

INTRODUCTION

Background

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This application is in support of a Development Permit Application at 349 W Georgia St, the former Main Post Office building. The Development Permit, incorporating a building on the Heritage Register, would allow an increase in density from 7 to 10.93 FSR. A mix of uses, including parking (above and below grade), retail, restaurant and office are proposed.

The site is strategically located at what is currently a gateway location to the downtown core in the Crosstown neighbourhood. This redevelopment will provide an essential link and catalyst between the established residential neighbourhoods of Yaletown and the transitioning Gastown / Chinatown area.

The neighbouring context of the site is comprised of a mix of uses. Major institutional and educational buildings dominate to the south and east, the Vancouver Public Library and Queen Elizabeth Theatre among these. Immediately to the north and west are major office developments, with the CBD just a few blocks to the west where zoning allows for developments up to 11 FSR. This area, the CBD extension, has seen a recent influx of new high technology users in the neighborhood to the west, and there continues to be unprecedented interest in this location by these users.

Linkages to transit are excellent with close proximity to SkyTrain via stadium station and bus transit surrounding the site. Discussion on the future of the viaduct access routes on Dunsmuir and Georgia is ongoing.

The site, approximately 130,092sf (12,086m²) in area, is currently zoned DD area C1 with a density of 7 FSR and a height limit of 150ft (45.7m) (Development Permit Board may increase the basic maximum height to 450.1ft [137.2m]). View corridors restrict height to approximately 222ft (67.7) with exceptions at the corners.

The site is currently occupied by the former Main Post Office building, a significant landmark. Retention of almost all of the structure is proposed. Additional area and new uses are superimposed within height and view limits to create a mix of uses that contribute to and repair the neighborhood's urban fabric, in alignment with applicable policy.

The Proposal

The development has a comprehensive mixed use program with three main components.

- Rehabilitated heritage podium containing two levels of underground parking, loading at grade, three floors of retail, 2 levels of office and parking, and one full level of office use
- 21 storey office building on W Georgia St.
- 22 storey office building on Dunsmuir St.

A number of significant public benefits are envisaged as part of this proposal:

- The largest heritage rehabilitation in Vancouver history.
- A sustainable development targeting LEED Gold for office core and shell.
- On-site public open space fronting Georgia St, providing animation and pedestrian seating opportunities.
- Improvements to all four street façades to create attractive, inviting and animated streetscape.
- A provision of a substantial amount of high quality job space close to transit, creating a critical mass.

The proposed development will meet or exceed all applicable City Policies and Guidelines including the Downtown District Official Development Plan, the Downtown Design Guidelines, the Downtown District Character Area Description for Georgia St, Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan, Central Area Pedestrian Weather Protection, and Heritage Policies.

Project Vision

The former Main Post Office building – covering an entire city block – is one of the largest opportunities for redevelopment in downtown Vancouver. As the former Main Post Office once did in the past, development at this site has the opportunity to set the tone for the future – not only for this city block, but for surrounding neighbourhoods, and for the city as a whole.

This massive mid-century building, whose utility has been shrinking for decades, will become a catalyst to tie the traditional downtown core with dynamic changes in Gastown, Crosstown and beyond. This building has the opportunity to re-assume its original identity as a centerpiece and gathering place for many downtown communities and neighbourhoods in a state of dynamic transformation and growth. The proposed development will invigorate and re-energize this portion of the downtown with a combination of office space, restaurants, shops, and most importantly the people that will bring this neighborhood to life once again.

The project vision is for an adaptive re-use of the existing heritage structure. The mixed-use development concept responds to market demands, and will support the substantial investment in heritage retention.

Linking the central business and cultural districts of downtown Vancouver, the approach will make the current dull uninviting streetscape a vibrant place to work and socialize – with public space, retail and services that not only benefit the building's users but also invigorate the existing surrounding neighbourhoods.

The project will have functional, efficient and flexible design to adapt to a changing market, and also needs to be imaginative, innovative and exciting. Recognized heritage aspects will be retained as feasible and beneficial to the design and the public.

