

24 JULY 2019

Mayor and Council
CITY OF VICTORIA
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

RE: **WAREHOUSE CONVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL**
1021 Cook Street, Victoria BC

Development Permit Application with Variances

Mayor and Council,

We hereby submit, on behalf of GMC Projects, a development permit application with variances to permit the conversion of existing warehouse space into two residential suites in a three-storey building rich in original character, located at the corner of Cook Street and Meares Street.

The first two storeys of the Bell Building were built in 1912 and included 3,955 sq.ft. of commercial space and 2,450 sq.ft. of warehouse space on the ground floor, and 10 one bedroom apartments on the second floor. In 1944, a third floor was added to provide 10 more one bedroom apartments. Following a fire in 2017, which saw the building vacated, the prior owners decided to sell and GMC Projects acquired the property in 2018 with the goal of rehabilitating the building as rental housing while keeping history in mind.

The warehouse space, accessible from Meares Street, is no longer relevant nor the right use given the surrounding context of residential and live/work space and its inclusion in a building like this would not be permitted today in its current configuration as it does not comply with current building codes. In consultation with the code consultant who participated on the upgrades to the building and life safety aspects of the building following the fire, it was determined that the most appropriate use [and safest] for the space, given its location in the building would be residential in keeping with residential above. Given the ongoing need for rental housing units in our community and the owners' recognition of warehouse use not being as compatible with the neighbourhood today as it was when the building was first built, the owners would like to convert the existing space within the building into two new unique residential units. In doing so, GMC Projects is offering to secure the tenure of the 2 new proposed units and 20 existing units as rental housing through a housing agreement. The timeframe for the covenant would apply for the remainder of the life of the existing structure which has just seen a substantial upgrade and investment by GMC Projects.

GMC Projects proposes to create two ground-oriented units overlooking Meares Street. Exterior modifications are modest with existing masonry openings being re-used to provide new entrances and glazing to the residential suites along with a new required exterior entrance to an expanded Hydro Room approved under a separate permit. Black anodized aluminum framing is proposed to complement the recently completed bold paint scheme and to respect the light industrial nature of the warehouse space. New wall-mounted light fixtures are proposed adjacent to the suite entrance doors for identification, wayfinding and safety. The existing windows at the rear of the proposed suites will also be replaced with new black anodized aluminum windows to match the new ones at the front, complete with internal fire rated shutters.



OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS

When the building was first built and then expanded, the property was not required to provide off-street parking and therefore does not have any. As the building is built to zero lot line on all sides, there has never been any space for off-street parking.

The change in use from warehouse to residential triggers a parking variance for the entire building. If the use of any portion of a building changes, as in this case from warehouse to residential, where the new use requires parking which is an increase from what the bylaw required for the previous use when the previous use was put in place, in this case 1912, then the whole building loses lawful non-conforming protection under the Local Government Act.

The only actual increase in parking demand comes from the creation of two additional residential suites [2 parking spaces] and the visitor parking requirement of 2 parking spaces based on the new Schedule C Off-Street parking Regulations. The existing warehouse space would require 2 parking spaces based on the current Schedule C so in reality, there is no net increase to the parking demand if the existing warehouse use was to continue.

If, as required, we apply the current Schedule C requirements to the entire building, a parking variance to reduce the parking requirement from 32 stalls to 0 is required.

A parking variance given the above context is supportable. Of significant note is that the building is located within the core and walking distance of an increasingly vibrant commercial area, which provides residents with vital and easy access to a wide range of amenities, goods and services, public transit and cycling corridors. In addition, the true net increase in parking demand based on current Schedule C requirements is zero given that the existing warehouse space requires the same amount of parking as the two new residential suites. GMC projects is removing a use that no longer fits within the neighbourhood context and improves the life safety of the tenants and is replacing it with new rental stock without adding any floor area and without increasing the parking demand, effecting positive change for the surrounding neighbourhood.

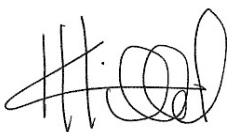
To offset the existing parking shortfall, a portion of the existing warehouse space has already been converted into a secure bike storage room, a change that was made following the base building upgrades post fire. Exterior bicycle parking will also be provided to municipal standards within the City boulevard on Meares Street.

With regards to a car share program, a car share program forms part of a development proposal by GMC Projects for the adjacent property at 1015 Cook Street, which, should it be approved, will provide residents of both 1015 and 1021 Cook Street with access to car share vehicles.

The existing driveway crossing within the boulevard on Meares Street that serves the warehouse space will be removed, and replaced with a new curb and sod to municipal standards.

We trust that the foregoing provides you with enough information to proceed with your review process. Should you require additional information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Hillel', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Karen Hillel Architect AIBC