

Letter to Mayor & Council

18 March, 2022

1693-1699 Fort Street

ARYZE

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

Dear Mayor Helps, Council and Staff,

Please accept this letter as part of our Rezoning and Development Permit Application for 1693 Fort Street, a proposed stepped six-storey mixed use development, thirty-four (34) affordable rental apartments—ranging from studios to two bedroom units— plus one (1) ground floor commercial rental unit (CRU) and a common rooftop amenity space. We are requesting to amend the property from the current R3-2 zoning to a new site specific zoning.

Proposed Development Overview

The proposed development at 1693 Fort Street is envisioned as 34 purpose-built affordable rental apartments situated above a ground floor CRU space and a programmed outdoor rooftop patio for residents to enjoy.

Located in the amenity-rich South Jubilee neighbourhood, the proposed development is in close proximity to a variety of restaurants, shops, job centres and health services, providing a 15 minute city lifestyle for future residents. The building will be positioned to support a range of transportation options promoting a car-lite lifestyle, including ample secure bicycle parking, Modo memberships for each unit and a new Modo vehicle located within the building that can serve the whole neighbourhood.



Project at a Glance



Height

6 storeys

including rooftop garden patio



North Setback

at ground level

0.77m



Number of Homes

34 Homes



Parking Stalls

9 Stalls

Site Area

9,644 sqft

East Setback

at ground level

3.03m

Studio

6 Units (18%)



Car Share

1 Modo Stall

Floor Area

26,443 sqft

South Setback

at ground level

3.36m

One Bedroom

13 Units (38%)

Commercial Space

832 sqft

West Setback

at ground level

1.82m

Two Bedroom

15 Units (44%)



FSR

2.74 FSR

Accessible Suites

3 Units (9%)

1x fully accessible
2x adaptable

Long-Term Bike Stalls

63 Stalls

(50% with electric
charging capabilities)

Site Coverage

61%

Residential Tenure

Affordable
Rental

Short-Term Bike Stalls

6 Stalls

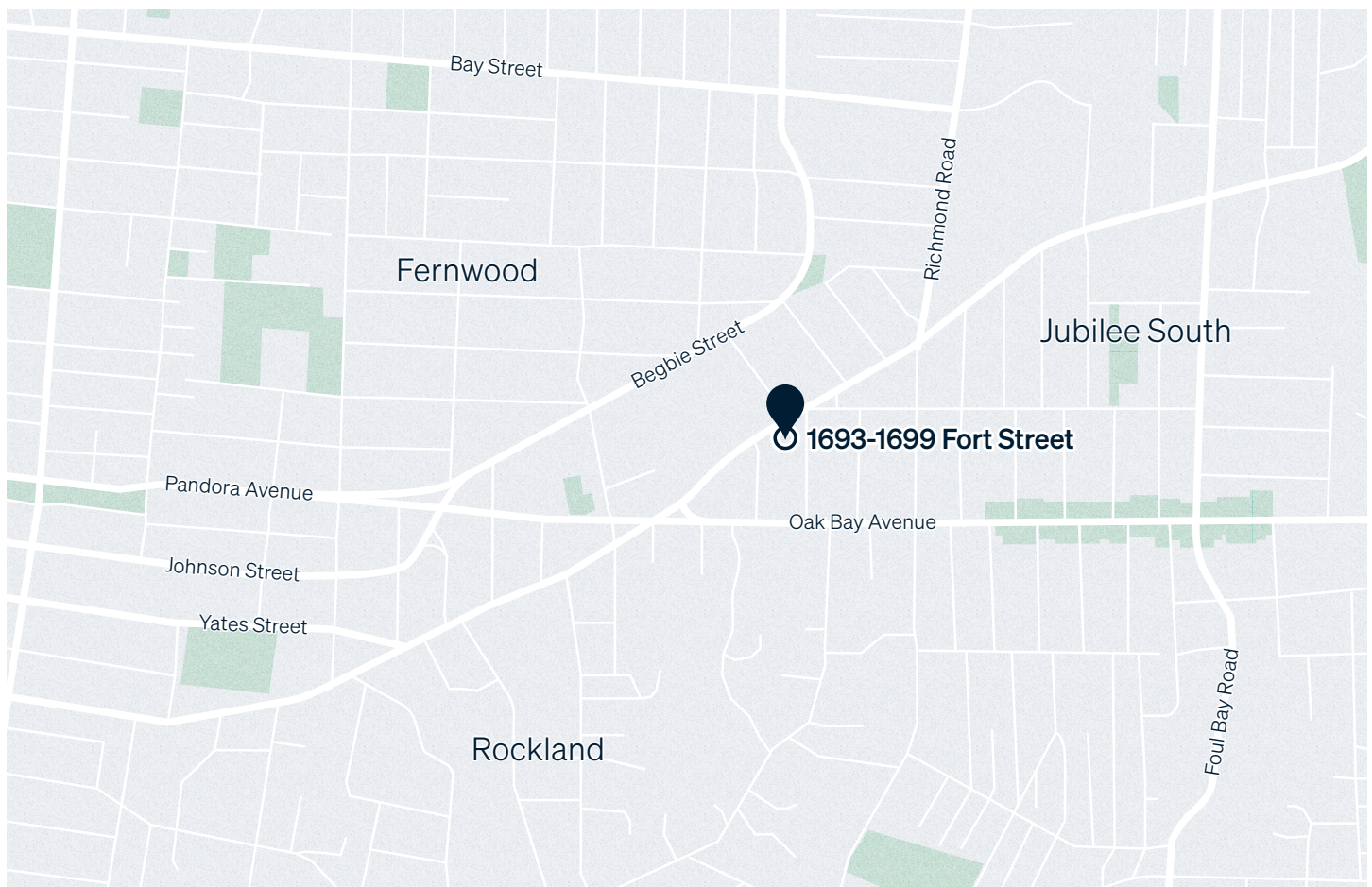
(Outside)

Area Context & History

The South Jubilee neighbourhood is a mixed-use vibrant area on the edge of Victoria and Oak Bay. Beginning as agricultural land in the 1920's the area saw the emergence of low-density single-family housing. Federal programs in the 1960's incentivised apartment rental buildings and by the 1980's construction shifted towards condominium ownership; a form of tenure that has made up the

majority of new homes in the area. This has all culminated in a heterogeneous mix of commercial and residential uses, ranging from single family character homes to multi-family and long-term care. Neighbouring buildings are characterized by an informal relationship to Fort Street, resulting in styles such as stucco, painted wood cladding and brick accents. The territory which the proposed

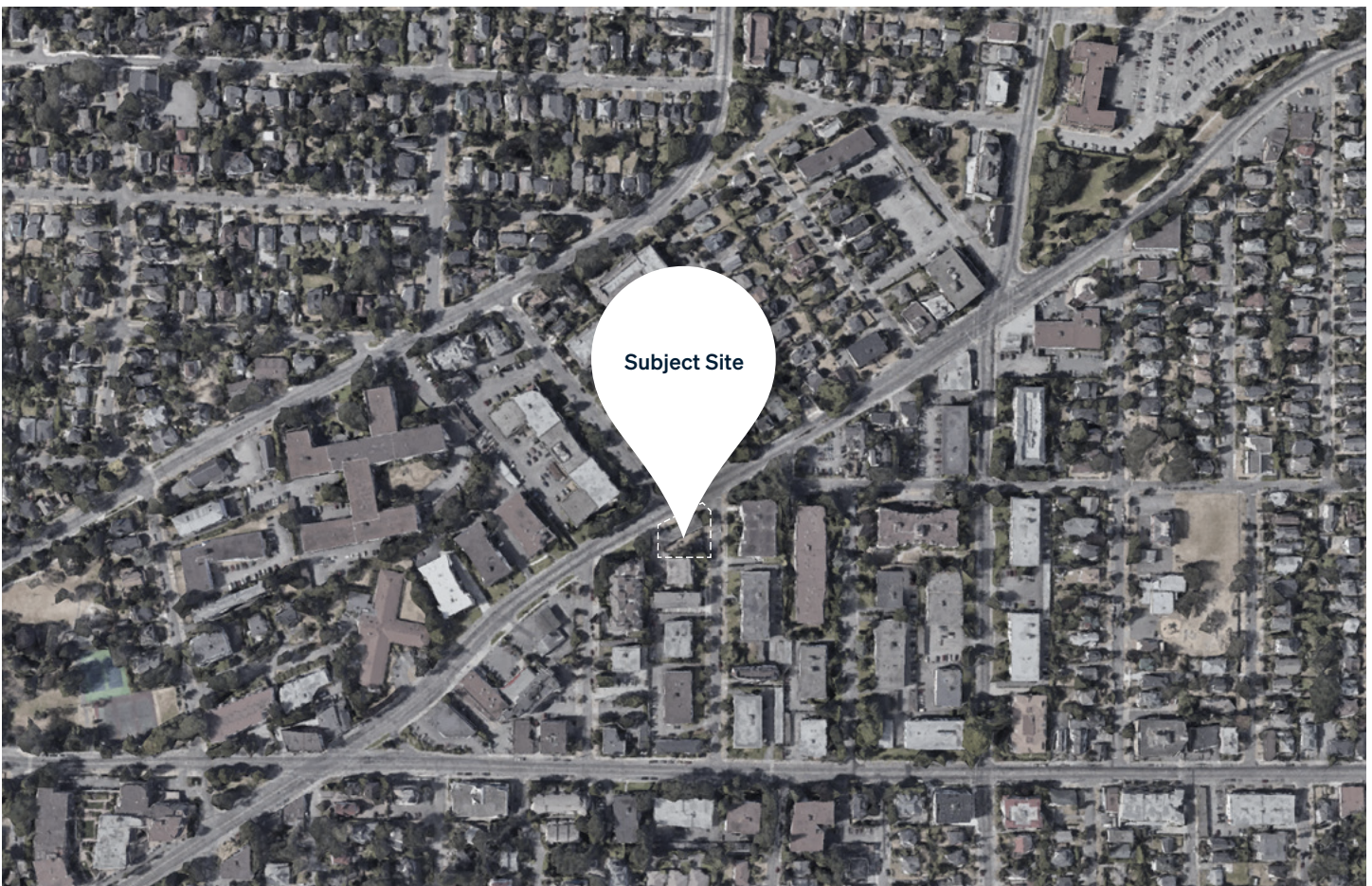
development is located on holds both cultural and historical importance, as it on the land of the Lək̓ʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ peoples. Known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, their historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



Neighbourhood Grain

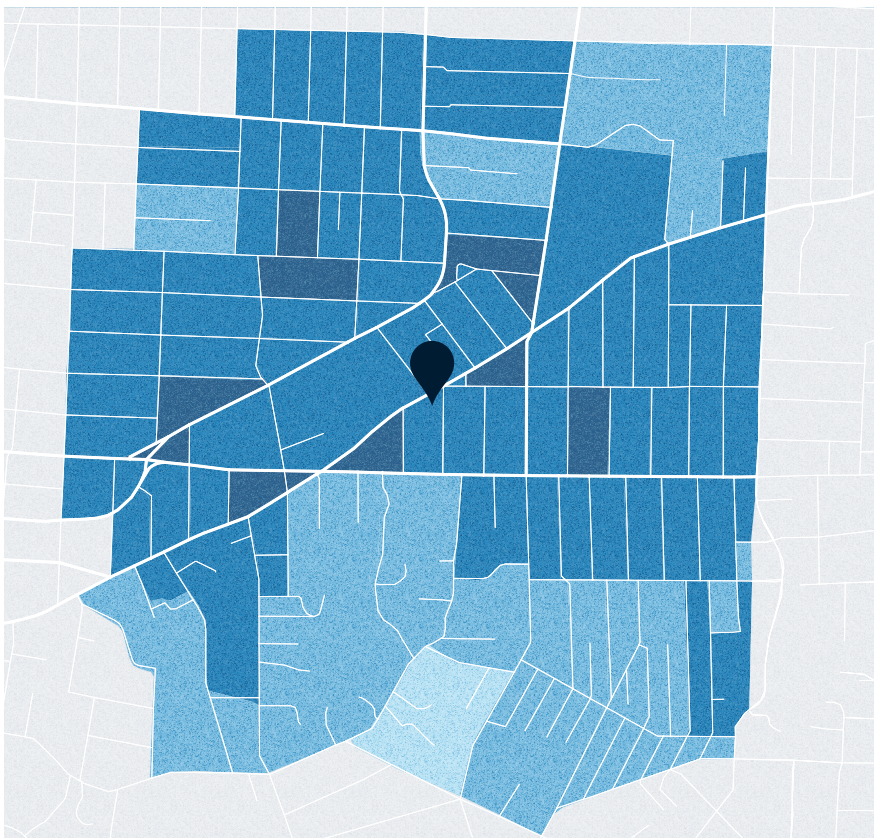
The South Jubilee area includes a diverse mix of commercial and residential uses. Many services and amenities are within walking distance thresholds. Neighbouring the site is a mix of multi-family residential buildings. Nearby Jubilee Village offers a wide range of retail, commercial businesses and health services.

The building grain peaks along Fort Street and tapers as you move North and South. The existing footprint is symptomatic of its era with larger setbacks and underutilized density. Modern design narratives seek to bring more intimacy to the street with tighter urban setbacks motivated by a balanced design driven by the desire for affordability and efficiency.



Proximity Indices

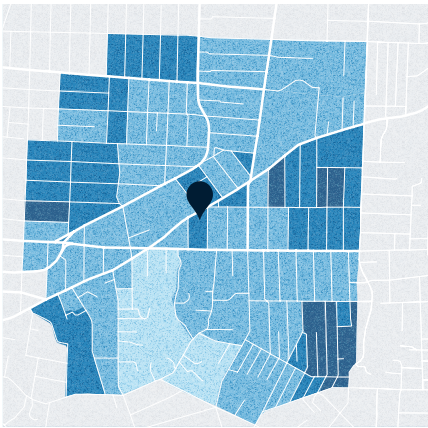
Located in the heart of the South Jubilee neighbourhood, the subject site provides excellent proximity to employment opportunities and to local retail and commercial businesses. It also presents easy access to critical services such as health care, child care, primary and secondary education. Parks surround the area and major transit routes crossing through allow for easy flexibility in exploring the surrounding areas.



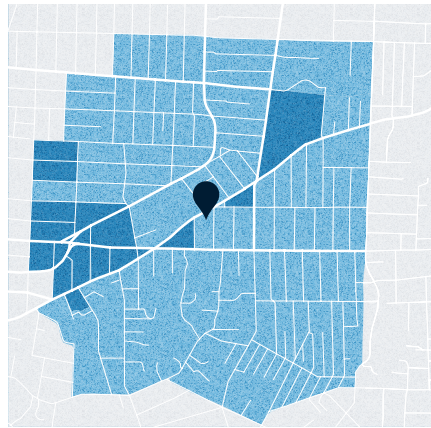
● Project Site

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low

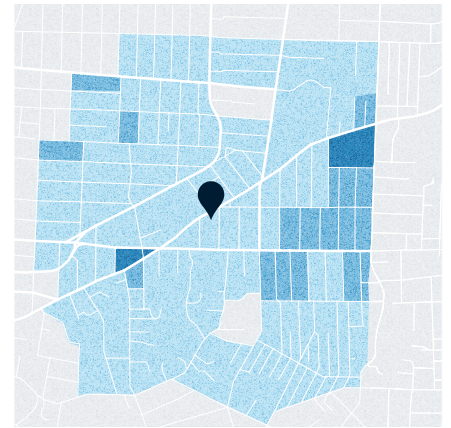
All Proximity Indices



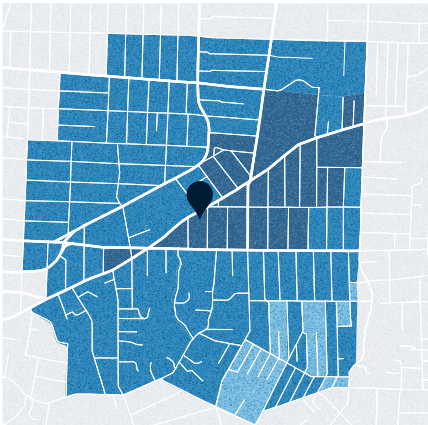
Childcare



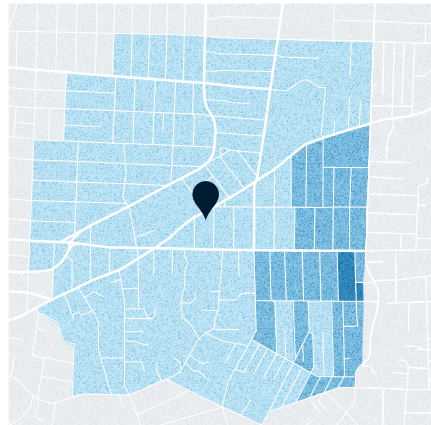
Employment



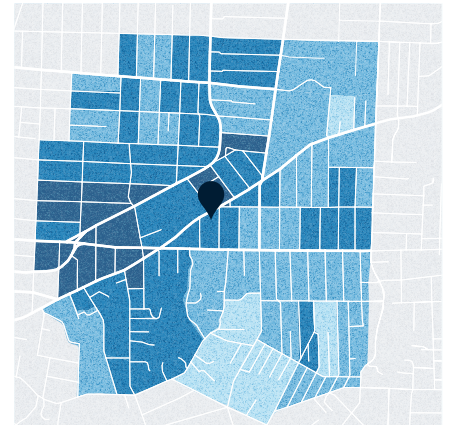
Grocery



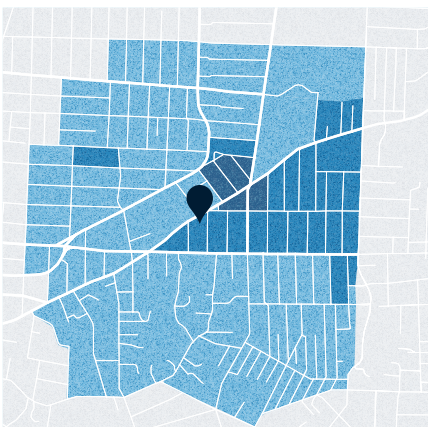
Healthcare



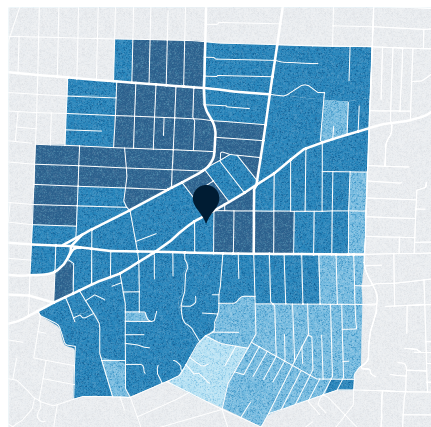
Library



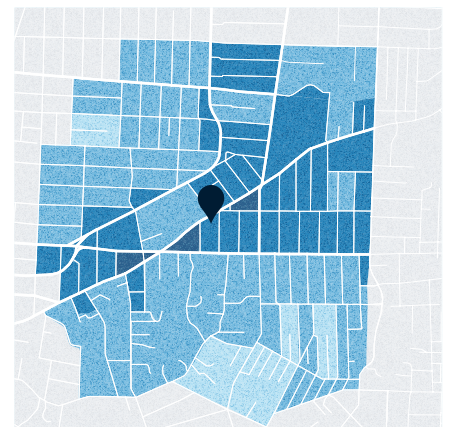
Park



Pharmacy



School



Transit

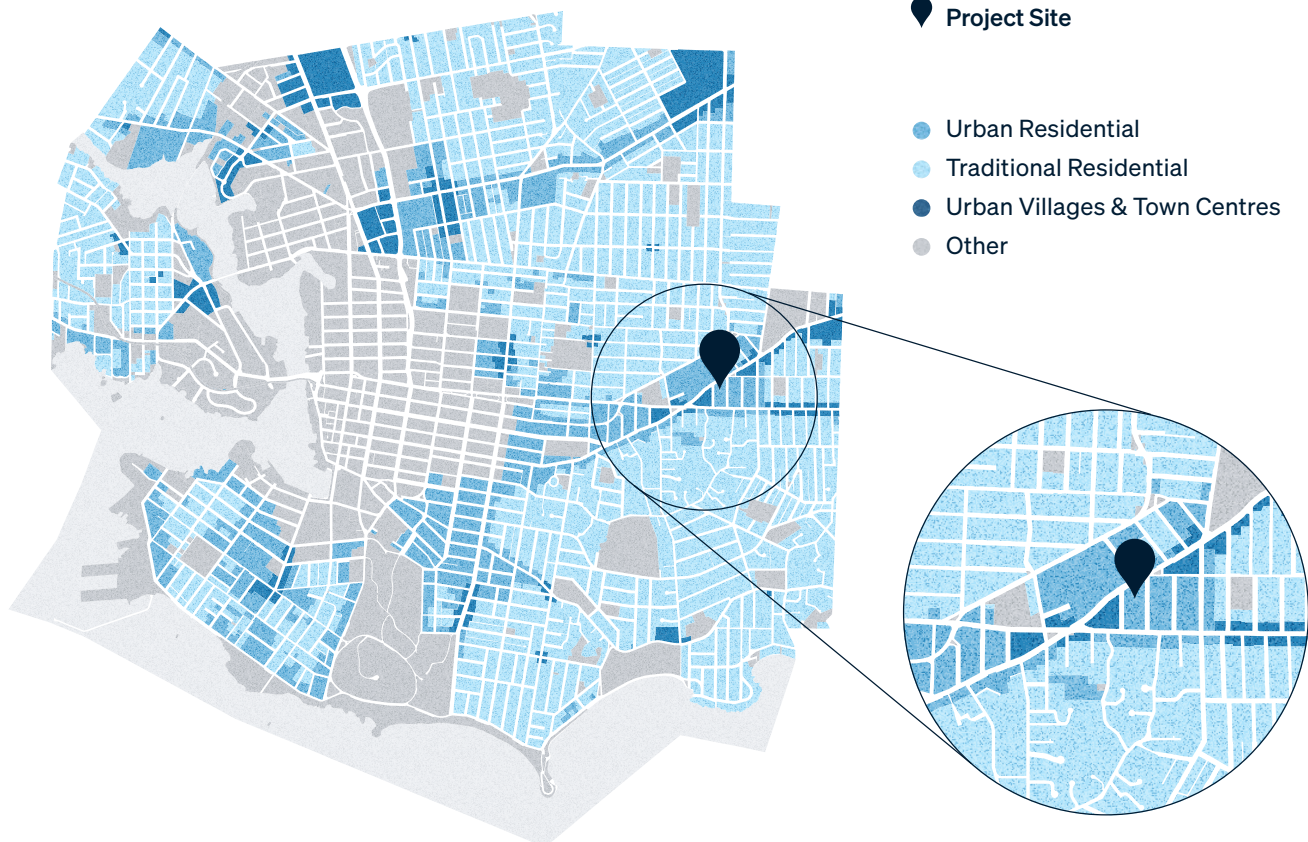
Policy Context

The subject property is located on the western border of the Jubilee Large Urban Village and near the Stadacona Large Urban Village, in an urban residential area. Housing forms characterizing urban residential areas are comprised of low-rise and mid-rise multi-unit buildings up to six storeys, including townhouses, apartments and mixed-use buildings along arterial and secondary arterial roads. Character features include variable yard setbacks with primary doorways facing the street, variable front yard landscaping and boulevard and street tree planting.

At **2.74 FSR**, our proposal does exceed the 2.0 FSR allowance outlined in the Official Community Plan. However, also outlined within the Official Community Plan are conditions that, if met, allow ‘bonus density’ to be awarded to developments that advance certain plan objectives. The key plan objective underlying this proposal is the addition of affordable rental housing. Our strategy for delivering these affordable homes is outlined in the coming section titled: Why Rental?

The proposed development is also supported by several other strategic plans, including:

- Victoria Housing Strategy
- Go Victoria Mobility Plan
- Climate Leadership Plan
- Missing Middle Housing Study
- Urban Forest Master Plan
- Bowker Creek Blueprint
- Dozens of action items in the 2019–2022 Strategic Plan

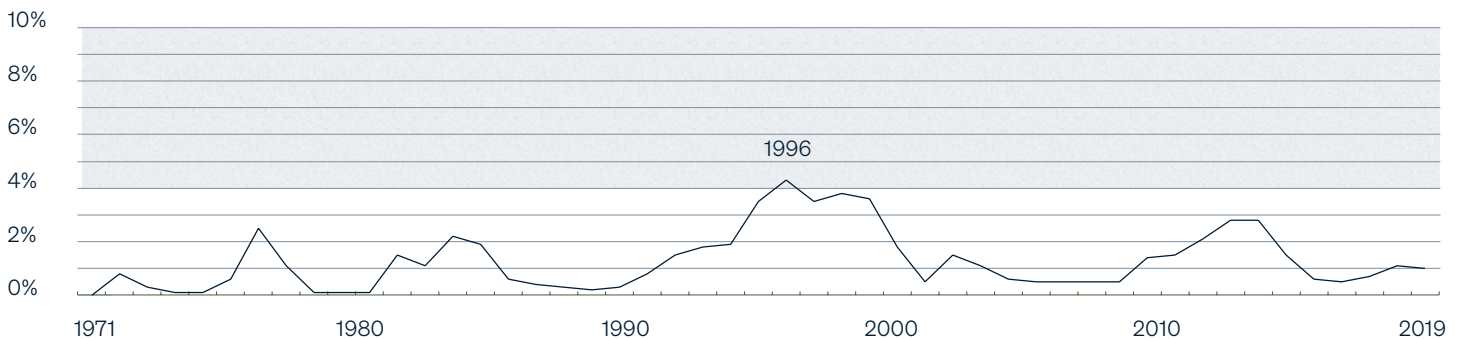


Current Landscape

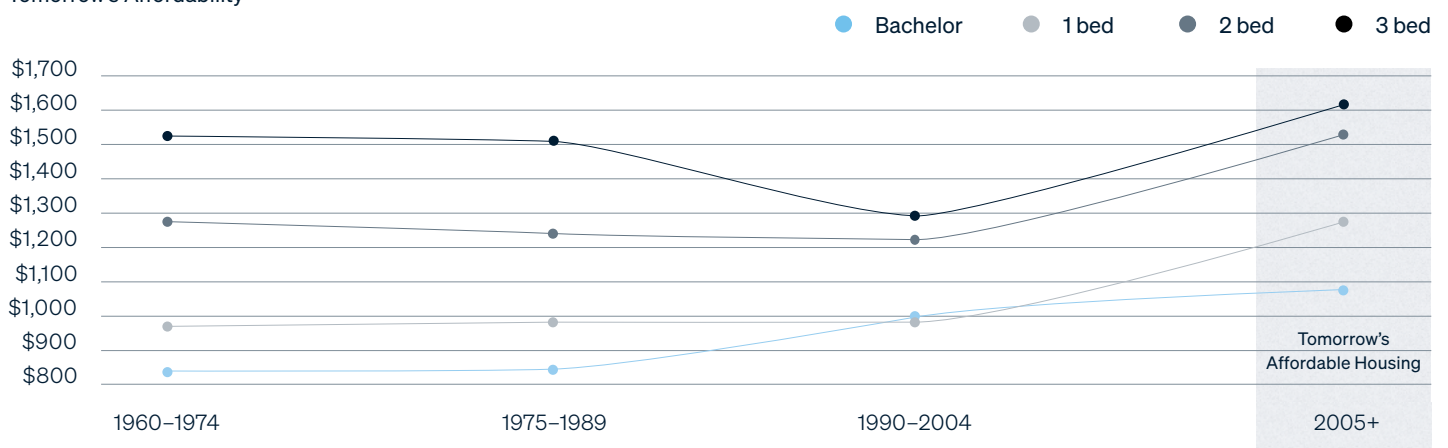
In the last 48 years, the rental vacancy rate has reached the 4% threshold of a balanced market only once (1996). As Victoria's rental vacancy rate remains well below this threshold, this lack of available rental inventory is a strong detractor to the affordability and health of our city.

Will all of these new homes be affordable? No. That's not the point. When we look at rental rates by unit type and age, the older stock is Victoria's affordable housing stock. We unfortunately had a 35-year gap in rental housing construction that we need to make up for. What we build today, is tomorrow's affordable housing. If we don't build it today, we perpetuate the problem and learn nothing from the past. This, paired with the reality that many of the purpose-built rental (PBR) homes built in the 1960's and 1970's are nearing end of life, means we need to have new housing options for residents.

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation: Vacancy Rates of Apartment Structures of Six Units & Over



Victoria Age vs Rate:
Tomorrow's Affordability

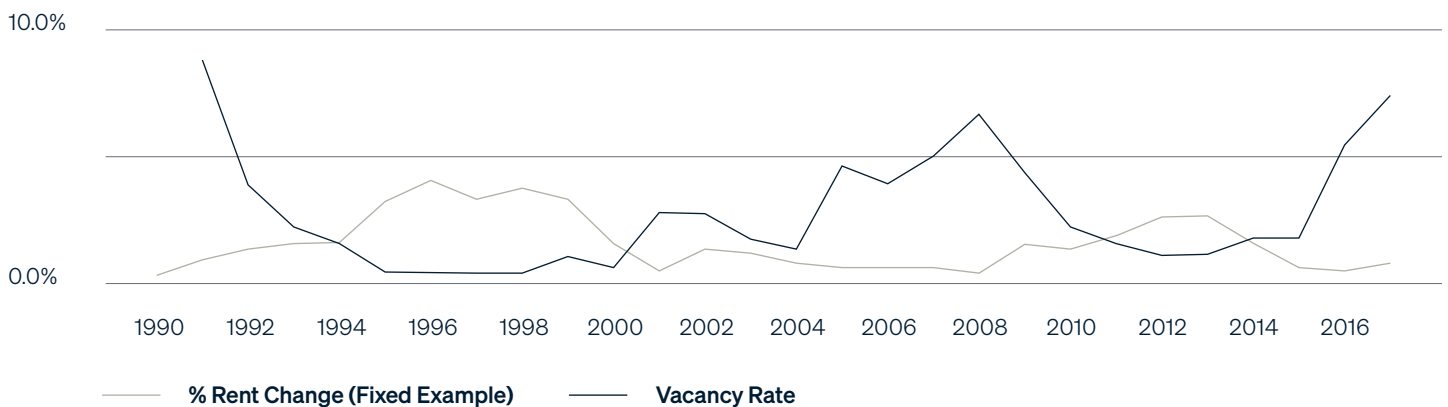


The relationship between supply and demand is directly correlated to affordability; positive or negative fluctuations in rent rates expressed as a percentage are inversely connected to the vacancy rate. In summary, when the vacancy rate is low, meaning low supply, rents go up. When supply increases, rents flatten or go down. This teaches us the best thing we can do for affordability across the board is to build more housing, period.

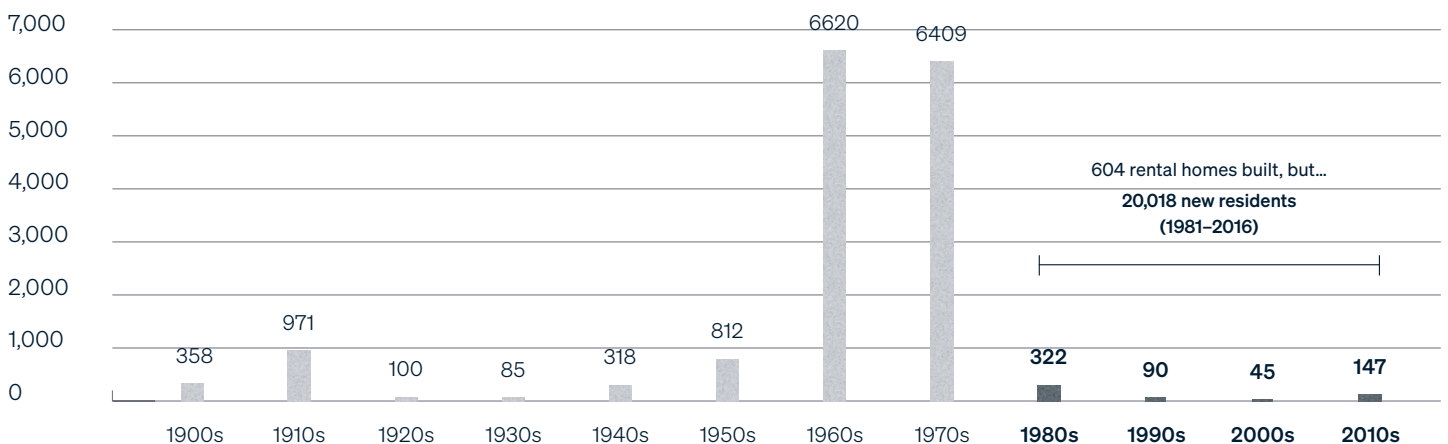
Between 1890 and the end of the 1950's, approximately 2,644 PBR homes were constructed, equating to roughly 38 per year. During the Federally incentivized multi-unit residential building (MURB) program, Victoria's rental stock skyrocketed to 13,029 PBR homes in a 20-year period, averaging 651 per year. As this program was phased out, only 604 PBR homes were built between 1980 and 2011, however, the city's population grew by 20,018 residents.

Herein lies the problem; population growth outnumbered rental housing construction 20 to 1, even adjusted for Victoria's proportionate share of rental households.

Vacancy Rate vs % Rent Change
(City of Victoria)



PBR Built by Year
(City of Victoria)



Why Rental?

Housing is a human right and with homeownership increasingly out of step with local incomes, Purpose Built Rental (PBR) housing is the strongest form of tenure and represents a possible—and sometimes beneficial—alternative to homeownership. Common benefits to rental housing are the lack of maintenance or repair costs, increased access to amenities, no property taxes, more flexibility where you live, predictable monthly payments and no requirement for a down payment.

If we are going to make urban progress in affordability, climate change and social equity, we need to increase rental housing across the city in areas well connected to walking, cycling and transit corridors.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of households in Victoria rent their home; of these, almost half (48%) are one-person households. The building programming in our proposal for 1693-1699 Fort Street is reflective of these statistics with proportionate studio, one bedroom and two bedroom units throughout.

As a Purpose-Built Rental, our proposal at 1693 Fort Street has been designed with leasing in mind. That means all rental units in our proposed development are tailored to increase livability through the form and function of the unit and to support the likelihood of long-term tenancies. What's more, the rooftop shared amenity space and ground floor CRU will offer a complete, self-sustaining lifestyle for future residents.

Our Commitment

In an effort to provide more attainable housing solutions for our growing City, we propose the following:

- Secure 100% of the building's units as affordable rentals in perpetuity (per the Zoning Regulation Bylaw's definition of affordable housing). As such, rents will be reflective of the area and income verification mechanisms will be in place to ensure that rents do not exceed the 30% of income threshold.

- Secure a minimum of 4 units with deeper affordability, with maximum rents adjusted to 30% of Victoria's median household incomes (or lower), as defined by the CMHC, for a minimum commitment of 10 years.

These legal covenants would be secured by way of a Housing Agreement with the City and registered on title, to the satisfaction of the Director of Sustainable Planning and Community Development.



Benefits & Impacts

Apart from meeting the policy goals and objectives outlined above, the project also provides several amenities to its residents and the community as a whole:



Affordable rental Housing
near amenities and jobs



Streetscape improvements
near a busy intersection
including the addition of
rain gardens



Rooftop green spaces
to benefit resident and
neighbouring views



Programmed rooftop patio
to provide a neighbourly
experience for tenants



Commercial Retail Unit to
enhance the pedestrian
experience



Modo car on site and
memberships for residents
to decrease traffic and the
need for car ownership



Retaining cherry tree and
increasing number of trees
throughout the site



Income restricted below
market rate purpose built
rental apartments under
the BC Housing 'Housing
Hub' program



Fully accessible common
areas, as well as the inclusion
of adaptable suites for building
users with mobility challenges

Site Layout & Building Form

This proposal seeks to provide a more urban, street-oriented building that is compatible with the evolving neighbourhood. The building will be positioned where several streets come together: Fort Street, Belcher Avenue, Fern Street and Leighton Road. The building is shaped as a five storey building with a setback sixth floor level, a form and height supported by the Official Community Plan. The building will be a modest marker at this node along the Fort Street arterial. The massing is shaped to reconcile the oblique orientation of Belcher Avenue and Fort Street, with a ground floor of commercial and ground level bicycle parking that will connect with and provide oversight to its sidewalk frontages.

Design Inspiration

The building expression is both contemporary and dignified. The main palette of the building is light toned and neutral, comprised of light and medium grey metal and textured cementitious panels, charcoal window frames and architectural concrete. The building materials have been selected to be durable, finely textured and of a subtle colouration, so that the building will compliment rather than compete with the surrounding mix of building styles.

While the materials palette is restrained, the expression of the building has a subtle playfulness, which took inspiration from a bookcase. The façades at levels

two through five are designed so that each storey reads as a horizontal 'shelf'. Vertically proportioned bedroom windows are arrayed on these 'shelves' in a randomized pattern; these elements are set within a field of textured profiled metal panels conceived as the paper edges of a book, turned backwards on the shelf. These patterned lengths are bracketed by the living room window bays, which project out from the main façade and tie the storeys visually together. One feature bay extends out at an angle, marking the main building entrance below on Fort Street.



Material Palette



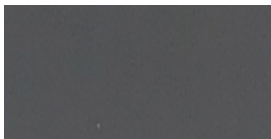
1. Pre-finished Metal
"Weathered Zinc"



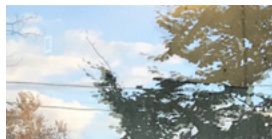
2. Corrugated Metal Cladding
"Surf White"



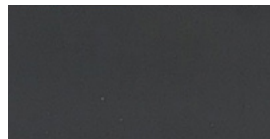
3. Charcoal Ceraclad
"Zen Garden"



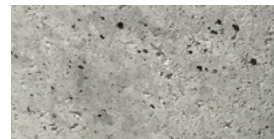
4. Charcoal Ceraclad
"Smooth"



5. Glazing



6. Black Vinyl Window Frames
Frames L1 to L6



7. Exposed Concrete
Ground Level Only



8. Painted Metal Picket Guard



Building Program

- 01. Commercial Retail Unit
- 02. Entrance Lobby
- 03. Bike Room
- 04. Visitor Parking
- 05. Residential Rental Units
- 06. Shared Rooftop Patio
- 07. Car Share Vehicle



Landscape Design

The landscape has been designed to create a pedestrian friendly and engaging planted interface that compliments the expression of the contemporary architecture, while augmenting the outdoor amenity space to encourage and foster community interaction.

The plantings selected for this site have a strong native focus and includes a variety of attractive flowering perennials to encourage pollination. In addition, the site is mass planted with cascading layers of water absorbing native and drought tolerant trees, shrubs, and ground cover plantings soil absorptive qualities that effectively filter stormwater. The planted areas are also carefully designed to slow rainwater runoff through detention, and reduce total runoff quantity through plant evapotranspiration. These are important qualities which adhere to the Bowker Creek Blueprint for sites that are within the upper reaches of the watershed.

1 Rain Garden Plants



Common Rush



Red Twig Dogwood

2 Retained Cherry Tree



Japanese Cherry Tree

3 Shade Tolerant West Coast Forest Plantings



Dwarf Salal



Bunchberry



Oregon Grape



Sword Fern

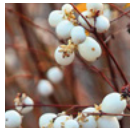


Deer Fern

4 Garry Oak Ecosystem Planting



Garry Oak



Snowberry



Forbs



Flowering Currant



Mobility Context

Multi-Model Network

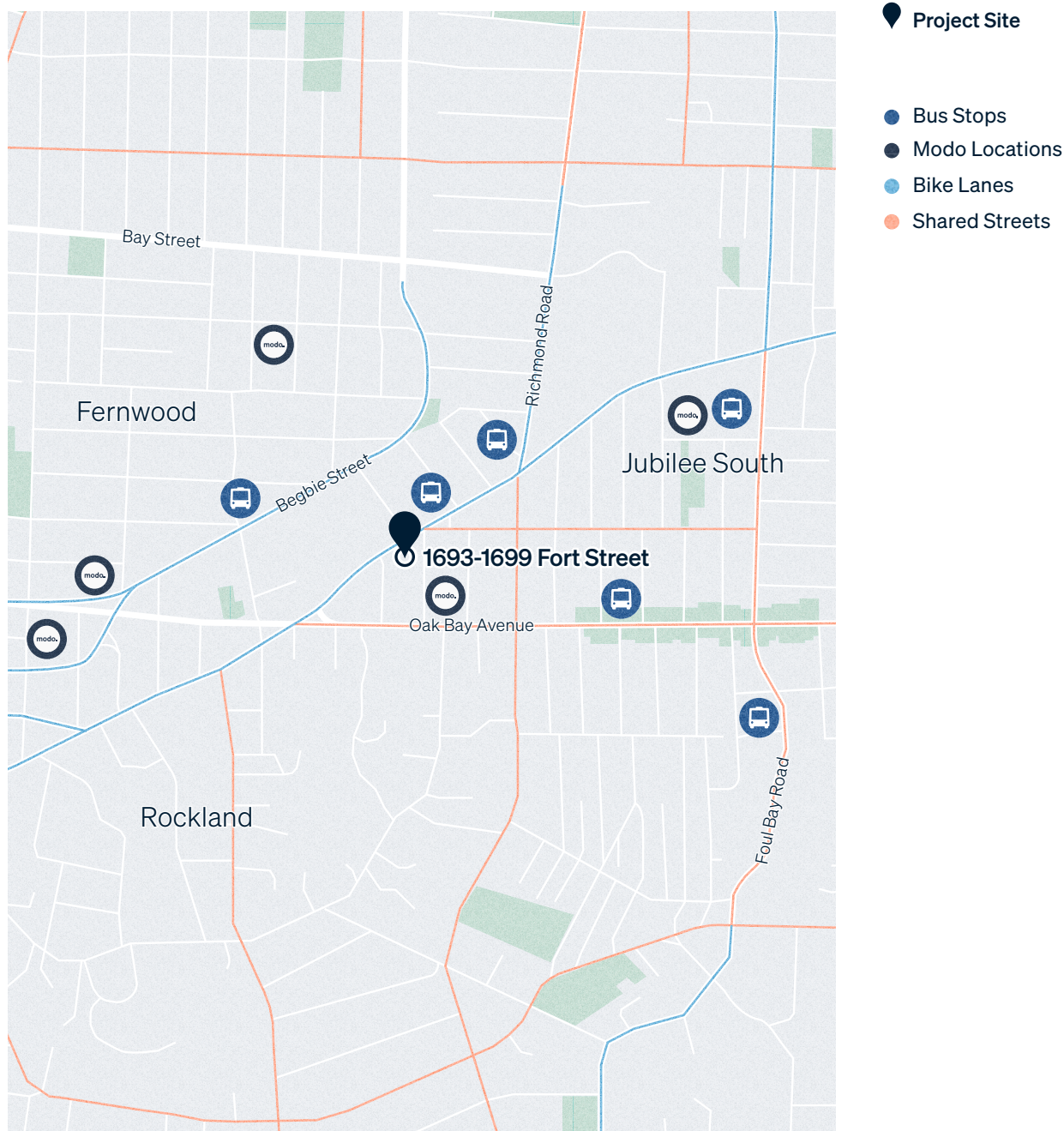
From the subject property's doorstep there are diverse cycle routes, bus routes, and walking options. The City of Victoria's twenty-five year transportation master-plan places even more focus and investment in alternative transportation options with additional transit service and bike lanes planned for the area.

Street Network

Fort Street is a two-way street extending west and east and is classified by the City of Victoria as an arterial road. Belcher Avenue is classified as a local road.



Active Transportation



Transportation Demand Management

The proposed development offers wide range of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) offerings such as:



Minimized Disruption

Parking entrance located on Belcher Street to minimize traffic impacts on Fort Street.



Modo Memberships

Modo memberships for each residential unit for the term of their tenancy, effective for the lifetime of the building.



Bicycle Accessibility

Significant bicycle parking, along with ebike charging capabilities.



Car Share

One car share vehicle in coordination with Modo to serve building tenants and the wider community.



Electric Charging Station

Roughed in electric vehicle charging stations to meet future demand.

Contributing to a Sustainable City



This proposed development is intended to create the kind of sustainable middle density development, carefully positioned in relation to alternate modes of transport, that contributes to a vital, low carbon, sustainable future envisioned for the City of Victoria.

Adding new homes and jobs in accessible locations holds the key for cities' fight against climate change as reducing automobile trips is the most significant component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As outlined above, the central location of the subject site in relation to multiple local amenities encourages a pedestrian and bicycle oriented lifestyle. The proposed development has been designed assuming walking, cycling and transit as primary transportation options for future residents.

The building will be designed and constructed to BC Step Code 3, in accordance with the City of Victoria's phased Step Code guidelines which were updated as of January 1st, 2020. Step Code 3 represents a 20% increase in efficiency. This includes designing the building systems in a way that will reach high levels of performance in Thermal Energy Demand Intensity (TEDI), Total Energy Use Intensity (TEUI), and airtightness.

Community Consultation

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 including our publicly accessible website page: aryze.ca/1693fort, where we update project information and provide an opportunity for community members to engage with us or stay informed throughout various stages of the approval process.

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.

Following our public launch back in June 2020 and many months of design development, we sought out neighbourhood and community feedback in a more formal way through hosting a Community Information Session moderated by the South Jubilee Neighbourhood Association via Zoom on the evening of January 11th, 2021. During this information session we presented a previous iteration of the project which was geared towards providing student housing.

We heard a range of community views on the student proposal last year and, in order to address some of the major concerns, we have changed the building to purpose-built rental housing. Following some minor changes to the building design, we sought additional community feedback on the proposal. We completed a follow-up Community Info Session on December 8th, 2021, hosted again by the South Jubilee Neighbour Association, in which the community response was highly supportive.

Throughout this process we have listened to the concerns of both the immediate neighbours and broader community, and have worked diligently with City Staff to address these concerns and improve our overall design. At this stage we feel that our proposal is much stronger and we look forward to exploring next steps to bringing these affordable homes into existence.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Quigley

Director of Development
Aryze Developments Inc.