



LOW
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ARCHITECTS

31 October 2017

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC

re 1811 Oak Bay Avenue – application for development permit with variances

Low Hammond Rowe Architects, on behalf of our clients Radnor Properties Ltd, is pleased to submit this application for a new development on the property at 1811 Oak Bay Avenue.

This proposal will replace a two-storey, 5-unit apartment building built in the 1940's and now considered at the end of its serviceable life, with a new 5-storey, 15-unit rental apartment building with an underground parking garage.

The project has been designed with consultation with the immediate neighbours and with City of Victoria area planners. We believe it fits appropriately within the complex context of the Oak Bay Avenue corridor, and will provide desirable quality rental housing to meet an increasing demand in walkable neighbourhoods such as this.

A complete description of the project and its design rationale follows. We look forward to presenting it in more detail for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Low Hammond Rowe Architects Inc

Christopher Rowe
Architect AIBC CPHD LEED AP
principal

1 Description of Proposal

1.1 Project components

- a five-storey 15-unit wood-frame rental apartment building with a single-level concrete underground parking garage.

1.2 Existing conditions and zoning

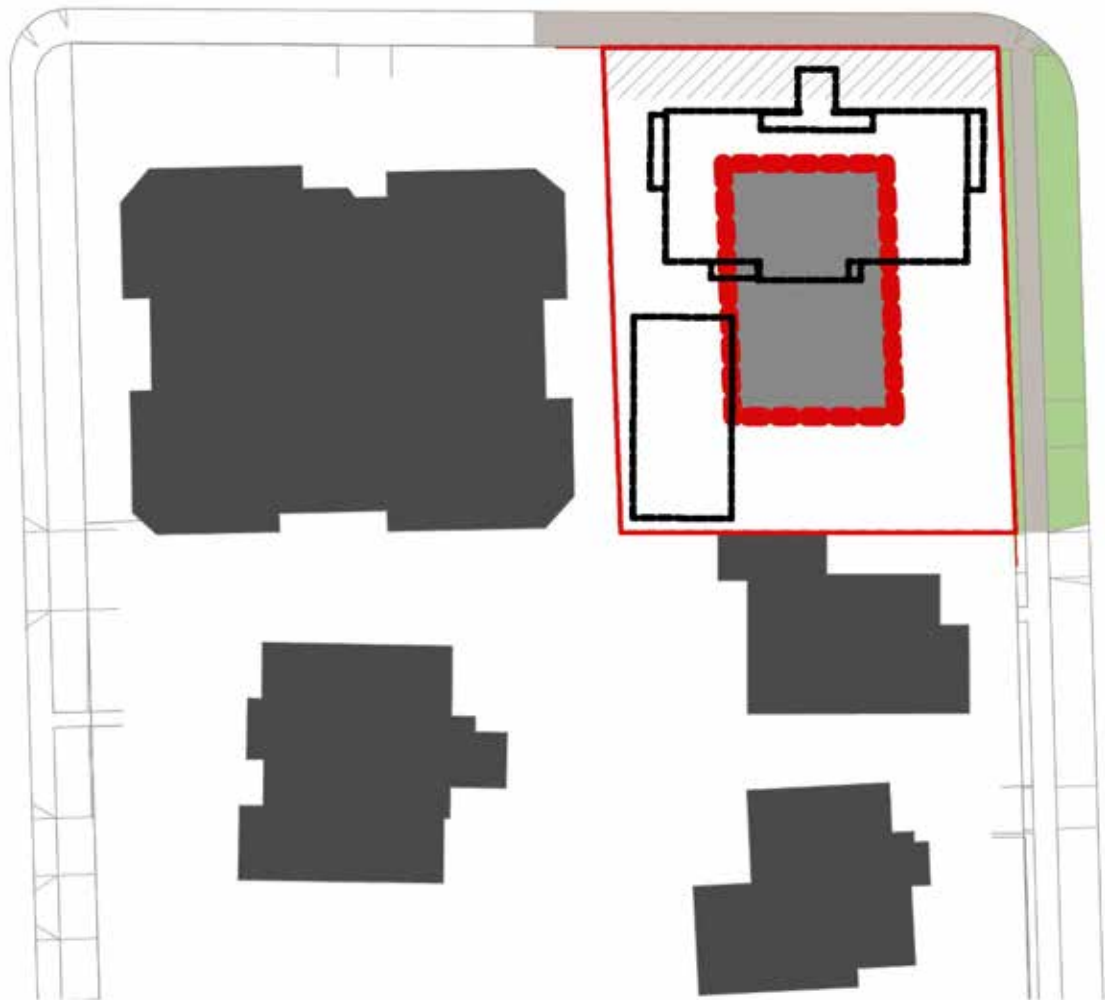
The existing building is a 5-unit apartment built in the 1940's. As an inexpensively constructed wood-frame building from the post-war era it is now nearing the end of its service life, is energy inefficient, and is uneconomical to upgrade or improve. It does have a small footprint and a large amount of open site space which is however largely devoted to car parking. Redevelopment of the site at this small scale is not financially feasible.



The approach to this project has been to find a design solution that best responds appropriately to its neighbours and the context, while following the zoning criteria as much as possible. A density increase is not requested. However, the R3-2 zoning in place on the site appears to be designed for larger land

assemblies and does not anticipate development of a remnant site such as this. The subject site is below the R3-2 minimum lot size requirement, requiring a variance. Setbacks on all lot lines are large, and render the site undevelopable without setback variances. We believe that the designed setbacks are appropriate and respectful of the neighbours.

The illustration below shows the site with the R3-2 setbacks applied, resulting in a building footprint the size of a small single-family home. (The outline of the existing building and garage is also shown)



1.3 Siting, massing and response to context

The overall context between Oak Bay Avenue between Richmond Road and Foul Bay Road displays what might be considered as a complete history of architectural design and development between Edwardian times and the present day. Building types range from remnant houses now converted to commercial uses, through older small-scale commercial storefronts to a wide range of multi-unit and mixed-use buildings largely built between the 1960's and present day. There is little to no coherence to form, setback, materials, or architectural style which might provide a design direction for this project. Existing City of Victoria zoning policy and design guidelines are about 30 years old and offer little guidance.



The commercial realities of rental residential development have driven a design which attempts to maximize the potential of the existing R3-2 zoning within a form that respects the immediate neighbours and the complex context of Oak Bay Avenue. This is done through a stepped massing that moves height up and away from the single-family neighbours on Bank Street to the south, and as far as possible from the strata residential building to the west. The southern stepped-back roof areas are used for private decks, with the deck guards moved back from the parapet to prevent sightlines into neighbouring single-family gardens.

Two main types of street frontage can be seen along this stretch of Oak Bay Avenue: commercial storefront and residential buffers. Other than an entrance canopy marking the main building entrance, the project does not present an active frontage to Oak Bay Avenue, but follows the lead of its residential neighbours with a landscape buffer between building and sidewalk. Ground floor apartments are given individual entrance steps and patios facing Bank Street.

1.4 Neighbourliness

The design of the building has been developed in direct consultation with neighbours to minimize overlook and maintain privacy. Landscaping and fence design will be developed in close consultation with the neighbours.

The strata apartment building to the west is currently screened with mature hedging and shrubs. A mature maple tree straddles the property line and is unlikely to survive the construction of the new building. A suitable replacement tree will be planted on the neighbouring property. A new slatted wood fence and plantings will maintain and improve the screening along the west property line.



The north elevation of the single family home to the south is dominated by an attached garage. A mature coniferous hedge exists on the property line. This hedge will be preserved if practical. The new building presents to this neighbour a tapering wall of the partially exposed parking garage. This wall will be covered with a slatted fence/screen with a maximum height of 1800mm, completely concealing the garage wall and screening the neighbouring property.



The massing of the building is strongly stepped away from the south single-family property and rooftop patio guards are held back further to minimize the possibility of overlook.



The neighbouring commercial property across Bank Street does not have an active frontage – instead presenting a parking and service area.



Properties on the north side of Oak Bay Avenue directly across from the project are all businesses operating in converted houses.'



1.5 Exterior Materials and Colours

The building exterior includes a brick masonry main floor (using a dark grey brick and matching mortar) with deep window and entrance reveals. The upper residential floors are clad in rain-screen stucco finish in a combination of white and pale grey tones. The walls and soffits of recessed balconies and the hallway circulation area are clad in wood siding stained a pale grey.

The exterior circulation areas are screened with an ornamental slatted wood screen with a light grey stain. Balcony guards facing Bank Street are a combination of glazed aluminum and powder-coated custom perforated metal screens.

A simple horizontal slatted wood screen design is used for other privacy screens and fences around the property line and between adjacent balconies.

1.6 Landscaping

The landscape plan is focused on screening of neighbouring properties, and presenting an appropriate ornamental face to Oak Bay Avenue and Bank Street. Landscaping of the Statutory Right of Way will be refined in discussion with City staff. (No direction from staff for the design of the SRW has been provided to date.)

2 Government Policies

2.1 Official Community Plan and Neighbourhood Plan

Applicable objectives of the Official Community Plan for this DPA are:

- (a) *To revitalize areas of commercial use along corridors through high quality architecture, landscape and urban design to enhance their appearance, achieve coherent design along corridors, strengthen commercial viability and encourage pedestrian use.*
- (c) *To enhance the function of Gorge Road East, Fort Street, Hillside Avenue, Oak Bay Avenue and Shelbourne Street as frequent transit corridors through transit-oriented streetscaping, with the design of adjacent development to support and advance this objective.*
- (d) *To ensure corridors are compatible with adjacent and nearby lower density residential neighbourhoods through human-scaled urban design and a sensitive transition in building form and place character.*

Applicable guidelines for this DPA are:

- (i) *Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings (1981).*
- (ii) *Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters (2010).*

3 Project Benefits and Amenities

- increases the number of rental units in the neighbourhood from 5 to 15.

4 Impacts

A relocation plan for existing tenants will be developed by the owners.

A thorough sun access study was completed. This demonstrates that the new building has little impact on sun access for neighbours due to its northerly location.

Impacts on neighbouring projects are discussed above.

5 Design and Development Permit Guidelines

The project has been designed to meet or exceed the relevant guidelines, including:

- Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings (1981)
- Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters (2010)

6 Safety and Security

The design follows best practices for CPTED including:

- 24/7 occupation;
- obvious distinction of semi-public from public areas;
- gated entrance and intercom from street to elevator and stairs;
- lighting and windows in entrance areas, common areas and parking garage to maximize visibility and surveillance;
- security gate for parking garage.

7 Transportation

The site is well served by BC Transit's number 2 and number 8 bus lines, connecting the site with downtown Victoria and Oak Bay, with connections to UVic and Fairfield at Foul Bay Road. A bus stop currently exists immediately adjacent to the project site.

Class 1 Bicycle parking for apartment residents is provided in accordance with Schedule C requirements in a dedicated room within the parking garage. Class 2 bicycle parking will be provided with a rack in the main entry area off Oak Bay Avenue.

The site has a 'Walk Score' of 81, summarized as most errands can be accomplished on foot. The Walk Score website shows a transit score of 60 'Good Transit' and a bike score of 66 'Bikeable'.

8 Green Building Features

- low VOC emissions in materials and coatings;
- individual electric metering;
- water-conserving plumbing fixtures.
- Stormwater management

Since the site landscape areas will be constructed over the underground garage, direct return of stormwater to the ground is not practical. On-site stormwater detention will be provided in subgrade facilities prior to discharge to municipal mains. Detention and pre-treatment will be provided by the intensive green roof over parts of the parking garage outside of the main building footprint.

9 Infrastructure

Existing public services appear adequate to support the new development. Further consultation with City of Victoria Engineering staff will be undertaken during the formal review process and any required upgrades included in the proposal.

10 Consultation and Design Refinement Process to date

29 August 2016:	Review with City of Victoria area planner Brian Sikstrom;
22 November 2016:	Review with City of Victoria area planner Brian Sikstrom;
25 January 2017:	Presentation and discussion of design concept to strata apartment neighbours;
Spring 2017:	Review with City of Victoria area planner Alec Johnston;

01 September 2017: Review with City of Victoria area planner Alec Johnston.

Subsequent to the application being made, the project will be reviewed by the Fairfield Gonzales Neighbourhood Association CALUC.