



The City of Victoria
#1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC

February 9, 2024

Dear Mayor and Council

Please consider this letter as our support for the application from Open Gate Development to build a 12-story Hampton Inn at 603 Pandora Street in Victoria BC.

With the loss of many motels and mid-level accommodations in the City of Victoria and the stricter Air BnB regulations, we are finding it more difficult to house film workers within our region. Although it will not solve the lack of hotel rooms, 198 more hotel rooms of this type will help us land shows, create jobs and increase economic growth in Victoria.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Gilbert
Film Commissioner

Hello,

I am writing to express my serious concern regarding the proposal for a 12-story hotel at the corner of Government and Pandora.

A 12-story building is far outside the bounds of the official community plan. Old town is a desirable and charming part of the city in large part due to the human scale (low rise) architecture in the neighbourhood.

The developers are arguing that the building will act as an anchor on the edge of Old Town, but that corner is not on the edge of Old Town - it is right in the middle of one of the most important parts of Old Town, the entrance to the Chinatown sub-area of Old Town. As you know, Old Town extends all the way up to Chatham.

Furthermore, the city decided in the Government Street revitalization project to build that corner into a special park highlighting the entrance into Chinatown, with the goal of creating pleasant and usable public space. A 12-story building butting up against this park will not create a pleasant atmosphere where people want to linger. The park would be on the north side of the 12-story building and would be in shade much of the day. The massive scale of such a tall building is not appropriate next to an important city park. The revitalization report approved by council says that the park is intended to "reflect the character and identity of Chinatown". It would not be in keeping with that intention to approve a building right next to it that is so grossly outside the OCP height restrictions.

In addition, I would like to suggest that an apartment building would provide greater value to the neighbourhood than another hotel. We have a severe housing shortage. Also, greater density will create a more lively local community and provide economic support for more of the types of services that locals need, such as a grocery store, for example.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Christina Vinters, Downtown Resident
217-599 Pandora Avenue

To whom I may concern,

Wanting to have my voice heard in regard to the potential 12 story hotel being proposed on the corner of Pandora and Government.

This corner is a part of Old Town and an important artery of the heart of this highly prized touristic attraction including Market Square, China Town & the big sky, low story, brick look. Sticking an 12 story eyesore in the middle of it is the wrong decision.

I was inspired by talk of a green space on that corner with a residential building that matched the height of the area. I am disheartened at the thought of a huge sun blocking building that will oblique the sun on the potential green space as well as ruin what is a lovely corner that seques into these historical sites that are a part of the unique lure of Old Town. I heard tell of this 12 story being "an anchor" for edge of Old Town but it is not the edge...it is the heart! Old Town has anchors - the Jawl building, the Hudson and The Bay Center. Please let's not let the high rise tsunami head toward the harbour. We must protect the size of Old Town and respect what it brings to the city.

A question: Are we not in a housing crisis? Do we really need another hotel? There is substantial airbnb that is now bringing in revenue to the city. Do we really need another hotel?

Finally as a the owner of Raino Dance and a resident in the area, I know that what makes this area alive is the folks like myself who live in the area and provide entrepreneurship, services and are customers ALL year long. We are the souls of this community and we need more of those to move in to ensure our downtown stays vibrant in a multifaceted way. Let's not turn our downtown into a line of Gucci stores servicing visitors who come, stay, take and don't actually care to do the work of protecting and building the unique culture of this area.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Respectfully,
Monique Salez
223-599 Pandora

Hello,

I wanted to write to you as a resident of downtown, someone who has raised a daughter here and who quite literally uses the old town as our backyard. I have huge concerns about the change in proposal regarding the hotel at the corner of Government and Pandora. Six stories was enough, but twelve stories is completely out of line with the regulations, not to mention the history and community of the old town, especially right by the Chinatown gates, as this corner is.

It really confused me when the developer was talking about this huge building being an “anchor” on “the edge” of Old Town. Since when is Government and Pandora the edge of Old Town? We’re literally right in the middle of it, right by the famous gates! It made me concerned that he didn’t actually seem to know a lot about this area to begin with, yet wants to build a twelve story hotel here. And from what I recall, a park is hopefully being put in by the city right beside it— A park that would be shaded by a completely out-of-place structure that is yet another building geared toward tourists rather than locals.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

Giordana McKnight

Hello Council,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed development project in our heritage zone. As a resident and stakeholder in our community, I believe it is crucial to voice these concerns to ensure that any development aligns with the values and regulations set forth for our neighborhood.

Firstly, it has come to my attention that the proposed development intends to exceed the height limit set for buildings in our heritage zone. While I understand the need for urban development, it is essential to preserve the historical and architectural integrity of our community. The current regulations stipulate a maximum height of four stories, and any deviation from this guideline risks compromising the unique character of our neighborhood.

Additionally, I am deeply concerned about the proposed use of the development. In the midst of a housing crisis, it is imperative that we prioritize projects that address the pressing need for affordable housing. Our community should serve as a beacon of inclusivity and accessibility, providing housing options for individuals and families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, I strongly urge the developers to reconsider their plans and allocate the development for affordable housing units.

I appreciate your attention to these concerns and look forward to engaging in further.

Lastly, I urge council to reconsider their efforts in abolishing short term rentals as this hotel would not need to be built if short term rentals were allowed to continue. The Short term rentals on the market currently will not be a fair price to continue to "affordable housing" and will not solve this issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Rebecca Peter

To the Mayor and Victoria City Council:

First, thank you for inviting members of the community to provide feedback on this development.

My name is Dan Girgis and I am an . I own a unit at 595 Pandora Avenue, which is approximately 30 seconds walking from the front door of the proposed development.

First of all, I certainly can recognize why this development is even being considered. Tourism is vital to the Victoria economy and generates significant revenue, both business and tax, for the immediate Downtown Community and Government at large.

It is in this vein that I ask: why is the city keen on doubling FSR, and permanently altering the Old Town streetscape, while simultaneously removing the property rights of short-term rental unit operators in the area who already meet this level of tourism need?

STR operators, licensed by the city and welcomed by their respective strata councils, purchased units in good faith and a market premium. As has been said in the BC legislature, the city lobbied for those rights to be taken away in the name of affordable housing.

Now, the city is considering permitting an impersonal and non-contextual hotel development in the heart of downtown on land that could indeed be earmarked for the construction of affordable housing units. After all, governments at all levels have very reasonably drawn attention to the housing emergency in BC. But instead of making a real dent in the problem by incentivizing and permitting the construction of affordable housing stock, they would rather attack law-abiding citizens and remove their property usage rights that were acquired in good faith. At the very least, the city should at least lobby to grandfather such rights as is standard practice across the globe.

In summary:

- Please do not wreck our beautiful Old Town to construct an impersonal Hilton that will profit into the pockets of corporate shareholders. Please consider requesting an amendment to the hotel design such that it be contextual to the streetscape.
- Please consider that simultaneously removing the property rights of STR's in the surrounding community is hypocritical and contradictory to your stated aim.
- Please consider that development land is development land: land for a hotel is also land for affordable housing.
- Responding to a housing affordability emergency can be done without taking rights away from law-abiding, conscientious citizens. Many other countries and cities do this well and there is a lot to learn.

The hotel rooms you are considering permitting will be no larger than many of the units in the Janion building, a former hotel, and yet you plan to force those into the long-term occupancy market? Please consider the contradictory nature of this approach.

Thank you for considering our points of view.

Respectfully,

Dan

--

Dan Girgis, MD

To the Mayor and Victoria City Council:

First, thank you for inviting members of the community to provide feedback on this development.

My name is Thomas Cowan and I have worked in tourism off and on over the past 10 years for Prince of Whales, as well as Tug boats on rotation for the last 4 years around the coast here.

First of all, I certainly can recognise why this development is even being considered. Tourism is vital to the Victoria economy and generates significant revenue, both business and tax, for the immediate Downtown Community and Government at large.

It is in this vein that I ask: why is the city keen on doubling height restrictions here, and permanently altering the Old Town streetscape, while simultaneously removing the property rights of short-term rental unit operators in the area who already meet this level of tourism need? Have the individuals suffering huge losses of income and well being; all been so the council can push a massive hotel through the same neighbourhood? Please give your heads a few shakes here, this reeks of political corruption and bribery from the hotel lobbyists.

STR operators, licensed by the city and welcomed by their respective strata councils, purchased units in good faith and a market premium. As has been said in the BC legislature, the city lobbied for those rights to be taken away in the name of affordable housing, why are you not building affordable housing? Remember most of the people in the community are using the income from their STR's to create their own affordability amongst the most expensive years ever in Victoria, while keeping their profits in the community.

Now, the city is considering permitting an impersonal and non-contextual hotel development in the heart of downtown on land that could have been earmarked for the construction of affordable housing units. After all, governments at all levels have very reasonably drawn attention to the housing emergency in BC. But instead of making a real dent in the problem by incentivizing and permitting the construction of affordable housing stock, they would rather attack law-abiding citizens and remove their property usage rights that were acquired in good faith. At the very least, the city should at least lobby to grandfather such rights as is standard practice across the globe.

In summary:

- Please do not wreck our beautiful Old Town to construct an impersonal Hilton that will profit into the pockets of corporate shareholders. Please consider requesting an amendment to the hotel design such that it be contextual to the streetscape.
- Please consider that simultaneously removing the property rights of STR's in the surrounding community is hypocritical and contradictory to your stated aim.

- Please consider that development land is development land: land for a hotel is also land for affordable housing.
- Responding to a housing affordability emergency can be done without taking rights away from law-abiding, conscientious citizens. Many other countries and cities do this well and there is a lot to learn.

The hotel rooms you are considering permitting will be no larger than many of the units in the Janion building, a former hotel, and yet you plan to force those into the long-term occupancy market? Please consider the contradictory nature of this approach.

I don't know how many councillors like to support local, but lobbying to destroy local entrepreneurs lives, who followed all the rules you've set out, to the benefit of large hotel corporations doesn't feel like you value local business at all all.

At the very least, all future monster hotels like this should include some sort of budget accommodation for travellers or hotel staff. With these new rules being shoved down your citizens throats, their only options are expensive hotels, or 90 day leases??? I guess there's always a car or a tent to sleep in if you have an emergency housing situation.. its no wonder this town is in such turmoil. People need options of 30-50\$ places a night to stay... don't build more massive hotels while killing your citizens mortgage helpers and well being.

I'm surprised if any of this is read, but here is hoping.
Thomas Cowan

Hi there, I'm responding to the Proposed Development Notice for 603 & 607 Pandora Ave, Victoria.

I am the owner of 3 suites at 524 Yates St, Victoria, BC and STRONGLY oppose this proposed building and design. There are several reasons for this below:

1. This location is in the heart of Old Town Victoria and it does not conform whatsoever to the Old Town aesthetic and will be a complete eyesore to the neighborhood.
2. The height of the building is a huge issue as well, as it will tower over every building in the area. A huge part of what makes Old Town Victoria so special is that it has historical value in this specific area... All large buildings should be in the business district or East of Blanshard, where all the rest of the large buildings are.
3. Another huge issue I have is the May 1st, 2024 removal of property rights for the OTD-1 Community in regards to the purpose-built Legal Non-Conforming status of people's property. It is totally outrageous that the City of Victoria Council is not exempting this specific purpose-built housing from the province's heavy-handed STR restrictions. Devaluing LOCAL Victoria resident's property to enrich a large hotel company is both repulsive and un-Canadian. The timing of the removal of Short-Term Rentals in Legal Non-Conforming purpose-built paralleled with the developments of hotels in the exact neighborhood are tone-deaf and frankly disgusting to the residents of this area. Not to mention the timing and facts surrounding the arson of this property, which I believe is still under investigation.

Needless to say, it is a resounding **NO** from me to have 603 & 607 Pandora Ave re-zoned and to have a gawdy hotel in the last historic area of my City.

All the best,

Tim Rhone

Hello,

I am a homeowner at 610 Johnson Street in Victoria. I am writing regarding the proposed 12 story development at 603 and 607 Pandora Ave of a 198 room motel.

I have attended two previous community meetings hosted by the developers. The last community meeting changed the project from the previous proposed seven stories to the present 12 story hotel configuration. When community members enquired as to why the development was increased to the present 12 story configuration, the developer stated that this was the only way they could recoup their money and have any profit.

I am against this proposed development. This project is too large and not in keeping with the historic look and feel of the neighborhood. This proposed development will tower over all of the other residences and historic buildings in the area. The building will create an eyesore down the street from city hall and a block away from historic Chinatown. The fact that the developers need to build a 12 story building in order to make a profit should not be a reason for destroying the look and feel of this area.

The developers rhetoric that the building 'bookends' Government street, "forming a counterpoint to the historic Belmont building" is merely an excuse for their project. Government street does not need to have a bookend of buildings and historic buildings such the Belmont are grandfathered in at their heights.

I urge you to reject this proposal in its present configuration. If a hotel is needed in this location, only one matching the six story Best Western at the corner of Johnson and Douglas, and the five story Hotel Rialto at the corner of Pandora and Douglas should be allowed.

All the best,
Helen Stavropoulos Sandoval
301-610 Johnson Street
Victoria, BC V8W 1M4

Dear Mayor and Council.

Unfortunately I cannot attend your upcoming hearing on this matter. Thus this letter.

I vigorously oppose this proposal.

I know few remember the two years of intensive public consultations called the *Victoria 2020 Visioning* exercise. But among the core outcomes were recommendations supporting a trade-off that concentrated the densification of the urban core east of Douglas to support both the economic and social revitalization of Old Town. This was translated into the subsequent OCP and Downtown Plan through a set of development height restrictions creating an urban arena stepping back from the harbour.

This development not only totally ignores the basic elements of this plan but, if carried out, would break a public trust with the citizens of Victoria.

Under the guidelines the proposed 12 storey hotel might be entitled to seven storeys if it replicated the Government Street façade of the heritage building it replaced, or if its design respected the historic fabric and character of its Old Town context.

The 12 storeys would compromise views, vistas and sightlines which comprise the unique heritage character of Old Town. It would tower several storeys above its tallest neighbours, the 6 storey Union Bank building and 5 storey Federal Post Office. The overall design and style clashes with the heritage character of the neighbouring structures.

The economic argument of the proponents is not persuasive. Two blocks away David Chard is revitalizing a heritage building for a 135 rooms hotel within the Old Town guidelines. He has been quite open with his economic proforma which is outlined in a technical paper posted on the **Victoria Heritage Observatory** website “*Economics of Heritage Conservation: Victoria’s Historic Urban Core*”. <https://victoriaworldheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Brief-16.2.-August-6.pdf>

Since 1990 the City has invested many millions in direct grants and tax incentives which have attracted over half a billion in restoration work, prompted the restoration of over 100 heritage buildings, and created over 800 residential units.

Why compromise the integrity of Old Town now?

Please decline this proposal.

Sincerely,

Martin Segger
1760 Patly Place
Victoria B.C.



Alicia Ferguson

From: Development Services email inquiries
Subject: RE: 603 Padora Ave. - Hampton Inn Project

Dear Mayor and Council,

I'm writing in regards to the hotel development proposal for 603 Pandora Ave. and ask that you reconsider the scale of the proposed Hampton Inn Project. The development is requesting an increase in height and density to 12 storeys, however this far exceeds the allowable height for the area goes against the OCP's vision for the historic area.

Victoria is a world renowned city for its beauty and historic charm. It's uniqueness is what locals and tourist love about it and also what sets it apart from other cities. The OCP acknowledges that many North American cities try to emulate Victoria's walkable urban pattern (section 6. Overview) Victoria saw the need to protect it's uniqueness and in 1965 developed the first citywide plan. "The Overall Plan aimed to balance urban renewal and redevelopment with the conservation of heritage" (Section 1. Page 11). The city has updated it's plan roughly every 10 years since and maintaining the historic core of the city has always remained key in the vision, value and goals of the city's plans. Throughout the years the city has done a great job of maintaining the historic core of the city, Chinatown in particular has been beautifully preserved and visitors come to see it's historic charm, not to see towers. All the building surrounding the proposed hotel are four storeys in height, and that very much makes up the feel of the core historic area. An amendment to allow this building to be three times the height of all neighbouring properties would feel very out of place. It would also set a terrible height and density precedence in the historic core that would lead to further erosion of the OCP's vision for the area.

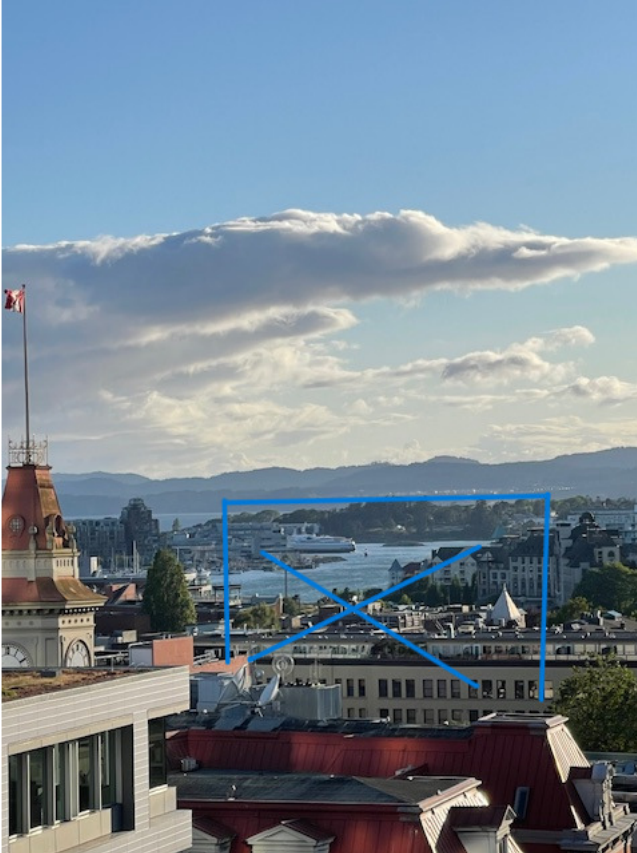
The OCP states multiple times that the allowable height for this area is one to five stores:

- Section 6 (page 54) Core Historic, A. Built Form: "Heights may generally range from one to five storeys, depending on the existing and envisioned context of the area and the ability to retain its historic character."
- Section 6 (page 56) Core Employment, A. Built Form: "Heights range depending on existing and envisioned context of the area. Generally envisioned to be five storeys west of Douglas Street and may generally range from eight to 15 storeys between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street as detailed in local area plans."
- Appendix A, DPA 1(HC): CORE HISTORIC Section 3 (b): "skyline of varying heights from one to five storeys"

The hotel claims it will not be economically viable if it's not allowed to build 12 storeys; undoubtedly it would be viable with the added height. The hotel would gained eight stories with amazing inner harbour views that they could charge a premium rate for, what hotel wouldn't claim it necessary for that gain. There are already several hotels built and operating in the area that followed the OCP's allowable one to five storeys height range. By allowing a new hotel to come in that does not need to conform to the same rules puts these existing hotels at a disadvantage because they will not have the same beautiful harbour views. What then is stopping them, or the next new build, from also building to 12 stories? Before long the historic charm of the area will be gone forever. If this developer does not feel they can build a viable hotel within that height range then perhaps it is not the best location for them to build a hotel, and the city should not be pressured into allowing it. In fact the OCP cautions the developer against land speculation that requires a height and density zoning bylaw amendment stating "the City is not obligated to approve any such application" (section 6, URBAN PLACE DESIGNATIONS. Page 41)

To allow this amendment so the developer can have an economic gain will not only come at an economic cost to the neighbouring hotels but also to many homeowners. Many condo owners to the east of the hotel will suffer an economic loss through the hotels economic gain. It does not feel right that a big company should get to change the rules at the expense of everyday people who followed the rules. I know this argument is self interested but my husband and I bought our condo because of it's beautiful view of the inner harbour. When we saw the view we immediately fell

in love with it. Unfortunately, when we purchased the market was hot and very competitive; with multiple offers we knew we had to go in with our best offer if we wanted to get the place. So we did what due diligence we could and reviewed the OCP to ensure we wouldn't lose our beautiful view. Based on the OCP and the one to five storeys range for the area, we felt comfortable with putting in our best offer. This hotel at 12 storeys will completely eliminate our view of the inner harbour and will devalue our condo significantly. And while that fiscally hurts, what hurts the most is the loss of view. It's why we purchased the condo, I love to just sit and watch out the window the daily inner harbour activities. Now when I look out the window I'm sad for the loss and anger at the short sightedness that will change the skyline. And while we are just one unit, there are many, many condo buildings in our area. The number of other units that will lose their view and have their property values drop is significant and should not be disregarded. It feels wrong and unjust that one big developer gets to gain an economic benefit at the expense of hardworking individuals. If a community can not trust that the rules set by its city will be followed, then it is difficult to have much confidence in the city.



Just one of many condo views that will be lost.

The developer mentions the public engagement they've had and seem to indicate that there was support from the community. While they notified people in a 200m radius, that does not include many residence to the east who would be most impacted by the 12 storey height. It was not until August 2024 that I saw the public notice signs on the property alerting me to the proposal. By then, according to the City of Victoria's website, it looks like much progress had already been made on the application. So my hope is that the public who live outside of 200m still have a chance to have their say.

I am not opposed to a hotel being built in that location, I think some development to the site would be an improvement and a hotel would bring tourists to the area. However, years of preserving and protecting what makes the area unique and special should not be erased by allowing the height increase. I understand the city can allow a variances to the OCP that would override and allow this, however it would be very short sighted and would forever change the area. If financial viability was reason enough to disregard the OCP then the historic charm of Victoria would have been sold off long ago. We must not give away what makes the city special because a developer claims today's costs make it prohibitive to build in accordance with the OCP. All developers throughout time will argue cost necessity for change,

but if your predecessors had not stuck to the OCP, the historic core of Victoria would look much different today. If the city is to consider a reasonable height variance, a 20% increase would seem reasonable which would be equivalent to a one story increase. To go from 5 to 12 is a 240% increase in height, how is that reasonable? The OCP is not to be taken lightly, it has been developed over the years and "is adopted as a City bylaw and the Local Government Act requires that all subsequent bylaws enacted and works undertaken must be consistent with it. It therefore has a guiding role by providing policy direction for all City departments whose activities have, or may have, an impact on present and future development in Victoria. (Section 2: Purpose, scope & linkages, Overview).

Please do not be the council that destroys the historic core of our beautiful City.

Sincerely,
Diane Duke-Fend