

DEAR MAYOR AND COUNCIL

GWL Realty Advisors Inc. ("GWLRA") is a strong proponent of purpose-built rental housing and brings decades of experience delivering and operating high-quality residential communities across British Columbia and Canada. Our track record includes a substantial portfolio of purpose built rental projects, reflecting our long-term commitment to sustainable, well-managed, and best-in-class buildings for our residents and tenants.

We are proposing to deliver a 13-storey purpose-built rental building in Victoria's historic urban core, anchored by a new 680-square-metre public plaza. The project strengthens an older part of the city by introducing new homes, enhanced pedestrian activity, and a contemporary building that draws on Victoria's Edwardian heritage through its proportions, materiality, and detailing.

The building has been carefully shaped to fit within the surrounding context and achieve sensitive transitions to adjacent heritage properties. It will provide a diverse range of rental homes supported by high-quality indoor and outdoor amenities that promote downtown livability and foster community.

The proposal aligns with key municipal objectives by increasing the supply of secure, purpose-built rental housing within a walkable, transit-accessible neighbourhood. Public realm improvements—including upgraded streetscapes, inviting outdoor spaces, and a new public plaza—will animate the block and create a more welcoming environment for residents and visitors alike.

As a longstanding developer and operator in of first class properties British Columbia, GWLRA appreciates staff's consideration of a design that balances architectural quality with long-term financial and operational feasibility. We look forward to working with the City through the rezoning process to deliver a project that contributes positively to those who live, work, and play in Victoria.

Sincerely,



Geoff Heu
Senior Vice President,
Development
GWL Realty Advisors

Sincerely,



Michael Reed
Vice President, Development
GWL Realty Advisors



View of Proposal (in green) Looking East Toward Proposed Plaza and St. Andrew's Church

WHO WE ARE



About GWL Advisors Inc. (GWLRA)

GWL Realty Advisors Inc. ("GWLRA") is a real estate investment and management company that creates stable investment returns for pension funds and institutional clients through long-term investment in, and proactive management of, real estate assets.

As a national real estate services firm, our practice is to acquire, develop and maintain sustainable, accessible and best-in-class buildings, as well as to offer excellent service to the residents and tenants of those buildings.

Commitment to Building in British Columbia

Though GWLRA invests in all asset classes of commercial real estate, we are strong proponents for, and have a substantial portfolio of rental housing. We are a reputable and committed rental developer with extensive experience in property management and development both in British Columbia and across Canada.

GWLRA is a longstanding developer in BC with an established track record of delivering mixed use and rental housing that meets critical Council objectives.



Rendering - 1220 Station St.



Rendering - 1555 Robson St.



Project Rendering - Chronicle (825 Nicola St.)



Laurier House

VISION

GWL Realty Advisors Inc. is excited to play a key role in creating a vibrant, mixed-use community in the heart of downtown Victoria. This site offers an opportunity to strengthen the surrounding neighbourhood by introducing thoughtfully designed rental housing, active ground-level uses, and public spaces that enhance connectivity and urban life.

Upon completion, this project will serve as a welcoming addition to the area, contributing to a dynamic streetscape and fostering a strong sense of community for residents, workers, and visitors alike.

Project Overview

Our proposal for the site includes:

- A 13-storey mixed-use building with two 6-storey wings extending eastward, connected by a substantial outdoor amenity terrace above the first storey
- 251 purpose-built rental units, including 32% family-sized units (two bedrooms or more)—exceeding City requirements
- Approximately 14,226 square feet (1,322 square metres) of ground-floor retail along Broughton, Courtney, and Gordon Streets
- A new public plaza enhancing the interface with the historic St. Andrew's Church and providing space for outdoor patios, passive recreation and community gatherings; and,
- Three below-grade parking levels with vehicular parking, loading areas, and ample bicycle storage, accessed via Courtney Street

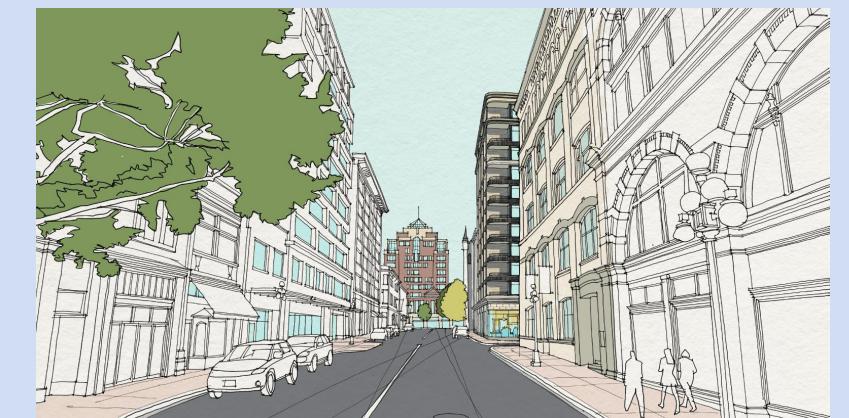
Overall, this development will deliver strategically placed housing density in a central, transit-rich location while supporting a well-integrated urban environment.



View of Proposal Looking Southwest



View South along Broad Street



View East along Broughton Street



View across Douglas Street

PLANNING CONSIDERATION

1. Aligns with Official Community Plan Policies

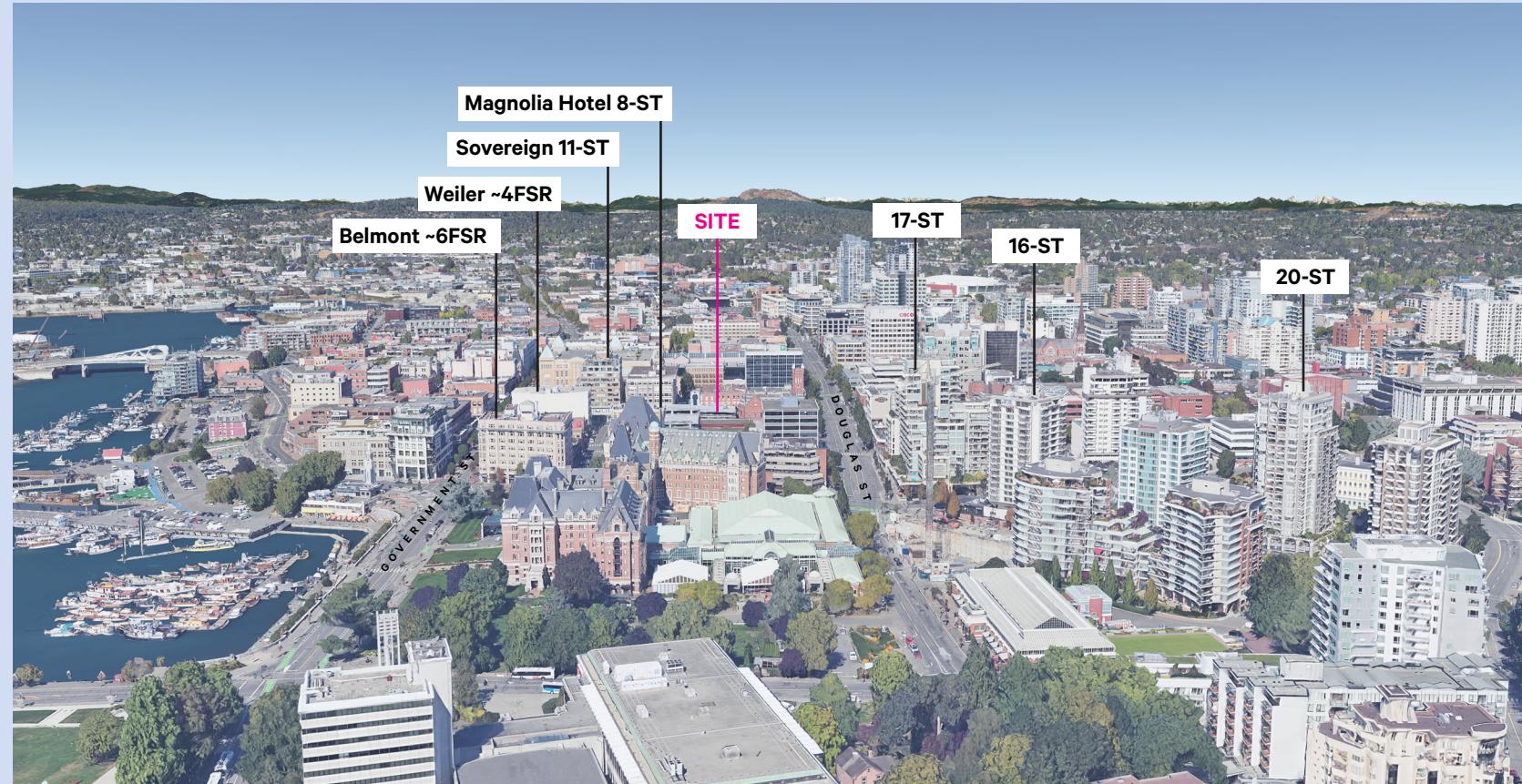
The public benefits included in this proposal provide a strong rationale for the requested increases in density and height, aligning the project with the OCP and requiring only a zoning amendment application. These benefits include: 251 rental housing units in the downtown core at a form and scale appropriate to Old Town; high-quality retail space to support downtown vitality; and a significant new public plaza (583 m²) that will enhance livability for residents and visitors alike.

2. Fits within the neighbourhood

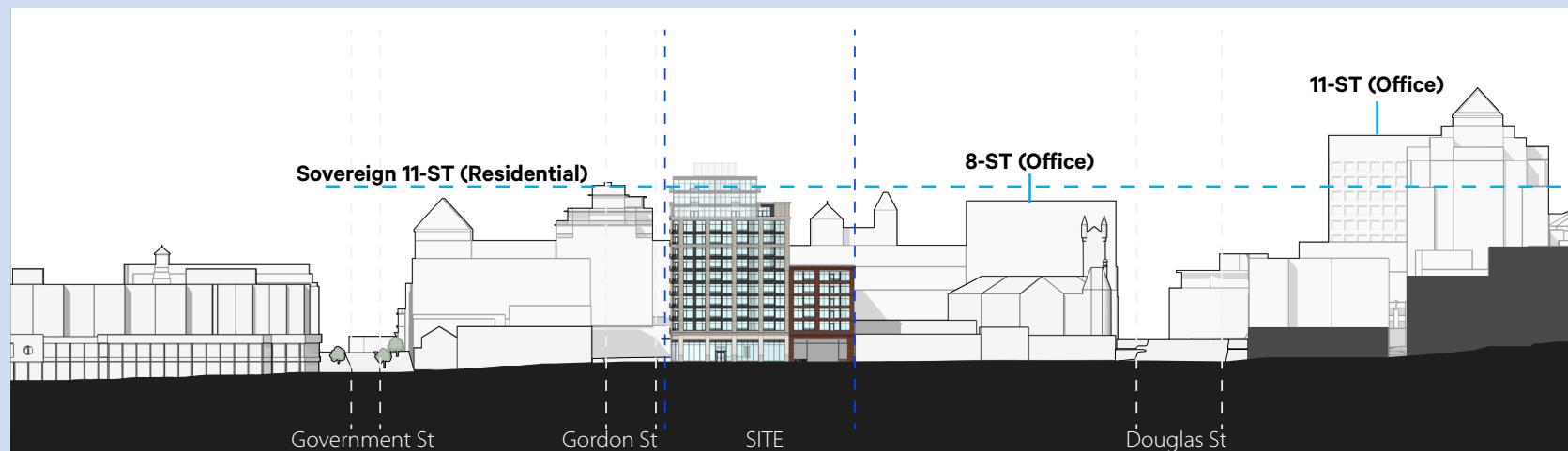
The height and form of the project align with both historic and newer buildings in this part of Old Town, including the Belmont, Yarrow, and Weiler Buildings, as well as more recent developments such as the Magnolia Hotel and The Sovereign. These precedents demonstrate that taller, higher-density buildings are compatible with Old Town's established character.



View East along Broughton Street



Aerial Photo Looking North



Courtney Streetscape Elevation

3. Views are maintained

The building height matches its context, reinforcing Old Town's distinctive "saw-tooth" roofline pattern. The proposal fits within the skyline from key public viewpoints such as Laurel Point, supporting the City's "Urban Amphitheatre" approach to downtown density and enhancing the character and legibility of Old Town's historic skyline.



View from Laurel Point



Gordon St. looking North - Union Club on the Right

4. Appropriate Form and Character

The design offers a contemporary interpretation of the prevailing Edwardian commercial style found throughout this part of Old Town. Materials, massing, building orientation, and architectural detailing integrate seamlessly into the surrounding urban fabric.



View South West at Broughton and Douglas Street Intersection

5. Heritage Sensitivity

The new public plaza along Courtney Street provides additional space for viewing the distinctive apse of St. Andrew's Church—a feature currently hidden behind a parking ramp. The building's placement also maintains existing views of the church's steeple and unique stepped gables from key vantage points along Douglas Street.

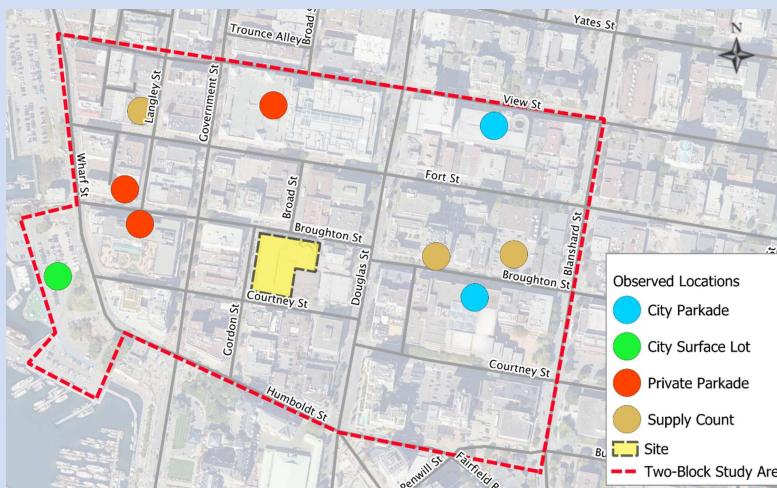
PARKING AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Community concerns were raised about the loss of the existing parkade, prompting GWL to commission Bunt & Associates and CBRE to study parking demand and retail impacts.

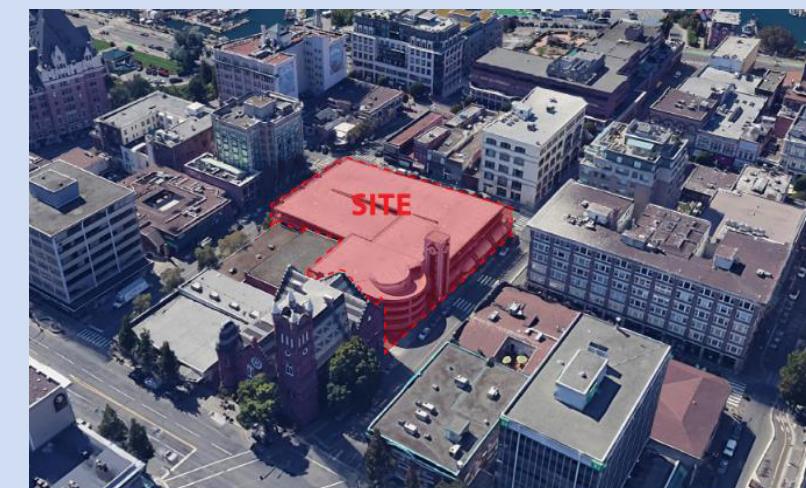
Parking Study Findings

Parking demand at the site has declined from 2016 to 2024, largely due to post-COVID work-from-home trends. The area is well-connected by transit, cycling, walking, and road networks, supporting ongoing residential growth.

Existing parking within a two-block radius can accommodate current and anticipated demand, with only minor midday weekday constraints at 1 pm. Any excess demand is modest and could be absorbed through nearby street parking, other lots, or shifts in commuter behavior. The proposed reduction in parkade supply aligns with City policy to reduce vehicle traffic and parking in the historic core.



Existing Parking Structure



Existing Parking Structure in Context

Retail Study Findings

The projected reduction in weekday vehicle trips may slightly reduce retail spending by commuters. However, the loss is more than offset by spending from new residents generated by the redevelopment.

The project replaces some transient, car-dependent spending with a stable 24/7 walk-in customer base.

Overall, the proposal supports a more sustainable, vibrant, and resilient Downtown Core for businesses, residents, and visitors with the introduction of 24/7 residence.



PUBLIC BENEFITS

New Public Plaza Provided

A new public plaza will be provided between the proposal and St. Andrews Cathedral, this creates a better interface than what exists today (an existing parking structure). The plaza is designed to highlight the Church while providing a place for people to gather and enjoy outdoor events, relax, and connect with the surrounding community.

Better Use of Land

The proposed redevelopment represents a strategic opportunity to transform underutilized parking in an ageing structure into a vibrant mixed-use community in an amenity-rich area of Victoria's Downtown. The project supports the evolution of a more complete, walkable, and active urban environment. It aligns with City goals for a more sustainable, human-scaled downtown—reducing vehicular trips and introducing new residents.

Much-Needed Rental Housing

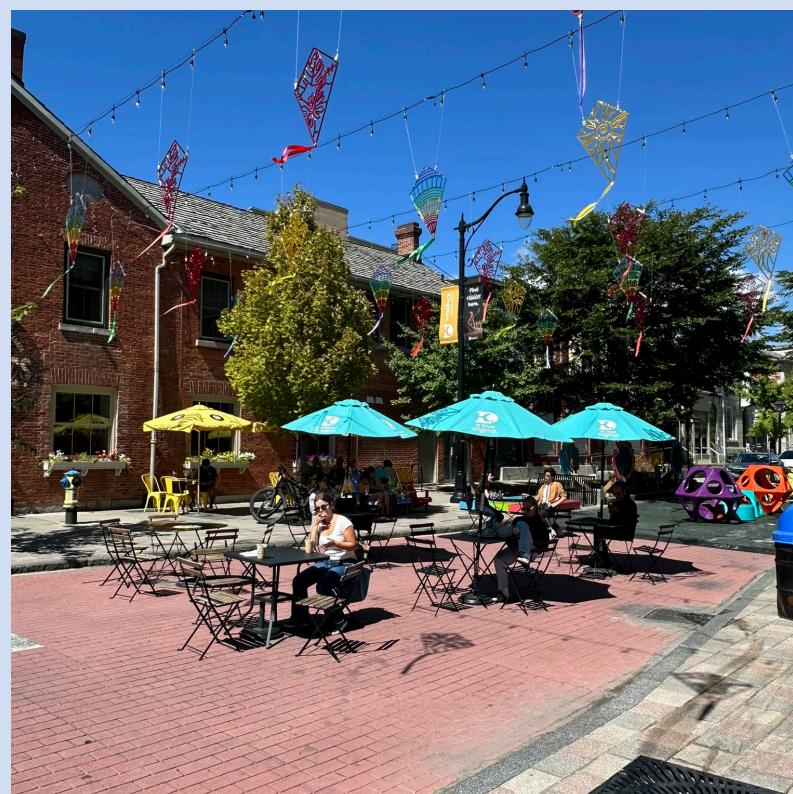
The development introduces a diversity of housing options, including family-friendly units, contributing to a balanced downtown residential community. The building will accommodate people from all walks of life—young adults, families, and seniors.



View of Proposed Plaza from Broughton Street



View of Proposed Plaza Looking Southeast



Heritage Integration

The design highlights the adjacent heritage context through architectural quality, complementary masonry, and careful corner articulation that references—but does not replicate—Edwardian commercial building forms. The development is designed to respect and enhance the prominence of the adjacent St. Andrew's Cathedral, a protected heritage building and significant cultural landmark.

Public Realm Improvements

The development brings the public realm to life with inviting open spaces, active street frontages, and improved landscaping. A new urban plaza serves as a hub for community gathering, while ground-floor retail and café uses provide “eyes on the plaza”—enhancing safety and encouraging pedestrian activity. Thoughtfully placed trees and planted areas add greenery, support urban forest goals, and create an attractive, functional space for residents and visitors.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church



Government Street - Victoria, BC



Heritage Integration Example



Public Plaza Activation



Public Plaza Example

COMMITMENT TO ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful community engagement is a cornerstone of good city-building. By actively involving local residents, stakeholders, and elected officials in the planning process, we ensure that new development responds to the needs and aspirations of the community. This approach aligns with the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan, which emphasizes "engaged citizens" as a core value.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

GWL is an applicant with a strong track record in Victoria—managing this site since 2012 and will retain ownership well beyond completion. GWL is dedicated to engaging a diverse range of voices, including residents, tenants, stakeholders, and local organizations, throughout the planning process and beyond. By seeking broad input, GWL aims to ensure this project serves the community now and for years to come.

ENGAGEMENT TO DATE:

At this early stage, engagement informs the proposal and allows for input before detailed design:

- Applicant-led Open House (September 2025)
- Existing tenants meeting (September 2025)
- Targeted stakeholder meetings with local Councilors and City Staff (Spring 2025–present)
- Meetings with the DVBA and Victoria Chamber of Commerce (October 2025)
- One-on-one meetings with adjacent businesses and landowners (Fall 2025)

Due to the Canada Post strike, mailouts for a formal CALUC meeting could not be completed in time for submission. GWL and its consultants have been working with the Downtown Residents Association CALUC and City Staff to schedule a formal meeting in the new year.

GWL is committed to incorporating feedback from this meeting into future submissions.

