

Tuesday, June 28, 2022

City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

RE : 2540-2542 Shelbourne Street - CALUC Pre-Application Meeting

Dear Mayor and Council ;



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On June 2, 2022, our firm took part in the pre-application meeting for a development application at 2540-2542 Shelbourne St. The nature of the proposal includes the rezoning of two-single family homes to permit the development of 15 ground-oriented townhomes, conforming to the permitted land-use within the Official Community Plan. Alex McCumber architect AIBC was present on behalf of dHKarchitects at that meeting.

This letter is framed by the events of the pre-application meeting but also by more recent conversations with the FCA LUC moderators as part of a de-brief conversation, which the developer felt was required, based on what transpired.

To begin, it should be stated as a team we have over 30 years of experience in Victoria and have represented many different clients and projects in community engagement meetings but were disappointed by the tone of this meeting, which involved several emotionally-charged and completely inappropriate exchanges. As a result, all parties agree that the meeting did not offer the developer or the LUC adequate discussion about the proposal and was not at all indicative of a successful public engagement process.

While some minor details related to the proposal were discussed, other issues eventually took over, largely policy issues the developers have no control over, but for which attendees had a great deal of concern and frustration.

We understand that for the LUC, which is a conduit for resident perspectives on development proposals, these are (mostly) the key issues heard (lack of affordable housing generally, and the shortcomings of the TAP process for renters) at every FCA LUC development meeting; however, in this instance many of the attendees engaged in combative and disrespectful behaviour, going so far as to label the developers racist for a perceived lack of minority representation in reference landscape images.

As mentioned, the applicant had a de-brief call with the co-chairs of the Land Use Committee to provide answers to the questions that were not addressed; the co-chairs have reiterated this was not a typical process and acknowledge the process needs improvement. The applicant and our team remain committed to the project and will continue to engage with the community but cannot do this successfully in settings where applicant team members are targeted and verbally abused.



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In reflection of the process and our experience, there are several key points we are asking Council to address for the future for all CALUC meetings:

- CALUC chairs shall be recognized by all attendees as the sole source of control for the meeting and have the authority to take control of conversations that are not productive or appropriate;
- General questions to the applicant shall be distributed prior to the meeting as has been recently implemented by the Fernwood Land Use Committee. This was helpful for the applicant and should help to guide the discussion and ensure all questions are addressed;
- Advocacy groups are certainly welcome to participate in any of the dialogue, however no single-interest group should be allowed to take control of the conversation, effectively disallowing residents the opportunity to discuss topics directly related to the project. Residents of the neighbourhood should be given priority in expressing feedback.
- CALUC pre-application meetings are a mandated part of the development process and should have some representative from the City (Staff or Council) present as an observer.

We believe there are no major objections from the community regarding the application and, as indicated in the letter from the Community Association, a good number of neighbours in support, despite the tone of the discussion during the CALUC meeting.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

dHKarchitects


Charles Kierulff architect AIBC MRAIC
Principal