

**544-558 Toronto Street**  
Letter to Mayor & Council

# 544-558 Toronto Street

Rezoning & Development Permit  
Pre-Application Proposal Summary

**ARYZE**

24 August 2022

City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 1P6

## **RE: 544-558 Toronto Street Rezoning & Development Permit Pre-Application Proposal Summary**

Dear Mayor Helps, Council and Staff:

We are pleased to present this letter outlining the core content of our forthcoming application to rezone and develop the lands at 415 Parry St and 544-558 Toronto St. Enclosed is a summary of a proposed stepped five-storey, fifty-four (54) unit residential strata development, ranging from one-bedroom + den to two-bedroom + den units. The building will include EV-ready underground parking for residents, a shared outdoor amenity space, thoughtfully landscaped grounds, as well as cutting-edge sustainable building technologies.

We will be seeking to amend these properties from the current RS-2 zoning to a new site specific (TBD) zoning that could accommodate the development of a mid rise multi-residential building.

# Project at a Glance

<b>Height</b> Stepped 5 Storey	<b>North Setback</b> 10.3m	<b>Number of Homes</b> 54 Homes	<b>Parking Stalls</b> 43 Stalls 100% EV Ready
<b>Site Area</b> 23,250 sqft	<b>South Setback</b> 3.8m	<b>One Bedroom</b> 8 Homes 15%	<b>Short-Term Bike Stalls</b> 6 Stalls
<b>Floor Area</b> 47,985 sqft	<b>West Setback</b> 5.7m	<b>One Bedroom + Den</b> 19 Homes 35%	<b>Long-Term Bike Stalls</b> 68 Stalls 100% E-Bike Ready
<b>FAR</b> 2.06 FSR	<b>East Setback</b> 1.3m	<b>Two Bedroom</b> 21 Homes 39%	<b>Residential Tenure</b> Strata Ownership
<b>Site Coverage</b> 57% 13,232 sqft		<b>Two Bedroom + Den</b> 6 Homes 11%	

## Unique Features

- Common outdoor landscape amenity
- Family oriented ground-floor homes
- High performance & sustainable building strategies
- Built to meet & exceed BC Step Code 3 wherever possible
- Active urban corner experience for pedestrian priority

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# Site Context & History

Located on the corner of Toronto and Parry Street in the James Bay neighbourhood of Victoria, the site is a lot consolidation comprising four (4) single-family residences. Immediately adjacent to Urban Residential zoning, the site is ideally located for a pedestrian-priority experience with ample amenities in close walking distance such as Beacon Hill Park, Dallas Road and Red Barn Market.

This land holds both cultural and historical significance as it resides on the traditional territory of the Lək̓wəŋən peoples and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

# Neighbourhood Grain

The growing neighbourhood of James Bay is rich with history and diverse forms of housing, ranging from single-family homes to mid-rise, multi-family buildings. With various commercial nodes sprinkled throughout the area—and James Bay Village less than 500m away—the subject site is ideally located for thoughtful densification. The OCP’s Urban Residential designation can be found directly across both Toronto and Parry Street, which allows for up to 6-storeys.

The subject site is also a great candidate for densification, as Toronto Street will eventually have a fully tree-lined boulevard, promoting safer walking, cycling and vehicle transit for future generations who seek a car-lite lifestyle.

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## Policy Context

The subject site currently holds a Traditional Residential Urban Place Designation, and each lot is zoned as R-2, Two Family Dwelling District. The proposed development does contemplate an FAR of 2.06, above the permitted 1.0 in Traditional Residential. For this reason, we are proposing a site-specific zone to allow for this increase, as well as an amendment to the Official Community Plan to designate the site as Urban Residential given its very close proximity to this designation, which can be found directly across the street on both Toronto and Parry, which allows for up to 6-storeys. While not currently permitted, this increase in density better meets the needs of our growing community while providing a diverse mix of housing in a neighborhood that has room to grow.

# Project Pillars

## **Thoughtful Design**

The design concept for this proposal has been carefully considered from the initial onset of the project, with an intent to remain sensitive to the history of James Bay while responding to the existing context in the immediate neighbourhood. The potential impact to our neighbours has been a priority and we strive to maintain positive neighbour relationships throughout the development process.

## **Pedestrian Experience**

The subject site is located on an active urban corner that holds ample potential to enhance the pedestrian experience for James Bay residents and the broader community. This has been emphasized throughout the proposal, as both Toronto and Parry Street are important connectors in the City for pedestrians but have challenges with utility poles, tight sidewalks and limited landscaped areas. Our goal is to propose a design that supports multi-modal transportation to promote a car-lite lifestyle, while also enriching the pedestrian experience at grade.

## **Housing Choice**

Victoria is known to be one of the most desirable cities in Canada, and as such, there continues to be a need for more diverse housing types in all neighbourhoods, including multi-family condos and townhomes. Sites such as these—located close to many jobs and services—represent a key opportunity for providing homes to people at different life stages while providing much-needed housing choice along the housing continuum. We also need to be mindful of how we're utilizing the scarce lands available to us and building for our future needs.

# Materiality & Building Form

The building elevations have been conceived to deliver a balanced tension between horizontal and vertical emphasis. This is achieved through the careful choice of material colours, finishes and textures. The application of these materials are deployed to emphasize and enhance the buildings appearance in context, but retain interest as people move closer and see the material richness and texture of the elevation panels. The elevations have a soft pastel hue, inspired by colour tones seen in traditional architecture in surrounding streets. Elevations are punctuated by balconies at lower levels and roof terraces at upper levels. The apartment balconies have been designed to provide outdoor space that is both recessed and projected for privacy and protection from weather, while delivering outlook and animation to the street. These 50:50 inset projecting balconies have been successful in Europe, where they have delivered a more usable balcony space, extending benefit to residents for more days of the year.

## **Design Inspiration**

Our design for the redevelopment of 415 Parry and 544-558 Toronto Street is carefully composed to deliver much needed multi-family residential accommodation to this part of the James Bay community. We have developed an architectural concept that celebrates this unique street corner with a timeless architecture that responds directly and sympathetically to its context. The most striking feature of the building's mass is the elegant, curved corner that provides a powerful form to address the junction of Toronto and Parry. The intention is that this crafted shape creates a quietly confident background building to reinforce the street edge and define the site for years to come.

The fifty-four (54) apartments are organized into a mid-rise city block composed over 5 stories. Building floors are carefully stepped back at upper levels to reduce the building's scale when viewed from the street and integrate the building scale towards neighbours in the north and east. This composition delivers a positive relationship to the surroundings on both Toronto and Parry Street. The building mass is specifically scaled to minimize overshadowing of neighbours and create a positive new streetscape animated by its residents.

The Toronto Street elevation delivers a 'living street' experience with front doors to access the ground floor apartments and city gardens accessed from the sidewalk. The main entrance lobby is located on

Parry Street and provides a visually accessible, human scaled entrance to the building. The entrance lobby leads to a daylit central circulation stair connecting all levels. The vehicular access to the basement parkade is off Parry Street, is composed to sit screened behind landscape and is visually secondary to pedestrians on approach.

Overall this redevelopment intends to create a mid rise residential building appropriate in context, with a strong identity that can sit confidently in the background, setting the scene for active urban living in Victoria.



# Landscape Design

The landscape design proposed for the site seeks to work with the building to create a series of front patio spaces for residents along Toronto Street. The landscape boulevard along this frontage will be designed to manage stormwater from the road as well as provide space and soil for a healthy urban forest. There is a focus to provide a street corner with green foliage while the building entrance opens to the street with opportunities for visitors to sit and park bikes.

A common space for residents of the building has been created at the rear of the building offering outdoor landscape spaces that are engaging for residents, provide opportunities to socialize and are ecologically functional. The at grade landscape will provide a community orchard full of fruit trees, a circle route for walking pets, an informal gathering fire pit, and a space to share some meals and barbeque. The landscape will also provide screening and buffering to the single family neighbours along the perimeter fencing.

# Mobility Context

## **Road Network**

The subject site is located on a secondary collector road network, and is additionally served by arterial and secondary arterial networks on adjacent streets. These road designations contribute to the ‘Pedestrian Priority’ project pillar, as the intent is to provide walkable thoroughfares appropriate for people-priority greenways, with ample sidewalk and landscaping. This has been incorporated into the current design and we look forward to how Toronto and Parry Street can be further developed to promote neighbourhood connection, as well as connection to major routes and commercial and employment districts.

## **Car-Lite Lifestyle**

The subject site is centrally located in the heart of James Bay—a mere 3 minute walk to the amenity rich James Bay Village. Not only does this promote the concept of a ‘15 minute city’, but it also allows for an easy car-lite lifestyle. The project has been strategically designed to encourage walking, cycling and transit as primary transportation options for future residents.

With 43 parking stalls proposed, the proposal will seek a variance to the current parking requirements. To help mitigate this, ample long-term bicycle parking is provided with sixty-eight (68) secure bike stalls that will be EV and E-Bike ready. Finally, additional potential transportation demand management strategies will be explored with our Transportation Engineer and the City of Victoria, such as Modo Car memberships for those units without parking, as well as transit passes.

# Community Consultation & Next Steps

We are available to discuss project details with stakeholders through a variety of channels to build trust and shared vision for the project all while maintaining a respectful and open conversation. Our goal is to create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable to share their ideas, hopes and aspirations for the community—and for them to ultimately see these values reflected in the end project.

Following a postcard distribution to nearly 2,000 residents in the immediate vicinity to the proposed development site, we held 1:1 introductory meetings with tenants of the subject properties to provide first-hand information and open up a direct dialogue with our team as we began the Tenant Assistance process.

Further to this, a preliminary Community Information Session was held via Zoom on the evening of June 21st, 2022 where the initial concept of the proposal was shared with the James Bay Neighbourhood Association and interested community members. Feedback was taken into consideration from this session in the design progression, and we look forward to presenting at the formal CALUC meeting on September 14th to demonstrate some of the revisions made based on the feedback provided.

Should community members wish to stay informed, they can find up-to-date project information available at [aryze.ca/548toronto](http://aryze.ca/548toronto), as well as the opportunity to sign-up for updates throughout the various stages of the approval process.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



**Olivia Wheeler**

Development Manager

Aryze