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To: Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
Planning Department
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C.

Re: Rationale for 1125 Fort Street Rezoning

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are applying for the rezoning of 1125 Fort Street from R3-1 (Multiple Dwelling District) to a new site-specific zone. This property is currently a single-family residence built in 1909. The owner, Donald Colborne, is proposing to preserve this historic home by moving it closer to Fort Street, on a new earthquake resistant foundation, and thoroughly renovating the interior. This will allow for a new residential suite at lower level and for an addition of three residential units at the rear of the existing home, where the lot extends to Meares Street. The owner is also planning to apply for heritage designation of the existing home.

1125 Fort Street is a Queen Anne Revival style home by builder D.H. Bale, a notable figure whose career lasted 40 years, resulting in a significant impact on Victoria's cityscape. The home was one of three built for the Bantly Family.¹ 1125 Fort Street was specifically built for family patriarch Ben Bantly and his wife Joanna Mensinger. The Bantlys owned a cigar factory and formed a popular local dance band.

Due to recent construction immediately to the west, the property now sits in the shadow of multi-storey condominium buildings. The proposed development is far less intensive than these neighbouring developments² and provides a transition from them towards the heritage properties to the east.

1125 Fort Street is in excellent condition, having maintained its key architectural features, notably a compact bellcast Queen Anne tower, with minimal alterations. We are proposing an addition at the back of the existing home but fronting on Meares Street, creating three new dwelling units with parking stalls located

¹ 1127 Fort Street remains while 1121 Fort Street, the former Bantly home closest to Cook Street, has been moved to Fernwood.

² The adjoining lot of the same size at 1121 Fort Street was redeveloped as the four-storey 25 unit "Zen" condominium building. Immediately to the west of the site is the recently completed six-storey 75 unit "Black and White" condominium. Across the street on south side of the property, at 1137 Meares Street, a previous parking lot is now a three-storey 6 unit condominium building. Other intensive developments are proposed on single lots in the immediate neighbourhood, at 1015 Cook Street (31 units) and 1114 Rockland Avenue (22 units).

at the ground level below. The parking will increase from an aging single car garage to four enclosed parking stalls, and we are requesting a parking variance of two. We are also requesting a parking variance for aisle depth of approximately 350 mm (14"). The new units in the addition will range in size from 108 m² (1160 sq ft) to 116 m² (1250 sq ft). Within the existing house the two units will be 107 m² (1150 sq ft) and 221 m² (2380 sq ft). This application proposes to increase the site coverage to 81%, and the total floor area to 804 m² (8655 sq ft), resulting in an F.S.R. of 1.91:1.

The design for the addition is in accord with recent changes to the neighbourhood's streetscape, but will not dominate the view or character of the original home along the Fort Street facade. As per the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, the addition draws a clear distinction between what is new in terms of massing and materiality. The home will be moved forward, enhancing its presence on Fort Street. The lot size (40 ft. by 113 ft.) restricts what can be done in terms of development without sacrificing the existing house. Moving the original home forward and locating an addition to the rear is a reasonable solution that does not promote an overbearing streetscape. This allows for a comfortably sized addition with room for parking.

The location of the addition creates a unique challenge in connecting the two structures. The connection is accomplished through a shared stairwell and elevator, providing greater mobility for residents and which supports aging in place. Another positive feature of the addition is the generous size of the units when compared with the majority of new property developments in the downtown area, thereby fulfilling a need for more diverse housing options. Amenities on the property will include eight secure bicycle parking stalls, large balconies, and a roof deck. The project will result in the stabilization and preservation of a significant residence in the Fort Street heritage precinct, through designating the property, and provide a physical and visual transition from the high density blocks immediately to the west to the significant assembly of heritage and character buildings to the east. The project will also add to the rental housing stock in the area under a housing agreement with the City of Victoria for the lower level suite in the existing home.

The project provides modest additional density in Victoria's urban core, making the current home a greater reflection of urban residences whilst retaining its historical characteristics. We see this application as an opportunity to efficiently use the land available and establish new dwellings in an area of increased housing demand.

Sincerely,

John Keay
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