

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

RE: 2915 DOUGLAS STREET TEMPORARY USE PERMIT APPLICATION

Dear Mayor Helps & Council,

PHS Community Services Society (PHS) is pleased to submit this application for a Temporary Use Permit approval for the property located at 2915 Douglas Street. This zoning change will allow us to qualify for the provincial Assisted Living Registry program. This program provides residents with a daily per diem; this is necessary to create sustainable recovery services to vulnerable citizens in Victoria and neighbouring communities.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The building and lot being considered were zoned and operated for decades as a motel. It was recently purchased by the province and converted to a supportive housing project to address both the homelessness crisis in Victoria and the overdose crisis. In terms of the overdose crisis the response has been to bring in the Vancouver Island Health Authority (IH) and renovate the second floor (22Units) of the building to be a supportive substance use treatment program named the Douglas Street Community Supportive Treatment (DSC ST) program.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The address is located in the Burnside Gorge neighbourhood. The Burnside Gorge Official Community Plan from July 2017 designates this block as General Employment. This temporary use permit would fall within that designated category. Victoria's Official Community Plan has a Housing and Homelessness Strategy (Chapter 13) which addresses the need for support services by means of short term stay shelters and safe beds. This temporary use will allow those individuals in need of such services to access them at 2915 Douglas.

PROJECT BENEFITS & AMENITIES

The DSC SL project is unique in the continuum of care available through Island Health: it is targeted at people who are higher needs (typically street entrenched) and therefore unsuitable for more mainstream programs. It is a crucial service in the midst of the opioid crisis and is a high-volume project with its capacity at 22 beds. The program is in-patient, meaning the program participants live at the DSC supportive recovery while they are involved in the recovery program. Each resident has their own room and meals are provided to allow people to focus on their needs and their recovery. Programming includes group sessions, traditional approaches (12 Step and SMART) as well as yoga and creative writing.

NEED & DEMAND

The proposed operating budget, developed between IH and PHS, is based on a 'per diem' model for the residents of the program. The per diem component reflects approximately 30% of the operating budget. To be eligible for the daily per diems the supportive treatment program would need to be certified and registered with the Provincial Ministry of Health's Assisted Living Registry¹. PHS has completed the Assisted Living Registry application process, including the site visit, but is unable to meet the requirement for a business license from the City of Victoria due to zoning issues beyond our control. At present then the program is operating at a significant deficit and PHS is working with IH and BC Housing to remedy the business license issue as soon as possible. Possible solutions are a 'temporary business license' while the City of Victoria and BCH are developing the larger rezoning proposal.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Douglas Street Community building is located in the Burnside-Gorge neighbourhood.

2915 Douglas St.

V8T 4M8

IMPACTS

There are no anticipated impacts from being granted a temporary business license or from a rezoning of the land use as the building is fully occupied now with:

- 25 units of housing – 3-5 years
- 22-beds Supportive Treatment – up to a 9 month stay
- 50-bed Shelter (The Arbutus Shelter) – 1 month (average stay)

SAFETY & SECURITY

PHS is committed to the Burnside-Gorge community and indeed has been attending monthly meetings with the Burnside-Gorge Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for well over a year now. The building is staffed 24/7 with 2 PHS staff at the front door. The Supportive Treatment program has another staff at reception on the Treatment floor 24/7 as well as a project nurse and Project Manager Monday through Friday.

The Arbutus Shelter has 2 staff on 24/7 as well.

In total the building has a base staff team of at least 5 people 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. With a nurse and 2 Managers. Most of the building is equipped with CCTV and the doors are fitted with electronic key locks.

Providing people experiencing unstable housing/homelessness, with addiction and mental health challenges, with supportive housing and treatment options is a net benefit for Victoria and the local community. At PHS we are committed to supporting both the neighbours and the residents and we have earned to trust of the neighbours by doing so.

¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/assisted-living-registrar>

In the 2 years the Douglas St. Community building has been in operation there have been no significant concerns and in fact the feedback from the Community (via the CAC) has been exemplary.

TRANSPORTATION

The front of the building faces Douglas Street, a major transportation corridor of Victoria's Burnside Gorge neighbourhood. A bus stop is located less than 100 metres northwest of the entrance at the corner of Douglas Street and Summit Avenue.

HERITAGE

The building in question has no heritage status, nor are there any nearby buildings which have heritage status.

GREEN BUILDING FEATURES

This temporary use permit would not envision changes to the current building structure.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The site is located along the main thoroughfare of Douglas Street with easy access to public transportation. Police services are located within 1 block of the site.

ABOUT PHS Community Services Society

PHS operates over 1500 units of supportive housing between Vancouver and Victoria. PHS operates two buildings in Victoria:

- The Johnson St. Community - 844 Johnson St.
- The Douglas St. Community – 2915 Douglas St.

PHS also contracts with Island Health to provide primary care to residents through our PHS Health Clinic and operates the first residential-based Supervised Consumption Site that has a Health Canada exemption (Section 56).

Sincerely,



Russell Maynard
PHS Community Services Society
778.889.2201