

City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC, V8W 1P6

February 13, 2026

Re: Letter to Mayor and Council for Cathedral Commons Masterplan: Zoning Bylaw amendment for a Comprehensive Development Zone at 911 Quadra Street, 912 Vancouver Street, 930 Burdett Avenue (REZ00867)

**Dear Mayor and Council,**

Following detailed consideration received from the city, we have revised the Cathedral Commons masterplan proposal to align with staff recommendations to achieve a plan supported by staff.

Through multiple discussions and iterations since our original submission in February 2024, we have arrived at the following shared understanding with City planning staff:

- The site can successfully support a development density of 2.4 FSR;
- The masterplan is compliant in structure and layout with the objectives of the new Official Community Plan and the City's communicated vision for this location; and
- The site plan and proposed building footprints are acceptable.

We thank staff for their inputs and direction towards an acceptable massing strategy that is OCP compliant under the new special designation.

The project team welcomes the opportunity for collaboration and partnerships throughout this rezoning process to achieve an iconic public space for the city for generations to come.

Sincerely,

**Brendon Neilson**

*Executive Director  
Anglican Diocese of Islands and Inlets*

## The Diocesan Vision for Cathedral Commons

In Christ Church Cathedral's Chapel of the New Jerusalem there is a large window on the east wall. This stunning artwork speaks to a hope of urban life deeply aligned with our faith. The design draws inspiration from the final book of the Bible, where there is a vision of a future city where God lives with people of all tribes and languages, the trees bear fruit for all, and tears are no more. This city is a place of radical belonging and beauty that can inform our vision of the city we want to live in.

We do not imagine this proposal will fulfill this vision, but we hope that by offering our space as a commons for the community, we-together might take a step in that direction. Imagine an urban village with five distinct but related mixed-use buildings, new and improved landscaped spaces for community life, a revitalized urban school and playground, and a garden of reconciliation co-designed with Songhees and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) Nations, all embedded in an ethos of belonging, hope and social wellbeing highlighting the Cathedral as the heart of the this emerging village centre.

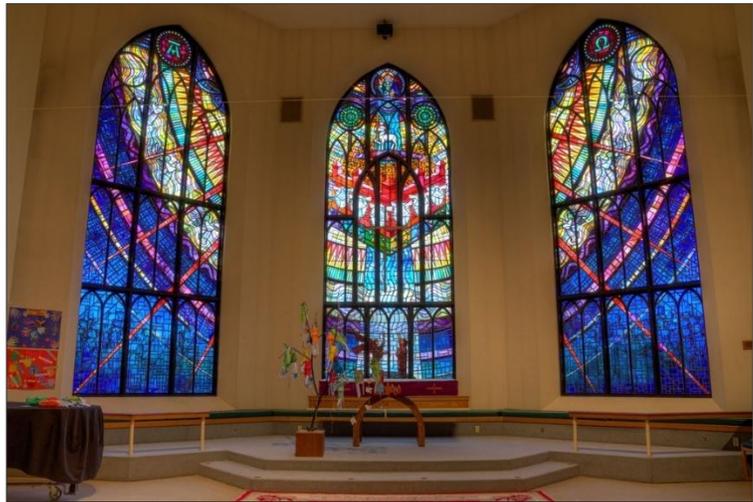


Figure 1: Chapel of the New Jerusalem-Stained Glass Window

This project offers an opportunity to cement the Cathedral as a historic and cultural landmark and a vibrant, lifegiving community of faith available to all.

We believe this proposal provides hope and vision not just locally, but for spaces and places of worship across the country. The Anglican Diocese and City of Victoria have a long history of collaborative efforts in building a community of belonging and trust. We see this plan as a path to ensure continued alignment of our shared hopes for another 100 years; this proposal embodies the City's current Strategic Plan. We are a unique applicant with a unique site, and through extensive engagement we have produced a compelling vision that will allow us to continue protecting and celebrating this exceptional site. This is a beautiful opportunity for the city to lead by example, not just locally, but nation-wide.

The role of religious organizations has shifted and will continue shifting. Our Diocese has evolved with the city and will continue adapting to the needs we see in our communities. This proposal represents years of discernment to provide balance of certainty and flexibility to be the Cathedral of tomorrow while preserving the heritage of yesterday. We are looking for your partnership in our bold vision of a commons built on the values of inclusion, generosity and hope.

## Songhees and Xwsepsum Relationships & Reconciliation

The Cathedral and Diocesan leadership have been building a relationship with Songhees and Xwsepsum First Nations through programming, invitations to services and events, and

most recently, working toward mutual understanding regarding redevelopment of the protected greenspace at the southwest lawn, adjacent to the Cathedral. These conversations started in 2018 and include re-dedicating the space as *sx<sup>w</sup>enx<sup>w</sup>en tənəx<sup>w</sup>* (the family group with ancestral connections to this area), and a site of reconciliation for the whole community. The Building For The Future (BFTF) team is engaging with Songhees and Xwsepsum representatives through an ongoing scheduled roundtable about this and other reconciliatory activities.

For several years, the Diocese has been gathering information about its lands through archival research and interviews. Working with historian Jesse Robertson, the Diocese is documenting this history. The reports are a small but tangible step on the path of reconciliation, enriching and complicating land-holding decisions and highlighting the need to move from symbolic to structural reconciliation. This work speaks to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #59 that calls on church parties to "ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization". To view the 21 reports completed to date, visit [our website](#).

### Description of Proposal

**Zoning Change:** In consultation with City planning staff, it was recommended that this application propose a zoning bylaw amendment for a Comprehensive Development (CD) zone. This application does not include a concurrent development permit application as the phasing of new construction of the property has not been determined. To better understand the implications of the proposed zone, as well as the existing buildings and open space on site, the application includes *conceptual designs* to illustrate the potential that could result from a full build-out of the site, in compliance with the proposed CD Zone. Separate Development Permit Applications will be made for each quadrant and building development to follow.

**Land Use:** This application puts forward the following land use makeup:

- Residential: 70-80%
- Institutional: 15-20%
- Amenity (*in addition to above institutional use*): 5-10%
- Commercial: 5-10%

**Density and Massing:** The overall massing strategy aims to work harmoniously with the existing Cathedral and context. The current zoning allows for 2.0 FSR, with current buildings making up approximately 0.5 FSR. The request for 2.4 FSR allows for a mix of heights from 8 storeys to a maximum of 18 storeys. As with all masterplans, this density, if realized, will occur over a multi-decade time scale; meanwhile, this density adds qualitative and quantitative value to the site that supports the Diocese in the vision both philosophically and practically.

**Design Framework:** We have created a framework that is designed to be enjoyed at street level. Our masterplan creates spaces that are aligned to human scale and holistic accessibility. The design framework will shape the future quality of design, materiality, composition and overall design agenda, providing certainty for the phased build-out.

**Building Heights:** As per direction from the city, the building behind the Cathedral has been reduced from 24 storeys to 12 storeys and a maximum height of 39m. Building B4 has been

reduced in height to 8 storeys and B3 has been increased to 18 storeys so that the massing steps down at the corner of Burdett Ave and Vancouver St.

- B1 - 12 storeys, max. 39m
- B2 - 8 storeys, max. 26m
- B3 - 18 storeys, max 54m
- B4 - 8 storeys, max. 26m

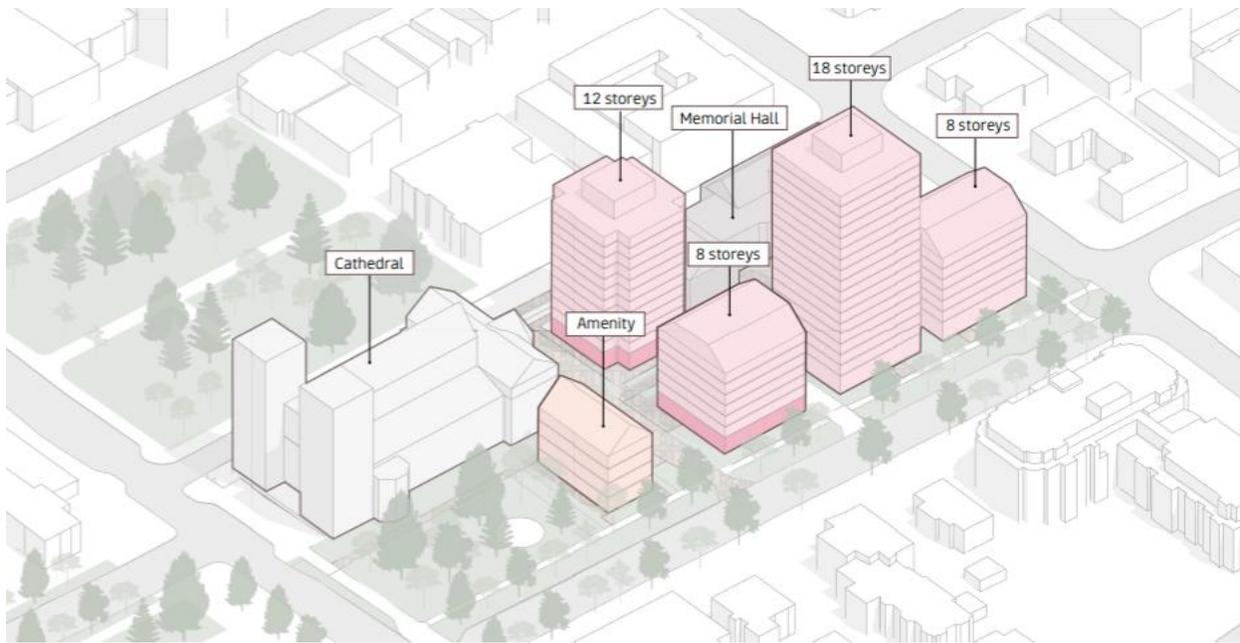


Figure 2: Cathedral Commons Land Use Plan

**Housing:** The residential development opportunities proposed in the masterplan will increase the housing stock in the region by up to 300 units.

**Community Benefits and Amenities:** The Cathedral Commons masterplan includes wide ranging community benefits, including the preservation and enhancement of three heritage designated buildings, improvements to connectivity through Cathedral Walk and Memorial Mews, pedestrian priority pathways connecting the property with the surrounding community, a new playground for Memorial Hall, and a proposed amenity building - Cathedral House. The Cathedral House is currently envisioned to house the administrative offices for the Cathedral and Diocese and will have rentable community spaces at low or no costs to non-profits and community groups.

Table 1: Cathedral Commons, Proposed Amenities

Amenity	Description
South Lawn	South Lawn is a space to be preserved in perpetuity as an active reconciliation space. The Cathedral and Diocese are in ongoing dialogue with the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations on ways to reflect the historic and future relationships with the Cathedral, the Diocese, the city, and these lands.
Cathedral Walk (SRW)	Pedestrian priority multi-modal laneway to allow for cross block access, accessible parking and loading for on-site amenities. Volumetric SRW to accommodate underground parkade.

Memorial Mews	Seating and circulation space connecting Quadra Street to Vancouver Street and providing access to the South Lawn, Memorial Hall Playground and Yarrow Chapel Plaza.
Memorial Hall Playground	Enclosed playground for students of Christ Church Cathedral School, with opportunity to allow public access outside of school hours. Design includes playground equipment, basketball hoop, natural play elements and rainwater gardens. Final design to be determined alongside Memorial Hall upgrades.
Yarrow Plaza	Seating and circulation spaces for adjacent buildings. Plaza to serve Yarrow Chapel programming and otherwise accessible to general public
Cathedral House	Proposed infill parcel for construction of new amenity building directly east of Cathedral. Confirmed uses include Diocese and Cathedral admin spaces. Possible uses to be determined based on partnerships and funding will include education, non-profit, community, performance, archive, multi-purpose rooms, event/café/food service
Christ Church Cathedral	Publicly accessible designated heritage building featuring diverse, inclusive public programming. Life safety, accessibility, and heritage preservation improvements planned.
Memorial Hall	Designated heritage building that is home to the Christ Church Cathedral School. Life safety, accessibility, and heritage preservation improvements planned.
Yarrow Chapel	Designated heritage building that is currently home to the Archives. Building to undergo restoration.
The Deanery	To be relocated to another property owned by the Anglican Diocese.

**Phased Development by Quadrant:** The site has been delineated into four parcels, identified as Quadrants 1 through 4, each integral to the transformation of the city block while striking a judicious equilibrium between historical conservation and contemporary functionality. The quadrant numbers do not suggest a sequential approach. The order of development will depend on market conditions, partnership opportunities, and community need and demand. A proposed phasing and associated amenity contribution is outlined below.

*Table 2: Phasing and Associated Amenity and Frontage Improvements*

Phase	Amenities and Frontage Improvements
Quadrant 4 <b>Anticipated Phase 1</b>	Allocation of 10% of Diocese profits from the development of phase one will be allocated to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- life safety, accessibility, and heritage restoration of Christ Church Cathedral</li> <li>- Completion of Memorial Mews East</li> <li>- Restoration of Yarrow Chapel</li> <li>- Street improvements on Burdett Avenue and Vancouver Street (to center line)</li> </ul>
Quadrant 2 <b>Phase 2 (Alternate Phase 1)</b>	Cathedral Walk (SRW)  Allocation of 10% of Diocese profits from the development of phase two will be allocated to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Memorial Mews (center)</li> <li>- Relocation of The Deanery</li> <li>- Street improvements along Rockland Avenue and Burdett Avenue (to center line)</li> </ul>

	- Life safety, accessibility, and heritage restoration of Christ Church Cathedral and Memorial Hall.
Quadrant 1.1	<p>The timing of improvements in Q1.1, Q1.2, Q1.3, and Q3 are to be evaluated at the Development Permit stage. 10% of Diocese profits from the development of Q2 and Q4 may be allocated to the amenities and frontage improvements described at right.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life safety, accessibility, and heritage conservation improvements to Christ Church Cathedral</li> <li>- Street improvements along Quadra Street and Rockland Avenue</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: The Cathedral forecourt, shown on A-01-1-001 is an example of a potential street treatment that could be completed in conjunction with the development and subject to a cost sharing agreement with the City of Victoria and other surrounding developments</i></p>
Quadrant 1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Memorial Mews (west)</li> <li>- Landscaping, including planting new trees</li> <li>- Street Improvements along Quadra Street and Burdett Avenue</li> </ul>
Quadrant 1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construction of Cathedral House</li> <li>- Street Improvements along Burdett Avenue</li> </ul>
Quadrant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Construction of Memorial Hall Playground</li> <li>- Street Improvements along Rockland Avenue, and Vancouver Street</li> <li>- Life safety, accessibility, and heritage restoration of Christ Church Cathedral and Memorial Hall.</li> </ul>

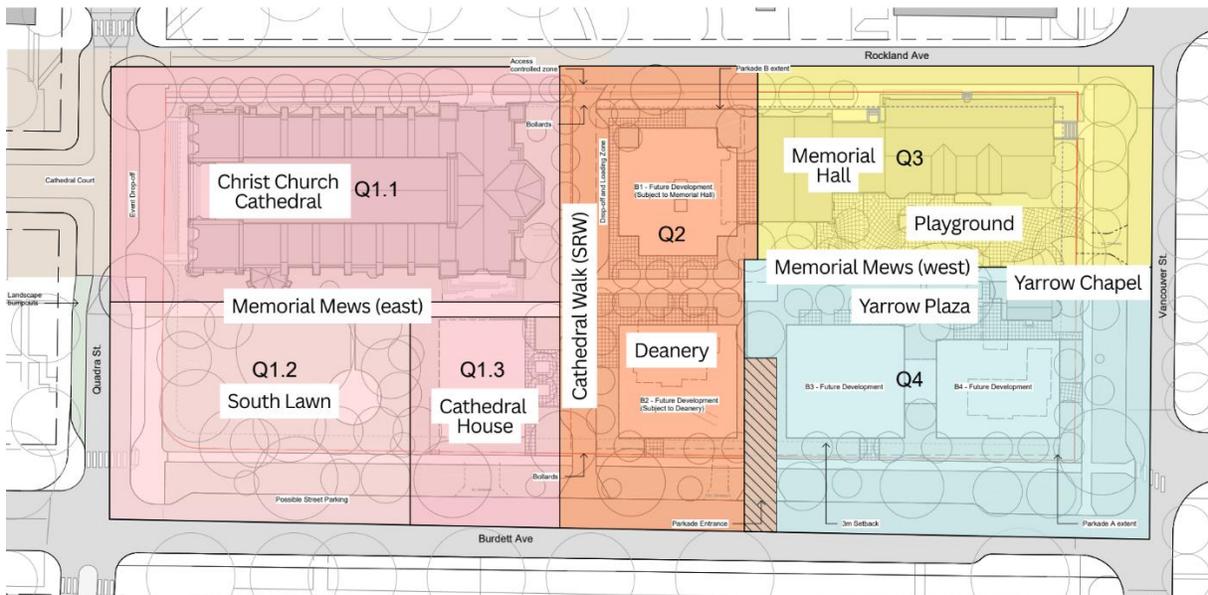


Figure 3: Cathedral Commons, amenities by quadrant

## Policy Framework

### Official Community Plan

Christ Church Cathedral is located within the Downtown Core (2050 OCP), in the northwest corner of the Fairfield neighbourhood. The new OCP identifies this site as a 'Special Density Area, as per map 14, Density Framework, and outlines other requirements to achieve a changes of density or use beyond the policies of the OCP. This project has been planning and designed under the previous OCP, the draft OCP, the new OCP and now this unique new site identification; as such, the plan remains committed to providing certainty and flexibility that consider key priorities of a variety of current plans and policies. The new OCP identifies this site as a 'Special Density Area' indicated.

Within DPA 1: General Urban Design and DPA 2: Downtown Core, the Victoria 2050 Official Community Plan outlines conditions and objectives that must be met to justify a special designation. The objectives relate to environmental protection, urban development, heritage conservation, and energy efficiency.

The Cathedral Commons masterplan and Cathedral Hill Precinct meet the objectives in the following ways:

- Hosting and continuing to grow the city's urban forest, including conservation and expansion of green space that supports a healthy urban forest with particular attention to large canopy trees
- Enhancement and creation of a unique district/node with a mix of commercial, institutional, and community-serving uses supporting residential and employment growth, featuring high quality buildings and open spaces
- Revitalization and activation of streetscapes to support economic development
- Embodiment of the perimeter block form of development that enables diverse scales of multi-unit residential, commercial, and industrial developments
- Preservation of heritage properties that balance heritage conservation with new development, while responding to a historic setting
- Integrating climate-forward stormwater management and infiltration into the landscape and open space plan to assist with mitigating climate impacts

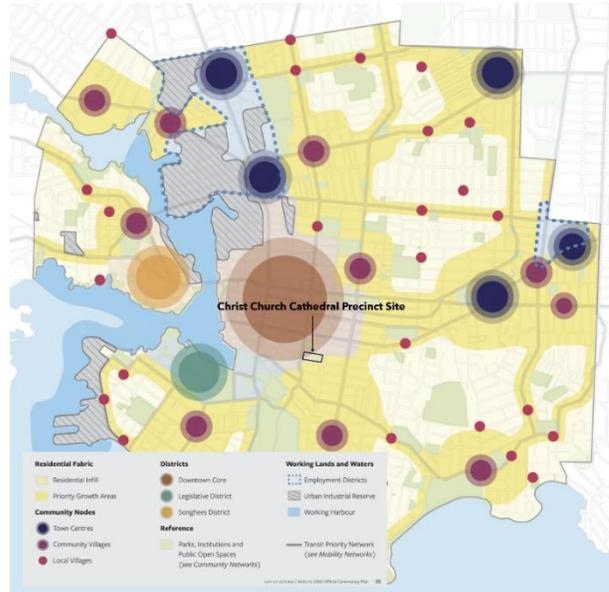


Figure 4: Victoria 2050 Official Community Plan

### Setbacks

In keeping with the Downtown Core Design Guidelines, a 3m minimum perimeter setback for all new buildings is proposed to provide space for either residential yards or commercial patios depending on final use. This offset also maintains the presence of the existing heritage structures on Rockland Avenue. Between new buildings, the side yard building separation is

a minimum of 10m. A minimum of 14m building separation is proposed for the rear between residential buildings. To maintain the prominence of the Cathedral on the site we have proposed a minimum 15m setback from the east elevation and 8m from the south.

### **Perimeter Block Concept**

The Victoria 2050 OCP outlines the envisioned urban form and design principles for future developments. The key framework for this vision of the residential fabric is guided by the Perimeter Block Concept. The proposed development framework for the Cathedral Hill site aligns to each of these key concepts of the Perimeter Block while respecting the heritage buildings on site. Cathedral Walk and Memorial Mews and the adjacent green spaces provide open space in the interior of the block. Buildings are located on the edge of the site with a 3m setback to allow for planting. Small floor plates, community and commercial spaces, and ground-oriented residential units provide the desired fine-grained rhythm, and buildings are oriented front-to-back to encourage activity on the street and in the interior of the block with entrances oriented towards the public streets and programming and publicly accessible landscaping on the inside of the block.

### **View Analysis**

By locating new development on the east half of the site and protecting Cathedral Commons, the views of the bell towers are maintained and celebrated. Furthermore, the addition on Cathedral Walk creates public space for pedestrians to better enjoy the stained-glass windows on the east end addition.

### **Fairfield Community Plan:**

The proposed FSR for the site is 2.4, which is in keeping with the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan and the maximum density allowable. By applying the design principles, density can be allocated in a way that is at a human scale, in keeping with the surrounding context and creating a network of pedestrian friendly pathways

### **Project Benefits & Amenities**

Historically, the Cathedral and Diocese have addressed community need through wide and diverse ministries. This proposal will allow for these ministries to continue alongside new opportunities, and the long-term protection and enhancement of the Cathedral as a civic amenity within an ever-changing local and regional context. In addition to the formal amenities listed above in the project description, the Cathedral Commons application will achieve many civic benefits, including:

#### **Economic**

- This masterplan focuses on creating a strong but flexible framework to meet future generations' needs while providing certainty in the quality and form of delivery to respect cultural, heritage and community goals.
- Rezoning enables the creation of new tourist attractions and opportunities to highlight a historic Victoria landmark

#### **Reconciliation**

- The Cathedral Commons project and ongoing conversations with the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations seek to progress several of the Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues Calls to Action. For example, we intend to include *lək'wəŋən* place names on site

signage and develop public acknowledgements of current and historical lək'wəŋən leaders (#6), ensure history, recognition of lands, stories, language, and presence is included in artistic lək'wəŋən and architectural expressions (#8), and acknowledge the legitimacy of lək'wəŋən oral history (#9). Conversations are already underway and will continue throughout the masterplan development.

### **Arts, Culture & Heritage**

- Renovations to the interior of Christ Church Cathedral to enhance accessibility and reconfigure the space to better serve as an arts, culture, multi-purpose venue
- Seismic upgrades to three heritage designated properties - Christ Church Cathedral, Memorial Hall, Yarrow Chapel - to ensure they continue to stand for generations as exemplars of the city's development

### **Environmental**

- Enhanced rain gardens, soil cell systems, permeable paving, and green corridors to maximize rainfall infiltration and diverse ecosystem opportunities.
- In addition to trees on grade in areas of open landscaping, a combination of proposed planters on slab will be connected beneath hardscape areas to allow for tree roots to access more soil to help promote healthy mature growth.

### **Social**

- The residential development opportunities proposed in the masterplan will increase the housing stock in the region by up to 300 units
- Improvements and expansion of the Christ Church Cathedral School playground in conjunction with landscaping, stormwater management, tree replacement and protection, creating an additional family-friendly play space outside of school hours
- Community gathering spaces and opportunities for inclusion and community development

### **Public Amenities**

- Construction of a dedicated amenity building, Cathedral House, that will provide new Cathedral and Diocese offices, support spaces (e.g. commercial kitchen, event rental space, multi-purpose rooms) and be available for use by other community groups
- New secured and publicly accessible north-south and east-west green connectors (Cathedral Walk SRW and Memorial Mews) and corridors across the site, including stronger connections to the existing Pioneer Square and the South Lawn.

### **Need & Demand**

This masterplan focuses on creating a strong but flexible framework to meet future generations' needs while providing certainty in quality and form of delivery to respect cultural, heritage and community goals. This includes the ability to continue addressing gaps in arts, culture, non-profit support, music, education, and culturally responsive programming through below-market space provision and services. Four years ago, we undertook space needs assessments with our arts and cultural partners and renters, alongside the City of Victoria; this work has informed the Cathedral Commons masterplan. The findings have been included in this submission. (See the Building For The Future: Phase One & Two Reports in the appendices)

We have always viewed ourselves as stewards of the lands and buildings with which we have been gifted. Increasingly, a large part of this stewardship is the preservation, conservation, and very costly renewal of heritage assets – assets which require change and renewal *in order to be preserved*.

## Engagement

As potential site designs emerged, the Building For The Future (BTF) team shared more information with interested parties across a range of venues and channels. The formal pre-application engagement process specifically included:

- Project introductions with the Boards of the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association and Downtown Residents Association
- A pre-application meeting with the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association Land Use Committee
- Two open houses at the Cathedral for both congregants and interested community members
- Two online sessions for interested community members; and
- A design workshop with City staff and representatives of neighbourhood landowners with major development proposals underway.

Invitations to the above events were sent via e-mail to organizations and individuals identified in early engagement phases and the feedback received throughout these processes have all informed the site design and planning decisions that informed this proposal.

Regular updates about the Master Plan project are posted to the Christ Church Cathedral's Building for the Future website [here](#).

## Project Goals

This application demonstrates our willingness to undertake an extensive planning exercise to proactively address the complex challenges facing both the Diocese and the community at large. We know that a better world is possible but only if we come together with consideration, care, innovation, and foresight. After two years of design and three years of community engagement, this project is proceeding with the following ambitious and necessary goals at the forefront:

1. Retention of community assets
2. Housing for all
3. Economic sustainability
4. Heritage preservation, conservation and renewal
5. Leading by example as stewards of faith-based lands for social good
6. Modeling meaningful Reconciliation

From the above project goals and extensive community engagement, we derived the following three project objectives.

### Project Objective #1: Cathedral Commons as a Community Landmark

The masterplan process began with a needs assessment among Cathedral users. Two themes emerged: First, a need to upgrade the Cathedral's interior spaces so they can be used for a wider range of purposes and by a wider cross-section of the community. Second, a desire to make the Cathedral more attractive and more accessible in its context.

The strategy for public space and landscape interventions on Cathedral Commons prioritizes maintaining the Cathedral's compositional prominence. This ensures that the Cathedral will retain its position as a standalone building within a green, park-like environment. This strategy aims to build a symbiotic relationship with neighbours, ensuring that any new

development contributes positively to the human-scale street environments found in the area.

The proposed development framework provides a foundation to make existing spaces more accessible and create more opportunities to deliver community value.

**Project Objective #2: Create development density to expand the social, community and cultural offerings on site**

This objective underscores the need to develop revenue to support the future financial viability, renovation and upkeep of the heritage assets on site. This will be achieved through phased development, as negotiated through a master development agreement (MDA) with the city throughout the rezoning process.

**Project Objective #3: Retain, celebrate and enhance Cathedral Common’s heritage**

The proposed development framework works with the existing heritage assets to celebrate their presence and to deploy them as noteworthy features defining the identity of the redevelopment.

**Neighbourhood**

**Christ Church Cathedral Precinct**

Christ Church Cathedral is situated at the eastern end of Courtney Street, in a unique, park-like context. A contiguous green area, consisting of Cathedral Commons and Pioneer Square, straddles Rockland Avenue, with the Courthouse Green to the west. Here the city transitions from the Downtown Business District with large building footprints to more residential, mid and low-rise neighbourhoods with tree-lined streets. The Cathedral Hill site provides a unique opportunity for redevelopment that will knit these two distinct urban forms together. By activating the site with increased density and neighbourhood services, it has the opportunity to anchor the south-east corner of the Downtown Core.



Figure 5: View looking north and south on Cathedral Walk

The site contains three designated heritage buildings, making it one of the most significant historical assets within the city. The proposal seeks to renew, retain, and restore these valuable heritage buildings, as set out by the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, while also expanding their use for residents and visitors alike. The costs associated with the required structural upgrades and renovations are significant. By

allowing for development density on the site, the city can support the Diocese to ensure these heritage assets will be safe, accessible and secure for future generations.

### Massing Rationale

The development framework sets out an approach to building footprint, landscape structure, and defines site circulation, transportation strategies and vehicular access for servicing. The strategy has a ‘pedestrian first’ approach while making significant moves to enhance the functionality and accessibility of the whole precinct. By locating new development on the east half of the site and protecting Cathedral Commons (South Lawn), the views of the bell towers are maintained and celebrated. Furthermore, the addition on Cathedral Walk creates public space for pedestrians to better enjoy the stained-glass windows on the east end addition.

Christ Church Cathedral is a protected heritage property. As part of the City Form guidelines, views to the Cathedral are to be maintained from the public realm “by careful consideration of new development within a 90m radius.” The key elements that define the heritage character of Christ Church Cathedral, as documented in the *Heritage Conservation Plan* (Cummer, 2025) include the bell towers on the west of the building, the outdoor pulpit to the south, the flying buttresses, stained glass windows (historic and modern), and the front facade rose window

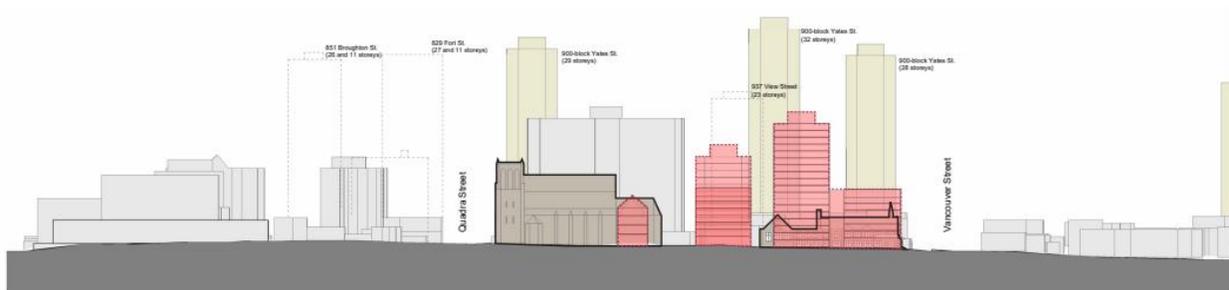


Figure 6: Skyline Analysis of neighbouring developments, approved and proposed

### Impacts

#### On-Site Impacts

There are no on-site residential tenants, however, there are over 60 regular user groups who make use of the Cathedral for a variety of ticketed and free events, concerts, religious and spiritual activities, support groups, yoga classes, etc. These groups will be consulted prior to construction to minimize disruption and collaborate on mitigation strategies. The development quadrants outlined earlier in this letter serve to separate out the phases of development allowing life at the Cathedral Precinct to continue on the rest of the site. Discussions are ongoing with the Christ Church Cathedral School at Memorial Hall to ensure their long-term presence on site, and to coordinate development in Q2 alongside necessary seismic upgrades.

## Neighbourhood Impact

The City of Victoria is set to have significant changes to its skyline in the next 10 years. The Cathedral Commons site is located on the edge of the Downtown Core Area where many of these developments are located. The proposed building heights of the Cathedral Commons masterplan at 8, 8, 12, and 18 storeys are in line with the upcoming developments in the immediate neighbourhood.

## Design & Development Permit Guidelines

This masterplan application proposes a framework that builds on various charrettes, and engagements held with the city over the last two years. The Cathedral Commons masterplan will create a north-south connection breaking up the scale of the lot, connect the site to Pioneer Square, create an east-west connection which will improve connectivity and permeability of the site and making the Cathedral part of Pioneer Park. The strategy has a 'pedestrian-first' approach that makes significant moves to enhance the functionality and accessibility of the whole site.

Based on direction from the city, the overall FSR was reduced from 2.5 provided in our earlier submissions to 2.4, and density was shifted from behind the Cathedral to the southeast on Burdett, with additional height added to the two midrise buildings. The proposed development balances the heritage buildings on site with the need for new development to finance their upgrades and restoration. The current FSR of the site is 0.5. Current zoning for the site allows for an FSR of 2.0 with a maximum height of 22.5m, which upon testing results in the crowding of heritage assets, development on Cathedral Commons and reduced site porosity. The proposed FSR for the site is 2.4, which is in keeping with the proposed 2.6 FSR in Priority Growth Areas as outlined in the Zoning Modernization, Proposed Amendment Bylaws, and 2.5 FSR for adjacent city blocks in the DCAP (2025) density framework. By applying the design principles, density can be allocated in a way that is at a human scale, in keeping with the surrounding context and creating a network of pedestrian friendly pathways that aligns with the Perimeter Block Form as outlined in the Victoria 2050 OCP.

## Safety & Security

The proposal seeks to address the significant increase in community safety concerns around the site. This was one of the top concerns communicated during engagement with current site visitors and users, and the adjacent development community. The project team has worked collaboratively with the city to undertake a CPTED analysis that informed the landscape and design suggestions included in this application. The lack of activity throughout all hours on-site and in the adjacent Pioneer Square and Rockland Avenue is known to be one of the larger contributors to the unsafe activities and behaviours on and near the site. Welcoming new uses, such as permanent housing and commercial activities, along with new active transportation corridors and improved soft and hard landscape features, will bring new light and activity to the site, putting 'eyes on the street' to support community safety, inclusion and well-being.

## Transportation

The site has a walk score of 95, indicating daily errands do not require a vehicle. It has immediate access to the Vancouver Street all-ages and abilities (AAA) bike route and is within

short distance of the Fort Street, Humboldt Street, and Richardson Street AAA cycling network.



*Figure 7: View looking north-east along Burdett Ave*

The south side accommodates a single access point for both Parkade A and B. A north-south lane through the site serves loading, parking, and drop-off zones. Vancouver Street features a dedicated drop-off zone for Memorial Hall School.

Day to day access and site functions will be delivered from streets, enhanced by a central zone (Cathedral Walk) with controlled access providing accessible parking, drop-off for Cathedral visitors, and event day access for transportation vehicles and servicing. New developments will be serviced from the central zone and street network. The proposed

masterplan allows fire truck access to all new buildings from public streets on all four sides. All primary entrances are within the maximum 15m, minimum 3m from the street as per BC Building Code 2024 3.2.5.6.

### Heritage

Three buildings within Cathedral Commons are designated heritage buildings: Christ Church Cathedral, Yarrow Chapel, and Memorial Hall. Despite previous assumptions, a fourth building on the site, the Deanery, does not have heritage status, although it is included on the City of Victoria’s heritage registry. The buildings have heritage significance for their aesthetic historical, cultural, social, and spiritual value. Statements of Significance were written for these four buildings in 2007, and all were added to the Canadian Register of Historic Places in 2010. The original statements have recently been updated and amended by Cummer Heritage Consulting, which has been retained for this project. These Statements of Significance, particularly their lists of Character Defining Elements (CDEs), will be used to guide all proposed work on these buildings to ensure their heritage value is maintained and enhanced.



*Figure 8: (Left to Right) Christ Church Cathedral, Yarrow Chapel, Memorial Hall, The Deanery*

### Site History

Christ Church Cathedral is situated on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish and

ləkʷəŋən speaking people, specifically the Songhees and Xwsepsum First Nations. "Church Hill" was formerly covered in Oak trees, suggesting kwetlal (camas), an important Indigenous food staple, may have grown here. The hill overlooked xwszyq'əm (whu-SEI-kum, "place of mud"), known to settlers as James Bay, which contained valuable clam beds.

The Cathedral's beginning is closely connected to the Hudson's Bay Company and the founding of British Columbia. There were two earlier iterations before the current version: one built in 1860 which burnt down in 1869, and a second built in 1872. In 1891, architect J.C.M. Keith won a competition to design the new stone Cathedral but wouldn't see it built for nearly forty years due to funding issues, two World Wars, and the Great Depression, resulting in today's "Unfinished Cathedral." Historical records show ongoing challenges throughout the 20th century with raising funds to maintain the site.

### **Conservation and Revitalization Plans**

Today, work is proposed to conserve the designated heritage buildings and extend their physical life, while simultaneously revitalizing the site through new development in strategic locations to provide much-needed revenue that will fund and support the ongoing work and expense of maintaining these heritage buildings in perpetuity. As part of the revitalization of the site, the heritage buildings will be preserved, restored, and rehabilitated, using each asset's Character Defining Elements (CDEs) as a guide. The proposed changes to Cathedral Commons do not affect the Heritage Values nor the CDEs of these historic places. Heritage Conservation Plans are being researched and written for each of these heritage buildings as part of this rezoning application, which will provide greater detail on the proposed conservation work. RJC Engineers has been engaged to provide seismic and structural upgrade plans for the heritage buildings, work that is currently underway.

### **Climate-forward Building Features**

The Cathedral Commons masterplan project is a multigenerational project. As such, ensuring climate-forward building features are considered is important to the longevity of the project and the overall wellbeing of those who live, work, and visit the Cathedral Commons. To that end, the following climate forward building features have already been integrated into the masterplan.

- **Building retention & reuse:** The Deanery will be restored and relocated off-site to another Diocese property in the CRD. The three designated heritage assets on site will be preserved, restored, and rehabilitated.
- **Transportation & multimodal design:** The design embraces multi-modal design and connectivity, including a pedestrian focused design, integration with AAA facilities and cycling corridors, mid-block pathways, proximity to transit stops and long-term transit improvements in the area. A transportation demand management memo has been provided to indicate what measures will be provided to minimize private vehicle use and demand.
- **Green infrastructure:** The landscape plan reflects a diverse range of green infrastructure elements including rainwater and stormwater management in the form of bioswales and permeable paving, a soil depth and soil zone plan, as well as a tree retention plan that will increase the urban tree canopy and support the ongoing development of an urban forest. The Design Guidelines outline the native, climate-adapted, food-bearing, and pollinator species that will further restore and enhance the healthy natural ecology of the site.

The following benchmarks and targets will be integrated by the design team at the development permit stage to support both current and future generations.

- Targeting Zero Carbon Building Standard
- Prioritizing the use of low embodied carbon materials and/or carbon-sequestering materials
- Fully electrifying mechanical systems
- Exceeding required BC Energy Step Code
- Including measures to ensure indoor air quality during forest fire smoke events
- Minimizing overheating risk beyond minimum requirements using mechanical and passive cooling techniques, including tree shading
- Including new or emerging technology and/or techniques to achieve higher carbon and energy performance

## Urban Forestry Landscape Plan

The landscape intent is to strengthen physical and visual connections in the area while introducing a clear identity for Cathedral Hill, envisioned as Cathedral Commons. Existing and proposed edges of surrounding properties will seek to increase public activation with the introduction of added public spaces at critical corners. Protecting, enhancing and increasing the urban forest is a priority of this project. The plan emphasizes selection of native or native adaptive species that offer appropriate form and character, habitat value, and climate resiliency suited to the existing site conditions. It also aims to restore pre-development landscapes while identifying opportunities to reintroduce Garry oak ecosystem plantings and tree communities helping to support the local biodiversity and increase the urban canopy to help advance the City of Victoria Forest Masterplan.



Figure 9: Cathedral Commons Landscape Plan, Updated February 2026

## Tree Retention and Replacement Plan

Project arborists Gye + Associates have identified a total of 27 trees for removal within this

application. Some of the trees that are identified for removal are considered invasive species and/or are in poor condition. Accommodations have been made wherever possible to retain high quality trees. Based on a property of this size, 68 trees are required. The tree retention and replacement plan find that a total of 68 trees can be accommodated on site. To ensure healthy root development and proper growth for all tree types and species, a minimum soil depth of 900mm for trees, 450mm for shrubs, and 300mm for groundcovers will be provided throughout the project area.

### **Stormwater Retention**

The landscape plan incorporates rain gardens, including green corridors and bulb outs, to maximize rainfall infiltration opportunities. These rain gardens will provide stormwater management while extending habitat within the site's open space systems, with the goal of enhancing habitat value through diverse plantings suited to on-site conditions.

Stormwater management principles, particularly detention through soil cell systems, will be used to increase on-site retention capacity and help manage peak runoff during both major and minor storm events. To further enhance rainfall infiltration and groundwater recharging, permeable paving or permeable paving systems should be installed throughout the site. In areas where achieving required growing medium targets is challenging, soil cells or structural soil should be implemented to ensure optimal conditions for healthy, mature canopy growth while also facilitating stormwater retention. While promotion of local biodiversity will be the main target of the landscape urban forest approach, consideration for native adaptive species will also be included for private areas including patios and courtyards which can flourish in typically altered conditions including above ground planters, soils on slab and microclimates affected by climate change.

### **Infrastructure**

The development framework sets out an approach to building footprint, landscape structure and defines site circulation, transportation strategies and vehicular access for servicing. Day to day access and site functions will be delivered by arrival, parking, and servicing from streets, which is enhanced by the inclusion of a central zone with controlled access. Existing site servicing is located in Quadrant 2. Conceptual design of a new sewer main on Burdett Avenue has been shown on the civil drawings complete with pipe sizes, elevations, and slopes to demonstrate the feasibility of this approach. Individual building service locations are shown; however, size will be determined at Development Permit stage. A sanitary attenuation report will be completed for the entire site prior to Development Permit submission, or if required following COTW and before first bylaw reading. If sanitary attenuation is required, it will be accommodated within the building footprints. The applicant is amenable to including confirmation of servicing and appropriate phasing in the master development agreement (MDA).

### **Conclusion**

The Cathedral and Diocese look forward to this once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect and shape the future of one of Victoria's most important urban places. Cathedral Commons is a crucial cultural, community, and heritage asset and a significant feature of the Victoria's landscape. This plan aims to secure additional land uses that celebrate and protect Cathedral Commons heritage, increase the vitality and accessibility of Cathedral Commons to the direct

and larger community, while providing flexibility and new opportunities for what the site can become in the future.

The project team welcomes the opportunity for collaboration and partnerships throughout this rezoning process to achieve an iconic public space for the city for generations to come.

Sincerely,



**Brendon Neilson**

*Executive Director  
Anglican Diocese of Islands and Inlets*