

Rezoning & DP Pre-Application Proposal Summary
24 March, 2025

First Metropolitan Lands

934 Balmoral Road

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A Partnership Between the United Church of Canada and Aryze Developments

Reinvigorating the First Metropolitan Lands as an Arts, Culture & Faith Landmark

21 March 2025 (Victoria, BC) — The Property Development Council of the United Church of Canada and Aryze have established a partnership that will see the adaptive reuse of the First Metropolitan Church and redevelopment of surrounding lands to deliver a new signature facility for faith, arts, and culture groups, alongside a new mixed-use purpose-built rental building. This transformative urban renewal initiative marks a major investment in Victoria's Downtown Core that will stimulate economic growth, support local jobs and strengthen Victoria's position as a leader in the arts & culture sector.

As proposed, the historic 1913 sanctuary will be re-envisioned and upgraded to offer rehearsal, performance, worship and gathering spaces, ensuring the valued heritage building continues to serve the community as it has for more than 100 years. Adjacent to the church at 934 Balmoral Road, plans include a mixed-use, purpose-built rental building that will deliver 128 homes blended between market-rate and affordable homes, alongside thoughtfully integrated commercial and community spaces.

Envisioned to spur the creation of a wider arts district in the North Park neighbourhood, this proposal builds upon the success of The Baumann Centre across the street which hosts chamber performances, opera rehearsals and artist training programs. While still in the early stages of engagement, the new worship, arts and culture facility at the First Metropolitan lands is intended to support a broad range of users including both professional and amateur arts collectives, faith-based organizations and community groups. Additionally, we are actively in discussions with a significant performing arts organization to anchor the development for long-term tenure.

The project team includes MA+HG Architects, who led the award-winning conservation and adaptive re-use of Vancouver's historic Hollywood Theatre, one of the last surviving neighbourhood cinemas. To maintain the heritage preservation of the church, Donald Luxton & Associates will provide expert guidance to the project team, ensuring alignment with best



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conservation practices and methodologies. Carey Newman—Hayalthkin'geme—a multi-disciplinary Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish artist—will work with emerging Coast Salish artists to design and integrate First Nations artistry into the interior of the sanctuary to both connect the space with Lekwungen histories and optimize the acoustics.

We look forward to further engagement with the North Park community, alongside local arts, culture and faith-based organizations to realize the full potential of this ambitious and transformative proposal. Visit aryze.ca/934Balmoral for the most up-to-date information on the development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Quigley".

Chris Quigley
Director of Development
Aryze Developments

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Evans".

Don Evans
Property Development
Property Development Council of the United
Church of Canada

About the Partners

The Property Development Council of the United Church of Canada (United Church of Canada) is dedicated to creating community-serving spaces, including facilities for arts & cultural groups, community organizations, and faith-based groups, as well as housing solutions for the broader community.

Aryze is a local development team with a strong track record of delivering high-quality housing that supports innovation in sustainability, affordability and community-building. Driven by data, expertise and alignment in shared values, Aryze focuses on partnerships with local First Nations, non-profits and community-based organizations throughout Greater Victoria.

24 March 2025

City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 1P6

RE: 934 Balmoral Rd / 1701 Quadra St (First Metropolitan Lands) Rezoning & Development Permit Pre-Application Proposal Summary

Dear Mayor Alto, Council, and Staff:

We are pleased to present this letter outlining the core content of our forthcoming application to rezone and develop the First Metropolitan Lands at 934 Balmoral Rd and 1701 Quadra St. Enclosed is a summary of the proposed development application, which covers the redevelopment and improvement of the existing First Metropolitan Church building, and a proposed six-storey, one hundred and twenty nine (129) home purpose-built rental development. The proposed development will include homes ranging from studio to three-bedroom units, including a series of ground oriented live-work and loft homes, alongside commercial retail and commercial office units fronting onto Balmoral Rd. The building will be designed to Step Code 4, and will include shared outdoor amenity spaces at the ground floor and roof level for residents, as well as publicly accessible landscaped grounds that connect to meaningful improvements to the adjacent public realm.

Project at a Glance

Proposed Residential Building

Height 6 Storeys	Number of Homes 129	North Setback (Rear) To face of residential building 5.3m	Live-Work + Ground Oriented Lofts 7 + 12 Homes
Total Floor Area 89,679 sqft	Residential Tenure Rental	South Setback (Front) Fronting on Balmoral Rd 2.17m	Studios 40 Homes
Residential Floor Area 85,800 sqft	FSR 1.86	East Setback (Side) 6.7m	One Bedroom 38 Homes
			Two Bedroom 24 Homes
			Three Bedroom 8 Homes

Church Redevelopment

Height of Addition New Structure 1 Storey	Addition Floor Area 3,607 sqft	FSR 0.38	North Setback (Rear) Face of Addition to PL 5.3m
Heritage Building Floor area 14,396 sqft	Total Floor Area 18,003 sqft		West Setback (Side) Addition Fronting Quadra 2.95m

Total Development Summary

Site Area	FSR	Parking Stalls	Short-Term Bike Stalls
47,790 sqft	2.24	100% EV Ready	35
		54	
Total Floor Area	Site Coverage		Long-Term Bike Stalls
107,026 sqft	66%		161

Unique Features:

- Adaptive heritage reuse of the existing First Metropolitan Church to build on the existing programme and develop a new vision for Church spaces.
- Campus-like community oriented development: Combining living and retail experiences with a community hub for arts, culture, and faith based practices.
- Choice of housing: Two distinct unit planning schemes have been developed for each suite type, allowing choice and flexibility for tenants. Each scheme configures the contents of the home in a different way, to cater to different lifestyles and priorities.
- High quality outdoor amenity space: Private outdoor spaces at the ground level and roof level, unique balcony configurations for each suite type, coupled with public pedestrian connections through a landscaped site.
- High performance & highly sustainable building design, targeting BC Step Code 4 energy efficiency standards

Site Context & History

This land holds both cultural and historical significance as it resides on the traditional territory of the Lək̓wəŋən peoples [pronounced: Le-KWUNG-en] and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples [pronounced: wh-SAY-nech] whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

First Metropolitan United Church, completed in 1915, is a key link to the historic evolution of Victoria's First Presbyterian congregation, which dates back to 1861. The congregation relocated here in 1913, holding services in a church hall before the main structure was finished. Following the 1925 union of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches, the congregation became First United Church, and in 1997 merged with Metropolitan United Church to form First Metropolitan United Church, which disbanded in 2023. This building is a testament to the congregation's long presence in Victoria.

The church is significant for its Edwardian-era architecture, reflecting the social and economic transitions in the North Park neighborhood before World War I. It was built during a time of rapid growth, with Quadra Street emerging as a major commercial area. The church's robust design symbolizes the optimism of the era and serves as a prominent example of Edwardian-era places of worship in Victoria.

As part of a broader group of historic buildings in downtown Victoria and North Park, the church exemplifies the importance of religious institutions in civic life, contributing to the area's architectural landscape. Its size and design, with brick and stone elevations, complement nearby religious landmarks and define the urban fabric of the area.

Designed by architect John C.M. Keith in the Gothic Revival style, the church features cusped arches, stained glass windows, and a crenellated belltower. Keith, known for his work on religious buildings, created a superior example of Gothic Revival architecture in Victoria, with the church standing as one of his finest works.

Neighbourhood Grain

The North Park neighborhood surrounding the site features a diverse urban grain characterized by a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional structures. This area showcases a variety of building types and densities, contributing to its vibrant and dynamic urban fabric.

The neighborhood offers a range of housing options, including single-family homes, low-rise apartment buildings, and condominiums. Along Quadra Street, a variety of commercial establishments cater to daily needs, dining, and retail. Additionally, the presence of institutions adds cultural and educational value to the community.

Policy Context

The site is currently zoned under two designations: C-1 Zone (Limited Commercial District), which supports mixed residential uses with ground-level commercial, and R-2 Zone (Two Family Dwelling District), which allows for two-family dwellings.

The North Park Neighborhood Plan (2022) identifies the Quadra Corridor as an important area for growth and improvement, specifically as a vibrant hub that combines arts, culture, diverse housing options, and commercial areas, all supported by improved transit and pedestrian infrastructure. Furthermore, the plan emphasizes the importance of creating lively and inclusive public spaces that can serve multiple community functions. It also encourages smaller-scale commercial spaces to foster a diverse range of local businesses, including micro-spaces for emerging enterprises. The overall goal is to maintain and enhance Quadra Street's potential as a thriving Arts and Cultural Corridor while prioritizing livability and diverse housing options that cater to a range of incomes, lifestyles, and household types.

In the context of the current Official Community Plan (OCP) for the North Park area, the vision is to enhance pedestrian connections, improve mobility options, and develop the Quadra Cultural Corridor as a vibrant space for people, arts, and culture, with diverse housing and village-like environments. These directions align with the growing emphasis on mixed-use development and the integration of diverse housing types in the area.

The current OCP also supports the creation of housing opportunities through mid-rise, multi-unit buildings, particularly within the Quadra Cultural Corridor, which is envisioned as a place that blends residential, commercial, and cultural uses. The OCP currently supports mid-rise buildings up to six storeys, with the potential for density above the 2:1 Floor Space Ratio (FSR) if substantial public benefits are provided, which may include improved public spaces, cultural contributions, or economic revitalization.

The emerging 2025 OCP continues this trajectory, identifying Quadra Street as a key frequent transit corridor and situating the site within the shoulders of an expanding downtown core area. This emerging policy framework supports mid-rise, multi-unit residential and mixed-use buildings, reinforcing the appropriateness of the site for increased density and a more vibrant, urbanized setting that would align with both current and future community goals.

The proposal for an increase in density above the standard 2:1 FSR would align with the broader vision of fostering a diverse, sustainable, and economically vibrant neighborhood. The development would incorporate key urban design principles, including appropriate scale, mixed-use integration, and sustainable energy performance. By introducing a mid-rise multi-unit residential building with a mix of uses coupled with the adaptive reuse of the existing heritage building, the proposal aims to contribute positively to the area's livability, economic vitality, and social health while supporting the broader goals outlined in both the current and emerging OCPs.

The proposed development is supported by several other strategic plans in this region, including:

- North Park Plan (2022)
- Downtown Core Area Plan (and DCAP Area Guidelines)
- Victoria Housing Strategy Phases 1 and 2
- Family Housing Policy and Advisory Design Guidelines
- Go Victoria Mobility Strategy
- Climate Leadership Plan
- Urban Forest Master Plan
- Victoria Corporate Plan 2024-26

Project Pillars

The Right Homes in the Right Places

One major challenge all growing cities and neighborhoods are facing is: where to locate housing to respond to population growth and the changing demographics of established neighborhoods?

It is widely understood that homes should be located near existing services, amenities and other destinations. This is important because it results in an efficient use of urban infill land that avoids clearcutting forests on greenfield sites in order to provide the homes people need. The City's policies speak to these trends with a whole host of strategies that aim to reduce car dependency, show climate leadership, and promote housing choice in all of the existing neighborhoods.

With these insights, and feedback received through early engagement initiatives with local stakeholders, we established the following project pillars which are the defining elements that our proposal is based upon:

1. Community Beacon for Worship, Arts, & Culture
2. Restore and Renovate a Heritage Asset
3. Thoughtfully designed rental housing
4. Pedestrian connections and new urban spaces

Community beacon for Worship, Arts, & Culture

The adaptive reuse of this heritage church building presents a unique opportunity to preserve history, revitalize the community, and create a vibrant and inclusive space through the following principles.

Cultural and Historical Preservation:

- The adaptive reuse of this heritage church building will preserve the community's past and its historical and cultural significance, fostering a sense of place and identity. The

expansion and repositioning of the building will ensure that its unique architectural elements are appreciated in a new context.

Community and Social Benefits:

- The transformation of this historic church into a multipurpose and inclusive space will not only preserve its architectural heritage but also breathe new life into the building. By adapting the church to accommodate a wide range of functions and ensuring accessibility for all, this project will foster a sense of community ownership and provide a unique setting for various cultural, social, and artistic activities.
- The revitalized space has the potential to become a hub for community gatherings, performances, exhibitions, educational programs, and celebrations, contributing to the vibrancy and diversity of the local area.

Economic and Environmental Advantages:

- The adaptive reuse of the First Metropolitan Church into a dynamic hub for arts and cultural performances will serve as a catalyst for economic revitalization in the surrounding area. By attracting diverse audiences and generating increased foot traffic, this initiative will stimulate commercial activity, drive patronage to local businesses, and create new opportunities for entrepreneurship and investment. The repurposed church will not only become a cultural landmark but also a powerful engine for economic growth and community development.

Spiritual and Symbolic Value:

- While being reenvisioned to support an expanded user base, the heritage church will retain its spiritual and symbolic value so that it can continue to serve faith based communities.
- The repurposed church will serve as a space for interfaith dialogue and understanding, where it can continue to promote respect and tolerance among different religious communities.

Restore and Renovate a Heritage Asset

- The adaptive reuse of this heritage church strives to preserve the integrity of key historical elements, while adapting the facility for modern use. Through thoughtful interventions—such as structural restoration, modernized facilities, and optimized interior layouts, the cultural and architectural value of the building will be retained while adapting to the evolving needs of the people it serves.
- The architectural character and significance of the church will be preserved through careful interventions, using sympathetic materials and techniques for all work to the valued heritage elements. Key structural elements will be upgraded and reinforced to ensure that the church remains safe, sound, and viable for continued use.
- Existing building systems and facilities will be upgraded to significantly improve accessibility, comfort, and overall functionality for all users, ensuring the building is inclusive and can be used effectively by individuals with diverse needs and abilities.
- Components of the building’s interior will be reprogrammed to enhance functionality, while maintaining the core sanctuary space. Flexible, adaptable areas such as multi-purpose rooms and meeting spaces will be introduced, allowing for a variety of activities while still respecting the sacred character of the original sanctuary. These improvements will make the building more accessible and relevant to the current and future communities.
- Modern facilities such as accessible restrooms and kitchen areas will be incorporated into the design, revitalizing it as a community resource for all.

Pedestrian connections and new urban spaces

- The introduction of new prominent commercial space along Balmoral rd and live-work homes throughout the central courtyard, will bring retail facilities to a growing community, supporting daily activation of the Balmoral / Quadra streetscape.
- The introduction of new public mews and urban alleyways continues the characteristics of the public realm seen throughout the city, giving pedestrians alternative paths of travel and further supporting activation throughout the site.
- The existing public realm surrounding the site along Quadra St and Balmoral Rd provides a limited street experience, featuring narrow sidewalks, poor separation from the road, and limited street trees. With this proposal, we have the opportunity to create a more vibrant public realm through the introduction of improved sidewalks, street trees, and integration with the new commercial frontage and pedestrian connections.

- The new central plaza space located between the First Metropolitan building and the proposed residential building will deliver a new programmable area that encourages both social interaction, daily enjoyment, as well as accommodating public and private programme opportunities such as cultural events and public gatherings.

Thoughtful Design

Redevelopment of the First Metropolitan Unit Church:

- The redevelopment plan for the First Metropolitan United Church involves the preservation and retention of the church's core structure, including the gabled wall dormers and interior stair sections of the Sunday School Hall. Restoration work will focus on replacing missing or deteriorated original materials and elements within the retained structures to ensure historical integrity.
- The plan involves the demolition of parts of the Sunday School Hall, Fellowship Hall, and Christian Education Wing, where the remaining structure's east wall will then be rehabilitated. The interior of the retained heritage building will be rehabilitated to suit the new use.
- A new single-storey addition with a basement will be added to the north side of the Church, and an exterior performance and loading area will be created on the east side.
- The new addition structure takes cues from the architectural characteristics of the heritage building, while delivering a contemporary architectural expression that prioritizes light and connectivity. At the exterior of the addition, coloured glass takes cues from the stained glass motifs of the church, creating a visual relationship between the spaces.

New Residential Building:

- The architectural expression of this proposal has been refined through a site-specific approach, taking careful consideration for adjacent heritage structures, the programmatic needs of the site, and the surrounding neighborhood and community.
- The proposed residential building employs a variety of architectural and design strategies to create a structure that is both visually appealing and functional. The exterior will be punctuated by generous clip-on balconies and a playful use of colored glass, drawing inspiration from the stained-glass motifs of the neighboring church. A

concrete plinth will wrap the second-floor exterior, providing a canopy for pedestrians and a visual transition to the architecture of the upper floors.

- The building will feature a central south-facing courtyard, positioned behind a landscaped privacy fence to create a visual break along Balmoral Road and a welcoming entry experience. The courtyard will be surrounded by live-work residences, which will gently activate the space during business hours. The expanded public realm along Balmoral Road will integrate with the building frontage and arcade through landscaping and sidewalk treatments, serving to animate the public realm and provide an inviting connection to the commercial retail units.
- The interior design prioritizes personal choice and flexibility. Private living areas are situated at the back of the units, while communal living areas are prioritized along exterior walls to maximize natural daylight. The free-flowing design of the living areas allows for multiple functions, and inboard bedrooms can be closed off for privacy or adapted for alternate uses. Balconies extend the living space to the exterior, and extensive planting throughout the ground plane and second-floor plinth softens the building's mass, encouraging interaction with nature.
- At the roof level, a communal roof deck is proposed to provide residents with further options for outdoor amenity space, with each being programmed to serve a different need; whether socialization, dining, or quiet time.

Site Programming:

- The site redevelopment plan prioritizes creating a welcoming and accessible environment through strategic placement of entry points, pedestrian connections, and inviting public spaces.
- A new central entry to the site is established at Balmoral Road, acting as a "Mews" to connect to Quadra Street, enhancing pedestrian flow and creating new cultural opportunities.
- A public plaza is integrated into the design to provide additional space for cultural activities and community engagement.
- The south-facing residential courtyard is thoughtfully placed to break up the residential massing, creating a more inviting and open atmosphere.

Mobility Context

Road Network

The site is situated at the corner of Quadra Street, a two-way north-south street classified by the City of Victoria as an Arterial Road, and Balmoral Road, an east-west Secondary Collector Road. From the property's doorstep there are diverse cycle routes, bus routes and walking options, including a section of Victoria's AAA protected bike Path and Shared-Use Cycling Corridor being only 200-metres away.

Active Transport

The site is well served by public transit, with bus stops on the same block of Quadra Street with numerous additional bus routes nearby, situated well within a typical walking catchment area.

The site is well connected to both walking and cycling networks and is within a walking distance of most everyday amenities and services, allowing daily errands to be accomplished either on foot or on a bike.

The site is 200m from the AAA cycling route on Pandora Avenue and 150m from the AAA route on Vancouver Street. The two major cycling routes provide north-south and west-east connections to the larger regional cycling network.

There are also a number of existing car share providers servicing the area in proximity to the site, including Modo car share vehicles, with several being located within 500m of the property.

Lastly, Walk Score is an on-line tool that assesses the walkability, bikeability, and accessibility to transit of a location based on proximity to amenities, services and infrastructure. The subject development site scores a 98 for walkability which it defines as "Walker's Paradise", a bike score of 97 which is defined as a "Biker's Paradise", and a transit score of 92 which is defined as "Rider's Paradise".

Vehicle and Bike Parking

The development will provide fifty-four (54) on site parking stalls, as well as providing a new dedicated and publicly accessible car-share for use by residents and the local community. The building will deliver one-hundred-and-sixty-one (161) secure bike stalls, designed to accommodate a combination of traditional bikes, E-Bikes, and Cargo-Bikes, as well as thirty-five (35) short-term bike stalls.

Community Consultation & Next Steps

We are committed to being good neighbours and having honest, open dialogues within the communities where we do our work. We are available to discuss project details with stakeholders through a variety of channels to build trust and shared vision for the project all while maintaining a respectful and open conversation. Our goal is to create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable to share their ideas, hopes, and aspirations for the community and for them to ultimately see these values reflected in the end project.

We plan to hold an in-person meeting with the CALUC and neighbourhood association, and broader community, on the evening of April 23rd, where we will present an overview of the proposal and will be available to answer any questions.

We will also soon be launching a publicly accessible website page, available at aryze.ca, where we will update project information and provide an opportunity for community members to sign up if they wish to stay informed throughout various stages of the approval process.

Taken together, the restoration and renovation of the First Metropolitan Church combined with a new mixed-use residential building represent a key piece of urban renewal in Victoria. This proposal will attract new users to these lands for a variety of purposes and builds on the City's vision to create a Quadra Cultural Corridor. We are excited to share this vision with the wider public as we continue to plan how this key part of the city can respect the past and plot a new future for the Church and its surrounding lands.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Kieran Lynch
Development Manager
Aryze Developments Inc.