



July 6, 2020

Mayor Helps & Council  
City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria BC V8W1P6

**Re: Rezoning/Development Permit Application for 110 Menzies Street (Village Gardens)**

Dear Mayor Helps & Members of Council:

On behalf of Village Green Apartments Holdings Ltd., the owner and manager of 110 Menzies Street, we are pleased to submit this application for a proposed 131-unit residential rental development for the property at the corner of Menzies and Niagara Streets in James Bay. The area of application represents part of a larger parcel, and the first of two phases to ultimately redevelop the entire site.

**Proposal Overview**

The application is to rezone the eastern half of the parcel fronting Menzies and Niagara Streets to permit an infill residential redevelopment in the heart of James Bay, in direct proximity to the James Bay Village Centre. An approximately 60-year old, modestly constructed residential apartment building currently sits on the proposed site, and contains 45 residential units. The site is significantly underdeveloped for such a strategic location. An important part of the rezoning application is a tenant relocation plan (See the Impacts section).

**Context**

This site is appropriate for development intensification because of its location immediately adjacent to the James Bay "Large Urban Village" centre identified in the OCP, and within walking distance of a wide range of amenities and services.

**Zoning Change**

Current zoning for the site is *R3-2 Multi-family Residential*, which permits an FSR of 1.6:1. Rezoning is requested to create a site-specific, multi-family with an FSR of 2.16:1. The building will be entirely residential with a range of unit types.

The following mix is proposed for the 131 units:

| UNIT TYPE         | NUMBER OF UNITS | UNIT SIZE RANGE (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Studio            | 10              | 35 – 51                           |
| One-bedroom       | 32              | 51 – 65                           |
| One-bedroom + den | 32              | 65 – 76                           |
| Two-bedroom       | 47              | 76 – 86                           |
| Three-bedroom     | 10              | 86                                |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>131</b>      |                                   |

The average size of a two-bedroom is 76m<sup>2</sup>, and the average three-bedroom is 86m<sup>2</sup>. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the units are one-bedroom + den or larger. This unit mix will allow for a more diverse range of residents, including singles, couples, families, and seniors.

#### **Tenure**

The new building will be 100% market rental, and the owner will agree to a Housing Agreement that guarantees long-term rental tenure.

#### **Policies**

This proposal's location is supported by the *Official Community Plan*'s objectives for James Bay, because the neighbourhood:

- Is a densely populated mixed-use neighbourhood with a *Large Urban Village*;
- Is home to a large portion of Victoria's rental housing stock;
- Maintains a variety of housing types and tenures for a range of age groups and incomes;
- Maintains an interesting diversity of land uses, housing types, and character areas; and
- Supports sensitive infill.

The proposal conforms to the *James Bay Neighbourhood Plan*, specifically enhancing and supporting the following goals and objectives:

- Provides a range of housing opportunities to accommodate a balance of family and non-family development;
- Supports initiatives for housing families, the elderly, disadvantaged, and needy;

- Encourages a visual harmony of form and scale between new buildings and adjacent residential units;
- Encourages high standards of architectural design for new residential developments; and
- Respects existing streetscape character.

### **Need**

The current housing crisis in Victoria is well documented. The rental housing shortage, with vacancy rates below a “balanced market,” place severe pressure on affordability and the number of options available for individuals and families. This project will help fill a need for rental housing in the neighbourhood (and beyond), and will almost triple the number of rental units currently on the site.

### **Benefits**

This project will provide social, environmental, and economic benefits to the City and the neighbourhood, including:

- An increased property tax base;
- Increased population density to contribute to local businesses, cultural activities, and public life;
- Increased population located within walking distance of amenities and services;
- Improved sustainable design, construction, and operation of new housing compared to existing poorly built stock;
- A greater number of much-needed rental housing units; and
- A variety of unit types that allows for diverse residents, particularly with the two- and three-bedroom units.

### **Impacts**

In addition to the immediate positive impacts of increasing rental opportunities for residents in the neighbourhood, the project recognizes and builds upon the varied scales of single-family houses and low-rise apartment blocks. The rhythmic stepped massing and continuity of streetscape will provide a unifying and pedestrian-scaled context to the surroundings. The overall massing will provide a transition from surrounding houses and apartment blocks up to the 7-storey James Bay Square.

### **Tenant Relocation Plan**

The *Tenant Relocation Plan* is a key component of this project, as it will determine the relocation of the 45 existing units, which comprise a single one-bedroom unit, and 44 two-bedroom units.

- **Compensation.** To assist with relocation costs, all residents will be compensated based on their existing tenancy. Displaced tenants will receive a financial assistance package, equivalent to three to six months of free rent.

|                             |  |                             |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 0 - 4 years: 3 months' rent |  | 10-19 years: 5 months' rent |
| 5 - 9 years: 4 months' rent |  | 20+ years: 6 months' rent   |

- **Moving Expenses.** A flat rate based on unit size will be provided to the tenants:

- \$500 for one-bedroom
- \$750 for two-bedroom

- **Relocation Assistance.** A relocation specialist will assist with tenant relocation, communication, and coordination. This individual will initiate one-on-one meetings with each tenant, where discussion and development of a relocation approach will be custom tailored. Three housing options will be provided based on the survey and meetings with tenants, and these options will be comparable in size, location, and rent amount.
- **Right of First Refusal.** Tenants will be provided first right of refusal once the new building is complete. Returning tenants will be offered a special rate of 10% below the starting market rent for new suites.
- **Tenants Requiring Additional Assistance.** The owner will coordinate resources to assist in the search for new homes for those tenants requiring additional assistance, including coordination with government programs, such as BC Housing and other not-for-profit groups. The owner will also provide support with moving logistics.

## Design Guidelines

This proposal follows the City of Victoria's *Design Guidelines for Attached Residential Development* in the following areas:

- Siting buildings in a manner that considers and maintains the pattern of landscaped front and back yards; that makes a positive contribution to the streetscape; and that achieves a more compact residential building form while maintaining livability.
- Ensure new development is oriented and designed to enhance public streets and open spaces, and encourages street vitality and safety through increased eyes on the street.
- Achieve buildings of high architectural quality and interest, with human-scale building proportions that are oriented towards and compatible with the established streetscape character and pattern.
- Enhance the quality of open space, support the urban forest, provide privacy where needed, emphasize unit entrances and pedestrian accesses, reduce storm water runoff, and ensure front and rear yards are not dominated by parking.

### **Design Intention for Architecture & Landscape Architecture**

The design intention for this project is to enhance the existing irregular streetscapes of Menzies and Niagara Streets, while creating a central landscaped courtyard amenity for building residents. The rhythmic townhouse scale at the street frontages uses a massing expression reminiscent of the traditional bay window, with the top floor stepped back. The purpose of this method is to achieve a responsible level of density while mitigating perceived height and visual impacts. Exterior materials are consistent with current residential developments, and includes a variety of finishes, textures, colours, and details.

To further improve the pedestrian experience along the two street frontages, street-accessed entry doors, front porches, and individual door-entry landscaping have been detailed. These elements combine to provide an interactive transition between private spaces and the public thoroughfare, while reinforcing the human scale of the streetscape.

The primary objective of the landscape design is to create stimulating and attractive outdoor settings that encourage residents to participate in casual and organized outdoor activities, and develop friendships and supports through social interaction in the following ways:

- An expansive central courtyard is designed in the style of a park, comprising a network of sweeping pathways that connect access points with a central water feature;
- An abundance of seating opportunities in a setting rich in plantings and expansive lawns;
- The high degree of natural surveillance and park containment will contribute to a safe setting for the informal children's play;
- In contrast to the more formalized design of the central courtyard, the common area perimeter vegetation on the south, east and west sides of the project will appear naturalistic in character, and comprise native plant species;
- First floor garden patios will provide defined private spaces, but allow for casual greetings and conversation with passersby; and
- A rooftop garden will provide a generous and functional setting for active gardening, outdoor games, and other group activities.

### **Variances from Zoning Bylaw**

The following variances are requested:

- A new purpose-designed zone will be required to allow for the requested increase in density.
- Compared to the existing R3-2 zone, some setbacks from the street and a minor change in building height will be required to incorporate the design intention of the project.

- The current bylaw requirement is 133 stalls, and this project provides a total of 115 stalls. A variance of 18 stalls or 13.5% is requested. Underground parking is provided on one level, with the variance largely created by cutting back the west wall to preserve a significant tree on the edge of the site. This vehicle parking shortfall is offset by the provision 208 bicycle parking stalls, which is 32 more than Schedule C requires for the site.

Consistent with City of Victoria and Provincial requirements, this application process will include the discharge with the existing Land Use Contract on title. The current underlying zoning is *R3-2 Multiple Dwelling District*, and the discharge is expected to be a straightforward administrative task, subject to working with City staff to achieve building conformity.

### **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**

This project conforms to the following principles of CPTED:

- Natural surveillance is provided by street access to all ground floor units, providing eyes on the street.
- Territoriality is enhanced by private outdoor patios for all ground floor units, which are detailed and landscaped to reinforce individual ownership, and to clearly delineate and limit unauthorized access.
- Outdoor spatial design that does not provide dead-end spaces or areas for concealment.
- Subdued, but adequate, site and building lighting to ensure the safety and comfort of residents and visitors.

### **Transportation & Parking**

This project provides slightly fewer vehicle parking stalls than required in Schedule C, primarily due to the desire to preserve a number of significant-sized existing trees. However, long-term and short-term bicycle storage exceeds Schedule C requirements:

| PARKING TYPE                        | REQUIRED   | PROVIDED   |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Residential Parking Stalls          | 120        | 105        |
| Visitor Parking Stalls              | 13         | 10         |
| <b>Total Vehicle Parking Stalls</b> | <b>133</b> | <b>115</b> |
| Long Term Bicycle Parking           | 162        | 184        |
| Short Term Bicycle parking          | 14         | 24         |
| <b>Total Bicycle Parking Stalls</b> | <b>176</b> | <b>208</b> |

## **Sustainability Features**

The following sustainability features are provided in this project:

- The use of vehicles will be significantly reduced by the provision of 131 residential rental units within walkable distances to places of work, recreation, shopping, and other services. With the project's regular transit service nearby, and close proximity to a comprehensive bike lane network, it is possible to get to most areas of the region without the use of private vehicles.
- 208 bike parking spaces are provided, including 184 long-term and 24 short-term spaces;
- As an urban infill development, the project adheres to the principles of promoting development on existing urban sites, diverting development pressure from greenfield locations, and making more efficient use of existing infrastructure;
- 10 electric vehicle (EV) stalls will be provided, with rough-ins for the remainder of the parkade;
- Landscape and stormwater management systems, including partial green roofs, will retain and infiltrate rainwater, and limit the post-development peak water run-off from the development.
- To reduce the urban heat island effect, the project design includes the following measures:
  - 100% of parking is underground;
  - A variety of both hard and soft landscaping;
  - Provision of a dog park and recreation areas for adults and children;
  - A mix of unit types with balconies and/or large terraces on roof decks to provide all ,with access to the outdoors and views;
  - Ample window area in each unit will increase natural lighting and provide views and passive solar gain during winter months;
  - Water conservation strategies include water efficient landscaping and fixtures;
  - Energy efficiency will meet Step Code 3 at minimum;
  - Passive envelope strategies will reduce reliance on mechanical systems;
  - All windows will be double pane, low-e glazing with thermally broken frames;
  - Use of low-energy lighting systems, including motion sensors in all common areas; and
  - ENERGY STAR appliances will be used throughout the project.

## **Infrastructure**

Existing public infrastructure and utilities meet the anticipated needs of this proposal. A copy of the civil engineer's report is attached, and provides a preliminary site serving plan and assessment of sanitary sewage attenuation requirements.

## **Consultation**

The following consultation activities have been undertaken:

- Early meetings with the co-chairs of the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) Land Use Committee introduced the project. Several follow-up/update discussions were also held with JBNA representatives after the neighbourhood meeting.
- A neighbourhood meeting was held on January 8, 2020, in conjunction with a regular monthly JBNA meeting, at the James Bay New Horizon's Centre. Individual invitation notices were hand delivered to a neighbours on both sides of Menzies, Niagara and Croft Streets, and to tenants of James Bay Square. Notices of the meeting were also posted on JBNA's website and in The Beacon. Tenants of the existing building were also invited. In many ways, the siting and massing of the building reflect the comments/feedback received at that meeting.
- Separate communications have been provided for tenants of the existing building.
- As a result of COVID-19, the JBNA Land Use Committee has provided a letter authorizing the submission of an application for rezoning prior to a formal CALUC meeting being held.

## **Closing**

We believe Village Gardens will contribute a thoughtful, sensitive, and positive urban infill to this central James Bay activity node. In the upcoming months, we look forward to the opportunity of presenting our proposal in detail, and respectfully request your positive response.

Yours truly,



Deane Strongitharm, RPP, MCIP

Attachs.

cc: Village Green Apartments Holdings Ltd.