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HAMMOND
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ARCHITECTS

18 March 2019

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC

re 1811 Oak Bay Avenue – application for development permit with variances

Low Hammond Rowe Architects, on behalf of our clients Radnor Properties Ltd, is pleased to submit this application for a new development on the property at 1811 Oak Bay Avenue.

This proposal will replace a two-storey, 5-unit apartment building built in the 1940's and now considered at the end of its serviceable life, with a new 5-storey, 14-unit strata-title apartment building with an underground parking garage.

The project has been designed with consultation with the immediate neighbours and with City of Victoria area planners. We believe it fits appropriately within the complex context of the Oak Bay Avenue corridor, and will provide desirable homes to meet an increasing demand in walkable neighbourhoods such as this.

A complete description of the project and its design rationale follows. We look forward to presenting it in more detail for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Low Hammond Rowe Architects Inc

Christopher Rowe
Architect AIBC CPHD LEED AP
principal

Description of Proposal

Project components

- a five-storey wood-frame building with 14 strata-titled apartments and a single-level concrete underground parking garage.
- the building includes a high proportion of larger homes (3 @ 3 BR, 1 @ 2 BR + den, and 4 @ 2 BR units)

The proposal is designed within the allowable density of the zoning; a number of variances are requested to allow the construction of an economically viable project that provides underground parking meeting the new Schedule C requirements.

Existing conditions and zoning

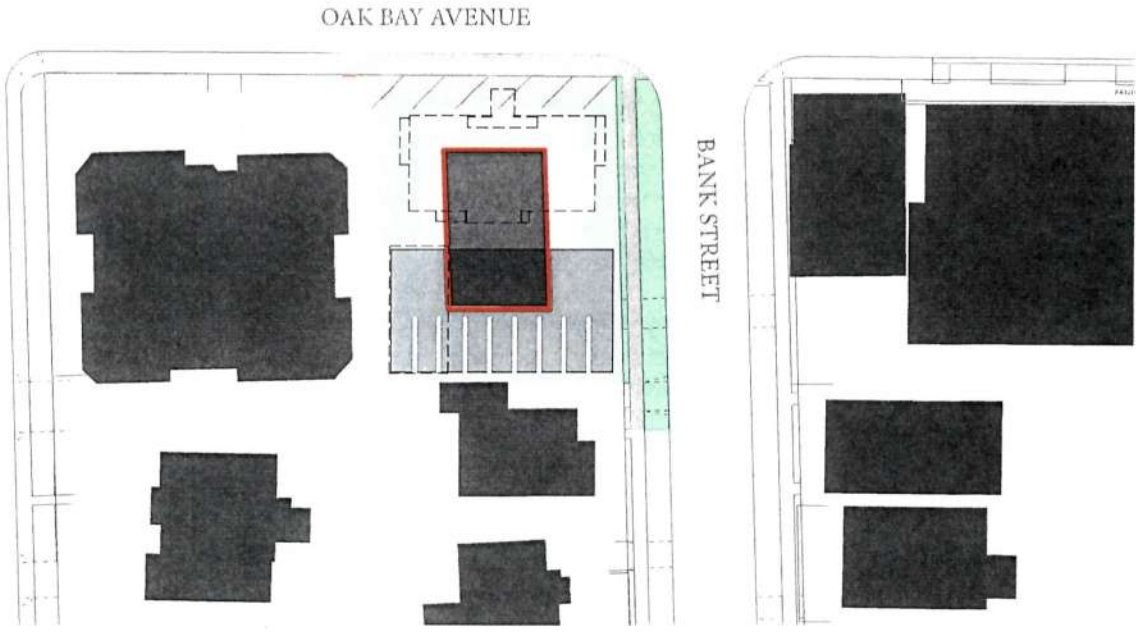
The existing building is a 5-unit apartment built in the 1940s. As an inexpensively constructed wood-frame building from the post-war era it is now nearing the end of its service life, is energy inefficient, and is uneconomical to upgrade or improve. It does have a small footprint and a large amount of open site space which is largely devoted to car parking. Its current location on the site does not conform to current zoning requirements, with a reduced setback from Oak Bay Avenue within a requested Statutory Right-of-Way.

Redevelopment of the site at a similar small scale is not financially feasible at less than luxury pricing. Provision of underground parking is very expensive (approaching $100,000 per space) and requires a larger building to achieve economic viability.

The approach to this project has been to find a design solution that responds appropriately to its neighbours and the context, while following the established zoning criteria as closely as possible. A density increase is not requested.

The R3-2 zoning in place on the site appears to have been designed for larger land assemblies and does not anticipate development of a remnant site such as this. The site is below the R3-2 minimum lot size requirement, requiring a variance. The required R3-2 setbacks on all lot lines are large and render the site undevelopable without setback variances. We believe that the proposed setbacks are appropriate, respectful of the neighbours, and fit within the local urban design context.

The illustration below shows the site with the R3-2 setbacks applied, resulting in a building footprint the size of a small single-family home. (The outline of the existing building and garage is also shown). Note also that a 9-space surface parking lot uses almost half the entire property.

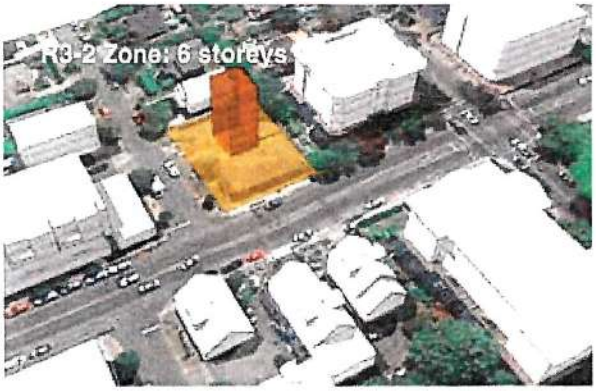


The peculiarities of the R3-2 zoning bylaw

The R3-2 zoning bylaw increases the set-back in proportion to height, regardless of floor area. This means that as the building increases to the maximum allowable height, the setbacks also increase, reducing the developable footprint.

The surrounding multifamily buildings have all been granted setback variances in order to be able to develop a realistic and viable floor plan and building size.

The last image shows all the potential set-backs overlaid on one another. This produc-es a stepped setback envelope from the neighbouring properties. We have used this composite setback envelope to guide the massing design of this project in attempt to follow the spirit, if not the letter, of the R3-2 zone.



Siting, massing and response to context

The overall context between Oak Bay Avenue between Richmond Road and Foul Bay Road displays what might be considered as a complete history of architectural design and development between Edwardian times and the present day. Building types range from remnant houses now converted to commercial uses, through older small-scale commercial storefronts to a wide range of multi-unit and mixed-use buildings largely built between the 1960's and present day. There is little to no coherence to form, setback, materials, or architectural style which might provide a design direction for this project. Existing City of Victoria zoning policy and design guidelines are about 30 years old and offer little guidance.

The commercial realities of residential development have driven a design which attempts to maximize the potential of the existing R3-2 zoning within a form that respects the immediate neighbours and the complex context of Oak Bay Avenue.

This is done with a stepped massing that moves height up and away from the single-family neighbours on Bank Street to the south, and as far as possible from the strata residential building to the west. The southern stepped-back roof areas are used for private decks, with the deck guards moved back from the parapet to prevent sightlines into neighbouring single-family gardens.

East (Bank St) elevation compared with R3-2 Setback zones (red overlay)

North (Oak Bay Ave) elevation compared with R3-2 Setback zones (red overlay)

Two main types of street frontage can be seen along this stretch of Oak Bay Avenue: commercial storefront and residential buffers. Other than an entrance canopy marking the main building entrance, the project does not present an active frontage to Oak Bay Avenue but follows the lead of its residential neighbours. Ground floor apartments are given individual entrance steps and patios facing Bank Street.

North (Oak Bay Ave) elevation

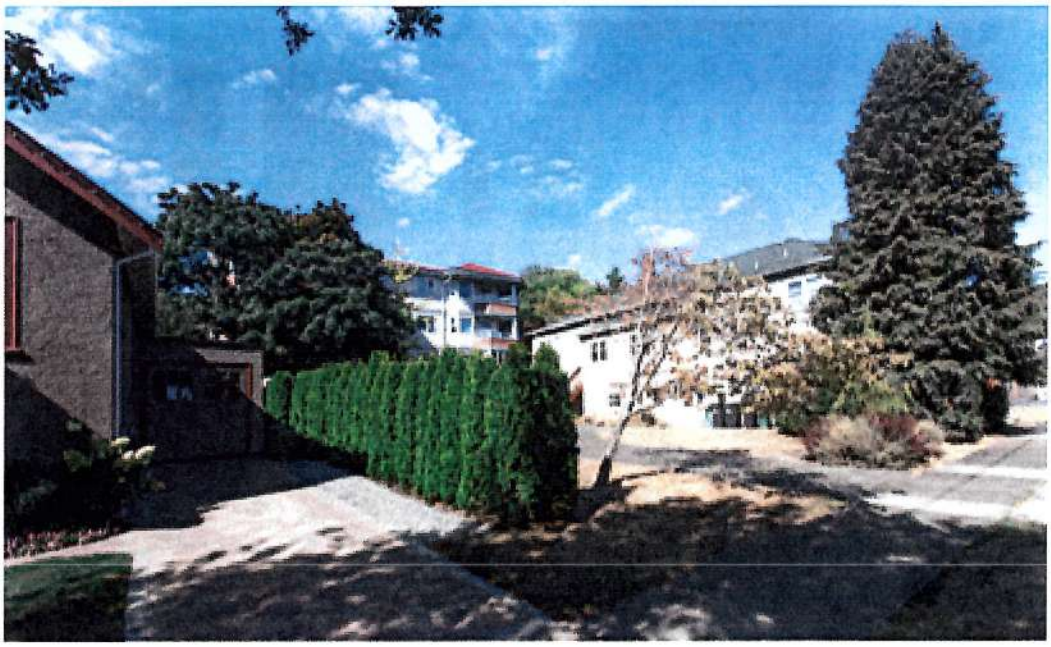
East (Bank St) elevation

Neighbourliness

The design of the building has been developed in direct consultation with neighbours to minimize overlook and maintain privacy. Landscaping and fence design will be developed in close consultation with the neighbours.

The strata apartment building to the west is currently screened with mature hedging and shrubs. A mature maple tree straddles the property line and due to its current poor health is deemed unlikely to survive the construction of the new building. A suitable replacement tree will be planted on the neighbouring property. A new slatted wood fence and plantings will maintain and improve the screening along the west property line.

The north elevation of the single-family home to the south is dominated by an attached garage. A mature coniferous hedge exists on the property line. This hedge will be preserved if it proves practical. The new building presents to this neighbour a tapering wall of the partially exposed parking garage. This wall will be covered with a slatted fence/screen with a maximum height of 1800mm, completely concealing the garage wall and screening the neighbouring property.



The massing of the building is strongly stepped away from the south single-family property and rooftop patio guards are held back further to minimize the possibility of overlook.

The neighbouring commercial property across Bank Street does not have an active frontage – instead presenting a parking and service area.

Properties on the north side of Oak Bay Avenue directly across from the project are a 4-storey condominium and a number of businesses operating in converted houses.'

Exterior Materials and Colours

The building exterior includes a brick masonry main floor (using a grey brick and matching mortar) with deep window and entrance reveals. The upper residential floors are clad in rain-screen stucco finish in a combination of white and grey tones. The walls and soffits of recessed balconies and the hallway circulation area are clad in wood siding stained a pale grey.

The exterior circulation areas are screened with an ornamental perforated screen in a copper colour. Balcony guards facing Bank Street are a combination of glazed aluminum and similar perforated copper-coloured screens.

A simple horizontal slatted wood screen design is used for other privacy screens and fences around the property line and between adjacent balconies.

Landscaping

The landscape plan is focused on screening of neighbouring properties, maintaining a privacy gradient, and presenting an appropriate ornamental face to Oak Bay Avenue and Bank Street.

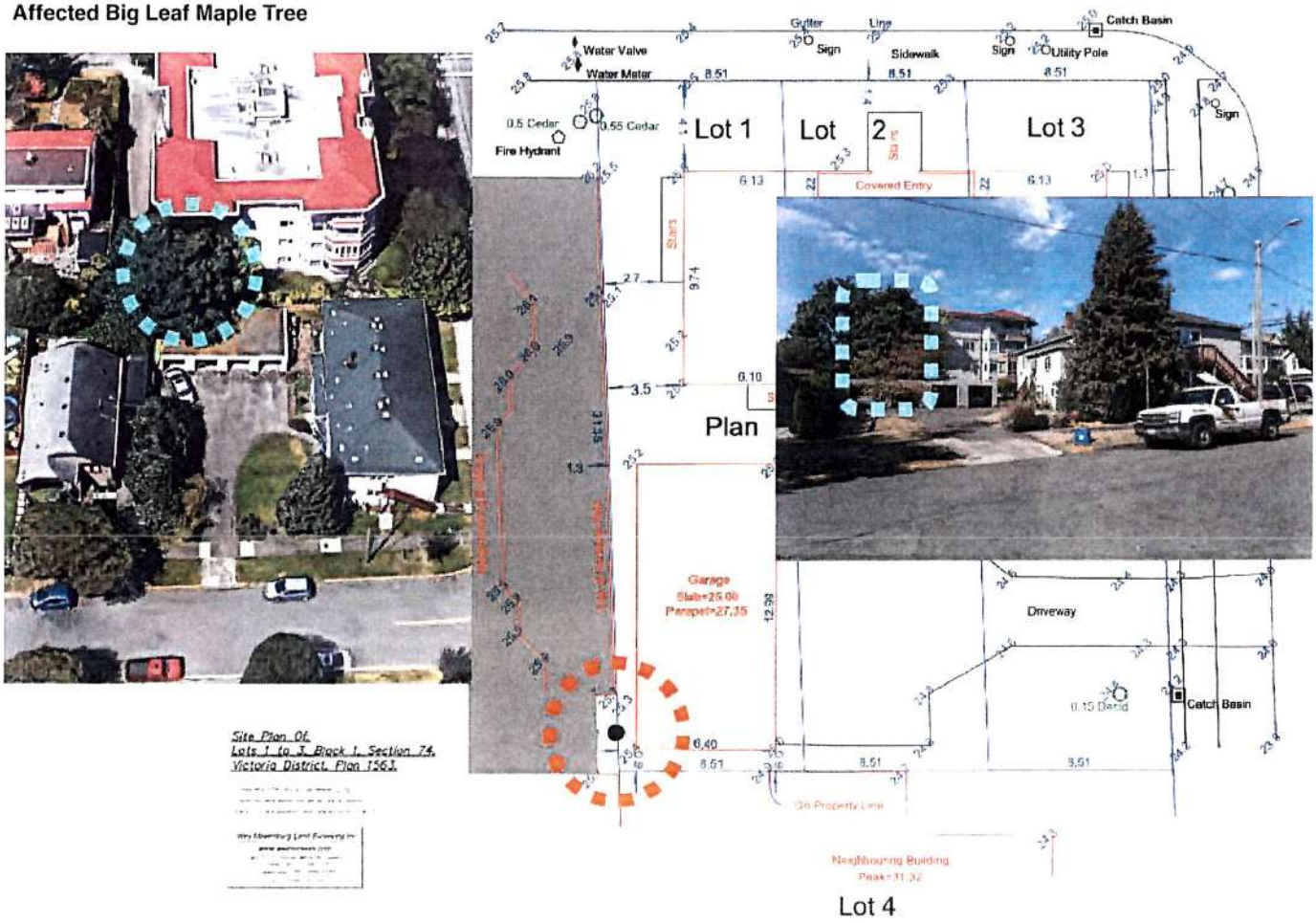
Landscaping of the Statutory Right-of-Way has been designed following the guidance and requirements of City staff, including a realignment of the sidewalk to be immediately adjacent to the building, and the provision of street trees in a boulevard.

A planter is provided along the Oak Bay Ave frontage to improve privacy for the adjacent ground floor apartment.

The Bank Street frontage establishes a privacy hierarchy through a grade change and setback of semi-private patios and ground-level accesses behind stepped planters.

Please see the attached Construction Impact Assessment & Tree Preservation Plan by Talbot McKenzie & Associates, consulting arborists, for their opinion on the viability of on-site protected trees. The ADP recommended saving an existing Big Leaf Maple tree straddling the property line at the southwest edge of the site; the arborists consider this tree, and a small Dogwood also on the property line to be in poor, unhealthy condition and recommend their removal and replacement. The proponent has agreed to replace the Big Leaf Maple with a large caliper size tree in a nearby location. Species will be selected appropriate to the conditions and in consultation with the immediate neighbours.

Affected Big Leaf Maple Tree



Government Policies

Official Community Plan and Neighbourhood Plan

Applicable objectives of the Official Community Plan for this DPA are:

(a) To revitalize areas of commercial use along corridors through high quality architecture, landscape and urban design to enhance their appearance, achieve coherent design along corridors, strengthen commercial viability and encourage pedestrian use.

(c) To enhance the function of Gorge Road East, Fort Street, Hillside Avenue, Oak Bay Avenue and Shelbourne Street as frequent transit corridors through transit-oriented streetscaping, with the design of adjacent development to support and advance this objective.

(d) To ensure corridors are compatible with adjacent and nearby lower density residential neighbourhoods through human-scaled urban design and a sensitive transition in building form and place character.

Applicable guidelines for this DPA are:

(i) Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings (1981).

(ii) Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters (2010).

Project Benefits and Amenities

The project provides a net increase of 8 new apartments over the 5 existing ones, including a high proportion of 2 BR and 3 BR homes.

This project was originally conceived as a rental building, but the cost of providing Schedule C-compliant underground parking within the limits of market rents made the economics unfeasible. Research indicated a strong demand for these larger 2 or 3 BR suites from local residents wishing to downsize their homes while remaining in their familiar neighbourhood. For this reason, a strata-titled approach was felt to meet the needs of this part of the city.

Impacts

At present, only a single tenant remains living in the building, the other four having previously relocated. Note that no eviction notices were issued to any residents. The remaining tenant will be helped with relocation following the City's Tenant Assistance Guidelines.

A thorough sun access study was completed. This demonstrates that the new building has little impact on sun access for neighbours due to its northerly location.

Parking is provided in full compliance with Schedule C requirements – no effects on local street parking are anticipated. Given the site's position adjacent to the Oak Bay Avenue arterial street, few negative traffic effects are anticipated on Bank Street.

Design and Development Permit Guidelines

The project has been designed to meet or exceed the relevant guidelines, including:

- Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings (1981)
- Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters (2010)

Safety and Security

The design follows best practices for CPTED including:

- 24/7 occupation;
- obvious distinction of semi-public from public areas;
- gated entrance and intercom from street to elevator and stairs;
- lighting and windows in entrance areas, common areas and parking garage to maximize visibility and surveillance;
- security gate for parking garage.

Transportation

The site is well served by BC Transit's number 2 and number 8 bus lines, connecting the site with downtown Victoria and Oak Bay, with connections to UVic and Fairfield at Foul Bay Road. A bus stop currently exists immediately adjacent to the project site.

Class 1 Bicycle parking for apartment residents is provided in accordance with Schedule C requirements in a dedicated room within the parking garage. Class 2 bicycle parking will be provided with a rack in the main entry area off Oak Bay Avenue.

The site has a 'Walk Score' of 81, summarized as most errands able to be accomplished on foot. The Walk Score website shows a transit score of 60 'Good Transit' and a bike score of 66 'Bikeable'.

City Transportation and Planning staff had previously indicated the requirement for a 3.35m Statutory Right-of-Way along the Oak Bay Avenue frontage for future street improvements – this has been incorporated into the design. Subsequent to the original submission being made, staff required that the City sidewalk be shifted to the interior edge of the SRW, immediately adjacent to the proposed building. This sidewalk alignment is not present on any properties to the west or east, and results in a jog away and back from the curb edge. The design does its best to protect the privacy of the ground floor apartment with a planter. Additional screens can be incorporated into the design to enhance the protection of safety and privacy from this odd sidewalk alignment. We consider this sidewalk alignment to be better suited to a commercial frontage than to a purely residential site such as this or its neighbours.

Green Building Features

- construction to current City of Victoria Step Code requirements
- low VOC emissions in materials and coatings;
- individual electric metering to encourage conservation;
- water-conserving plumbing fixtures.
- Stormwater management

  Since the site landscape areas will be constructed over the underground garage, direct return of stormwater to the ground is not practical. On-site stormwater detention will be provided in subgrade facilities prior to discharge to municipal mains. Detention and pre-treatment will be provided by the intensive green roof over parts of the parking garage outside of the main building footprint.

Infrastructure

Existing public services appear adequate to support the new development. Further consultation with City of Victoria Engineering staff will be undertaken during the formal review process and any required upgrades included in the proposal.

Consultation and Design Refinement Process to date

29 August 2016	Review with City of Victoria area planner Brian Sikstrom;
22 November 2016	Review with City of Victoria area planner Brian Sikstrom;
25 January 2017	Presentation and discussion of design concept to strata apartment neigh-

	bours;
Spring 2017	Review with City of Victoria area planner Alec Johnston;
01 September 2017	Review with City of Victoria area planner Alec Johnston.
21 November 2017	Formal Submission for DP with Variances
04 January 2018	Presentation to joint meeting of Fairfield-Gonzales and South Jubilee Neighbourhood Association CALUCs
10 January 2018	Review with City of Victoria Planning, Transportation, and Parks staff
30 July 2018	Resubmission addressing Staff review comments
28 November 2018	Advisory Design Panel

Conclusion

We believe this project represents a successful approach to creating needed new housing on a small leftover infill site in a complex context. It is designed, in consultation with the immediate neighbours, to meet as many of the existing zoning criteria as possible, to be neighbourly, and to make a modern but sensitive response to its context. Where setbacks variances are required, we have sought to meet the intent of the bylaw through maximizing distance from existing neighbours. and arranging living spaces to minimize any impact on privacy.

We hope Council will agree and grant the requested variances.

On behalf of Radnor Properties Ltd
Christopher Rowe, Architect AIBC CPHD LEED AP
principal