March 9, 2018

Mayor Lisa Helps & Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

RE: 415-435 MICHIGAN STREET RESIDENTIAL INFILL REZONING & DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION

Dear Mayor Helps & Council:

CitySpaces Consulting, on behalf of Starlight Investments, is pleased to submit this application for rezoning of, and a development permit for, the properties located at 415 and 435 Michigan Street.

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THE PROPOSAL

This application proposes rezoning the property from its current *R3-H High Density Multi Dwelling District* to a new site-specific zone that will accommodate 24 new ground-oriented infill rental housing units (12 two-bedroom townhouses/12 studio units) along Michigan Street between the existing towers, adjacent to the swimming pool.

The project site is located in the James Bay neighbourhood, on the north side of Michigan Street, adjacent to Irving Park. The existing site has two purpose-built rental apartment towers that were constructed in 1962 – Regent Towers (13 storeys), and Charter House (14 storeys). The two towers are separated by a distance of about 65 metres.

This project is intended to:

- Increase the rental housing supply and choice for individuals and families;
- Enhance the public realm and Michigan Street "curb appeal" of the site;
- Provide on-site amenities for new tenants, and improve amenities for existing tenants;
- Create a model stormwater management plan; and
- Provide an architecturally pleasing infill development.

LAND USE POLICY & THE VICTORIA HOUSING STRATEGY (2016)

This project is in alignment with the Official Community Plan (OCP) in which the site is designated as "urban residential", which supports:

- Attached and detached buildings up to three storeys.
- Low-rise and mid-rise multi-unit buildings up to approximately six storeys.
- Variable yard setbacks with primary doorways facing the street.
- Variable front yard landscaping, boulevard, and street tree planting.
- On-street parking and collective driveway access to rear yard or underground parking.
- Ground-oriented multi-unit residential.
- Low to mid-rise multi-unit residential.
- Total floor space ratios generally up to 1.2:1.
- Increased density up to a total of approximately 2:1 may be considered in strategic locations for the advancement of plan objectives, such as within 200 metres of the James Bay "Large Urban Village".

This project also aligns with the OCP because of its:

- High quality architecture, landscape, and urban design features (8.43);
- Provision of new infill and building additions that respond to context through sensitive and innovative design (8.44); and
- Human scale building design, through consideration of form, proportion, pattern, detailing and texture, particularly at street level (8.45).

The 415-435 Michigan Street Project supports the OCP's objectives for housing diversity by:

- Adding to the range of housing types (family-oriented and studio units), forms (ground-oriented) and tenures (rental) within the neighbourhood to meet the needs of residents at different life stages, and to facilitate aging in place (13.9); and
- Providing ground-oriented, multi-unit residential housing to encourage a mix of residents, including households with children (13.10).

In terms of encouraging active transportation, the site is ideally located within:

- A few minutes walk of the James Bay neighbourhood's main commercial centre;
- A ten-minute walk to Downtown;
- A few minutes walk to three carshare stations; and
- A few minutes walk to seven transit stops.

The project is also in alignment the *Victoria Housing Strategy* (2016), which states that," purpose-built rental housing represents an important part of the spectrum of choices that are available to renter households".

WHY IS REZONING REQUIRED?

The site is currently zoned *R3-H High Density Multiple Dwelling District*, which permits a floor space ratio (FSR) of 1.68:1, and the existing buildings on the site have an FSR of 1.44:1. The proposed ground-oriented units will add approximately 1,996 m^2 (21,486 sf) of additional floor space for a combined FSR of 1.65:1.

The current R3-H zone requires a minimum building height of 21 metres. The proposed new rental units will be approximately 12.5 metres, therefore rezoning is required to reduce the minimum height provision in the Zoning Bylaw. No increase in density or change of use is requested.

REQUESTED VARIANCE

A parking variance is requested with this application. Transportation consultant, Watt Consulting, has reviewed demand for both on-site and on-street parking, and analysis shows that existing parking can meet the demand from both the existing buildings, and the proposed new units (with a spillover of two vehicles). Parking demand was calculated for the existing occupied units, the known vacant units (at the time study), as well as resident (by unit type) and visitor parking demand for the proposed units. On-street parking was also taken into account in conducting the assessment.

The existing site has 195 rental apartment units, and more parking stalls than are currently being used. The proposed development is to provide an additional 24 rental units (bachelor and two-bedroom units), for a total of 219 units. The proposed parking supply for the site is 138 stalls.

The Watt Consulting study determined the parking ratios appropriate for the site, and then applied those ratios to forecast future demand, including demand from the proposed 24 ground-oriented units. The methodology used is standard engineering practice, and includes recognition that larger units, with more bedrooms, will have higher parking demand than studio units. The study did not take into account the high probability of further parking demand reductions with younger generations using alternate modes of transportation. As outlined in the table below, the total expected parking demand for the site, including the proposed new units, is 140 stalls.

EXPECTED FUTURE PARKING DEMAND		
TYPE OF PARKING DEMAND	PARKING RATIO (stalls/unit)	PARKING DEMAND (number of stalls needed)
Existing Peak On-Site	0.73*	104
Currently Vacant Units (19 units)	0.73	14
Proposed New Studio Units (12 units)	0.56	7
Proposed New 2-Bedroom Units (12 units)	1.07	13
Visitor (For Proposed 24 Units)	0.10	2
TOTAL EXPECTED DEMAND		**140 stalls**

**There was assumed to be 25 vehicles parked on the street attributed to the site, and these were considered when developing the ratio for calculating parking demand (See attached Watt Consulting report).*

Transportation demand management programs were considered to further support the reduction in parking supply: additional bicycle parking, adjacent transit stops, and adjacent carshare program locations.

The existing site parking supply is expected to accommodate the proposed infill development with the potential spillover of two vehicles, which is not expected to negatively impact neighbourhood parking conditions. A copy of the study is attached to this application.

SITE ATTRIBUTES/ENHANCEMENTS

The project is located in an underutilized area between the two existing apartment towers, and on the north side of a centrally-located swimming pool, along Michigan Street. The existing driveways will remain the same, flanking the new housing building.

In addition to providing new rental housing, by siting the project in this location, there is also opportunity to improve the existing site arrangement for current tower tenants. For example, the existing swimming pool becomes a more central feature with added privacy from the street. A new storage shed will provide additional Class I bicycle storage, and improve trash collection.

On-site vehicle circulation and safety will be improved through the addition of clear pedestrian links between the new and existing buildings, as well as improved lighting and visual connections, and the removal of the large retaining walls at the driveway entrances. These walls block views of oncoming pedestrians and the adjacent municipal streets, and were mentioned as an issue by existing tenants during one of the public open houses.

A new combined bicycle and refuse shed will be built, providing 32 new Class 1 bicycle parking stalls – more than the bylaw requires for the 24 new units.

The placement of the proposed infill project on the site allows for street-oriented townhomes and flats along Michigan Street, which will enhance the public realm, increase the sense of neighbourhood, and provide much-needed rental housing options for families.

UNIT TYPES

The project comprises 12 two-storey, "walk-up" townhouse units stacked on top of 12 ground level studio apartment suites. Each ground level studio unit has a private outdoor garden space, and each two-bedroom townhouse unit has a private rooftop deck. The street facing townhouse units all have roof level terraces.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The project's exterior design will provide a refreshing new streetscape for the Michigan Street frontage, and enhance the sense of neighbourhood. The massing for the project adopts a rowhouse approach in which each home has its own front door. Both the housing and storage buildings will be crafted in a West Coast, but modern style, using simple planes, flat roofs, generous overhangs, and contemporary glass railings. Materials will include both Hardie and

natural wood, and glazing will be contemporary in its fenestration. Where visible to the street, soffits will be clad in natural wood materials with associated trim. Please see the plans and elevations attached to this application.

LANDSCAPING & OPEN SPACE

New landscaping will integrate the new buildings and site circulation with the existing apartment buildings, site features, and facility programme. A revitalized Michigan Street frontage will incorporate new tree plantings, and amenity plantings to provide an attractive public realm and integration with the existing neighbourhood. Landscaped areas will be planted with a diverse selection of tree and shrub species to soften the building edges, and to provide screening for the private outdoor spaces. Existing trees that need to be removed for construction will be replaced at a ratio of more than four to one.

The ground level studio units also each have a private outdoor garden space. Each two-bedroom townhouse unit has a private rooftop deck, and those facing Michigan Street will all have roof level terraces. These private amenity spaces for each unit will be separated by architectural privacy screens and raised planters. These privacy screens will include native and adapted non-invasive plants to support biodiversity, reduce pesticide use, and support water conservation. Where possible, existing trees will be maintained.

GREEN FEATURES & ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The green features for the project can be divided into three categories: 1) stormwater management, 2) specific landscaping for the new development, and 3) high performance construction techniques.

1. Stormwater Management

Rainwater management has been incorporated into the landscape plans, and designed to manage run-off from both the new building and the westerly one-third of the existing surface parking area. The rainwater management features will comply with the City's new *Rainwater Rewards Program*, and it is expected that the building owners will enjoy a reduction in stormwater utility fees as a result.

2. Specific Landscaping

The 12 two-bedroom units will each enjoy innovative individual rooftop amenity spaces, with raised garden plots on each deck.

3. High Performance Construction

The majority of materials that will be used for construction are environmentally-friendly (e.g., non-toxic, wood, etc.). As well, to promote indoor air quality, low VOC or no VOC paints, adhesives, and sealants will be used. Several energy efficient components will also be included:

- High-performance windows, e.g., EnergyStar.
- Heat recovery ventilator (75% or better recovery).
- LED lighting throughout.
- Water efficient fixtures throughout.

SERVICES & UTILITIES

The site is fully serviced. No upgrades to sanitary sewer, stormwater, or domestic water lines are anticipated, nor is a requirement for a sewer attenuation tank. A copy of preliminary servicing for the new development is included as part of this application.

SUBDIVISION

Currently, each of the two existing residential buildings (415 and 435 Michigan Street) are situated on separate lots, although parking and exterior amenities are interchangeably used by residents of both buildings.

The two lots will be consolidated as part of the development approvals process, and the consolidation will be completed prior to the issuance of a building permit.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Three meetings have been held related to this application:

1. An informal meeting was held with the James Bay Neighbourhood Association Land Use Committee on May 31, 2017.
2. An open house for the residents of the two existing towers on the site was held on August 28, 2017.
3. A public open house for the neighbourhood was held on August 28, 2017.

All tenants were invited to the first open house, and some 600 invitations were distributed to neighbours for the second open house. In general, the response from neighbours was favourable. Existing tenants did raise some questions related to the timing for completion of work on the tower buildings, and the driveway views, which were addressed earlier in this letter. A summary of the comments received is attached to this application.

An additional meeting was convened with the Design Review Committee of the James Bay Neighbourhood Association on December 13, 2017 to explain the application, and to receive initial feedback. The Committee was mostly concerned with the parking variance for this application.

CALUC MEETING

A CALUC Meeting was hosted by the James Bay Neighbourhood Association on February 14, 2018. Feedback from meeting participants tends to be related to three main points:

1. Parking; issue with variance request for no additional parking.
2. Loss of green space.
3. Overall impact on Michigan Street.

1. Parking

As mentioned above, a parking variance is requested with this application. The parking study, prepared by Watt Consulting, concludes that,"the existing site parking supply is expected to accommodate the proposed infill development with the potential spillover of two vehicles, which is not expected to negatively impact neighbourhood parking conditions.

It is important to note that while an allocation of vehicles parked on Michigan Street was used to determine parking ratios, this does not mean that 25 stalls on the street are required to meet parking demand, as suggested in comments recorded during the CALUC presentation. The difference between the methodology to determine parking demand ratios, and actual parking needs can be easily misinterpreted. The assessment did not suggest that on-street parking spaces are in lieu of on-site parking.

2. Loss of Green Space

Residents are concerned that the site for this project will mean loss of green space in the community, and that the proposed development does not include enough green space/landscaping.

The attached landscape plan shows that new landscaping will:

- Integrate the new buildings and site circulation with the existing apartment buildings, site features, and facility programme. Pedestrian access to the existing Charter House building is enhanced with a new sidewalk along the east driveway.
- Incorporate a rain garden as an integrated way to both landscape and manage stormwater on the site. The existing green space is a lawn, which provides little in the way of ecosystem services or landscape functionality. Lawns require significant inputs of water, fertilizer, and energy to maintain. The proposed landscape manages rainwater, provides more tree canopy, and enhanced biodiversity of the site, while reducing irrigation demand.
- Incorporate new tree plantings, and amenity plantings to provide an attractive public realm and integration with the existing neighbourhood.
- Replace existing trees that need to be removed for construction at a ratio of more than four to one, thereby enhancing tree canopy coverage of the site.

The ground level studio units also each have a private outdoor garden space. Each two-bedroom townhouse unit has a private rooftop deck, and those facing Michigan Street will all have roof level terraces. These private outdoor spaces will expand the interior living spaces for tenants , and also provide them with space to grow food and plants.

It is noted that the introduction of a new rain garden, the planting of more drought resistant vegetation, and the proposed tree replacement program shown on the attached landscape plan will, together, have a more positive impact on the local green space/environment than the existing grass-covered area.

3. Overall Impact on Michigan Street & Its Streetscape

Some neighbours expressed concern that the added "density" on the site would add to parking congestion on Michigan Street. Current zoning for the site already permits the additional rental housing units without a change in density. At the request of the James Bay Neighbourhood Association's Development Review Committee, additional monitoring of parking demand was done on Michigan Street, and determined surplus on-street parking was available (see attached Watt Group report).

There are currently more than 500 residential units/residences fronting on to Michigan Street between Menzies and Oswego Streets. Given the existing density of this block, and the compact nature of the James Bay neighbourhood, it seems unlikely that the addition of 24 units (4% increase in units) would have a substantial impact on the neighbourhood, or on traffic congestion on Michigan Street, particularly if these new residents take advantage of all available transportation options (walking, transit, car share, etc.).

At the meeting, there were also concerns about future impacts on street parking by the new Capital City Park development and Downtown employees. Such impacts would be minimal to this block because of different peak demand periods.

CONCLUSION

This application represents a special opportunity to enhance and make better use of an existing location in the community, while responding to the demand for rental housing in Victoria. We look forward to presenting this proposal to Council and committees, and demonstrating its many positive features.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned (250-383-0304 x 22, dstrongitharm@cityspaces.ca).

Sincerely,

Deane Strongitharm, MCIP, RPP

Attachs.

cc: Ashley Burke, Starlight Investments