

May 2, 2025

City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6

Attn: Mayor and Council

Re: Project Summary and Rationale Letter - 441, 443 Government Street and 605, 607 Michigan Street

Hello Mayor Alto and City of Victoria Council Members,

We are pleased to submit the enclosed Rezoning and Development Permit application for the redevelopment of 441, 443 Government Street and 605, 607 Michigan Street located in the City of Victoria's James Bay neighborhood. We recognize the importance of this location, one of Western Canada's oldest and most vibrant communities.

The concept for the site is to consolidate two duplex lots to permit a new six storey multifamily development. Our application is guided by the Official Community Plan (OCP), the Province of British Columbia's Transit Oriented Area Policy, the James Bay Neighbourhood Plan, as well as the established and emerging development patterns within the James Bay Neighbourhood.

Our proposal reflects a comprehensive and thoughtful approach, incorporating a detailed site analysis, review of precedent developments in James Bay, alignment with the City's land-use policies, and meaningful engagement with neighbours and local stakeholders. We are committed to designing a development that respects the neighborhood's heritage while meeting the evolving housing needs of the community.

Project Overview

Our vision is to introduce 51 new condominium homes within a thoughtfully designed six-storey, multi-family development.

The land use policy framework in the City of Victoria is evolving rapidly; however, several existing policies support the proposed form of development. The site is situated at the intersection of Urban Residential and Traditional Residential designations within the Official Community Plan (OCP) and has the potential to support multi-unit residential development in an attached building form. According to the current Official Community Plan, the Urban Residential designation envisions low- to medium-density residential uses with a base Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of approximately 1.2:1. The OCP allows for additional density in locations that align with the growth management concept, with a maximum density of approximately 2:1 FSR.

Our proposal seeks a higher density than currently anticipated in the existing OCP. However, it is important to note that the City of Victoria is also actively reviewing its Official Community Plan, and the density framework for this property may change as a result of that review.

The Provincial Government has also recently introduced several new land use policies aimed at increasing the supply of housing across British Columbia. Notably, Provincial Bill 47: Housing Statutes Amendment supports the creation of additional housing supply in areas well-served by transit hubs. Our surveyor has confirmed that the subject site is located within the Legislature Exchange Transit-Oriented Area (TOA) which allows new housing developments with a minimum allowable height between six and ten storeys tall. Our proposed six storey development aligns with this new policy by promoting sustainable, transit-accessible housing.

From a zoning and OCP perspective, our proposal will also require a rezoning from R-2 Two Family Dwelling to a Site-Specific Zone as well as an OCP amendment to accommodate the development of a six-storey, multi-family condominium building.

Since acquiring the properties in May 2024, we have initiated community engagement with the James Bay Community Association through the CALUC engagement process, as well as our immediate neighbours and we have also engaged with the City of Victoria's Planning and Development Team. Based on the feedback received, we have tailored our design to reflect the community's preferences wherever possible.

The proposed development offers a design that provides much-needed housing options in James Bay and minimizes impact to surrounding single family homes and heritage structures. However, we acknowledge that the design does differ from some of the City of Victoria Staff's pre-application feedback. We believe that there are three important design considerations that warrant closer examinations and reveal several challenges:

- **Copper Beech Boulevard Tree M1 (Municipal tree #14506)**

During the initial pre-application review, City of Victoria Parks Staff identified Municipal tree #14506, a Copper Beech boulevard tree referred to as M1 by our Project Arborist, as a 'high-value tree'. As a result, they have expressed a preference for its retention. Our pre-application drawings had indicated this tree to be removed to accommodate the proposed parkade design, as no root zone investigation had been conducted at that time. Following the pre-application review and feedback by Staff, our Arborist conducted exploratory root mapping for this tree in March 2025. The exploratory root mapping concluded that this tree can be preserved with the currently proposed parkade and building design, as it's root zone likely does not significantly extend into the proposed parkade footprint.

- **TOA and Floor Space Ratio**

The subject property is situated within 400 meters of the Legislature Transit-Oriented Area (TOA), as designated by the Province of British Columbia and now incorporated into the City of Victoria's Zoning Bylaw. The TOA designation allows for a minimum building height of six storeys and a minimum Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of 2.5. To enhance the livability of each home in the proposed development, we are planning an overall FSR of 3.2. Additionally, the proposed building setbacks and the reduced upper levels have been carefully designed to integrate seamlessly with the surrounding neighborhood, ensuring compatibility with the existing urban fabric.

- **Young Street Statutory Right of Way (SRW)**

Before acquiring the subject properties, City of Victoria Staff identified the need to widen Young Street to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. As a result, either a dedication or a statutory right of way (SRW) would be required. In response, we initially proposed an at-grade SRW along the Young Street frontage, with a portion of the underground parkade extending below grade into the frontage. However, City of Victoria Transportation Staff later clarified that a dedication would be necessary, and that projections into the Young Street frontage would not be permitted.

The small size and irregular geometry of the property present challenges in achieving a functional parking layout for the underground parkade without the aforementioned projection. While the City of Victoria does not require off-street parking for developments located within the Legislature TOA, we believe it is essential for our project to provide an adequate amount of on-site parking. This will not only meet the needs of future residents but also ensure that the development does not have negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Housing Options

The project will be comprised of 51 new homes ranging from Junior One-Bedroom condo homes to Three-Bedroom condo homes oriented towards families. The development will feature a diverse mix of homes, with a focus on family-sized units and varied housing options.

The full unit mix breakdown can be seen below:

	Number of Homes	Unit Mix
Junior 1 Bedroom	20	39%
1 Bedroom	5	10%
Junior 2 Bedroom	5	10%
2 Bedroom	17	33%
3 Bedroom	4	8%
Total	51	100%

41% of homes are designed as family-sized units and each residence featuring outdoor space, the project encourages diverse and sustainable living.

Design and Development Permit Guidelines

The subject property is located within the City of Victoria's Development Permit Area 16. Our proposed development aims to achieve the following main objectives:

- Support multi-unit residential developments that provide a sensitive transition to adjacent and nearby areas.
- Integrate buildings in a manner that complements the established place character, including its heritage character.
- Enhance the character of established areas and their streetscapes through high-quality architecture, landscaping, and urban design that responds to each distinctive setting with sensitive and innovative interventions.

The proposed development is thoughtfully designed to integrate seamlessly into the diverse and varied built landscape of the surrounding area. The neighborhood features a blend of historic and contemporary structures, including landmarks such as the City of Victoria's Fire Station Number 2, low-rise single-family homes, small-scale commercial spaces, and multi-family residential and office buildings of varying heights. Nearby developments include Duet by Chard Development, with four-storey and eight-storey buildings across Michigan Street at 640 Michigan, and Capital Park by Jawl and Concert Properties, which combines new construction with restored heritage structures up to five storeys. Additionally, high-rise buildings like Orchard House at 647 Michigan Street and Robert's House at 620 Toronto Street contribute to the architectural diversity of the area.

The proposed six-storey development is designed to harmonize with this eclectic context through calibrated urban design, architecture, and landscape integration. To create a visual connection to the local heritage, prominent elevations of the building will feature brick masonry cladding, inspired by structures like Fire Station Number 2. During our CALUC engagement session, several neighbors expressed concerns that the red brick cladding appeared too dark and severe. In response, we carefully reviewed this feedback with our Project Architect, and as a result, we are now proposing a lighter brick cladding with more traditional brick detailing. We believe these modifications will enhance the design and contribute positively to the streetscape, adding a textural element that enriches the surrounding environment.

The main building entry is located on Michigan Street, directly across from the 'pocket park' bench seating outside the Birdcage Confectionary. The building's design features a prominent entry canopy, traditional brick detailing and an upper storey set back from the lower levels. This approach, combined with large balconies and expansive openings, articulates the building form while ensuring ample natural light in every home.

Ground-floor homes include spacious private outdoor terraces that are slightly separated from the adjacent sidewalk and public realm by layered landscape plantings, offering privacy and an enhanced connection to nature. Creating a sense of community is also important and a communal, roof top amenity space provides a place for residents to gather.

Public Realm and Landscape

A key goal of this project is to create a dynamic, well-connected streetscape that prioritizes accessibility, sustainability, and shared experiences—offering opportunities for engagement, and connectivity for residents of all ages and backgrounds. Young Street will be improved and enhanced with a 2.16m SRW, and we will continue the City of Victoria’s investment in bicycle infrastructure on Government Street and Michigan Street. Landscape boulevards will include new and retained street trees. Additional on-site landscape plantings will also enhance the public realm on all frontages including six new replacement trees and a total of twelve new on-site trees.

Bicycle Infrastructure and Alternate Transportation Options

Vehicle parking is entirely located below grade in a new parkade structure. Given the challenging geometry of the site and the vehicle entry at the highest-grade point of the site, a portion of the parkade is located directly below a new SRW on Young Street. The proposed development also includes convenient access to sixty-four (64) long term bike parking spaces that will meet or exceed the City of Victoria Schedule C requirements. Additionally, through the rezoning and development permit review process we will consider additional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures to ensure that we align with City of Victoria targets for sustainable transportation and greenhouse gas reduction, offering affordable and eco-friendly options for future residents.

Green Building Features

The proposed development will meet Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code, the provincial standard for sustainable and energy-efficient buildings. We will collaborate with the Architect and an Energy Modeler during the Building Permit application process to ensure these standards are met or exceeded. The design of building envelope will also incorporate best practices with the use of high-quality, sustainable materials to ensure durability and performance.

In addition, the project will adhere to Emissions Level 4 of the BC Zero Carbon Step, with electric systems for both domestic hot water heating and space heating to reduce GHG emissions. To address recent Building Code changes and our increasingly warm summers, each home will be equipped with a heat pump for both heating and cooling, enhancing occupant health and comfort.

The application will also meet the City of Victoria’s bylaw requirement for all parking spaces to have access to Level 2 energized outlets, facilitating future installation of electric vehicle chargers.

Sustainable landscape design is another key feature of this project. New street and on-site trees will enhance privacy and shade during summer months while providing wildlife habitats. An on-site stormwater management system will capture, clean, and release stormwater into public infrastructure to mitigate potential impacts.

CONCLUSION

This proposed six-storey multi-family residential development will contribute to addressing the City of Victoria's housing needs while aligning with the James Bay neighbourhood's character and vision. Through innovative design, environmental sustainability, and community engagement, this project supports the City's commitment to balanced, equitable, and sustainable growth.

We look forward to advancing this proposal through the rezoning and development permit process and continuing meaningful collaboration with the City of Victoria and local community members.

Best regards,



Nicholas Standeven
Vice President of Development