

Old Strathcona Mixed Use Development Proposal

The Cedar Waxwing Group is looking to “infill” the former CPR lands north of Whyte Avenue between Gateway Boulevard and 102nd Street to the southern edge of 84th Avenue. The concept envisions developing several distinct elements in this proposal some of which are visually described employing accompanied coloured renderings.

First and foremost, we look to celebrate the historic railroad significance in Strathcona and in the typical agricultural town throughout the prairies. We do this by replicating the iconic grain elevator structures that are now disappearing but were the focal-point mainstay that identified agrarian output and connected farm to the vast railway transportation network that ferried grain crops to ports and to world markets. We are not, however, building grain elevators. Instead, we are using this archetypal form to develop high-end condominiums between 83rd Avenue and 84th Avenue, and a boutique hotel fronting Whyte Avenue and running along the western edge of 102nd Street.

The eight-storey, massed structures will have some very unique features. Constructed, from a structural perspective, entirely from Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) that has a centre rock-wool core -- prevents fire spread between units, completely deadens noise both vertically and horizontally, and enables extremely high r-value insulating performance. Exterior, remote-controlled, vertically louvered, insulated shutters can be adjusted to control both sun and view angles, and can be closed completely to shutter both light and extreme temperatures. Through-the-wall VRF (Variable Refrigerant Flow) heating and ventilating systems provide individual control on a suite by suite basis.

The CLT structure is exposed on interior walls and ceilings giving a warm, wood finish sensibility. Kitchen and bathroom areas employ translucent luminous molded ceilings that conceal fire sprinkler systems, plumbing system piping, and lighting. Floors are finished in various styles and colours of cork. The CLT composition enables the entire structure to be modularly built in factory-controlled precision and delivered to site for exceptionally fast building erection times.

The Boutique Hotel, sporting 40 very unique rooms (some of which are two-storey loft-style suites) have CNC (Computer Numerical Control)-fashioned wall murals -- permanent art embedded in the very wall finish. The ground floor of the hotel features a dinner theatre with a holographic stage that is designed to bring back early twentieth century vaudeville-style entertainment, burlesque comedy and song and dance. Live entertainers will mix with more ethereal forms, keeping the audience guessing as to which is real and which is illusion.

The Boutique hotel will also form the hub for three Edwardian-style micro-hotel outposts disbursed through the residential community of Strathcona, some several blocks distant,

set off in various directions. The Cedar Waxwing Group is currently seeking corner lots suitable for these developments. The intent is to design structures true to the early “square” form prevalent in original Strathcona housing types. Each developed as 3-storey, residential-form structures with a “live-in” basement suite for a maid and a butler and guest suites on the second and third floors suitable for 8 double-occupancy hotel visitors. A chef and chef’s assistant bring custom talents for breakfast, lunch and dinner events. A horse-drawn Hanson Cab ferries guests back and forth to the Boutique Hotel from each of the Edwardian structures.

Adjacent to the elevator-like structures, the condominiums and boutique hotel, a connected high-ceiling retail centre is broken into two structures, one north of Whyte Avenue on the east side of Gateway Boulevard, the other immediately north of 83rd Avenue. Both are enclosed structures that house tent-like kiosks to provide a panoply of gift boutiques. Stairs and a glass elevator take shoppers to an ornamental roof garden, a setting for acoustic entertainment and, alternatively, scheduled oratory.

Splitting the roof garden in two, an elevated trestle with an enclosed glass roof extends the streetcar line that currently runs from the Grandin Station adjacent to the Provincial Government precinct to the north end of the Farmer’s Market in Old Strathcona. The extension envisions a long trestle, designed to emulate the character of the High Level Bridge, that carries the streetcars over 105th Street, over 104th Street, over Gateway Boulevard, over 83rd Avenue and over Whyte Avenue to a new terminus on the CPR lands south of Whyte Avenue. We have a proposal into the City that envisions the line being extended all the way south to 68th Avenue, then east to Mill Creek, then bending north through the creek (as per the original rail course), hooking up to the new LRT line (recently awarded) at the Muttart Conservatory. This proposal would afford Strathcona a vested interest in public transportation that also has a tourist bent. We would change the propulsion system from an overhead electrical line to a between-the-tracks LSM (Linear Synchronous Motor) system (more efficient).

Splitting the roof gardens linearly, enables a private garden for Condominium owners and hotel guests. A transit stop would be located in both building sections.

Beneath the entire development, a 3,000-car, 3-level automated parking garage would be developed with ingress and egress afforded at 83rd Avenue between Gateway Boulevard and 102nd Street. 83rd Avenue at this location would be closed to through traffic. The parking would be free for use to the development, to the Farmer’s Market, and to all of Strathcona businesses and residents. Therefore there would be no loss of parking from the surface lots presently serving the community.

While this scheme has been presented to both the Old Strathcona Foundation and to the Old Strathcona Business Association, specifically to Murray Davidson, Executive Director, and to Karen Tabor of the Old Strathcona Foundation, procedure is being held up until the land ownership is sorted out between the CPR and the City.

