

**PROSCENIUM**

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

Dear Mayor Helps &amp; Council,

**Re: Application for OCP Amendment, Rezoning and Development Permit; 1100 & 1120  
Yates Street; 1109, 1115 Johnson St.**

Proscenium Architecture + Interiors Inc. is pleased to submit an application for an OCP Amendment, Rezoning and Development Permit for the above-noted property on behalf of Chard Development Ltd. The purpose of this letter is to provide further clarification and a description of the application.

The proposal consolidates the properties bound by Yates, Cook and Johnson into three parcels of land. The first Parcel will provide a 12-storey plus mezzanine mixed-use building over three levels of below-grade parking. The second parcel will provide a new 6-storey building over three levels of below-grade parking. The third parcel will include the existing Victoria Professional Building. Parking for this building will be moved from the existing surface parking lot to the below-grade parking facility under the 6-storey building.

As outlined in an accompanying letter from Chard Development, the vision for this comprehensive development is to provide a range of market and affordable housing options – meeting the City's Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy – as well as local supportive commercial space and extensive community benefits that include the retention and upgrade of the existing Professional Building. This is proposed at a location in the city that has excellent current and future transportation options, walkable connections, immediately accessible bike paths to the downtown core, and access to nearby urban nodes. The scale of the site also allows a holistic approach to the public realm and interior landscaped areas with connections that would not be possible without the property consolidation. The ground level mews that will be created between these buildings will have a reciprocal access agreement with a shared facility agreement to cover costs, maintenance and upkeep requirements. Should a change of ownership occur, mechanisms will be in place to transfer these agreements.

As will be further described in this letter, the proposed site provides a unique opportunity to soften the transition from the taller downtown core to the shorter midrise-associated urban residential to the east. This stepped response to the urban context is echoed with the stepped massing from the 12 storey to the 6 and 5 storey buildings themselves.

A diverse mix of housing options spanning the housing continuum are being proposed: Inclusionary Housing Units (Ownership) (104 units) of various unit sizes and typologies, and market condominiums (113 units) also of various unit sizes and typology for a total of 217 housing units in the development, while maintaining and improving the existing Victoria Professional Building with its 36 offices and 100 parking spaces. Given the current site use, the proposed project will not displace any existing residents and will provide community-oriented commercial uses – including a restaurant and coffee shop – similar in size to that currently in the existing strip

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mall. Other proposed features include a child care facility, dog walk area, some private landscape space and an after-trip bike facility.

We believe this proposal incorporates good planning and socially conscious principles by way of a diverse mix of housing and a long list of community benefits that will appeal to a broad range of Victoria residents. Much thought has gone into the unit typologies in an effort to bring a diverse mix of market and affordable housing options to the proposal. Based on feedback at the early community involvement meetings, the unit mix has been refined to include additional two and three bedroom units that are suitable for families and shared living situations. In addition to the residential and commercial components, spaces that contribute to community building such as the proposed child care facility have been well supported in the early consultation phase. Neighbourhood focused retail with individual character has been noted as important for street vitality. Retention of existing buildings of good urban fabric is always a positive; the upgrades to the Victoria Professional Building that form part of this proposal will ensure that the building remains relevant to the community for years to come.

A well-defined architectural expression complements height and massing that is site appropriate. The massing of the buildings have been arranged to be respectful of neighbours by orienting density towards the downtown core for the market condominium and stepping down in density towards the more urban realm with the affordable condominium. Buildings have also been arranged so as to minimize the impact of on-look from one building to the other. This application does not include the small commercial site located on the southeast corner of Cook and Johnson. Drawings previously submitted to City staff show potential massing for redevelopment of this site given parking requirements and other restrictions. To allow for this development in the future, the proposed buildings have been set back from the property line.

### **12-Storey Mixed-Use Development**

The tallest of the proposed buildings, the 12-storey building has been purposely sited on the corner of Cook and Yates to provide a strong street edge that responds to the taller 15-storey massing permitted under the OCP directly across Cook Street. A strong two-level podium has been designed to bring a pedestrian scale to this development and complete the street corner wall. Commercial units front on the major Cook Street arterial. A proposed patio bridges the strong street wall as the podium wraps to Yates. A combination of anchoring brick piers and curtain wall glazing associated with the commercial opens up the street edge and engages the public realm with proposed ground level activity. This vertical pier and transparency is juxtaposed against the second level of the podium where a lighter horizontal metal and glass frame set the datum line of podium to tower above. Along the Yates Street face of the building, the podium opens to the entry of the condominium. A child care facility is accessed off of the north face on the mezz where a lobby and a feature stair connects the ground plane to the child care space above. The proposed entrance of the child care facility will be enhanced by the designed greenspace allowing for a exterior playground area. The choice of materials for this element is a combination of the anchoring brick and an obscured glass required for child care use. Its massing has been purposely positioned to break the plane of the second floor podium and to draw the eye to the building above.

While it is often a strategy to provide a tiered, multi-stepped massing on a taller tower, with only 10 additional levels above the podium we believe a tiered response such as this would underserve the proportions of the building and site as it transitions from the proposed taller buildings across Cook. Furthermore, efforts to reduce building heat loss by reducing the proportion of surface area to volume through the simplification of building form would be negatively impacted by introducing additional stepping. This building's location at the south-west corner of the site minimizes the shading impact of this simplified form. This proposal calls for a step back at the podium and a second step back at the 11<sup>th</sup> floor. The 11<sup>th</sup> floor step is in response to the existing buildings across

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Cook Street, one of which (10 storeys) steps only at the podium and the second (13 storeys) steps at the podium and again at the 11<sup>th</sup> floor.

Along the east and west face, the language of the second podium level "box" is echoed up the face of the tower where a vertical fin box climbs to create a frame that acts as an inter-unit screening device and an additional layering to the massing. This verticality is contrasted by the horizontality of large, tiered balconies up the north and south face that stress a distinct flat plane against the glass wall of the suites. The balconies are designed to provide generous outdoor living space and to act as a solar shading device for the south outlook. The colour palette chosen for this building plays off of the darker brick anchoring elements with the lighter, off-white metal panel box and balconies above. The windows utilize a strong black mullion for punch and cladding is a combination of horizontal, light-coloured grey cement panel and a darker grey Oka Skin cement panel. A blond wood colour has been further utilized to enhance soffits.

### **6-Storey Affordable Condominium Building**

The Cook and Johnson corner property does not form part of this proposal and as such, a strong corner podium response does not seem appropriate for the 6-storey affordable condominium building which sits further east on the property facing Johnson Street. This building continues the theme of cross site height transition as it sits between the taller 12-storey building to the southwest and the existing 5-storey Professional Building to the southeast. The building massing indents midblock on Johnson Street to denote entry and to break down the massing of street edge. The massing and density of this building is also a direct response to proposed and under construction buildings neighbouring to the east and across Johnson Street.

Entry to this strictly residential building is mid block on Johnson Street. Brick elements are used at the ground plane with an additional framing element around a linear panel cladding system to bring focus to the lobby. Street homes opening directly onto Johnson Street activate the street edge and are also anchored through the use of brick elements. This ground plane treatment wraps the building and the language continues on the mews. The material palette is respectful of its neighbours using a combination of dark brick at the ground plane, glass, grey vertical metal panel and light grey horizontal cement panel. The vertical metal cladding system is interrupted by the deep punch of the windows and the protrusion of balconies. These balconies include screening elements between units to create additional interest along the street edge and minimize overlook. In addition, translucent glazing will be provided for units facing into the mews for increased privacy between buildings. To denote entry and to break down the massing the building indents and the palette shifts to white metal cladding with wood panel accents mid block along Johnson Street. An extended parapet adds greater architectural expression.

Where the proposed 12-storey building is concrete construction, this building will utilize a 6-storey wood frame structure. This form of building lends itself to a punched window expression. Inherently, this results in a smaller glass ratio with more solid wall. Through the use of increased solid wall, the two buildings are designed to balance the energy modeling required under the BCBC Step Code.

### **Existing 5-Storey Victoria Professional Building**

The third building, the existing Victoria Professional Building, has a distinct massing and expression that has informed the neighbourhood for many years. A number of the cues used in the two proposed new buildings – including the vertical fins and the expressed box elements – have been derived from the existing Victoria Professional Building. With this proposal, the existing building will undergo an enhancement that will tie it to its new neighbours. Existing windows are being replaced with new high performance windows. The north canopy is being removed and replaced with a new canopy more in keeping with the proposed pedestrian/bike realm of this entry point. A new, lower level lobby is being added to provide direct connection to the adjacent below

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grade parking. A bike storage and end-of-trip facility will encourage use of adjacent bike lanes. While the buff and red brick will retain their existing colours, the vertical fins and horizontal frame work is proposed to be painted a charcoal grey colour that emphasis this key defining element.

#### **Government Policies/ Design Guidelines**

The site currently has a mix of existing zonings. The three existing parcels on the west are C-1 zoning and the two parcels of land on the east are R3-1 and C-1/R3-1 zoning respectively. *This proposal will require lot consolidation, an OCP amendment, a rezoning and a development permit to proceed.* This proposal has utilized the design direction given in both the OCP and Fernwood Neighbourhood Direction section along with the neighbouring Harris Green District and Downtown Core Area Neighbourhood Directions sections. The later OCP and Fernwood section have played the heavier influence where the Downtown Core Plan primarily impacts projects on the west side of Cook Street.

The proposed site is unique in that it falls into two OCP policy areas. The site is split approximately 50/50 between the denser and taller Core Residential (3.5 FSR up to 8 storeys) and mid-level density and height found under Urban Residential (2.0 FSR up to 6 storeys). The Fernwood Neighbourhood Directions section calls for neighbourhood density to increase in the southwest zone of Fernwood where the site falls.

The OCP currently calls for greater height and density on the west side of Cook Street; up to 15 storeys in height. The east side of Cook is permitted 8 storeys, moving down to 6 storeys further east. This prominent division line of Cook Street results in a very asymmetrical street wall under the OCP. With this proposal, we aim to soften the stepping effect by moving from the neighbouring 15 storeys west of Cook to a more gradual 12 storey step reinforcing the busiest corner, followed by the proposed 6 storeys as one moves east across the site. The resulting FSR of this more gradual stepping is 3.62 for the area of the site under Core Residential and 2.5 for the area under Urban Residential. The full site blended proposed FSR is 3.01. While both the height and density is above the OCP, as outlined in Chard Development's accompanying letter to Mayor and Council, we believe that the many benefits to the community and the nature of this central, walkable location with immediate access to transportation options warrants consideration in the amendment of the OCP. Further, we believe that the treatment of movement across the site and the stepping of density provide an appropriate and superior response to the urban context of the neighbourhood.

The proposed amendments to the OCP include:

- Height - A Relaxation from the OCP allowed height of 8 storeys to 12 storeys for the mixed-use condominium building at the Cook and Yates corner.
- Density - The relaxation of the OCP Core Residential allowed FSR of 3.5 to 3.62 for the mixed-use building at the Cook and Yates corner and the portion of the 6-storey Johnson Street building that lies within the Core Residential Zone.
- Density – The relaxation of the OCP Urban Residential allowed FSR of 2.0 to 2.5 for the portion of the 6-storey Johnson Street building that lies within the Urban Residential Zone and the existing 6-storey Professional Building.
- Parking - A relaxation on the number of commercial, residential and visitor parking stalls to reflect current and anticipated use. Parking for the existing Professional Building will be replaced on a 1:1 ratio plus seven additional stalls for a total of 107 commercial parking stalls. Current demand for these stalls is highest during regular business hours, meaning that they will be available to new commercial users and to residential visitors during evenings and weekends thereby mitigating the shortfall on these types of stalls. Further, while the number of residential parking stalls falls below the 2018 Schedule C requirements, the proposed number of stalls reflects the market demand experienced

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and supported by a Traffic Study in other recently completed residential developments and is further mitigated by the inclusion of two vehicles and parking spaces dedicated full time for car share.

### **Need and Demand/ Project Benefits and Amenities**

Currently all municipalities inclusive of Victoria are experiencing a large demand for all forms of housing inclusive of market and affordable condominium housing. This demand is only projected to increase. With that in mind, it is understandable that communities will need to experience densification. This project proposes responsible densification that maintains the function of the current lots by placing all parking below grade, thereby allowing pedestrian-oriented spaces, housing, and commercial to be built above. Furthermore, through the provision of community benefits such as a purpose-built child care facility, and the provision of small scale retail, the project moves towards providing solutions to needs that have been expressed at community consultations.

The significant mix of housing typologies, unit types and sizes in the residential component of this development touches two levels of the housing continuum. The targeted result is a diverse community welcoming to a breadth of age groups, family structures and income levels. Further, the proposal aims to address the significant need for child care spaces within the City of Victoria with a 3,900 sq. ft. child care facility with secured exterior play space on the second floor of the 12-storey mixed-use development. The building of community continues by way of enhance green space, the retention of the existing Professional Building, new bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities for commercial users and approximately 5000 sq. ft. of locally-focused commercial space contemplated as a restaurant and coffee shop.

By moving the parking below grade, the project is able to create a significantly improved public realm with a green bike and pedestrian walk way through the site. This allows for access to the Professional Building from both of its current entry points, provides the neighbourhood with through-block connections, outdoor gathering places, and garden plots, and includes a dog walk area. The design language of the interior walkway complements the vocabulary of the street edge, terminating in the activation of the corner of Cook and Yates with a restaurant patio. The beautification of Yates is accomplished by the proposed undergrounding of the BC Hydro lines and through the development of a proper sidewalk/boulevard system and new bus shelter within the City's requested SRW on Johnson Street.

Discussions are ongoing with Victoria's car share provider in order to provide two car share vehicles with dedicated below grade parking within the development.

### **Neighbourhood**

The site is uniquely situated on the boundary between Harris Green and Fernwood, a neighbourhood made up of traditional residential sites to the north. Southern sites – including the subject site – are described as moving from Core Residential to Urban Residential. The proposed project, while having both Core Residential and Urban Residential uses, also sits on the boundary of the denser Downtown Core, and is underutilized in density and use. It has a relationship to Downtown, Cook Street Village, North Park Village and other nodes. It has excellent transportation access with bus lines, bicycle lanes, walkable neighbourhood destinations, and important public schools. As per the OCP and Fernwood Neighbourhood Directions section, the property is strategically sited to accommodate increased density. The proposed density mix will provide a responsible mix of housing types and will be in keeping with the urban massing, occurring and proposed, in the neighbourhood. The intended gradient of density across the site provides a unique opportunity to respond to the transition of Harris Green to Fernwood.

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## **Impacts**

It is the design team and Chard Development's belief that the proposed development complements – and is sensitive to – its immediate neighbours and neighbourhood. Through the consultation process it has become apparent that all immediate neighbours to the north, south, east and west across Cook Street are supportive of this proposal.

Further impacts of this development are as follows:

- By retaining and improving the existing Professional Building, a valued community asset is maintained, and its usable lifespan will be extended. Parking will be replaced on a 1:1 ratio and will be improved with weather-protected, accessible below grade parking and a direct interior connection.
- By undergrounding the parking and replacing the surface lot with built structure and landscaping, noise levels will be reduced, as will appearance and performance of traffic flow. The current parking lot suffers from an awkward route across the bike lane, sidewalk and street parking. The proposal reduces the current seven vehicle access points down to the proposed one.
- By setting back both the 12-storey and 6-storey buildings significantly from the adjacent property at the corner of Cook and Johnson, the future development rights of this neighbouring property are retained.
- By planning for the development of the SRW on Johnson Street, an inadequate sidewalk will be replaced.
- Through the addition of a proposed restaurant and coffee shop, existing site retail offerings will be essentially maintained and enhanced.
- The addition of the through block bike and pedestrian connection off of Cook Street – which will remain open to the public during business hours – encourages movement through the site. Access to the Professional Building is retained and improved for residents, tenants and the community as a whole.

## **Safety and Security**

Building placement, building transparency levels, parkade access and on-site movement have all been designed with safety and security in mind. The access point to the parkade and loading has been placed at the point where, according to our traffic consultant's review, they provide the best interface of car, truck, bike and pedestrian movement. City Engineering in early discussions also supports the main vehicle access being off Yates versus Cook Street. Access to key components such as the child care facility and Professional Building can be achieved directly from Yates, through the on-site walking/bike mews, or via direct access by car at level P1.

Buildings are designed to look not just out onto the street, but into the mews. This follows the CPTED principal of eyes on the street. The first line of security is to make sure that all open site points are visible to those who live and frequent the property.

The concept of the midblock, cross-site mews is to provide a common access and gathering place for the neighbourhood. It was pointed out at the CALUC and ADP meetings that it might be prudent to provide a well-designed, attractive, gate system that allows for through block accessibility during business hours but closure in the evening for increased residential privacy. All planting and on site landscape features are designed with CPTED principals in mind to ensure that there are no hidden corners or areas that one cannot see around.

## **Infrastructure/Transportation**

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This proposal, due to its location, is nicely positioned in terms of a number of key infrastructure elements that exist already, or are in the process of being expanded.

Vehicular, bus and bike transportation is well served. The site is bound by two east-west secondary arterial roads (Yates and Johnson), and a major arterial north-south road (Cook). Yates and Johnson are also both east-west bus routes and east-west bike routes. Johnson has an existing bus stop located adjacent to the proposed 6-storey building. It also calls for an SRW with the intent to widen the sidewalk, build an improved bus shelter and provide an enhanced boulevard. A new north-south bike route is being developed two blocks west on Vancouver Street and we understand a Cook Street bike route is proposed in the longer term.

The neighbourhood location of this project is also well positioned for pedestrian movement. The site is within a five minute walk of Central Middle School and North Park Village, and within a ten minute walk to Victoria High School, park space and Fernwood Village.

In terms of onsite car parking, the number of stalls for the overall project falls below the 2018 Schedule C requirement. That said, the proposed parking ratio reflects the known demand from the existing Professional Building – which is predominantly during regular business hours – and the contrasting demand anticipated from new commercial users and visitors which is anticipated to be highest during evenings and weekends. The reduction in the number of residential stalls reflects the market demand experienced in other recently completed residential developments in Victoria, as supported by a traffic report from traffic engineers Bunt & Associates, and is further mitigated by the inclusion of two dedicated car share parking spaces.

The proposed bike parking will meet the required bike parking under the new Schedule C. The project has also been designed to provide an end-of-trip facility for cyclists. Access to the commercial buildings for cyclists can be via the through-block connection across the site, or via the bike routes on Johnson and Yates. The same can be said for pedestrian access to the site.

In terms of existing and proposed utility infrastructure it is the intention to support the City of Victoria in a Beautification Application to BC Hydro to underground the existing pole mounted hydro services located along Yates for the area of the site. In addition, a Sewer Attenuation Study has been completed and has confirmed that sewer attenuation is not required for this proposal.

### **Heritage**

While this project does not involve any heritage buildings nor does it have any impact on neighbouring heritage structures, it does call for the retention and rehabilitation of the Victoria Professional Building, thereby maintaining an existing building that carries significance to the community it serves.

### **Green Building Features**

The buildings will be fully compliant with the new BCBC 2018 Step Code. Early completed energy modelling confirms that the design is on target to achieve this required target. New green building features have been incorporated, inclusive of:

- Simplified massing to minimize heat loss.
- High performance building envelopes in terms of insulation values, and reduced window area over the full site. The project has limited spandrel panels in favour of higher performance insulated stud assemblies.
- Energy-efficient lighting and electrical systems, including motion sensor lighting, LED lighting and other similar provisions.
- Low flush toilets and high efficiency plumbing fixtures.

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- Construction waste management during construction.
- High efficiency heat pumps for heating and cooling.
- Patio shading on south elevations.
- Testing of the energy model and air tightness testing will be performed throughout the project.

In addition to green building features, the selection and treatment of the site also follows well established green principles:

- The development and densification of a community where neighbourhood infrastructure exists within easy walking distance, thereby enhancing pedestrian movement and encouraging green transportation over vehicular movement. The same can be said by choosing a site located on bike routes and bus routes.
- By putting densification on an underutilized parking lot, no green space or existing significant building must be removed.
- By maintaining and upgrading the Professional Building via new windows and elevators, the existing structure's lifespan has been increased.
- By our provision of end-of-trip facilities for cyclists, a key source of green travel is being enhanced.
- The proposed car share program reduces dependence on personal vehicle ownership.
- The site landscaping has been designed to utilize drought tolerant native or adapted vegetation.
- The landscaping proposes the use of low-flow, efficient, drip irrigation.
- All street trees will either be maintained or replaced to assure no net loss of trees.
- The landscaping is being designed to promote a bird-friendly and bee-friendly environment.

In summary, we believe this project will serve the community well, will help in meeting policy objectives for the City of Victoria for this area of transitional density, and will provide a broad selection of homes situated at two points on the housing continuum to area residents, in tandem with the development and enhancement of much-needed community supporting uses.

Yours truly,  
**PROSCENIUM Architecture + Interiors Inc.**



Hugh Cochlin, Architect AIBC, AAA, MRAIC, LEED™ AP  
 Principal

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