

K E N G O K U M A & A S S O C I A T E S

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City of Vancouver

453 West 12th Avenue,

Vancouver, BC. V5Y 1V4

Attention: Ms. Karen Hoese, Senior Rezoning Planner

Dear Karen,

Re: 1550 Alberni Street – REZONING APPLICATION: Design Rationale

The design of 1550 Alberni Street is inspired by its surroundings. In this context, we believe that the tower's organic response to the surroundings and the evocative appeal of Japanese sensibilities will strongly resonate with the values of the people of Vancouver.

A simple extrusion of the constricted site is strategically "carved" to recede the volume from its neighboring towers on Alberni Street and to maximize its exposure to English Bay to the south. The architecture is therefore shaped by its environment, much in the same way an iceberg is sculpted by its relation to the sun, the climate and the ocean currents.

From further afar, the carving creates curious perceptual effects. At one moment the building appears to taper to a minimal floorplate; at another it presents a stunning cantilever; and yet another it envelops the street. This ephemeral quality is enhanced by the abstract façade, which in contrast to the sensual balconies, constantly renews the onlookers' perception from different points in the city.

On the ground, the tower is mediated by a Japanese garden. The plinth is carved to allow Alberni Street and Cardero Street to flow into the lobby and the swimming pool. The resulting dome for the lobby shelters the otherwise exterior Japanese garden open to the elements which aspires to become a work of art with "atmospheric" qualities. The garden can be transformative accommodating various uses to enhance the public realm. Its ceiling – clad in wood – is a remarkable backdrop to Alberni Street as interest to passerbys. Along Cardero Street, the tree-lined retail is similarly characterized by the overhanging dome of the swimming pool above. Materially, the abundance of timber in British Columbia provides a strong theme to the project. The deep balconies along the carved interface are expressed ideally in wood, offering a communal quality to the façade. As wood is always an invaluable material to our work, this project provides an apt opportunity to enhance its possibilities in high-rise applications.

1550 Alberni Street will be our first project in Canada, and our first tower in North America. We are truly privileged to contribute to the skyline of Vancouver – a city whose attitude toward sustainability and multiculturalism is admirably expressed in the prevalence of nature and the eclectic mix of buildings.

Sincerely yours,



Kengo Kuma

July 15, 2015