

26 September 2024

Revised 17 April, 2025

City of Victoria
No.1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC, V8W 1P6

Attn.: Mayor & Council

Re: 741 Fisgard Street (formerly 1620 Blanshard Street) Rezoning and Development Permit Application

It is our privilege to submit Rezoning and Development Permit applications for 741 Fisgard Street (the "Site") on behalf of Jawl Residential and Tri-Eagle Development (the "Applicant"). The proposed details outlined within this application have been carefully crafted to respect the spirit and intent of the Official Community Plan and the Downtown Core Area Plan. Thoughtful, responsive, and iterative design processes have shaped the form and character of this development proposal (the "Proposal" or the "Project"). It is our belief that this Project is contextually appropriate and will enrich and complement the city fabric in which it is situated, as described within the contents of this letter.

Existing Site Characteristics:

The Site is located at the highly visible corner of Blanshard and Fisgard Streets and forms a gateway to the downtown core. The site is currently vacant, with the previous low density commercial building removed in 2023 in anticipation of redevelopment. The site is zoned CBD-2 Central Business District-2 Zone which allows for a building up to 58.0m in height with density up to 7.6:1 FSR, subject to terms of the 2018 Zone and historical 2003 MDA. The Official Community Plan designates the site as Core Business, supporting multi-unit residential and mixed-use buildings with up to 24 storeys in height.

The Site's high profile Blanshard Street frontage is relatively flat with a gentle slope to the west along the Fisgard Street frontage. The site is flanked by a mid-rise (9 storey) residential building with commercial use at grade to the south and the Hudson development, comprising four high density residential buildings with commercial at grade and heights to 23 storeys, to the north. The lot immediately to the north east, across Blanshard Street, was recently purchased by the city for development as a public park.



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A Corporate Partnership

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The general urban context of the downtown core, with its mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses, is highly livable and walkable and well-served by a range of amenities including a grocery store, restaurants, cafes, and small-scale retail shops. The site borders the arts, culture, and entertainment district, which adds to the livability in this location. Immediate adjacency to the Blanshard Street, Douglas Street and Fort Street arteries provides direct access to transit and dedicated biking corridors. The combination of these factors creates the foundation for a vibrant, distinctive urban neighbourhood with rich opportunities for social, residential, and commercial growth.

Description of Proposal:

This Development Proposal envisions a 22-storey building containing **13,376 sq.m.** of gross floor area incorporating **161** residential units and **5** commercial units at grade. 107 parking stalls are provided in a three storey underground parkade and 192 bicycle parking stalls, including 22 cargo bikes, are provided in a secure bike room with at grade access.



Perspective – Looking Southwest

The architectural concept for this Proposal responds to the unique site, at a key node on the Blanshard Street corridor, and uses simple, platonic forms and a minimal palette of high-quality cladding materials to create a powerful and iconic gateway to the downtown core.

The building design concept is based on the following fundamental tenets and guiding principles:

- The Project should deliver much-needed housing in one of the most livable sections of the downtown core.
- The Project should embrace its walkable, bikeable, and amenity-rich location to advocate alternative transportation options for residents.
- The Project should support an animated and vibrant street frontage.
- The Project should incorporate high quality architecture which is contextually appropriate and contributes to the emerging high-density contemporary urban fabric that will define this gateway to the downtown for years to come.
- The Project should recognize and respond to its location as a key gateway site to the downtown core.
- The Project should work within the substance and spirit of the Official Community Plan and Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP) guidelines applicable to the location.

Official Community Plan:

Strategic direction for the Downtown includes the accommodation of a significant share of the anticipated population growth for the region over the next decade. The proposed development of this Site with a 22-storey purpose-built residential building will advance this objective while simultaneously reinforcing the high-density development form that the DCAP guidelines promote for the Blanshard Street corridor. Thoughtful development of the ground plane reinforces the OCP objective for providing “well-designed public realm services and amenities to support commercial and residential development”. While the Site is designated Core Business, it also sits along the blurred border with Core Residential within the OCP. The Applicant for the better part of two decades has worked to deliver a commercial building on this site. With the long lasting impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on the commercial office market, the opportunity to deliver a commercial building here commensurate with the Core Business designation is not possible.

Moreover, in recent years, the City has approved other Office projects elsewhere in the City these approvals have further increased office supply, during an environment where demand is continuing to decrease. These factors further have removed any possibility that this project can deliver an Office Building.

In addition, with the recent purchase of the Blanshard Street Park which will sit kitty corner to the subject site, the Applicant feels there is significant opportunity to deliver much needed housing across from the new City Park.

Development Permit Area 2: Core Business:

The Core Business development permit area (DPA2) applies to the Site, and a calibrated and intentional response to the high profile gateway location of the site has informed the conceptual approach for this Proposal since inception. In keeping with the objectives of this designation, this Proposal will intensify mixed-use development including multi-unit residential occupancy and at grade commercial uses to activate a critical and highly visible portion of the Blanshard street frontage at the perceived entrance to the downtown core. The architectural expression employs a contemporary podium and tower form that responds to the established Hudson development to the north while introducing a dramatic language of [glass, ceramic and metal panel](#) that will form an iconic landmark and define this prominent corner as a gateway to the city centre. Large, at grade commercial units opening onto wide sidewalks and covered public spaces are proposed to activate the Blanshard and Fisgard street frontages. To the west, a unique linear food court is proposed as a highly visible and active contribution to the existing through block connector. [The feature plaza at the north east corner of the site has been expanded and the building form above it simplified to reinforce this principal gathering space as an iconic landmark in the street frontage. The lobby and principal entrance, which opens directly from the plaza, has been relocated and revised to better address Fisgard street, while maintaining a strong presence and unobstructed access from Blanshard Street.](#)

Downtown Core Area Plan Design Guidelines & Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential:

The Proposal respects the principles outlined in the Downtown Core Area Plan Design Guidelines and the Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential, Commercial and Industrial and responds to the specific character of the site and its context.

Specifically, the Proposal's massing, form, and orientation have been calibrated to recognize the key gateway location of the site through the establishment of an iconic tower form, while fostering a human-scaled, pedestrian-oriented public realm at street level as expressed in the DCAP guidelines. The proposed 3 storey podium forms an integral part of the street wall, allowing for a continuous sense of enclosure along Blanshard Street while the emergent 22-storey tower, which descends to grade at the corner, establishes an iconic gateway form and creates an architectural bridge to the Hudson development to the north. [Responding to city comments, the north and east faces of the podium \(addressing Fisgard and Blanshard Streets respectively\) have been pulled back to visually extend the public realm along the principal frontages and to provide additional clearance from the proposed street trees. Additionally, the frame around the perimeter of the podium has been revised to echo the banding in the tower and has been extended across the top and bottom of the feature screen at the north east plaza. The proposed screen has been refined as an abstracted pattern of horizontal louvers that provide shading at the residential areas and dappled light into the plaza. Together these revisions strengthen and clarify the horizontal expression of the base and reinforce the vertical expression of the tower.](#)



View of Fisgard Street Frontage

The residential units are distributed in a mix of Studio, One Bedroom, One Bedroom plus Den, and Two Bedroom layouts with two penthouse units capping the building. Units are arranged around a central stair and elevator core to maximize access to natural light and offer distinctive views across the city from every space. Creative floorplan layouts have been developed to maximize opportunities for overlapping uses in open plan arrangement of living / dining and kitchen areas and glazed exterior walls allow daylight to penetrate as deeply as possible into the units.

The Proposal's design in relation to the street will activate and support a dynamic and vibrant public realm, reinforcing existing commercial establishments along Blanshard Street to the north. Following the building to street interface principles outlined in the draft DCAP guidelines and Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential, the building face is pulled back from the property line on both the Blanshard and Fisgard Street frontages, allowing for the introduction of a substantial pedestrian area that provides spill-out activity space and visual and physical connection between the public street use and the building interior uses. Primary entrances along the building frontage are clearly visible from the street on both the Blanshard and Fisgard approaches with a prominent atrium lobby defining the corner. Ample glazing and generous floor to ceiling heights enhance the visual presence of ground floor uses along the street. Parkade access and garbage removal are located on the Fisgard street frontage, toward the western property line away from the primary entries. Continuous weather protection is provided on all three publicly access sides of the building through a combination of building overhangs and glazed canopies. Vegetated planters and differentiated paving materials help define the building entrances at the ground plane. Substantial efforts have been made to locate non-active uses away from the street frontage, including the positioning of bike storage at the rear of the building.

The podium pulls back at the 4th floor providing relief for the street level experience of the urban edge and creating a large outdoor roof garden for residential use. A mixture of hard and soft landscaping features at this level create a series of distinctive open air rooms that provide residents with a variety of opportunities for outdoor activities throughout the day. Extensive glazed walls surrounding the 4th floor spaces along with high ceilings at this level establish a porous connection between indoors and outdoors and create a strong visual and physical connection between the interior amenity spaces and outdoor activities.

The tower, rising from the podium, is punctuated with distinctive two story skygardens that articulate the massing of the vertical form and provide additional outdoor spaces for resident use. Each of the six skygardens responds to the unique microclimate of its location, in terms of orientation and elevation, and offers residents a choice of outdoor environments that respond to time of day, season and use.

While the project does not have private balconies, the significant and varied outdoor amenity spaces, detailed above, have been a central feature of the project from its inception and reflect a vision for the residential experience as being part of an active community of neighbors. These shared spaces allow for much richer and more meaningful access to outdoor activities than private balconies which are necessarily limited in size and aspect and are frequently underutilized. Moreover, by having a more consistent and less varied façade, the Applicant is able to deliver a more energy efficient building

The Project's façade composition and architectural expression have also been thoughtfully and intentionally developed in keeping with DCAP guidelines. The massing of the building is a simple podium and tower form with a two-story base visually hovering over the glazed commercial first floor. This transparent ground plane transforms vertically into the glazed tower at the prominent corner. The tower facade is broken up and articulated through the introduction of strong horizontal bands, running around the perimeter of the building at each floor level. A taller first story emphasizes the distinct commercial usages and entries at this level. The materials chosen will weather gracefully, and are organized in a visually balanced composition at the residential levels, while an open and highly glazed ground level creates a modern and dynamic environment that is intended to activate this key node in the Blanshard Street corridor.

Transportation

This Project is exceptionally well situated in a highly walkable and bikeable location that is also directly serviced by public transportation along the Blanshard Street and adjacent Douglas Street and Fort Street corridors. The designated AAA two-way protected Fort Street bike lane runs perpendicular to the Proposal while the recently completed Vancouver Street shared use neighbourhood bikeway is located two blocks to the north. The Proposal offers 192 long term bicycle parking stalls in a conveniently situated bicycle storage room at grade, providing more secure bicycle parking stalls for residents than required by City zoning requirements. 22 oversized cargo bike parking stalls, electric bicycle charging capacity and a spacious bike workshop area are also incorporated into the Project. Short term bicycle parking is centrally located and entirely covered by the canopy above, providing visitors with convenient, highly visible, weather protected stalls directly adjacent to both the residential and commercial primary entrances.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of building occupants and the public have been carefully considered and CPTED principles have been incorporated into the Proposal wherever possible, especially along the Fiskard Street frontage at grade. The creation of a robust resident population is an important contributing safety and security benefit provided by the Proposal, encouraging 'eyes on the street.' This natural surveillance is supported by the incorporation of extensive transparent glazing at street level and the introduction of an animated commercial use at grade in this location. Down-lighting integrated into the canopy and building frontage at grade creates a well-illuminated and animated ground floor, while simultaneously controlling glare and light pollution.

Green Building Features

The Applicant has reviewed and is prepared to construct and develop the project in accordance with the principals of sustainable design, and to meet B.C. Step Code Level 2 energy performance. The following is a list of green building initiatives that will be deployed within the project.

- High efficiency heating / pressurization systems for all common area spaces.
- High-efficiency heat recovery ventilation systems in each residential unit.
- Access for all residents to unique "skygarden" outdoor spaces distributed throughout the tower form.
- Access for all residents to amenity spaces including outdoor rooms and gardens on the 4th floor roof deck.
- Natural and recyclable building materials will be used to the extent possible and as appropriate to the use. Exterior envelope materials are highly durable, and detailing will suit life-span management of components.
- Directly metered suites.
- All windows EnergyStar® rated.
- All appliances EnergyStar® rated.
- LED lighting throughout.
- Construction waste diverted from landfill during construction through smart on-site waste management.
- Low-VOC paint in all interior areas.
- All ductwork to be sealed with low toxin mastic.
- Low-flow plumbing fixtures used throughout all units.
- Secure, heated bike storage with bike repair station.
- Electric Bike Charging Locations within Bike Storage.
- EV charging stalls in the parkade.

Infrastructure:

In keeping with the spirit of the BC Carbon Step Code, the applicant intends to minimize the use of fossil fuels in servicing the site. The consultant team will continue to work with the applicant to design the most efficient systems possible.

Master Development Agreement and Existing Zoning

It is the intent of the Applicant to deliver on all density bonus conditions outlined in the 2018 Downtown Zoning Bylaw. These conditions include a public walkway at least 3.7m wide constructed on the site at mid-block to connect Fisgard Street to the southerly Boundary of the site, a 2m wide portion of the site adjacent to Blanshard Street, a \$350,000 contribution to downtown Public Art and a \$100,000 contribution to the City's Housing Reserve Trust Fund

Moreover, it is anticipated that the Applicant, together with the City, will work to update the historical MDA to align with the current uses within this application and deliver on past commitments.

Conclusion:

In preparing the anticipated rezoning and development permit application package the design team has carefully considered the relevant Official Community Plan and Downtown Core Area Plan guidelines applicable to this location. It is our belief that this Proposal will provide a high quality, contextually sensitive building to this rapidly transitioning section of the city and the downtown neighbourhood. This Proposal will provide important housing stock to the area and will contribute to the animated and dynamic public realm that already exists along Blanshard Street. Its proposed scale and architectural language respond to its surroundings and its unique location at a key gateway to the downtown core. We look forward to further steps with the City of Victoria regarding this Proposal. If you have any questions or require clarification of any part of this application, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

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