



Letter to Mayor and Council

April 19, 2018

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

Mayor Lisa Helps
Members of City Council
City of Victoria

Dear Mayor and Council,

**Re: Proposed Redevelopment at 819-827 Fort Street (“825 Fort”)
Rezoning, Development Permit and Heritage Alteration Permit – Revised Application**

825 Fort Holdings Ltd. c/o The Salient Group is pleased to enclose the revised application for a mixed-use development at 819-827 Fort Street (“825 Fort”) pursuant to the initial rezoning, development permit and heritage alteration permit application to the City submitted November 2017. The revised application includes a proposal for:

- 98 purpose built rental homes,
- A mix of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom homes,
- Retention and rehabilitation of the historic Edwardian building façade at 825 Fort Street,
- Designation, retention and rehabilitation of the historic Edwardian building façade at 821 Fort Street,
- Historically scaled retail storefronts designed and curated to support the local community and add vibrancy to the neighbourhood,
- Urban design and form that is contextually respectful and reduces overlook of neighbours, and
- Coordination with the new Fort Street Bikeway and the City’s public realm plan, incorporating sidewalk widening and a mid-block crosswalk

The proposed redevelopment application has been re-submitted to the City in conjunction with revised Architectural and Landscape drawings dated April 19, 2018.

From the initial redevelopment concept the project team has consulted with the City of Victoria and local stakeholder groups resulting in an ongoing design development process to incorporate feedback. This is reflected in the form and composition of this revised project application.

The goal for the proposed redevelopment is to capture the historic and commercial spirit of Fort Street, while sensitively creating new living and working space that will support Victoria’s burgeoning hi-tech and commercial downtown district with high quality purpose-built rental urban homes and historically driven character retail space. The creation and restoration of a compact, walkable and vibrant community is core to Salient’s corporate mission and will contribute to the strength and composition of this evolving mixed-use district on Fort Street.

Project Description & Neighbourhood Context

The project site is comprised of 2 legal lots with civic addresses of 819-821 Fort Street, and 825-827 Fort Street. The “825-Fort Street” site is located mid-block on the south side of Fort Street between a large property to the east currently slated for future redevelopment. To the west is the lower scaled Fort Common properties, a collection of neighbourhood scaled commercial and retail buildings that together comprise another significant site of future growth.

The redevelopment proposes to provide 98 purpose-built, market rental apartments of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom homes ranging in size from 350sf - 870sf. The project mix consists of 53 1-bedroom homes, 38 2-bedroom homes, and 7 3-bedroom homes. We expect a diverse range of prospective residents with a concentration working in the technology and service sectors in the Downtown. The building form and its homes are inspired by urban lofts and have a diversity of plans to accommodate the changing space needs of an urban lifestyle.

The project builds on the existing character of the area, creating a community within the building while adding value to the community as a whole. The built form of the 825 Fort Street redevelopment is rooted in the retained and rehabilitated facade of the historically designated “BC Hardware Building” at 825 Fort Street.

Through the review process, we have resolved how the historic façade of 821 Fort Street could also be retained. Although this building is not currently designated as heritage by the City, we are proposing to designate and rehabilitate this façade back to its original design and to integrate the facade into the project. Set back above the second and third levels, the building continues in the existing modules reflecting the city in its historical growth pattern.

Fort street is well known for its lower scale historic character with interesting shops at the street level, and the redevelopment proposes to retain the historically scaled retail spaces that will continue the rhythm of Fort Street. Tenants of the Fort Street commercial spaces will be curated and coordinated to complement the character of the existing properties to the west. The retail character and mix will be critical to the vitality of the area and the success of the mixed use neighbourhood.

The public realm for the proposed redevelopment has been designed to be generally consistent with the City’s Downtown Public Realm Guidelines with widened sidewalks and a mid-block crosswalk. In addition to being located on the new Fort Street bike pathway, public transit is directly accessible on this block.

Community Consultation

In addition to ongoing consultation with the City and local stakeholder groups, two public open houses have been held to date as part of a broader community engagement process. The first open house event was held in August 2017 and attended by over 40-people including members of surrounding businesses and the community, the neighbouring “Escher” development on Broughton Street, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Residents’ Association, the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust, City Council, the Fairfield Gonzales CALUC, as well as other attendees who did not identify themselves or an affiliation. The open house preceded the initial rezoning and development permit application made in November 2017.



The second open house event was held in March 2018, following feedback received from the City's technical review comments on the initial application. The purpose of the second open house was to highlight proposed revisions to the project design in advance of finalizing the revised submission. The second open house event was attended by approximately 45-50 people, a mix of those familiar with the proposal and those who were being introduced to the project for the first time. The feedback we received from the community was positive overall with enthusiasm and support for the continued revitalization of Fort Street. A detailed summary of both open house events has been shared with City staff.

In addition, there has been ongoing communications with other members of the immediate and broader community. This includes residents of the "Escher" residential building, members of the Fairfield Gonzales CALUC, the DVBA, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Residents Association, UDI, and neighbouring business owners to understand the needs and concerns of the community. We have also consulted with executives at VIATEC to better understand the housing needs and dynamic of the high-tech workforce. The collective feedback received has contributed to the design and composition of the project reflected in this revised application.

Development Permit & Policy Guidelines

The project site is currently zoned as a Central Area Zone (CA-2-Fort Street Special Commercial and CA-HG Harris Green Commercial District). It is located within the Fort Street Heritage Corridor in the Fairfield-Gonzales neighbourhood and bounded by Harris Green to the north and east, and Downtown to the north and west.

The two guiding policy documents that are applicable to this project site are 1) The City of Victoria's Downtown Core Area Plan ("DCAP") and 2) the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan ("OCP"). As per direction received from Staff, the project has been designed within the DCAP design guidelines with two exceptions.

The first exception is a variance in height. The permitted height under OCP guidelines is 20-storeys. The permitted height under DCAP guidelines is 10-storeys, or 30m. The proposed height of 825 Fort Street is 10-storeys at 33.6 m (reduced from an initial application of 11-storeys at 36.3m). The additional height above 30m is a result of the higher than typical floor-to-floor heights on levels 1, 2 and 3. The floor-to-floor heights on these levels are set by the existing floor-to-floor heights of the historical 825 Fort Street building which is retained and integrated into the redevelopment project, and therefore increasing the over height above the guideline of 30m.

The second exception is a variance in the number of required parking stalls as per the City's new proposed Schedule C, which is discussed further in the Transportation section below.

The building setbacks from the east, west and south property lines meet or exceed the guideline setbacks as defined in Appendix 6 of the DCAP. Building stepping, set-backs and reductions in height have been made on levels 3, 9 and 10 on the North face of the building, and also on Levels 9-10 on the south face of the building, trimming the overall building form and massing.

In this "urban infill" form, the primary outlook for all suites are oriented north-south. There are no primary outlooks to the east or west, only windows for light and livability. The urban infill form reduces



overlook conflicts between adjacent properties given the mid-block site location, the recently completed residential development to the southeast and anticipated future development sites to the east, south and west.

The OCP does not provide a density guideline for mixed-use projects on this site, while the DCAP classifies the site under a 'Special Density Area' that also does not prescribe guidance on density. The proposed revised density is 5.99FSR (reduced from an initial application of 7.0 FSR). The density is a result of the building's urban infill form that orients residential units to face north and south of the site, versus a 'point tower form' that orients units in all directions.

Design Rationale

The architectural expression will be a balance of highlighting the historic elements while introducing contemporary design, taking into consideration the neighbourhood context.

The three-storey Edwardian façade of the designated heritage building at 825 Fort Street will be preserved and restored. In addition, as a result of discussions with staff the two-storey Edwardian façade of the 821 Fort Street building will also be preserved, restored and designated as heritage. The historic scale and rhythm of the retail storefronts are characteristic of Fort Street's past and inform the design of rest of the project.

The new structure on the east of the 825 Fort Street façade will be complementary to its articulation and character before stepping back and transitioning into a modern addition above. The large setback above the second and third floor maintains a human scale street wall to activate retail services at the ground level. These steps and staggers are designed to expose the west face of the building when travelling from west to east, again highlighting the existing heritage components.

This approach has led the design of the building parti to consist of 3 smaller aggregate parts, to reduce the visual scale of the development and give the impression of separate urban infill additions built over time. This approach maintains the character & sensitivity of the heritage components, with the most appropriate design being considered for the community over the long term. The material selection is based on the concept of smaller developments and additions to evoke both scale and texture of existing structures along Fort Street and the surroundings. The massing and orientation of the building creates flexibility to provide homes with greater diversity in size and type of unit.

Through several meetings with local stakeholders, the project has consistently been evolving based on feedback received on the project's use, design, massing and public realm design.

Heritage

The existing building at 825 Fort Street is a municipally designated heritage building on the Victoria Heritage Register. This handsome 3-story building was originally constructed in 1911-1912 for B.C. Hardware Company, however the building and structure has since been renovated and altered many times. The building was renovated by the Cunliffe family in the late 1980's to restore the historic façade to its original appearance, however none of the building's original elements remain in the building's interior.



The existing building at 821 Fort Street is not a municipally designated heritage building. However, part of this proposal is to work with the City to dedicate this façade as heritage. This 2-storey building was originally constructed as a 1-storey building in 1908 for G. Bergstrom Bjornfelt as a Swedish massage parlour and Turkish Bath House. A second storey addition was constructed in 1913 intended to expand the size of the commercial operation. As the floor to floor heights in this 2-storey façade are not complementary to the floor to floor heights in the 3-storey façade of 825 Fort Street, we envision that this space could function as a separate element in the form of a double-height commercial space that contributes to the retail vibrancy of Fort Street.

The proposed redevelopment will retain and rehabilitate the existing façades of both 825 and 821 Fort Street and redevelop the site to the highest and best use for the area: mixed use residential with ground level retail space. The redevelopment is designed from the historic rhythm of the heritage façade, with residential units on the second and third floor that are designed with large floor to ceiling heights to take advantage of the opportunity to maximize natural illumination.

In keeping with the existing streetscape, there will be no setback from the pedestrian level at Fort Street utilizing as much of the site as possible. The tall ground-floor retail level with an inset front entrance and large glazed shop windows will be retained from the historic facade, and carried through the entire retail plane on the ground level to maintain the historic rhythm of Fort Street. The intention is to create a strong podium at the base of the building with more modern, stepped-back storeys above in order prioritize and highlight the heritage façade component below.

Don Luxton & Associates have prepared conservation plans to retain and restore the existing 825 Fort Street façade and the existing 821 Fort Street façade. As the project progresses, Don Luxton will be carrying out further testing and analysis as part of the conservation plan. A qualified materials consultant will also be engaged to assess existing building materials, and re-use materials where practical, appropriate, or significant due to the heritage and character of the building. Materials that are used will be carefully selected with thought carefully given to the textures and colours of materials to ensure they are sensitive and consistent with the neighbourhood character.

Public Realm, Green Building Features, Infrastructure

Greenery is incorporated into 825 Fort to provide buffers between public and private spaces. At the second floor, private patios are defined with linear planters and shrubs, intending to provide natural privacy that does not exclude genuine social interaction. The same condition exists on floors four through eight. Homes with large terrace spaces will be provided with hose bib locations to encourage residents to grow herbs and vegetables, and also to provide a means of maintenance for the common terraced landscaping areas.

At the ground floor level, the public realm is designed to coordinate with the City's plans to upgrade the existing cycling infrastructure on Fort Street. This includes sidewalk and streetscape improvements, proposed trees in locations that do not conflict with underground or overhead utilities, and a mid-block crossing as part of the City's plans. We welcome the opportunity to work with the City and adjacent property owners to create a comprehensive, exciting and dynamic street environment on Fort Street over and above what is currently planned.



On the third floor, the project will have a common collegium and outdoor common space designed to foster connections within the community of the building. It is designed to be as flexible as possible for various uses and multiple groups as an amenity relevant to the needs of the residents and through the life of the building. The amenity area includes a pet run and play area, barbeques, trees and planting, and

flexible seating-eating-gathering space. Additional facilities that are tailored to urban living include storage, ample bicycle parking and lockers, a bicycle wash, and a bicycle repair station. All of these features are intended to reduce the parking and vehicle footprint in order to encourage alternative modes of transportation.

825 Fort will not be targeting a green certification, but is being designed with thoughtful, practical design for efficient systems in conjunction with the proposed use of purpose-built market rental homes.

Transportation

825 Fort Street will be requesting a variance in parking supply, which is lower than the minimum parking requirements outlined in the new proposed parking requirements in the City's Draft Off-Street Parking Regulations for Downtown. The project is proposing to provide 57 parking spaces. The City's proposed changes to Schedule C would require 75 parking spaces.

The site is strategically located and highly accessible given its central location within the downtown core. It has excellent walkability and access to transit, and is located on the new Fort Street Bike Path. In addition, the project's use as a purpose-built market rental apartment is intended to service those who are within walking distance to their place of work. It is expected that vehicle ownership rates will be significantly lower than typical condominium projects. We believe the level of parking provided for the project is appropriate given the location and proposed uses.

As part of this application, a Traffic Study has been prepared by Bunt & Associates Traffic Consultants to provide guidance on the amount of parking required to meet the needs of 825 Fort. Bunt's analysis includes information from surveys of similar rental properties in close proximity, and also to advise on the appropriate level of parking taking into consideration the project's use and location. The number of parking stalls that are being proposed as part of this development was decided in consultation with Bunt, and also consistent with their analysis and recommendation.

Further, we will be providing a variety of Traffic Demand Measures to support a decrease in number of parking spaces, including a start and end-of-trip amenity for cyclists (including a bike wash and a bike repair station), ample secured bicycle parking well above the minimum required amount, provision of a car share program for residents in the building, and an information package for new residents to advise on the alternative methods of transportation that are easily accessible and available.



Project Design Team & Credentials

We are pleased to be working with such a talented team with extensive project experience in Victoria:

- The Salient Group, Developer
- Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership, Architect, Building Code
- Waymark Architects, Heritage Architect
- Don Luxton, Heritage Consultant
- JEA, Civil Engineer
- Considered Design, Landscape Architect
- AES, Electrical Engineer
- Rocky Point, Mechanical Engineer
- RJC, Structural Engineer
- Bunt & Associates, Traffic Consultant

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this revised proposal to redevelop the existing properties at 819-827 Fort Street. We look forward to working with City staff to progress this application.

Sincerely,

825 FORT HOLDINGS LTD. *c/o The Salient Group*

Robert Fung
President

cc: MCM Partnership - Renante Solivar, Sydney Schwartz