

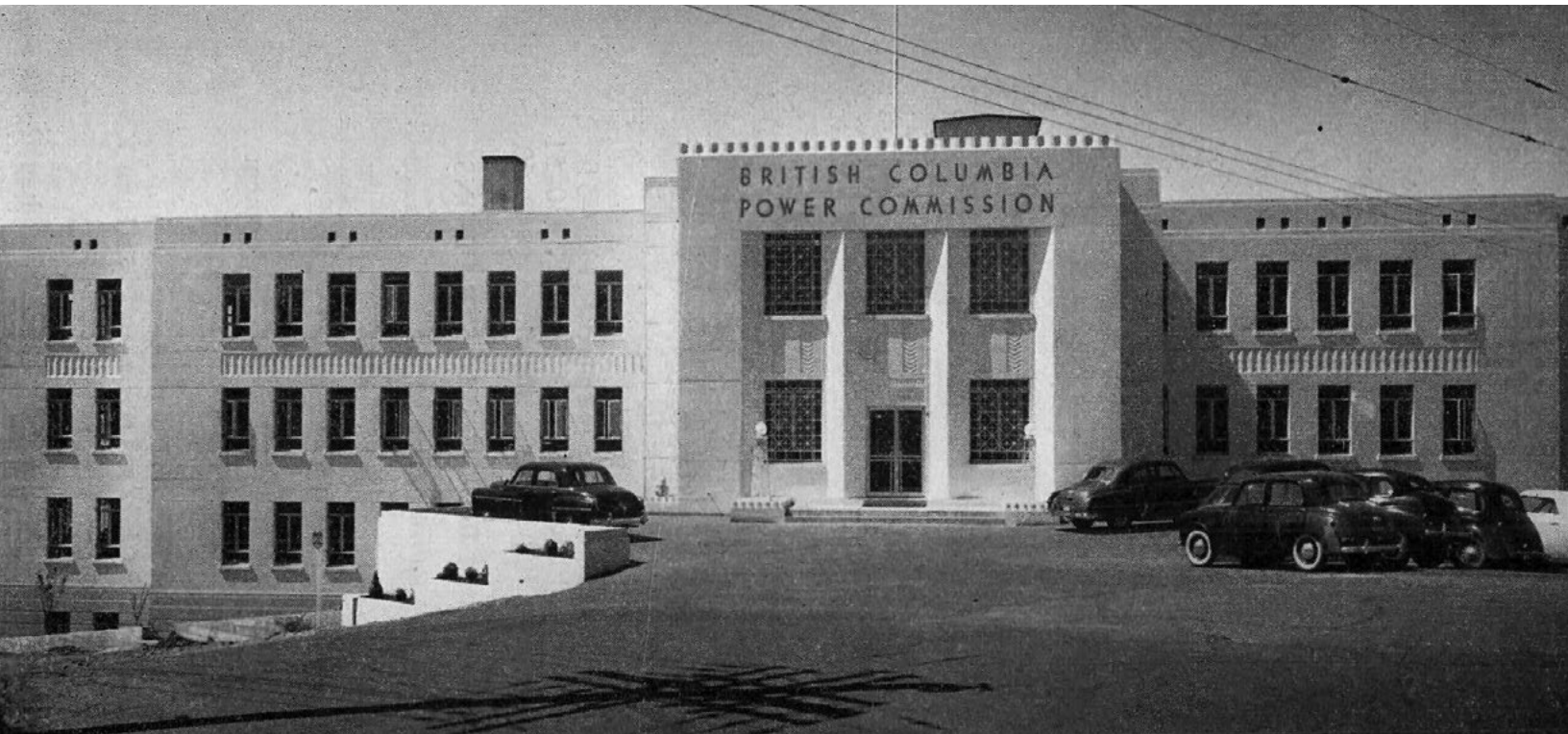
780 Blanshard Street

Rezoning Pre-Application
Information Package

Letter to Mayor and
Council

City of Victoria

February 24, 2022





omb

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February 24, 2022

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

Re: **Rezoning Pre-Application Information for a Comprehensive Development Urban Design Plan at 780 Blanshard Street**

Dear Mayor Helps 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 780 Blanshard Street, legally described as lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 28, and 29 of section 88 and of lot 1627, Christ Church Trust Estate, Victoria, Plan 35B. The goal of this project is to rehabilitate, and ultimately designate, the existing heritage building (the BC Power Commission Building), revitalize the site and its surroundings, and construct a new addition to the heritage structure. A mixed-use program is proposed, with a new 77-room hotel being installed within the renovated heritage building and 102 new dwelling units added in the addition.

Site Context

The 2,272 m² site is unique in the city. It is a steeply sloping triangular 'island' lot with no abutting private property lines. The site is bordered by three streets: Blanshard Street on the east, Burdett Avenue on the north, and Fairfield Road along the NW-SE axis. Immediately adjacent to the west is a small municipal park, Penwill Green, which is contiguous with the landscape of the site. The most prominent feature of the site is the British Columbia Power Commission Building, a late Art Deco-styled cast-in-place concrete structure designed by BC Public Works Architect Henry Whittaker. It was completed in 1950 and subsequently functioned continuously for public sector use until recently vacated.

Vision + Goals

The intention for this project is to revitalize an important existing site within downtown Victoria in a way which makes the most of the opportunities that it presents and addresses its challenges with a thoughtful, responsible, sensitive, and viable approach. The team has envisioned a new development that restores an important heritage building, strengthens the urban network, improves the surrounding public realm, renews the adjacent municipal park, provides significantly expanded public transit infrastructure, and ultimately helps create a more vibrant, resilient, and diverse community.

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

- Rehabilitate an important heritage structure, and to install a new program which brings the public and visitors into the building in a way they were not able to in the past.
- Respond to the unique characteristics of the site and urban context in a way that meaningfully enhances the utility, character, and social importance of the heritage building and surrounding public realm.
- Extend and enhance the mobility infrastructure on the site and its immediate surroundings to create an “urban mobility hub.”
- Infuse more housing choice within the downtown core to address current and future needs.
- Establish new connections between the building, its precinct, and the street for a vibrant dialog between the public realm and the heritage building.

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

- The challenge of creating a sensitive and compelling addition to the heritage building that balances programmatic demands, urban design considerations, policy goals, and financial realities.
- The scale of the public realm improvements needed for the ‘urban island’ site with three frontages and the interconnected relationship with the underutilized Penwill Green park.
- The skewed relationship of the existing building to the streets and property lines, the geometry of the site, and the sloped topography (approximately 8m from the Blanshard Street entrance to the sidewalk along Fairfield Road), place considerable constraints on site design, architectural response, and conformance to existing zoning bylaws and design guidelines.
- The inability to provide any significant on-site parking while also retaining the existing heritage building.

Based on an analysis of the heritage building and site history, the urban design considerations, and planning and policy context, the team developed a set of emerging principles to guide the design decision making. Building on the principles in combination with the opportunities and constraints presented by the site, several design concepts are proposed to form the core of the overall proposal. These principles and concepts are illustrated as follows:

Emerging Principles

Support Urban Vitality
Design to Complement + Enhance
Build on Unique Character
Strengthen the Urban Network
Respond to Ecology + Climate
Increase Safety + Inclusion



Design Concepts

Renew Penwill Green
Create a Blanshard Street Plaza
Redefine Burdett Avenue
Renew the Heritage Building
Connect a Multi-Modal Hub
Complement Housing with Active Uses
Activate Street Frontages
Realize Landmark Potential

The Architecture

Conceived as a comprehensive heritage rehabilitation and complementary contemporary addition, the design proposal aims to achieve several goals:

- Retain and enhance the existing character of the site.
- Thoughtful architecture that is complementary to the heritage building, its immediate neighbours, and the city.
- Urban design that transforms the public realm around the site to better activate the street and welcome people to and around the site.
- A mixed-use program that aligns with the employment, housing, and tourism goals of the city.
- A potential landmark at an inflection point in the city.



Conceptual image looking across Blanshard Street toward the corner of Burdett Avenue

The point of departure for the architectural design is the guidance offered in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* on the rehabilitation of historic buildings (Standards 10, 11, and 12). In general, these guidelines instruct to:

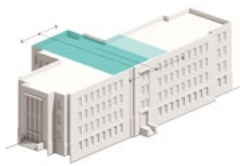
- Repair rather than replace character-defining elements.
- Conserve heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to an historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to, and distinguishable from the historic place.
- Create any new additions or related new construction so that the essential form and integrity of an historic place will not be impaired if the new work is removed in the future.

The rehabilitation of the BC Power Commission building will be detailed in a conservation plan prepared by Community Design Strategies. The principal rehabilitations to the façade will include:

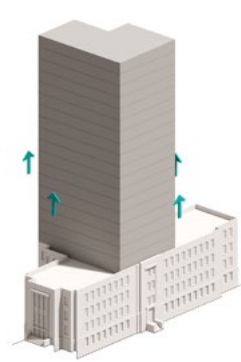
- The removal of the unoriginal eastern exit stair core which was added to the building in the 1990's.

- Restoration of the original heritage paint colours based on the heritage consultant's investigation.
- Retention of significant character-defining elements, like metal window screens and corrugated glass

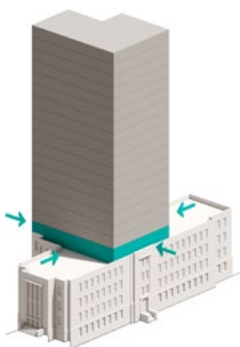
The addition to the historic BC Power Commission building takes the form of a slender tower with a direct formal relationship to two of the building's principal entrances. As articulated in the submission materials, the tower form matches the width of the prominent Blanshard Street main entrance façade and translates that form to the opposite elevation by symmetrically framing the prominent Fairfield Road entrance. The asymmetric relationship between the Blanshard Street entrance and the Fairfield Road entrance results in a L-shaped form. The tower floor plate respects the heritage building's footprint by keeping the tower façade aligned with or stepped back from the face of existing parapets below. The NW and SE faces of the addition are set back 19.3m and 22.6m, respectively, from the corresponding elevations of the heritage building. In addition, the fifth storey, the first above the existing heritage building, is further stepped back from the existing parapets by an additional 0.6m to preserve the visual integrity of the heritage structure and to transition more gracefully between the old and the new. The result is a horizontal base building whose historic character remains distinct and legible, and a new vertical massing that, in part due to its reduced-size floor plate, minimizes the impact on the heritage structure.



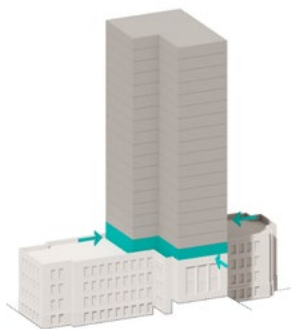
01 Define floor plate in response to existing entrances and asymmetry



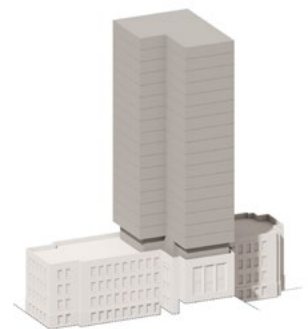
02 Extrude floor plate to scale mass in context (add 3.0 FSR)



03 Inset Level 05 to provide separation of addition from heritage building

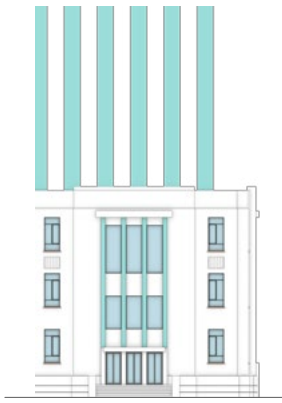


04 Resulting form



Massing derivation diagram

The fenestration and balcony strategy employed on the addition takes cues from the existing building's form and detailing and reinterprets them with a contemporary expression. The strong vertical composition of the Art Deco building entrances is echoed in the vertical bands of glazing and wall above. The existing building's window proportions and cellular grid-like expression are reflected in the size and consistent articulation of openings above. Periodic horizontal banding and a lightly articulated parapet complete the architectural composition in response to the horizontal ordering of the Art Deco building below.



Step 1. Create a strong vertical reference to key elements of the existing building.



Step 2. Articulate the horizontals using recessed cladding elements, referencing the language of the existing to delineate floors.



Step 3. Create a stronger horizontal emphasis at every third floor level to terminate verticals like the existing building and provide a more human scale to the facade.



Step 4. Resultant facade.

Fenestration and façade articulation diagram

The design proposes a material vocabulary inspired by the contemporary application of the materials used in the construction of the heritage building. This includes: modern rain-screened wall assemblies clad with cementitious panels; and metal-detailed windows, doors, and balconies to complement the existing aluminum window grilles, stairway guards, and window systems.

The hotel and residential tower will share a front entrance and lobby from a redesigned public plaza-style front entry and pick-up drop-off zone, replacing the existing asphalt parking lot at the corner of Blanshard Street and Burdett Avenue. The hotel, currently planned with 77 rooms, will feature a café and food service area adjacent to the Fairfield Road entrance, a shared fitness facility for guests and residents, a bookable meeting space / lounge in the historic Chairman’s Office on Level 3, and a rentable space at the Level 5 rooftop for small gatherings.

The residential tower will have its own indoor and outdoor amenity spaces, including a children’s play area on the east portion of the Level 05 roof.

Landscaping Architecture + Public Realm

As introduced in the Design Concepts above, the project proposes several distinct, significant landscape and public realm improvements on and around the site. They represent an opportunity to activate the site and the park to make a significant contribution to the neighbourhood. These are:

- Renewed Penwill Green: A re-envisioned small urban park which enriches the community, that is a safe, welcoming place to gather, and which helps knit together the various pedestrian, active transport, greenspace, and public transit networks in downtown and the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- A Blanshard Street Plaza: A new space that welcomes the public to the front of the historic building, which defines the site with a more civic presence, and that provides more appropriate arrival for the intensified use of the site.
- Burdett Avenue Redefined: An enhanced street front which more than providing a missing sidewalk, expands public green space, provides multi-modal connections, and which helps link the upper plaza precinct to the renewed Penwill Green park.
- More Active Fairfield Road: A potential transit terminus with enhanced passenger waiting, a covered shelter, and bicycle parking. A new café, accessible from the street, where food and beverages might be enjoyed in the historic building or on the street.

- On-site Gardens + Rooftops: Provide a variety of outdoor experiences for guests and residents and a welcoming interface between the site and the surrounding community.
- Vegetation + Stormwater Management: New ecologically appropriate and drought tolerant planting throughout the site to manage stormwater run-off on site, enhance the urban biosphere, and help create a more welcoming and resilient landscape.



Conceptual image looking across Fairfield Road toward Penwill Green park

Policies and Guidelines

This application proposes to alter the zoning for the site from CBD-1 to a new Comprehensive Development (CD) zoning. This proposal is based on the unique opportunities and constraints of this site as described above, with the principal driver being the conservation and rehabilitation of the BC Power Commission Building. 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 and challenging site.

Land Use

The proposed land use, a commercial hotel with multiple dwelling residential, is consistent with the current CBD-1 zoning. Close to the inner harbour, convention centre, and the rest of downtown, the site is an excellent location for a hotel, and would add to the supply of hotel rooms in the area. At the edge of downtown, adjacent to several other Urban Place Designations which promote higher density residential use (Core Residential, Core Inner Harbour/Legislative, Urban Residential), the added dwellings are a good fit to the immediate neighbourhood and a welcome supplement to the anticipated employment growth in downtown Victoria.

Density

The development proposal includes a total gross area of 10,474m², comprised of 3,650m² of commercial hotel space and 6,824m² of residential space. The current CBD-1 zoning generally permits a density of 3.0:1. 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 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.” Directly opposite the site, on the north side of Burdett Avenue, is Density Bonus Area A-1, which contemplates a base mixed-use density of 4:1 and maximum density of 6:1.

| 780 Blanshard Site Area | CBD-1 Current FSR | DCAP + OCP Max Residential FSR | OCP Max Commercial FSR | Proposed FSR | Proposed Maximum Gross Floor Area |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2,272 m² | 3.0:1 | 3.0:1 | 6.0:1 | 4.6:1 1.6:1 Commercial 3.0:1 Residential | 10,474 m² |

Height

At 22 storeys — four storeys for the existing heritage building and 18 storeys for the tower addition — the proposed rooftop height for the development is 70.67m, with an additional 2.33m rooftop structure comprising the mechanical penthouse and elevator overrun. This exceeds the 43.0m set out by the CBD-1 zoning by 27.67m. The height is consistent with the Core Business height limit of up to 24 storeys stated in the OCP. The DCAP outlines a maximum building height of 45.0m or approximately 15 residential storeys for the site (Map 32). The primary reason for the proposed height is the opportunity to retain the existing heritage building and have a sensitive and well-considered architectural response in the design of the addition. As set out in the submission materials, the rooftop addition respects the existing footprint of the BC Power Commission building and derives its geometry from a relationship to two of the primary Art Deco-styled building entrances below. The result is a proposed reduced floor plate (384m²) when compared to typical residential towers (maximum 650m² for buildings above 30m). While the same proposed density could be contained within 14 overall storeys (4 existing + 10 addition) — and therefore comply with the 45.0m Map 32 height limit and the 650m² residential floor plate limit (Appendix 6) — the resultant massing would not respect the footprint of the existing heritage building. Studies of various alternate development forms were undertaken in the design process, and none were as successful as the proposed design.

| 780 Blanshard Existing Height (Storeys) | CBD-1 Maximum Height | OCP Maximum Residential Storeys | DCAP Maximum Height (Approx. Residential Storeys) | Proposed Height (Storeys) |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 15.01m (4 storeys) | 43.0m | 24 storeys | 45.0m (15 storeys) | 70.67m (22 storeys) |

There are several additional contextual factors which support this variance to the maximum height:

- The slender tower profile preserves more skyview, enhances access to daylight, and minimizes shadow impacts.
- The cross slope of the site, two storeys north to south, results in 20 perceived storeys at the main entrance at Blanshard Street and Burdett Avenue, and 22 storeys along Fairfield Road, which is directly opposite to two existing high-density residential projects, 751 Fairfield Road and 788 Humboldt Street, with street-facing heights of 18 and 14 storeys, respectively.
- The existing generous floor-to-floor heights in the heritage building are retained.

Setbacks, Building and Street Interfaces

Anticipating the full-block street wall building typology predominant in the downtown core, the CBD-1 zoning has 0m minimum setbacks at the front, sides, and rear up to 20m in height. Above that, to preserve daylight reaching street level and to maintain separation between tall buildings, a series of increasing step-backs are required as buildings grow taller. For the 'front' of this property, which City staff have confirmed is on Blanshard Street, a 5:1 angle of inclination away from the street is required above 20m in height. For the other two side/rear property lines, a step back of 3.0m is required between 20.0m and 30.0m, and 6.0m over 30.0m to 43.0m (Maximum Height). These setbacks are generally consistent with the Building and Street Interface Guidelines in the DCAP, which contemplate a street wall condition of 15.0m or 20.0m, depending on street type, with a 1:5 setback ratio beyond those heights.

In this proposal, the existing siting and floor plate configuration of the BC Power Commission building — a building with significant existing setbacks on the north and east — place constraints on the massing of any addition which confines itself to the footprint of the existing building. As a result, the proposed addition has minimum setbacks from Blanshard Street and Burdett Avenue of 9.75m and 8.90m, respectively. Along Fairfield Road, where the existing structure is close to the street, the addition is set back 3.58m at the closest point to the property line. This constraint results in the tower-form addition projecting beyond the 1:5 inclined plane above approximately 39m in height. At the top of the building this projection is 6.52m beyond the 1:5 setback ratio plane. As noted above, keeping the floor plate of the addition within the outline of the existing heritage building is a key attribute of success for the design response to the heritage building. There are several additional mitigating factors that further support this approach:

- Since the project is on the north side of Fairfield Road, the shadow impacts of the addition on the street immediately below are minimal.
- The small floor plate of the addition reduces the 'canyon' effect, and has a corresponding reduced shadow impact on the street below when compared to a typical downtown midrise or highrise development typology.
- The more significant setbacks from Burdett Avenue and Blanshard Street, where larger public spaces and park areas are located, provide relief from the proximity of the tower addition above Fairfield Road.

Floor Plate Limitations and Building Separation

The small floor plate residential tower addition (384m²) conforms to the floor plate maximum size for buildings greater than 30m (maximum 650m²). Without any other abutting private property lines, the site has street frontage on all three sides of the triangular lot and the footprint of the proposed tower addition fits entirely within the footprint of the existing heritage building. As such, while the residential exterior wall clearance to the property line along Fairfield Road does not conform with the 6.0m clearance called for in the DCAP Appendix 6, there is a 3.57m minimum clearance to the corner of the tower addition wall above Fairfield Road. The distance from the tower addition to the nearest tall neighbour, 751 Fairfield Road opposite, is greater than 18m.

Building Design Guidelines

Retaining the existing heritage building and adding a tower-form addition results in a building form generally consistent with the Building Design Guidelines in DCAP Appendix 7. The tower addition produces a new composition consistent with a distinguishable building base and top. The existing Art Deco-styled entrances on multiple elevations maintain the building's strong "address" and legibility. Mechanical equipment is effectively screened on rooftops, and despite no laneway or integrated loading facilities, loading and service access can be well accommodated and generally screened at the southeast corner near Blanshard Street and Fairfield Road.



Vista termination views to 780 Blanshard: Looking south along Blanshard Street (left) and looking east along Humboldt Street (right)

In addition, the site has significant ‘landmark potential’ as it is located at two vista terminations:

- Looking south along Blanshard Street, the heritage building and tower form would be prominently visible as Blanshard curves east as it descends the slope toward Beacon Hill Park.
- Looking east along Humboldt Street from the Inner Harbour, the proposal creates a clear prominent termination of the view, framed by the existing context.

Sun shadow studies demonstrate that the proposal preserves solar access on sidewalks opposite the development during key mid-day hours and has a modest added impact on the adjacent streets and public realm overall. This is the result of the tower’s slender profile and its location at the south edge of the site within the footprint of the existing heritage building. Other tall buildings in the area cast significant shadows, reducing the net added incremental shadow impact of the proposal.

Project Benefits and Amenities

The development proposal aspires to benefit the economic, social, and cultural life of Victoria. The project team sees this project as a chance to leverage the unique opportunities and challenges of the site to reestablish 780 Blanshard Street as a significant address in downtown Victoria. Several aspects will be of benefit to the broader community:

- Additional employment and tourist infrastructure supported by the hotel,
- The rehabilitation of and added public access to a significant historic building,
- Added downtown housing to support a more lively and walkable community, and
- An updated urban park and potential new public transit hub.

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

- Accessible sidewalks and green spaces all around the site,
- New project-sponsored dedicated car share spaces,
- New public transit shelter and seating,
- Electrified short-term personal mobility charging,
- A new public plaza,
- Opportunities for public art, and
- A publicly rentable historic conference room and new rooftop event space.

Need and Demand

The downtown area of Victoria is a key centre in the region’s employment and population growth projections and planning. The recently released 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. In addition to the existing employment base and network of schools and services, there is significant new commercial development near the site, including the recently approved Telus Ocean project (749 Douglas Street, 2-minute walk) and the proposed Capital VI office building (1221 Blanshard Street, 5-minute walk).

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 redesign of Penwill Green. The project aspires to be an active, inviting, safe, and inclusive precinct that will bring Victorians and visitors to and through the site in a way that strengthens urban networks and promotes neighbourhood vitality.

Transportation

The lot configuration and siting of the existing heritage building allows for limited off-street vehicle parking. Considerable effort has been undertaken in concert with WATT Consulting Group to develop a suite of mobility options and Transportation Demand Management measures to reduce vehicle parking demand and encourage the use of public transit and alternative active transportation modes (see additional information in preliminary WATT report included in the submission materials). In addition, the immediate adjacency of the BC Transit bus terminus along Fairfield Road, the redesign of Penwill Green, and the upgraded street frontages all around the building offer an opportunity to make broader neighbourhood-level transportation improvements. This has culminated with a vision for the development to become an "urban mobility hub."

Vehicle + Bicycle Parking

While the proposal has limited off-street vehicle parking, 25 off-site stalls within a short walking distance have been secured by Reliance Properties for long-term use by the development. The tenureship of the residential portion of the building program has not yet been determined by the owner. As a result, the vehicle parking requirement differs slightly between rental and strata use. The table below notes the current vehicle parking, the proposed, the Zoning Bylaw 2018 requirement for the proposed land uses, and the difference between the proposed and Zoning requirements.

| Existing On-Site Vehicle Parking | Proposed Vehicle Parking | Required Vehicle Parking per Zoning Bylaw 2018 (rental / strata) | Shortfall (rental / strata) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 6 stalls | 27 stalls (25 off-site) | 95 / 115 stalls (19 hotel) (76 rental or 96 strata) | 68 / 88 stalls |

Significant long and short-term bicycle parking is proposed for building guests, residents, and visitors. A minimum of 50% of the long-term bike parking will have access to outlets for charging. End-of-trip facilities for hotel staff, including lockers, showers, and secure, electrified storage are proposed. In addition, bicycle parking and a public bicycle repair station are being contemplated adjacent to Penwill Green park and the transit area along Fairfield Road.

| Long-Term Bicycle Parking | | Short-Term Bicycle Parking | |
|--|-------------------|--|------------------|
| Required Vehicle Parking per Zoning Bylaw 2018 | Proposed | Required Vehicle Parking per Zoning Bylaw 2018 | Proposed |
| 123 stalls | 148 stalls | 13 stalls | 14 stalls |

Loading

Loading will be managed at the southeast portion of the site at the existing service entrance to the building. Standard delivery vehicles and waste management vehicles can be accommodated on site at the existing driveway crossing near the corner of Blanshard Street and Fairfield Road.

Parcel delivery vehicles and passenger pick-up and drop-off can be managed on-site at the front plaza at the corner of Blanshard Street and Burdett Avenue. A pick-up drop-off curb and two short-term parking spaces are provided at the front plaza.

Transportation Demand Management

A variety of transportation demand management measures are proposed to reduce the overall demand for parking and to encourage alternate modes of transportation. These include:

- Three project-sponsored, publicly accessible car share spaces located on Burdett Avenue,
- Transit pass programs (EcoPASS and ProPASS) for hotel employees and tower residents,
- Charging facilities for 50% of long-term bicycle parking spaces,
- Long-term bicycle parking for extra-large cargo bikes and similar (min 10%),
- End-of-trip facilities for hotel staff,
- Ample short-term pick-up and drop-off space to facilitate deliveries, ride hailing, and other short-term uses, and
- Multi-modal wayfinding to promote active transit and public transit use

Public Transit Infrastructure Improvements

The site is adjacent to the existing Fairfield at Blanshard transit terminus point for the Victoria Regional Transit System. In addition to overall pedestrian and bicycle connection improvements to this transit node from the building and surrounding area, the site's development offers several potential transit infrastructure improvement opportunities that would be of benefit to not only the neighbourhood but the City and region. The suggested transit infrastructure improvements for the site include:

- Potential for expanded transit vehicle capacity, through the extension of the curb on the north side of Fairfield Road west towards Burdett Avenue. Expanded capacity could also potentially support the introduction of RapidBus, since two of the transit system's proposed RapidBus routes (the West Shore RapidBus Line and Peninsula RapidBus Line) will require a terminus point in the downtown area.
- Potential placement for Transit Vehicle Electric Charging Infrastructure at this location to not only provide the opportunity to evolve the transit system to zero emission vehicles but also reduce noise of transit vehicles in the area.

- Expanded transit passenger amenities, including transit shelter, expanded waiting space and bus loading facilities on Fairfield Road integrated as part of the Penwill Green improvements.
- Transit staff facilities within the building, including a washroom and small breakroom with kitchenette for BC Transit drivers.



British Columbia Power Commission Building, photographed in 1951

Heritage

The BC Power Commission Building is a registered heritage building (R/Com) in the City of Victoria. The building was designed by the BC Public Works Department’s Chief Architect, Henry Whittaker. It was built in 1949-50 and is an example of late Art Deco expression. Its geometric form and ornamentation provide a significant counterpoint to the typically Victorian nineteenth century architecture of nearby landmarks such as St. Ann’s Academy and communicate a sense of modernity well suited to its original function as the headquarters for the electrification of the province in the mid-twentieth century. It functioned continuously for public sector use for the Power Commission and then for BC’s Ministry of Environment until 2020.

Community Design Strategies is the heritage consultant for the project and will prepare a heritage conservation plan for the building, in addition to the “Summary of Research and Revised Statement of Significance” report included with the submission materials. According to the Statement of Significance, the character-defining elements of the BC Power Commission Building are:

- Location on the edge of the Humboldt Valley.
- Four-storey flat-roofed form and geometric massing.
- Architectural composition designed to accommodate its sloping lot and to accentuate the height of the southern façade.
- Association with the BC Power Commission as evidenced in such interior elements as the three-storey high aluminum stairwell screen with the initials B.C.P. and such exterior elements as incised signage on the north façade.
- All surviving Art Deco detailing relevant to its 1949 design.
- Surviving interior fittings and fixtures related to its original design.
- Original spatial configurations, fittings, and detailing of the Conference Room (originally the Chairman’s Office).

The intent for conservation is to preserve the exterior and interior character-defining elements. Although the original spatial configuration will be adapted for reuse, the Conference Room (Chairman's Office) and west stairwell will remain fully intact. The double-loaded corridor along a central east-west circulation spine will also be retained. The proposed interior partition scheme is compatible with the existing building fenestration pattern. The historically intact third floor entrance lobby and the original wood paneled library on the fourth floor were not identified as character-defining elements, but the team is working on interior layouts that enable the retention and/or re-use of these features to the greatest degree possible.

Standard 11 of the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* states that heritage value and character-defining elements must be conserved when creating any new additions and that all new work must be physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place. The proposed tower addition meets this standard in the following manner:

- It conserves the heritage value and character-defining elements by not obscuring, radically changing, or having a negative impact on character-defining materials and forms. Hotel use ensures the space has public access, the altered spatial configuration for hotel suites is like the original office layout.
- It is physically compatible, yet distinguishable from, the BC Power Commission building in that the addition will not be an imitation nor will it be in severe contrast. It will use materials, texture and colours that are harmonious with those of the historic building; taking design cues from the Art Deco detailing, such as the scale, rhythm and alignment of the fenestration and horizontal and vertical elements and blend contemporary interpretations into the design of the tower, thus emphasizing the integrity of the historic building, complementing the building, and respecting its heritage value.
- The addition is further distinguishable from the building's historic "podium" with clear distinction between what is old and what is new, while preserving the materials and features that characterize the heritage building.
- Standard 11 requires the addition to be subordinate to the historic place. This standard clearly states it is not a question of size. Although the height of the addition competes with the low-rise scale of the historic building, the addition can be considered subordinate in that it confines its footprint to the central spine between the two primary ground floor entrances, thus preserving the historic building's horizontality, scale and relationship to the site and its context.
- The addition is also set back on the north and south sides to maintain views of the outer edges of the historic building and confines its location to ensure most of the heritage building's mass is untouched. Views from the southwest and southeast give a sense of the addition being displaced beyond the historic building, thus giving the perception that it is a separate structure.

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.

As an example of adaptive re-use, the project proposes an array of environmentally responsible features:

- BC Energy Step Code performance at Step 4 for the residential tower and Step 3 for the commercial hotel.
- Re-use of most of the existing concrete structure of the BC Power Commission

building, resulting in significantly reduced construction material use, less energy and waste expended in demolition and disposal, preservation of embodied carbon, and the extension of life for a 70+ year old structure.

- An all-electric heat pump-based heating and cooling system capable of being shared between both the hotel and residential tower resulting in a more sustainable, efficient system.
- Landscaped roofs and site planting designed for on-site storm water management.
- An architectural design which considers passive design principles, limiting window-to-wall ratios.
- Extensive bicycle storage facilities, including 50% of the long-term bicycle parking spaces electrified for charging personal mobility devices and 10% of spaces large enough to accommodate cargo bicycles;
- End-of-trip facilities for hotel staff, including showers, lockers, and secure, electrified bicycle storage.
- Building-sponsored public car share spaces and resident car share memberships to reduce parking and personal vehicle demand.
- Low-use water fixtures and high efficiency LED lighting throughout.

Community Engagement

The project team have consulted with City staff several times over the development of this project. After meeting with members of the Downtown Residents Association in December 2021, the team looks forward to the upcoming Community Meeting, and to hearing the thoughts and ideas of a wide spectrum of Victoria residents, neighbours, and stakeholders.

Conclusion

The goal after the community consultation phase is to bring forward a rezoning proposal for 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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