

Pamela Martin

From: Ahmed Mumeni <[REDACTED]>
Sent: November 28, 2019 9:48 AM
To: Public Hearings; Victoria Mayor and Council
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: Proposed Changes to 208/210, 220, 230, and 240/242 Wilson Street
Attachments: Letter to Council - Wilson Walk Proposal.pdf

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the residents of the 200-block of Edward Street, 306 Edward Street, 407 Edward Street, 715 and 720 Catherine Street, and 246/248 Wilson Street, please see the attached letter to the Mayor and Council re: the proposed changes to zoning at 208/210, 220, 230, and 240/242 Wilson Street. This letter summarizes our collective views over the proposed Wilson Walk development, and would appreciate its inclusion in the agenda for the city council meeting scheduled for tonight at 6:30 PM. We look forward to the ensuing discussion regarding the future of our community.

Let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Best,
Ahmed Mumeni on behalf of the Edward St, Catherine St, and Wilson St Community

Dear Mayor and Council,

The residents of the 200-block of Edward Street, 306 Edward Street, 407 Edward Street, 715 and 720 Catherine Street, and 246/248 Wilson Street would like to unanimously take this opportunity to express our views over the proposed Wilson Walk development. Moreover, we would like to provide further context over our concerns by briefly familiarizing the council with our community.

We consist of seventeen families, many with young children, and a plethora of four-legged companions. There are currently nine young children who live on the 200-block of Edward Street (soon to be 10!) – all roughly around the same age. During the summer, it is not uncommon to find that our street turns into a ball hockey court. During the winter, we host holiday parties to catch up, and swap stories. We share baked goods, shovel each other's driveways during the odd winter storm, and look out for one another. We are a strong, healthy, vibrant, and thriving community.

Our Concerns

We are grateful for the developer's efforts in engaging our community with regards to their proposed development. Through the engagement process, we have consistently shared the concerns listed below. However, we would like to have a firm commitment on the part of the City and the developer to address the following issues that we have identified as arising from this development.

1. **Impact of proposed development on traffic flow:** With the size of the development, there will be increased car traffic on Edward St., Alston St. and Catherine St. This will impact our block of Edward St. because the entrance to the underground parking is on Alston St. It is reasonable to expect that the residents of the new development will use Alston St. and Edward St. if they are travelling towards the Western Communities. This concerns us because many of the neighborhood children use the front yard areas to play, ride bicycles, and draw with sidewalk chalk.
2. **Impact to Edward Street parking:** The development provides only 23 parking spots. Demand has been identified at 36 spots. It is expected that the additional 12 bachelor units do not include any parking spots. The developer cannot guarantee that the prospective buyer does not have a vehicle that may be parked on residential parking areas on Edward St. We understand that the developer has provided parking stalls in accordance with City guidelines, which admirably encourage cycling and car-sharing. The reality is that most families still have at least one car, and many have two. The transportation study cited by the developer states that there may be parking capacity on Edward St. Our community is interested in fewer cars parked on our street to facilitate mixed-use public space (e.g. ball hockey, and kids playing safely in front of our houses). Moreover, the transportation study also uses vehicle ownership data that does

not accurately reflect the number of vehicles owned by the families on Edward St.

3. **Impact to Wilson Street parking:** we are concerned about the proposed changes from existing residential parking on Wilson St. to 2-hour parking. We are concerned that this change, along with the proposed development and its lack of adequate parking, will force people to park on adjacent side streets (e.g. Edward St. or Catherine St.). We understand that this change relates to the proximity of this block of Wilson St. to Westside Village. However, the surface and underground parking at the Westside Village is never full, so there is no need for the City to discourage residential parking along Wilson St.
4. **Impact on privacy:** Those of us who live in homes backing onto the new development are concerned about the privacy of our backyards.
5. **Damage to existing structures due to a lengthy blasting period¹:** we are concerned about the possible damage to our homes during blasting as a result of:
 - a. Permanent ground deformation due to heave pressures
 - b. Vibratory settlement of building foundations
 - c. Direct vibratory cracking in a building due to ground vibrations
6. **Disruption and noise due to blasting and construction:** many of the families on Edward St. that back directly onto the proposed development have young infants/toddlers that need frequent naps during the day. Moreover, a number of individuals work from home. We are concerned about the disruption and noise that will occur during the construction process. Moreover, our dogs (five dogs live in the houses that back onto the proposed development) are terrified of blasting noises, much in the same way they are terrified of fireworks.

¹ Note that in BC, WorkSafeBC states that the “blaster must take precautions for the protection of persons and property” (OHS Regulation Part 21: Blasting Operations). Moreover, the *British Columbia Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* does not prescribe specific actions to protect property from urban blasts, and so the onus is entirely on a competent blaster to take the necessary precautions to ensure the risk of damage to neighboring properties are mitigated. Our community struggles to find comfort in the existing regulations to ensure no damage will occur to our properties due to urban blasting.

Existing Issues

The following is a list of issues that currently exist, notwithstanding new issues introduced by the proposed development:

1. **Issues on Alston Street:** Alston Street is currently heavily pot-holed, and severely neglected. This is especially true between Edward St. and Langford St. where there is no sidewalk, and no room for pedestrians and car traffic during standard business hours due to parked cars. The top of Alston St. at Edward St. is a hill and a blind corner where one of our neighbours has been struck by a vehicle in the past. The chain-link fence that borders Alston St. is uninviting, unsightly, and a poor reflection of our otherwise amazing community. This street is used as:
 - a. A free parking lot during the day by workers who work in the area
 - b. A parking spot for RVs and camper vans that park for extensive periods of time – complete with refuse and human waste dumping, used alcoholic beverage containers and drug paraphernalia
 - c. Garbage dumping ground for unwanted furniture.

We have historically attempted to raise these safety issues with the city, only to receive responses from city staff that completely dismissed our concerns, particularly around pedestrian safety (see Appendix B).

Consideration of this development, which will substantially increase traffic on Alston St., should include a plan to upgrade Alston St.

2. **Use of Edward St. as a through-fare and parking:** Edward street is used as a short-cut from Alston St. by drivers coming or going from the nearby hardware store, Wilson St., or Catherine St. Moreover, when Alston Street is completely full of parked cars during business hours, some cars park in the residential parking areas on Edward St. There are often vehicles parked on Edward at Alston, which leads to a blind corner and larger vehicles being unable to complete a turn safely. This is a frequent issue for vehicles such as city garbage trucks, and a safety issue for larger emergency response vehicles (eg. fire truck).
3. **Increased traffic on Catherine St.:** There is no crosswalk between Wilson St. and Skinner St. on Catherine St. Many residents of Vic West use Edward St. to walk to and from the Westside Village and downtown, jaywalking across Catherine St. at either Edward St. or Langford St. Because of a steep hill, there is little visibility on Catherine when driving northbound. This has been especially true since the Market Garden boutique grocery store opened on the west side of Catherine St. These problems will only get worse as the neighbourhood continues to densify.

4. **Intersection of Wilson St. and Catherine St.:** There is a four-way stop at this intersection with a flashing red light to indicate stop signs. Our neighbours have had to call emergency services at least five times due to vehicles hitting pedestrians, skateboarders, and cyclists. We have also witnessed numerous motor vehicle collisions, vehicles not completely stopping or slowing down, and vehicles running through the intersection at high speeds narrowly missing pedestrians and cyclists. One of our neighbours has had a vehicle collide with their parked car on Catherine Street, with the impact being so great that it was pushed half a block up the street. The stop signs and flashing lights are ineffective, and we are concerned that a greater density in the area will only amplify the traffic issue. This is a concern due to the number of pedestrians and cyclists that currently travel through the area - a number that will only increase with the proposed development.

Possible Solutions to Concerns and Existing Issues

The residents of the 200-block of Edward Street, 306 Edward Street, 407 Edward Street, 715 / 720 Catherine Street, and 246/248 Wilson Street seek the following solutions as a possible means to mitigate the concerns and issues described above:

1. **Cul-de-sac the end of Edward Street at Alston Street:** blocking off Edward St. to Alston St. traffic will mitigate both traffic flow issues, as well as parking issues on Edward St. Moreover, given how narrow it is, Alston Street could be made one-way southbound to force residents of the new development and the hardware store onto Wilson St., which is well-equipped to deal with higher traffic volumes. A precedent for segregating traffic from a larger development and the existing neighbourhood has been established at Alston St. and Raynor Ave. in the Rail Yards, pictured below.



Figure 1: Street view of Alston St. at Raynor Ave showcasing a traffic divider

2. **Improvements to Alston Street:** we request the City of Victoria, in collaboration with the developer as appropriate, to provide much needed improvements to entire length of Alston Street between Langford Street and Wilson Street including repairs to potholes, installation of a sidewalk to improve pedestrian safety, traffic calming measures (e.g. open to bicycle traffic only), as well as new parking rules and enforcement (e.g. residential parking only to facilitate the additional parking needed for the development).
3. **Fence Height Variance:** We understand that the developer has applied for a variance to allow the fence along the northern boundary of the development to be measured from the elevation of the higher properties. We request that the council approve the fence height variance requested by the developer to ensure maximum privacy between the backyards of the Edward St. residents and the proposed development.
4. **Traffic Calming on Catherine Street:** The City should consider installing speed humps along Catherine Street between Wilson Street and Langford Street. Additionally, or in the alternative, there should be a crosswalk across Catherine Street at either Edward Street or Langford Street, along with appropriate signage warning northbound drivers. We consider this situation to be similar to Menzies Street in James Bay, where a crosswalk was added at Michigan Street because pedestrians were crossing there without a crosswalk. Another possible solution to the Wilson and Catherine intersection could be a traffic circle.

Conclusion

We urge the Mayor and Council to consider the concerns presented by the Edward Street, Catherine Street, and Wilson Street residents, particularly around parking and traffic issues, the poor condition of Alston Street, and of utmost importance, the safety of our families and children in relationship to traffic/parking issues, the need for privacy, and the inconvenience caused by extensive periods of construction and blasting. We encourage the Mayor and Council to designate a cul-de-sac at the intersection of Edward Street and Alston Street to support the thriving community that exists, and to consider the possible solutions proposed herein in response to the challenges associated with this development. In addition, we request that the Mayor and Council strongly examine the fence height variance, and basic improvements to the infrastructure on Alston Street as a responsibility of the developer.

We all share a common goal of wanting Vic West and the Edward Street community to continue to grow as a strong, vibrant, and diverse neighbourhood. The suggestions offered above would facilitate both the densification mandated by the city, as well as the community cohesion that we know and love on Edward Street and in our neighbourhood.

Unanimously Signed,

Name	Address
Ahmed Mumeni and Ashley Heaslip	222 Edward St.
Eric Regehr and Laurel Dietz	224 Edward St.
Reg and Cindy Jansen	246 Wilson St.
Sara Jansen	248 Wilson St.
Ross Harray and Megan Ames	214 Edward St.
Roswitha Marx	216 Edward St.
Jasper and Judith Blake	228 Edward St.
Ravina Dhillon-Shivji	215 Edward St.
Harb Dhillon	201 Edward St.
Ken and Tiina Shaw	221 Edward St.
Heikkila Family	231 Edward St.

Dan & Sharon Barton	230 Edward St.
Sara Dalman	202 Edward St.
Rupert Walker & Berkley Vopnfjord	715 Catherine St.
Chris Taylor & Family	720 Catherine St.
Janet Noden William and Lily van den Broek	306 Edward St.
Mark Feldthusen	407 Edward St.

Appendix A: Photos of Alston Street Issues



Figure 2: Old furniture illegally dumped on Alston St.



Figure 3: Old furniture illegally dumped on Alston St.



Figure 4: Illegal long-term RV parking and further illegal dumping of old furniture at Alston St. and Edward St.



Figure 5: Illegal long-term RV parking on Alston St. at Edward St.. Note the parking ticket issued in the windshield. This RV remained parked for a few weeks despite the ticket.



Figure 6: Illegal dumping of building supplies on Alston St.



Figure 7: Day-time vehicle parking on Alston St. by non-residents and general poor road conditions. There is only room for one-way traffic, and no pedestrians.



Figure 8: Day-time vehicle parking by non-residents and poor road conditions on Alston St. at Edward St.

Appendix B: Response from the City of Victoria in 2016 re: Alston Street Issues

From: Carl Wilkinson
Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2016 9:37 AM
To: Sara
Subject: RE: Alston street

Hello Sarah

Thank you for that thoughtful feedback. After receiving your message I had an opportunity to go out and revisit the road prior to getting back to you.

As you have noted there is no parking regulation for Alston from Wilson to Langford at this time. This is largely due to the fact that there are no homes that have it as their sole access/address, and the large commercial lot on the east side is undeveloped. With that said, the City will be reviewing the available roadway width for two way traffic and may impose parking restrictions to ensure sufficient width for two way traffic. This process can take up to two months by the time parking restriction signs are placed.

In reviewing our, Greenways plan, capital projects 5 year outlook, and the Victoria West Transportation plan I can find no plans or priorities to upgrade Alston at this time. The City's Pedestrian master plan also ranked Alston as low priority.

With regards to safety, sidewalks are available to all properties in the neighbourhood that can lead to any destination. If Alston feels unsafe to you as a pedestrian I would discourage its use and suggest using the established sidewalk network instead.

If you would like to discuss the matter further please feel free to contact me.

Kind Regards

Carl

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