



James Bay Neighbourhood Association

jbna@jbna.org

Victoria, B.C., Canada

www.jbna.org

February 16th, 2021

Mayor and Council,
City of Victoria

Dear Mayor Helps and Councillors,

Re: CALUC Community Discussion – Village Green, 110-122 Menzies

The Village Green proposal, 110-122 Menzies was considered at the February 10, 2021 JBNA ZOOM Discussion Forum. 34 people participated.

When first approached by the proponents, they had discussed a timeline and multi-tiered consultation process that had to be altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the close down on meetings in spring of 2020. The April 19, 2020 letter submitted to Mayor and Council provided information on the first consultation meeting at the January 8, 2020 JBNA meeting (before COVID-19) as well as the discussion with the proponents regarding the CALUC process going forward. The January 2020 meeting did not include schematics of a proposed structure; rather it was a visioning discussion.

As detailed in the April 19, 2020 letter, a ZOOM pre-meeting with architectural drawings occurred on April 15, 2020 with the proponent's team and JBNA Development Review Committee members Tim VanAlstine, Mark Cammiade and myself.

Late last year, the proponents indicated their wish to proceed with the CALUC meeting. A ZOOM discussion was held on Monday, December 21st, 2020, to consider the readiness of the proposal for community review. Participating were Tim VanAlstine, Deane Strongitharm of City Spaces, Greg Mitchel of Primex, and Tim VanAlstine and myself from JBNA.

The proponent created and distributed a flyer to over 160 residences within 100 meters of the property and has spoken with a property manager of a nearby strata complex, requesting distribution of the notice (notice in Appendix 'A'). This distribution included all tenants of the property. JBNA distributed notice of the meeting and the proponent's notice to the JBNA e-mail listings to about 700 e-addresses.

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Presenting at the February ZOOM review of the proposal were Deane Strongitharm of CitySpaces Consulting Ltd., Tony James and Jeremy Beintema of Continuum Architects, Carole Rossell of Small and Rossell Landscape Architects, and Greg Mitchel of Primex Investments.

During the slide presentation, residents learned more about the purpose-built rental apartment proposal. In summary:


- 131 units,
- variances sought on parking with 100 total while Schedule C requires 162,
- excess secured bicycle parking, 250 where 176 required, and space for cargo bicycles,
- two modo car spaces with EV charging stations included,
- significant resident outdoor space with large roof garden and entertainment area, and
- Tenant Assistance Plan.

Following the presentation, meeting participants were given the opportunity to ask questions or provide comments. Several residents spoke about the proposal. Comments are found in Appendix 'B'. Resident e-mail comments are found in Appendix 'C'.

In general concerns and issues raised by those at the meeting focused on density (James Bay being already the most densified residential area in the City), deficit on parking, and affordability.

We believe that given the overall community feedback, that the CALUC community consultation obligations have now been met.

For your consideration,



Marg Gardiner
President, JBNA

Cc: JBNA Board
Michael Angrove, CoV Planner,
Deane Strongitharm, City Spaces
Greg Mitchel. Primex

Appendix 'A'

Community Forum Notice delivered to over 160 residences within 100meters



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February 10, 2021

110 Menzies Street Forum

JBNA is hosting a Community Discussion to consider, and receive comment on, the proposed development for 110 Menzies Street / 450 & 456/458 Niagara Street on Wednesday, February 10th, at 7pm, via ZOOM conferencing.

110 Menzies / 450 & 456/458 Niagara:

The area of application is just over one acre in James Bay; the Official Community Plan designation is Urban Residential

Zoning (existing):

R3-2 Multiple Dwelling District and R-K Medium Density Attached Dwelling District

Zoning (Proposed):

Site Specific

Proposal Details:

The proposal is for a 131-unit infill residential rental development for the lots at the corner of Menzies and Niagara Street.

The area of application represents part of a larger parcel, and the first of two phases to ultimately redevelop the entire site.

For information, you may call/email:

Proponent Representative:

Deane Strongitharm,
dstrongithamr@cityspaces.ca,
250-889-1862

JBNA CALUC Co-Chairs:

Marg Gardiner, marg.jbna@telus.net,
250-260-0300

Tim VanAlstine, timothyvanalstine@gmail.com,
250-704-6566

Zoom Details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86873173149>

Meeting ID: 868 7317 3149

Note: The City is currently modifying a comment system and may, or may not, provide on-line comment opportunity in addition to receiving letters about the project.



Appendix 'B'

Minutes: February 10, 2021, CALUC Discussion

Question and Answer session:

Q: Nathan and Klima – 458 Niagara, adjoining house. What will rents be for the new units? Will they be affordable?

A: GM: We build market-rate housing – that's our business. We will assist with the transition for tenants, but after that it is all market rental with no affordable component contemplated – at least, not in this first phase.

Q: How many of the existing 36 units are occupied by long-term tenants?

A: Approximately 20% have turned over in the last year due to attrition. New tenants know the site is being redeveloped.

Q: Will tenants be given notice as required by the LTA?

A: Yes – we have a tenant coordinator, Candace. The City requires four months' notice minimum.

Q: Can you comment on the heights of the different wings?

A: They vary from four to seven storeys, South to North. We are at the same height at the north as the neighbouring buildings.

Q: Are the charging stations only for modo cars or for generic spaces too?

A: We are running conduit for all parking spaces, so we will be able to provide charging when needed by tenants. We are starting with 10 chargers.

Q: Is parking included in the rent?

A: Normally parking is an additional charge.

Q: You are adding a lot of density – what are you doing for the community in return?

A: Two things: We are consistent with the OCP and the height of existing zoning. The most important and costly public amenity are the improvements to the street frontages, with boulevards and reduced private space.

Q: Will there be blasting to create the parking, and how much?

A: We have a geotechnical report and some blasting will probably be required. Modern technology is much less invasive. Residents will be notified in advance.

Q: The Menzies Boulevard – it is a major redesign. Please discuss the changes as they are significant.

A: Right now, there is a narrow sidewalk that has telephone poles in it. We are ceding space for a wider boulevard to provide space between vehicles and pedestrians and make a more pleasant experience. The poles will be located in a boulevard between the street and the sidewalk.

Q: Buildings were erected in 1960. Is there an abatement plan and will neighbours be protected?

A: We expect hazardous materials to be present. We have done a study and will use a professional abatement company. Tenants will be gone – the project will be sheeted per standard practice.

Q: Will the trees on Menzies be removed?

A: Yes – all of them. Some of the trees are in poor health according to the arborist report. We will preserve trees on the North boundary (Elms). The City is seeking buried conduits and underground parking – there is no alternative.

Q: There will be more demand for parking on the street given the shortage of spaces on site.

A: Given the location, and the City's Transportation Demand Measures, the City has accepted the strategy we have presented. They are looking for greater than required bike stalls, storage for cargo bikes, and we provide both.

Q: What is the plan for water runoff and use of permeable pavers?

A: Permeable pavers don't really apply because most of the site is being excavated for parking underground. Some water will be captured and filtered on-site, with excess stored in detention tanks and then overflow into the Storm System.

Q: I live just beyond the 100m distance. If parking is not included in the rent, they will look for parking on the street. This will exacerbate the current problems with parking. The 7-storey building at Thrifty's – how many units there? I am asking about density.

A: In our rental complexes, we don't see parking spaces overflowing. Prices are set to try to reduce offsite parking. I don't know the zoning or number of units at JB Square – I think it is FSR 2.5.

Q: My greatest concern is density. We are crowded already. Your building is Urban Residential, the other building is designated higher density, and you are proposing to equal that. In summer this place is packed with tourists, cruise ships or not. We have another huge development finishing up at Capital Park. In my view, while I like the presentation, the number of units and height are too much – density is too high. This height of building is not appropriate for this lot.

A: The existing zoning allows the height we are proposing. We view this as a strategic location, and the OCP says a 2:1 FSR is appropriate – we are at 2.13.

C: I would like the project better if you reduced the floor count by one or two. We have another major development coming at Croft Street, I gather. Parking is very difficult here.

C: I see 100 parking spots for 131 units – clearly a shortage.

Q: What are your exterior lighting plans?

A: We haven't reached that level of detail yet. We are aware of glare and night sky concerns. We focus on entry areas for public safety. Each unit will have front door lighting – that's all we know right now.

Q: Building orientation – inside units on South side wing will hardly ever see the sun. I would have thought the courtyard would be oriented to the South to allow sun to penetrate all units, and reduce the visual impact from Niagara Street.

A: Courtyard is for enjoyment of the residents.

Q: What kind of air handling system will you have for the project?

A: We will use a VRF system – Variable Refrigerated Flow, with rooftop chillers and ducted heaters.

Q: Were any wind studies done?

A: No, not yet. We haven't seen the need for it and have not been advised that there are any serious concerns. We've never had to do that for buildings of this size before.

C: Given your goals for the rooftop uses, I think you need some kind of wind screening, particularly on the South and South West sides. Winds are strong enough to move barbecues in this area.

Q: Why aren't you including subsidized or affordable units? I understand you have costs to bear, but what's missing in your proposal that precludes affordable units in this development.

A: I tried to develop affordable housing in Vancouver for a number of years. Three tools are: 1) Density; we would need to push FSR 4 or 5 to provide affordable housing. 2) BCHousing provides many subsidies, but the pool is limited and there are many uncertainties and competing issues in finance for projects like these. 3) Federal options. Already hard to make rental housing work. We are long-term owners – we build and hold. We provide safe and comfortable homes, market rate. We don't go after luxury renters. This is not an easy question to address.

Q: What kinds of materials will you be using?

A: Concrete for the main floor above the parking level, and all wood from there up. We are looking at a variety of materials for the cladding – not finalized yet.

Q: When will construction start?

A: That's up to the City mostly – we are aiming for Spring 2022.

The Applicants thanked JBNA and attendants for participating and asking good questions.

Appendix 'C'

Correspondence received on the project:

On Sun, Jan 31, 2021 at 1:03 PM, Edward Patrick Moffit wrote:

I'm Edward deTrafford-Moffit. I spoke at the December 2019 meeting, about Village Green redevelopment, proposal in 2 1/2 yrs. This would put the timeline to move from May-September 2022, but not before. I suggested to have tenants relocated by them, with financial assistance. as housing shortages are a reality. During winter, the foul weather makes it a difficult time to move, that is more likely to have damages & injuries more likely. Tenants could be in better spirits, when knowing of the move date is ASAP ThX• PS

The C19V Epidemic requires that we need more space & opened air, so when moving in good weather, doors & windows could afford a better air circulation, to dispel that Virus.

Subject: Redevelopment of Village Green, James Bay

Date: February 11, 2021 at 2:43:14 PM PST

Dear Mayor Helps and City Councillors,

Thank you all for the good work that you and your teams are doing for the people of Victoria. In a fast-growing city with complex needs, you have been transforming Victoria in a progressive, inclusive way.

I have two questions about the redevelopment of Village Green and our housing crisis:

1. Developers are tearing down habitable, affordable rental buildings to create higher rent properties. Many buildings being demolished have years of use left in them. Tearing down these buildings removes hundreds (thousands?) of affordable rental units from the market. The rental rate in Victoria has jumped about 65% in 4 years. I believe investment developers, non-resident purchasers, and Air BnBs are 3 major causes of our housing crisis. What can be done to protect us? Why are so many on the street while hundreds of homes are empty and luxury buildings are going up? Is housing a basic human need? Should investors' behaviour be allowed to create a housing crisis?

Should we hang onto buildings that are livable until they need replacing (good for our environment, too)? Should developers be encouraged to replace single family dwellings with multi-family units? A more even distribution of high density areas might be helpful, creating vibrant villages like James Bay and Cook Street, with shopping (also good for environment and community).

2. In Minutes of a previous meeting, I believe it was said that construction at Village Green would likely not commence until 2023. Can you confirm? I live across the street, am sensitive to noise, and will have to move when the 2 year construction project starts. I pay \$950 a month. It's now \$1,500 for an apartment in Victoria. I'm 64 with low income. With the pandemic and an neck injury, it is not good to be moving. It would help anxiety levels knowing there is a two-year window to find housing (instead of by next spring). I might have to leave Victoria.

Thank you very much for your attention to these questions. Hundreds of people are losing affordable homes and facing an uncertain and frightening future when projects like this happen. I don't know what the solution might be, but asking developers to include or contribute to affordable housing solutions is a good start, as well as putting people before profit.

Respectfully,

Val French

XXXX Niagara Street, Victoria