

February 09, 2024

City of Victoria
No.1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC
V8W 1P6

Attn.: Mayor & Council

**Re: 2002 Richmond Road, 1909 Birch Street, 1769 Pembroke Street
Rezoning and Development Permit Application**

Cascadia Architects is pleased to submit, on behalf of Empresa Properties Ltd., a Rezoning and Development Permit Application for the properties located at 2002 Richmond Road, 1909 Birch Street, and 1769 Pembroke Street, commonly referred to as the "Turner Site". The application proposes the construction of a 6-storey 55-unit mixed-use commercial and residential building that carefully responds to the relevant 2012 Official Community Plan directions, the 1996 Jubilee Neighbourhood Plan and City of Victoria Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential projects.

For many years the art-deco inspired building, home to *Turner's News* and *Ian's Coffee Stop*, was a gathering place for residents of North Jubilee and staff at the Jubilee Hospital, and despite the uninviting urban environment around the building, the site was arguably the heart of the Jubilee Neighbourhood. The design team's vision for this application is to create a project that renews that neighbourhood center as a visual landmark for the area and an improved urban environment that explicitly welcomes people by providing generous and attractive public realm amenities. In keeping with this vision, the building is proposed to include animated ground floor uses such as a café and restaurant, as well as purpose-built rental residential homes on 5 floors above the ground level.



In preparing this Development Tracker pre-application package, the design team has received preliminary input from the both the North Jubilee and South Jubilee Neighbourhood Association Executive Committees, as well as local residents, City staff, and specialist consultants, including a transportation planner, landscape architect, and civil and geotechnical engineers. The public consultation and review process to-date included the following meetings:

- Multiple Planning Meetings – with City of Victoria staff from Planning, Engineering, Parks, and Transportation, as well as Council representatives.
- Presentation to 2020 Richmond Road Strata Council – May 2, 2023
- Presentation to NJNA Executive Committee – May 30, 2023
- Presentation to SJNA Executive Committee – June 6, 2023

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A Corporate Partnership

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- Pre-CALUC Community Meeting – June 27, 2023
- CALUC Community Meeting – September 13, 2023
- Milliken Developments (Joint owners of the Amica Building) – October 3, 2023

Existing Zoning, Site Characteristics, and the Jubilee Neighbourhood Plan:

The two parcels on Birch and Pembroke are currently zoned R1-B for single family homes, and the corner property is zoned C-1 for commercial and residential uses up to 3 storeys. The current total site area is approximately 1,587 sq.m.. Proposed land dedications along Richmond Ave and Pembroke St. would reduce the site area to 1,493.8 sq. m.. This area is well-integrated with the public transit and the AAA bicycle networks and is valued for its proximity to the Jubilee Hospital and the Fort and Foul Bay shopping center, as well as to downtown and UVIC via the transportation networks. Victoria's Official Community Plan suggests this area can be re-developed to 6 storeys in height, with a density of up to 2:1 where Plan objectives are advanced.

Description of the Proposal:

The proposed development capitalizes on the slender, triangular shape of the corner property to create a distinctive flat-iron inspired building of 6 storeys, paying homage to the former Turner building, while containing 55 residential units building in a mix of studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom configurations. The elegant architectural form proposed for the building will elevate this corner, and immediately create a unique landmark in the city as a clear expression of the North Jubilee location and identity. The building massing in this proposal is concentrated at the Birch & Richmond intersection, due to the awkward shape and width of the panhandle of the site that extends to Pembroke. The design team is proposing to use that area as a landscaped parking surface for the project, due to the inability to provide viable underground parking within the convoluted site boundary. This preserves the current open condition of the site where it is adjacent to single-family homes and keeps available the option of future coordinated development with the 2 properties at Birch and Pembroke, resulting in a superior 'neighbourhood fit' for that end of the block.

The project also proposes to create a significant community amenity in partnership with the City of Victoria, by closing the end of Birch Street as it intersects Richmond Road (except for service and emergency vehicle access) to create a public plaza that will extend and amplify the positive pedestrian-oriented activity created by the ground floor commercial spaces. This public plaza will feature stormwater management landscapes, and areas for public seating and presentation. It will also accommodate various temporary uses such as a small neighbourhood farmers' market, street musicians, and occasional food trucks or carts. The ground-level experience will be further enhanced by providing the City with volumetric SRWs on all sides to allow for greater pedestrian and cycling mobility, despite the additional challenges this poses for development on the narrow site. These significant public realm enhancements demonstrate the proponent's commitment to creating a true neighbourhood heart in this location. Accompanying the application is a cost-sharing proposal from the applicant, Empresa Properties.

The project team is dedicated to carrying on the legacy of the past uses of the site through imagery and artwork. The semi-permanent site furniture is proposed to be imprinted with historical imagery. Other opportunities for historical imagery exist, including public areas of the building like the bike rooms and the residential lobby. Further consultation with community members, tenants, and owners is required to finalize the concept.

The proposal's key characteristics can be evaluated against the **2012 Official Community Plan, and 1996 Jubilee Neighbourhood Plan** goals as follows:

- The proposal will require an OCP amendment to accommodate the increase in proposed density to 2.95:1, beyond the 2:1 OCP suggested threshold. As illustrated in the accompanying drawings (A052), the increased density largely results from creating a viable floor plate at the OCP height vision within the constraining site geometry. The case for this amendment is very strong, based on the proposed rental tenure for the residential units, the site's proximity to the adjacent Large Urban Village, and the extent of proposed public realm improvements on a site that has proven financially unfeasible to develop for decades. In all other respects the intent of the Official Community Plan is fully achieved:
 - 6 storey height limit,
 - Improvement to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure around the Jubilee,
 - Intensification of commercial and residential uses,
 - Strengthening of the Large Urban Village centered at Fort Street and Richmond Road.
- The Jubilee Plan dates from 1996, and so is not as current as the OCP, but this proposal nevertheless addresses many of the objectives of the LAP:
 - By revitalizing a derelict site, the proposal is increasing safety and security in the area, (Community Objective 2.3)
 - The active, publicly accessible ground floor uses provide a significant community amenity that also, by virtue of the outdoor enhancements, acts as a potential gathering place for all residents, (informally, toward the intent of Community Objective 2.4) and enhances public safety (Commercial Objective 5.3.4)
 - By creating rental residential units at a variety of sizes close to a major employer that also is a major provider of healthcare services for the area, and in particular seniors, the project meets a crucial need for housing, (Housing Goal 3.2)
 - By massing the development at Richmond and Birch, the project keeps the built form away from the single-family zone, and preserves the opportunity for future, transitional development at the NW corner of the block (Housing Objective 3.3.1 and 3.4.10),
 - By providing rental housing (Housing Objective 3.3.8),
 - Although the existing art-deco inspired Turner Building is not salvageable and not listed as a Heritage feature in the neighbourhood, the proposal does reference key characteristics of the well-loved structure. The design maintains the distinctive bullnose profile at the corner of Richmond and Birch, as well as the corner entry location and configuration, and café / restaurant uses. Additionally, ground floor exterior finishes will include glazed black ceramic tile in reference to the original finish at the base of the Turner Building. In these ways the new development acknowledges the intent of the Heritage Objectives (4.3) in the LAP.
 - The project also adds commercial growth in an appropriate location (Commercial Objective 5.3) and creates a distinctive character for this area of the neighbourhood (Commercial Objective 5.3.2) as well as mixing commercial and residential uses (Commercial Objective 5.3.3),
 - By creating an accessible public landscaped area for local use the proposal addresses the intent of the intent of the Parks Objectives (7.3.1, 7.3.2, 7.3.4, 7.3.5),
 - The closure of Birch Street to cut-through type traffic use, the enhancement of boulevard landscaping, and the creation of the separated bike lane on Richmond Road will address Transportation Objectives (8.3.2, 8.3.3, 8.3.4, 8.3.6)

Exterior Finishes:

Due to the tight triangular site creating a challenging shape to achieve functional floorplates for residential use, the building is designed to use all the available area between Birch Street and Richmond Road, pushing the building faces right to the property lines at the residential levels 2 to 6. The architectural expression must therefore be achieved by the simplicity of sculptural form, without dramatic articulation. The slender bullnose at the corner of Richmond and Birch establishes the dominant character of the building and along the primary frontages of Birch Street and Richmond Road, the building is composed of horizontal bands of vertical fins, rendered in a high-quality metal finish that will vary in its colour and radiance depending on the lighting conditions. This composition creates an elegant, stretched façade proportion along Birch, and then sweeps around the Richmond corner to create the strong fan-like shape as the building steps outward over the generous sidewalk on Richmond. The ground floor is properly recessed, creating weather-protected areas for seating, and giving the building a sense of lightness, as the upper floors 'float' over the ground floor.

The ground floor recalls the previous Turner Building in its materiality of clear glass storefronts framed by grey concrete structure and glazed black ceramic tiles. Access to the ground floor CRUs is via doors that match the original locations and geometry of the Turner Building. High quality paving materials and patterns connect the building's architecture to the forms of the public plaza landscape, where bullnose planters and triangular seating arrangements interspersed with groups of trees create a variety of outdoor spaces suitable to accommodate café patrons, street performers and the public alike.

For building residents, a rooftop garden augments the outdoor access achieved at their units via balconies and Juliet railings and creates a secure gathering and community space for the building.

Transportation and Infrastructure:

The project is exceptionally well situated and served by City of Victoria infrastructure. Schools, parks, and recreation facilities, as well as shopping destinations are all within walking or rolling distance of the site. The future residents will have a range of transportation options available to them. Infrastructure for vehicles, walking, and particularly cycling is immediately accessible from the property, with the newly constructed Fort Street AAA cycling corridors less than a block away.

The project will include 13 surface parking stalls accessed from the driveway at Pembroke Street, including two accessible parking stalls to meet the City bylaw requirement for the commercial space (one being larger to accommodate van parking). Subject to Modo approval, an additional parking stall on-site would be dedicated to a car-share vehicle, and will be supported by an EV charging station. One of the commercial parking stalls will also be provided with an EV charging station.

A large and well-equipped space is available on the main level of the building for cyclists to store and maintain their bikes, whether they ride for fun or as a means of transportation. Providing long-term bicycle parking beyond what's required by Schedule C will help cyclists who ride alone or with their families.. Short-term bicycle stalls are provided directly adjacent to the residential Main Entrance (as per Schedule C), with additional banks of short-term bike parking distributed through the landscape areas and around the commercial units.

In the accompanying Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA) Bunt & Associates has summarized its findings on existing and future traffic operations in the surrounding neighbourhood, project parking supply, rationale for the parking variance, and outlines a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan for the project.

Safety and Security:

This development will introduce a new population of residents in the neighbourhood and contribute additional 'eyes on the street'. The overall design has considered passive surveillance of the property, and views to all common areas and access points. The ground floor commercial units will animate the area throughout the day, re-enforcing the street presence with its landscaped area as an active space. Site lighting illuminates the areas around the entire building to promote safety and visibility of landscaped areas. It is important to note that this lighting will be shielded and kept at a lower mounting height in order to avoid glare and light pollution to neighbouring properties. Lastly, access to the building will be secured and available only to the residents and permitted guests.

CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles have been employed along the north east exit path along Richmond Road. A fence protects an narrow outdoor pathway, preventing unwanted loitering in a location that has no other public social value.

Sustainable Features:

The following is a list of green building / social sustainability initiatives that will be deployed within the project:

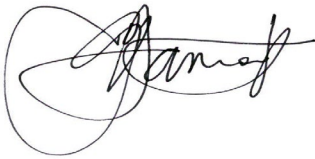
- No existing dwellings or residents displaced during construction,
- Net Positive Housing Creation (55 homes)
- Meeting Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code as City of Victoria requirement,
- Site is located adjacent to the Richmond Bike Lane (and will improve it to a fully divided lane) and within 250m of the Fort Street Bike Lanes,
- High-efficiency LED lighting throughout common areas and homes,
- Secure bike storage at ground level includes an automatic door with electronic access control,
- Electrical outlets for electric bicycle charging locations within bicycle storage,
- A bicycle wash station and repair stand in convenient location,
- All Parking stalls to have Level 2 EV compatible electrical outlets at building completion, (vehicle energy management system may be required),
- Fresh air ducted to each home, by heat recovery ventilation units,
- No on-site fossil fuel consumption is proposed for residential area services, in anticipation of Victoria's Step 4 Carbon Step Code requirement,
- Stormwater Management Plan implemented during construction, and for street water run-off from public plaza area in final configuration,
- Construction Waste Diversion Plan implemented during construction,
- Community Rooftop Garden for Residents.

In preparing this application package the team has carefully considered community input, City staff input, the relevant Official Community Plan objectives and the Jubilee Neighbourhood Plan. It is our belief that the design for this project is responsive to the neighbourhood context and proposes timeless architecture and public landscapes that will contribute positively to the community experience.

If you have any questions or require further clarification of any part of this application, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

CASCADIA ARCHITECTS INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Damant', with a large, stylized circular flourish on the left side.

Gregory Damant, Architect AIBC, RAIC, LEED AP
Principal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Johannknecht', with a large, stylized circular flourish on the left side.

Peter Johannknecht, Architect AIBC, RAIC, LEED AP
cert. Passive House Designer, Principal