

4 November 2021

# 822 Catherine Street 304 Langford Street - Rezoning and Development Permit Application

City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, British Columbia  
V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps, Council, and Staff:

Please accept this letter as part of our Rezoning and Development Permit Application for 822 Catherine Street | 304 Langford Street, a proposed mixed-use development, including thirty-one (31) residential rental units and two (2) commercial units. We are requesting to amend the property from the current R-2 zoning to a new site-specific zoning. The project is proposed as 100% secured-in-perpetuity affordable rental housing as per the Zoning Bylaw.

## History and Site Context

This is the land of the Lekwungen People, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. As you travel through the city, you will find seven carvings that mark places of cultural significance. To seek out these markers is to learn about the land, its original culture, and the spirit of its people.

Victoria West, as it is known today, is of cultural and historical importance as it was once the site of the Songhees village. Canadian National Railways introduced rail service in 1922 and a further blossoming of industry followed as entrepreneurs took advantage of access to railyards,

steamship terminals, and a growing base of employment. Victoria West was crucial to the economic and industrial hub for early Victoria and in the years following, the area grew into a popular residential area. This was an early example of a modern mixed-use neighbourhood, with amenities and work situated within an easy commute from residential areas.

## Policy Context

The subject property is located in the heart of Victoria West, directly bordering the Catherine at Edward Street Village. The Victoria West Neighbourhood Plan envisions this area as an opportunity for 'neighbourhood gathering, shops, and services'. The Neighbourhood Plan also identifies several 'big moves', the first of which is to 'Create Strong Village Hearts', which has guided the planning of this proposal. Another is to develop and construct more places to live near transit and amenities. Within a two-block radius you can find an elementary school, a local food market - popular not only with residents of Victoria West but citywide - as well as four bus stops that provide access to most, if not all of the major regional employment centres within a 25-minute ride.

In the Official Community Plan (OCP), urban villages are envisioned to absorb 40% of all population growth, yet they only make up 3.5% of the city's land base. As such, we need to be careful about redevelopment to ensure these scarce lands are utilized appropriately. Currently designated as Traditional Residential within the Official Community Plan, we are seeking an amendment to include the subject site within the Catherine at Edward Small Urban Village. The housing forms characterizing these areas are low-rise and mid-rise multi unit buildings including townhouses and apartments, freestanding commercial, and mixed-use buildings.

Our project, as proposed, lies just under 2.0 FSR at 1.86 FSR, which is above the Official Community Plan allowance designated for Small Urban Villages. There are provisions in the Official Community Plan to exceed the stated density for the advancement of certain plan objectives; in this case, the provision of rental housing in perpetuity and strengthening the 'village heart' through providing local employment and business opportunities through the commercial spaces on the ground floor.

The proposed development is supported by the Housing Strategy Phase 1 and 2, Go Victoria Mobility Plan, Climate Leadership Plan, Missing Middle Housing Study, and dozens of action items in the 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan.



## Neighbourhood Grain

This area of the Victoria West neighbourhood includes a heterogeneous mix of commercial and residential uses, from single-family residential buildings to multi-family apartment and condominium buildings. Neighbouring the subject site is a mix of single-family residential buildings located to the north and west, with commercial uses to the south and east. As per the Neighbourhood Plan, “A mix of historic older homes and new development in a greatly varied lot pattern is a characteristic of the neighbourhood.” These buildings include a range of building styles, composed mainly of stucco and painted wood cladding, with some brick accents.

The building grain peaks along Catherine Street and tapers as you move east and west which is a typical land use pattern for the city. The footprint of the existing building is symptomatic of its era, with larger setbacks from the street and underutilized density, resulting in a fragmented urban design program. Modern design narratives seek to bring more intimacy to the street with tighter urban setbacks with the balance of the design program being driven by the rental utility and the relationship to neighbouring residential properties.

As well as directly bordering the Catherine at Edward Small Urban Village, the subject site is less than 500 metres from the Westside Large Urban Village and 500 metres from the Craigflower Small Urban Village which offers a wide range of local retail, commercial businesses, and services. Opportunities for recreational activities exist within a short walking distance from the subject site and include Banfield Park, Vic West Elementary, Victoria West Park, Songhees Walkway, and the Galloping Goose Trail.

## Site Layout and Building Form

This proposal seeks to provide a more urban, street-oriented building that is compatible with the evolving neighbourhood. The building will be positioned at the intersection of Catherine Street and Langford Street. The building is shaped as a three and a half storey building along Catherine Street stepping down to three stories as it meets the neighbouring single-family residential buildings. The building relates to the scale of adjacent single-family buildings with a mansard inspired roof design and a generous setback at the top floor. At three and a half storeys, the

proposed building is intended to provide an urban termination to the block and forms a threshold between the more quiet Langford Street and the busy Catherine Street, respecting the transition to the neighbouring residential buildings to the West. The building is set back 3.9 m along Bella Street and 3.1 m along Langford Street to align and maintain the continuity of the street frontage with neighbouring residences while allocating space for the future reconciliation of the street width along Bella Street.

Intended to be a landmark along the border of the Catherine at Edward Small Urban Village, the building mimics the neighbouring commercial properties with commercial units at grade along Catherine Street, enhancing the public realm and village heart. The adjacent patio spaces serve to enliven the streetscape, with additional boulevard planting, public seating, and eleven publicly accessible bicycle stalls.

A centrally located courtyard in the middle of the building aligns with the residential yards to the West and provides relief to the overall building massing.

Taking advantage of the existing topography, the building mass is set into the slope along Langford Street. The parkade entrance is 'tucked' underneath the first floor of residential use along Langford Street, the lowest point of the site. Two Dogwood trees will be added in addition to planting to mark either side of the parkade entrance.

## Design Inspiration and Material Palette

Composed of pearlescent metal shingles, arrayed in an artfully detailed pattern and metal window frames with planting boxes, the building has been designed to mark the transition from the traditional residential form to a more urban building typology. Architectural concrete is present at grade and is balanced by a wood-panelled entrance to the residential lobby. The materials were chosen based on feedback received from the community and municipal staff, as well as a desire to be faithful to the architectural legacy of the area, while allowing a modern architectural form to express itself.

While the materials palette is restrained, the expression of the building has a subtle playfulness. Generously sized windows are arrayed in an attentive pattern that interacts with the cascading arrangement of the shingles. These shingles give way to warmer-toned metal panels that frame



each window, softening the facade and lending an organic undertone to the building appearance. The planting boxes are a node to the residential character of the neighbourhood.

Envisioned as an 'outdoor living room', the common courtyard is nestled in the center of the building. Picnic tables, seating, and planting will enhance this space, in addition to a vibrant lighting design which allows for year-round use by building residents. The programming of the common courtyard is purposeful in its intention to create a space for connection and foster a sense of community between residents.

Extending upwards from the common courtyard, the exterior corridors give residents access to their units and activate the exterior building form.

The proposed development is designed using Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CTPED) principles to engage and promote safety and security for tenants and visitors. To minimize opportunities for concealment, the building footprint is uncomplicated, with minimal alcoves and recesses. Landscaping is similarly articulated with a combination of low ground cover and high crown plant species that provide clear sight lines into front, rear, and side yards eliminating blind spots. Appropriate levels of shielded lighting provide safe, well-lit pathways, and garden areas around the building, specifically at entry and exit doors.

The Vic West Neighbourhood Plan emphasizes that the residents of the area value eclectic aesthetic. This building as proposed is seen as expressing, through form and materials, the local eclectic context of the neighbourhood. We envision this building as an elevation of the 'rental building' stereotype, and an interesting addition to the historic and dynamic neighbourhood which is Victoria West.

## Building Layout

### Parkade

The parkade is accessed from Langford Street and houses various building services, such as: vehicular parking, secure bicycle storage, waste and recycling collection, and utility rooms. An elevator and stair connect this level to the entrance lobby and residential floors above.

### Level 1

The ground floor is split into two levels to accommodate the grades of the site and the parkade below. Along Catherine Street, the building steps in at the ground floor to broaden the pedestrian realm and highlight the commercial units with streetfront glazing. Patios at either building corners and enhanced landscaping further improve the public experience. From Catherine Street, building tenants can access the residential lobby, which is located between the two commercial units and serves to clearly delineate the residential realm from the commercial spaces. Directly to the rear of the lobby, the building opens onto the common courtyard which from here, ground floor residents can enter directly into one of six units and access is provided to upper floors via twin staircases flanking either side of the residential elevator.

#### Levels 2 - 3

Levels two and three are the 'typical' floors with identical floor plans of ten units each. The units are accessible via the exterior corridor, with views both towards the boarding streets and towards the common courtyard. This shared access reinforces the indoor-outdoor character of the building.

#### Level 4

Level four includes five two-bedroom units, all of which are oriented to provide views towards the street and the common courtyard. Defined by the sloped mansard roof line, the fourth floor of the building dissolves away from the neighbouring properties, giving the appearance of a three storey building. This design is an homage to the existing residential buildings throughout the neighbourhood and provides visual relief to the neighbouring residential properties. This level further steps down along the west elevation, reducing its impact to the neighbouring residential properties and creates space for two common patio areas for use by residential tenants.

## Landscape Design

The landscape is designed to animate the streetscape, foster community interaction, and create a pedestrian friendly and safe environment for residents. The design is intended to compliment the expression of the contemporary architecture with a plant palette that is sensitive to the local ecosystem and to the population that is engaging with it. The plant material selection has a



strong native focus, with attractive flowering perennials to support pollinators. All plants are drought tolerant and suited to the site conditions.

Best efforts will be made to retain the two existing purple plum trees located on the boulevard along Langford Street, one of which is a more recent planting, while the other is an established tree. Along Catherine Street, a single purple plum tree will be retained with one tree added in the boulevard to the north.

Three Stewartia will be added along Bella Street, in addition to pedestrian level lighting which is intended to address Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) concerns for residents and members of the community. As part of the exterior lighting design, we will minimize adverse offsite impacts of lighting such as light trespass, and obtrusive light.

Along the West property line, future building tenants will have access to both Langford and Bella Street by way of a pathway that will be gated at either end with fob access for tenants only. A six foot solid wood fence, along with additional planting and complete screening of windows along the West property line provides a further buffer between the subject site and the neighbouring single-family residential buildings. The existing hedge along the adjoining property line is to remain or be replaced with a similar species but one requiring less maintenance if the current neighbour so requests.

## Why Rental?

Housing is a human right, and with homeownership increasingly out of step with local incomes, Purpose Built Rental (PBR) housing is the strongest form of tenure and represents a possible, and sometimes beneficial, alternative to homeownership. Benefits of rental housing include the lack of maintenance or repair costs, increased access to amenities, no property taxes, more flexibility where you live, predictable monthly payments, and no requirement for a downpayment.

The 1960s and 1970s introduced the first series of apartment buildings built under the Federal multi-unit residential building (MURB) program that incentivized many of the rental apartments built throughout the Capital Region. As this program was phased out, only 604 purpose built rental homes were built between 1980 and 2011, however, the city's population grew by 20,018 residents. Herein lies the problem; population growth outnumbered rental housing construction by more than 20 to 1 creating a significant shortage of supply. If we are going to make urban

progress in affordability, climate change, and social equity, we need to increase rental housing across the city in areas well connected to walk, bike, and transit corridors.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of households in Victoria rent their home; of these, almost half (48%) are one-person households. The building programming is reflective of these statistics with four (4) studio units, twelve (12) one bedroom units, and fifteen (15) two bedroom units.

All rental units have been designed to increase livability through the form and function of the unit and support long-term tenancies.

## Mobility Context

### Multi-Modal Network

From the subject property's doorstep there are diverse cycle routes, bus routes, and walking options, including the Galloping Goose Trail, E&N Trail, and the Songhees Walkway. The City of Victoria's twenty-five year transportation masterplan places even more focus and investment in alternative transportation options with additional transit service and bike lanes planned. Catherine Street is also included as a part of plans for the expansion of Victoria's AAA bicycle route network, and this project includes proposed sidewalk and curb upgrades that will help to achieve this goal.

### Street Network

Catherine Street is a two-way street extending north/south and is classified by the City of Victoria as a minor collector road. Langford Street and Bella Street both extend east/west and are classified as a local road.

### Trip Generation

The anticipated vehicle trip generation is anticipated to be in the range of 10 to 20 two-way vehicle trips per peak hour period. This range of vehicle trip generation is typically considered negligible in terms of road capacity and intersection operations.



# Active Transportation

## Cycling and Pedestrian Networks

The site is well connected to both walking and cycling networks. Residents of the proposed development will be able to access most everyday amenities and services either on foot or by bicycle. The site is immediately adjacent to a local food market, and within a 5-minute walking distance of the Westside Village Shopping Centre, which contains a grocery store, pharmacy, and discount store, as well as several other shops and restaurants. Walk Score is an on-line tool that assesses the walkability and bikeability of a location based on distances to a wide variety of amenities and services. The site scores a 76 for walkability which it defines as 'very walkable'. The addition of two commercial rental units on the ground floor of the development is expected to further enhance the neighbourhood's walkability.

The location was awarded a Bike Score of 95 out of 100, placing it in Walk Score's 'biker's paradise' category. The site is an approximate ten minute bike ride from downtown Victoria via the Johnson Street Bridge. This recently completed bridge is part of the City of Victoria's All Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycling network, with a multi use path suitable for all cyclists, including families and children. Faster and more confident cyclists may also choose to use the bike lanes adjacent to traffic on Esquimalt Road. The site is a short bike ride from the Galloping Goose Regional Trail which connects to the Burnside Neighbourhood and Saanich via the Selkirk Trestle.

Planned All Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycling network expansions by the City of Victoria will connect the E&N Rail Trail to the Johnson Street bridge over the next few years. These cycling upgrades are expected to improve the neighbourhood's already high Bike Score. With its large volume of bike parking, the proposed development is well-positioned to support the anticipated cycling demand to and from the site.

The proposed development provides for forty (40) long-term bicycle parking spaces and eleven (11) short-term spaces, with cargo bicycle parking (three stalls), electric bicycle charging, and a bicycle repair station. This supply exceeds bylaw requirements and is expected to help promote cycling to and from the development.

## Car Share

Modo is a two-way carsharing service; registered members can pick up the vehicle from a parking spot and must return it to the same spot when they are done. Vehicles range from compact cars and sedans to SUVs and minivans, all of which are present within 800m of the site.

Currently there are five Modco car share vehicles located within 800m of the subject site, the closest of which is located approximately 250m away on Alston Street near Raynor Avenue. Downtown Victoria has approximately twenty additional Modco vehicles, all of which are easily accessible by bike or transit.

As per section 3.9.1 of the Vic West Neighbourhood Plan to 'make at least one on-street location available for car sharing in or near each large and small urban village, and in new multi-unit buildings to reduce single vehicle dependency', we purpose to provide one new car share vehicle located at Catherine Street for easy accessibility. Each tenant will receive a Modco car membership for the length of their tenancy.

#### Transit

The site is well served by public transit, with five transit routes within 500m of the site - an approximate six-minute walk. Transit routes accessible include nos.: 10, 14, 15, 24, and 25.

#### Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

The best transportation demand management strategy is the location efficiency provided by building denser housing forms in compact, walkable/cyclable neighbourhoods with ample access to public transit such as Victoria West.

The proposed development offers a wide range of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) offerings such as:

- One car share vehicle in coordination with Modco to serve building tenants and the wider community.
- Significant bicycle parking is provided, along with a repair station and three cargo bicycle stalls, an increase from the previous submission.



- Modo memberships for each residential unit for the term of their tenancy, effective for the lifetime of the building.
- Thirteen parking spaces to be allocated as follows: 9 spaces available for residents to lease and four spaces for visitors.
- Electric vehicle charging stations.
- Twenty percent (20%) of the total number of Long-Term bicycle stalls will be equipped with 110V outlets.
- Significant upgrades to sidewalk and curbs on both east and west sides of Catherine Street, including curb bulb-outs for traffic calming and a new pedestrian crosswalk.

## Contributing to a Sustainable City

According to researchers, densification holds the key for cities' fight against climate change as reducing automobile trips is the most significant component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As outlined above, the central location of the subject site in relation to multiple local amenities encourages a pedestrian and bicycle oriented lifestyle. The proposed development has been designed assuming walking, cycling and transit as primary transportation options for future residents, and as Catherine Street is included as part of the planned AAA bicycle network, this is an ideal location for such a project.

The building will be designed and constructed to BC Step Code 3, in accordance with the City of Victoria's phased Step Code guidelines which were updated as of January 1st, 2020. Step Code 3 represents a 20% increase in efficiency. This includes designing the building systems in a way that will reach high levels of performance in Thermal Energy Demand Intensity (TEDI), Total Energy Use Intensity (TEUI), and airtightness.

This proposed development is intended to create the kind of sustainable middle density development, carefully positioned in relation to alternate modes of transit, that contributes to a vital, low carbon, sustainable future envisioned for the City of Victoria.

## Community Consultation

Aryze Developments is committed to being good neighbours and having honest, open dialogues within the communities we do our work. We are available to discuss project details with stakeholders through a variety of channels to build trust and shared vision for the project all while maintaining a respectful and open conversation. Our goal is to create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable to share their ideas, hopes, and aspirations for the community and for them to ultimately see these values reflected in the end project.

Aryze Developments held a Community Information Session via Zoom on the evening of April 13th, 2021, wherein we welcomed members of the neighbourhood and community to learn more about the proposed development and to provide comments and feedback. A further meeting was held with the Vic West Land Use Committee April 20th, 2021, as well as a third community meeting on September 29th, 2021 to inform of building design updates.

Aryze Developments Inc. is committed to assisting all current building tenants in their relocation as per the City of Victoria's Tenant Relocation Policy and has developed a Tenant Relocation Plan outlining this process. As per the policy, all residents of the current building have been notified of the proposed development and coordination continues to be ongoing. Supports provided included enhanced rent compensation, additional moving cost assistance over and above required amounts, and an offer of first right of refusal with 10% below market rent in the new building when complete.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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