

September 13, 2019

Mayor and Council

City of Victoria
c/o Leanne Taylor, Senior Planner
Sustainable Planning and Community Development

1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC
V8W 1P6

RE: Rezoning for Parkway Mixed-Use Development

Dear Mayor Helps, City Council,

We are pleased to present to you our application for the revitalization and addition to the Wellburn's Building, the heritage building located at the north west corner of Pandora Avenue & Cook St, in the North Park neighborhood. Considered one of the major gateways to Downtown Victoria, this intersection is an important site for the community of North Park, identified in the Downtown Core Area Plan in the Residential Mixed-Use District, the largest of all the downtown core area districts. Our proposal brings important rental residential units to the neighborhood, strengthens the iconic historic character of the site, and enhances the neighborhood and streets with vibrant new retail spaces.

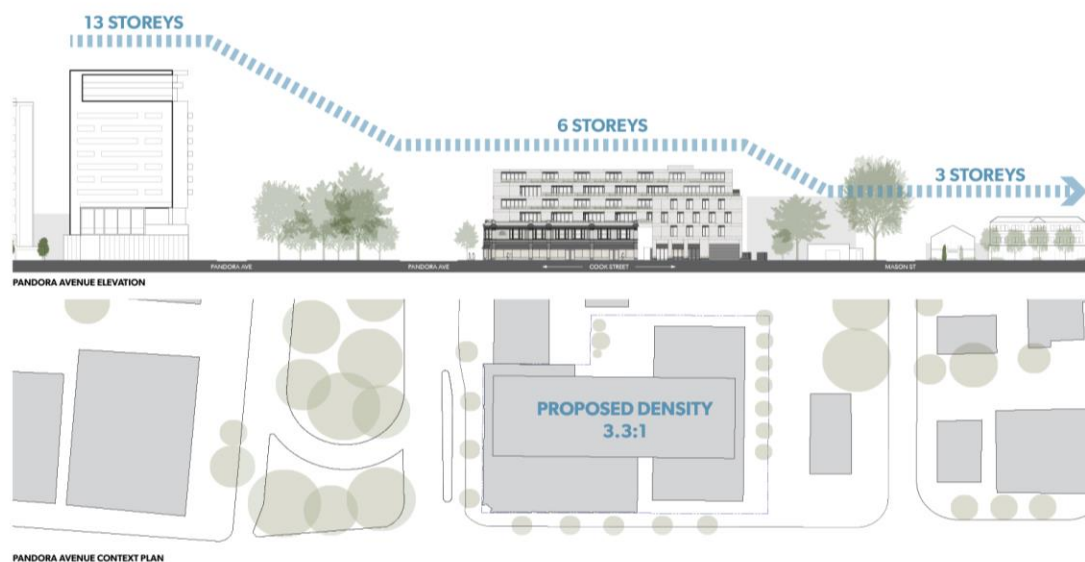
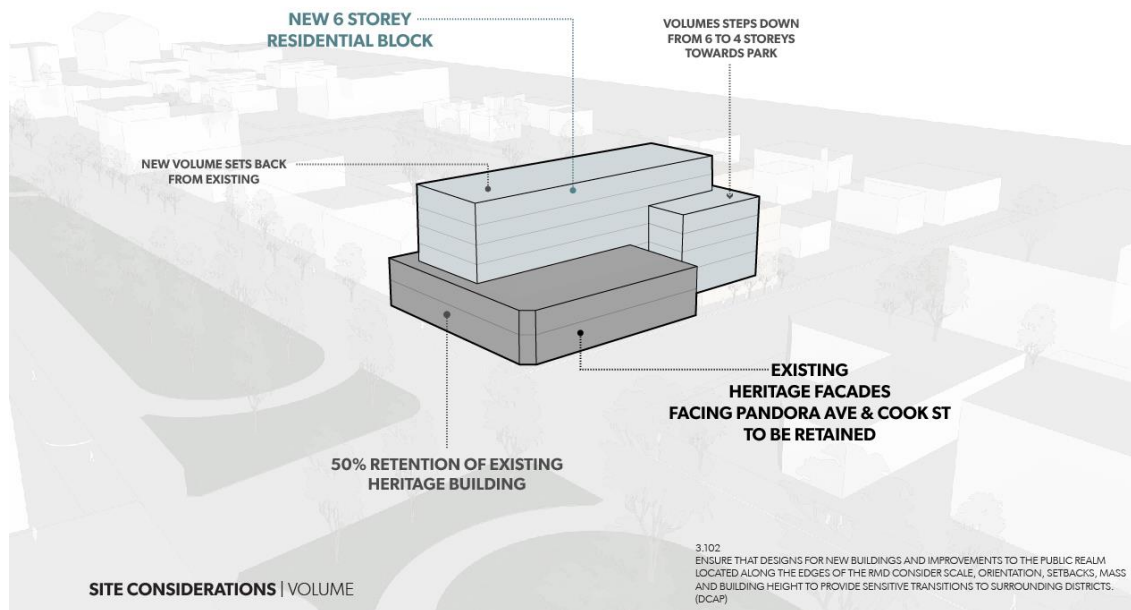


Description of Proposal

The project includes the 50% retention and seismic upgrading of the existing heritage building, known to the community as the Wellburn's building. The 50% retention will include the entire historical facades facing Pandora Avenue & Cook Street, and a portion of the north façade facing the existing parking lot.

Adjoining the existing heritage building, a new 4 & 6 storey mixed-use volume is proposed. The terraced volumes significantly step back from the existing building to ensure they are subordinate to the heritage building. The new volume is modern in character, incorporating rich materials complementary to the heritage materiality of the Wellburn's Building. 103 purpose-built rental apartments are proposed, with a retail/commercial space being maintained on the existing ground floor of the Heritage Building, and the addition of a café space on the ground floor of the new 4 storey volume facing Cook St.

The new development is oriented in a T-shape, creating a large west-facing courtyard. The intent for the courtyard is to be a place for community; shared and activated by the many residents of the building. Leading into the courtyard is a mews/breezeway which separates the historic and modern buildings at street level, and serves as the residential entrance to the building. The ground floor of the 4 storey volume will contain the new main lobby for residential use and includes a potential café that faces a seated patio onto the entry mews and Cook Street.

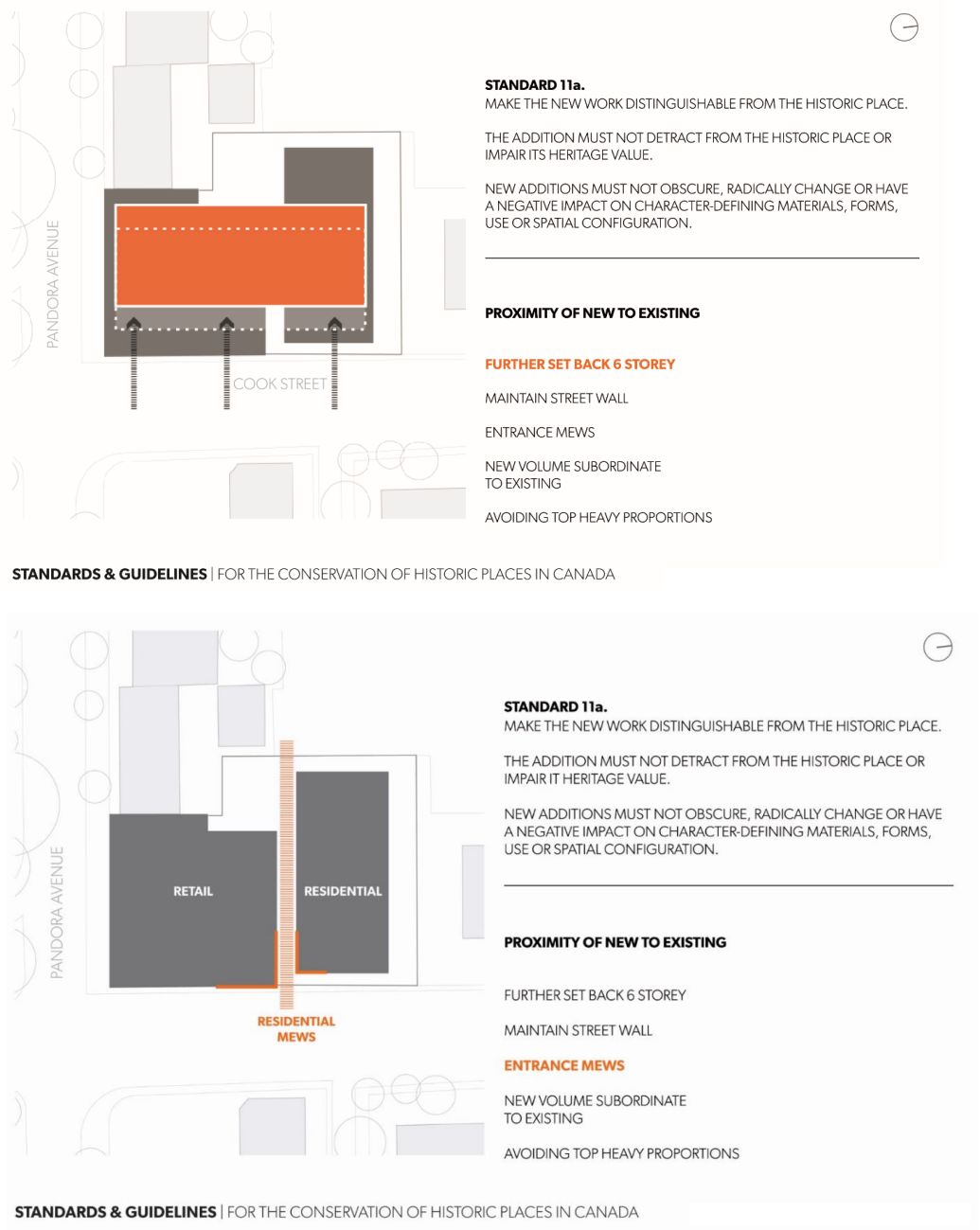


INTERCONNECTING NEIGHBOURHOODS | PROPOSED HEIGHT

Heritage

A priority of the project is to conserve the heritage value of the Wellburn’s Building, built in 1911. 50% of the existing volume will be retained. This will include the historic façades facing Pandora Avenue & Cook St, the north-east wall facing the residential mews up to the external face of the 6 storey volume and a portion of the existing volume from the Cook Street façade to the external face of the 6 storey volume. All character-defining elements in these locations will be preserved along with any in-kind repairs, as required. The original use of the building will remain, with opportunities for multiple retail spaces on the ground floor and residential suites above. The building will be Designated Heritage with the Heritage Registry.

The new volume will be clad in a large format, light coloured panel, and borrows elements from its historic counterpart, including: the running bond pattern of the glazed white brick, the rhythm, proportion & angles of the projecting oriel windows, and the recessed entryways on the existing storefronts.

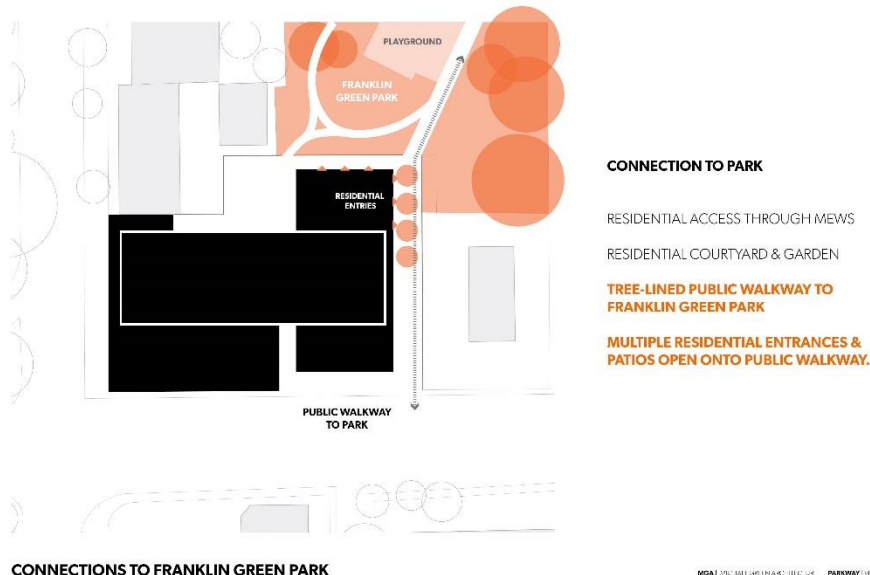
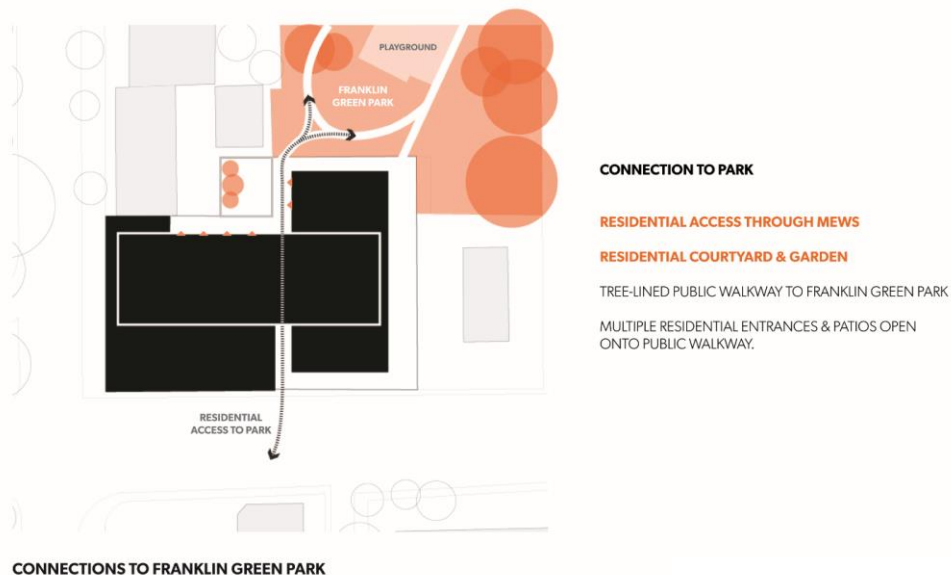


Project Benefits

It is exciting to be a part of the conversations about the vision of the vibrant North Park neighbourhood. We have met with the North Park Association and have presented to the community twice and are pleased to hear that the project addresses their needs for increased housing, particularly rental in this part of the neighborhood.

We are also looking forward to contributing to the enhancement of activity along Pandora Avenue & Cook Street. The main commercial space has the opportunity to attract a large interactive retailer, or it can be demised for multiple smaller businesses. The proposed café, located directly off Cook St, encourages pedestrian travel along the block with bike racks nearby that will further draw people into this space.

A priority of the project is to create a strong connection between the proposed development and Franklin Green Park. The new addition steps down from 6 to 4 storeys to face the park, and the ground floor residents of the 4 storey volume have generous outdoor patios with direct views onto the park. A wide public walkway on the north perimeter of the property is proposed, providing a shortcut for pedestrians travelling between Cook Street and Franklin Green Park.



Government Policies

The site will undergo rezoning to a new site-specific zone. At this time City staff have not determined the zoning classification, however this proposal is in accordance with the Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP). Per 4.10 of the DCAP, the 1050 Pandora Avenue lot qualifies under the bonus density framework, allowing a maximum density of 5.5:1 FSR for mixed-use development. The proposed development utilizes 2.9 FSR.

This proposal has been developed in accordance with the Official Community Plan and the Downtown Core Area Plan. Per the OCP, the building will follow the requirements of between 3 & 20 storeys of multi-unit residential, commercial and mixed-use development. One storey of parking will be provided underground.

The building design responds to the intents of the principles set out in the DCAP for the North Park community:

- New buildings and improvements to the public realm along the edges of the Residential Mixed-Use District should consider scale, orientation, setbacks, mass and building height to provide sensitive transitions to surrounding districts. (3.102)
- Varied heights and massing are encouraged to avoid uniformity in building design. (6.44)
- Additional setbacks, massing and the orientation of taller buildings to improve sunlight should be considered. (6.44)
- Active commercial and retail uses along Pandora Avenue are encouraged to increase pedestrian activity and improve vitality. (3.96)
- The DCAP encourages the design and development of the eastern gateway at Pandora Avenue & Cook Street to signal and celebrate the arrival into the Downtown Core area. (6.144)
- Any new development should complement both the existing architecture and the natural environment of the Downtown Core Area. (2.3)
- Historic Buildings should be recognized for their value and benefit to the downtown core area, their rehabilitation and seismic upgrading should be encouraged and integrated with new developments.
- The use of balconies, terraces, patios, doorways and windows along building faces that are located directly adjacent to a park, plaza or open space should be considered to encourage natural surveillance and vitality. (6.43)
- Safe and direct walking connections throughout the Downtown Core Area that link public spaces are encouraged. (3.3)

The proposed development strengthens North Park as a primary gateway into Victoria by maintaining the focus of the heritage Wellburn's Building with complementary contemporary architecture for the new construction.

Need and Demand

As mentioned, residential units are very desirable in this neighborhood. Currently, the remainder of the existing site to the north of the Heritage Building is a surface parking lot. In addition to the 11 existing residential units in the Wellburn's Building, the proposed development will provide a further 92 residential units, for a total of 103 rental residential units.

Safety and Security

CPTED and safety considerations have been driving factors throughout the development of this design. The forms of the buildings at the ground plane are purposely kept simple in order to reduce the sense of unknown conditions and to maintain a strong visual connection with Franklin Green Park. There are currently ongoing problems with transient and potentially illegal activities in the park. At site boundaries, planting and barriers will be kept low to maintain strong safe visual connections with residential units providing ongoing passive surveillance into this area, deterring future unwanted activity.

Green Building Features

Rating System

- This project will fulfil the criteria for Step 1 of the BC Energy Step Code. In addition to this, it will take important pieces from many rating systems for a curated approach to green building that responds uniquely to our design and site, to best optimize the performance of the building. It is the design team's philosophy that Green Rating Systems have merits but at times also present challenges that contradict the intents of the points in the systems.

Site Selection and Design

- Tapered overhangs of balconies prevent summer solar gain while maximizing winter solar gain.
- All residential suites are designed with operable windows and/or doors for natural ventilation.

Innovation and Design

- The building has been designed with an integrated design process involving the design team and construction managers, and will continue to be managed through an integrated process through construction.
- The project will seek to employ panelized or prefabricated products throughout, especially for structure and major systems.
- Light wood framing has been selected as the primary structural material in the interest of employing local trades and natural renewable resources, and for its environmental benefits in sequestering carbon.

Building Retention and Reuse

- 50% of the existing building will be retained for its exterior assemblies, structural systems, and finishes where appropriate.

Transportation

- The total parking stalls will be below the minimum required in order to encourage alternative transportation. A parking study has been completed and this parking solution will be reviewed as a variance.
- Short-term bicycle stalls will be located along the residential mews linking Cook Street to Franklin Green Park and at the entry to the cafe.

Energy Efficiency for Part 3 Buildings

- The development will reduce energy use by at least 10% compared to ASHRAE 90.1 2007.
- The development will target Step 1 of the BC Step Code

Water

- Low-volume plumbing fixtures will be used.

Site permeability

- Permeable paving will be used at private patios and where appropriate at courtyard and pathway hardscaping.

Landscaping and Urban Forest

- No net loss in number of trees.
- Increase overall number of trees.
- Flower planting will be specified to encourage beneficial insects and support bee population.

Conclusion

Thank you for reviewing our submission. We appreciate the opportunity to describe the design solutions that have been developed to address the intents of the City of Victoria while delivering a high quality mixed-use development that the owner is proud to bring to the neighborhood. We look forward to further communication with you as the project continues its path.

Sincerely,

MGA | MICHAEL GREEN ARCHITECTURE INC



Michael Green
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