



May 29, 2025

Mayor Alto, Council and the Community Association Land Use Committee
The City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Attention: Mayor, Council and the Community Association Land Use Committee

Dear Mayor Alto, Council and the Community Association Land Use Committee,

RE: Project Summary and Rationale Letter – 517 / 533 Chatham Street & 532 / 536 Herald Street

Intracorp is pleased to submit this proposal for a new mixed-use residential infill development located at 517-533 Chatham Street, and 532-536 Herald Street.

Located within the Historic Commercial District of Downtown Victoria, the site is comprised of six lots all currently zoned Old Town District-1 (OTD-1). This proposal has been shaped based on the guidance provided by the Official Community Plan, Downtown Core Area Plan and Old Town Design Guidelines and reflects a comprehensive and thoughtful response to the area's rich architectural heritage, urban character, and evolving community needs.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

- Zoning (Existing): OTD-1
- Zoning (Proposed): OTD-1
- Proposed Land Use: Residential, Retail Trade
- Height: 6-storeys, ~21.5m. Variance requested to accommodate the additional height from the 15 m height noted in the Downtown Core Area Plan.
- Total Floor Area: 10,322 sq m
- Dwelling Units: 134 homes, consisting of a mix of studios, 1-bedrooms, 2-bedrooms, 3-bedrooms and ground-oriented loft style units.
- Maximum Allowable Density: 3.00 FAR
- Existing Density to Remain: 1.17 FAR
- Proposed Infill Density: 1.83 FAR
- Total Proposed Density: 3.00 FAR

This application proposes an infill six-storey residential building with neighbourhood-serving retail at the ground floor along Chatham Street. It will transform an underutilized parking lot and accessory building into 134 new homes, helping meet Victoria's housing demand while supporting a diverse community. The building will be designed to meet BC Energy Step Code 3 and Zero Carbon Emissions Level 4 standards.

This development proposal aligns with the overall intent of the OTD-1 zoning bylaw, while requesting a height variance to approximately 21.5 m, or six storeys. The proposed height is contextually appropriate within the context of the neighboring Capital Iron Arts & Innovation District immediately adjacent north, which comprises buildings up to 14 storeys envisioned along Chatham Street. The addition of a sixth storey contributes to a varied roofline, enhancing architectural interest along the block, and gives each building a distinct and recognizable character.



PROJECT BENEFITS AND AMENITIES

This project presents a meaningful opportunity to contribute to one of Victoria's most historic and character-rich neighbourhoods. The design respects the neighborhood heritage while introducing a contemporary architectural expression, delivering 134 new homes, neighbourhood-serving retail that supports local businesses, and a new public pocket park and pedestrian passthrough alleyway that adds much-needed green space and draws inspiration from the surrounding cultural character. The overarching vision is to deliver lasting public value through housing, open space, and urban design, strengthening the community while honouring its legacy. This proposal emphasizes six key public benefits:

- **134 New Homes in the Downtown Core Area**
The project delivers 134 new homes which will support a diverse range of households and helps address current and future housing needs, while encouraging a vibrant and inclusive downtown community.
- **New Public Pocket Park**
A new 7,400-square-foot public pocket park on Herald Street will introduce much-needed green space to Downtown Victoria, offering a place for rest, gathering, and community interaction.
- **Extending a Public Passageway Corridor**
The site connects Herald Street and Chatham Street through a continuous pedestrian connection that includes a public Pocket Park, a landscaped courtyard, and two urban passages inspired by Victoria's historic alleyways. These passages directly extend Dragon Alley across Herald Street, enhancing mid-block connectivity.
- **Activating the Public Realm on Chatham Street**
Drawing from the historic character of surrounding streets, the project offers a contemporary interpretation of neighbourhood values through active frontage, high-quality materials, and thoughtful design. This helps reinforce local identity while contributing to a lively and engaging streetscape.
- **Neighbourhood-Serving Retail**
More than 6,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space along Chatham Street will support local businesses, provide everyday amenities, and activate the public realm, adding vibrancy to the pedestrian realm.
- **Off-Site Streetscape Improvements**
The proposal includes improvements to the Chatham Street frontage, including new sidewalks and enhanced pedestrian connections. These upgrades will support a future crosswalk, connecting the site to the Capital Iron Arts & Innovation District to the north.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

This proposal advances the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan by focusing new housing and mixed-use development within the Urban Core and aligns closely with the vision for a dynamic, high-density, downtown. The proposal contributes to this vision by introducing a mixed-use residential infill development which supports the intensification of land use in the Urban Core while preserving the unique character of Historic Commercial District. In recognition of its location within the Core Historic sub-area, the proposal emphasizes contextual design. The building's articulation, continuous street wall frontage, and human-scaled massing reflect the historical lotting and architectural rhythm of the surrounding neighbourhood, ensuring a respectful and coherent urban presence. At the ground level, offsite improvements may include widened sidewalks, a bicycle path, active commercial frontages, and mid-block connection contributing to a vibrant and walkable public realm, reinforcing the OCP's goal of enhancing pedestrian experience and supporting alternative transportation modes.



The project site is located within the Historic Commercial District (HCD) of the Downtown Core Area Plan. There are several objectives specific to this district, supported by several policies and actions. The proposed development is intended to support each applicable objective as follows:

- That the placemaking character of the HCD is retained and continues to contribute to Victoria's competitive advantage as a destination for retail, entertainment and tourism.
Response: The design and planning intent of the project are directly informed by the historic context and urban fabric of the HCD. The proposal aspires to reinforce the character of the neighbourhood through sensitive massing, material selection, and ground-level activation.
- That the HCD becomes a model for sensitive integration of new infill development and public realm improvements into the historic environment.
Response: The proposal employs a courtyard housing typology to provide a variety of livable homes while integrating ground-floor retail to animate and contribute to the public realm. The design prioritizes compatibility with the historic setting.
- That the HCD is able to attract and accommodate growth in the tourism, retail, entertainment sectors.
Response: The addition of retail uses at grade introduces a significant amount of leasable commercial space, creating opportunities for new businesses and contributing to the area's vitality.
- That the compact, diverse, low-scale and small-lot character of the HCD is retained.
Response: The design responds to the historic lot pattern and scale by articulating the massing to break down the building's form. The proposal respects the rhythm and built form that characterize the HCD.
- That the local population base is increased through the integration of residential dwellings on the upper storeys of existing buildings.
Response: Although this is a new building, the project will introduce 134 homes, including studios, one-, two-, and three-bedroom homes. The majority of the units are dual-exposure oriented, offering natural light and ventilation from two directions.

NEED AND DEMAND

This proposal supports many of the OCP objectives, as well as the Victoria Housing Strategy. This proposal aims to provide housing options to meet the needs of the City's current and future residents from all walks of life.

The proposal also supports thoughtful infill development by adding new housing without displacing existing residents. It makes use of underutilized land to introduce needed homes to accommodate Victoria's steadily growing population. Further, accessible green space remains limited in the urban core. As density increases, the need for high-quality public open space becomes more urgent, with residents, workers, and visitors facing fewer opportunities to connect with nature. This proposal responds directly to that need with the inclusion of the pocket park fronting Herald Street.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

The proposal relates to the neighbourhood and immediate context by aligning with the maximum FAR of 3.0 outlined in the OTD-1 zoning bylaw. A courtyard typology has been thoughtfully designed to accommodate the infill density as a response to the limited site area, with consideration provided to ensure a continuous street wall along Chatham Street resulting in an enhanced public realm at street level.

The site plays a key role in the network of courtyards, squares, and alleyways that define the Historic Commercial District's unique urban fabric. Positioned at the northern end of this pedestrian system, it



directly aligns with Dragon Alley across Herald Street, allowing for a seamless extension of the public realm. The project builds on this connection by integrating a series of pedestrian pathways, including a public Pocket Park, that reinterpret and extend these historic passageways in a contemporary context. Along Chatham Street, the proposal strengthens the street wall with active, ground-floor retail that serves the neighbourhood, animates the public realm, and reflects the materiality, rhythm, and scale that define the area's heritage character.

IMPACTS

This proposal has been designed to fit seamlessly into the surrounding urban environment, contributing to the area's character and function through the public amenities provided such as the public pocket park, mid-block connection and neighbourhood-serving retail. The proposal aims to enhance vibrancy in the existing neighborhood through thoughtful redevelopment of an underutilized parking lot.

The existing Biggerstaff and B. Wilson buildings included in the site consolidation will be retained, ensuring no residential tenants being displaced. The proposal offers an opportunity to improve underutilized land while positively contributing to the vitality of the neighbourhood.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT GUIDELINES: DOWNTOWN CORE AREA PLAN

The proposal directly supports several key sections of the Downtown Core Area Plan by introducing a connected public realm network and delivering meaningful open space in the heart of the Historic Commercial District. The following elements illustrate how the design responds to and reinforces DCAP objectives:

- **The Passages**
Supports DCAP Section 5.38 – “Mid-Block Street Crossings”
The project introduces new mid-block pedestrian connections that align with DCAP's call for enhanced permeability through “mid-block walkways” and future “mid-block street crossings.” The proposed Passages extend the character of the Historic Commercial District's historic alleyways, improving pedestrian flow between Herald and Chatham Streets. Upgrades also include off-site infrastructure and accessibility upgrades that further integrate the project into the surrounding public realm.
- **The Pocket Park**
Supports DCAP Section 6.25 – “New Parks, Plazas and Open Space”
The proposed 7,400-square-foot public Pocket Park along Herald Street addresses a significant greenspace gap in the area. Serving as a pedestrian gateway to the broader site, the park links seamlessly to Chatham Street via the internal Courtyard and Passages. Designed with a variety of seating, planting, and gathering areas, the Pocket Park will provide a welcoming space for residents, workers, and visitors alike, enhancing the livability of the neighbourhood.
- **The Courtyard**
Supports DCAP Section 3.33 – “Ground-Oriented Residential Uses”
In accordance with DCAP guidance on residential adjacency to through-block walkways, the project introduces a central Courtyard that acts as a semi-private amenity space for residents. This landscaped, daylight area serves as the heart of the development, where both public Passages converge. Residential units facing the Courtyard help animate this space throughout the day, creating passive surveillance and a strong sense of place within the block.



DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT GUIDELINES: OLD TOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

This proposal has also been carefully designed to align with the architectural values and principles outlined in the Old Town Design Guidelines (2019), while supporting the objectives of the Downtown Core Area Plan. Through its material palette, street-level activation, scale, and massing, the project reflects the unique character of the Historic Commercial District while introducing high-quality, contemporary urban design.

- **Active Ground-Floor Uses and Retail Character**
Neighbourhood-serving, ground-oriented retail along Chatham Street is a key component of the proposal. These commercial units are designed at a scale appropriate for the context, with typical frontages ranging from 12 to 18 feet to reflect historic lot widths (OTD 5.4.2). The ground-floor height exceeds 4.5 metres (OTD 5.4.3), with integrated weather protection, pedestrian-scale lighting, and welcoming entries that foster a vibrant, safe, and animated streetscape (OTD 5.4.7–5.4.10). This aligns with DCAP Objective 3.24 to prioritize active commercial uses at the street level.
- **Street Wall Continuity and Historic Rhythm**
The proposal continues the strong street wall condition of Chatham Street, aligning with adjacent developments such as the Ironworks building. The building façade is articulated to express the rhythm of traditional 20-metre (66-foot) lot widths (OTD 5.1.8 and 5.2.4), reinforcing the historic urban grain of the area. Architectural detailing explores proportion, material variation, and window/balcony rhythms in support of OTD 5.2.5, ensuring continuity while offering a fresh interpretation.
- **Human-Scaled Streetscape and Parkade Integration**
The parkade entrance is discreetly integrated within the ground-level massing to maintain visual continuity along the commercial frontage. Designed to match the retail bays in scale and rhythm, the parkade blends into the streetscape while ensuring convenient access (OTD 5.7).
- **Material Expression and Horizontal Articulation**
Materials under consideration include high-quality brick, textured metal panels, and glazing—all selected for their ability to age gracefully and harmonize with the industrial and historic character of the HCD. The upper portions of the building will incorporate a distinct and contemporary roofline (OTD 5.1.4), while maintaining alignment with established horizontal datums found in adjacent heritage buildings.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The design of the building and public realm has considered the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Building design can maximize opportunities for natural surveillance, which limits opportunity for crime. Well lit spaces, sufficient glazing, and an active public realm were all considerations.

The building's circulation is designed to be external but contained within the interior courtyard, enhancing connectivity and visibility while preserving privacy (OTD 5.6.5). This design supports CPTED principles by encouraging movement and fostering passive surveillance. The inclusion of a public Pocket Park and active commercial edges further supports safety and a welcoming public realm.

HERITAGE AND INSPIRATION

The proposed development honors the heritage significance of the site by preserving the Biggerstaff Building and B. Wilson Building, two landmark historic structures that enrich downtown Victoria's character. The design draws inspiration from these buildings, ensuring the new infill building complements and integrates seamlessly with the surrounding historic context. By retaining the heritage fabric and reflecting



their architectural language in the new construction, the proposal reinforces the neighborhood's unique identity and supports both cultural preservation and sensitive urban growth.

TRANSPORTATION

This site is well-positioned within Victoria's active transportation network, offering residents easy and convenient access to a range of sustainable travel options. Located along key cycling routes and within proximity to several high-frequency transit routes, the project encourages reduced car dependency and supports a healthier, more environmentally conscious lifestyle. While the development includes parking for both residential and commercial uses, it also features enhanced bicycle facilities that exceed the City's minimum requirements, promoting cycling as a practical and appealing mode of everyday transportation. Identified in the Official Community Plan as a key mobility hub, the site's connectivity aligns seamlessly with Victoria's broader goals for sustainable growth and climate leadership.

CLIMATE-FORWARD BUILDING FEATURES

A core tenet of this project is the inclusion of dual aspect residential units, which enhance livability by providing access to natural light and air from dual-exposure orientations. This design promotes passive cooling, helping to keep units comfortable during the warmer months. Most units benefit from natural light on both sides, while the common circulation areas are naturally ventilated, reducing overall energy use. This building form aligns with the urban context of downtown Victoria, where nearby buildings similarly incorporate courtyards of varying sizes to achieve these environmental benefits. The project is designed to meet BC Energy Step Code 3 and Zero Carbon Emissions Level 4 standards. Additionally, a weather-protected breezeway contributes to an improved public realm, offering sheltered outdoor space for residents and visitors alike.

The following are the other preliminary strategies being explored as part of the green building features:

- Improved building shape design to mitigate the heat loss intensity from reduced vertical surface area to floor area ratio.
- Appropriate window-to-wall ratio to balance advantageous passive heating gains and daylight usage versus disadvantageous heat loss in cold seasons and overheating in warm seasons.
- Passive cooling from distributed balconies for solar shading, low-E coating on glazing for solar heat gain control, and operable windows and patio doors for natural ventilation.
- High efficiency building envelope for thermal energy demand reduction.
- Air barrier continuity, commissioning, and testing to meet an appropriate level of airtightness for limiting uncontrolled air infiltration / exfiltration and the associated heat losses.
- Enhanced indoor air quality and energy demand reduction from high efficiency heat / energy recovery ventilators in all residential suites and amenity areas.
- Electrified, low carbon energy systems for space heating, cooling, and domestic water heating in compliance with EL-4 targets.
- High efficiency lighting with smart controls in the applicable common area

URBAN FORESTRY

In accordance with the City of Victoria's Tree Protection Bylaw, this project proposes to retain the majority of existing on-site trees and add over 40 new trees. Some trees, including two municipal street trees along Chatham Street, will require removal or relocation to accommodate the design and ensure a continuous street wall and enabling the offsite Chatham Street City Engineering design works. All tree removal and



relocation activities will comply with the bylaw's requirements, including obtaining necessary permits and providing replacement trees as stipulated. A Tree Management Plan will be provided at the rezoning stage to outline protection measures for retained trees and the species, size, and location of replacement plantings, consistent with the bylaw's standards.

This proposal also aligns with the objectives of the Victoria Urban Forest Master Plan by contributing to the protection, enhancement, and expansion of the urban forest. The planting of new trees, along with the preservation and relocation of existing trees, supports the Master Plan's goals of increasing tree canopy cover, enhancing biodiversity, and providing environmental and social benefits such as shade, stormwater management, and improved air quality.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The project proposes improvements to the Chatham Street frontage, including offsite pedestrian sidewalk enhancements that will connect to a future crosswalk leading to the Capital Iron Arts & Innovation District to the north. Additionally, at Herald Street to the south of the site, the development includes extending the sidewalk bulge at the entrance to the Pocket Park, further enhancing the public realm. Located within Victoria's urban core, the development does not anticipate requiring upgrades to the existing City of Victoria sewer, water, or drainage infrastructure. The applicant team will collaborate closely with the City of Victoria to design a frontage that aligns with the City's goals and standards.

CONCLUSION

We look forward to working closely with Staff, Council, CALUC, and the broader community to refine this proposal and deliver lasting public value through high-quality urban design, new housing, and thoughtfully integrated amenities. We appreciate your consideration and the opportunity to contribute to the evolution of Victoria's vibrant downtown community.

Yours truly,
INTRACORP PROJECTS LTD.

Matt Kolec
Director, Development