

June 9, 2020

City of Victoria  
Building and Planning Department  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps and members of City of Victoria council,

We are still excited to apply for a subdivision and re-zoning for our property located at 2920 Prior Street from R1-B to R1-S2 and a site-specific zone. The proposal would allow for retention of the existing house, retention of the existing garage via legally converting it to a garden suite (currently being used as an unauthorized garage suite), and the construction of a new house on the subdivided parcel. Based on our petition with the immediate neighbours the city specifically would like to hear from, we have signed petitions from almost every neighbour supporting this application.

#### Government Policies and Benefits

Consistent with numerous small lot re-zoning policies and guidelines, this application is a responsive design to adjacent homes and streetscape. We have met the small lot policies in several ways including not tearing down the existing structures, being sensitive to neighbours, increasing the supply of detached homes in our current housing crisis, and revitalizing neighbourhoods by allowing sensitive infill housing. Objectives met that have been taken from the official community plan:

“The objectives that justify this designation include: (a) To accommodate 10% of Victoria’s anticipated population growth and associated housing growth in Small Urban Villages, and residential areas to encourage and support future and existing commercial and community services. (b) To accommodate housing growth in Traditional Residential areas in a manner that is gradual, of a small scale and adaptive to the local contexts. (c) To integrate more intensive residential development in the form of single family dwellings on relatively small lots within existing Traditional Residential areas in a manner that respects the established character of the neighbourhoods. (d) To achieve a high quality of architecture, landscape and urban design to enhance neighbourhoods. (e) To integrate infill development in Traditional Residential areas that is compatible with existing neighbourhoods through considerations for privacy, landscaping and parking.”

We have worked tirelessly with Cascadia Architects to create a floorplan that not only meets the needs of our family of four, but also maintains the privacy and views of our neighbour to the north and seamlessly fits into the neighbourhood.

#### Need and Demand

By retaining the existing, older approx. 750 sq.ft. one bedroom and one bathroom house, we create an affordable family-oriented rental home. Also, by retaining and legalizing the existing garage suite, we create and keep a second affordable rental home that is much needed in our community. As we are all aware, living in the city and finding affordable rental homes is difficult. The major concern here could be that a future owner could instead tear down the existing house (currently in very poor shape) and garage suite and build one large, mansion-like house on the property, which does not fit into the neighbourhood, removes needed affordable rental homes, and could drastically effect the cityscape views of several neighbours to the north.

## Services and Neighbourhood

Based on the circulation of our small lot petition, it appears the proposal has very strong support from almost all the neighbours. However, we've been working with our neighbour to the north very closely to make sure their views are protected. Throughout the last 1.5 years, we have tweaked the plan several times to address many of the neighbours ideas, thoughts, and concerns. A Quadra/Hillside Neighbourhood Association meeting was held on March 26, 2019 (Pre-CALUC) and then on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 (CALUC) and we since have done even more changes to the site and landscaping plan based on feedback. The lot size is very unique in being 70 feet wide and 135 feet long (approx. 9450 sq.ft.), and the existing house is positioned completely to the southern side of the lot. The land slopes being on the hill so due to these elevation changes, the proposed new house will be lower than normal allowing for a good amount of sunlight and views to maintain for our northern neighbour. Even before deciding to purchase, we have been very cognisant of the neighbours to the north's view corridor and received positive feedback from them about our idea of rezoning/subdivision even before the property was purchased. However, there was some concern over maintaining their views and sunlight, as well as language of our proposed covenants. We felt we have now addressed these concerns.

Also, you can see similar sized width lots over to the east on Blackwood street, as well as the lot directly to the south at 2916 Prior Street (see picture below).



Summit park is a few blocks away, several bus routes are on Quadra, Hillside, or Finlayson, there's walkability to amenities/schools, and the site can be serviced by public infrastructure from Prior street.

## Impacts

We, along with other neighbours, believe the development will enhance the neighbourhood. The existing house will get a much needed face-lift as it's been a run-down rental property for over a decade. There is one protected fir tree on the property and two boulevard trees. Based on an arbourist's report, the proposed new house's footprint and driveways will not impact the health of the protected tree so it, as well as the two boulevard trees can remain. We have a proposed landscape plan that shows many privacy foliage we have discussed with our neighbours. We propose a privacy screen on the side of the deck to keep privacy between the neighbour to the north, as well the new house. We feel this a great location for an infill house as a new owner if they did knock down the existing house, could build a very large house that could hinder the views of all the neighbours to the north. Also, no windows will be positioned toward the closest neighbour to the north at 2930 Prior Street except two lower small frosted windows, which is for a lower staircase and a lower bathroom of proposed new house (we have removed the upper window based on recent feedback from northern neighbour). We have also altered

the roof shape to allow more light to the neighbours, as well as angled the top floor northwest corner's floorplan to allow a bit more of a view and light that will come into our neighbours kitchen window (based on their suggestion).

Tenants live in the house, as well as garage suite. They are aware, before they decided to rent, the changes that may occur if subdivision/rezoning is approved and are ok with it. The house will not be affected from this as it is a legal structure and nothing needs to be updated. However, the garage suite may need some upgrades such as servicing upgrades when being converted to a legal garden suite says city of Victoria permits department. We are prepared to work with our lovely and accommodating tenant, as per the tenant assistance plan, to make sure they are taken care of if temporarily displaced due to a stop in services. Therefore, we will pay for any needed temporary accommodation or house them in the proposed newly constructed house's basement during any temporary displacement due to new storm/sewer services being added and/or possible energy upgrades in home such as extra attic insulation. We will work with the city at building permit stage, as per the permits department feedback, to boost energy efficiency of the proposed legal garden suite, while not effecting the peace and quiet of the current tenant too much and get to as close as reasonably possible to current energy building standards. We will also be guided by the residential tenancy act's guidelines and will not increase the rent just because some upgrades took place. We have a great relationship with our tenant, want to make this as smooth as possible, and believe these upgrades will be a long-term benefit. This is NOT a "renoviction" and, if our tenant needs to leave temporarily due to renovation, we are prepared to pay for whatever is needed to make tenant comfortable. We definitely want them back.

We have been sensitive to neighbours and have had continued dialogue with neighbours visiting them on several occasions (privately 5+ times with neighbour to our north). We have even paid for a shadow study to provide clarity on shadowing throughout the different times of year. It appears very positive and favourable in that the proposed house appears to only produce shadows into the north neighbour's windows during 2 months of the year in the early morning. In order to show the neighbours to our north their view of the cityscape would be maintained, we went a little above and beyond and had a surveyor, with our neighbour's permission, survey our neighbour's deck and house. We then were able to provide what the views would be like from their deck. As an extra step, to make sure their views will be protected forever, we will place a restrictive covenant on the proposed house lot, as well as the existing lot's house and garage in favour to our neighbour to the north. A restrictive covenant is an obligation imposed on the owner of one parcel of land to refrain from using that land in a certain way for the benefit of another parcel of land. These covenants will state that no house will be allowed to be built taller or longer than what we're proposing on the newly subdivided lot, as well as the garage won't be able to be built taller or larger in the future, as well as the existing house, if ever torn down, will only be able to be built a certain distance from the rear lot line and a certain height. That way our neighbour to the north can have their views protected forever. Our lawyer will give their undertaking to our neighbours to the north that these covenants will be registered as soon as we receive approval of the subdivision/rezone and the registration of the new titles.

### Design

We have taken into consideration all of neighbourhood feedback to create a house using natural materials in order to blend into the street. We have recently adjusted the roof to allow more light towards our neighbours to the north. We have hired Cascadia Architects to architecturally design and create with attention to detail and, after several revisions, we've created a beautiful space (not just another quick, cookie cutter design). See letter from Cascadia Architects regarding the design rationale.

### Variances

For the proposed new house on the proposed R1-S2 lot, the only variance is for a window well on north side to allow for light into basement bedroom. For the existing house, due to the fact we want to keep the garage garden suite in tact, this will result in an L-shaped lot and therefore we are requesting a site specific zone. Variances for garden suite height will be required, as well as the existing house north and south side yard setbacks

We appreciate your consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

Neil Street Holdings Ltd.

Some of the green building initiatives being used:

- Bicycle Parking (shown on the plan)
- Thermal Windows (triple pane); On-demand hot water
- Electric car charging outlet; E-Bike charging area
- LED Lighting; energy star appliances
- Native Landscaping; Retention of existing building stock
- Water conservation via low flow faucets, showerheads, toilets