

343 W PENDER STREET

DESIGN RATIONALE

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**Musson
Cattell
Mackey
Partnership**

DESIGN RATIONALE

Proposed Development

The proposed development is an eight-storey BC Housing project designed to support homeless at-risk seniors. The existing three-storey Class B heritage building on the southern portion of the site will be integrated into the new design, maintaining its character-defining façade. The remainder of the 6.48 FSR will be achieved through new construction on the northern half of the site and additional massing above the retained heritage. The building will include 96 supportive housing units, complemented by resident-specific amenities and ancillary spaces, consistent with *BC Housing Design Guidelines and Construction Standards*.

Surrounding Context

The site is located in the Victory Square neighbourhood. Typical of Victory Square, the neighbouring context has a variety of building types and uses. Office, retail, institutional, hotel, and residential uses can be found within surrounding buildings that range from character and heritage structures to recent office buildings and condominium towers. To the northeast across the lane is the Vancouver Film School Sound Design Campus. Facing the site at the corner of Pender (going counter-clockwise) are: a new eight-storey social services facility; a nine-storey historical commercial building, and; a three-storey heritage building with retail and commercial use. In close proximity is Victory Square Park and the historic attractions of Gastown. The site is adjacent to the Pacific Coast Apartment building on West Pender.

The heritage assets of the Victory Square Area are characterized by their 'sawtooth' expression of low- and mid-rise development, fine-grain, continuous retail (with 50' frontages), and strong 'street wall' expression, built to lot lines. The area is punctuated with a number of taller heritage developments that include the

Dominion Building and the Sun Tower. At the heart of this neighbourhood is Victory Square Park, and its cenotaph, which comprise a public memorial unique in Vancouver.

Site Context

The site is located at the northeast corner of West Pender Street and Homer Street and sits well below the two view cone corridors that cross the site (3.2.3 - Queen Elizabeth Park and 9.2 - Cambie Street). The site is well served by transit with four Skytrain stations located within a five-minute walk as well as a major bus and bicycle route running along West Pender.

Around the corner on Homer Street, the site slopes downward approximately 10 feet and abuts a lane at the rear. The site is made up of 3 existing parcels that contain two older structures, one that is listed as heritage and one of historic interest.

At the north end of the site is the two-storey non-heritage listed World Building. It was originally built as a newspaper printing house in 1892 but resides unoccupied. The building has undergone significant alterations and the original masonry façade has been covered over. At the south end of the site, currently vacant, the three-storey Class B registered heritage building is named the Hartney Chambers.

Constructed in 1908-09, the Hartney Chambers is valued for its Edwardian-era architecture. This commercial building of modest height and size is notable for its Neoclassical detailing. Embellishments such as pedimented windows, pilasters, block modillion cornice, and central pediment give the building a stylish, English appearance considered very progressive at the time. This was an early local project by architect William F. Gardiner (1884-1951), who had arrived in Vancouver in 1907. Constructed as a commercial block with street level retail



Aerial image of the site (highlighted in pink) within the Victoria Square neighbourhood.

space and offices above, Hartney Chambers contributes to the continuity of the Victory Square area as an important commercial and retail district in Vancouver in the early twentieth century. Originally, Hartney Chambers housed a variety of professional offices, including William Gardiner's architectural office.

Character Defining Elements as outlined in *The Canadian Register of Historic Places*:

- Corner location, built on a north facing slope and built to the property lines on all sides.
- Contribution to the streetscape, as part of an unbroken streetwall with continuous retail storefronts on two façades.
- Flat roof with raised parapets.
- Masonry construction, as expressed in the two main façades, with pressed red brick cladding with stone

detailing, and rear and side walls of common red brick.

- Neoclassical details, such as: block modillion cornice (sheet metal) with frieze incorporating a centred open pediment; two-storey giant order pilasters; front entrance doorframe with bracketed crown; segmental, pedimented third storey centre window with bracketed sill; and second-storey centre window with pediment supported by scrolled brackets.
- Additional exterior details, such as the chamfered corner with corner entrance, recessed central entry with double doors to upper storeys flanked by doorway to the eastern commercial space, black and white square porcelain tile entrance floor with Greek key design border, two recessed and paneled entrances facing Homer Street, sheet metal courses capping first, second and third storey windows, carved stone cartouche within the pediment, and light well on east elevation.

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- Regular fenestration: double-hung one-over-one wooden-sash windows on second and third floors.
- Ground floor plate glass display windows with hinged, operable (hopper) transom light.
- Basement windows in the storefront bulkheads along the west elevation.

Structural Assessment of the Existing Building

Read Jones Christoffersen Ltd. (RJC) has conducted a review of the The Hartner Chambers building on January 21, 2020 to assess the condition of the structure. The assessment was based on visual observations as copies of the original structural drawings for the building were not available at the time of this review. The following is a summary of observations and the structural implications:

- "...Based on our review of the building and past experience with similar buildings, there does not appear to be a defined lateral load resisting system for this building. The exterior walls along W Pender Street and Homer Street consist of unreinforced masonry on the top two levels and a heavy timber frame on Level 1. The north and east exterior wall of the building consists of full height masonry walls (likely unreinforced) and provide very little lateral resistance for the building."
- "...The existing base structure has very little capacity to resist the forces required in the current Bylaw. We expect that an upgrade of the building to meet current code force levels for both gravity and seismic loads would result in a near complete reconstruction of the internal structure. Therefore, any options to increase floor area [...] to improve its functionality for modern day use will leave very little of the existing structure in place."
- "The heritage value of the exterior façade can be maintained by connecting it to the new structure."



Hartney Chambers building, c. 1985

The structural assessment has played a critical role in shaping the proposed design - specifically the [recommended](#) approach to heritage conservation.

Heritage Façade Assessment

Further observation of the heritage façade was conducted by RJC in February, 2024 following a CoV notice identifying a safety concern associated with the Cornice above the West Pender Street elevation. The following is a summary of observations and recommendations from RJC.

- "In general, the facade is in a severely deteriorated state. The mortar was observed to be very soft and has eroded from the masonry joints allowing for increased water ingress into the wall assembly. The weak mortar is highly porous and readily absorbs moisture further weakening the masonry and adjacent elements. The deteriorated mortar has weakened the 2-wythe parapet to a point of

instability.”

- “...The repairs are no longer effectively preventing water ingress. The sheet metal elements were observed to be severely corroded. At several locations, the sheet metal had corroded completely through. In particular, the upper cornice has large corrosion caused holes in the cap providing a direct path for water to enter the assembly causing corrosion of the secondary structure that connects the cornice to the parapet and facade wall.”
- “The lintels above level 2 and level 3 windows have corroded and are causing ‘rust jacking’ of the cement parging and adjacent masonry. The cement parging has debonded and cracked above the windows at most locations. The cracked parging and adjacent masonry is allowing increased water ingress into the masonry facade.”

Following the observations noted above and in accordance with RJC’s recommendations, the following

summarizes the ongoing maintenance and repair work that has been done for the Homer Street and Pender Street heritage facade.

- Portions of the sheet metal and brick parapets deemed unsafe were removed and stored on site for later reinstallation.
- Temporary weatherproofing and safety protection were installed around the perimeter adjacent to the heritage facade on Homer Street and Pender Street.
- Loose parging was removed from the heritage facade on Homer Street and Pender Street, and temporary weather and safety protection were installed to prevent anything further from falling off the building into public areas.
- Loose parging was also removed from the lane elevation, and protective netting was installed to secure any debris from the public.



Hartney Chambers building, c. 2020

DESIGN RATIONALE

Zoning Review: Downtown District (DD)

The DD serves as the regional hub for commercial development, with the highest concentration of working and shopping public in the area. Within the DD, residential uses are encouraged as a means to increase variety, amenity, and safety downtown.

The site is located in area C2 of the DD as prescribed in the *Official Downtown Plan* (ODP) - a developing area for live/work, retail, residential, and hotel uses. C2 is currently zoned for a maximum floor space ratio (FSR) of 5.0 (ODP 3.1.C2) with a basic maximum height of 22.9m (ODP Table 1, row 1). The development Permit Board may permit an increase in density to a maximum FSR of 6.00 and building height to a maximum 32.0m if two-thirds of the FSR is comprised of social housing (ODP 3.4.b and Table 1, row 1). Through the conservation of the heritage façade, a 10% FSR increase is permitted (ODP 3.14) allowing a maximum 6.6 FSR for the site.

The Downtown Eastside Plan policy for Victory Square is to “facilitate compatible new residential and mixed-use development, while reinforcing the existing scale and character of the area.” It encourages a “balanced approach which means regulating, supporting, and encouraging development that benefits the existing community (including low-income residents), while allowing the area to evolve over time.”

FSR Calculations and Exclusions

Amenity spaces are an important element of BC housing projects as they foster social interaction and encourage a sense of community within the project. The “*BC Housing Design Guidelines and Construction Standards*” outlines the amenity programs that best supports this intention. Amenities such as gathering spaces, dining hall and associated commercial kitchen, laundry room, library/

computer room, and ancillary spaces all contribute to a holistic housing project. The proposed development provides these spaces, identifying them as dedicated building amenity in line with the aforementioned BCH Guidelines. To accommodate these BC Housing service and amenity requirements, the proposed development excludes these programmatic elements from FSR calculations - in accordance with the ODP Section 7.1.ix.

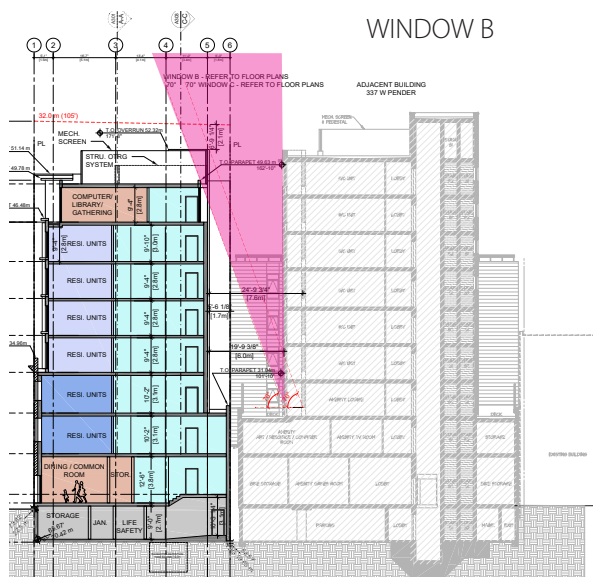
The development will also be seeking FSR exclusion for exterior wall thickness and kitchen exhaust shafts. Under Section 10.15 of the *Zoning and Development By-Law*, the director of planning may permit an exclusion of insulation thickness beyond applicable performance value as well the area occupied by a rainscreen system both as verified by a building envelope professional. Section 10.16 of the same by-law permits the exclusion of interior exhaust shafts for each floor above the kitchen to a maximum of 3.2m² per floor.

Parking and Loading

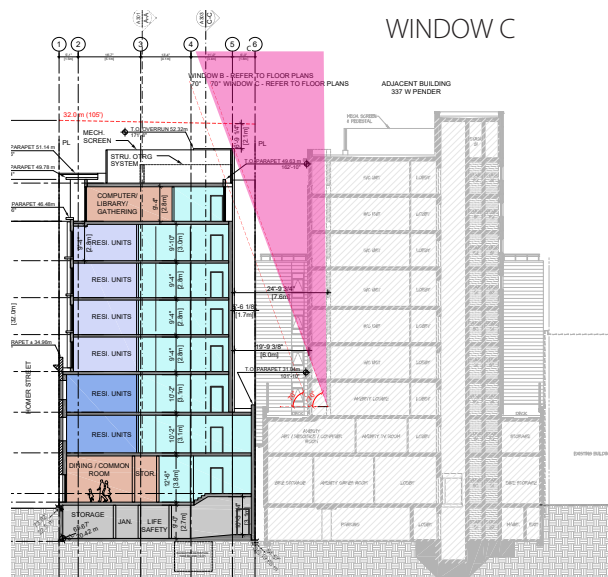
As a result of the site’s constrained size, and in order to maintain the heritage façade, excavation is not feasible. Though redevelopment of the site would be unable to meet the minimum parking (accessible, visitor), or loading requirements dictated by the City of Vancouver by-laws, the proposed senior’s housing will not generate significant demand for parking or servicing. The proposed parking and loading strategy has been designed to meet BC Housing’s and Whole Way House operational and programmatic requirements. One accessible parking stall, one Class A passenger, and one Class A loading stall are provided.

Lightwell

The site is adjacent to a nine-storey rooming house

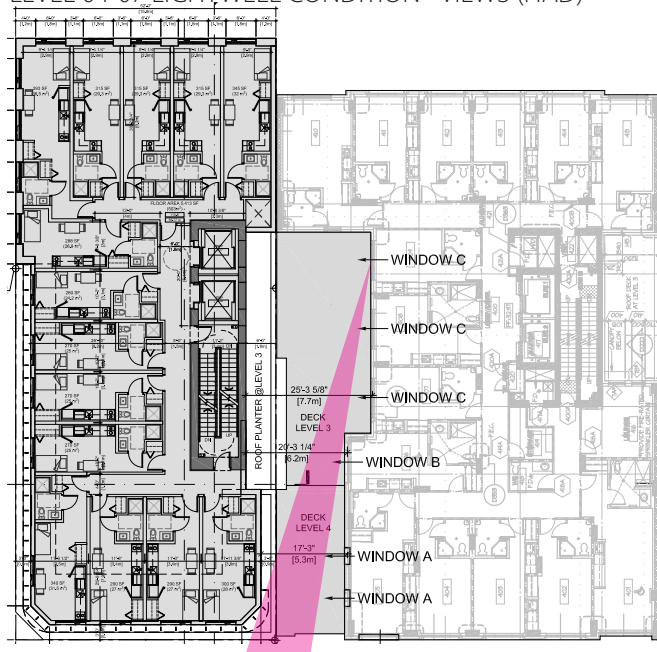


A 70° daylight angle is maintained for "Window B" on Level 4 and above.



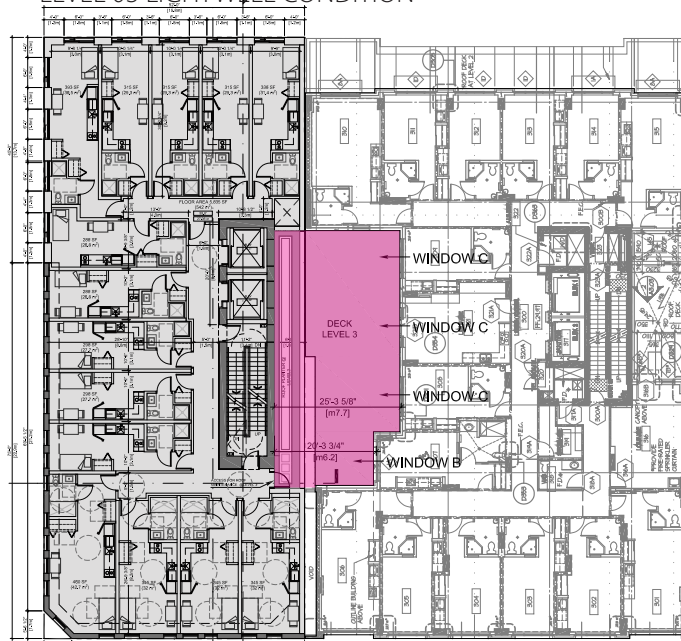
A 70° daylight angle is maintained for "Window C" on Level 3 and above.

LEVEL 04-07 LIGHTWELL CONDITION - VIEWS (HAD)



The separation between buildings above Level 3 permits south sun into the lightwell aligned with Alternative Solution in New Development Adjacent to Hotels and Rooming Houses (With Windows or Lightwells Near Interior Property Lines).

LEVEL 03 LIGHTWELL CONDITION



Lightwell condition at Level 3 showing the most restricted Window B.

apartment building with a lightwell condition at the east property line. The massing of the proposed development is designed to preserve adequate daylight access to the neighbouring building, in accordance with the *Guidelines for New Development Adjacent to Hotels and Rooming Houses (With Windows or Lightwells Near Interior Property Lines)*. Drawing A302 shows the lightwell condition in section, corresponding with the windows marked on A204-A206. Suites that incorporate Window A and Window D have outlook from living spaces to the north and south unencumbered. Level 3 “Window B” of the is the most restrictive condition for a side window opening onto a living space with only a portion of the window achieving the 70° daylight angle.

Walls facing the lightwell have been located 7.5 metres from those in the Pacific Coast Apartment for borrowed light as a minimum that can be achieved in order to allow functional floor plans to be developed in the addition to the Hartney Chambers. There is no overlook as there are no windows facing the lightwell so privacy is maintained. In Section B-B, the proposed is shown to comply with a 70° daylight angle originating at the windowsill.

Building Height

The height limit for the site is 22.9 m (75 ft), however in case of social housing the Development Permit Board may increase the height to a maximum of 32.0 m (105 ft). The proposed average floor-to-floor height is 10 ft to maximize the livability of the units, access to daylight, and fresh air. The 11 ft floor-to-floor height at level 2 and 3 matches the floor height of the typical levels of the heritage building with the existing ground level retail floor at a 13.3 foot floor-to-floor that must be retained.

Heritage Approach

The proposed vertical addition has been thoughtfully designed to respect and respond to the heritage character of the original façade, ensuring it remains visually subordinate to the historic elements. The proposed heights and densities maintain compliance with existing zoning regulations and align with local heritage policies. Importantly, the vertical addition enhances the financial and functional viability of the non-profit housing component, which addresses a demonstrated need within the Downtown Eastside. Furthermore, the building's height is consistent with the surrounding urban context, including an adjacent eight-storey building, thereby reinforcing the area's established scale and form.

Within the context of the streetwall along both streets, the massing fits with the sawtooth expression prevalent in the Victory Square area. The five-storey addition and the new massing to the north demonstrate a distinguishable, compatible and subordinate response as a tripartite composition.

The new addition is set back and proportionate in massing to the expressed ground floor and levels 2 & 3. The proposed façade is designed in muted subordinate colours incorporating contemporary elements and materials (julliet balconies and metal panels). A modern expression is introduced by using metal fins which corresponds with the defining vertical elements (pilasters) and horizontal elements (cornices) of the Hartney Chambers. Additionally, the horizontal and vertical fins will provide a passive solar cooling during the sunny days.

The new massing to the north is expressed in an Edwardian Commercial fashion vertically with a base, shaft and cap that ties in horizontally to cornices of the Hartney Chambers and its five-storey addition. The secondary access off Homer Street diminishes its presence with

simple silicon glazing. A sandy coloured brick in elevation with simple detail as a background gives more presence to the Hartney Chambers' bolder and contrasting façades, which therefore remains visually dominant.

Heritage Conservation Rationale

The heritage values of the Hartney Chambers have been assessed through a Statement of Significance. A recent structural analysis has determined that "...proposed upgrades to meet current code force levels for both gravity and seismic loads would result in a near complete reconstruction of the internal structure...". Given the need to rebuild the structure, the two principal façades of Hartney Chambers along West Pender Street and Homer Street will be retained and undergo a process of preservation and restoration. Further physical investigation has now been undertaken; a full assessment of the survival and condition of original materials and elements will be undertaken once full access to the site can be achieved. The initial intent for the site is as follows:

- The Hartney Chambers is a B-listed Heritage Register Resource and would receive municipal heritage designation.
- Initial structural review indicates that the existing internal structural elements are completely deficient, and will need to be rebuilt to retain and conserve the exterior façades.
- The two main façades of the Hartney Chambers will be fully rehabilitated and restored.
- Restoration of missing and severely deteriorated character-defining elements of the retained façades.
- Adaptation of the existing commercial retail units on the ground floor into a shared amenity space that will provide supportive services for future tenants of the facility.

Summary

The proposed development responds to the zoning regulations and by-law requirements while the site's unique constraints inform the design. The massing and program address BC Housing requirements, heritage conservation priorities, site limitations, structural considerations, the character of the surrounding neighbourhood, and the relationship to adjacent buildings.

The proposed development will make a valuable contribution to the Downtown District, enhancing the neighbourhood while directly supporting councils priority to create more homes. By delivering 96 units of social housing, the project provides essential, stable housing for at-risk seniors and plays a meaningful role in reducing the risk of homelessness in the community.

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