CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER

Woodlands Centre Block Tower Land Use Study



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Background Context



In 2009 New Westminster City Council directed that three studies be undertaken for the structure known as the 'Tower' at the former Centre Block, Woodlands, located at 22 East Royal Avenue:

- ***Land Use Study***
- ***Seismic/Structural Feasibility Study***
- ***Financial Feasibility Study***

This report forms the final Land Use Study Report for the Tower. The Seismic/Structural Feasibility Study and Financial Feasibility Study have been submitted under separate cover as stand alone reports. However all three studies form an integrated suite of investigation and reference each other.

The Tower (built 1889) is all that remains of the Centre Block (begun 1878), the oldest and most significant structure that formed an integral part of the former Woodlands provincial mental asylum. The Tower was the main entry pavilion to the Centre Block. Over the years, the facility expanded and its name was changed several times: originally the 'Lunatic Asylum', it became the 'Public Hospital for the Insane' in 1897, 'The Woodlands School' in 1950, and 'Woodlands' in 1974.

The Woodlands facility was decommissioned in stages over a period of time, finally closing in the late 1990s. BCBC, the provincial crown corporation responsible for disposing of or developing provincial property, then developed a master plan for the site. The Woodlands site was rezoned in 2002 to facilitate the entire property being redeveloped as a planned residential community. The site was subsequently purchased by the Onni Group of Companies in early 2004. Since then much of the site has been redeveloped with multi-family residential housing, including several buildings to the north, west and east of the former Centre Block. Development continues.

As part of a comprehensive development plan for the Woodlands site, the Centre Block, including the Tower, had been slated for conservation and adaptive re-use, in recognition of its significant heritage value and historical association with the Woodlands facility.

In July 2008, a series of fires effectively destroyed the Centre Block with the exception of the Tower. The developer now intends to develop new market residential buildings adjacent to the Tower. While the exact disposition and location of such future development has not yet been finalized by the developer or approved by the City, for the purposes of this Land Use Study the consultants were advised by City staff to assume a 15 m (50 ft.) horizontal separation distance between the Tower and any new development. This separation distance will allow the Tower to be accessed and function as a stand-alone public amenity/facility.

Woodlands is an integral part of New Westminster's early history as the first capital of British Columbia. The Woodlands site has a charged history for many people and arouses strong emotions in former residents and health workers alike. Given that the Tower is all that remains of the original main building, there has been a vigorous debate about what to do with it. Some have advocated that it be demolished. Others advocate that it should be left as a memorial 'Ruin', a reminder of the site's history as a mental asylum and home to many former residents. Others have advocated the idea of a reflective memorial 'Garden' being incorporated into the shell of the Tower, with the roof, interior walls and possibly upper sections removed. Still others would prefer to see the Tower saved, adapted and re-used for a purpose that benefits former residents and/or the broader community.

This Land Use Study has examined all three options, based on recent Council direction:

- ***Scenario 1 – Memorial Ruin***
- ***Scenario 2 – Walled Community/Reflective Garden***
- ***Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community***

Each of these scenarios involves retaining the existing structure of the Tower to a lesser or greater degree, and part of the purpose of these studies is to determine the site planning implications and structural/seismic and financial feasibility of these different scenarios. This work has resulted in a greater understanding of how the scenarios proposed for the Tower would look like and operate on the site, as well as an understanding of the structural/seismic, capital and potential operating costs associated with each of the three scenarios. Please refer to the separate **Seismic/ Structural Feasibility Study Report** (by Wicke Herfst Maver Consulting Inc.) and **Financial Feasibility Study Report** (by the BTY Group) for the conclusions of those two studies.

These three reports together help to provide a context and content for more community consultation by the City and – ultimately – a decision by Council and the landowner as to the future of the Tower.

Building Condition

The Tower is a three-storey plus basement structure that was constructed as the entry pavilion to the Centre Block. The building was constructed in the late 1880s, and consists of a wood-framed roof and floors on mostly triple-wythe unreinforced brick walls bearing directly on 2 ft. wide granite and sandstone rubble basement walls. The architectural style has been described as “a picturesque Italianate Style” (Woodlands Re-zoning Heritage Assessment, April 2002, by McGinn Engineering & Preservation Ltd.). The building had “flourishes of Victorian ornamentation on the tower and adjoining two-storey veranda…and extensive use of an applied moulded window hood…In 1930 the exterior brick walls were covered in stucco…the tower cut down approximately fifteen feet, and all the wood frame ornamental façade elements…including the veranda and porch entry removed. The brick facades were given a cementitious stucco coating. A new Art Deco, classically inspired, concrete entry with piers was installed at the tower entry…The entry was further altered in the 1960s with a new entry pavilion.” (op cit)

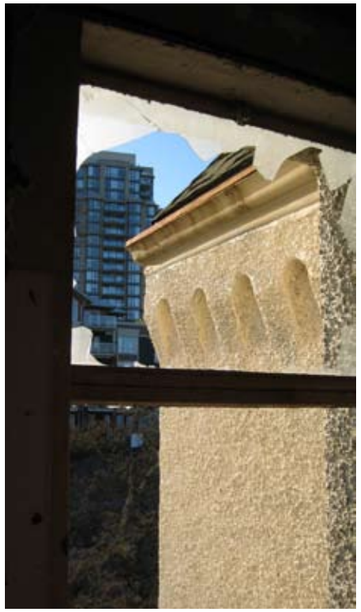
Most of the Tower is still covered in stucco however there are some areas where the stucco has been removed revealing the exposed original brickwork. More recently, some of the exposed brickwork and stucco has begun to spall and fail. Previous studies concluded that the exposed brickwork does not meet current BC Building Code standards for weathering.

The 1960s era entry pavilion has been demolished, leaving a partially ruined double-facing concrete stair leading up to the entrance doorway.

The Tower used to be attached to the Centre Block to the immediate north. With the fire and subsequent demolition of the rest of the Centre Block in 2008, the rear north edge of the Tower element has been left open and exposed to the elements. Most of the windows have been destroyed, and some windows have been bricked up. The front door has been removed. The interior of the Tower is in a state of advanced destruction, with all interior walls reduced to the studs and almost all internal finishes and fixtures destroyed. The original spiral wooden stairway to the second floor is largely intact, although it too has suffered damage. It does not meet current BC Building Code requirements for egress. There is currently no access to the third floor as this was provided via the now demolished Centre Block. The roof appears to be relatively intact although visual inspection was limited to observation from the adjacent grounds.

The Tower ground floor is approximately four feet above adjacent finished grade, and is reached via a pair of opposed external concrete stairs on the south façade of the building. There is no handicapped access. The original surrounding landscape has been largely removed and cleared, with the exception of one nearby mature tree to the immediate west of the Tower. The original Centre Black has been entirely demolished, leaving an excavated area to a depth of approximately 4-5 ft. to the immediate north of the Tower element. Water gathers in this depressed area. The grand sloping lawn and mature specimen trees to the south of the Tower are relatively intact, providing a panoramic view down to the Fraser River and mountains to the south.











Site Planning Approach

A Conceptual Site Plan is illustrated here. This Site Plan applies to all three scenarios.

As noted previously, this study has assumed a separation distance of approximately 15 m (50 ft.) between the Tower and any new adjacent residential development. This separation distance will allow the Tower to be accessed on all sides and to function as a stand-alone public amenity/facility, and also to be viewed as a discrete historical structure in the surrounding landscape. It is recognised that the landowner is proposing additional development in the surrounding area. However, it is not known at this time exactly where such adjacent development will be proposed or approved. Therefore the Conceptual Site Plan does not identify any proposed adjacent development. Once a Development Site Plan has been developed and received approval, this Conceptual Site Plan will need to be adjusted as necessary and integrated with the landowner's Development Site Plan.

The consultants were provided with a Landscape/Site Plan dated April 2004, prepared for the landowner by Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architects. This plan indicates a new concrete walkway linking the gateway in the restored heritage wall along Columbia Street up to a series of proposed pathways that curve around the south side of the Tower and former Centre Block. The pathways provide access to the Tower entrance on the south façade. There is a proposed Lookout to the south of the Tower, overlooking the Fraser River.

The drawing notes that the "Future Centre Block Development Landscape to be designed to fit with Front Lawn" and "Designs to depend on building design requirements". Thus the final site plan/landscape design will be subject to the final site planning for this part of the site.

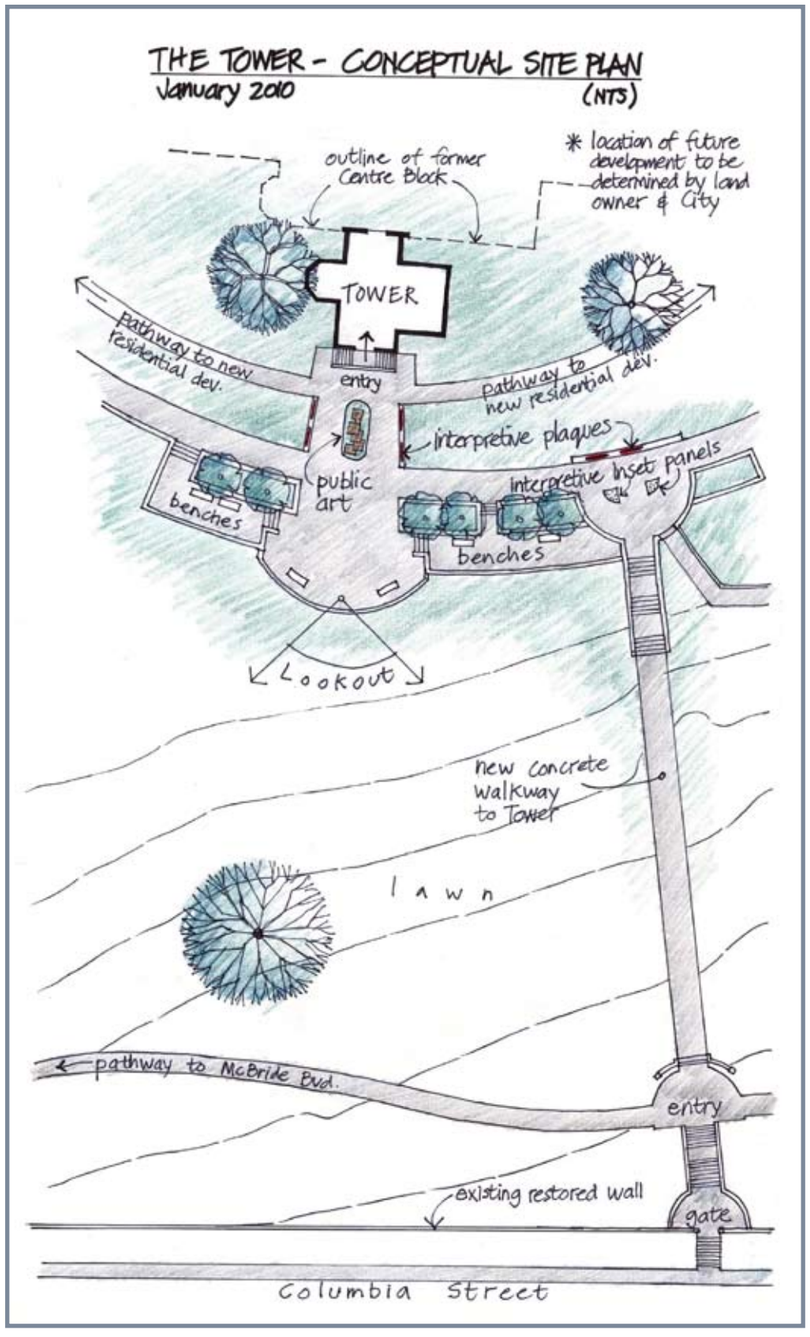
Building on this Landscape/Site Plan, the proposed site planning approach is to incorporate the pathways that remain into the site plan for the Tower, in all three scenarios. The pathway entrance to the Tower approaches from the south. There is an opportunity to introduce vertical interpretive panels along this route, as well as possible public artworks, that help to commemorate and reflect on the history of the site. The interpretive panels could be mounted on reconstructed fragments of brick walls that re-use some of the original brickwork that has been stockpiled after demolition of the Centre Block. There is also an opportunity to inset interpretive/artwork panels into the horizontal pathway surface itself, thus providing another venue for commemoration and historical interpretation of the site.

There is an opportunity to expand the interpretive and commemorative aspects of the landscaping by recalling the outline and plan of the former Centre Block to the north, in the form of various landscape elements such as low retaining/seating walls, stone building footprint outlines, hedges, pathways, outdoor "rooms", planting beds, hedgerows, etc. This approach could be accommodated in all three scenarios.

Pathways, stairways and entrance areas around the Tower should be illuminated with pedestrian lighting. The exterior of the Tower could also be lit up with accent up-lighting that would help to illuminate the Tower at night and create a focal point of interest.

It is assumed for the purpose of this study that any parking requirements generated by any of the three proposed scenarios will be accommodated in the parking facilities proposed by the land developer as part of the nearby residential development.

It is assumed for the purpose of this study that the principal pathway to the south of the Tower could provide the required emergency vehicle access to the Tower. In Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use as a Community Facility, this would be the fronting "street" to the building for purposes of fire fighting.



Scenario 1 - Ruin

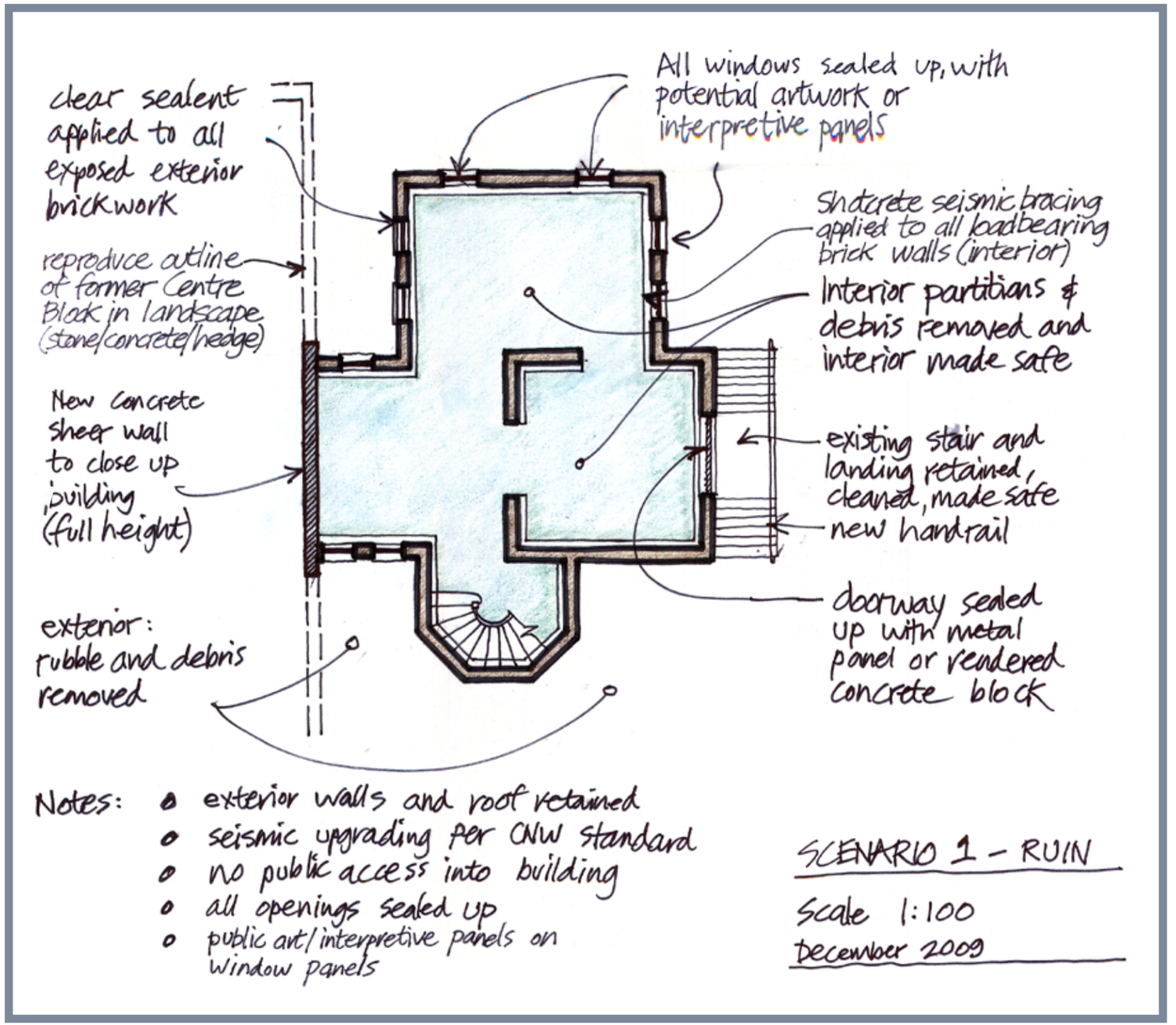
This scenario is described as follows in the City's Terms of Reference:

a) The building will be closed off with no access or occupancy.
b) The currently exposed north wall will be replaced with material using a design that is similar to and sympathetic to the existing structure, without implying that the new wall is historic.
c) The remaining exterior of the building will be cleaned according to proper heritage conservation standards, but the exterior material will not be repaired (i.e., the exposed brick will be weather-proofed with a clear sealant).
d) The interior spaces will be cleaned of debris, but otherwise left as is.

Scenario 1 is illustrated in the following plan and 3D renderings. Scenario 1 is envisaged as a commemorative "ruin" that recalls the history and heritage of the former Woodlands site, and acts as a memorial structure in the landscape. In this scenario the building is sealed up and made safe, with no public access into the interior.

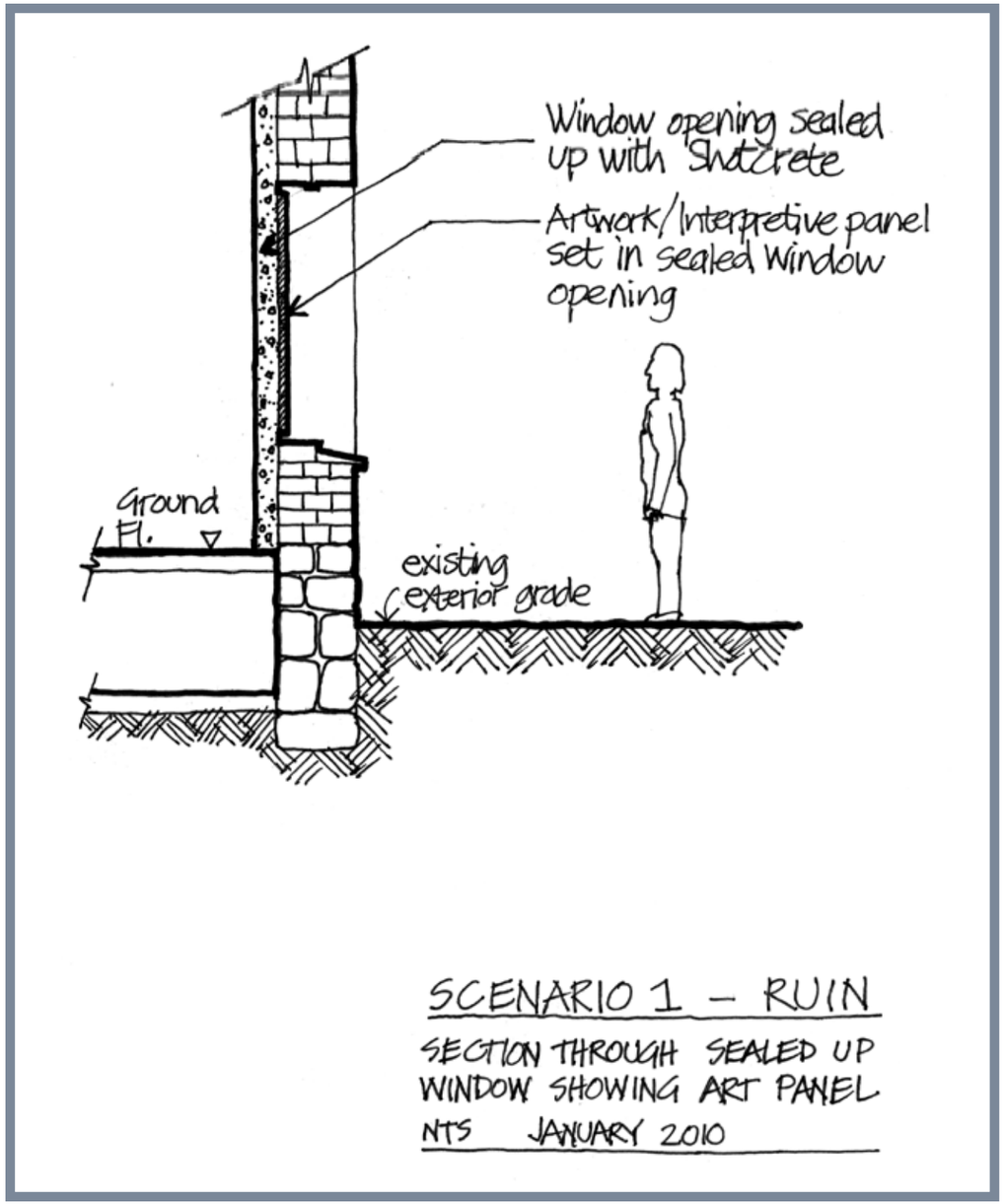
The proposed approach for Scenario 1 includes the following elements:

- All exterior walls and roof retained
- Seismic upgrading as per City of New Westminster requirements (see separate Seismic/Structural Feasibility Report for details)
- No public access to interior of building
- All window and door openings sealed up
- Opportunity for public art and/or interpretive panels in sealed window/door openings
- A new full height concrete sheer wall seals up the north edge of the building, with opportunity for artwork and/or interpretive material on the wall
- Shotcrete seismic bracing applied to all load-bearing brick walls on the interior (see separate Seismic/Structural Feasibility Report for details)
- Interior partitions and loose debris removed and interior made safe
- Existing concrete entry stair and landing repaired, made safe with new handrail
- Exterior rubble and debris removed and surrounding area landscaped per Site Plan
- Clear sealant applied to all exposed exterior brickwork
- Opportunity to recall the outline and plan of the former Centre Block to the north, in the form of landscape elements such as low retaining/seating walls, stone building footprint outlines, hedges, pathways, outdoor "rooms", planting beds, hedgerows, etc.
- It allows for a phased development scenario.



Scenario 1 - Ruin

The Tower 'Ruin' scenario offers an opportunity for the exterior of the building to accommodate artwork and/or interpretive material that tells the story of the original site and building. For example, the sealed up window openings could house artwork designs or interpretive panels, to be viewed by the public from the outside of the building, as illustrated in this conceptual cross section. The specific content and design of the artwork and/or interpretive material is subject to further consultation process.



Scenario 1 - Ruin



View From South Lawn of the Tower in Landscape

Scenario 1 - Ruin



View From Pathway Towards Tower

Scenario 1 - Ruin



Aerial View

Scenario 1 - Ruin



View of North Wall (potential location for public art and/or interpretation)

Scenario 2 - Walled Community/Reflective Garden

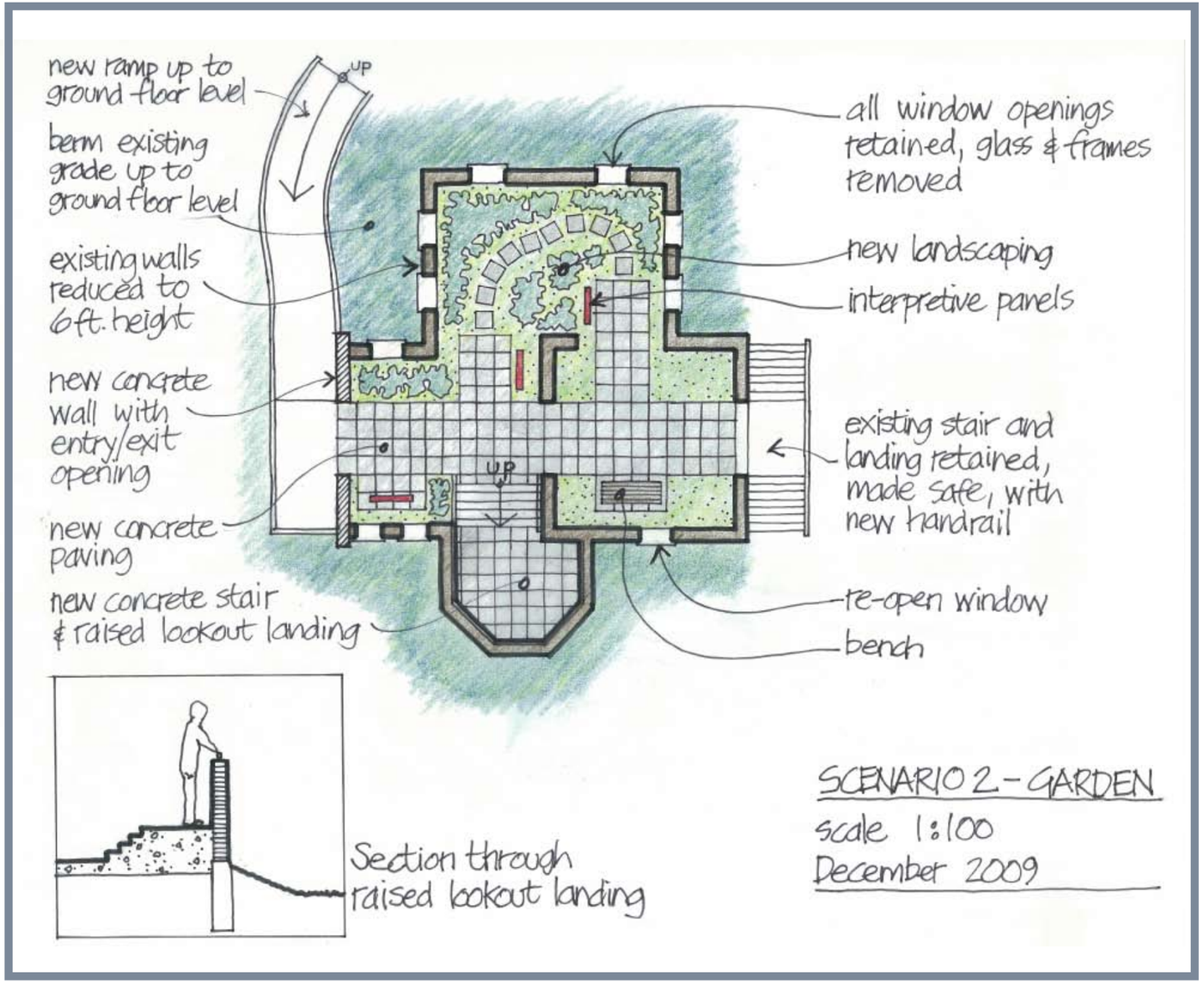
This scenario is described as follows in the City's Terms of Reference:

a) The building will have the roof and possibly the top section removed.
b) Window openings will be retained, but without glazing or other coverings.
c) Most or all of the interior demising walls will be removed in whole or in part.
d) The interior second and third floor levels will be removed.
e) The floor level will be cleared and made level.
f) The spiral staircase will be retained but closed off, or consideration will be given to use of the spiral staircase to a small viewing platform.
g) Planting areas and pathways will be created within the walls.
h) The remaining exterior of the building will be cleaned according to proper heritage conservation standards, with some repair work and replacement of lost damaged elements; but the exposed brick will be retained as is and weather-proofed with a clear sealant.

Scenario 2 is illustrated in the following plan and 3D renderings. Scenario 2 is envisaged as a walled garden that uses the existing exterior walls of the Tower to define and contain a reflective garden. The walls are reduced in height to six feet, and a landscaped garden and promenade is introduced into the interior of the former building.

The proposed approach for Scenario 2 includes the following elements:

- Existing structure demolished down to 6 ft above existing ground floor
- All load-bearing walls retained up to height of 6 ft. above existing ground floor
- No seismic upgrading required (see separate Seismic/Structural Feasibility Report for details)
- Existing stair and landing retained, repaired, made safe with new handrail
- All window openings retained, frames and glass removed, made safe
- New 6 ft. high concrete wall on north edge of building, with entry/exit opening
- Remove and replace existing ground floor with built-up grade, paving, landscaping, etc.
- New concrete paving route through interior
- Interpretive panels located at appropriate locations along pathway route
- Install bench in front lobby area
- New concrete stair and raised Lookout platform in former stair alcove
- Berm existing outside grade up to match ground floor level
- New concrete ramp/pathway on north side to provide handicapped access
- Include adequate pedestrian and accent lighting inside structure and on exterior



Scenario 2 - Walled Community/ Reflective Garden



View From South Lawn of the Walled Garden in Landscape

Scenario 2 - Walled Community/ Reflective Garden



View From Pathway Towards Walled Garden

Scenario 2 - Walled Community/ Reflective Garden



Aerial View

Scenario 2 - Walled Community/ Reflective Garden

12 ft. Height Wall Variant

Version 1: 6′ Height Walls



Version 2: 12′ Height Walls

In this variant of Scenario 2, the load bearing walls are reduced in height to a maximum of 6 ft. above existing ground floor, except for the four walls that define the entrance tower, which are reduced in height to a maximum of 12 ft. above existing ground floor. This creates a more dramatic, substantial presence in the landscape and is also more interesting from an architectural point of view. This also allows the front entry to become more of a portal to the functions inside the former building. However the increased wall height will require seismic/structural support, which will increase the construction costs.



Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community

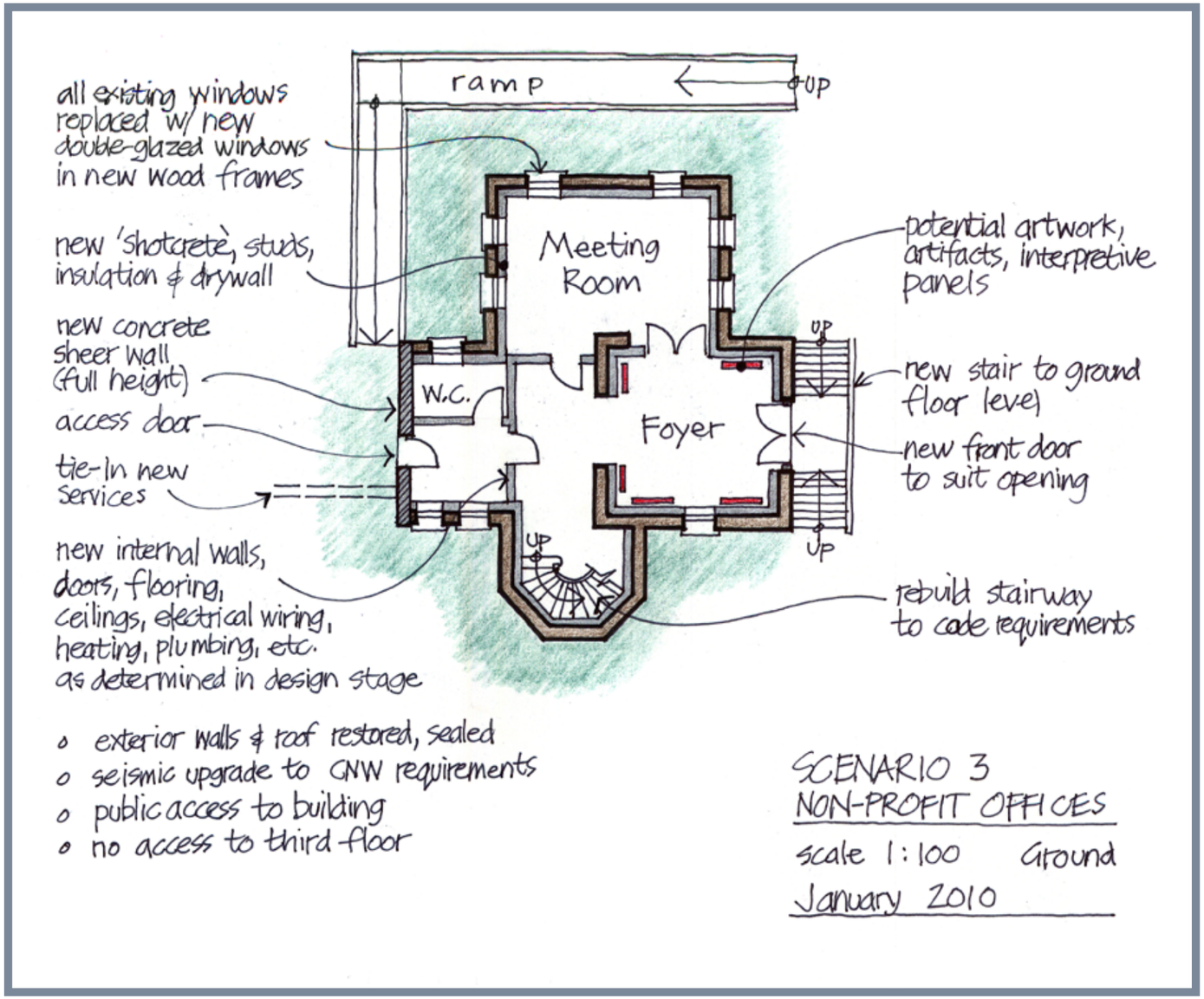
This scenario is described as follows in the City's Terms of Reference:

a) The building will be made usable for office/meeting space, such as for non-profit organizations, outreach or resource centres, artist studios, etc.
b) The currently exposed north wall will be replaced with material using a design that is similar to and sympathetic to the existing structure, without implying that the new wall is historic.
c) The remaining exterior of the building will be cleaned according to proper heritage conservation standards, with some repair work and replacement of lost/damaged elements; but the exposed brick will be retained as is and weather-proofed with a clear sealant.
d) The spiral staircase will be retained and repaired.
e) The second floor level may be closed off, used for storage only, or used as occupied space.

Scenario 3 is illustrated in the following plan and 3D renderings. Scenario 3 is envisaged as the existing Tower building being adapted for a use that benefits former residents of Woodlands and/or the community, most likely as meeting or non-profit office space. This building would help to tell the story of Woodlands, not just architecturally, but with regard to human history, with particular reference to former residents. This involves restoring and renovating the building to current code standards for such occupancy.

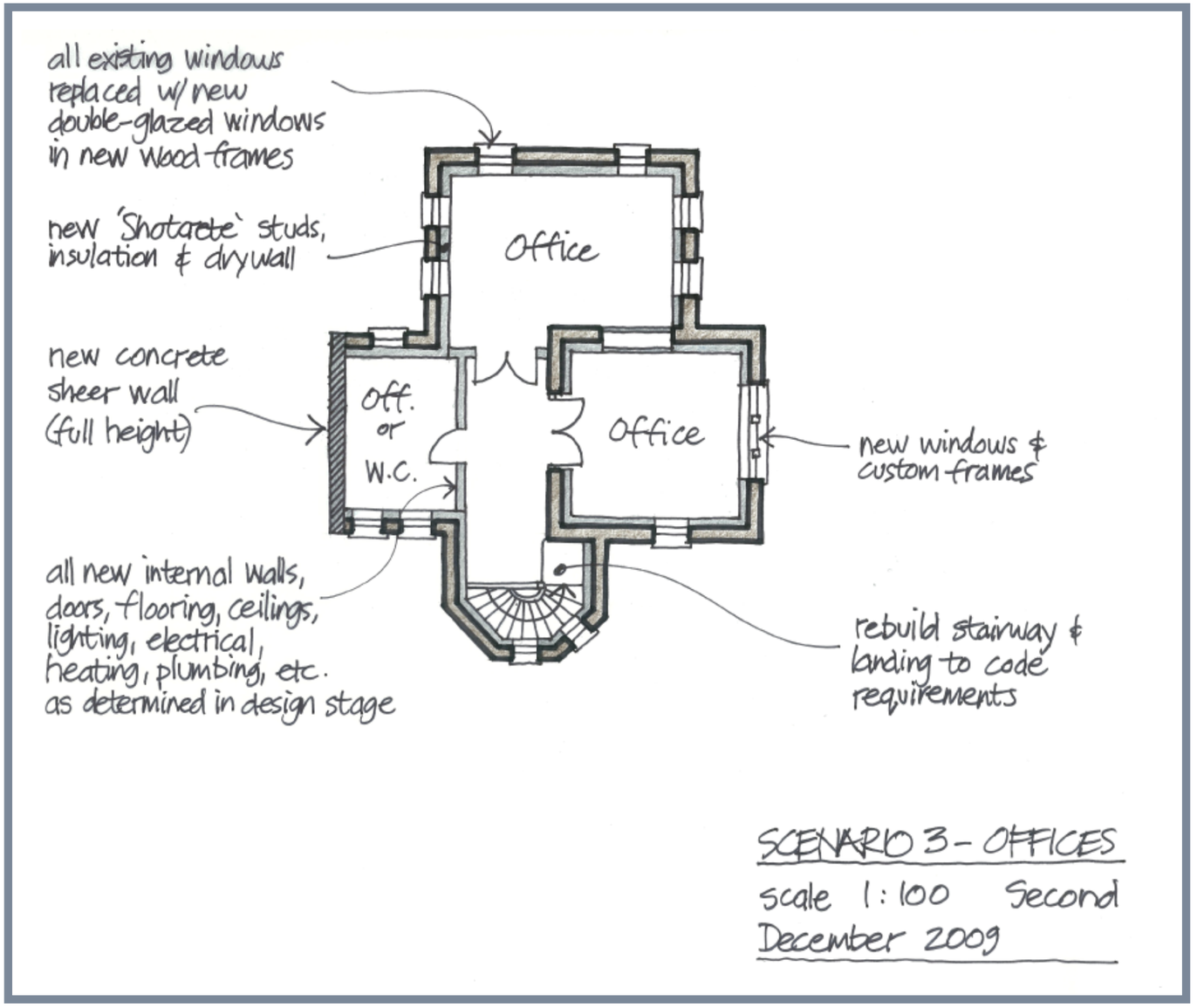
The proposed approach for Scenario 3 includes the following elements:

- Public access to building
- Renovate and restore ground and second floors for public (non-profit) use
- No access to third floor
- All exterior walls and roof restored, sealed, made safe
- Seismic upgrading as per City of New Westminster requirements (see separate Seismic/Structural Feasibility Report for details)
- All existing windows replaced with new wooden frames and double glazed windows
- All new internal walls, floors, doors, windows, electrical, lighting, heating, plumbing, etc. as determined in detailed design stage
- Shotcrete seismic bracing applied to all load-bearing brick walls on the interior (see separate Seismic/Structural Feasibility Report for details)
- New 2x4 stud walls, insulation, drywall on inside of shotcrete
- A new full height concrete sheer wall seals up the north edge of the building (includes windows and door)



Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community (cont)

- Handicapped access ramp up to door on north elevation
- New washroom
- Rebuild interior stairway and landing to current Building Code requirements
- New front entry stair
- New front door to suit existing opening
- Tie-in to new services (water, electricity, sewer, cable, etc.)
- Use portion of former basement for mechanical room, with external access
- Exterior rubble and debris removed and surrounding area landscaped per Site Plan
- Clear sealant applied to all exposed exterior brickwork
- Opportunity to recall the outline and plan of the former Centre Block to the north, in the form of landscape elements such as low retaining/ seating walls, stone building footprint outlines, hedges, pathways, outdoor "rooms", planting beds, hedgerows, etc.



Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community



View From South Lawn of the Tower in Landscape

Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community



View From Pathway Towards Tower

Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community



Aerial View

Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community



View of Tower from North

Scenario 3 – Adaptive Re-Use Benefiting Former Residents and/or the Community

New Glazed Wall Variant

In this variant of Scenario 3, the new full height concrete sheer wall sealing up the north edge of the building is replaced with a wall that has large glazed window areas, structurally supported with steel cross bracing on the interior. This will provide visitors with a view into the inside of the building and as well as provide more interest to the rear (north) façade. From an architectural perspective, it also clearly indicates what has been added to the heritage building, and allows the building to "open up" to the outside. However the increased wall permeability and extensive glazing will require additional seismic/structural support, which will increase the construction costs.





Views of Glazed North Wall