



**RELIANCE**  
PROPERTIES

**D'AMBROSIO**  
architecture + urbanism

2960 Jutland Road  
Victoria, BC, Canada, V8T5K2  
tel 250.384.2400  
web daustudio.ca

May 8, 2023

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

Attention: Mayor and Council

Re: Capital Culture District (also known as 'LoRo (Lower Rock Bay) and, 'The Capital Iron Site'):  
Application for Rezoning to a Comprehensive Development Zone based on an Urban Design Plan for  
subject properties at 1824, 1900, 1907, 1908, 1924, 2010 Store Street and 530 Chatham.

*Introduction and  
Overview*

On behalf of Reliance Properties, DAU is pleased to provide updated application materials that include new Land-use, Density and Regulatory Zoning Parameters for the subject properties. This 6.7 acre site is a significant assemblage of properties on the boundary between Old Town and the Burnside Neighbourhood. With guidance by City Planning Staff, the development application has been structured as a comprehensive, multi-phase Rezoning and OCP amendment, to be followed by separate Development Permits for each discrete phase of development. The development outcomes of the proposed Comprehensive Development (CD) Zone are illustrated in the included Urban Design Plan. This is to assist in visualizing the likely form and characteristics that would result from the complete build-out of the properties, within the parameters and in compliance with the proposed CD Zone.

The Capital Cultural District is a unique opportunity to revitalize an emerging City district through principled private development. The project envisions an integrated, resilient and heterogeneous neighbourhood that balances private economic interests with arts and cultural spaces and a superior public realm. To achieve this, the proposal draws upon comprehensive planning best practices.

Inspired by local precedents of Selkirk Waterfront and Dockside Green, the Capital Culture District CD Plan will guide the gradual, phased urbanization of these urban brownfield lands and their frontage on the upper harbour waterfront. The area has a long and varied history of economic and industrial activities, which have for many decades served an important function in the development and growth of Victoria and the region. Under the proposed Rezoning, light industrial and dormant marine uses will be reinvigorated and integrated with new uses. As most of the subject properties have

devolved from heavy industry such as ship salvage, they are ready to transition to a resilient socio-economic mix and intensity of use. This process has begun organically, by attracting small-scale manufacturing, brewing, arts and crafts, recreation, retail-wholesale, high-tech/ offices, non-profit institutional, food and beverage, as well as residential redevelopment in both renovated and new buildings.



Illustration of future build out of the Capital Culture District Plan

Significantly, the proposed Capital Culture District Plan is located at the heart of the area designated as an Arts and Innovation District in the City's 2020 Victoria 3.0 Economic Action Plan; the Victoria 3.0 principles and goals have been integrated into this development application. It is important to note that along with economic land development viability, the Applicant's goal is to accommodate long-term, incremental, and flexible uses. The careful balance of non-residential, commercial employment and residential uses will encourage a varied demographic and mix of uses. As a place in transition from fading industry and parking to an urban complete city, it is bound to attract a wide demographic that includes creatives, makers, and entrepreneurs. To achieve this goal, the proposed range of housing sizes, types and tenures are also important components of the Plan's economic viability.

The guiding intention is viable new private buildings and repurposed heritage structures, while creating public space and arts and cultural facilities. To that end, Reliance Properties, and the Board of Directors of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV) have signed a Letter of Intent to locate a proposed new Art Gallery as a keystone part of Phase One, at the heart of the Plan.

*Planning Policy  
and Parameters:*

The Capital Culture District Plan has been designed to balance the multi-faceted priorities of the site and project proforma, while meeting the intent of City policy objectives and demonstrating best practices for progressive, sustainable urban design. The proposed CD Zone establishes a framework to intensify and diversify uses within the site, thereby reflecting the aspirations of the 'Victoria 3.0 Arts and Innovation District'.

**Density**

The Capital Culture District Plan is proposed to have an overall Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of 3.0:1, which is permitted by the current zoning and is consistent with the Official Community Plan (OCP). A range of densities are proposed within the site, as part of the comprehensive arrangement of uses and building typologies that forms this urban design plan. As proposed, a portion of the property would have a slightly higher FSR than is anticipated in the Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan.

**Land Use**

The Capital Culture District Plan includes "Core Employment" Land Use as designated in the OCP and "Employment Centre" as identified in the DCAP, as well as the "Marine Industrial"/ "Industrial Employment"/ "Industrial Arts" called for in the Burnside-Gorge Local Area Plan. Consistent with these policies, the Plan's proposed uses include marine industrial, industrial, commercial, arts and cultural, high tech, residential, live/work and more. Additional uses, beyond those anticipated in the current policies, respond to the aspirations of Victoria 3.0 and flexibility of use and location, that are fundamental concepts of the arts and of innovation. Existing industrial uses, adapted to be compatible with adjacencies, will be integrated as the plans develop.

**Height**

A range of building forms and heights are envisioned to create fitting proportional relationships to streets and public open spaces. The proposed street edge conditions and scale are established by careful spacing of building massing in relation to heritage buildings, calibrated setbacks, and a 5 storey podium along Chatham and Government streets. Building podiums will have recessed ground floors for generous public sidewalks.

Above the podium portions of the buildings, walls are set further back from the line of the street. Taller buildings are an essential means to balancing the economic viability

of the project with the provision of adequate publicly accessible open space. To achieve this balance, select proposed building heights exceed those anticipated by Planning policy at the time of this writing. To mitigate perceived negative impacts of this additional height, two taller buildings have been carefully integrated into the Plan: one 15-storey artists live/work building, and one 20-storey residential tower. The shape and position of the two taller buildings have been carefully considered to mitigate view and shadow impacts.

It is important to note that all built projects within this comprehensive plan will be subject to separate Development Permit applications and will be governed by the guidelines of the Downtown Core Area Plan.

*Need and Demand, Benefits and Amenities*

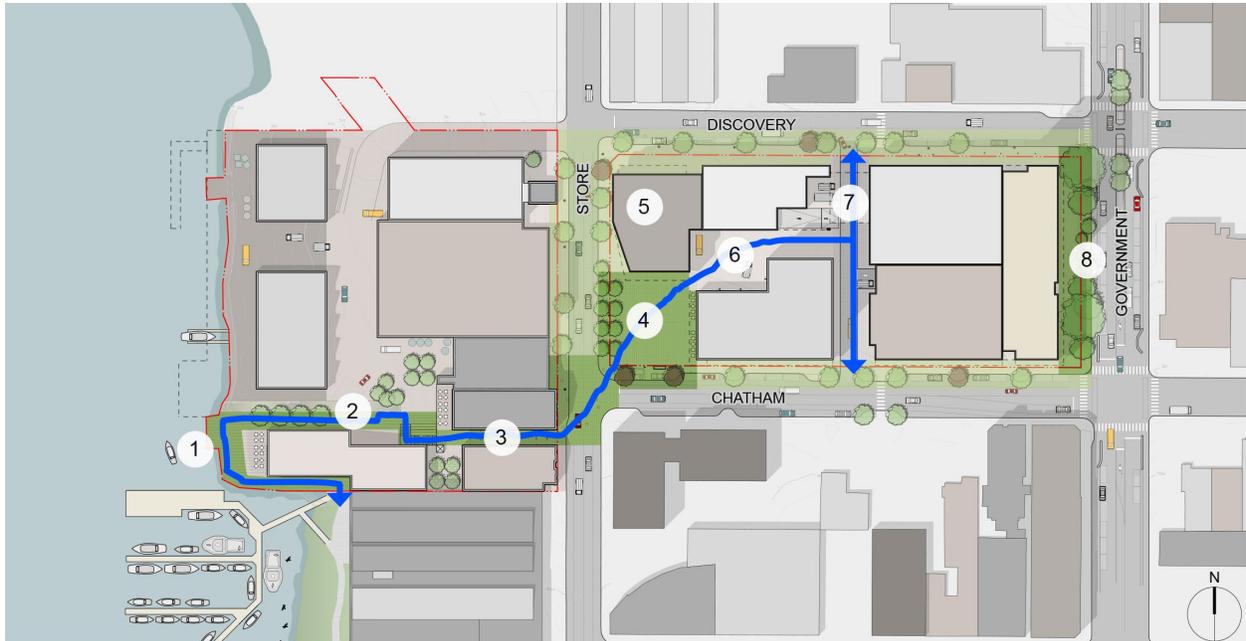
The Capital Culture District Plan seeks to balance a complex amalgam of public needs and private objectives. The proposed CD zone has been crafted as a careful integration of land-use planning and humanistic urban design, to ensure the quantitative zoning parameters are founded on intentional qualitative principles of good urban design. The Developer and Design Team have been mindful of the scale, population density and heterogeneity, beauty, and safety of the proposed urban district, guided by the following **Planning Objectives**:

- **A Balanced Mix:** Augmented and adaptable facilities for present commercial and industrial activities, and a wider variety of uses around a network of public spaces. These include a new plaza adjacent to a major cultural institution as well as separate, direct public and marine commercial access to the harbour. Buildings to accommodate a variety of light industrial, marine, commercial, and residential uses to help foster a diverse, resilient local economy.
- **Robust Infrastructure:** Circulation networks to facilitate and serve knowledge-based, technology, arts, crafts, commerce, and light industry.
- **Urban Reconnection:** Accessible, interconnection with existing rights-of-way to the East, to the harbour, to the former industrial Rock Bay lands to the North, to Old Town and south to Downtown.
- **Social Diversity:** Constructed and curated urban amenities to support and nurture a changing demographic, individual and family living, creativity and entrepreneurship.
- **History as Inspiration:** Commemorated and celebrated First Nations presence, traditional trade and post-colonial, industrial, marine and manufacturing histories.

*Neighbourhood Impacts and Amenity Contributions*

Positive urban design impacts are intended throughout the district's phased redevelopment, including the repair, reconnection, and expansion of a pedestrian-focused network of walkways, lanes, and shared-street rights-of-way. This project is anticipated to be of significant economic and social benefit to the immediate neighbourhoods as well as to Downtown and the City at large. The open spaces created will be one of the most important results of the Capital Culture District Plan

and will be regulated by the proposed CD Zone. These benefits are part of the proposed Amenity Contribution, detailed in the subsequent Urban and Architectural Designs that will be subject to the City’s Development and Building Permit processes.



Network of Publicly Accessible Open Site Spaces & Amenity Contributions

**1. Harbour Pathway: Statutory Right-of-Way (Direct Amenity Contribution)**

The new Harbour Pathway is a public connection between the existing Harbour shoreline quay to the south (closed at time of this writing) and to the east via the Harbour Concourse, to Store Street allowing restricted activities (parking and storage) to the north to continue.

**2. Harbour Concourse: Statutory Right-of-Way (Direct Amenity Contribution)**

A landscaped pedestrian route publicly connecting the Harbour Pathway to Flour and Rice Alley and Store Street, with an elevator for full accessibility to the quay.

**3. Flour and Rice Alley: Statutory Right-of-Way (Direct Amenity Contribution)**

Located between two heritage buildings, Flour and Rice Alley publicly connects the concourse to Store Street and will frame the view towards the waterfront.

**4. A Public Plaza- ‘Street Meet Square’: Statutory Right-of-Way (Direct Amenity Contribution)**

Located at heart of the district (the sunny corner of Chatham and Store Streets), the plaza design is inspired by rail lines that historically traversed the site. The plaza includes trees, seating, and special lighting and paving.

**5. A New Art Gallery: (Land Volume Amenity Contribution)**

The proposed public art gallery fronts the plaza, which serves as an entry forecourt to the gallery. While the terms of an agreement beyond the current MOU between the Applicant and the AGGV are being finalized, negotiations with the City regarding allocation of value of the gallery site will continue as a separate process.

**6. Artisan Alley: Service and pedestrian Circulation Route serving an Applied Industrial Arts (AIA) Building, and Artist Live/Work Building.**

Inspired by the network of alleyways in historic Old-Town, the alley links a North-South, mid-block lane to the plaza. It will facilitate phase one access and loading for the light-industrial and commercial users of the AIA Building on Discovery Street.

**7. East Block Lane: Statutory Right-of-Way (Direct Amenity Contribution)**

The mid-block lane connects Chatham and Discovery streets and is a physical space between Phase One (the current parking lot) and future phases to the east. It will link a mid-block route south, to be part of the network of mid-block connections in the city. The lane will be for shared use by pedestrians and drivers, with building access along both sides.

**8. Government Street Boulevard of Trees: Statutory Right-of-Way (Direct Amenity Contribution)**

The buildings along the west side of the street will be set back to enhance the experience of the beautiful rows of London Plane and other trees. These trees will also define a linear boulevard park between the shopfronts of the commercial and residential buildings on the West side of Government Street.

*Safety and Security*

While Zoning does not explicitly regulate design aspects of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED), this Urban Design consideration is integral to the ideas of the proposed mixed-use CD Zone and Urban Design Plan. CEPTED principles are fundamental to the methodology of the Design Team, including concepts of defensible space, natural surveillance, all-gender and all-ages public spaces, day/night community culture, connectivity, and threshold capacity.

*Transportation Circulation and Infrastructure*

Collaborating with City Engineers, the Design Team’s Transportation specialists have aligned the Plan with anticipated future right-of-way redevelopment. Access, circulation, and connection are critically important to the urban design, even at Rezoning Application stage, and have been given careful attention and coordinated with City staff throughout the process to date.

The Capital Culture District Urban Design Plan gives priority to pedestrian and cycling circulation as meaningfully integrated aspects of the Open Space network. In addition to the proposed plazas and walkways, the project is consistent with the following transportation policies:

- wider sidewalks throughout
- improved street landscapes and parking
- underground parking for all buildings with provisions for paid public parking
- traffic-calming techniques throughout.

*Utilities  
Infrastructure*

The public rights-of-way and open space circulation network incorporates creative, landscape-based stormwater management techniques, in the form of rain gardens, public water features, and using site topography. Electrical power, water supply, sewer and information/ communication infrastructure are the subject of close collaboration between specialists and the City Engineering Department. As a fundamental quality of Brownfield Site Redevelopment, the optimization of utility systems near new development is a sound and environmentally responsible strategy. To that end, locations, capacities, augmentation, and improvement of underground services will be determined and coordinated at the time of Development Permit and subsequent Building Permit Applications, as required by City regulations.

*Histories and  
Heritage  
Preservation*

The Capital Culture District project acknowledges, respects and will commemorate both indigenous and colonial histories of the site. The City of Victoria, mandating Victorian-colonial heritage preservation, has recognized Heritage Registered buildings located at 1824, 1900 and 1910 Store Street. Accordingly, they will be preserved for adaptive re-use in compliance with Heritage Guidelines.

**Early History**

For many centuries before European colonial presence, indigenous people lived and hunted in the area. The Lekwungen-speaking peoples (Esquimalt and Songhees Nations) shared the shores of the Upper Harbour and provided a visiting camp in the Rock Bay Area for other Nations for trade with settlers and merchants at Fort Victoria. This ended around 1860 when a smallpox epidemic afflicted many of the visiting aboriginal groups. The Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, through the joint Matullia Organization, have re-acquired the former site of the BC Hydro installation to the South of the Rock Bay and have long-term intentions for the lands.

The Capital Iron property, DcRu-116 is a pre-contact archaeological site as described by Grant Keddie, Curator, BC Archaeology. In 1976, an archaeological excavation was undertaken during construction of a building. 133 artifacts were recovered, and it was determined that the site was first occupied in 260 A.D. to 424 A.D.

## **Post-Colonial/ Modern History**

Industries lined the shore of what is known as the Upper Harbour and Rock Bay. Historical activities in the area included a tannery, sawmills, an asphalt plant (still operating), a propane tank farm, and a concrete batch plant (still operating). In the 1930's, uses on the subject land included coal sheds, rock bins, offices, a hotel, rice and flour milling, warehousing, ship dismantling, scrap metal salvaging, freight sheds and a railway yard.

### *Green Building*

The inherent environmental impact of buildings and urban development is significant and is mainly guided by Zoning Bylaw and Building Code criteria. As an urban, dense, mixed-use development, the Capital Culture District is an environmentally sound approach to redevelopment. The plan embodies the following sustainable and smart-growth principles:

- Redevelopment of brownfield sites with remediation where required.
- Compact development served by minimum extension of utilities infrastructure
- Well-served by proximate public transit
- Served by good multi-modal network of public rights-of-way/ streets and paths
- Mix of living, working, services, commerce and recreation within a 15 min. walk
- Variety of housing types and tenures
- Arts and cultural facilities
- Parks and open space within 5-to-10-minute walk/roll of all residences

### *Community Engagement*

On September 21, 2021, a Community Meeting (CALUC) was hosted by the Burnside Gorge Community Association Land Use Committee, with the Downtown Resident's Association in attendance. A presentation was made, followed by a question period. Topics raised by community attendees were primarily general enquiries that focused on the final development, rather than the process or details of the rezoning. The Acting Chair of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria voiced their enthusiastic support for the project.

The current application resubmission includes revisions that respond to City requirements as well as some neighbourhood requests. Per the City's process, both CALUC committees were contacted to offer presentation of the revised application. The CALUC members reviewed the revised submission documents and determined that another official CALUC meeting was not necessary.

### *Advisory Panels*

The project was presented on April 27, 2022, to the City of Victoria's Advisory Design Panel (ADP) and on May 10, 2022, to the Heritage Advisory Panel (HAP).

Varying comments and suggestions were made by panel members, covering a range of topics such as building height, landscaping, connections to the Harbour, and heritage designation. Many of the suggestions have been incorporated in the updated submission; comments have been addressed under separate cover.

*Conclusion*

Reliance Properties, DAU and the whole Design Team have worked collaboratively with City of Victoria Planners and Engineers to bring forward a design concept that will, initially and over time, accommodate needed employment and a resilient mix of uses including housing and the arts. The phased development will breathe new life into this significant urban area by improving the interface conditions and connections with the surrounding blocks and the Downtown core. In preparing this application, careful consideration has been given to the objectives of the City expressed in Victoria 3.0 as well as to thoughts expressed by the Downtown Residents Association, Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Association, and the Advisory Design and Heritage Advisory panels. The overarching intention is to put in place a Zoning bylaw that will permit the creation of a vibrant, resilient, beautiful new part of an Arts and Innovation District, proximate to Downtown Victoria and a catalyst for the future of the Victoria 3.0 initiative.

We look forward to continuing working with staff during the balance of the Rezoning process and, the subsequent Phase One Development Permit Application. If clarification or additional information is required, please do not hesitate to contact us.

D'AMBROSIO architecture + urbanism



Franc D'Ambrosio, Architect AIBC PIBC FRAIC LEED AP  
Founding Principal



Erica H. Sangster, Architect AIBC FRAIC  
Principal