

15 February 2024

City of Victoria
No.1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC
V8W 1P6

Attn.: Mayor & Council

Re: 1244 Wharf Street – Rezoning and Heritage Alteration Permit

In 2021 the City of Victoria updated the referenced site's zoning and issued a Heritage Alteration Permit for the revitalization of the existing building to include residential / hotel uses together with a rejuvenation of the building's significant Wharf Street facade. Since those approvals were issued, factors surrounding the project feasibility have challenged its progress toward construction, and now necessitate further adjustment of the proposal parameters.

As a result, new rezoning and HAP applications are required to incorporate a 2-storey addition at the roof of the existing building, and Cascadia Architects is pleased to submit these applications on behalf of The Salient Group (the 'Applicant'). As with the original proposal, the intended use remains residential / hotel, and these updated submissions have been prepared in consultation with a heritage consultant to maintain the proposal's compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and to acknowledge the City of Victoria's Old Town Design Guidelines. A separate Conservation Plan has been submitted as part of this application.

The building is located at the western termination of Yates Street, flanked by Reeson Park to the north, and the Victoria Regent Hotel to the south and the west. There is an existing dual aspect to the building located on the site, presenting a commercial frontage to Wharf Street and a more utilitarian harbour frontage to the water. Interestingly, the current 5-storey structure, which presents as 3-storeys on Wharf Street, is the result of several building phases and additions over several decades in the 19th century. The first building, with its rubble masonry foundation, was erected in 1882. Following this, an additional storey was added in 1892, with a large addition to the side in 1896. The architectural expression of the building evolved through these additions, and at completion of the 1896 addition it stood as a significant landmark at the foot of Yates Street, blending ornate Italianate and Romanesque elements within a late Victoria vernacular architecture. The random rubble stone foundations, brick masonry and load bearing masonry details, windows, decorative detailing, and iron shutters and doors constituted the significant character-defining elements of the building, but over time several of those key features from building's most prosperous era (namely the ornate balcony and pediment that adorned the Wharf Street frontage) were dismantled. The building's current condition now only hints at its former prestige, but nevertheless, the 'Yates Block' (it was commissioned for James Yates), remains a significant landmark as a surviving representation of the Victorian-era



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commercial warehouses that lined the Inner Harbour. The details of the building history and the Victoria's mercantile context in that era are described in the Conservation Plan.

As expressed in the original application, the Applicant's intent is to sympathetically rehabilitate this heritage-registered structure, but now with another layer of addition that expresses the extended evolution of use and occupation from the 19th to the 21st century. The outcome will be the conservation of the heritage value of this significant historical asset and its adaptive reuse to provide new residential/hotel and updated commercial space. Through renewal the building will contribute to the Old Town's resident population, street liveliness, and overall economic wellbeing. The introduction of residential/hotel uses along the west side of the building will also provide a needed overlook to the rear of the property and will help activate the David Foster walkway.

The OCP states that the City of Victoria strives to work with partners to attract jobs, residents, and visitors to Victoria by promoting the image of a vibrant, diverse, and creative city in a maritime setting, while retaining the importance of heritage, history, and tradition in defining Victoria's character. This proposal provides an excellent opportunity to advance this objective, integrating modern purpose and architectural expression with a historically significant building located along the city's waterfront while simultaneously upgrading its life safety performance. The proposed works will conserve and enhance the heritage property and improve the visual identity and appearance of the city, both from Wharf Street and the waterfront. It will significantly contribute to the quality and character of the Inner Harbour District as well as to its economic vitality and vibrancy.

Design Rationale:

As per Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, this proposal strives to express the heritage value of the current building facades by striking a delicate balance between removals and restorations to represent the building's condition at a specific time in its history. Where significant character-defining elements have been removed or have deteriorated to the point that they must be replaced with new elements, the new elements will express the forms, materials and detailing of sound versions of the original elements. In contrast, where significant new program and use occur within the building, or are added in new storeys atop the roof, the proposal introduces new architectural elements to the exterior which are physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to, and distinguishable from the existing building. Specifically, the addition, which employs a simple and visibly lightweight material palette of metal and glass in contrast to the mass-masonry of the 19th construction, is set back from the primary Wharf Street façade of the original building to give space to its ornate Italianate features. A continuous reveal line between the original parapet and the new upper floors on the other three elevations further underlines the clear point of separation between old and new. In plan the addition is properly orthogonal, resulting in a triangular overhang at the west elevation. This is a purposeful move to highlight the more idiosyncratic parallelogram of the original building footprint that was likely influenced by the shape and location of the harbour's edge at the time of construction. The addition is distinctly modern in its detailing and architectural language, but clearly draws inspiration from the proportions and composition of the historic structure, expressing the same number and vertical rhythm of window bays to the east and west as the dominant Wharf Street façade below. To the north and south the calmer solidity of the 'party' walls is carried up into the expression of those additional façade faces as subordinate sidewall elevations for the building.

The use of the restrained material palette also extends to minor exterior expressions of modern interior use within the original building fabric, following the rule to maintain a cohesive register of newness that complements and animate

the historic form of the building. This conceptual approach is evident in the treatment of new windows and doors. All new windows are positioned proud of the building face in thin metal sleeves. All modern doors are recessed to the inside face of existing exterior walls, incorporating this same device of a metal sleeve expressed on the exterior of the building. This subtle pushing, pulling, and rotation of modern architectural elements and the use of this distinct modern material creates a clear delineation between the historic structure and modern components.

Proposed Works:

The proposed renovation and addition will create 52 residential / hotel units distributed from levels 2 to 7, with related bicycle and unit storage spaces, and service / garbage rooms at level 1 below Wharf Street. A commercial retail or F&B unit will be re-established at the Wharf Street level. Additionally, this proposal will upgrade the building's structural, seismic, and life-safety standards. Using the City of Victoria's Tax Incentive Program (TIP), it is the Applicant's intention to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate character-defining elements of the building's exterior, placing particular emphasis on the Wharf Street frontage which expresses elaborate materials and detailing in comparison to the other three façades.

East (Wharf Street) Façade:

The restoration of a decorative balcony with scrolled metal brackets located above the recessed off-main entry is proposed, utilizing historical photographs and physical evidence as guides for its scale and design. This balcony was removed prior to 1972, and its proposed restoration is an important element of this revitalization project. The painted sheet metal balcony will re-establish the building's main entry as a focal point and will reassert the building's significance along Wharf Street. Similarly, a portion of the elaborate decorative pediment that sat atop the entry bay will be recreated from historical photos, reestablishing fundamental aspects of the original ornate character of the 1896 façade composition.

The reconfiguration of the two existing secondary entries along Wharf Street is proposed as a means of reintroducing the original 1882 configuration of entries and windows. The entries in this portion of the building have been reinstated and/or moved multiple times, and the current doors are not original to 1882, 1892, or 1896 construction. By locating twin glass doors in distinctly modern metal frames between a historic window to the south and a new window which incorporates the 1896 upper transom and matches historic fenestration to the north, the language of entries along Wharf Street is compositionally clarified, nodding simultaneously to an historic past and a modern future. Additionally, this reconfiguration better achieves accessibility requirements for interior uses.

North Façade:

Archival photographs reference three existing windows at the Wharf Street level at the north façade. It is proposed that two existing openings will be rehabilitated as functional windows serving spaces inside. New modern windows are being proposed on floors 4 and 5 along the north wall to accommodate residential units and increase light and livability in the homes. Their size and proportion reference the historic windows located on the west façade. There is currently a dedicated mural from the late 1980s located on an existing stucco rainscreen on the north wall that the Applicant is proposing to retain in place and repair as required, subject to further investigation on site.

West Façade:

Rehabilitation of existing windows is proposed within the existing façade, and new mechanical vent caps serving residential supply and exhaust air requirements will be added. The addition's façade above matches the east addition

façade, with a higher percentage of glass area and finer detailing giving a lighter expression that contrasts with the simple mass brick façade below. The cantilevered southeast corner reinforces the sense of mass in the strong brick base, which anchors and supports the addition above.

South Façade:

New modern windows are proposed along the south façade of the building, providing enhanced access to daylight for the corner unit residences. Their proportion and scale are harmonized with the historic architectural pattern of the building's historic fenestration. Glazing in the addition above is also more restrained, maintaining the primacy of the east/west orientation of the building between street and harbour.

Lighting

The proposed lighting strategy focuses on the east elevation as the dominant façade, employing the use of up and down lighting to highlight the structural bays and pilasters, and to celebrate the re-established decorative balcony and cornice structures. The overall focus is illumination of the public realm and celebration of the textural quality and historic pedestrian scale and rhythm of the building, highlighting shadow and depth to emphasize the three-dimensional quality of its historic materials.

In conclusion, the 'Yates Block' building holds significant value as a historic resource in a prominent waterfront location in the heart of Old Town. The existing building contributes to the rich sense of place in the downtown core – however it is currently underperforming as a meaningful destination in the Inner Harbour and needs revitalization. It is our belief that the works described in this Rezoning and Heritage Alteration Permit application will successfully restore the building's prominence and vitality, celebrating its historic significance while imbuing it with new purpose in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

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