

1520 Blanshard Street

Rezoning Application
Information Package

Letter to Mayor and Council

City of Victoria

February 24, 2025



omb
office of mcfarlane biggar
architects + designers

February 24, 2025

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

Re: Rezoning Application Information for a Comprehensive Development Urban Design Plan at 1520 Blanshard Street

Dear Mayor Alto and Council,

The office of mcfarlane biggar Architects + Designers (**omb**), on behalf of Reliance Properties, is pleased to present this letter and enclosed documents to introduce this rezoning concept for 1520 Blanshard Street, legally described as Lot B of Lot 1257, Victoria City, Plan VIP60943. The goal of this project is to construct a new 35 storey tower and 5 storey podium complete with an urban plaza and public realm upgrades along three frontages and a mid-block connection. A mixed-use program is proposed, with active commercial retail at grade and office/co-working on level two. The remainder of the podium and tower consists of 321 dwelling units with stratified ownership, including live/work, studio, 1, 2, and 3 bedroom suites.

Site Context

The 3,484 m² site is bordered by three streets: Blanshard Street on the east, Cormorant Street on the north, and Pandora Avenue on the south. The existing mid block pathway that connects Pandora Avenue and Cormorant street will be maintained and enhanced. The remainder of the block is occupied by The Rotunda and 750 Pandora, two contemporary commercial developments that offer a combined 27,000 m² of retail and office space.

Vision + Goals

The intention for this project is to leverage the potential of one of Victoria's most prominent sites to create an active urban place that offers a mix of housing and commercial uses to enhance the vitality of the downtown core.

The site presents several significant opportunities which inform this proposal. These include opportunities to:

- Provide a gateway to downtown and mark the apex of the City of Victoria's envisioned urban amphitheater with a landmark building.
- Provide a significant housing contribution that, when coupled with the existing commercial developments next door, creates a block with a mix of housing and commercial that is conducive to a vibrant downtown and aligns with the intent of the OCP's envisioned land use strategy.

- Provide a new public plaza that is active, inviting, and multifaceted.
- Enhance the mobility infrastructure at the intersection of key cycling, pedestrian, and transit corridors.

Conversely, the project has several constraints and challenging conditions to consider in redevelopment, including:

- Creating a contemporary tall building that is place specific and rooted in Victoria's distinct architectural heritage.
- Creating a comfortable and vibrant open space on a site that experiences strong wind events.
- Responding to the current housing crisis while ensuring the Central Business District remains vital

Based on an analysis of the site, the urban design considerations, and planning and policy context, the team developed a set of key questions to underscore the intent of the project. The key questions are outlined as follows:

1. What does the future of urban living look like? How do we enhance the quality of life for individuals and families living and working in tall buildings?
2. How do we create a place-specific modern architectural intervention that contributes to and participates in the rich history of Victoria's built environment?
3. How do we create a sheltered, active, engaging, and inviting plaza and public realm that will make a meaningful contribution to the City? How can the landscape speak to Victoria's unique natural environment to create a place-specific experience?

The questions inform a set of design principles that help guide decision making and ultimately shape the proposal. These principles are detailed as follows:

Create an animated public space

- Create a publicly accessible, pedestrian focused streetscape that closely relates to the interior building program.
- Create animated places for formal and informal gathering that consider activity during and after business hours and on weekends.
- Contribute to the existing energy of active transportation along Pandora Avenue and extend the design language of the project into the public realm.

Create activated street frontages with distinct identities

- Position Pandora Avenue as a destination for gathering with food and beverage program at both the west (through-block connection) and south edges (corner of Blanshard Street).
- Create generous, welcoming, identifiable, and highly transparent street frontages along Blanshard Street.
- Activate Cormorant Street by relocating loading and functional services below grade and extending active program to the street edge.
- Provide opportunities for indoor/outdoor connection on all frontages including the mid-block connection

Invite the public realm into the site

- Bring the public into and through the site by channeling energy from the street into the mid-block connection.

- Create opportunities to extend the streetscape into the building through strategically programming commercial levels at and above grade.
- Create permeability between indoor and outdoor space with operable facades, naturally lit indoor spaces, continuous materials, and shared design elements.

Consider terminated vistas and public views

- Acknowledge the terminated vista looking southbound on Blanshard Street.
- Consider key public external views and participation in the urban amphitheater (located within the Crosstown area of Douglas and Yates).
- Leverage the added density to revitalize the site, enhance the area, and give the block an appropriate presence in the urban fabric.

Incorporate wind mitigation strategies

- Avoid creating wind tunnels (Venturi Effect) and use the massing to push wind away from inhabited areas.
- Use landscape strategies like rows of trees or hedges to mitigate horizontal wind, downdraft from building facades, and wind acceleration around corners.
- Leverage public art, screening, and large planters to break up wind flow at ground level.
- Provide inset (protected) balconies, particularly at higher building floors.

Bolster a strong relationship to place

- Define an architectural expression that is distinctly Victoria, mediating the tendency for towers to appear placeless by drawing upon the unique qualities of the place.
- Build the site rather than building on the site, understanding its history, topography, geography, and purpose in the city.
- Clearly define what will be delivered to the community - contribute to the urban village with an active ground floor, POPS space, and base building that promotes gathering and interaction while housing residents who can participate in the evolution of the downtown.

Respond to the environment

- Respond to the specific, local environment of the site by considering the sun, wind, rain, and microclimates at all strata the project engages with.
- Protect and encourage occupant health and well-being by maximizing views, livable outdoor space, daylight, and fresh air while minimizing energy consumption, overheating and glare.
- Set the standard for responsible tall buildings through high performance of both operational and embodied carbon.

Material integrity and practical innovation

- Continue the legacy of investment in the regional capital through durable, high-quality materials that connote longevity and permanence.
- Reinterpret the material cultures of the place by deeply understanding pre- and post-colonial vernacular techniques.
- Develop an honest tectonic expression that reconciles modern building methods with traditional values.
- Strive for lateral thinking with well-understood technology to redeploy local methods and materials in new ways - create the extraordinary with the ordinary.

Create flexible spaces for live/work/play

- Challenge preconceived ideas of segregated living, working, and playing spaces by finding opportunities to support all activities on site.

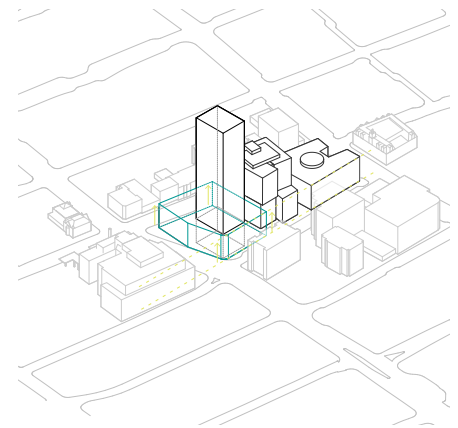
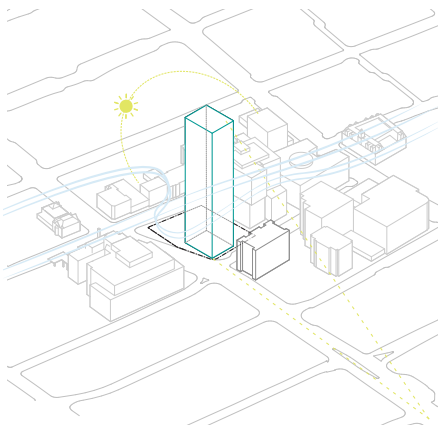
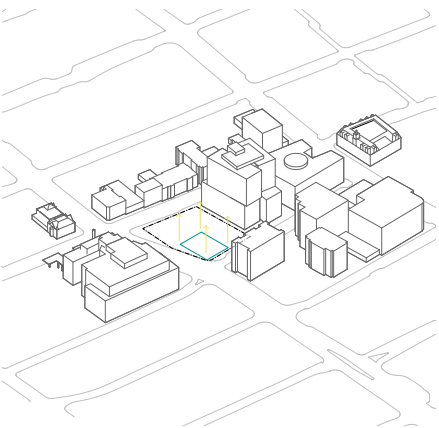
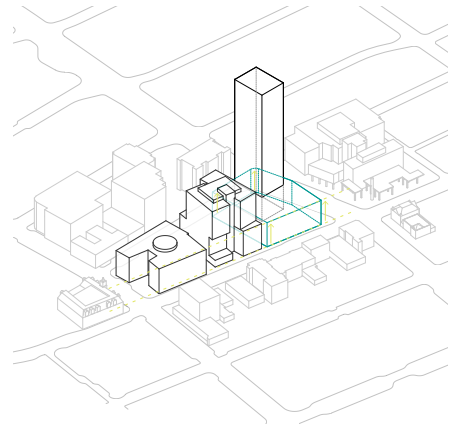
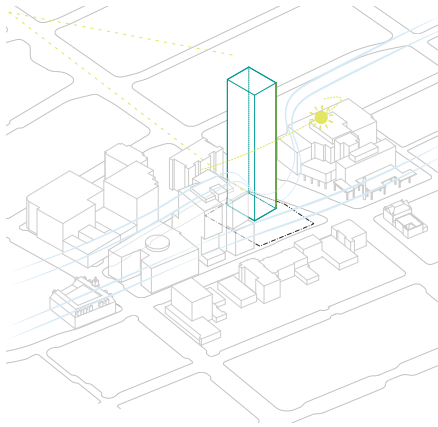
- Facilitate co-working and alternative models of work through the provision of flexible, dynamic shared spaces.
- Provide high-quality amenity spaces that support the work-life balance of residents and co-workers.
- Develop suites that properly support work-from-home arrangements.

The Architecture

The following set of diagrams illustrate how the design principles inform site planning and building massing:

The resultant massing promotes active uses at the ground floor and ensures public open space is comfortable and inviting by providing protection from the elements and maximizing exposure to sunlight.

Massing Rationale



Site the Tower

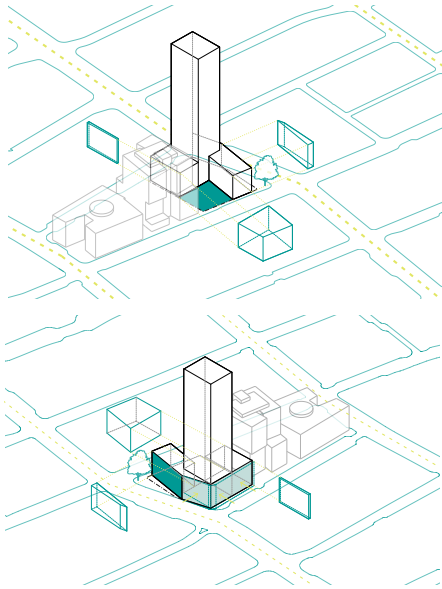
Density is concentrated in the northeast corner of the site to address the southbound vista termination along Blanshard Street. The orthogonal tower positioning presents a strong elevation northward, consistent with Classical city-making ideals. The slender floorplate minimizes shadow impacts.

Consider Environmental Conditions

The tower siting and proportion maximizes solar exposure for the rest of the site. Westward wind tunnels along Pandora and Cormorant must be protected against. Downdraft from the tower must be mitigated to shelter the ground plane.

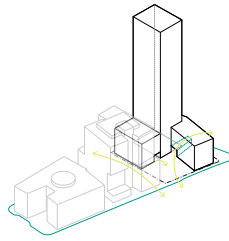
Continue the Streetwall

A six storey base building strongly relates to the buildings west of the site, the historic BC Electric Building across Blanshard, and the Pandora village to the south. The base building captures downdrafts from the west face of the tower.



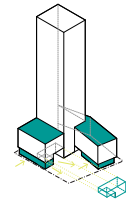
Create a Generous Public Realm

The base building is carved away to create a south-facing plaza protected from the street and prevailing winds. Strategic slices from the edges of the base building reinforce the shift in the City grid, enhance frontages and contribute to the existing through-block connection.



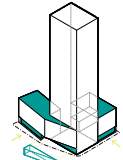
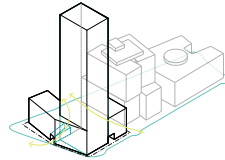
Facilitate Movement & Engagement

Targeted porosity at the ground plane brings pedestrians through the site along existing desire lines and encourages engagement with retail frontages and the plaza. Connection to the plaza is created from Blanshard St. Through-block movement is enhanced for pedestrians and cyclists.



Activate Streets and Rooftops

Ground floor spaces are recessed, creating inviting, weather protected spaces to help activate the perimeter of the site. The public is invited to occupy a terraced amphitheatre tucked strategically over the parking ramp facing the plaza. Rooftop amenity space for residents extends activation to the sixth floor.



To further anchor the building to its site, the team has developed an architectural expression that has its roots in Victoria's historic built fabric and the material culture that makes it unique. Victoria's iconic streetscapes, such as lower Johnson, were studied to understand the proportions, glazing strategies, and material techniques that define the city's historic fabric. The lessons learned form the foundation for a contemporary expression.

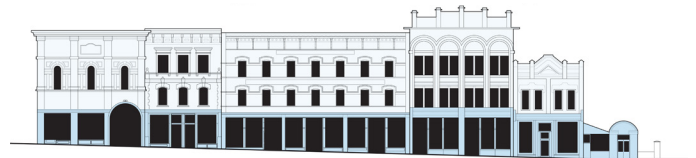
The following diagrams are representative of the heritage streetscape analysis:

Historic analysis provides a framework for the development of a contemporary interpretation of Victoria's heritage fabric. This approach is coupled with climate responsive planning and facade design to define a place specific architectural expression.

Heritage Streetscape Analysis



Symmetrical Bay / Asymmetrical Entrance



Solid / Void Relationship / Glazing Proportion



Base / Middle / Top

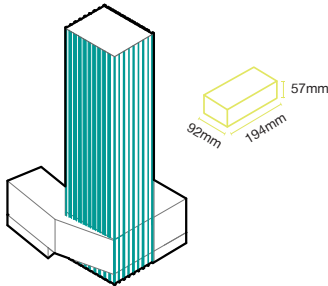


Vertical Expression

Landscape Architecture + Public Realm

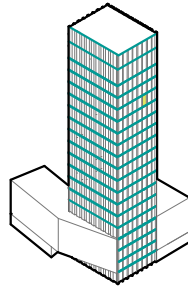
The site is unique in that it is bordered by frontages on 4 sides, all of which demand specific treatments that respond to their scale and character. Blanshard Street is a main arterial and

Architectural Expression Rationale



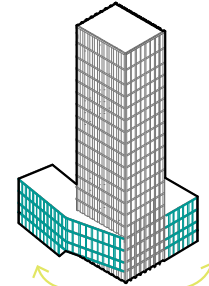
Express Vertical Structure

Consistent pier width and spacing based on a modular brick creates a vertical structural expression with 10 equal divisions on the east and west elevations and 8 equal divisions on the north and south. Working with masonry dimensions ensures maximum flexibility in contextually appropriate material selection (masonry or stone panels).



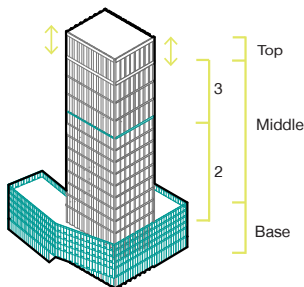
Establish the Horizontal Rhythm

Horizontal emphasis at every other floor creates a consistent grid that reinforces the 2:1 ratio commonly found in Victoria's late 19th century architecture. The grid creates a subtle vertical emphasis while humanizing the scale of the building's height into discernible elements.



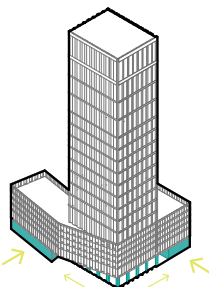
Translate to the Base Building

The consistent grid is continued on to the base building, following the articulations of the facades as they respond to their dynamic street contexts. As the grid "peels" away from the corner of Blanshard and Cormorant Streets, the tower form both meets the ground and becomes the base building.



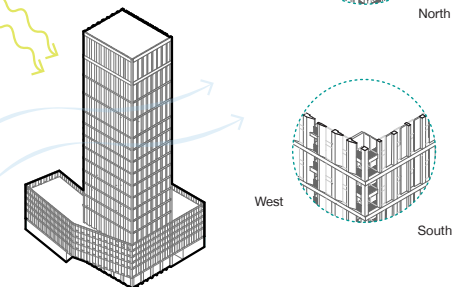
Create a Tripartite Expression

The base building is bolstered with increased solidity that brings its solid to glazed ratio into alignment with Victoria's historic streetscapes. At the height of the existing fabric, the horizontal emphasis expands to a 3:1 ratio, reducing the perceived height of the tower. An enhanced vertical expression at the top of the building creates an elegant 4:1 ratio to meet the sky with a contextually appropriate rooftop termination.



Activate the Street

Articulation of the ground floor to enhance building entrances and guide pedestrians through commercial uses creates a legible streetscape. The tower structure continues to ground, anchoring the building on its site. Increased glazing at the ground floor exposes the inner life of the dynamic commercial spaces while referencing the highly transparent facades of Victoria's historic buildings.



Respond to Local Environment

Each elevation of the tower is fine tuned for the specific sun and wind conditions that vary across the building. Deeper overhangs at the south and articulated piers at the east and west provide protection from solar heat gain. Balconies are recessed into the building's skin, providing wind protected "outdoor rooms" that enhance the four season usability of these private outdoor spaces.

the position of the site provides a gateway to downtown. The inflection in the street grid at the site creates an opportunity for a terminated vista when travelling south toward downtown. Recognizing this opportunity, the tower is positioned to create a strong elevation northward, a technique that is consistent with classical city making. The corner of the tower at this location comes down to meet the ground, further strengthening the approach. At the podium level, the massing peels away to create covered storefronts along Blanshard Street. At the midway point, the podium opens up with a breezeway to allow a direct connection to the plaza and to enhance the porosity of the site. As an improvement to the current condition, all storefronts on the street are accessible from grade without the need for stairs or ramps.

The residential entrance is located on Cormorant Street, with its quieter, more intimate scale. Parking and loading access is located on Cormorant Street with all services below grade to preserve the entirety of the frontage for pedestrian use. The parking exit for the existing building is currently located on Pandora Avenue and crosses over a bicycle lane and a transit pullout, creating an unsafe and inefficient condition. By positioning the parking and loading on Cormorant, site access and safety will be greatly improved.

The configuration of the podium massing creates a protected urban plaza that is sheltered from the southerly and westerly winds. Landscape strategies will also be deployed to further shelter the plaza and create a welcoming and comfortable space. With the improved mobility configuration on Pandora Avenue, the streetscape is positioned as a destination for food and beverage program that are envisioned to spill out of the building and activate the plaza. The commercial entrance is located on the plaza side of the tower to encourage movement through the space and create a more lively environment.

An existing mid-block connection spans between Pandora and Cormorant on the west side of the site. The existing property to the west contains an active food and beverage use on the south side of the connection, which is envisioned to participate in activating the plaza. A dedicated bicycle elevator is proposed at grade along the through-block connection, tapping into the existing bicycle infrastructure and circulation in the neighbouring building. At the north end of the plaza, a stair and stepped seating span over the parkade ramp below and provide access to a raised covered outdoor terrace that overlooks the plaza and is connected to a mezzanine space within the podium. The suite is envisioned to house an active use that can take advantage of the covered patio.

The landscape design approach complements the architecture to create a place-specific and responsive design. The key concepts that guide the design are outlined below:

Animate the public realm

- The urban plaza design at Blanshard and Pandora aims to encourage inclusivity and social interaction by animating the public realm with active storefronts and programming.

Unite inside / outside

- Establish a connection between indoor and outdoor spaces by uniting materials and programming. Creating a consistent design language by raising the existing plaza to a unified, accessible ground plane.

Urban ecology

- The urban plaza design on the ground floor reinforces the city's green infrastructure and stormwater strategy utilizing stormwater run-off for function and aesthetics. The proposed allée at the mid-block connection adds to the urban forestry initiative and added green space on the podium roof level further benefits the city by capturing and storing rainwater, providing bird and pollinator habitat, and reducing the urban heat island effect.

Enhance publicness

- Generate reasons for people to spend time here by creating a unique identity in this up

and coming residential/central business district. This is achieved with the use of green spaces, pedestrian friendly networks, and comfortable street furniture for all ages. Constructing an active and social environment through a public realm strategy will funnel people to the space for everyday use.

Flow connectivity

- Give a sense of flow between Victoria's public streetscape and the site. Building up the existing plaza and creating an at grade mid-block crossing creates a seamless transition from neighbouring sites that enhances Victoria's pedestrian and cycling network.

Micro-climate and comfort

- The south facing plaza is situated on the southwest corner of the site. Anchoring this corner will be several large specimen trees, clustered within the plaza and along the mid-block crossing. They will provide adequate shade and protection for pedestrians shopping or strolling through. Providing protection from light and wind and offering comfort during all times of day and all seasons.

Policies and Guidelines

This application proposes to alter the zoning for the site from CBD-1 with Site Specific Regulations to a new Comprehensive Development (CD-1) zoning. This proposal is based on the unique opportunities and constraints of this site as described above, as well as a series of on-site and off-site contributions.

All contributions will be defined through a land-lift analysis. On-site contributions include public realm improvements at all four frontages and a new urban plaza. Off-site contributions may take the form of direct financial support to Victoria's Arts & Culture and acquisition of permanent artist space in the city.

The intent is to meet the core objectives and principles in the Official Community Plan, Downtown Core Area Plan, and other applicable guidelines in a way that is well suited to the specific urban design considerations of this unique site.

Land Use

The proposed land use, commercial and residential, is consistent with the current CBD-1 zoning, and promotes a vibrant downtown that remains active during all hours.

Density

The development proposal includes a total gross area of 27,339m² (7.8 FSR), comprised of 4,400m² (1.3 FSR) of commercial space and 22,938m² (6.6 FSR) of residential space.* The current CBD-1 zoning has Site Specific Regulations and permits a density of 0.8:1, but in general CBD-1 supports a density of 3:1. In the OCP, the site is within the Core Business Urban Place Designation of the Urban Core planning area, which permits a maximum residential floor space ratio of 3:1 and total commercial floor space ratios ranging from a

1520 Blanshard Site Area	CBD-1 Current FSR	DCAP + OCP Max Residential FSR	OCP Max Commercial FSR	Proposed FSR	Proposed Maximum Gross Floor Area
3,484 m ²	0.8:1	3.0:1	6.0:1	7.8:1* 1.3:1 Commercial 6.6:1 Residential	27,339 m ²

*Discrepancy in FSR is due to rounding. Refer to areas for more specific breakdown of use.

base of 4:1 to a maximum of 6:1. In the Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP), the site is within the Central Business District, which reiterates a maximum residential floor space ratio of 3:1. The site is within the Special Density Area noted in Map 14, where changes to the maximum density “must be approved through a rezoning process that considers the policies of this Plan along with the local historic context, public realm context and other relevant plans, policies and design guidelines.” The site is in Density Bonus Area A-1, which contemplates a base mixed-use density of 4:1 and maximum density of 6:1.

The primary reason for the variance in density and land use mix is due to the significant on-site improvements and off-site contributions described in the Policies and Guidelines section above, as well as the opportunity to provide a significant housing contribution of 321 units.

Height

At 35 storeys, the proposed rooftop height for the development is 118.42m, with an additional 6.79m rooftop structure comprising the mechanical penthouse and elevator overrun. This

1520 Blanshard Existing Height (Storeys)	CBD-1 Maximum Height	OCP Maximum Residential Storeys	DCAP Maximum Height (Approx. Residential Storeys)	Proposed Height (Storeys)
12m (3 storeys)	43.0m	24 storeys	72.0m (24 storeys)	118.4m (35 storeys)

exceeds the 43.0m set out in general by the CBD-1 zoning by 75.42m. The DCAP and OCP support a maximum height of 24 storeys or 72m. The proposal exceeds this by 11 storeys or 46.42m.

The primary reason for the variance in height is due to the configuration of the podium and tower that maximize public open space, provide an urban plaza, and ensure a slim tower profile that maximizes sky view and minimizes shadow impacts.

Emerging Policy - Victoria 2050 - Big Moves

Understanding that the OCP is undergoing review and updates, the project has identified key policy direction to ensure the proposal is future forward and anticipates the new mandates and direction in the City’s plan. Below are emerging policy directions from Victoria 2050 - Big Moves that will be addressed with the proposal:

Family Housing Policy

The newly adopted family housing targets will require the following mix for stratified ownership developments: Minimum 30% of units must be two bedrooms or more; minimum 10% of units must be three bedroom or more. The proposal meets these targets with 20% two bedroom and 11% three bedroom units.

Approach to Heritage

Future policy direction recognizes the importance of heritage in the city and proposes to “ensure adjacent redevelopment is context sensitive and responsive.” The proposal seeks to find an architectural complement to the existing heritage fabric of downtown, as described in the Architectural Rationale section above.

Prioritizing Livability in a Changing Climate

The proposed intensification of the site and provision of housing contribute to a vibrant block that is currently 100% commercial and mostly vacant after business hours. The proposal also provides significant outdoor amenities both at the ground plane and at the podium level, improving livability and aligning with future policy direction.

Embracing Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

The proposed plaza is an example of a POPS that offers a significant contribution to the public realm, ties together the existing network of mid-block connections, and offers areas for play, rest, and gathering in an under served area of the city.

Preserving and Creating Arts and Culture Spaces

Given the pressures of development, the high cost of land, and the lack of funding, cultural spaces are at risk of being pushed out of the city. The proposed off-site cultural contribution can help secure funding to support cultural space and meet the community's needs.

Project Benefits and Amenities

The completed development will feature a number of amenities for the residents, guests, the public, and the broader community including:

- Provision of 321 new housing units, making up 1/3 of the projected housing target for the year it is constructed,
- An off-site cultural contribution,
- A new public plaza,
- Opportunities for public art,
- Improved public realm on 3 frontages and the mid-block connection,
- Active sidewalks that meet or exceed the DCAP's Appendix 3 ambitions for frontage, pedestrian, and enhanced furnishing zones
- Improved cycling and mobility infrastructure and a dedicated bicycle elevator to provide access to secure bicycle storage and end of trip facilities,
- 1,460m² of private rooftop amenity for resident use,
- Private interior amenity on L2 through L6 for resident use,
- Work from home spaces in every unit,
- A landmark building to define a key gateway to downtown,

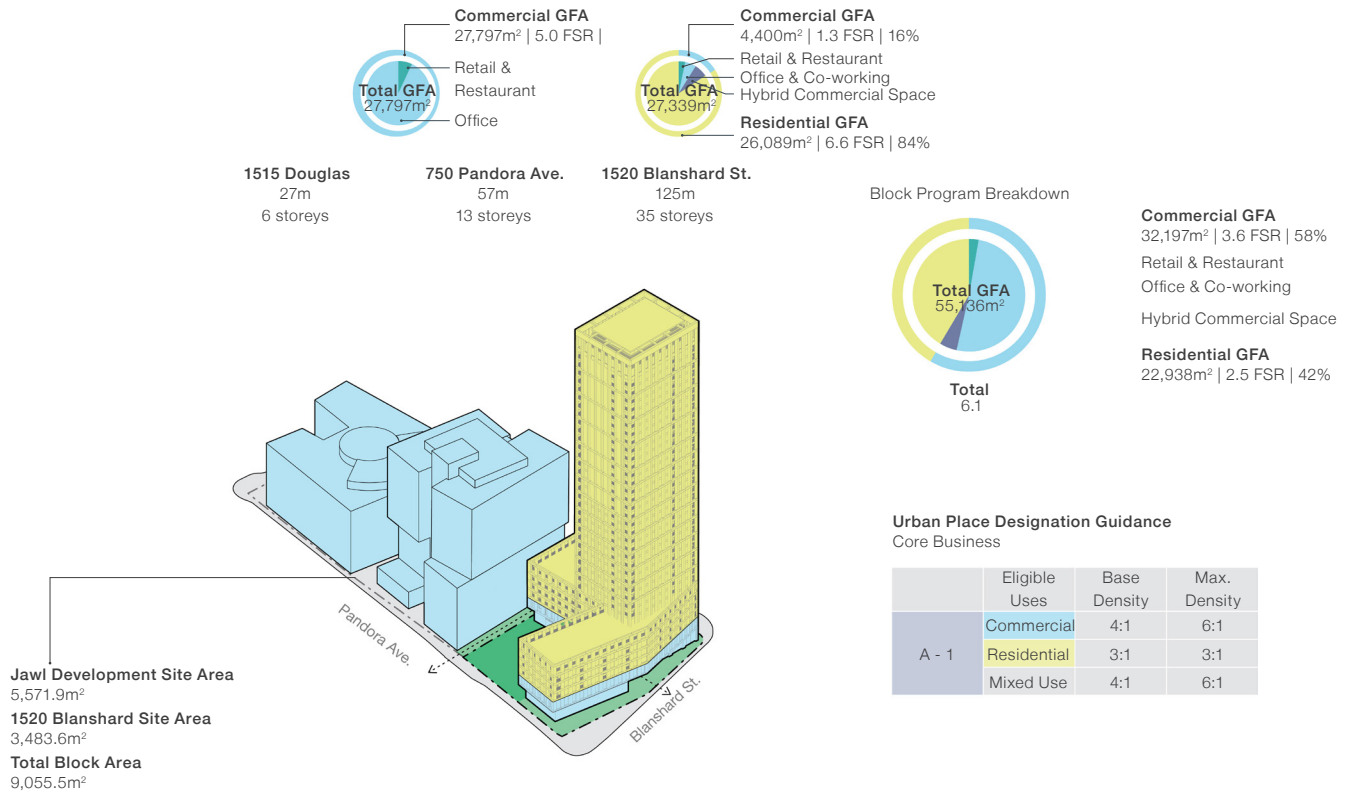
Need and Demand

The downtown area of Victoria is a key centre in the region's employment and population growth projections and planning. The 2021 national census data show that the population of downtown Victoria grew by 40.8% between 2016 and 2021. This represents 25% of the total population growth in Victoria since 2016.

The anticipated growth in the downtown core forms part of the foundation of the Downtown Core Area Plan. The Victoria Housing Strategy (Phase 2) and the CRD Regional Growth Strategy identify housing as a core need for the region, especially in urban centres. The DCAP also refers to City forecasts which indicate that, by 2026, the total combined floor space demand for residential, office, retail, service, and hotel room uses in the Downtown Core Area will increase by an additional 853,800m² to 1,174,300m².

The 2021 report Victoria's Housing Future notes that current housing growth capacity in Victoria is falling short of future needs. This, in turn, affects the City's ability to meet housing affordability targets. The analysis of new housing units by target growth area set out in the OCP shows a potential shortfall in the Urban Core but a positive indication from recent trends.

Victoria's Housing Future also discusses the "15-minute neighbourhood" as a key concept in city planning, and underscores the social and economic value of building communities where there are a diversity of shops, schools, offices, and other key destinations within a 15-minute walk from home. When considered along with the 100% commercial developments to the west of the site, the proposed block achieves a density mix that aligns with the DCAP's target of 3 FSR Commercial and 3 FSR Residential, supporting a balance of uses that promote neighbourhood vitality.



Safety and Security

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles have been considered in the building planning, landscape design, and public realm improvements, including the public plaza and through-block connection. A strong driver in enhancing safety and security is the inclusion of housing and food and beverages uses, which increases 'eyes on the street' past typical business hours and promotes a sense of community in the urban realm.

Pedestrian safety has been considered and is described in the Transportation section below.

Transportation

Although City Staff have noted that a Traffic Impact Analysis is not required for this development, preliminary studies have been undertaken in concert with WATT Consulting Group to highlight the transportation related benefits of the proposal. The key benefits are outlined below:

Pedestrian and Public Realm

- Improved and more accessible pedestrian connections between Cormorant Street and Pandora Avenue
- New mid-block path through podium along Blanshard Street further activates plaza and acts as a gateway to downtown

Cycling

- Placement of vehicle access on Cormorant Street eliminates site's existing parkade exit conflict with Pandora Avenue bike lane
- Excellent connection to adjacent protected cycling facilities on Pandora Avenue and Blanshard Street
- Cycling entrance and elevator provides access to generous secure bike parking facility that accommodates various bicycle types, including oversized cargo and electric bikes
- Public bike racks and parking integrated into exterior landscape and building facade

Transit

- Offers excellent connection to existing and future high-quality transit
 - Improves sight lines and connection to existing Frequent Transit bus stop directly adjacent to site on Pandora Avenue
 - Within 200m of proposed RapidBus Stations on Douglas Street
- Opportunity to consider design treatments to have curbside and pedestrian areas flow together on Cormorant Street
- Opportunity to consider existing transit stop at Pandora and Blanshard and coordinate with BC Transit and the City of Victoria to ensure the stop is efficient and safe

Vehicles and Other Considerations

- First level of parkade designed to accommodate a range of delivery vehicles and trucks
- Integrates accessible parking and electric vehicle charging in line with City bylaws and best practices
- Vehicle access off Cormorant Street offers easy connection to/from both Douglas Street and Blanshard Street, meaning it balances out vehicle impacts across the network
- Loading accommodated below grade to increase provision of public realm

Parking

- Preliminary parking requirements are calculated per the Zoning Bylaw and Schedule C, however parking requirements and alternate transportation options will be discussed with the City and coordinated with upcoming amendments to the City's off-street parking bylaw and a site specific Transportation Demand Management strategy to develop a holistic plan that aligns with the City's vision for the downtown

Required Vehicle Parking per Zoning Bylaw 2018 / Schedule C (total)	Proposed Vehicle Parking (residential)	Proposed Vehicle Parking (commercial)	Proposed Vehicle Parking (total)
392 stalls	277 stalls	58 stalls	335 stalls
(334 res. / 58 comm.)	(incl. 32 visitor)		

Long-Term Bicycle Parking		Short-Term Bicycle Parking	
Required Bicycle Parking per Zoning Bylaw 2018	Proposed	Required Bicycle Parking per Zoning Bylaw 2018	Proposed
407 stalls	498 stalls	50 stalls	50 stalls
(393 res. / 14 comm.)	(474 res. / 24 comm.)	(32 res. / 18 comm.)	(32 res. / 18 comm.)

CALUC representatives raised concerns of increased traffic on Cormorant. The project team intends to coordinate with the City of Victoria to discuss strategies to mitigate the impacts of the potential increase in traffic with a range of traffic calming techniques and features to enhance visibility of pedestrian crossings to ensure Cormorant maintains its character and remains a safe pedestrian zone.

Infrastructure

The proposed development is situated in the downtown core of Victoria and has three frontages, each with underground utilities capable of servicing the site. Regulated and unregulated watermain exist on Blanshard for domestic and fire suppression servicing. Sewer and drain services are expected to connect to existing mains on Pandora, similar to the existing building. Recent upgrades to shallow utilities (BC Hydro, Rogers, and Telus) on Cormorant to accommodate the 1515 Douglas development will be extended to the 1520 Blanshard site. Studies may be required to assess the capacity of existing utilities, and any required upgrades will be identified early in the project and confirmed with City staff. Two of the three frontages have existing bike lanes, which will be maintained or upgraded, as required by current City standards. All frontages will include enhanced pedestrian facilities and match recent neighbouring developments.

The proposal intends to enhance existing connections and deliver a significant public open space that will benefit the larger community. As noted in the Green Building Features below, the applicant intends to deliver a fully electrified building with high efficiency heat pump technology.

Green Building Features

The design team includes LEED-accredited professionals and Certified Passive House Designers, all of whom share a commitment to environmental responsibility. The team's design approach will include, in addition to meeting or exceeding the requirements of the BC Energy Step Code, consideration of the global warming potential of building materials, up and downstream waste potential of materials, and the durability and suitability of materials, systems, and equipment.

The project proposes an array of environmentally responsible features:

- BC Energy Step Code performance at Step 2
- BC Zero Carbon Step Code GHG Emission Level 4 (Zero Carbon)
- An all-electric heat pump-based heating and cooling system
- Landscaped roofs and site planting designed for on-site storm water management
- An architectural design which considers passive design principles and is responsive to macro- and micro-climate conditions
- Window-to-wall ratios that balance access to light and views with solar heat gains
- Extensive bicycle storage facilities, including 50% of the long-term bicycle parking spaces electrified for charging personal mobility devices and inclusion of spaces large enough to accommodate cargo bicycles
- Separate end-of-trip facilities for commercial staff, including showers, lockers, and secure, electrified bicycle storage.
- Low-use water fixtures and high efficiency LED lighting throughout

See also **Large Project Supplementary Information Booklet**, which contains additional materials that address queries raised during the community engagement sessions.

Community Engagement

The project team have consulted with City staff several times over the development of this project. The team met with members of the Downtown Residents Association and the North Park Neighbourhood Association in December 2024 and provided the pre-application package to the City for online viewing and comment.

On January 25th, 2025, the team held a public “open house” at the Thomas and Birch Warehouse at 2100 Douglas Street. The open house was attended by approximately 50 people. The team also attended an in-person Community Meeting hosted by the Downtown Residents Association on February 10th at Hotel Rialto at 653 Pandora Avenue, which was attended by approximately 23 people. The meetings and online comments have allowed the team to hear the thoughts and ideas of a wide spectrum of Victoria residents, neighbours, and stakeholders.

A summary of the community engagement is included in the rezoning submission package.

Archaeological Site Clearance

A review of the site undertaken by Stantec determined that there are no archaeological concerns. There are no registered archaeological resources within or near the Project area. The Project area is also assessed as having low potential for the presence of unrecorded archaeological resources. A formal letter is included in the rezoning submission package.

Conclusion

The goal for this rezoning proposal is to create a project that will enhance the site, the neighbourhood, and the downtown. The team hopes that this project will help Victoria grow and evolve to fulfill the city’s vision, and to do so by meaningfully engaging with all stakeholders in the shared project of city making. We look forward to connecting with residents and working with staff through the rezoning process.

Please do not hesitate to contact the team for any additional information or clarifications.

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