

**Vessel Liquor Store Ltd.**  
1609 Fort Street  
Victoria, BC V8R 1H8

City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

April 19, 2021

Dear Mayor and Council

**Re: Development Permit with Variance for the Expansion of Vessel Liquor Store  
1609 Fort Street, Victoria, BC  
(the “Vessel Property”)**

Please see attached an application for the approval of a Development Permit with Variance (“DVP”) to facilitate an expansion of the Vessel Liquor Store (“Vessel”).

**Background**

The Vessel Property was first rezoned to allow for a liquor retail store in early 2015 and Vessel’s operations commenced later in the year. Over the ensuing five years, Vessel has developed its business in a professional manner which has resulted in many recognitions and awards including being voted the Best Liquor Store in the City three years in a row through the Times Colonist’s annual Readers’ Choice Awards.

In February of this year, a DVP was approved by City Council to allow expansion of Vessel into an adjoining 86.2 square metre (“m<sup>2</sup>”) space that was formerly occupied by Money Mart thus increasing the total area of Vessel to 327.0 m<sup>2</sup>. Recently, due to economic factors, the remaining adjoining tenant to Vessel (Dragon Gate Restaurant) has closed. Vessel has secured this space to facilitate an additional 126.8 m<sup>2</sup> expansion which requires Council’s approval.

**Proposal**

The current proposal is to expand the 327.0 m<sup>2</sup> Vessel store by an additional 126.8 m<sup>2</sup>, which would result in a total area of 453.8 m<sup>2</sup>.

**Neighbourhood Shopping at the Oak Bay Junction**

The Vessel building, Vessel and the adjoining recently-opened Urban Grocer are under overall common management. These businesses together with Shoppers Drug Mart are synergistic and together provide much-needed services for the area.

**Upgrade of the Vessel Property**

At the recently-purchased Vessel Property, a refurbishment program has started with new landscaping and exterior lighting and the City’s approval to complete a major upgrade to the exterior and second floor of the building is in place. This will improve the visual appeal of the Vessel Property which is important given its prominent location at the junction of Fort Street and Oak Bay Avenue.

### **Vessel Supports Local Producers**

Vessel has throughout been a very strong supporter of BC products. It is interesting to note that the local craft beer industry's sales have tripled over the last five years and the number of BC breweries have increased over nine years from 54 (2010) to 170 (2019) with +/- 20 more about to open. Twenty-five hundred people (+/-) are currently employed in the craft beer brewing industry. Additionally there is also a constant burgeoning of BC wines and local craft distillery products (such as vodka and gin) becoming available. The growth in all of these offerings including imminent additional offerings means that Vessel needs more space.

### **Vessel and the Community**

Vessel has always been about community and building on this relationship. They are consistent supporters of many organizations in the arts, sports, education and community outreach groups and of course BC suppliers with particular emphasis on "local".

### **Vessel and Education**

Vessel uses its platform to provide educational opportunities for its staff, partners in the industry and members of the community. They have trained staff in local restaurants and have even partnered with competitors to train their staff; a recent example being their offer of an internship for a member of the Vinica Education Society which is focussed on diversifying the wine industry through innovative education and professional mentorships. One focus of Vessel is its support of people that are passionate about wine but are experiencing systemic barriers to participation and advancement and are working with them to develop new leaders in the industry.

### **Online Shopping**

The reality of shopping patterns as affected by online shopping including delivery or pickup is a very real aspect of today's business world. Vessel is currently offering an experimental and limited online service and concurrently studying a basis to expand this service including curbside pickup. Additional space will be required to pursue this and remain competitive in today's marketplace.

### **Size Comparison to Other Major Victoria Liquor Retail Outlet Competitors**

<b>Vessel Liquor Store</b>	<b>Current Size:</b>	<b>327.0 m<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<b>Proposed Size:</b>	<b>453.8 m<sup>2</sup></b>	
<b><u>Liquor Retail Store</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Size</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed Size of Vessel by Comparison (+/-)</u></b>
Gov't Liquor Store	Fort and Foul Bay	926.5 m <sup>2</sup>	49%
Gov't Liquor Store	Fairfield Plaza	530.0 m <sup>2</sup>	86%
Gov't Liquor Store	Hillside Shopping Centre	785.0 m <sup>2</sup>	58%
Cascadia	Quadra Village	594.0 m <sup>2</sup> Approved by Council April 2018)	76%
Hillside Liquor Plus	3201 Shelbourne St.	622.0 m <sup>2</sup>	73%

As can be seen from the above, Vessel (when expanded) will be smaller than all of its major competitors noted above, that being between 49% and 86% of their sizes.

### **Why Vessel Wants to Expand**

There is an industry principle as articulated by the Province of fairness and a level playing field. In this context, even when expanded, Vessel is at a significant size disadvantage to its main competitors. Simply put, Vessel requires more space to remain competitive including supporting local producers, its increasing customer base and to address the advent of online shopping.

### **Technical Details – Site Fully Complies Including Excess Parking**

Aside from the requested variance for the increased retail liquor store area, our request complies with all other zoning and development guidelines. No expansion of the building's footprint is being proposed and the former restaurant use is being replaced with a retail use which results in a reduction of the overall parking requirements for the building. The City has approved a small second floor expansion of 91.1 m<sup>2</sup> enclosing former balcony areas. The entire second-floor space will be used for offices. The combination of the slightly-expanded second-floor office areas with the main floor retail being all Vessel, requires a total of 17 parking stalls and there are currently 20 stalls provided onsite.

### **Consultation**

- **South Jubilee Community**

The Vessel Property is in the South Jubilee Community and details of the proposed DVP were provided to their Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC). The Committee reviewed the proposed DVP and on April 14<sup>th</sup> they provided an email response to Chelsea Medd at the City of Victoria planning department advising that they “have no comments or objections to the expansion plans”.

- **The Rockland Neighbourhood Community**

We also met with the Rockland CALUC to discuss the proposed DVP, and Ross Borland (the Managing Partner of Vessel) and I met with their members on April 7<sup>th</sup>. The details of the proposed expansion were provided and there was discussion around parking, the planned upgrades to the building's exterior, the site and the size comparison to other liquor stores in the area. This included discussions related to details of our proposal. There were no objections to the DVP.

- **Petition of Adjacent Properties**

Although not a requirement for the DVP approval process, it was suggested by the City Planner that a petition of the neighbours be undertaken in the same manner as is done for a rezoning. We are in the process of completing this work and will submit the information shortly.

On behalf of Vessel, thank you for your consideration of this application.

Sincerely,



Trevor Dickie,  
Project Coordinator for Vessel Liquor Store Ltd.

trevor@radcliffelane.com  
(250) 858-5740