

2525, 2529, 2533 Cook Street
Proposed Re-Zoning and Development Permit
Letter to Mayor and Council



January 24, 2025

Attention: Mayor & Council

Good Day,

We are pleased to submit this Rezoning and Development Permit Letter to the Mayor and Council for 2525, 2529, 2533 Cook St, and 2522 Empire St on behalf of Empire Street Ventures Ltd. (the Owner) also referred to as Casman Properties.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Casman Properties previously participated in an Informal LUC Presentation hosted by the Fernwood Community League Land Use Committee on August 15th, 2023, in which we introduced ourselves and our initial ideas for providing a housing project on these 4 lots. A formal CALUC meeting was hosted by the Land Use Committee on March 19th, 2024, and a project design was presented to all attendees followed by an extensive question and comments forum. Following the CALUC, community members and neighbors submitted comments via the City of Victoria online platform.

Casman Properties reviewed and assessed all of these comments and concerns and met with their Design Team, Architect, Engineers, and Landscape Architect to review as well as City of Victoria Planning to determine what revisions to the design could be made to address the concerns that were expressed repeatedly by the neighbors. We are pleased to have the opportunity to present the revised design at the next available CALUC meeting, following the Canada Post strike.

Some major revisions to reflect the considerations made following the March 19th CALUC include but are not limited to: Moving the parkade entrance from Empire Street to Cook Street to alleviate the concern of increasing traffic on Empire Street, Reduction of the building from 6 Stories to 5 Stories for a gentler transition of building types on Cook Street and the residential on Empire Street, Inclusion of family friendly Townhomes in the project on Empire Street with pedestrian focused frontage, revised aesthetic of the building style for a lighter scheme to respond to the concern the original design was too dark.

INTRODUCTION

The development proposes to construct a five-storey apartment-style condominium building with a 1 level concrete underground parkade. The 53-unit building will provide junior 1-bedroom, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom condominium suites. Empire Street will be home to 6 Townhomes.

This project on Cook and Empire Street is the fifth multi-unit residential project in the Casman Properties portfolio in the Greater Victoria area, all of which are proudly built by Casman Projects, a division of the Casman Group, who have been building neighborhoods for over four decades.

The ultimate goal of this project is one that complements its surroundings and provides a desired mix of housing to the community. The proposed project will be a step forward in implementing the vision set forth in the OCP for the Fernwood Community in the City of Victoria.

EXISTING ZONING, OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP) AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The current zoning is R-2 Two Family Dwelling District. The site is located in the block between Cook, Haultain, Empire, and Bay Street. Empire Street is a Local Street with the access from both Haultain Street and Bay Street. The OCP identifies the Cook Street side of the block as "Urban Residential". With the Empire Street side of the block identifying as "Traditional Residential".

This proposed development conforms to the Vision in the citywide context and Strategic directions of the Fernwood OCP contributing to:

- Accommodate the increase of population and housing growth in the Fernwood area (OCP 21.9.1).
- Follow the OCP plan to retain the neighbourhood heritage character and buildings (OCP 21.9.6).

The 4 parcels incorporated by the proposal are 2,230 m² (24,000 ft²) in total area and are currently occupied by a single home on each property, with one car garage on 2522 Empire Street. None of the homes have heritage status.

The neighbourhood encompasses a mix of homes ranging from single family housing to townhomes with many homes being converted over the years to include additional revenue suites. The immediate neighbourhood includes homes that have been constructed and updated through different design eras.

The six townhomes proposed on the lot facing Empire address the provincial and City of Victoria's strategy on inclusion of up to 6 dwelling units on residential properties.

The homes on 2525, 2529, and 2533 Cook Street were consolidated for an assembly sale by the long-term owners of two of those homes with the sale completing in October 2024. 2522 Empire Street was purchased in 2022. The homes are currently tenanted. All tenants have been notified of the intention to repurpose the land for construction of a multi-family project and Casman Group of Companies properties is working with both Proline Property Management and the City of Victoria to ensure the Tenant Assistance Policy is being followed.

IMPACTS

The 4 homes currently on the site have a total of 12 bedrooms currently between the four existing homes. None of the homes are designated as Heritage. This area of Cook Street in Fernwood has been recognized as an excellent candidate for density growth through multi-family. This proposed project has the opportunity to add just shy of 100 bedrooms to the Fernwood and Victoria Housing Stock.

INCLUSIONARY HOUSING & COMMUNITY AMMENITY POLICY

As per the 2023 City of Victoria Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy, a contribution of \$382,448 cash in lieu contribution will be provided by the developer.

MASSING & SITING

The building design concept is based on several imperatives:

- Contribute positively to the pedestrian and urban experience along Cook and Empire St.
- Massing and architectural expression be sensitive to the smaller scale single-family homes to the East of the site and currently to the North and South, yet understanding the OCP includes for adding density and multi-family housing along Cook Street to the North and South in future.

STREETSCAPE / RELATION TO STREET

The ground floor units facing Cook St. are accessible directly from the street, through private patios which provides a soft, small scale residential street-to-building connection. The six Empire Townhomes will focus on bicycle and pedestrian access to ensure quiet family friendly living. A fence surrounding the property will replace any existing fencing and provide privacy and security to the ground floor units and neighboring properties. The property design includes setting the sidewalk back from Cook Street and creating a boulevard. Entry to the condominium building lobby is welcomed via an entry on Cook Street.

EXTERIOR FINISHES

The project uses a palette of durable materials capable of weathering gracefully, such as cementitious panel cladding and coated aluminum railings at balconies and patios. A soft and light colour palette and the inclusion of wood grain accents will be complemented by light brick materials as a nod to the historic properties in Fernwood. The combination of these materials relates to components of the existing context while contributing to the aesthetic direction of future developments.

URBAN FORESTRY

Tree protection and replacement plans developed by an Arborist and the Landscape Architecture firm have been incorporated into the design to ensure that Victoria's Urban Forest remains protected and can expand.

Casman Properties has worked closely with an arborist to investigate the trees on the site and on the neighboring properties. During the investigation it was determined that there will be little to no impact to these offsite trees during the construction phase. Please refer to the included arborist report for the full details of the trees that are to be removed or relocated.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

The site is well located and fully serviced by City infrastructure. It provides immediate proximity to amenities, public transportation, parks, trails and bike lanes.

- University of Victoria – 4.6km / 9 min drive, 22 min bike ride, 20 min bus ride.
- Fairway Market – 800m / 2 min drive, 3 min bike ride, 10 min walk.
- Save-On-Foods – 1.0 km / 4 min drive, 4 min bike ride, 15 min walk.
- Hillside Shopping Centre – 2.0km / 5 min drive, 8 min bike ride, 28 min walk.
- Cedar Hill Golf Course and Recreation Centre – 2.8km / 6 min drive, 16 min bike ride, 26 min walk.
- Central Park – 750m / 11 min walk, 4 min bike ride, 11 min walk.

Bus stations - 51m away on the southbound side of Cook Street and 67m away on the northbound side of Cook. Provides direct travel to Fairfield / Royal Jubilee Hospital / Uptown and Beacon Hill Park and convenient connection to other transit routes.

The numerous nearby employment opportunities available in the service and tourism industries and in the Provincial Government offices make this a desirable address to call home.

A Multi Transportation and Mobility Approach has been taken for this project to address the City of Victoria's CLIMATE LEADERSHIP PLAN AND the GO-VICTORIA Sustainable Mobility Strategy.

The project proposes to include underground parking accessed from Cook Street that provides 25 stalls, with an additional 3 visitor stalls for the underground parkade and 1 visitor stall for the townhomes. The apartment building will have 36 bicycle stalls underground, and 6 bicycle stalls by the entrances. Bike storage in the underground parkade will accommodate both e-bikes and cargo bikes. The townhouses contain a secured bike storage that will have 26 bicycle stalls and will also accommodate e-bikes and cargo bikes. Electrical Vehicle charging stations will be provided as per City of Victoria guidelines. A Car sharing service such as Modo, will be implemented into the MTA plan as well as working with BC Transit to provide passes to residents.

BC Hydro Requirements: BC Hydro has been engaged and consulted by the Project's design team of engineers in regards to the total power demand for the designed project once completed and the current power available to the site from existing infrastructure. It has been confirmed that a pad mounted transformer (PMT) will be required.

SUSTAINABILITY AND GREEN/CLIMATE FORWARD FEATURES

The building will be developed to meet Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code, with durable materials and a design that optimizes natural daylight.

All building systems and appliances will be Electric, no natural gas appliances or equipment are incorporated into the design and therefore no natural gas infrastructure will be brought to the property. Additional features, such as EV chargers, LED lighting, ERVs (energy recovery ventilation units), highly insulated building are included.

The design addresses to a multi transportation mode approach to encourage shared and active transportation. It also supports electrification of vehicles while reducing transportation related greenhouse gas emissions (OCP Transportation and Mobility 7.0 Goals)

CLIMATE FORWARD BUILDING FEATURES

- **NEAR ZERO EMISSIONS:** Design mechanical systems as fully electric
- **TRANSPORTATION:**
 - Embrace multi-modal design and connectivity, including access to sidewalks, bike lanes, car share services, transit stops, etc.
 - Exceed requirements for EV charging, such as providing charging for e-bikes
- **URBAN GARDENING & FOOD PRODUCTION:**
 - Design community-building outdoor spaces for gardening and food production: raised planter garden boxes incorporated into the shared rear lawn of the condominium building for resident gardening and food production.
- **CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTION:**
 - Use future climate predictions to design mechanical systems
 - A Cooling (A/C) system will be included in every suite.

SAFETY & SECURITY

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED) Strategies incorporated into the design include:

- Clustering dwelling units to create neighbour-to-neighbour surveillance
- Landscape design and maintenance to allow clear and unobstructed views
- Walkways and entries to be visible and well lit
- Design symbolic barriers through landscaping, changes in grades, and use of fences
- Adequate lighting surrounding building positioned properly
- Fob access system and high security keying system for door access
- Cameras and monitored security system in common areas and parkade
- Fencing will be provided around the property to separate the private and the public areas.
- The underground garage will be gated to prevent nonresidents from entering and parking in the garage.
- Building location makes it highly visible from all sides and directions.
- Project design to designate a meeting area for residents of the building to meet.

LIFESTYLE

The future mixed multi-family and townhome project will provide 53 units of thoughtfully designed 1- and 2-bedroom homes from the building, and 6 townhouses that will appeal to homeowners spanning a range of demographics. With proximity to outdoor activities as well as downtown, the location will attract downsizers who already call the Fernwood Neighbourhood home as well as first time buyers into the Victoria market. The ground-oriented units on the main floor allow for street level easy come and go lifestyle, upper units provide a lock and go low maintenance lifestyle, and the Townhomes on Empire are well suited for family living. The indoor and outdoor amenity spaces provide opportunities for creating, gathering, and community building within the property. An Artist Studio to be used by residents as well as a dog wash and bicycle repair station are just some of the amenities the project has to offer its future owners.

Sincerely,



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