

September 17, 2018

Mayor and Council  
City of Victoria  
#1 Centennial Square,  
Victoria, BC

RE: APPLICATION FOR REZONING AND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT  
1025 – 1031 JOHNSON STREET & 1050 YATES STREET

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

We are pleased to submit this Rezoning and Development Permit Application for the above noted property.

The vision for this site is a master-planned community that incorporates the best of city design principles and includes a smart mix of housing, commercial and retail spaces, along with a new public safety facility. The proposal contemplates four buildings that will be arranged on site to create a sense of place, maximize light and view corridors and add vibrancy to the Harris Green neighbourhood. The first phase (Phase 1), for which a development permit application is being made concurrently with the rezoning, proposes a 12 storey building (11 plus mezzanine) constructed to the National Building Code 2015 Post Disaster level requirements. This building will be home to the City of Victoria's Fire Hall No. 1 and emergency operations centre, BC Ambulance ready centre, office space plus 130 homes, all over two levels of underground parking.

This application has been thoughtfully developed to promote the goals of the *Official Community Plan 2012 (OCP)* and to respect the *Downtown Core Area Plan 2011 (DCAP)* design guidelines.

#### Existing Land Use & Applicable Planning Policy

The site is comprised of nine separate legal lots with a combined area of 7,200m<sup>2</sup> in the Harris Green neighbourhood. The site is prominent in its position on the centre of the city, being bordered by Johnson Street to the north, a one-way street leaving the city, Cook Street to the east, marking the border of the downtown, and Yates Street to the south, a one-way street entering downtown. Located on the edge of the downtown district, the site is one of the last remaining service lots of a city that is growing and changing according to the principles set out in the OCP. The site has a gentle slope from Johnson down to Yates Street and is bordered by sidewalks and bike lanes on these one-way streets. Cook Street to the east has the characteristic established line of chestnut trees that continues to the Cook Street village and Dallas Road.

#### A CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP

##### *Principals*

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The site is currently occupied by the Pacific Mazda car dealership and a pay parking lot. Directly adjacent to the west of the site are a single-story insurance agency and two multi-storey residential buildings. Across the street on Johnson, Yates and Cook, buildings vary in height from 1 to 17 storeys.

The site boasts some of the best amenities in Victoria with access by foot, bicycle and transit to schools, cultural centres, restaurants, shops and civic facilities. The harbour is an eight minute walk away, George Jay and Central Middle schools are both within ten minute's walk and a healthy mix of streetside businesses and amenities are within a few minutes: Conservatory of Music, grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, drug stores and shops.

The property is split zoned. The western portion is zoned Harris Green District (R4B) and the eastern portion is zoned Limited Service District (S1). The OCP designates the site as Core Residential and within *Development Permit Area 3 (HC) - Core Mixed-Use Residential*, anticipating multi-residential development along with other land uses, public amenities and services that help to develop complete communities.

The R4B zone permits mixed use residential and commercial developments up to 10 storeys but does not prescribe a maximum density through a floor space ratio (FSR) calculation. A "theoretical" FSR for these lands has been calculated using an approach confirmed in consultation with the City of Victoria and applied to recent development applications zoned R4B. The "theoretical" density is calculated based on the building height and front yard setback regulations stipulated in the zone. This confirms a theoretical density of 9.8:1. The R4B zone has no parking requirement.

The S1 zone permits an FSR of 1.5:1 and a maximum height of 15m. However, the OCP and DCAP for this site identify a base density of 3:1, a maximum density of 5.5:1 and building heights of up to 15 storeys along Cook Street and 17 storeys in the mid-block of Johnson and Yates Street.

This proposal has been developed to meet several objectives set out in the OCP and DCAP. The provision of housing in the downtown, plus the emergency services program help the City in achieving OCP Section 3, Plan Values 3.6 *Individual Well-Being*, 3.7 *Community Capacity Building*, and 3.11 *Adaptive and Responsive*. There has been a coordinated, collaborative process in planning for Phase 1 of the project including the proponent, multiple departments at the City, BC Ambulance and Pacifica Housing Advisory Association. This unique building program is only possible through careful, coordinated planning between the varied agencies and stakeholders (*OCP Plan Value 3.13 Coordinated Planning*).

Several of the OCP Plan Goals are addressed with this proposal, including those Plan Goals that relate to:

- *Accessibility*
- *access to affordable housing*
- *a range of housing types*
- *Victorians know their neighbours, are connected to communities of interest*
- *Victoria is a safe city*
- *Victoria is prepared to deal with known hazards and emerging threats*

### Description of Proposal

The proposed development is a multi-phase, mixed use development to be constructed over a number of years, commencing with the Phase 1 along the mid-block of Johnson Street. Phase 1 proposes a 12 storey building (11

storeys plus mezzanine) containing a first level and mezzanine of fire service and ambulance operations, a second level containing fire hall operations/administration and emergency operations centre, a third storey of office, 130 homes over eight storeys and two levels of underground parking. The balance of the development is envisioned to be a mixed-use development conforming to the DCAP design guidelines with building heights ranging from 14 to 17 storeys and uses consistent with the Core Residential OCP designation. The specific design and uses for these subsequent phases will be brought forward as separate development permits at the time those phases advance.

### *Proposed Zoning*

To accommodate this proposal, a site specific zone is being requested that is generally in compliance with the OCP and DCAP, with the exception that the overall density for the site being proposed is derived from the aggregate of (i) the current development potential for those portions of the site zoned R4B (which is greater than the maximum development potential identified in the OCP) and (ii) the development potential identified in the OCP and DCAP for those portions of the site currently zoned S1.

A site specific amendment to the OCP to permit the proposed new zone is supportable, as the application is consistent with the Core Residential urban place designation and furthers the broad objectives and policies of the OCP.

### *Massing and Siting*

The proposed massing strategy has been formed by applying the directions of the OCP and DCAP, community feedback and the program requirements of a post-disaster public safety building to the development potential for the lands. A detailed massing development study is included with the rezoning application.

The proposal contemplates building heights of 12 storeys fronting Johnson, 15 storeys fronting Johnson and Cook Streets, 14 storeys fronting Cook and Yates Street and 17 storeys fronting Yates Street, consistent with DCAP height guidelines. The overall site density proposed is 6.8:1. When the area dedicated to the Fire Hall is excluded, the overall site density is 6.26:1.

The proposal for a 12 storey building in Phase 1, in an area where the OCP contemplates a 17 storey maximum height, is driven by the structural limitations of a post-disaster building, while giving consideration to the existing row of 10 storey residential and mixed use buildings across Johnson Street. With this limit on the development potential of the Phase 1 building, the density that could otherwise be accommodated on that area of the site is applied to the remaining phases.

The proposed massing for the site complies with the setbacks outlined in the guiding documents, stepping back away from the street at upper levels to ensure light and views are enhanced at street level. However, by treating the site as a cohesive development and creating a unifying raised podium with zero side-yard setbacks at lower levels, the massing at the upper levels can be reduced, resulting in more slender towers with greater separation for light and air for residents and at the street level. The raised podium approach with greater street level setbacks also creates wider street level spaces with semi covered outdoor terraces. The large floor plates of the raised podium provide for flexibility in programming, creating the opportunity for a variety of uses which results in greater vibrancy for the neighbourhood. Potential podium uses may include multi-level townhomes, apartments, live work spaces, offices, recreational and other uses.

The massing of the remaining phases demonstrates that the proposed site-wide density can be developed sensitively in a manner that conforms to the DCAP guidelines for height, setback, building and street interface and building separation.

## Phase 1

### *Building Program*

Phase 1 of the development is for an 12 storey (11 plus mezzanine), mixed use building that includes the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters, BC Ambulance station, commercial space, 130 rental apartments, all over two levels of secure and public underground parking. The residential 'building' contains 24 studio, 56 one bedroom, 43 two bedroom and seven three bedroom homes. The Victoria Fire Department will be the primary 'face' to the building, taking up the majority of the lower levels, including street presence. As such, the building has been designed to have a prominent civic presence.

### *Building Siting, Setbacks and Massing*

The urban firehall requires that there be a 6 metre setback at street level for the apron, for some of the cleaning, daily check overs and maneuvering of apparatus will occur. As well as being a practical requirement of the fire department, this forecourt sets the building apart as one of civic importance.

The building meets the Built Form Policies described in DCAP, including the inclusion of a terrace to distinguish between podium and upper levels, recessed entries, reduced building bulk of upper storeys, and upper floors stepping back to stay within the 1:5 Building Setback Ratio that starts at the 20m level.

The three different program elements will stand out as unique, yet at the same time will combine to create a cohesive building with a modern take of the traditional tripartite expression of *base* (apparatus bays at grade), *middle* (VFD1 headquarters and office in the raised podium) and *top* (8 storeys residential building). The building meets the skyline with a floating flat roof with a tapered edge and exposed soffit.

### *Building Materials and Expression*

The *base* (apparatus bays and entry lobbies) is occupied by the six firehall apparatus bays, two ambulance bays as well as two entry lobbies that lead to the VFD1 head quarters, office and residential occupancy above. The apparatus bays are visually and kinetically active spaces that will be highlighted by the glazed lower level and glazed bay doors. Entry lobbies will be articulated with the use of landscape forecourts, signage, lighting and highlight material and colour of the elevator and stair cores on the inside. The building base will have full height curtain wall windows with minimal mullion caps and dark framed glass doors in order to maximize transparency.

The *middle* (raised podium) is a two storey volume that houses the administration, the emergency operations centre and suppression crew areas of the Victoria Fire Department, plus one floor of commercial space above. This raised podium volume will be clad in textured cementitious panels on the east and west walls and cantilevered soffit, plus a prominent glazed 'monitor' façade facing the street that will provide 'eyes on the street', and references the early modern expression of the existing firehall #1 building. The raised podium will have floor to ceiling window wall with

vertical mullions and screening that responds to the building program and will add texture to the front wall, in keeping with the textured cementitious cladding.

The *top* (apartment) is an 8 storey residential 'building' that appears as 6 storeys by including recessed floors at its base and top. The base of the residential building sits on top of the two storey raised podium and includes walk out terraces from the residences, along with communal landscaped outdoor areas (complete with a dog run and children's play area) adjacent to an indoor common room. The residential floors will be clad in light coloured composite metal panels, combining multiple tones of similar finishes (reflective and matt finish, plus darker tones for accents). The recessed floors will be clad in the same metal panels, but in darker, matt finish to enhance the shadowing. The top of the building will have punched windows that will enforce the residential character and will contrast the window expression on the lower portions of the building, further enhancing the tripartite expression.

### *Landscape*

The entry lobbies on Johnson Street will be marked with soft and hard landscaping including benches positioned to view the apparatus inside and on the apron. Because the six firehall and two ambulance bays greatly limit the extent of at-grade landscaping, additional landscape has been added to upper areas of the building, on the north and south sides, providing amenity to the building occupants. The upper landscape which includes trees in large planters will reinforce the design concept of stacked buildings, with an elevated ground plane on the top of the raised podium.

### *Parking*

The existing R48 zone does not require any car parking. The proposed Phase 1 building includes two levels of underground parking containing 116 parking stalls, plus 172 class 1 bicycle parking spaces. There are an additional 23 class 2 bicycle parking space at grade, near the entry to the apartment building and at the back of the parking ramp (south-west corner of the site).

### Project Benefits and Amenities

#### *Post-Disaster Public Safety Building*

This project will achieve the OCP goals of replacing Fire Hall No. 1 with a new facility that meets the present and future requirements of the Victoria Fire Department for service delivery. The co-location of the fire service with BC Ambulance furthers the OCP's broad objectives that emergency response is coordinated and delivered efficiently and effectively. The public safety facility will provide an important civic presence on the street 24/7 and the post disaster nature of the building furthers the OCP goal of strengthening the resiliency of structures and infrastructure to seismic events through high standards.

#### *Housing and Affordability*

This project will initially bring 130 new homes to the Urban Core, in a form that is supportable relative to the OCP policy direction that the Urban Core is to accommodate and foster a greater range of housing options across the housing spectrum, including non-market housing. The applicant is working to deliver some or all of the 130 homes as non-market housing, which delivery is contingent upon approvals from upper levels of government. A variety of unit

sizes are being proposed ranging from studios to 3-bedroom homes, consistent with BC Housing Design Guidelines for suite sizes.

This project will also add a significant number of new homes in the subsequent phases, consistent with the strategic directions in the OCP for the Harris Green Neighbourhood to accommodate a significant share of the 50% of forecast new population and housing growth earmarked for the Urban Core over the next 30 years.

### *Sustainability*

This project proposes a number of sustainable building features. Most importantly, it promotes social and civic sustainability, incorporating the important civic function of a new public safety facility in an innovative manner together with much needed housing. Together, these uses will play an integral part of the City fabric. The post-disaster nature of the Phase 1 building offers both public safety and longevity of the structures.

This project further serves sustainability goals as it is a higher density project located in close proximity to bike lanes, major transit routes and within walking distance to the Central Business District and numerous amenities.

The project will be fully compliant with the new energy requirements in the BC Building Code. For Phase 1, Step Code 1 will be achieved. It is anticipated that the residential component will achieve a higher level of energy efficiency due to the compact building form and absence of exposed concrete floor plates that are commonly incorporated into residential towers. These two factors greatly influence energy efficiency and building envelope durability.

### Response to Community Feedback

Over the last six months, information regarding the proposed development has been communicated through more than 25 meetings, reaching over 150 community members, through which process significant feedback was solicited and received from the community. During this extensive consultation process, certain common themes were identified:

- *Need for adequate parking* – This application responds by meeting the requirements of Schedule C site wide, despite the existing R48 zone having no parking requirement.
- *Daylight and views through upper levels of buildings* – The massing strategy for this application focusses the density in the lower levels of the building (the raised podium at levels 2-5) thereby allowing for smaller floorplates of the tower elements, increased architectural articulation and space between.
- *Improved public realm* - Again, the massing strategy and unified building massing over the entire site allows for the lifting-up of the podium level, resulting in greater area at the street level for semi-covered pedestrian spaces.
- *Building heights* – The proposal is consistent with the City's vision for building heights on the site as described in the OCP with heights dropping towards the eastern border of the downtown core.
- *Impacts of an urban Fire Hall* - The Victoria Fire Department has worked closely with the development team on a building design that will align with the VFD's operational plan to mitigate traffic and noise through a variety of strategies, while improving responsiveness and efficiency between fire and ambulance services in the City of Victoria. A "good neighbour" agreement will also be implemented.

### Safety and Security

The Phase 1 building has been designed to consider CPTED guidelines. The Johnson Street façade will be predominantly glazed, with views in and out of lobbies which will provide a level of safety for public passing by and residents entering the building. The apparatus bays will again be largely glazed with fire department and ambulance staff regularly on duty on the ground floor. The hard and soft landscape that is to be located at the two primary building entrances will be low and visually porous to ensure safety for both pedestrian/apparatus interface and CPTED reasons. Until future phases of the project are built, the east and south sides of the Phase 1 building are open to the Pacific Mazda dealership parking lot and Cook Street and Yates Street respectively. Future phases will also be designed to consider CPTED guidelines to ensure safety and security of the occupants of the development.

### Transportation & Infrastructure

The project is well situated and serviced by City of Victoria infrastructure. Walkability and access to transportation for the project is exceptional, with immediate proximity to major transit routes and bike lanes. The location of higher density transit-supportive development along Yates street is consistent with DCAP objectives.

### Conclusion

We are very pleased to be submitting this rezoning application for this comprehensive development on this prominent and important site on the border of the downtown core. The proposed development is compliant with the overall goals of the Official Community Plan and the Downtown Core Area Plan, and directly responds to many of the Values, Goals and Policies of these guiding documents.

The phase 1 of the project will include public amenities that address specific, pressing needs of the City of Victoria with inclusion of a new home for the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters, Emergency Operations Centre, BC Ambulance Station and the continued need for a range of housing types in the downtown area.

The assembly of multiple development sites into a cohesive development results in new opportunities for a mix of uses that could possibly include larger institutions or businesses. The proposed massing will allow for this sort of mix, while ensuring high quality public spaces (greater setbacks at street level), cohesive street wall (raised podium) and narrower upper floors that maximize daylight and view.

We understand that the submission for Rezoning and Development Permit is only one step along the way towards approval and we look forward to continuing to work with the community, stakeholders, and City staff as the details of the proposal are refined. We look forward to presenting to Council in the near future.

If you have any questions or require additional clarification of any part of the application, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

HCMA Architecture + Design



**Carl-Jan Rupp**

ARCHITECT AIBC, SAA, OAA, MRAIC, DIPL-ING. LEED AP