

January 29, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

RE: 603 Pandora Ave. CALUC Application - Hampton Inn Project Description/Rationale

An Official Community Plan and rezoning amendment application will be submitted to develop a new 198-room hotel on the vacant site located at the corner Pandora Avenue and Government Street, across from the McPherson Theatre and Centennial Square. The proposed hotel development will provide:

- Mid-priced and family-focussed hotel rooms and amenities;
- Ground floor commercial space fronting Government Street to enhance street activity and contribute to the revitalization this part of downtown;
- A new public plaza and pedestrian-friendly frontage improvements complementing the infrastructure upgrades along Government Street;
- An estimated 70,000 guests per year to this part of downtown that is within easy walking distance of Chinatown, the lower Johnson St. shopping district, the emerging Arts and Innovation District, and Old Town; and,
- Use of an innovative prefabrication method of construction that will produce less waste, less greenhouse gas emissions, less construction traffic disruption, and a shorter construction timeframe.

Design Rational

The proposed building will be 12 storeys, comprised of a two-storey commercial base and 10 storeys of hotel rooms. The project 'bookends' the Government Street mall and forms a counterpoint to the historic Belmont Building. The architecture is a contemporary interpretation of taller buildings from the Edwardian/classical revival period. Key design considerations are integration with the heritage street wall, having a scale and materiality that is compatible with the Old Town fabric, and activating the public realm. The project team is comprised of professionals that have long-standing experience in and understanding of Victoria. The design has been guided with input from Don Luxton, of Don Luxton and Associates Inc., a well-respected architectural historian who has worked extensively in Victoria and provides management of cultural and heritage resource services for both the public and private sectors. D'Ambrosio Architecture and Urbanism (DAU) is the prime consultant for the project and Hapa Collaborative are the landscape architects.

A fundamental design intention of the project is the creation of a prominent public plaza, motivated first by improving its solar access. The proposal completes the street wall on Government Street, then

pivots to widen the public frontage, connect to the larger corner plaza, and bring mid-day sunlight onto the plaza. A portion of the building cantilevers over the public space, through a proposed reciprocal easement with the City of Victoria. The plaza will have a combination of tactile and passive elements including a misting feature, rest areas and tree canopy.

The building will have 4 levels of underground parking or a ratio of 0.65 stalls per guest room.

The Need

According to Tourism Victoria, the City attracts close to \$1.4 billion in visitor spending in a typical year, with hotel revenues estimated at \$250 million per year. However recent events have impacted the local hotel industry's ability to manage visitor demand. Over the past decade, nearly 1,200 purpose-built hotel rooms in Victoria have been lost to either redevelopment or supportive housing conversion. Recent Provincial Government restrictions on short-term rentals will compound the tourist accommodation shortage that will inevitably impact Convention Centre booking, the availability of accommodation for Victoria's film industry and the tourism and the downtown retail sector generally. It is estimated that the hotel will create over 70 full-time (FTE) jobs in the downtown core.

Why 12 Storeys

The viability of hotels is largely driven by a financial model that must withstand market volatility and fluctuations in tourist activity over time. While there have been several proposals for new hotels in Victoria over the past few years, little has been developed to date due to construction cost increases, interest rate escalation and onerous financing conditions. Under current economic and financing conditions, a modern, mid-priced downtown hotel requires approximately 200 rooms to be viable. The building form, as proposed in this application, achieves both the requisite hotel functions and the public realm objectives for the project.

Closing

We believe this project will be an important and welcomed economic contributor to downtown Victoria. The building form responds to the classic revival style found in many buildings in Victoria and, along with the significant public plaza space, will positively transform this landmark corner site.

Yours truly,



Deane Strongitharm, MCIP, RPP

cc. Ocean Gate Developments Ltd.
David Jacobson - Trace Projects
Erica Sangster - D'Ambrosio Architecture and Urbanism

