

350-360 Douglas Street CALUC Letter

August 15, 2022

Hello Neighbours

We are pleased to convey our pre-application CALUC package for the proposed infill rental housing project on the property located at 350-360 Douglas Street. The property is located in the James Bay neighbourhood and is bounded by Toronto Street to the north, Douglas Street to the east, Avalon Road to the south and Huntington Place to the west. Located directly across from Beacon Hill Park and the South Park Family School playground, the site benefits from access to abundant open space and connected pedestrian, cyclist, and transit routes.

Current Development

The property is currently developed with two 13-storey residential rental apartment buildings, known as the Goodacre Towers, owned by Starlight and managed by Devon Properties. Much of the site is also developed with surface parking, providing 183 vehicle parking spaces.

Concept Planning

Starlight has engaged a team of planning and design professionals, led by independent Development Manager Mat McLash, to prepare a plan for an infill rental building. The idea of making more efficient use of the site has long been considered for the property, with a number of earlier development concepts prepared and presented to the community since 2017. Learning from these earlier concepts and the opportunities and constraints identified through ongoing community dialogue, the current proposal seeks to achieve an appropriately scaled, sited and contextual plan for the site.

Replacing Homes for Cars with Homes for People

The key concept for this infill development is the opportunity presented by relocating a significant amount of the existing surface parking to new underground parking, opening up a portion of the site for a new building. Effectively, we are displacing cars to create new homes for people, while not impacting or displacing any existing residents: a challenge often difficult to avoid when considering development in an urban context.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Early engagement with the James Bay Neighbourhood Association and City of Victoria planning staff identified key issues of consideration for the site, including:

- Minimize impacts on the traditional residential and heritage-designated neighbours to the south and west;
- Achieve a transition in scale from the 13-storey towers to the single-family residential setting;
- Help 'complete' and activate the Toronto Street frontage by filling in the gap in the streetscape with a new building that can 'knit' the neighbourhood back together;
- Design a new building to be highly street and pedestrian-oriented;
- Address parking needs of the existing and proposed new residents without impacting neighbouring on-street parking.

Tenants-First Approach. Before commencing public and community engagement, the team followed a tenants-first approach to ensure existing tenants were informed of the development planning process. A tenant meeting on June 21, 2022 conveyed an introduction to the proposal and assured tenants that their existing homes were not affected by the plans and that their tenancy would not be impacted by the infill development: tenants will not be displaced and there will not be any changes to their rent as a result of the development.

Immediate Neighbours. Following tenant notification, the team invited immediate neighbours to attend an information session on July 6, 2022 to learn about the planning process and provide input to the plan development. Topics discussed included parking and traffic, building siting and mitigation strategies to minimize construction impacts.

JBNA - Project Introduction. An initial presentation of the project was shared with the JBNA at their July 13, 2022 meeting. The team provided an overview of the conceptual planning and received positive feedback about the site planning approach, the building scale and siting, with some noting that the proposal represented an appropriately scaled building in the right place.

JBNA - DRC Meeting. The project was reviewed by the DRC on August 9, 2022, with suggestions for further study of the building's presence at the important intersection of Douglas and Toronto, and the building's materials and landscape details. Further consideration of the unit mix was also suggested to try to incorporate some larger, family-friendly units at the ground floor.

Site Analysis

Comprehensive site analysis was completed to inform the site plan including:

Environmental: considering the solar orientation and prevailing wind patterns to avoid shadow and wind impacts.

Views: thinking about the orientation of new buildings to maximize views to Beacon Hill Park and South Park Family School yard, providing a sense of connection to these large open spaces and creating important 'eyes on the street and park'. Also considering privacy and overlook concerns with separation from the existing residential towers on site and surrounding neighbours.

Built Form Analysis: considering the siting and setbacks of existing and adjacent buildings to help identify appropriate siting for the new building.

Transportation: removing the site access off of Toronto Street to create a strong pedestrian streetscape and connecting to existing pedestrian, cyclist and transit corridors to support alternative modes of transportation. Completing a comprehensive parking study and traffic impact analysis.

Proposed Development

The proposal is for a new infill residential building located in the north portion of the site, fronting Toronto Street. The building is 6-storeys in height, stepping down to 4-storeys in the west, and appearing as 5-storeys in the east, where the new building will be built into the existing slope of

the site. The proposal accommodates 90 new rental homes, including 39 one-bedrooms, 17 one-bedroom and dens and 34 two-bedroom units.

New underground parking and the replacement of some surface parking is proposed to meet the calculated parking demand, as a result of the detailed parking study.

Respecting the Heritage Context

The west portion of the site is located within the Avalon-Huntington Heritage Conservation Area and is given the HCA1 Traditional Residential designation within the Official Community Plan. The portion of the site assigned to this area does not contain any heritage designated or registered buildings and is currently occupied by a parking lot with a carport along the western edge. However, the community has a rich history and the site is adjacent to three heritage designated houses along Huntington Place. This context has been considered during the development of this proposal.

The community is defined by buildings in the Queen Anne, Edwardian Vernacular Arts & Craft and Italianate styles. Single family homes are constructed and clad in wood and larger buildings such as the James Bay Inn and South Park School are constructed and finished in red brick, stone, and white stucco with metal and concrete projections and details. To be consistent with the construction methods and practices of the historic context, the proposed structure has been developed with a material and colour palette that is harmonious with these larger historic structures given their similarities in scale. The wood cladding and detailing used on the historic single-family homes was not typically used on larger structures of the era, so these are avoided to be consistent with the historic methods and prevent an incorrect illustration of the era's architecture.

This approach is consistent with *The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* Standard 11 which identifies that work should conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to a historic place, or any related new construction. New work should be made physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place. The proposed building's two-storey red brick base and light coloured upper storeys with dark detailing acknowledges the appearance of the James Bay Inn, however, the application of the materials is such that it is clearly differentiated from the historic buildings. The resulting palette and simple detailing of the proposal creates a reserved backdrop to the adjacent single-family homes, allowing the vibrant colours and rich architectural detailing of the historic structures to remain the prominent focus of the neighbourhood.

The character of the historic streetscapes are defined by small front yard setbacks that are activated with front porches, low metal or wood fences, and attractive landscaping that promotes a sense of community and an active pedestrian street. The proposal seeks to connect to the character of this streetscape. All ground level units are provided with street facing patios enclosed with black metal fences and landscape planters.

Enhancing the Street

Particular attention has been given to the street level of the building to create an active street edge. A two-storey brick base combined with street level patios creates the feeling of a townhouse development and provides residents with direct access from the sidewalk. Terraced planters and landscaping creates a soft transition from private to public space. The main lobby

is also accessible from both sides of the building, providing a front entrance to the street as well as a rear entrance from parking and service areas.

The perimeter of the site along Huntington Place and Toronto Street will be upgraded with enhanced landscaping including new trees and shrubs. This will replace the existing carport to provide natural screening of the parking area. Black metal fences will be provided where guardrails are needed in a manner that is similar in character to fencing used by several residences in the community.

Where possible and advisable based on tree health, existing mature trees will be retained. A preliminary Tree Management Plan has identified a number of trees along Douglas Street that can be retained. Where tree removal is required, replacement planting will be provided.

Amenities

An internal pedestrian connection is created through the site from Huntington Place to Douglas Street. Running along the south side of the proposed building, it connects to the building lobby as well as a number of resident amenities located at grade including a dog wash, fitness facility, and bike room. The exterior space between the proposed building and the existing tower is conceived as a shared amenity space accessible to the community. This may include planting, visitor bike parking, seating, and public art to enhance the façade of the existing building.

Residents of both the new building and the existing towers will have access to two new rooftop patios. One will be located on the west end of the building above the 4th floor as the building height steps down. This will be set back from the parapet of the building to restrict sightlines and prevent overlook to adjacent properties. The second will be located on the roof at the east end of the building with views towards Beacon Hill Park. This will be accessible from a social room on the 6th floor.

Alignment With City Policy

The property is designated within the City of Victoria’s OCP for Urban Residential development, which accommodates buildings up to 6-storeys in height and up to a density of 2.0 FSR. While the existing 13-storey towers are inconsistent with the OCP’s anticipated built form, the proposed new building has been designed to reflect City policy and serve as a transition from the existing towers to the surrounding community context.

The proposal anticipates a comprehensive development zone that divides the site into two development areas:

Development Area A (New Development):

- Site Area: 43,390 sf (4,031 sm)
- Building Area: 82,775 sf (7,688 sm)
- FSR: 1.91
- Height: 6 Storey

Development Area B (Existing Development):

- Site Area: 52,765 sf (4,902 sm)
- Building Area: 155,882 sf (14,482 sm)
- FSR: 2.95
- Height: 13 Storey

On a net site basis, the proposal reflects a total, site-wide density of 2.48 FSR, accommodating a total of 287 rental units. Balancing the cost of replacing surface parking with new underground parking and accommodating the calculated parking demand, the proposal includes 228 vehicle parking spaces (0.79 spaces/unit) and 198 bicycle parking spaces.

Community Benefits

The project offers a number of community benefits, most notably the creation of much needed new rental housing in these challenging times of low supply and high demand. We are encouraged by positive comments of support heard so far about how the proposal reflects an appropriate and well-designed solution that makes more efficient use of an existing site and provides a positive community outcome.

- Creation of 90 new purpose-built rental homes, including ground-oriented homes;
- Replacement of surface parking with a new building that helps 'knit' the neighbourhood back together;
- Streetscape enhancements along Toronto Street and Douglas Street to support greater walkability;
- Visual connections to Beacon Hill Park and South Park Family School yard to provide 'eyes on the park' and a stronger sense of community;
- Respectful transition in scale from existing towers to traditional neighbourhood setting.

We look forward to engaging with the community at the upcoming CALUC meeting, to be hosted by the JBNA on September 14, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Mat McLash
Development Manager for Starlight