

Vancouver's Goh Ballet proposes 25-storey tower, with 315 student suites

Chan Hon Goh: 'Housing is a well-documented challenge.'



[Mike Howell](#)
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The Goh Ballet wants to expand its operations from its current two-storey building in Mount Pleasant by redeveloping the property to build a 25-storey tower. | Image courtesy Goh Ballet rezoning application document

The Goh Ballet has submitted a rezoning application to the City of Vancouver to expand its operations in Mount Pleasant by building a 25-storey tower that would include 315 dormitory-style apartments for students.

The design of the project incorporates the 1912 heritage building at East Eighth Avenue and Main Street that the Goh family purchased in 1984. The two-storey landmark building was originally used by the Royal Bank of Canada.

But Chan Hon Goh, general and artistic director of the Goh Ballet Academy and Youth Company Canada, said expansion is needed to accommodate more performance space, students and seismically upgrade the heritage building.

“We hope that with this redevelopment, we will be able to serve many more students [up to 344 within 315, dormitory-style self-contained residences] while also providing the necessary housing to accommodate them, in a city where housing is a well-documented challenge,” Goh said in an email.

The application provides more detail on expansion, saying the development would effectively double the academy’s operations, accommodating approximately 890 students annually compared to the current 450.

“This expansion will enable increased teacher employment, performance-hosting capabilities and financial support for dancers through scholarships and foundation initiatives,” the application said.



The Goh family bought the 1912 heritage building at East Eighth Avenue and Main Street in 1984. | Rendering courtesy Goh Ballet rezoning application

'Duration of their studies'

In Vancouver, there is a severe need for student rental housing, with universities experiencing housing wait lists up to 6,000 students long, translating in some cases to an 18-month wait time, according to the application.

“The proposed student housing will be entirely rental, available at market rates to students, staff and faculty for the duration of their studies,” the application said. “This will help Goh Ballet’s students find housing close to the academy, alleviating the pressure of having to compete with others in the market.”

The site falls within the Broadway Plan's boundaries and is a couple of blocks from the under-construction Mount Pleasant SkyTrain station. The subway is expected to open in 2027.

Such proximity to transit allows for a taller building on the academy's property.



West Vancouver resident Chan Hon Goh with a student at the Goh Ballet Academy in Mount Pleasant. | Photo courtesy Chan Hon Goh

'Aligns with our goals'

In June 2022, Goh raised concerns with city council over restrictions on adding density to the site, noting the academy might have to close or relocate. A recent change to city policy coupled with provincial government legislation related to transit-oriented areas has since alleviated her concerns.

"The City of Vancouver took a broad range of commentary into consideration and prescribed zoning for the Broadway corridor that aligns with our goals, with the result that many surrounding projects that are or will be contemplated under the Broadway Plan will be taller than what we are proposing," Goh said.

She said the city's general manager of planning at the time of the Broadway Plan's approval, "acknowledged our feedback and agreed that, given the unique characteristics of the project, additional density and height on this particular site could be considered."

The provincial government's transit-oriented areas policy applies to sites with 200 metres of transit stations and allows for towers of a minimum height of 20 storeys. Goh Ballet's application is for 25 storeys.

"In that context, I'm hopeful that our proposal will be met with enthusiasm," Goh said.

If approved by city council, Goh said the tower will be defined by two large-scale murals which could be developed to be part of the public art piece for the project, as well as circular portal windows and a "moongate" entry door.

"Because the design integrates the existing heritage building at grade that has already been part of its neighbourhood for many years, the project effortlessly blends with the current and future condition of Mount Pleasant," she said.

"The design further incorporates murals as a way of building on Mount Pleasant's tradition of transforming blank walls into vibrant public art, contributing to the neighbourhood's established mural culture."

Goh Ballet Academy Canada was founded in 1978 and today it is considered one of the world's leading ballet academies. Goh took over the family business in 2010 after a 21-year career as principal dancer for the National Ballet of Canada.

Goh said she expects the proposal will go to public hearing in 2026. Public feedback on the proposal is now being accepted via the city's website under the ["shape your city"](#) section.