



July 16, 2025

Mayor Alto and Council
The City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Attention: Mayor Alto and Council

Dear Mayor Alto and Council,

RE: Project Summary and Rationale Letter – 517-533 Chatham Street & 530-538 Herald Street

Intracorp is pleased to submit this proposal for a new mixed-use residential infill development of an underutilized surface level parking lot located at 517-533 Chatham Street, and 530-538 Herald Street.

Located within the Historic Commercial District of Downtown Victoria, the site is comprised of six lots all currently zoned Old Town District-1 (OTD-1). This proposal has been shaped based on the guidance provided by the Official Community Plan, Downtown Core Area Plan and Old Town Design Guidelines and reflects a comprehensive and thoughtful response to the area's rich architectural heritage, urban character, and evolving community needs.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

- Zoning (Existing): OTD-1
- Zoning (Proposed): OTD-1
- Proposed Land Use: Residential, Retail Trade
- Height: 6-storeys, ~21.5m. Variance requested to accommodate the additional height from the 15 m height noted in the Downtown Core Area Plan.
- Total Floor Area (infill): 87,371sf
- Dwelling Units: 134 homes, consisting of a mix of studios, 1-bedrooms, 2-bedrooms, 3-bedrooms and ground-oriented loft style units.
- Maximum Allowable Density: 3.00 FAR
- Existing Density to Remain: 1.17
- Proposed Infill Density: 1.72
- Total Proposed Density: 2.89

This application proposes an infill six-storey residential building with neighbourhood-serving retail at the ground floor along Chatham Street. It will transform an underutilized parking lot and accessory building into 134 new homes, helping meet Victoria's housing demand while supporting a diverse community. The building will be designed to meet BC Energy Step Code 3 and Zero Carbon Emissions Level 4 standards.

This development proposal aligns with the overall intent of the OTD-1 zoning bylaw, while requesting a height variance to approximately 21.5 m, or six storeys. The proposed height is contextually appropriate within the context of the neighboring Capital Culture District immediately adjacent north, which comprises buildings up to 14 storeys envisioned along Chatham Street. The addition of a sixth storey contributes to a varied roofline, enhancing architectural interest along the block, and gives each building a distinct and recognizable character.



PROJECT BENEFITS AND AMENITIES

This project presents a meaningful opportunity to contribute to one of Victoria's most historic and character-rich neighbourhoods. The design respects the neighborhood heritage while introducing a contemporary architectural expression, delivering 134 new homes, neighbourhood-serving retail that supports local businesses, and a new public pocket park and pedestrian passthrough alleyway that adds much-needed green space and draws inspiration from the surrounding cultural character. The overarching vision is to deliver lasting public value through housing, open space, and urban design, strengthening the community while honouring its legacy. This proposal emphasizes six key public benefits:

- **134 New Homes in the Downtown Core Area**
The project delivers 134 new homes in the Downtown Core Area, consisting of a diverse mix of unit types, will strengthen the urban fabric and provide residents with diverse options to live, work and play in this growing community, while also helping to meet future housing needs.
- **New Public Pocket Park**
A new 7,400-square-foot public pocket park on Herald Street which will introduce meaningful urban greenspace in an area where no park space exists within a 10-minute walking radius, gathering, and community interaction.
- **Extending a Public Passageway Corridor**
The site connects Herald Street and Chatham Street through a continuous pedestrian connection that includes a public Pocket Park, a lush residential courtyard, and two urban passages inspired by Victoria's historic alleyways. These passages directly extend Dragon Alley across Herald Street, enhancing mid-block connectivity.
- **Neighbourhood-Serving Retail to Activate the Public Realm**
Over 4,600 square feet of retail space facing on Chatham Street will serve the community, while creating new economic opportunities and activating the local public realm. The design of this active public realm takes inspiration from the surrounding historic context and neighbourhood values.
- **Sustainable and Liveable Courtyard Typology Building**
A typology common in the area, which creates a ground floor courtyard amenity for residents, as well as allows natural light and ventilation from two aspects for all units allowing for exceptional occupant comfort. The exterior circulation further reduces overall carbon footprint through passive ventilation and cooling.
- **Pop Up Retail**
Proposed pop-up retail within the Pocket Park will provide unique opportunities for community connection and public realm activation on Herald Street.
- **Off-Site Streetscape Improvements**
Improving the Chatham Street frontage with offsite pedestrian improvements to connect to a future crosswalk to the north Capital Culture District.
- **Heritage Retention**
Ensuring long-term retention of the existing Biggerstaff and B Wilson heritage buildings, through sensitive infill development on surrounding lots enabling their lasting sense of place.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

This project has been crafted based on the guidance provided in the numerous policies, guidelines, bylaws, bulletins, and building codes which provide for the regulatory framework and vision of the site. Key policies include Victoria's Official Community Plan, the Downtown Core Area Plan, the Zoning Bylaw (2018) Downtown, and the Old Town Design Guidelines.



This proposal advances the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan by focusing new housing and mixed-use development within the Urban Core and aligns closely with the vision for a dynamic, high-density, downtown. The proposal contributes to this vision by introducing a mixed-use residential infill development which supports the intensification of land use in the Urban Core while preserving the unique character of Historic Commercial District. This proposal addresses five core OCP themes:

- **Urban Design and Placemaking**
Response: The project supports the OCP's emphasis on human-scaled design, active streetscapes, and public realm improvements. Fine-grain articulation, contextual massing, and pedestrian-oriented frontages create a welcoming and vibrant street experience, particularly along Chatham and Herald Streets. The inclusion of a pocket park furthers the goal of enhancing neighbourhood character and public gathering spaces.
- **Land Use and Density**
Response: Consistent with the Core Residential and Urban Place Designations, the proposal supports compact, mixed-use development within the Downtown Core. The building's form and density promote efficient land use while accommodating future population and economic growth in a manner that respects the existing context.
- **Climate Resilience and Sustainability**
Response: Design strategies include energy-efficient systems, sustainable materials, and urban greening, contributing to OCP targets for greenhouse gas reduction and climate adaptation. The project reinforces the city's commitment to sustainable growth and environmental stewardship.
- **Transportation and Mobility**
Response: The development prioritizes walkability and supports multi-modal transportation options through bicycle facilities, active ground-floor uses, and proximity to public transit. These elements align with OCP policies to reduce car dependence and improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity.
- **Heritage and Cultural Integration**
Response: Rooted in the historical context of Old Town, the proposal reflects the OCP's goals to conserve and celebrate cultural heritage. Contemporary architecture is carefully calibrated to complement heritage character, supporting a respectful and adaptive evolution of the urban fabric.

The project site is located within the Historic Commercial District (HCD) of the Downtown Core Area Plan. There are several objectives specific to this district, supported by several policies and actions. The proposed development is intended to support each applicable objective as follows:

- That the placemaking character of the HCD is retained and continues to contribute to Victoria's competitive advantage as a destination for retail, entertainment and tourism.
Response: The design and planning intent of the project are directly informed by the historic context and urban fabric of the HCD. The proposal aspires to reinforce the character of the neighbourhood through sensitive massing, material selection, and ground-level activation.
- That the HCD becomes a model for sensitive integration of new infill development and public realm improvements into the historic environment.
Response: The proposed retail further accommodates growth in retail through the addition of neighbourhood-serving retail space on Chatham Street, along with the Pop-up Retail in the Pocket Park which activate the public realm with neighbourhood amenities. The proposed courtyard typology creates exceptional livability of homes through dual-aspect exposure, allowing for natural ventilation and passive cooling.
- That the HCD is able to attract and accommodate growth in the tourism, retail, entertainment sectors.
Response: The addition of retail uses at grade introduces a significant amount of leasable



commercial space, creating opportunities for new businesses and contributing to the area's vitality. Further, the unique pop-up style retail in the Pocket Park will draw visitors from the neighbourhood and greater community.

- That the compact, diverse, low-scale and small-lot character of the HCD is retained.
Response: The design is sensitive to the historic property scale by articulating the massing to break down the building's form. The proposal respects the rhythm and built form that characterize the HCD.
- That the local population base is increased through the integration of residential dwellings on the upper storeys of existing buildings.
Response: Although this is a new building, the project will introduce 134 homes, including studios, one-, two-, and three-bedroom homes.

This proposal also responds thoughtfully to Victorias Old Town Design Guidelines, ensuring new construction complements the historic character of its context. The proposal addresses five key concepts:

- Urban Pattern and Street Rhythm
Response: The proposal responds to the historic lot pattern and fine-grain rhythm of Old Town. Massing is articulated to reflect narrow frontages and consistent setbacks, reinforcing the visual continuity along Chatham and Herald Streets. The pocket park on Herald enhances pedestrian connectivity and aligns with the intent to create open, human-scaled spaces within the street network.
- Scale and Massing
Response: The proposal reflects the scale and proportion of adjacent heritage buildings. Building height and bulk transition sensitively, particularly where the development interfaces with Chinatown and the Old Commercial District. Varied rooflines, step-backs, and vertically-oriented elements are incorporated to reduce perceived mass and maintain a comfortable pedestrian scale.
- Materials and Façade Design
Response: The design incorporates durable, high-quality materials—such as brick, metal, and punched windows—that reflect the texture and character of Old Town. Façade articulation includes a modern interpretation of cornices, recessed entries, and traditional storefront proportions, maintaining a respectful dialogue with nearby heritage structures.
- Public Realm and Streetscape
Response: The proposal enhances the pedestrian experience through active frontages, transparent glazing at street level, and fine-grain detailing. The Herald Street pocket park introduces new landscaping, seating, and opportunities for public gatherings that celebrate the area's cultural identity and invite community use.
- Heritage Integration and Contextual Fit
Response: While contemporary in design, the proposal is informed by the surrounding historic context. New architectural elements harmonize with Old Town's character-defining features, offering a respectful and contextually sensitive evolution of the urban fabric.

Additionally, this proposal aligns with the Downtown Zoning Bylaw (2018), supporting key objectives relating to land use, form and livability.

- Height and Massing
Response: The building height is contextual and integrates thoughtful massing transitions to adjacent heritage contexts, especially along the Chatham and Herald frontages. Step-backs and vertical elements reduce the visual impact while maintaining a strong street wall, consistent with the form and character policies of the bylaw.



- **Setbacks and Street Interface**
Response: The proposal is aligned with front, side, and rear setback requirements, supporting a continuous street wall along Chatham St., and creating a strong street interface and supporting pedestrian-oriented design. Active commercial frontages and residential entries contribute to animation and safety at the ground level, aligning with zoning requirements for building orientation and interface.
- **Parking and Access**
Response: The project complies with the bylaw's reduced parking requirements for downtown developments. It incorporates secure bicycle storage and shared vehicle access, promoting sustainable transportation options and reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- **Public Realm Integration**
Response: The inclusion of a publicly accessible pocket park on Herald Street exceeds minimum open space requirements and aligns with the bylaw's objectives for enhancing pedestrian experience and providing high-quality, accessible public amenities in the downtown core.

NEED AND DEMAND

This proposal supports many of the OCP objectives, as well as the Victoria Housing Strategy. This proposal aims to provide housing options to meet the needs of the City's current and future residents from all walks of life.

The proposal also supports thoughtful infill development by adding new housing without displacing existing residents. It makes use of underutilized land to introduce needed homes to accommodate Victoria's steadily growing population. Further, accessible green space remains limited in the urban core. As density increases, the need for high-quality public open space becomes more urgent, with residents, workers, and visitors facing fewer opportunities to connect with nature. This proposal responds directly to that need with the inclusion of the pocket park fronting Herald Street.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Victoria's Downtown, particularly the Old Town District, is defined by its historic masonry buildings, narrow passages, and intimate urban scale. Features such as the Downtown passages and Dragon Alley exemplify a fine-grained network of pedestrian routes, modest frontages, and layered architectural expression. The area's character is rooted in a cohesive material palette of red and buff brick, stone detailing, and traditional storefronts with recessed entries and punched windows. These elements contribute to a walkable, human-scaled environment rich in texture and history. This proposal responds directly to that context, emphasizing brick construction, vertically oriented windows, and active commercial frontages. The design respects the surrounding architectural language while reinforcing the continuity of Old Town's distinctive urban fabric.

The proposal relates to the neighbourhood and immediate context by aligning with the maximum FAR of 3.0 noted in the OTD-1 zoning bylaw. A courtyard typology has been thoughtfully designed to accommodate the infill density as a response to the limited site area, with consideration provided to ensure a continuous street wall along Chatham Street resulting in an enhanced public realm at street level.

The site plays a key role in the network of courtyards, squares, and alleyways that define the Historic Commercial District's unique urban fabric. Positioned at the northern end of this pedestrian system, it directly aligns with Dragon Alley across Herald Street, allowing for a seamless extension of the public realm. The project builds on this connection by integrating a series of pedestrian pathways, including a public Pocket Park, that reinterpret and extend these historic passageways in a contemporary context.



IMPACTS

This proposal has been designed to fit seamlessly into the surrounding urban environment, contributing to the area's character and function through the public amenities provided such as the public pocket park, mid-block connection and neighbourhood-serving retail. The proposal aims to enhance vibrancy in the existing neighborhood through thoughtful redevelopment of an underutilized parking lot.

The existing Biggerstaff and B. Wilson buildings included in the site consolidation will be retained, ensuring no residential tenants being displaced. The proposal offers an opportunity to improve underutilized land while positively contributing to the vitality of the neighbourhood.

REZONING PROPOSAL SUMMARY

The proposal directly supports several key sections of the Downtown Core Area Plan by introducing a connected public realm network and delivering meaningful open space in the heart of the Historic Commercial District. The following elements illustrate how the design responds to and reinforces DCAP objectives:

- **Neighbourhood Serving Retail**
Over 4,600 square feet of retail space fronting Chatham Street will serve the community, while creating new economic opportunities and activating the local public realm.
- **The Passages**
The project introduces new mid-block pedestrian connections that align with DCAP's call for enhanced permeability through "mid-block walkways" and future "mid-block street crossings." The proposed Passages extend the character of the Historic Commercial District's historic alleyways, improving pedestrian flow between Herald and Chatham Streets. Upgrades also include off-site infrastructure and accessibility upgrades that further integrate the project into the surrounding public realm.
- **The Pocket Park**
The proposed 7,400-square-foot public Pocket Park along Herald Street addresses a significant greenspace gap in the area. Serving as a pedestrian gateway to the broader site, the park links seamlessly to Chatham Street via the internal Courtyard and Passages. Designed with a variety of seating, planting, and gathering areas, the Pocket Park will provide a welcoming space for residents, workers, and visitors alike, enhancing the livability of the neighbourhood.
- **Pop-up Retail**
The addition of pop-up retail within the Pocket Park will activate the space and surrounding street, encouraging residents and the broader community to engage with their neighbourhood. This, in turn, fosters vibrancy, enhances livability, and supports the objectives of the Downtown Core.
- **The Courtyard**
In accordance with DCAP guidance on residential adjacency to through-block walkways, the project introduces a central Courtyard that acts as a semi-private amenity space for residents. This landscaped, daylight area serves as the heart of the development, where both public Passages converge. Residential units facing the Courtyard help animate this space throughout the day, creating passive surveillance and a strong sense of place within the block.



DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT GUIDELINES: OLD TOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

This proposal has also been carefully designed to align with the architectural values and principles outlined in the Old Town Design Guidelines (2019), while supporting the objectives of the Downtown Core Area Plan. Through its material palette, street-level activation, scale, and massing, the project reflects the unique character of the Historic Commercial District while introducing high-quality, contemporary urban design.

- **Historic Architectural Ordering Principles**
The Chatham Street elevation has been informed by the tripartite ordering of base, column and capital – found in many of the surrounding buildings. This elevation is also modulated horizontally with four distinct ordering lines which symbolize the original property plat of 60 feet onto the street front.
- **Street Wall Continuity and Historic Rhythm**
The proposal continues the strong street wall condition of Chatham Street, aligning with adjacent developments such as the Ironworks building. The building façade is articulated to express the rhythm of traditional 20-metre (66-foot) lot widths (OTD 5.1.8 and 5.2.4), reinforcing the historic urban grain of the area. Architectural detailing explores proportion, material variation, and window/balcony rhythms in support of OTD 5.2.5, ensuring continuity while offering a fresh interpretation.
- **Material Expression and Horizontal Articulation**
Materials under consideration include high-quality brick, metal accents, and glazing – all selected for their ability to age gracefully and harmonize with the industrial and historic character of the HCD. To fit in with the articulated facades of the context buildings, the intent is to incorporate a contemporary and distinct roofline (OTD 5.1.4). The scale of the street level weather protection and height of glazing is an important consideration, both in the overall elevation composition and for the human experience at street level

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The design of the building and public realm has considered the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Building design can maximize opportunities for natural surveillance, which limits opportunity for crime. Well lit spaces, sufficient glazing, and an active public realm were all considerations.

The building's circulation is designed to be external but contained within the interior courtyard, enhancing connectivity and visibility while preserving privacy (OTD 5.6.5). This design supports CPTED principles by encouraging movement and fostering passive surveillance. The inclusion of a public Pocket Park, Pop-up retail, and active commercial edges further supports safety and a welcoming public realm.

HERITAGE AND INSPIRATION

The proposed development honors the heritage significance of the site by preserving the Biggerstaff Building and B. Wilson Building, two landmark historic structures that enrich downtown Victoria's character. The design draws inspiration from these buildings, ensuring the new infill building complements and integrates seamlessly with the surrounding historic context. By retaining the heritage fabric and reflecting their architectural language in the new construction, the proposal reinforces the neighborhood's unique identity and supports both cultural preservation and sensitive urban growth.



TRANSPORTATION

This site is well-positioned within Victoria's active transportation network, offering residents easy and convenient access to a range of sustainable travel options. Located along key cycling routes and within proximity to several high-frequency transit routes, the project encourages reduced car dependency and supports a healthier, more environmentally conscious lifestyle. While the development includes parking for both residential and commercial uses, ample bicycle parking and facilities, including oversized bike stalls, promote cycling as a practical and appealing mode of everyday transportation. Identified in the Official Community Plan as a key mobility hub, the site's connectivity aligns seamlessly with Victoria's broader goals for sustainable growth and climate leadership.

CLIMATE-FORWARD BUILDING FEATURES

A core tenet of this project is the inclusion of dual aspect residential units, which enhance livability by providing access to natural light and air from dual-exposure orientations. This design promotes passive cooling, helping to keep units comfortable during the warmer months. Most units benefit from natural light on both sides, while the common circulation areas are naturally ventilated, reducing overall energy use. This building form aligns with the urban context of downtown Victoria, where nearby buildings similarly incorporate courtyards of varying sizes to achieve these environmental benefits. The project is designed to meet BC Energy Step Code 3 and Zero Carbon Emissions Level 4 standards. Additionally, a weather-protected breezeway contributes to an improved public realm, offering sheltered outdoor space for residents and visitors alike.

The following are the other preliminary strategies being explored as part of the green building features:

- Improved building shape design to mitigate the heat loss intensity from reduced vertical surface area to floor area ratio.
- Appropriate window-to-wall ratio to balance advantageous passive heating gains and daylight usage versus disadvantageous heat loss in cold seasons and overheating in warm seasons.
- Passive cooling from distributed balconies for solar shading, low-E coating on glazing for solar heat gain control, and operable windows and patio doors for natural ventilation.
- High efficiency building envelope for thermal energy demand reduction.
- Air barrier continuity, commissioning, and testing to meet an appropriate level of airtightness for limiting uncontrolled air infiltration / exfiltration and the associated heat losses.
- Enhanced indoor air quality and energy demand reduction from high efficiency heat / energy recovery ventilators in all residential suites and amenity areas.
- Electrified, low carbon energy systems for space heating, cooling, and domestic water heating in compliance with EL-4 targets.
- High efficiency lighting with smart controls in the applicable common area

URBAN FORESTRY

In accordance with the City of Victoria's Tree Protection Bylaw, this project proposes to retain the majority of existing on-site trees. Some trees, including two municipal street trees along Chatham Street, will require removal or relocation to accommodate the design and ensure a continuous street wall and enabling the offsite Chatham Street City Engineering design works. All tree removal and relocation activities will comply with the bylaw's requirements, including obtaining necessary permits and providing replacement trees as stipulated. A Tree Management Plan and Arborist Report have been provided which outline protection



measures for retained trees and the species, size, and location of replacement plantings, consistent with the bylaw's standards.

This proposal also aligns with the objectives of the Victoria Urban Forest Master Plan by contributing to the protection, enhancement, and expansion of the urban forest. The planting of new trees, along with the preservation and relocation of existing trees, supports the Master Plan's goals of increasing tree canopy cover, enhancing biodiversity, and providing environmental and social benefits such as shade, stormwater management, and improved air quality.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The project proposes improvements to the Chatham Street frontage, including offsite pedestrian sidewalk enhancements that will connect to a future crosswalk leading to the Capital Culture District to the north. Additionally, at Herald Street to the south of the site, the development includes extending the sidewalk bulge at the entrance to the Pocket Park, further enhancing the public realm. Located within Victoria's urban core, the development does not anticipate requiring upgrades to the existing City of Victoria sewer, water, or drainage infrastructure. The applicant team will collaborate closely with the City of Victoria to design a frontage that aligns with the City's goals and standards.

CONCLUSION

We look forward to working with City Staff and community stakeholders to shape the proposal and deliver lasting public value through high-quality urban design, new housing, and significant high-value amenities. We appreciate your consideration and the opportunity to contribute to the evolution of Victoria's vibrant downtown community.

Yours truly,
INTRACORP PROJECTS LTD.
on behalf of Belmont Properties

Matt Kolec
Director, Development