

February 28, 2017

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A Corporate Partnership

Dear Ms. King,

**RE: Development Permit Application – 530 Drake Street  
Project Description, Development Proposal, and Design Rationale**

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

Covenant House was established in New York City more than 35 years ago to address the issue of homeless youth. The organization has developed an international reputation for its successful approach to supporting at-risk youth. Covenant House Vancouver opened in 1997 in response to an overwhelming community need. It has become the main provider of residential and outreach services for homeless and at-risk youth in Vancouver. It currently operates out of two buildings in Downtown Vancouver: 575 Drake Street and 326 West Pender Street.

Covenant House Vancouver is a vital organization supported by 150 employees, over 100 volunteers, and 50,000 donors. It provides a full continuum of services for youth with its three core programs:

**Street Outreach** engages with at-risk youth on the street. A team of outreach workers offers food, counselling and minor medical attention as well as referring youth to the Drop In Program and the Crisis Program. The Drop In Program connects youth with immediate services (meals, clothing) as well as support services (health, housing).

**Crisis Program** provides shelter and support services to youth 16 to 24 years old. Trained staff and volunteers provide youth with the help they need without judgement; and

**Rights of Passage** provides longer term housing, support and life skill training for youth while they transition away from life on the street.

In recent years, an average of 1500 youth each year have been assisted by Covenant House Vancouver but their needs are changing. There has been a significant increase in the number of youth with mental health and addiction issues. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of females being seen by staff, and in the number of youth who have aged out of foster care. To meet these emerging needs, Covenant House requires additional program and shelter space.

Covenant House Vancouver is proposing to develop two sites in the Downtown South on Drake Street. Their plan is to develop the sites in sequence so that the current services are not compromised or disrupted during the renewal process. The first site under consideration is the location of the current Immigrant Services Society at 30 Drake Street. The second property is the current Covenant House site at 575 Drake with they have occupied since 1997.

Covenant House's approach to assisting youth makes use of an Integrated Service Plan that incorporates short-term and long-term goals, continuity of care, and referrals aiming to enable youth to live independent lives. This Integrated Service Plan aligns with the City of Vancouver goals by preventing adult homelessness and supports youth in securing long-term housing and education. Covenant House Vancouver has developed relationships with private sector housing providers and strong ties with post-secondary institutions. The majority of the youth in the Rights of Passage (ROP) program obtain places in these institutions.

To meet the evolving needs of homeless youth, Covenant House Vancouver requires additional space as it has 'micro-managed' the space at their existing two facilities to the maximum extent possible. Covenant House Vancouver Crisis Programs are currently split between 575 Drake Street (owned by CHV) and 326 West Pender Street (leased from the City of Vancouver). The ROP Program located at Pender Street has been reduced to accommodate additional beds for the Crisis Program, and the temporary use of the space involves many compromises. Administration staff is located at Pender Street. The Drake Street location houses the Crisis Program as well as the Drop In Program which requires schedule compromises for spaces needed for both programs but that cannot be used at the same time. The organization's fundraising staff is located at Drake Street.

There is no room for the required space needed for youth with more serious issues, nor is there capacity for appropriate health, education or fitness support. By redeveloping 575 Drake Street and introducing new program space at 530 Drake, Covenant House Vancouver will be able to meet the demand for the increase in services.

In addition, the revised program for the three building would return space currently used for the Crisis Program back to the Rights of Passage Program at 326 West Pender. This will provide space for 20 additional self-contained apartments which aligns with the City of Vancouver Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

Covenant House Vancouver selected the two Drake Street properties because:

- Consultation with youth and front line staff confirmed that the downtown is a magnet for youth. This location and the adjacency to downtown works very well to meet the needs of homeless youth. The youth stressed that the location is very accessible, close to transit, and away from the Downtown Eastside;
- Consultations with the development and real estate industry confirmed the difficulties of securing suitable and affordable sites in the downtown area; and
- Covenant House Vancouver has operated successfully from its Drake and Seymour location for nearly 20 years and has an established presence in the community.

Two new buildings will enable Covenant House Vancouver to provide even more to Vancouver's youth:

- Eliminate turn-aways of male, female and transgendered youth
- Provide specialized assistance to girls and young women
- Increase educational programming

- Support transitional and after-care programs
- Deliver mental health support and health services
- Enhance substance misuse services
- Allow for badly needed recreational areas
- Provide new apartments for the ROP transitional living program on Pender Street

## **DESIGN RATIONALE**

### **Description of Program**

The main and second floors of 530 Drake will house the Drop In Program. On the main floor will be the reception and intake room, a lounge which will include a servery and dining area, washrooms, and office/meeting spaces. The second floor will have office/meeting spaces, a multipurpose space, showers and laundry facilities for youth, and a clothing room where youth can get additional clothing. There will also be a small health clinic for visiting physicians. Youth coming to the Drop In Program will be known to staff.

Once the adjacent property at 575 Drake is complete, the third and fourth floors at 530 will be used for a new program called Sanctuary. This program is intended for youth who are in precarious situations: in danger on the street, leaving the streets but not yet ready or able to decide on a plan for change, or leaving the Crisis Program without a safe next step. Youth who have been asked to leave the Crisis Program because of unacceptable or disruptive behaviour can stay in the Sanctuary Program while they sort out their issues. Without the Sanctuary Program, these youths would be discharged directly to the street. Each Sanctuary floor will have seven single occupancy rooms complete with washrooms. The remainder of the floor will include a lounge, dining/server area, and staff areas. There will be a balcony facing Drake Street on each Sanctuary floor. Until the larger building at 575 Drake is complete, it is proposed that the third and fourth floors be used to accommodate 28 youth in the Crisis Program (double occupancy).

The fifth floor will house administration offices for Covenant House Vancouver. The basement will consist of service areas: mechanical and electrical services spaces as well as storage. The roof will have some mechanical equipment (outdoor and enclosed) and some green roof area but no patio or program space. No on-site parking is proposed.

### **Site Context**

The site is located at the intersection of Seymour and Drake, at the north end of the Seymour off-ramp of the Granville Street Bridge in the New Yaletown area of the Downtown South District. The site has an existing three storey wood frame building which was built around 1990 and is currently used by the Immigrant Services Society. ISS will be moving into a new building in the summer of 2016.

Directly to the south of 530 Drake is a 25' lot with a two storey commercial building currently used by a yoga studio and a marijuana dispensary. Next to that is the 11 storey Karis Place building which is one of the 14 City owned sites used for the Provincial Homelessness Initiative Program. Across the lane is a two storey office building and ambulance station. Across Seymour Street is a 14 storey rental apartment building.

### **Pedestrian Realm**

Redevelopment of the site will allow for the provision of a streetscape design in keeping with the New Yaletown requirements of the Downtown South Goals and Policies. Currently there is no setback and no trees along the Drake Street side of the site. When completed, the site will have a 12' setback along Drake Street that will include a double row of trees, paving features and planting.

### **Setbacks**

The 12' setbacks proposed along Drake and Seymour Streets meet the Downtown South Guidelines. In addition, there is a 5' road dedication along Seymour Street. There are no side yard or rear yard setbacks required for the proposed height of the building. The required setbacks result in 194.5sm (2086sf) for undevelopable footprint.

### **Density**

The proposed new building area of 1699.77sm (18,296sf) results in an FSR of 3.05 which is above the allowable 3.0 FSR prior to rezoning. The program will be 100% Institutional-Social Services with is above the allowable 1.0 FSR for Institutional Use.

### **Height**

The building is proposed to be five storeys high with a height of 19.944m (65'-5") to the top of the higher roof parapet. At the roof level, there is a stairwell providing access to the roof top mechanical equipment and an enclosure for equipment. The height of this roof is 21.519m (70'-7") which is slightly over the allowable 70' height limit.

### **Form and Character**

Although separate buildings with different programs, Covenant House Vancouver wants the two buildings (530 Drake and 575 Drake) to have a common design language so that they are easily identifiable as part of a whole. There will be materials and elements in common to both buildings, but the size of footprint, height and setback conditions will differentiate the buildings.

For the building at 530 Drake, a rich palette of durable materials is proposed. These include metal and HPL composite panels, modular cementitious cladding, curtain wall framing and window walls. Scale is mitigated by the extension of a frame on the second floor which acts as a canopy on the west and north facades. The building will have essentially the same floor plate on all levels, and the amount of glazing on each floor will change depending on the program.

Regards,



Wanda Felt, Architect AIBC, LEED<sup>AP</sup>  
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