

December 27, 2020

Mayor Helps & Council  
City of Victoria  
City Hall  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

**Re: Application for Development Permit, 1150 Cook Street**

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

We are pleased to submit this letter to accompany the Application for a Development Permit for the above-noted property. Understanding how busy you all are, we have highlighted with ***bold italics*** what might be considered the most salient information in each section.

**Description of Proposal**

The proposal is to develop the property within the existing zone of R-48 Harris Green District. ***The proposal also meets the goals and objectives for density and building height of the Core Residential designation within Victoria's Official Community Plan (OCP).***

- Proposed Uses: A residential building with ground level commercial and bicycle parking uses.
- Proposed Building Height: 47.57 m and 16 storeys (permitted: 30 m and 10 storeys). Variance requested.
- Proposed Setbacks:

Level	Front (East)	Rear (West)	Side (North)	Side (south)
1	1.7m	0.1m	1.9m	0.1m
2-3	1m	0.0m	0.0m	0.0m
4	3.4m	4.8m	3.7m	6m
5-15	2.8m	4.8m	2.1m	6m

- Proposed Floor Space Ratio (Lot Area = 1,009m<sup>2</sup>): FSR = 7.78.
- Type of Tenure Provided: Strata ownership.
- Proposed Dwelling Units: 129 Units.
- Proposed Unit Types:
  - Studio and Den - 4 units
  - 1-bedroom - 99 units
  - 2-bedroom - 26 units
- Proposed Parking Stalls: 41 stalls (no stalls required).
- Bicycle Parking (required and provided): 143 long-term spaces, 14 short-term spaces.

One hundred and twenty-nine extremely liveable homes will be provided. ***All living areas and bedrooms are on exterior walls (i.e., not shoe boxes) providing an abundance of natural light throughout the homes.*** Setbacks and building separations are generous. 1150 Cook St. will be an extraordinary place to live.

**Government Policies**

1150 Cook Street is located in downtown Victoria within the Urban Core (Core Residential Designation) of the OCP. The development proposal aligns with Victoria's OCP values by ensuring an increase to the urban core housing stock, a strengthening of social resources and the public

realm, and the reinforcement of downtown Victoria vibrancy through contemporary design and collaboration with city planners and community stakeholders. ***The Core Residential Designation defines building forms of multi-unit residential buildings to be up to 20 storeys in height, with three- to five-storey podium facades to define the public realm.*** The theoretical density (R-48 has no defined FSR) calculated for the site is 8.98. As noted in the OCP, Harris Green is a key high-density residential neighbourhood in the Urban Core. With rising population growth and residents of Victoria looking for places to live and work, the proposed project for 1150 Cook Street will help to satisfy the burgeoning demand for medium to high residential densities within downtown Victoria.

#### **Project Benefits and Amenities**

***Project benefits for this development will include an increase of the urban housing stock within the Core Residential Designation, streetscape upgrades to meet the transportation and pedestrian mobility requirements within the OCP and new commercial opportunities to integrate and flourish with the local urban fabric.*** Being able to accommodate the anticipated growth and density that the City of Victoria is projecting for the future will allow the Harris Green Neighbourhood to benefit from an increase in a variety of residential housing stock. Streetscape upgrades will be conducted to ensure continuous accessible design across the frontage as well as to meet Victoria's OCP and Victoria's Pedestrian Master Plan strategies. Commercial retail units at grade are proposed to offer amenities to the building residents as well as to better engage the local community. In addition, a social community gathering area is being suggested for the southwest corner of the intersection of Cook and View Streets. It is anticipated that the cost of improvements to the public realm are in excess of \$100,000.

***In addition to the above-described project benefits and amenities, we would like to offer a contribution to the City of Victoria housing fund and make a contribution to a future traffic signal at the corner of Cook and View Streets.*** The contribution to the traffic signal is based on the percent impact our development has on that intersection. Based on the Traffic Impact Assessments for our development (SW corner) and that of the development on the NW corner of Cook and View Streets, it is our understanding that the impacts are 9% and 91%, respectively. ***Given the anticipated cost of the traffic signal being +/- \$300,000, we would like to offer a pro rata contribution of \$30,000. In conjunction with the above-described benefits and amenities, we would also like to offer \$100,000 to the City of Victoria Housing Reserve Fund (HRF).***

There has been some confusion around the traffic signal. We believe the confusion is largely due to the fact that there are two applications in process at the intersection of Cook and View Streets. Staff have indicated that they are able to require either proponent to install a traffic signal and that it is the first application to move forward (i.e., get to Building Permit) that will be responsible for the cost of the installation. The same independent third-party traffic consultant has worked on both proposals. That consultant's written response to the suggestion that our development triggers, and could be responsible for, the need for a traffic signal was, "...if the intersection remained unsignalized the development would also have little impact...The amount of traffic this development is contributing to the intersection does not seem to be proportionate to the associated costs to installing a traffic signal". Nonetheless, we think it is fair we contribute to the cost based on our impact (i.e., 7% of all developments in the area and 9% if related solely to the other development at the intersection of Cook and View Streets). While we are unwilling to be unfairly burdened with 100% of the cost, we also believe it is unfair to burden our colleague with 100% of the cost. It would seem relatively straightforward and sensible to share the cost based on impact. As we have been told this is something dealt with at the Building Permit stage, and that

the first application to get there will be responsible for the cost, we find ourselves in a strange predicament. We would like to contribute to the traffic signal based on our impact and also contribute to the much-needed HRF. If we are saddled with all (e.g., \$300,000) or even 50% (e.g., \$150,000) of the cost, we would be unable to contribute to the HRF. As per the third-party traffic consultant's letter dated Apr. 22, 2020, our development does not trigger the need for a traffic signal and requiring us to contribute the full cost (or even 50% of the cost) is disproportionate to our impact. Nonetheless, there is a small impact and we would like to pull our weight. We ask you support our \$30,000 contribution (i.e., 10%) to the future traffic signal and accept our \$100,000 contribution to the HRF.

### **Need and Demand**

Development of the site is required to better reflect the growing urban landscape of downtown Victoria. ***In aligning with the OCP, the proposed mixed-use building will serve the needs of residents and the community.*** Planning guidelines and local demand will be met by providing a higher-density project, expanding local retail spaces, improving the vitality and livability of the public realm, and offering a well-designed and contemporary built form within the Downtown Core Area.

### **Neighbourhood**

1150 Cook Street is located at the southwest corner of Cook and View Streets. A long-time gas station brownfield site, it will be environmentally remediated as part of the proposed development. East of the subject property are multi-family buildings at 1020, 1039 and 1051 View Street. These buildings are 17, 11 and 9 levels, respectively. Immediately north of the site are car dealerships on both the east and west sides of Cook Street. Currently, a residential tower of approximately 20 levels is being proposed for the northwest corner. To the south and west of the site are low rise office buildings. The existing site warrants development based upon the dynamic status of the neighbourhood and the need to densify and improve the current streetscape and pedestrian realm. The proposed development will relate to the local neighbourhood by representing the visions and goals of the Harris Green Neighbourhood. ***A brownfield site will be re-invigorated with contemporary architecture and enhanced public realm.***

### **City Staff and Community Consultation**

The Developer has met with City staff on several occasions. Staff have been supportive of the project and collegial in assisting the development team in working through both functional building issues and aesthetic design. Given the relatively small size of the site, challenges exist. The collaborative manner in which staff have approached the project has been both refreshing and helpful. We are pleased that we have been able to maintain the initial design concept, while incorporating many of the functional necessities of such a building. The Downtown Residents Association (DRA) was also consulted and provided valuable input. The increased landscaping on the podium and the community plaza at the corner of View and Cook Streets are, in part, responses to comments received from the DRA. Following a productive ADP meeting, among other things, the top of the building was redesigned, the building amenity space was moved to Cook St. and elevations were refined. ***Efforts from all stakeholders early in the process have generated an elegant building that is functional and community-facing.***

### **Impacts**

***By engaging with the ground-orientated commercial retail units, benefiting from the increase in dwelling units for the area, utilizing the enhanced public realm and enjoying the contemporary streetscape and building design, the local community will experience a positive impact from the***

**development.** Neighbouring properties will experience an increase in activity and use and benefit from the positive impact to local commercial businesses.

#### **Design and Development Permit Guidelines**

1150 Cook falls within the DPA3(HC) Development Permit Area. ***The proposed development meets the stated purpose of revitalizing the area through a residential development with active commercial at street level.*** Multi-unit residential is encouraged in the form of mid-to-high-rise above ground-level commercial. The proposal complies with these guidelines by helping to revitalize and animate Cook Street, enhancing appearance through high-quality architecture responsive to the context, and enhancing the pedestrian experience through human-scale urban design, compatible with street function.

#### **Building Design**

***The building's mass is composed of three distinct elements: a ground level commercial base, a two-storey residential podium and a twelve-storey residential tower above.*** The three lower levels combine to form the primary street wall 12 m high along Cook Street, matching the height of the 3-storey office building to the south. Commercial frontage at grade is set back 1.7 m, allowing for additional public, weather-protected space along Cook Street. This space, in combination with proposed off-site improvements near the View Street corner will help achieve the enhanced pedestrian experience referred to in the above section. With its slim floor plate of 517m<sup>2</sup> (significantly below the 650m<sup>2</sup> policy maximum), the tower component was configured as a slender, vertical element, in contrast to the podium's horizontal character. A 1.8m shift in the tower's floor plate was introduced in order to further reinforce the vertical expression of north and south facades. The tower's strong presence at the corner of Cook and View Streets serves as an important Downtown Core Area boundary marker. Asymmetrically placed shadow boxes were used to add visual interest to east and west facades. Roof top mechanical equipment is recessed approximately 3.5ft below the height of exterior curb and wrapped with a translucent glass railing in order to screen it.

#### **Building Height and 1:5 Setback Ratio Line**

The current R-48 zoning limits the maximum building height to 10 storeys and 30m. ***In conformance with applicable OCP Guidelines, a height of 15 storeys and 45m is proposed.***

Further, we believe this height is appropriate for the following reasons:

- The project's most immediate context includes buildings with heights ranging between 9 and 17 storeys. A development proposal is currently with the City of Victoria for a building of approximately 20 levels on the northwest corner of Cook and View Streets.
- The proposed height is reasonable in proportion to the 30m Cook Street width
- Additional height has little shadowing impact on Cook Street owing to its north-south alignment
- A study was conducted to determine the impact of the view corridors to the Olympic Mountains. The slender design of our building has far less impact than a shorter, stouter building would have on view corridors to the Olympic Mountains.
- Helps to reinforce the building's role as the Downtown Area gateway marker.

We believe the above rationale also applies to the encroachment of upper storeys into the 1:5 setback ratio line. Stepping the building mass back at levels 11 – 12 would undermine the building's design intent and its role as an important urban marker along Cook Street.

#### **Safety and Security**

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is important for this development as it will offer safety and security for residents and commercial users on-site. ***A number of strategies to reduce crime, the opportunity of crime or the fear of crime will be implemented.*** These include:

- Dwelling units clustered together to create neighbour-to-neighbour surveillance.
- Landscape design to allow clear, unobstructed views.
- Walkway and entries are visible, well-lit, and overlooked by windows.
- Windows constructed of clear glazing to overlook public/private spaces.
- Glazed doors, white or light colour paint schemes and the elimination of dead ends and sharp corners in stairwells and parkades lobbies.
- Mixed-use development to encourage the presence of people at all times.
- Reduction of entrapment spots by the use of glazing in doors and windows.
- Commercial units on the ground floor to create an active streetscape.

### **Transportation**

The project is located along the arterial of Cook Street. ***The project exceeds the R-48 zoning parking requirements and complies with requirements of the current Zoning Bylaw Schedule C-Off-Street Parking requirements for bicycles.*** Bicycle parking will be within a safe and secure facility, located at street level, making it easily accessible. Increased bicycle usage by residents will be further facilitated through proximity to existing and future network of Greenways, including Fort Street bike lanes one block away and the currently under-construction bike lanes along Vancouver street.

Located on an arterial within the urban core of downtown Victoria, public transportation opportunities are frequent. Although there are no vehicle parking requirements under the current zoning, and it is our hope that the primary modes of transportation for the future residents of the building will be foot and bike (given the proximity to the commercial core), 41 parking stalls will be provided.

In summary, we believe this proposal offers significant benefits to residents of Victoria in terms of quality, livability, and moderately priced accommodation. Abundant amenities, including those not required, are contemplated and will be of great benefit to the community and City of Victoria. We also believe that, in its present form the project will, through its strong design, make a significant contribution to the city's evolving urban fabric.

Yours truly,



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Dan Robbins  
66 Developments Ltd.