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DESIGN RATIONALE: DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION: 2001 BEACH AVENUE, VANCOUVER, BC.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to renovate and seismically upgrade an existing non-conforming pre-1974 concrete residential rental tower located at 2001 Beach Avenue. Additionally we are proposing to introduce a below grade automated parking system located in the exterior sideyard to bring the building in conformance with the city of Vancouver parking by-law.

We are proposing several alterations to the floor layouts to facilitate the modernization of the elevator system, to bring exiting in conformance with the current VBBL, to improve unit liveability, to improve building amenities and to improve the interface with the public realm.

We are proposing to consolidate four penthouse level units to create a single large two-level penthouse unit. In conformance the zero rate of change policy, three units are being proposed on the upper main level to offset both in number and typology the units being lost for penthouse consolidation. As the existing parking on this level occurs above base surface, it is included in FSR calculations and therefor no change in density results. This has been confirmed in correspondence with Assistant Director Anita Molaro and Senior Planner Tim Potter.

In order to improve livability through views and natural daylighting, we are proposing to introduce several new glazing openings as well as increasing the opening sizes of existing openings. This, combined with the existing poor seismic capacity of the extant building structure necessitates the introduction structural intervention. To this end, we are proposing to introduce an exterior structural exoskeleton on the southeast and northeast corners of the building. The specifics of the exoskeleton design will be elaborated upon in later sections.

Additionally to improve the livability of the units, we are proposing to introduce balconies to create private outdoor space for all units in conformance with city policies. Furthermore, we are proposing to create a new at grade interior/exterior amenity space with southern exposure for the enjoyment of all building residents.

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Neighbourhood Character

The West End is a high density, mature residential community with several architectural eras being strongly represented in the eclectic form of development in place. The area's compactness and its proximity to English Bay, especially in the case of this lot, gives it a strong pedestrian orientation. Its pleasant atmosphere makes walking through the West End an enjoyable experience. Although the overall character of the neighbourhood is set, there is room for change.

Our approach to this project has been to respect the neighbourhood character while modernizing the exterior. Modern cladding materials and practices are paired with the extant building massing and building setbacks to achieve a harmonious union. The introduction of light steel balconies provide articulation and visual interest to an unremarkable existing façade, while the inclusion of the vertical living wall screens provide visual privacy as well as creating soft vertical edges to the building in reference the nearby trees of Stanley park.

Likewise, the design of the aforementioned exoskeleton was treated as an opportunity to referentially enhance the neighbourhood both in regards to proximities and history. The building's juxtaposition to English Bay is expressed through the form of the structural reinforcement. We intended the form to be a vertical expression of water while whimsically invoking design motifs contemporary with the original date of construction.

Street + Building Character

The character of the streets contributes significantly to the West End's image. The mature street trees and lush landscaping of the front yards are major elements in creating the character. In our opinion, the existing landscaping and public realm interface is minimal at best and wanton at worst. We have in collaboration PWL partnership worked quite diligently to ameliorate the landscape and public realm interface. Included in the Landscape plans prepared by PWL Partnership are more detailed explanation of the approach to landscape design.

Context has a strong influence on street character. The relationships to existing, buildings, parks, commercial areas, neighbourhood edges and main traffic arteries all contribute to street character. As mentioned above, our approach to the architecture has been to allegorically reference both the ocean of English bay as well as the vertical evergreen trees of Stanley Park. We believe that this attitude has resulted in a redevelopment that responds to the pedestrian experience and augments the iconic procession entering Stanley Park.

Orientation

As this project is the renovation of an existing non-conforming building, there is little that can be done to alter the existing siting and massing. However, we have wherever possible to enhance the existing massing through the introduction of transparent components to replace

opaque elements as well as the articulation and softening of the façade to replace blank façades.

Views

Views of Stanley Park, English Bay, Coal Harbour, The North Shore Mountains and Downtown are important amenities for the West End. As a result view impact can be a very contentious issue. As we are not altering the existing massing of the building, we believe that the proposed work does not result in any adverse affects to neighbouring property views. The proposed project does however significantly improve the views and the access to views for the residents of the building.

Topography

The topography of the West End results in many sloping sites and this site is an example of that. The site slopes approximately nine feet (9'0") east to west along Chilco Street. We are not proposing any significant alterations to grade and the few retaining walls that are proposed are low and terraced. The existing building takes advantage of the sloping site by providing two parking entries with crossings on opposing exposures. We are proposing to retain the crossing locations. Additionally, we are proposing to retain the existing entry which is located at the lower end of the site thereby eliminating concerns of a "pit"-like entry condition.

Light and Ventilation

Natural light and ventilation are essential to residential livability. This was a strong design driver in our redesign of this building. The existing units suffer from wasted opportunities in regards to both. In our upgrading of the façade we have increased the size, access to and operation of existing openings as well as introducing several new large openings on flanking elevations. This provides the opportunity for natural cross ventilation while significantly improving the amount of natural light provided to all rooms of all untis.

Privacy

In a high density area such as the West End, privacy in highly valued. Although this is not a new development we were cognizant that the introduction of new and amelioration existing of façade transparency noted above, as well as the introduction of new outdoor spaces could result in the degradation of neighbouring property privacy. To address these concerns we have proposed living wall screens at strategic locations along the façades to provide soft, natural privacy screening.

Safety and Security

Safety is a component of livability. Although we are not proposing any significant alterations to the lobby or parking access points we have ensured that both are visible from the street. In the case of the of the new amenity area, we have utilized low planting and retaining walls to define edges while retaining visual connection for casual surveillance. We have also ensured that sufficient lighting is provided to create a safer night-time environment.

Access the Circulation

Traditionally, access to buildings in the West End has been from a single, prominent entrance with apartments providing access from a central lobby. Indeed this is the case in the existing building. We are proposing to maintain this arrangement with improvements to further formalize the entry. We are proposing the introduction of shallow reflecting pools either side of the entry path in order the further define the entry and as a further reference to the water of English Bay.

Materials

The existing building has a somewhat brutalism façade, dominated by concrete, typical to the mid-century era in which it was created. We are proposing the introduction of highly durable, contemporary cladding materials such as glass, anodize metal, cementitious panel and curtain wall glazing.

Conclusion

We believe that the proposed project represents a significant improvement in all aspects of the existing building both aesthetically and in regards to life safety. We look forward to receiving the city of Vancouver's response to our submission.

Regards,

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