



February 7, 2019

Mayor Lisa Helps & Council  
City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square Victoria BC  
V8W 1P6



**RE: Development Application Revisions  
Rezoning Application No. 00620 and  
Development Permit with Variances Application No. 00076  
210 Gorge Road East, Victoria BC**

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Dear Mayor Helps & Council:

On October 4, 2018, Victoria Cool Aid Society (Cool Aid) presented our development proposal to Council to create a new residential building at 210 Gorge Road East, including 82 units of affordable rental housing for tenants at a range of income levels. When we presented those plans, we heard various concerns expressed from the community, with a focus on both the height and density of our proposed design.

We were asked by Council in your motion dated October 4, 2018 to reconsider the following elements of our proposed development:

1. A reduction of storeys to conform with the local area plan
2. To possibly include ground-floor commercial
3. To consider an increase in parking
4. To bring the type of unit percentages more closely aligned to the Regional Housing First Program implementation plan

In response to the concerns raised by the Burnside Gorge Land Use Committee and our neighbours and to the direction provided by Council, we have worked with our design team to address these concerns, while still maintaining the design, unit mix (studio, one and two bedroom units) and landscaping features of our original proposal.

#### **Changes to our development proposal for 210 Gorge**

Cool Aid submits this letter to outline the revisions to our development proposal for your consideration.

The key revisions to our proposal include:

1. A reduction in the number of storeys from six storeys to five storeys, to align with the Local Area Plan, and a reduction in the number of units from 82 homes to 72 homes, through the elimination of 10 studio units
2. Modifications to the main floor and sidewalk along Gorge Road to include a commercial space at grade which will be operated as a coffee outlet
3. Increase of one parking space in the underground parking

	<i>Parking provided</i>	<i>Parking required</i>
<i>Affordable dwelling units</i>	19	19
<i>Staff parking</i>	1	
<i>Visitor parking</i>	5	7
<i>Total Parking</i>	25 spaces	26 spaces
<i>Resident Bicycle Parking</i>	84 spaces	76 spaces
<i>Visitor Bicycle Parking</i>	12 spaces	7 spaces

4. Retention of a balanced mix of tenants able to pay rents at a range of income levels, including:
  - 30 units at income assistance rates (\$375/month) with support services available on site;
  - 8 units at affordable rental rates (\$750/month);
  - 34 units at moderate income rental rates (ranging from \$850 - \$1500/month).

We acknowledge this unit mix differs from the suggested mix as set out Regional Housing First program; however, this project presents a unique challenge for us as housing providers, as our premise for the redevelopment has always been guided by the need to replace the 21 income assistance units we'll lose as part of the demolition and then create more supply in the redeveloped building. This unit mix has been well understood by our funders and formed the basis for our approval by the Regional Housing First Program and the CRD Board.

We know that our immediate neighbours and other community leaders have questions and concerns about how Cool Aid plans to manage and operate the building, and address any issues that may arise. To help respond to those concerns and increase confidence in our proposed approach, we have prepared an Operating Management Plan that outlines our vision and commitments for operating this new affordable rental housing in the Burnside Gorge community. We are sharing this document with neighbours and have posted it on our website.

### Alignment with the Local Area Plan

Our revised plans respond to the following key objectives outlined in the Local Area Plan:

***12.2.1 ii) a base density of 1.2 FSR and a maximum density of 2.0 FSR where amenities are provided to offset the impacts of additional density***

***And***

***12.6.2 Ensure new development along Burnside and Gorge Roads is oriented positively towards the street to create a more attractive and pedestrian friendly streetscape environment.***

Our revised plans are at a density that comfortably falls with the Local Area Plan parameters, with an FSR of 1.7: 1. The amenities that we are offering to offset the impacts of the additional density proposed here include:

- Extensive boulevard gardens and landscaping to improve the pedestrian experience along Carroll Street and act as a medium for neighbourhood interaction;
- Preservation of a significant horse chestnut tree at the corner of Carrol and Gorge and the introduction of three new trees and extensive landscaping treatments to the Gorge frontage which will remarkably improve the pedestrian experience along a heavily trafficked corridor
- Introducing a coffee outlet at the street level for neighbours and commuters travelling along the future “all ages and abilities bicycle network” planned for Gorge Road

***12.2.1 iii) Buildings on the north side of Gorge Road, east of Balfour Avenue, may be built to 5 storeys along the Gorge Road frontage, if they support plan objectives, including the creation of space for local-serving commercial uses, with a sensitive transition to lower density areas to the north.***

Our revised plans incorporate a coffee outlet on the ground level – one that we will operate as a social enterprise – that we are certain both our tenants and the surrounding community will love. The proposed design achieves a sensitive transition to our neighbours to the north by cutting back the fifth storey.

***12.2.3 New development outside of the Urban Village (planned for Gorge Road and Irma Street) along Gorge Road, may include either ground-floor commercial or residential uses along Gorge Road.***

The Local Area Plan recommends a height of four storeys for residential development and five storeys if a multi-unit residential building incorporates commercial amenities for the local neighbourhood. We trust that the addition of a coffee outlet to our proposal meets that standard.

Cool Aid has already taken a number of steps to share these revised plans with community advocates in Burnside Gorge, and over the next few weeks, will be reaching out directly to neighbourhood residents and our immediate neighbours near 210 Gorge to inform them of our proposed changes, receive their feedback, and answer any questions they have.

## Conclusion

This revised proposal represents a compromise solution that:

- meets our goals of renewing an asset which has reached the end of its useful life;
- increases the supply of much needed new affordable rental housing in Victoria; and,
- acknowledges and addresses the needs of our neighbours and the surrounding community.

Cool Aid plans to be a part of the Burnside Gorge community for many years to come. Contributing positively to the community, developing long-term relationships, and being a good neighbour is very important to us. We're committed to doing the ongoing work with our neighbours to achieve these goals.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to discussing this revised proposal with you in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,



Deanna Bhandar,  
Director, Real Estate Development  
Victoria Cool Aid Society

cc: Kathy Stinson, CEO, Victoria Cool Aid Society