

Yaletown Square  
1290 Homer Street, Vancouver BC

# DESIGN RATIONALE

**issues / revisions**

Issued for Development Permit Application

22 June 2018

## Contents

Overview	1
Site & Context	2
Relevant City Guidelines and Policies	3
Design Rationale	4

## **1. Overview**

This Development Permit Application is to permit the renovation and rehabilitation of an existing historic building and the addition of 3 new floor levels above.

The Yaletown Square building will be preserved and restored to resemble its appearance when originally constructed in 1910, at which time it was known as the MacPherson & Teetzel Company Building. The building's structure, services and access will be upgraded to increase its functionality for adaptive re-use as retail/restaurant and office space. Existing character-defining elements will be preserved, while significant missing or deteriorated elements will be reinstated. Three new levels of office space will be added above the building and the structure of the addition will be used to stabilize the existing building. The design of the addition draws a clear distinction between what is historic and what is new and the materials and massing have been carefully considered to be compatible with the exterior form of the historic building and its location.

The building owner intends to voluntarily protect the restored Yaletown Square building as "Heritage Designated" on the Vancouver Heritage Register.

## **2. Site & Context**

The site is located at 1290 Homer Street, at the southern edge of Yaletown in downtown Vancouver. The Yaletown Square building faces Homer Street to the west, Drake Street to the south and Hamilton Street to the east. The site is at the south end of the "street-wall" block between Homer and Hamilton Streets, consisting of mainly 5- to 7-storey buildings. About sixty percent of these buildings date from the first half of the 20th century and over the last 50-60 years have undergone a variety of restorations, renovations, and additions. The remainder of the buildings are newer infill developments. Yaletown Square, at 2 storeys high facing Homer Street, is the lowest of the buildings on this block. It is generally overshadowed by surrounding contemporary high-rise buildings to the east, south and west, and by the 4-storey building immediately north of the site.

The site slopes down nearly a full storey from Homer Street to Hamilton Street. A significant feature on the Hamilton Street side is the Yaletown Dock, an elevated structure that formerly served to load and unload goods transported by rail, now functioning as a wide pedestrian promenade with patios that separate the buildings from Hamilton Street.

## **3. Relevant City Guidelines and Policies**

The site is zoned HA-3, Yaletown Historic Area. The proposed development is in general conformance with Zoning & Development Bylaw 3575.

### **3.1. Use**

The HA-3 District Schedule (dated April 2013) permits Office, Service (Restaurant Class I) and Retail uses as outright approval uses.

### **3.2. Height**

The maximum height allowable is 21.4m. The proposed height of the building is 21.4m measured from the top of the building parapet to the lowest point of the base surface, which has been calculated using survey information and the official established Building Grades received from the City of Vancouver.

### 3.3. Setbacks (and Encroachments)

The HA-3 District Schedule does not permit front, side or rear yards. While the existing building is generally without setbacks, certain existing features and walls are either slightly set in or encroaching slightly beyond the property line.

Based on our review of the project with the office of the City Surveyor, we understand that the owner will be required to enter into an encroachment agreement(s) with the City of Vancouver for existing and new encroachments beyond the property line, the details of which are outlined below (refer to the architectural drawings for additional information):

- 3.3.1. The exterior face of the existing building wall is located beyond the east property line by an average dimension of about 195mm *at grade*. The east façade of the new addition above will be located about 175mm beyond the property line, to approximately align with the average plane of the face of the existing building wall below.
- 3.3.2. The existing mono-slope roof projects beyond the east façade, forming an overhang that extends past the east property line by about 955mm. This original projecting roof feature will be maintained as part of the restored historic building.
- 3.3.3. Two existing entry stairwells provide access to the lowest floor of the building (below the level of the Yaletown Dock, on Hamilton Street) and are located beyond the east property line. These stairwells will be reconfigured as part of the improvements to the Yaletown Dock but will remain on City property. A new dock leveler will be added at the north east corner of the site immediately outside of the refuse and recycling room; this will also be located on City property.
- 3.3.4. A prominent overhanging cornice that was part of the original 1910 MacPherson & Teetzel Company Building (but since removed) will be reinstated at the top of the existing building along Homer Street and extending a short distance along the façade on Drake Street. The cornice will protrude approximately 800-1000mm beyond the property line on the west and south sides.
- 3.3.5. A less-prominent existing lower cornice above the storefront façade on Homer Street and Drake Street extends beyond the west property line by approximately 30-50mm; this cornice will be retained as part of the restoration work.

### 3.4. Floor Space Ratio

The maximum permitted FSR is 5.00. The site area is 560.7m<sup>2</sup> and the gross floor area of the building for FSR calculation purposes is 2,625m<sup>2</sup>. The proposed FSR for the project is 4.68.

No building envelope exclusions are sought as part of the FSR calculations.

### 3.5. Off-Street Parking

Currently there is no off-street parking for the existing historic building at 1290 Homer Street. Section 4.3.4 of the Parking Bylaw allows that no new parking spaces be required for Levels 1 through 3, as the existing active uses (commercial: office) will remain active uses (commercial: retail/restaurant/office) following the renovation and restoration of the historic building.

The Parking Bylaw requires 11 new off-street parking spaces for the 3 levels of office space added above the existing building. *This application seeks relaxation of the off-street parking requirement* on the basis that it would be extremely detrimental to the restoration and retention of the existing historic building.

Further to the requested relaxation above, we note the following:

- 3.5.1. The site is well-served by public transportation, only 270m from the Yaletown-Roundhouse Canada Line station, 450m from the Aquabus / Yaletown Ferry Terminal and within 2 blocks of three separate Translink bus routes (#6, #23, #258).
- 3.5.2. Monthly parking can be found nearby at the Roundhouse Community Centre (190m), the lot at Mainland and Davie Streets (180m) and periodically at neighbouring residential developments when unused spaces are available.
- 3.5.3. Metered parking (9am-10pm) is available on both sides of Homer, Drake and Hamilton Streets.
- 3.5.4. Approximately 9 car share spaces are located within a 1-block radius of the site.
- 3.5.5. A dedicated painted bike lane on the east side of Homer Street connects the site with Vancouver's network of cycling routes.

The City of Vancouver has indicated their support for the requested relaxation of the off-street parking requirements. Additional Class A bicycle parking spaces have been provided as part of the project to offset the absence of vehicle parking; refer to section 3.7 below for additional information, also to the Bicycle Parking Rationale report by Bunt & Associates Engineering Ltd. included with this application for Development Permit.

### **3.6. Off-Street Loading (and Waste / Recycling Removal)**

Calculating the off-street loading requirements based on sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.7 of the Parking Bylaw results in 2 Class B loading spaces for the retail/restaurant use and 1 Class A and 1 Class B loading space for the office use.

Section 5.1.2 allows that in HA Districts the Director of Planning may permit or require fewer spaces. *This application seeks relaxation of the off-street loading requirement* on the basis that it would be extremely detrimental to the character of the existing historic building.

Loading for Yaletown Square will be via the existing designated and signed commercial loading zone (7am-6pm M-F) alongside the curb on Homer Street, directly in front of the building.

Waste and recycling from the commercial tenants will be sorted and stored for pickup in a new refuse room located within the building on Level 1, instead of using the large rolling bins that currently reside curb-side on Hamilton Street along the edge of the Yaletown Dock. A dock leveler will be provided to transport the waste and recycling bins from the refuse room to the level of the Yaletown Dock, where they will be wheeled to the corner of Drake and Hamilton Streets by the waste management company operator for immediate transfer into their truck. After unloading, the operator will return the bins to the refuse room. The size and configuration of the refuse room and the procedure for removing bins has been reviewed by the company that currently manages the waste and recycling for the building; refer to the letter from Waste Control Services Inc. included with this application for Development Permit.

### **3.7. Off-Street Bicycle Space Regulations**

Calculating the bicycle space requirements based on sections 6.2.4.1 and 6.2.5.1 of the Parking Bylaw results in 6 Class A spaces (1 for the retail/restaurant use and 5 for the office use) and 6 Class B spaces (for the office use).

Due to the existing constraints and restrictions of the site and of the historic building, no off-street vehicle parking spaces have been provided. In lieu of vehicle parking, additional Class A bicycle parking has been included, over and above the number of spaces required by the Bylaw. To determine the appropriate number of bicycle parking spaces, Bunt & Associates Engineering Ltd. have conducted a review of the project and the site and have recommended facilities for 28 Class A bicycle parking spaces; refer to the report included with this application for Development Permit. The Class A bicycle parking facilities have been provided in the basement of the building (Level 1), accessible from Hamilton Street or via elevator from the Homer Street lobby. Based on 28 Class A bicycle parking spaces, in accordance with the Bylaw requirements, 40 clothing lockers will be provided; as will washroom and shower facilities, one for each gender.

Six (6) Class B bicycle spaces will be provided at new racks to be mounted adjacent to the sidewalk in front of the building along Homer Street, to the side of the pedestrian path of travel and in a highly-visible and well-lit location. Refer to the architectural site plan for the exact location.

## **4. Design Rationale**

### **4.1. Existing Historic Building:**

The existing building has been identified as having historical significance in the City of Vancouver, valued as a good example of an early Yaletown warehouse and due to its association with the development of this industrial neighbourhood.

The work proposed for the historic building includes aspects of preservation, rehabilitation and restoration and will be based upon Parks Canada's *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. Refer to the Conservation Plan prepared by Donald Luxton & Associates and included with this application for Development Permit.

The major interventions proposed for the historic building include: the preservation of the original exterior masonry walls and wood window assemblies; the restoration of the missing storefront and significant projecting cornice on Homer Street (with a partial return along Drake Street); the rehabilitation of interior spaces and seismic upgrading of the existing historic structure; and the construction of a three-storey addition above the roofline to accommodate new office space.

### **4.2. Vertical Addition:**

As per the *Standards & Guidelines*, the design of the three-storey addition draws a clear distinction between what is historic and what is new, while being compatible with — and preserving the character of — the historic building.

The form of the addition follows the same simple rectangular form of the historic building in plan. The massing of the addition is comprised of a two-storey volume atop a single-storey recessed connecting floor above the roofline of the historic building. The connecting

level is set back on all three exposed building faces from the historic building below and the two-storey volume above, functioning as a simple, recessed hyphen that visually separates the old and the new, allowing the historic roofline to be less encumbered.

The vertical addition will bring the overall height and massing of the building in line with the neighbouring historic and contemporary buildings along this block of Homer Street. Proportionally the addition reads as secondary to the historic building, in part due to the diminished presence of the recessed connecting floor. As a result, the addition has the appearance of a simple, modern, two-storey box resting above the historic building.

The design of the addition is simple and unobtrusive, reflecting the existing building, which it references but does not copy.

As with the historic building, horizontal bands of opaque wall alternate with glazed openings to delineate the floor levels. The windows of the addition are expressed as a continuous ribbon, referencing the horizontality of the historic building without mimicking the rhythm of its punched openings. The height of the ribbon glazing corresponds to the height of the individual windows on the main floor of the historic building; similarly, the height of the new addition's bands of opaque wall are proportional with the height of the opaque wall above the windows of the historic building.

Floor to ceiling glazing comprises the perimeter of the recessed connecting level above the roofline of the historic building, diminishing its visual presence. The opaque wall areas of the two-storey volume above will be clad in a panel system having a colour value similar to that of the historic brick masonry. While the colour will be complimentary, the panel cladding is a clearly modern, manufactured construction material and will distinguish itself from the masonry by virtue of its overall lightness, smoother finish and simpler articulation. The cladding of the addition will not compete for visual interest with the heavy, highly-textured and variegated brick masonry of the historic building.

The structure of the addition will span the width of the historic building to minimize impact on the existing heavy timber columns and beams. A new concrete stair and elevator core will be constructed along the north side of the building set away from the three principal facades. New steel and concrete composite columns at the perimeter of the historic building will be inset into the interior face of the masonry walls to minimize disruption of the space. In addition to supporting the new construction above, these columns will stabilize the unreinforced masonry loadbearing walls of the historic building and serve to structurally brace the heavy timber structure.

#### **4.3. Site Development:**

The project will undertake certain improvements to the Yaletown Dock area directly adjacent to the building, beyond the eastern property line. These improvements include: replacement of the existing stairwells down to the lower level of the building with new, reconfigured stairwells, guards, handrails, area drains, etc.; addition of a new dock leveler for waste and recycling removal; re-grading of the Yaletown Dock to correct existing surface drainage deficiencies and direct water away from the building; re-surfacing the Dock with salvaged and matching new brick pavers to replace existing asphalt patching and heavily deteriorated areas; addition of a steel pipe railing at the perimeter of the Dock where currently missing in front of the subject property, as per the Yaletown Dock Guidelines; relocating the existing planting bed to the west and replacing the existing tree to allow for a new code-compliant accessible ramp at the southeast corner of the Dock.

Relocating the planting bed and access ramp and replacing the tree will substantially improve the public realm in front of the building. The new ramp will replace the current steeply-graded access point to the Yaletown Dock from Drake Street with a code-compliant ramp at the corner, in-line with pedestrian movement that is generally along the edge of the Dock. Shifting the pedestrian circulation away from the building and toward the corner will create an area adjacent to the entrance that can accommodate a sidewalk patio for a future restaurant tenant, which would provide animation to the corner of Drake and Hamilton Streets.

The addition will feature an extensive green roof, significantly enhancing the view down upon the building from the residential towers that overlook the site. This green infrastructure tool will aid in reducing summer heat gain and winter heat loss; in capturing, filtering and slowing roof water runoff; and in protecting and extending the life of the roof itself.

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