

September 20, 2018

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC

RE: 1010 Fort Street, Rezoning and Development Permit Application

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am pleased to re-submit for your consideration a rezoning and development permit application for 1010 Fort Street, which will deliver 53 units of purpose-built rental housing, secured through a housing agreement for a period of ten years. We are pleased to inform you that the proposal includes a significant number of family friendly units (17% two bed, 6% two bed + den) and a new commercial retail space that will add to the vibrancy of Fort Street. The retail space will host a coffee shop that will offer residents a secondary social area to compliment the proposed rooftop amenity area. The addition of new residents and retail space will further strengthen the role of Fort Street as a destination within the City of Victoria, while continuing to recognize its importance as a key movement corridor for transit, cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles alike.

The proposals location in the heart of downtown and its absence of vehicle parking offers future residents an alternative to the car-dependent lifestyle that defines much of the Capital region. Abundant bicycle parking and direct access to the new Fort Street cycle lanes, combined with existing transit and car sharing options will afford residents the chance to participate in the active, walkable lifestyle that defines Downtown, without the burden of owning and operating a private vehicle. Vehicle parking has not been proposed on this project nor is not required under the current zoning as a result of the property's narrow width and limited site area, which significantly impact the ability to design and construct an efficient, cost-effective underground parking area. These limitations are one of the key reasons we have proposed a rental building rather than a condo, recognizing that home owners typically expect at least one parking stall.

Finally, I want to note that a CAC has not been proposed for this project, as we understand Council's draft CAC Policy excludes purpose-built rental housing projects. Also, of note to Council is the provision of 10 *affordable* rental units in this proposal. These units are being provided to satisfy Abstract Developments CAC commitment for the rezoning of 1201 Fort Street. These units do not represent a CAC for the current proposal and their space is included in the FSR calculations.

I thank you for your consideration and we look forward to advancing this project with staff and council.

Warm Regards,


Adam Cooper MCIP, RPP
Senior Development Manager



Description of Proposal

The proposal for 1010 Fort Street is to rezone from the CA-42 Zone - Harris Green Commercial District, to a new site-specific zone suited for the increasing density and evolving framework of Downtown Victoria. The proposed rezoning will meet the goals and objectives for density and building height in the Core Residential designation within Victoria's Official Community Plan and Downtown Core Area Plan. The proposal addresses the Design Guidelines from the DCAP, but as discussed later, the narrow lot at 1010 Fort presents several design and development challenges and makes it unrealistic to apply a strict interpretation of the DCAP guidelines. The FSR (5.7) and height (9 storey) of the project are also generally consistent with the direction of the Downtown Core Area Plan.

Project Benefits and Amenities

The primary benefit of this development proposal is an increase of rental housing stock within the Core Residential designation. Of significant importance is the fact that a substantial number of the units are suitable for family housing (17% of units are two beds, and 6% of units are 2 bed + Den for a combined total of 23% of all units). Of the 53 total units, 10 will also be allocated as affordable rental units in order to satisfy Abstract Development's commitment to provide 10 affordable rental units, per the CAC for the rezoning of 1201 Fort Street.

In addition to new rental residential space, the project will also include new commercial retail space that will be used for a coffee shop, further activating the fabulous Fort Street Corridor. New sidewalks with a surface treatment designed to meet the Downtown Public Realm Plan will be provided and will improve the experience for pedestrians.

- The Harris Green neighbourhood will benefit from an increase in family friendly rental housing options.
- The city's significant political and capital investment into the Fort Street cycling lanes will be leveraged for the creation of a 'bike-lane oriented development' that offers new options for families searching for affordability, by allowing them to live a car-free lifestyle.
- The project is proposed to house 10 affordable rental units (5 in income quartile 2 and 5 in income quartile 3), as part of Abstract Development's commitment as part of a CAC for the rezoning of 1201 Fort Street.
- Streetscape upgrades will be constructed to ensure continuous accessible design across the frontage as well as to meet Victoria's OCP.
- A commercial retail unit at grade, envisioned to be a coffee shop or café is proposed. This space will offer amenities to the building residents as well as expand the food options in the local community.

Neighbourhood

1010 Fort Street is located east of 1006 Fort Street (an existing 3.5 storey commercial building), west of 1012 Fort Street (an existing single storey commercial building), north of 1007 and 1011 Fort Street (existing 4 storey commercial buildings) and south of 1029 View Street (a development site currently under construction, that will be the home of the "Jukebox", a market housing project).



Design and Development Permit Guidelines

1010 Fort Street falls within the DPA 7B (HC): Corridors Heritage Development Permit Area. The proposed development meets the Corridors Heritage purpose of revitalizing the area through a residential development with active commercial at the grade level. Multi-unit residential is encouraged to be intensified to medium-high density along Fort Street between Cook and Douglas streets.

The proposal complies with these guidelines by helping to revitalize the secondary arterial of Fort Street, improving the appearance of the corridor, particularly at the pedestrian level where the brick and glass façade is a major improvement over the existing structure on the site. The pedestrian and cycling experience will be improved through human scale urban design, which is compatible with the new cycling infrastructure on Fort.

Transportation

1010 Fort St is located along the secondary arterial of Fort Street, between the Cook Street arterial to the east and the Vancouver Street collector to the west. Transit service operates in the Fort Street Corridor and a new two-way, separated cycling facility is located along the southern frontage of the subject site. No off-street parking is proposed for the project and the current zoning has a provision that allows narrow lots such as 1010 Fort to exclude vehicle parking. Specifically, the CA-42 zone notes that “no parking is required for a lot that has an area of not more than 650 m² or a width of not more than 18.5 m”. The site area of 1010 Fort is 628.29 m² and the width of the lot is 18.03 m, making it possible to exclude parking under either provision. The current zone allows for 4 storeys of mixed use commercial / residential development with an FSR of 2.5 and no off-street parking.

Unlike the current Schedule C, the parking requirements for the CA-42 zone are not related to tenure, location or unit size, but instead are tied to site area and site width - critical factors when considering the efficiency and cost of providing underground parking. Although we are proposing a greater density on the site, the constraints of site width and area have not changed and as such, we are asking Council to carry the parking exclusions forward into the new zone. Given our intention to create housing that is attainable, we are respectfully requesting that the requirement for off-street parking be waived as it would be extremely expensive to provide. Should the parking variance not be permitted, the program of the building would need to change to satisfy the minimum parking requirements in the new Schedule C.

Mitigating factors in the variance are the location of the building downtown which provides future residents with the option to walk, cycle and use transit as their primary ways of moving around the City. Given the mix of land uses around the site and the key destinations within short walking distance, we are confident our proposal can be introduced to the neighbourhood without creating an undue burden on the neighbourhood or the supply of parking intended to serve the local businesses along Fort Street.

Further, we are excited at a chance to introduce a new option for families trying to achieve affordability in a city that has seen surging home prices. By eliminating transportation costs from their household budgets, young families and those working in the service industries will have a greater proportion of disposable income available to save or put back into the local economy. What better location than our downtown core to offer this type of opportunity?



Heritage

The existing building on site does not have heritage value and no heritage designated buildings will be impacted by the development of this proposal. The proposal relies on brick façade and offers a small retail frontage which responds to the heritage characteristics of the Fort Street corridor.

Green Buildings

Green building features within the building will employ passive and active strategies such as efficient suite layout to maximize livability, shading and overhangs across the facades, efficient use of durable and long-lasting building products, use of contemporary heating and cooling systems, and high performance envelope and glazing design. Most notably, by developing an infill project to a higher density with no vehicle parking, we are maximizing the use of our most precious scarce resource in Victoria and reducing the GHG emissions associated with our residents by having them rely on alternative modes of transportation as their primary means of navigating the city.

Infrastructure

Being located in the downtown Core of Victoria, there is currently adequate sewer, water, sidewalks, roads and parks within the area. Infrastructure improvements will be provided as required by the City of Victoria.

