

March 20, 2019

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

**Re: 415-435 Michigan Street  
Submission of Revised Project Description & Plans**

Dear Mayor & Council:

On behalf of Starlight Investments, we are pleased to provide an updated project description and plans for rezoning and a Development Permit with Variance for the properties located at 415 and 435 Michigan Street. These revised plans, for 24 ground-oriented rental units, are in response to comments received from:

1. The Application Review Summary and Plan Check;
2. The Advisory Design Panel;
3. Additional consultation with the James Bay Neighbourhood Association's (JBNA) Executive;
4. Additional parking analysis and revised calculations;
5. Additional meetings with Development Services and Transportation Staff; and
6. Further internal discussions about the City's housing policies.

**Project Summary**

This application proposes rezoning the property from its current *R3-H High Density Multiple Dwelling District* to a new site-specific zone. The new zone would accommodate the addition of 24 ground-oriented infill rental housing units (including 12 two-bedroom family townhouses) along Michigan Street between the two existing residential towers, adjacent to the swimming pool.

The use and density permitted in the current zone will not change. The reason for the zoning application is because the proposed townhouse infill project does not meet the minimum height requirements in the current bylaw.

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The project site is located in the James Bay neighbourhood, on the north side of Michigan Street, adjacent to Irving Park. The existing site comprises two purpose-built rental apartment towers that were constructed in 1962 – Regent Towers (13 storeys) and Charter House (14 storeys) – and 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 the Michigan Street “curb appeal” of the site;
- Provide on-site amenities for new tenants, and improved amenities for existing tenants;
- Introduce rain gardens and a stormwater management plan;
- Provide an architecturally pleasing infill development;
- Apply a suite of Transportation Demand Measures designed to encourage alternatives to private vehicle use; and
- Support the City’s affordable housing objectives.

Since the previous submission, the following changes have been made:

## **1. Building Design Changes**

Perhaps the most significant change is the conversion of the twelve ground floor studio units to one-bedroom units by introducing an interior glass wall and doors that will provide privacy when blinds are down, yet visually expand the space when they are open. There has been no change in floorspace, but the bedroom areas have now been enclosed to improve the livability of the units.



In addition to the internal layout of the lower units, the following changes have been incorporated into the plans:

- The previously shown new bicycle storage building on the east side will be extended, and another new bicycle storage building will be added on the west side of Regent Towers. These changes will result in two new bike storage buildings on the property with much easier accessibility for tenants; and
- Four additional parking stalls will be provided, including one specifically dedicated for Modo carshare.

## **2. Landscape Plan Changes**

The landscape plan has been revised to reflect the architectural changes, and the comments and suggestions received from the JBNA Executive. A letter from the Landscape Architect is attached. Significant changes include:

- Introduction of a small, centrally located gardening area that will offer good solar exposure and include raised planter beds, ornamental garden beds, a potting table, and garden shed;
- Minor changes to reflect the addition of the designated carshare parking space;
- Adjustments to reflect the additional bike storage building; and
- Some minor planting changes along the Michigan Street frontage with an updated plant schedule.

### **3. Parking Changes & Transportation Demand Measures**

The original application showed 138 parking stalls overall for the site. No additional parking is contemplated. A traffic plan, prepared by Watt Consulting, concluded that there is a suitable amount of parking for the existing units and the proposed new units based on parking demand surveys (previously submitted). Subsequently, a “peer review” of Watt’s results was conducted by Bunt & Associates (copy attached). While the new report made a couple of notations about the original Watt report, the analysis indicated the initial report findings were sound, and concluded there would be sufficient parking to meet demand.

The original rezoning submission also showed the provision of 34 Long Term bicycle stalls in a new building. A separate part of that new building also provides space for an enclosed recycling centre that will allow removal of large outside garbage bins.

Concerns have been expressed by City Transportation staff regarding the number of Long Term bicycle stalls and vehicle parking stalls. The initial staff review stated that the bylaw would require a total of 307 spaces. However, a review of the parking requirements carried out by the applicant identified the following:

- The number of parking stalls required by the bylaw, based on a total of 219 residential units (195 existing and 24 new) units, is 243 stalls;
- The site is immediately adjacent to the James Bay Village Centre, and if the property were included as part of that Village Centre, the total number of parking stalls required by the bylaw would be 202; and
- The parking bylaw prescribes parking requirements by floor area rather than unit type. On the site, there are a number of existing units that are just one square metre larger than the cut-off point for a lower parking ratio. If those units were only one square metre smaller in floor area then the total parking requirement would be reduced to 193 stalls.

The Transportation staff report also flagged the number of Long Term bicycle stalls, and requested consideration for additional spaces. The existing buildings have no specifically designated bike storage areas as this would not have been a consideration at the time of construction. The original submission proposed 34 new Long Term bicycle stalls. The revised



plans have added a new designated bike storage building, and the proposed total is now 168 Long Term bicycle stalls and 18 Short Term stalls. .

Starlight has made considerable efforts to identify other strategies to reduce dependence on the car, and to introduce measures that will encourage the use of alternative transportation modes. The fact that the site is within a five-minute walk of the Legislative Precinct, 10 minutes to Downtown, and less than five minutes to a "Village Centre" suggests that many working residents/tenants will find walking a very convenient means of travel to shop and to work.

In addition to the new bicycle storage buildings, to mitigate parking demand and encourage residents to use alternate forms of transportation, Starlight will implement the following TDM measures:

- i) Purchase of a Modo carshare vehicle to be located on-site in a convenient and designated parking stall;
- ii) Purchase of Modo car memberships for the first 50 tenants who sign-up;
- iii) Initial pre-purchase of \$100 per membership in Modo vehicle use credits as incentive for tenants to use the on-site vehicle;
- iv) Introduce a U-bike program specific to 415/435 Michigan that will be overseen by Devon Properties to ensure the bicycle company maintains proper controls; and
- v) Removal of the old carport structures, allowing for three additional parking stalls southeast of Regent Towers.



#### **4. Consistency with the City's Housing Policy**

The proposed project is consistent with City land use and housing policies because it is:

- A ground-oriented infill housing development;
- A rental project;
- Targeting families by providing 50% of the proposed new housing units as two-bedroom units with rooftop patios;
- Not seeking an increase in density over the current zoning, and is consistent with the Urban Residential land use designation; and
- Located near employment, commercial, social, medical, and educational centres (the new GVPL branch is one block away, and the James Bay Community School is two blocks away).

Starlight is aware of the importance the City is placing on the provision of affordable housing in the community. To be a partner in the solution, Starlight is prepared to work with the City to assign two of the one-bedroom units (approximately 10% of the total new units proposed) for below market/affordable rents.

## **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 family and affordable 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 me directly at 250.383.0304 x 122 or at [dstrongitharm@cityspaces.ca](mailto:dstrongitharm@cityspaces.ca)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deane Strongitharm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Deane Strongitharm, MCIP, RPP

Attachs.

cc.      Howard Paskowitz, Starlight Investments  
         Rob Bateman, City of Victoria

