



December 1, 2020

Dear Mayor Helps and members of Victoria City Council,

Re: Local Government Recommendations for Trees Cannabis

It is my pleasure to be submitting this letter in response to the city staff's reports recommending Trees Cannabis for LCRB licences for cannabis retail. Trees has been a long standing cannabis retailer in Victoria and has worked tirelessly with regulators and local governments as BC and Canada transitioned from the cannabis 'grey market' to the regulated system over the past five years. It is of utmost importance to stress that Trees' operations in this system is one of strict compliance with all regulations.

I was pleased to see resounding support from the businesses and residents around our 230 Cook Street store. The report on our 1545 Fort Street store echoed concerns raised by residents of nearby Verrinder Avenue during the public hearing on rezoning, and I will use this opportunity to highlight some of the work done by the City and Trees to address these concerns.

On December 13th, 2018 Council directed staff to "engage residents on parking and traffic management solutions on Verrinder Avenue." Since that instruction from Council, Transportation has installed signs that inform drivers that Verrinder Avenue is now residential parking only and that turnarounds are forbidden. This addresses resident's concerns about non-resident parking on the avenue and vehicles heading to the top of the block only to have to turn around in resident's driveways with nowhere to park. In addition to this, Trees will have signs in store instructing customers not to park on Verrinder, and all staff at the store will be trained to watch the security camera overlooking Verrinder and not to serve customers that have illegally parked on that street until they move their car. We believe this will be effective in shaping customers' behaviour to address Verrinder residents' concerns.

Secondly, Verrinder Avenue was identified within the City's repaving program budget and that work has been completed. This helps address overall concerns about the road condition. While doing this work, Transportation Services remediated the business-adjacent side (west Verrinder) filling in the small ditch, paving it, and separating it with bollards to allow safe pedestrian access and eliminating non-resident traffic and parking. Engineering and Public Works have identified that the historical design of the intersection of Verrinder Avenue and Fort Street is less than ideal and drivers are obliged to take additional care when entering and exiting the street. There is limited opportunity to redesign the intersection but staff is examining the signal timings for the Fort Street/Oak Bay intersection in relation to the new lane changes. The area has densified, and neighbourhood has become much more urban in the last two decades. Any kind of business operating on that corner would be dealing with similar parking and traffic issues, be it a cannabis store, cafe, or pharmacy.

Another area of concern raised by local residents was the rampant graffiti on the building and the buildings surrounding the intersection in general. In the summer of 2019, Trees commissioned a full-sized mural along the east side of the businesses, facing Verrinder, that has greatly reduced tagging and graffiti in the area. Anti-graffiti coating was applied to the mural to make cleaning off spray paint easier.

Finally, one outstanding concern raised by the community is the consumption of cannabis products on site, or in the vicinity, and nuisance odours. Under severe penalties to licensees, consumption of cannabis products is strictly forbidden in licensed premises, and customers are explicitly notified

to consume or smoke only in legally designated places as defined by the CRD, the *Clean Air Act*, and WorkSafeBC. In addition, as per the *Cannabis Act*, all cannabis products are packaged and sealed in an off-site Health Canada designated facility, eliminating any smell of the products within the store. As stated above, Trees' operating procedures and licences rely on compliance with all laws and regulations. Trees looks forward to working with our neighbours and the City to renew our thriving business and to be a strong community member.

Sincerely,
Alex Robb
Director of Trees Cannabis