

March 12, 2025

Addendum to Letter to Mayor and Council

Sustainable Planning and Community Development
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Re: 235 Russell Street, Victoria – Rezoning and Development Permit Application

Dear Mayor and Council,

We write to supplement the letter to Mayor and Council dated September 13, 2024 that was part of the rezoning and development permit application submission of that same date. That letter describes the proposal, whereas this addendum is meant to elucidate our current position.

While there has definitely been some confusion around the submission of September 13th, it now seems clear to us based on discussions and the recently received Application Review Summary that staff support for this current iteration is limited. Although we find this surprising and counter to our initial understanding of support for the pivot to a building incorporating a residential component, it now appears that support is contingent upon revisions that are not feasible. We understand staff's position and that the position is based upon policy. Our position is that the current application for a 6-storey, mixed-use (industrial-residential) building that replaces the previously-approved 4-storey industrial building is a better aesthetic fit for the neighbourhood and provides desperately needed housing (a portion of which is below market). Basically, the top two levels of industrial space have been replaced by four stepped-back levels containing 30 apartments. That is, the first two levels remain the same (i.e., a podium in the current iteration) after which the building steps back to accommodate 30 apartments, each with a private balcony.

Briefly, we received a development permit for the aforementioned 4-storey industrial building in late 2021 and currently have a building permit for that building under review with staff. In March of last year, we began discussions with staff around the idea of incorporating a residential component. As such, we progressed through the CALUC process and formerly submitted our new application. Based on recent discussions with staff and receipt of formal comments on November 29th (some of which cannot be accommodated), it would seem that counter to our initial understanding, staff may not support the revised application. While this submission is similar to that submitted in September, many of the comments received from staff in late 2024 are valuable and have been incorporated into the proposal. Unfortunately, there are some staff-suggested revisions that are not feasible.

Changes that are not feasible include a reduction in storeys below six, increased setbacks, reduced density and road dedication. It is worth noting that setbacks related to the current proposal are equal to or greater than those for the previously-approved building. While the density associated with the current proposal is above that referenced in the OCP and Vic West Neighbourhood Plan, so is that of the previously-approved building. Road dedication is not a requirement with respect to the building permit

currently under review, so why is it for this new application? We are perplexed why the pivot to include 30 homes, some of which will be below market, has garnered such a response.

Albeit the 4-storey industrial building is a positive addition to the neighbourhood and city, we believe the current iteration is more architecturally interesting and fits exceedingly well into the neighbourhood transitioning between industrial and residential. Most importantly, the addition of 30 homes to Victoria's rental stock is invaluable. We remain committed to the current iteration and are eager to get under construction as quickly as possible.

Following is an abridged list of staff-suggested revisions that have been incorporated into the proposal.

- Provide 3 trees.
- Increasing the amount of natural light into the units to improve livability.
- Using the roof for a green roof, and/or solar panels, etc.
- All mechanical and utilities indicated on the plans (e.g. gas meters, PMTs, ventilation shafts, grates and other above-ground mechanical or site servicing equipment) should be located to minimize negative impacts on the public street and adjacent properties.
- Materials proposed on the visible undersides of building elements such as balconies and overhangs should be clad with exterior materials that have a finished appearance and which complement the palette of exterior materials used on the rest of the building.
- A minimum of 25% of dwelling units contain two- or more bedrooms, with a minimum of 5% of total dwelling units containing three- or more bedrooms
- Trip facilities (i.e., shower, changerooms, storage lockers) for employees are required.
- Provide an area with the property bounds to allow for refuge storage & operations.
- TDM measures.
- Rain water management.

Below are revisions suggested by staff that require further discussion.

- Commercial loading zone. It is unnecessary and was sorted out previously.
- Car share within parkade. There are security considerations, but perhaps this can be accommodated in front of the building.
- Frontage improvements beyond the property.

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