

Sept. 1, 2024

1320 Purcell Place, Victoria

Sustainable Planning and Community Development  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Letter to the Mayor and Council

### **Description of Proposal**

Following the adoption of the Missing Middle Housing initiative, the proposal for 1320 Purcell Street has been revised to create four additional rental homes, as compared to the earlier iteration in which a single-family detached home was contemplated on a small lot subdivision. Currently, a small building containing four rental homes is envisioned to the east of the existing heritage-registered character home. The proposal meets the goals and objectives within Victoria's Official Community Plan (OCP). An architecturally-designed four-unit contemporary building, one block off Fort Street, within walking distance of the downtown core, will be added to Victoria's housing stock.

### **Government Policies**

The development proposal aligns with Victoria's OCP values by ensuring an increase to the urban housing stock, a strengthening of the public realm, and the reinforcement of Victoria's vibrancy through well-considered contemporary design. With rising population growth and residents of Victoria looking for places to live and work, the proposed project for 1320 Purcell will help to satisfy the burgeoning demand for missing middle housing in Victoria. The proposal aligns with the "Heritage Conserving Infill" section of the Missing Middle Housing Initiative.

### **Project Benefits**

Project benefits include an increase of the urban housing stock within walking distance of downtown Victoria. The proximity to the downtown core and schools will allow for environmentally-friendly modes of transportation to be utilized. The tax base will be increased and, given the diverse sizes of the homes (2 x 1-bed and 2 x 3-bed), a variety of housing options is presented. Being able to accommodate the anticipated growth and density that the City of Victoria is projecting for the future allows the core and surrounding neighbourhoods to benefit from an increase in a variety of residential housing stock. It is also contemplated that the existing heritage-registered home will be conserved by designating heritage status.

### **Need and Demand**

Development of the site is required to better reflect the growing residential landscape of Victoria. In aligning with the OCP, the proposed building will serve the needs of residents and the community. Planning guidelines and local demand will be met by providing a well-designed and contemporary built form within the Rockland neighbourhood.

### **Neighbourhood**

The subject property is on the northern edge (i.e., just off Fort Street) of the Rockland neighbourhood. Purcell Place is a lightly travelled (i.e., four civic addresses) dead-end road close to the corner of Fort and Moss Streets. 1320 Purcell Place is a residential multi-unit rental building (i.e., a character conversion). It is adjacent to the south of the Grace Lutheran Church at 1273 Fort Street. To the north is another multi-unit rental character conversion. East and west are single family detached homes. The existing site warrants development based upon the dynamic status of the neighbourhood and the need to densify and improve housing options in Victoria.

### **Impacts**

By engaging with the ground-orientated street-facing design, the local community will experience a positive impact from the development. The Scandinavian-influenced, architecturally-designed home animates the street by creating a gathering area to the south of the home. The street facing elevation is predominantly glazed and a large patio for gathering has been placed at grade in the front yard. In addition to the patio at grade, are two street facing balconies at levels two and three. In order to minimize impacts on neighbours, glazing will be limited on the west elevation. There will be no glazing on the east side in order to remove any privacy concerns for our neighbour to the east. The proposed building is screened from the east neighbour by a fence and a significant tree (around which the house has been designed). The large horse chestnut tree on the east property line will be preserved, further mitigating any impact on the neighbour to the east. On site parking will be provided, including an accessible stall.

### **Design**

The first step in the design process involved on-site consultation with an arborist. In order to minimize the impact on the existing horse chestnut, it was advised that a flat-roof, no-basement home was preferred. Further, it was advised that if possible, across from the tree, the house could be set back slightly more (i.e., “notched out”). Initially, prior to architectural design consultation, a building to mimic or reflect the existing character home was considered. The arborist advice in conjunction with the designer’s reservation to create “faux heritage” led to a rethinking of the design. After much discussion and consideration, we are very pleased to present the current iteration. The building is compelling and the juxtaposition to the much larger heritage home is striking. The proposal enhances the streetscape through high quality architecture responsive to the context and enhances the pedestrian experience through human-scale, street-facing design compatible with street function.

### **Transportation and Infrastructure**

1320 Purcell Place is located one block off the arterial of Fort Street. The project complies with the current Schedule C parking requirements and intends on providing covered bicycle parking. The site provides easy access to Victoria’s growing network of bike lanes. Public transportation is also extremely close and easy to access.

Preliminary discussion with City of Victoria staff have revealed that a 2.47 road dedication across the entire frontage of the property will be requested. This equates to over 1,000 sf of land and has dramatic negative effects on parking for the existing heritage home, parking for the proposed building, proposed bike parking, green space, raised vegetable planter beds, etc. That is, the detrimental effects on the subject property are numerous and significant. Further, the detrimental impact on the

street/neighbourhood is significant. Purcell is a lovely 1-block, dead-end street. There seems to be very little incentive to widen it. Any widening will detract from the existing beauty and quaintness of the extremely short road. The idea that in the future a trail connection will be made from Purcell Pl to Craigdarroch Rd is unlikely as the owner of the adjacent property has declined to provide access beyond Purcell Pl. This is not to say it is impossible, but certainly unlikely. More importantly, even if a trail were secured through the adjacent property and a property east of the adjacent property, this provides no rationale for Purcell road dedication. An unlikely pedestrian trail connection through two private properties does not require a widening of Purcell Pl. The requested road dedication is not only completely unnecessary, but detrimental to the proposal and the neighbourhood in general. Unlike the requested road dedication which would seem of little, if any, value, four rental homes (including two family-oriented homes) within a block of schools, bike lanes and public transport would seem to be of great value.

There is currently adequate sewer, water, sidewalks and roads within the area.

### **Heritage**

The existing building is considered to have heritage status. Heritage designation is contemplated.

Regards,

*Daniel Robbins*

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