

VIA EMAIL: zoning@victoria.ca

June 17, 2024

1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

RE: 1703-1705 Fernwood Drive & 1312 Balmoral Drive – Missing Middle Development Permit

Dear Mayor, Council, and Staff:

We are pleased to present this development permit for the re-development of 1703-1705 Fernwood Drive and 1312 Balmoral Drive. The proposal includes the consolidation of three single-family lots to permit the development of 19 Missing Middle townhomes. Our application is guided by the Official Community Plan (OCP), the Missing Middle Housing Initiative (MMHI), the Fernwood Neighbourhood Plan, as well as the established development patterns within the Fernwood Neighbourhood. The proposal focuses on addressing housing attainability under the guidelines of the MMHI through a contextually appropriate form of development.

This project responds to the following objectives as set out in the MMHI:

1. Improve options for families to stay in the City: by providing a diversity of housing we aim to make it feasible for families to remain within the City of Victoria.
2. Increase the supply and variety of housing: expanding the range of available housing types to meet the varied needs of our growing population.
3. Support a 'car-light' lifestyle, public transit use, and walkable neighbourhood centres: promoting sustainable transportation options and creating pedestrian-friendly areas.
4. Ensure that the look and feel of new Missing Middle housing suits the character of the neighbourhood: enhancing social interaction and fostering a strong sense of place within communities.

The project has been designed to make a positive contribution to the existing neighbourhood fabric, adapting to the evolving needs of the community. It focuses on timeless design and neighbourly buildings oriented toward social activity, ensuring a harmonious integration of old and new structures. Every detail has been considered to facilitate livability for residents.

HOUSING BENEFITS

The Fernwood Neighbourhood has the city's highest total number of families with children at home, and one of the highest shares of young adults aged 15-34. Most of the housing in the neighbourhood is single family (approximately 24% of all dwelling units) and apartments (approximately 63%). Between 2012 – 2020, a total of 56 new housing units were approved within the Fernwood Neighbourhood. This application would represent a 34% increase to the total number of housing units approved over this 9-year period.

Generally, the creation of Missing Middle Housing has been challenging when compared to condominiums and single-family dwellings. From 2012 to 2019, fewer than 250 Missing Middle homes were approved. Rising housing costs have left fewer opportunities for families to purchase their first home in Fernwood and

Greater Victoria. These insights have shaped the proposal and are a direct response to what's most important in every project: future homeowners and the community.

CLIMATE-FORWARD BUILDING

As part of the City's 2025 vision for a healthy and vibrant community, this proposal has included the following to align with the Climate Leadership Plan:

- Near Zero Emissions – this proposal has been designed with mechanical systems that are fully electric. All homes with garages are being provided with EV charging infrastructure;
- Emissions levels are targeted to achieve Level 4 (EL-4) of the BC Energy Step Code;
- Low Carbon – Priority will be given to local suppliers with locally sourced products of low embodied carbon;
- Transportation – multi-modal design and connectivity is being embraced and encouraged through the inclusion of car-free homes and secured bike storage;
- Rainwater management – on-site infiltration to manage rainwater control;
- Landscaping – native planting is being proposed throughout the site;
- On site areas for resident gardening are being provided to facilitate community building.

SITE CONTEXT

The three existing single-family homes in this proposal are located at the northeast corner of Fernwood Road and Balmoral Road. This proposal sits within the heart of the Fernwood neighbourhood, one block from Victoria High School and two blocks from Fernwood Square. The surrounding built form is comprised primarily of single-family structures, with higher density apartments one block south along Pandora.

The neighbourhood of Fernwood contains an increasingly diversified housing stock, ranging from heritage homes and bungalows, to low-rise multi-family residential. The neighbourhood is home to close to 10,000 residents in over 5,000 households. While it has the highest total number of family households and household types, the age of residents is quite diverse – with a mix of families, seniors, youth, couples, and singles. This application could result in a +5% increase to Fernwood's townhome stock.

As discussed further below, Heritage character is a top priority for residents in the neighbourhood. It's clear from walking Fernwood Road, new housing stock must respect and complement the character of this area. This proposal strives to offer a ground-oriented form of housing that integrates into this heritage character.

POLICY CONTEXT

In tandem with early engagement of the Fernwood CALUC and the Planning Department, our team has focused on the guidelines and objectives of several policies to shape the proposal. These guiding documents and policies are noted below with key summaries provided.

The Official Community Plan;
Fernwood Neighbourhood Plan (2022);
Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings (1981);
Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential, Commercial and Industrial Development (revised 2019);
Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters (2010);

MMHI (2022);
Tenant Assistance Policy

Official Community Plan

The site is currently zoned R1-B, Single Family Dwelling, and holds an Urban Place designation of Traditional Residential. This designation envisions multi-unit buildings up to three-storeys, including attached residential and apartments, at approximately 1.0 FSR. This proposal contemplates a consolidation of the three properties under the MMHI to permit three-storey, ground-oriented townhomes with a density of 1.1 FSR, consistent with the objectives and guidelines in the OCP.

The subject property is within the Development Permit Area 16A – General Form and Character. The objective of this designation includes several guidelines our team has addressed, more specifically:

1. Multi-unit residential developments that provide a sensitive transition to adjacent and nearby areas with built form that is often three storeys, or lower.
2. Integration of multi-unit residential buildings in a manner that is complementary to established place and character in a neighbourhood, including its heritage character.
3. Enhancing the character of established areas and their streetscapes through high quality of architecture, landscape and urban design
4. Achieving livable environments through considerations for human-scaled design, quality of open spaces, privacy impacts, safety and accessibility.

The proposed building forms and character have been designed with respect to addressing the objectives relating to form and character. A steep grade across the site results in many of the street-facing homes to appear as two storey forms, specifically along Fernwood Road. This massing is purposeful in keeping a low profile along Fernwood Road while presenting opportunities for a slightly different scale and expression from the other proposed townhomes on this site – furthering the eclectic mix of typologies and styles within Fernwood.

Through early discussions with Transportation and Engineering, we understand there is a request for significant road dedications along Fernwood Rd (3.91m – 12.8') and Balmoral Rd (2.91m – 9.5'). For context, the gross area of these dedications equates to 15.2% of the buildable area of the site and will make this project unviable; the area taken from the dedications cannot be transferred to other areas of the site. The current proposal conforms to the Missing Middle guidelines as approved by Council and is within the approval height and density. Due to the natural steep grading of the site, and 2,200 sq.ft. of land area that is not buildable (which is proposed to be converted to common outdoor amenity space), the dedications, as proposed, limit ground-oriented housing, which there is an acute need for in Fernwood and throughout the City. We will continue to work with Staff to achieve the objectives of the MMHI and look for support from Mayor and Council to provide this much needed housing.

Fernwood Neighbourhood Plan (2022)

As noted in the Committee of the Whole report for Local Area Plan amendments, *“capacity for more housing choice was a top concern among residents... Beyond clear community desire, the need for more housing that meets a diversity of lifestyles, preferences, and incomes is illustrated in latent demand indicators, growth projections, and the gaps in existing Official Community Plan (OCP) Urban Place Designation capacity.”*

Of the 'big moves' outlined in the Fernwood Neighbourhood Plan, the support of diverse, mixed housing is most relevant to this proposal. The intent of designing 19 townhomes on this site creates 3 bedroom homes with an average total liveable area of ~1,250 sq. ft. These highly liveable, functional homes are inherently

more attainable than comparable single-family dwellings. Additionally, these homes include secured interior parking, ample storage for bikes and strollers, private outdoor space for each home, and flexibility at grade for a bedroom to accommodate a growing family. This proposal targets young families that wish to stay or move to Fernwood in an amenity rich community that supports a car-light lifestyle.

The MMHI (2022) - The Middle is Missing

At a time when housing is a pressing issue in Victoria, we have addressed this need by proposing ground-oriented townhomes for Victorians to call home. This project is largely about unlocking the potential for multi-family housing that meets the needs of those within a traditionally single-family neighbourhood. The proposal responds to the grading and spatial limitations of the site and context within the Fernwood Village, while considering key issues such as walkability, transit, car sharing, housing diversity and accessibility.

The specific objectives of the MMHI that have been addressed in this proposal include:

- *Improve options for families to stay in the City*; a mix of housing typologies are being proposed to offer a range of options for families to stay and grow within Fernwood. Through the City’s Financial analysis for Missing Middle Housing, it’s evident that ‘*smaller unit sizes will keep the total unit price more affordable than larger units allowing the new units to appeal to a broader range of buyers*’. This proposal includes ground-oriented housing with ~1,250 sq.ft. homes.
- *Increase the supply and variety of housing*; this proposal, across from Victoria High School and within a short walk to Fernwood Square, provides nineteen new 3-bedroom homes for Victorians.
- *Ensure the look and feel suit the character of the neighbourhood, support social interaction and foster a sense of place*; the architectural expression picks up on the traditional and eclectic architecture of Fernwood, and is anchored by a 2,200 sq.ft. semi-private outdoor space that is proposed to be programmed for family-friendly use for all residents.

Paramount to the construction of missing middle housing is the affordability and appropriate sizing. A proposition of townhome creation does not imply, necessarily, a response and action to address this housing shortage. A key factor in the development of this typology is appropriate planning and the creation of thoughtfully designed, functional space for young families, first time buyers, and downsizers.

Tenant Assistance Policy

The three existing houses on the property have a combined seven suites all occupied by tenants. Through an approved Development Permit to facilitate 19 family-oriented townhomes, relocation of existing tenants will be required. Through the guidelines found in Section 6.0 of the Tenant Assistance Plan the applicant will continue to engage with the tenants through the approvals process – **a compensation package over and above the minimum City requirements is being proposed and will be outlined in further detail with staff and tenants prior to approval of the application.**

DESIGN RATIONALE

This proposal builds on early consultation with Planning and the CALUC and adheres to the Missing Middle Design Guidelines.

A total of nineteen ground-oriented townhomes are proposed in three separate buildings on a consolidated corner lot in the amenity rich Fernwood neighbourhood. The townhomes have been sited to create street-facing front porches and entries along Fernwood Rd and Balmoral, while the third building is oriented

towards a common outdoor amenity area in the rear of the property. Vehicular access is provided off Balmoral Road with two drive aisles bisecting the site, creating a welcoming and functional plan that respects the Guidelines.

The primary facades along Fernwood and Balmoral are created, and result from, the steep grading of the site, offering two distinct elevations. Along Fernwood, the massing illustrates a two-storey form with a uniform roofline and individual bays that create a rhythm along this street face. Raised porches provide direct access to the main living areas in each of the homes, with layered landscaping and rich materials to elevate this primary elevation. The scale and expression take cues from many of the smaller bungalows in the neighbourhood in an urban form that facilitates more community and neighbour engagement. Gable and traditional detailing form the architectural expression of these townhomes.

The facade along Balmoral is designed in response to the grading and slope from Fernwood. The massing has been divided into three groups with a stepped roofline and bays that create stronger vertical expressions. Front entries are provided at grade, and slightly below, due to the natural grades.

CONCLUSION

The proposal outlined above is fully compliant with the Missing Middle Design Guidelines and Official Community Plan with respect to density and height and will provide nineteen ground-oriented homes for the Fernwood neighbourhood. We look forward to continuing to work with Staff through the approval of this application and thank Mayor and Council for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Hassan Sayed
Frame Properties