



Nicole Roberts
Unity Urban Properties
3471 Short Street
Victoria, BC V8X 2V6

City of Victoria
#1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC, V8W 1P6
c/o Alec Johnston ajohnston@victoria.ca

RE: Unity Commons Application Update 1303 Fairfield Rd.

Dear Mayor and Council,

We write to provide an update on our application requesting Council's support for the redevelopment of the Fairfield United Church. As our engagement with Council began prior to the November election, I am taking this opportunity to provide context and background both for newly elected council members as well as a refresher for those returning.

The goals for Unity Commons stem from Council's broad vision to increase rental accommodation, to build structures that are environmentally responsible and to invest in amenities that promote health and wellbeing and enrich neighbourhoods.

In the spring of 2018 the City of Victoria required that new construction meet Step One of the new BC Energy Step Code noting that by 2020, Step Three would be required. The implementation of the new progressive building code means that buildings are more energy efficient through design and materials utilization. Unity Commons will be built to Step Three specifications and features 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes that will remain rental homes in perpetuity through a registered covenant. These homes are built on top of a dedicated Sanctuary space that will serve as the new home for the Fairfield United congregation and a Community Commons area.

The Fairfield United congregation is very involved across the community and through the subsidization of this 2,350 square foot space, we are recognizing the importance of public space and the role that it plays in fostering inclusive and compassionate communities. This space will become the new home for the Fairfield United congregation and function also as a community space for inter-faith worship, arts and cultural activities and opportunities that promote social connection and inclusion. A new café space with an outdoor seating area has been introduced on the corner of Moss and Fairfield. This café space will offer a local business owner the opportunity to expand their existing neighbourhood business. This addition allows for a safe and welcoming outdoor seating area and improves site lines and access to the existing crosswalk promoting public safety.

In partnership with the congregation of Fairfield United Church, we have undertaken extensive engagement with the neighbourhood over a period of two years. This has taken the form of numerous open houses, community meetings, smaller neighbor meetings, and meetings with individuals. We have listened carefully and responded to concerns raised and requests for new opportunities as much as possible. A summary of concerns raised and our responses is attached for your review.

Changes to the application:

- Working directly with our most immediate neighbours, we have extensively redesigned the project to further protect their privacy. These changes include the introduction of clerestory windows which will allow light into the apartments but will provide no oversight of our neighbour's home and yard. We have relocated and/or re-orientated balconies and refined privacy screens to further preserve our neighbour's privacy.
- Unity Commons will meet Step Three of the new BC Energy Step Code exceeding the City's requirement of Step One. The loss of one rental unit necessitated the move from Step Four to Step Three in order to ensure that we could retain market rental homes.
- We explored with City of Victoria staff the opportunity to include a 'pull-out' on Moss Street in front of the new Sanctuary entrance. Since the site slopes steeply from Moss Street to the sidewalk, a pedestrian drop-off would require a retaining wall and stairs from the street. This approach was considered intrusive and less than ideal for users. Planning and Transportation staff did not support the concept. The existing pull-out for pedestrian drop-off on Fairfield Road will be maintained.
- A new dog-friendly water fountain will be added to the public gathering space on the corner of Moss and Fairfield

In summary, Unity Commons is a relevant and innovative redevelopment in a city that is modernizing. It introduces much-needed rental homes to a family-oriented neighbourhood, and our subsidization of the Sanctuary/Community Commons introduces important purpose-built community space that supports the health and wellbeing of an inclusive and compassionate community. The energy-efficient building design encourages a simple compact form with a low ratio of surface to volume and balances that imperative by varying the massing for urban design interest. The design allows for optimal energy efficiency which in turn contributes positively to the affordability needs of our residents who will live and work there.

Unity Commons is a small project that delivers large. It responds broadly to the complex needs of the community in thoughtful, deliberate and meaningful ways that contribute to the environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability of our neighbourhoods.

We thank Council for their thoughtful consideration and seek their support to proceed to a public hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Roberts".

Nicole Roberts
Unity Commons

Unity Commons: Community engagement summary of concerns

Concerns Raised	Considerations	Unity Commons
<p>Desire by some to retain the brick church structure</p>	<p>Church structure is 92 years old. It is constructed of bricks that are ‘half-baked’ and the building has deteriorated badly.</p> <p>It is not economically feasible to restore the brick building.</p> <p>The church structure does not meet the latest seismic requirement or the fire/safety code standards. Areas of the Church were closed in 2016.</p> <p>Community organizations that were using the Church as their venue along with the United Church congregation were asked to relocate due to the deterioration of the building and public safety concerns in early 2018.</p> <p>The church is not on the heritage registry and can be dismantled.</p> <p>All materials will be repurposed, upcycled and recycled.</p>	<p>Redevelopment includes a ground floor purpose-built Sanctuary space for the Fairfield United congregation; This space will also function as a community space for inter-faith worship, cultural activities and opportunities that promote social connection and inclusion.</p> <p>There is a proven need for new community space in the City of Victoria.</p> <p>This space is subsidized by the developer and is an innovative model that meets the goals of achieving economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability.</p> <p>Existing memorial plaques, stones and bricks are being preserved and reintroduced at the entrance to the new Sanctuary and Community Common.</p>
<p>Building massing and design</p>	<p>Building energy efficiency has design implications.</p> <p>The Unity Commons apartments will be built to meet Step Three of the new BC Energy Step Code. Energy requirements for these homes will be approximately 75% lower than current building code requirements.</p> <p>It’s true that the materials and details of this building are modern; This is a modern building built in the 21st Century and environmental priorities are requiring all of us to achieve more with our buildings.</p> <p>Unity Commons is an innovative building that does its best to be responsive to the climate, its neighbours, the street life of its context, and its social responsibility.</p> <p>Unity Commons is not as high as the peak of the existing Church and it’s massing allows for 5% more public gathering space.</p>	<p>Working in cooperation with our neighbours, the design of Unity Commons has been amended to further consider their privacy.</p> <p>The top floor of Unity Commons has been further set back from Moss Street and from the neighbour to the south to improve privacy and reduce the apparent height of the building to three storeys.</p> <p>To accomplish this, we have reduced the rental homes by one unit from 16 to 15 and we have moved from our original commitment of Step Four building code to Step Three to keep the homes market rental rather than luxury condominiums.</p> <p>Citizens have encouraged us to add a dog-friendly fountain to the outdoor public gathering space and we have made this addition.</p>

Concerns Raised	Considerations	Unity Commons
<p>Parking concerns raised in the neighbourhood</p>	<p>Currently there are no designated parking spots for the Church, yet the Church has been operating with a congregation of 60 – 100 people in the neighbourhood for 100 years.</p> <p>Unity Commons anticipates that its residents will use public transit, walking and cycling as means of transportation due to its ideal location and proximity to services and downtown.</p> <p>Unity Commons includes underground parking:</p> <p>16 parking spots for 15 units.</p> <p>9 of the 16 are flexible parking spots for daytime use.</p> <p>20 secure bicycle stalls are included on the ground floor and 12 weather-protected stalls are to be located near the residential and church sanctuary entrances.</p>	<p>Fairfield United has an agreement with the Fairfield Gonzales Community Association to use 8 spots (evenings and weekends).</p> <p>Fairfield United has a letter of support from the School District recognizing the long history with Sir James Douglas Elementary School that allows for the use of the school parking lots (42 spots) on Sundays and weeknights.</p>
<p>Large Urban Village designation</p>	<p>Unity Commons requires an amendment to the Official Community Plan to build four storeys (zoned currently for three).</p> <p>This application is not a trigger for the introduction of Large Urban Village designation in the area nor does it trigger the Urban Residential designation. Fairfield Road is not an arterial or a secondary arterial street. If it was a 4 storey building it would be permissible within the Small Urban Village Designation; This proposed new designation is the City's determination.</p> <p>The City ordered a landfill analysis to establish any value that would be added to the project as a result of the inclusion of a fourth floor. The findings of this independent analysis confirmed that any additional value from the fourth floor will solely subsidize the Sanctuary/Community Commons Space.</p>	