

YAMAMOTO ARCHITECTURE

DATE -

May 16, 2019

TO -

City of Vancouver, Development Services Department
515 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5Z 4A8

ATTN -

Miguel Castillo Urena

Dear Miguel,

Re: DESIGN RATIONALE: 6103 - 6191 West Boulevard

SITE CONTEXT

The site occupies the entire 6100 block of West Boulevard spanning between West 46th Avenue to the south, West 45th Avenue to the north, and a lane to the west. The S.E.P Block is located on the northernmost portion of the site, and currently houses four retail units. The remainder of the site is home to Kerrisdale Lumber, made up of several buildings fronting West Boulevard, and a large works yard along the lane.

The site is zoned C2, and a pattern of mixed-use commercial and residential buildings has been established to both the north and south. Across West 45th Avenue to the north is 2103 West 45th Avenue, a four storey mixed-use building with retail at grade. While this building is zoned C-2, it does not incorporate the 4th level step back prescribed within the C-2 Guidelines. Further to the north along West Boulevard are small-scale, one storey commercial buildings characterized by parapets, fabric awnings and ample glazing at grade. Like the building at 2103 West 45th, these buildings are built with very little setback to the West Boulevard property line.

To the south of the site across West 46th Avenue is 2110 West 46th Avenue, a four-storey mixed-use building that features a retail fore-court that is lower than both the West Boulevard and West 46th Avenue sidewalks. Further to the south at 6237 West Boulevard is a four-storey mixed-use building that has a negligible setback to the West Boulevard property line, and a four-storey street wall.

Recent developments further to the south include Sterling; 6415 West Boulevard, and McKinnon; 6300 West Boulevard. Both of these developments are four-storey, mixed use buildings that encompass their entire respective blocks. Both building also feature strongly defined four-storey street walls.

To the west of the site across the lane are RS-5 zoned single family homes, fronting West 45th Avenue and West 46th Avenue.

Facing the site to the east is East Boulevard and the Arbutus Corridor Greenway. At 6168 East Boulevard is The Kirkland, a five-storey mixed-use building that incorporates the *façade* preservation of a two-storey heritage building.

PRESERVATION OF THE S.E.P. BLOCK

At the heart of the proposal is the preservation and restoration of portions of the Stanley Ernest Peters Block.

The S.E.P. block was constructed in 1930. and has been a commercial building ever since. Presently, the building **contains four retail units, and has had numerous renovations and alterations since its initial construction.**

The proposed development has been closely informed by the Conservation Plan prepared by Donald Luxton and Associates. dated April 2019. and the Structural Assessment prepared by Entuitive dated April 15, 2019.

The Conservation Plan establishes the following Character-Defining Elements of the S.E.P. Block:

- *Corner location along West Boulevard*
- *Continuous Commercial Use since 1930*
- *Siting at the property line with no setbacks from either street*
- *Commercial form, scale and massing as expressed by its single storey rectangular shape and recessed entries*
- *Wood frame construction with stucco cladding*
- *Inset store entrances with glazed wooden entrance doors*
- *Fenestration including storefronts with glazed display windows and transom windows*
- *Mission Revival details including decorative Mission Parapet capped with metal coping and inset panels, decorative mosaic tiles, and textured stucco finish*

The proposal incorporates the S.E.P. Block into a larger building while reinforcing the Character-Defining elements listed above. In addition, the proposal has evolved through discussion with Planning to arrive at a massing approach that is sympathetic to, and helps to emphasize the preserved S.E.P. Block's original massing and **character.**

The Structural Assessment highlights deficiencies related to structural capacity, lateral stability, snow loading, and seismic performance relative to the VBBL. It also outlines changes that have occurred to the internal structure of the building.

The interior of the S.E.P. building has been modified continuously since its construction, and the Conservation Plan states the following:

*The block has housed a range of businesses including: drug store, grocery store, billiards, building and equipment supply business, office space, restaurant, paint supply, and commercial training school all of which modified the interior spaces to suit their requirements. These alterations, in addition to the extensively modifications to the storefronts of West Boulevard and West 45 Avenue, have impacted the block's interior and resulted little original **materials remaining intact in the interior.***

The S.E.P. Block will become part of a larger, concrete building with parkade below, and two levels of apartments directly above the rear portion of the existing building. Given the lack of heritage value of the building's interior, and to accommodate the new construction, our focus will be on preservation and restoration of the building's most important Character-Defining elements.

The proposal is not simply a facade preservation. The original building frontages along both West Boulevard and West 45th Avenue will be preserved and restored, and the original building's south and western edges are emphasized through setbacks of the new building adjacent. The original building frontages were not flat, but incorporated deep entries flanked with glazed display areas. Restoration of these original storefronts will create a deep zone behind the facade that re-instates the original entry sequences of the building as it was when first constructed.

Rather than "tacking on" the existing building facades onto a new building, we have used the original building to inform the massing for the new building. For this reason we are requesting additional height, as this enables us to move density away from the top and sides of the S.E.P. Block. The relocation of density towards the south allows for more breathing room around the original building, celebrating and reinforcing the original building character and massing. Shifting density away from the northern side of the site also has the benefit of minimizing shadowing towards the north.

We have arrived at the current massing scheme after numerous iterations, and in collaboration with Planning.

WEST BOULEVARD FRONTAGE

West Boulevard is a grand street fronting the Arbutus Greenway. South of the S.E.P. Block, our proposal sets the entire building back to provide a generous sidewalk for the majority of the block. A small forecourt is provided adjacent to the S.E.P. Block, in order to emphasize its massing and create a transition to the setback streetwall along the remainder of the building. This frontage is characterized by a simple, four-storey street wall that is established by a rhythm of stone-clad vertical piers animated by a combination of exterior balconies, enclosed balconies, and exterior windows. The fifth floor is set back to emphasize the four storey streetwall, continuing the pattern established by neighbouring buildings.

The building massing steps down above, and back from the S.E.P. block facades. This maintains the integrity of the original building's massing, while creating a transition to the five-storey massing of the southern portion of the building.

The frontage along West Boulevard provides continuous retail storefronts, with weather protection provided in the form of metal-clad, illuminated canopies. The retail spaces and canopies are grouped into sets of three bays that reference the scale and rhythm of the bays of the original S.E.P. Block.

WEST 45TH AVENUE FRONTAGE

The preserved and restored S.E.P Block occupies the majority of this frontage, and restoration will bring back depth to its currently flat facade. West of the S.E.P. Block, the building is set back, again to emphasize the original S.E.P. Block massing and to re-instate the portal opening that originally anchored the northwest corner of the building. The set back portion of the new building picks up the height of the S.E.P. Block parapet, to unify the existing building with the new. A retail space is proposed west of the S.E.P. Block, highlighted by a canopy that reinforces the height of the original S.E.P. Block storefront.

WEST 45TH AVENUE FRONTAGE

The residential lobby is located off of West 46th Avenue, maximizing the potential for commercial frontages along West Boulevard, and recognizing the more residential character of West 46th Street. The large setback of 2110 West 46th Avenue will ensure that the residential lobby is highly visible from West Boulevard. The residential lobby is framed by a three-storey tall entry portico and prominent canopy. The southwestern corner of the building steps back and down to two storeys to help create a transition to the single family homes to the west. This portion of the building will feature a generous lobby area that will help to animate the corner of the lane.

LANE TREATMENT

While the lane will provide parkade and Class B Loading access, we have incorporated ground level units that help to bring activity and greenery facing the single family homes to the west. The ground level units are set two risers above the lane elevation, and separated from the lane by a planted buffer. The lane frontage also incorporates a ground level gym, that will contribute visual activity and passive surveillance of the lane. Above the podium of retail and the lane facing units, a large landscaped deck provides west-facing outdoor space and a continuous buffer of planting along its western edge. The upper level of the building facing the lane picks up the character of the West Boulevard frontage, but is broken down into a series of smaller, stepped volumes that transition down towards the single family homes to the west.

HOUSING FOR FAMILIES

A total of 64 units are proposed, of which 63 are 2-bedroom units or larger, making 98% of the units suitable for families. This location is an ideally suited for housing for families. The site is in close proximity to parks, community amenities, schools, and public transportation. Outdoor space is provided for each unit, and building step backs toward the west provide generous, sunny decks. Top floor units will have direct access to private roof decks that will incorporate planting that screens adjacent patios. Access to the rooftop is provided through stair enclosures rather than roof hatches. This is in recognition of the safety concern that the Building Department has raised with respect to access into and out of hatch-type openings. The proposed stair enclosure will provide safe and convenient access to the rooftop while not compromising the building envelope. Rooftop railings are set back from the edge of the building to minimize their appearance from street level.

AMENITY SPACES

Indoor amenity spaces are a prioritized, as are generous circulation and lobby spaces that encourage interaction between residents. The entry lobby features a large seating lounge, as well as a double-height space that will feature a hanging piece of artwork. The ground level also incorporates a gym that will have generous ceiling heights and windows facing new planting along the lane. At the second level, an indoor amenity space with kitchenette provides direct access to an outdoor child's play area. The outdoor play area is west facing, and will benefit from mid-day and afternoon sunlight.

CONCEPTUAL MATERIALS APPROACH

The S.E.P. Block will be preserved, and restored according to recommendations of the Conservation Plan. This will include repair of the existing stucco wall, and restoration of recessed storefronts, mosaic tiles, and decorative glass panels. The S.E.P. Block will be painted white, with dark green trim and storefront.

The proposed building is defined by a plane of vertical, stone-faced piers framed by dark bronze trim. Windows, picket railings, canopies, and fascias are also dark bronze, to create a restrained and elegant colour palette. The streetwall is considered as a flat plane expressed with a parapet on top, picking up the language of the S.E.P. Block and re-interpreting with contemporary detailing.

Canopies are solid-clad elements, and provide a simple expression that contrasts with the more delicate detailing of the S.E.P. Block.

Towards the lane, the building character is maintained through a rhythm of painted concrete piers. Areas of glass guardrail are introduced to maximize views for the upper units towards the west.

REQUESTED RELAXATIONS

DENSITY

The proposed density is 2.75 FSR, or 10% above the Conditional 2.5 FSR that is possible within C-2 Zoning. The additional density will help to offset costs associated with preservation and restoration of the S.E.P. Block. These costs will include temporary shoring of the existing building walls, restoration of original storefronts, decorative glazing and mosaic tile work. The original, wood-framed building will require creative Code and Structural solutions to ensure that the building meets current VBBL structural requirements, and satisfies fire safety without compromising the integrity and legibility of the S.E.P. Block.


BUILDING HEIGHT

As described above, the ability to add a partial fifth level provides us with flexibility to shape the building massing in a way that responds to the S.E.P. Block and celebrates its Character-Defining elements.

BUILDING SETBACKS

Towards the west, reduced setbacks are proposed for ground and second level residential units. This has been discussed with Planning as the scheme has evolved, and the setbacks provided allow for generous patios and a layer of buffer planting against the lane. As with the relaxation for building height, the reduced setbacks allow us to shift bulk away from the S.E.P. Block.

Regards,



Taizo Yamamoto Architect AIBC