

Fairfield Gonzales Community Land Use Committee Meeting Report



Date: February 27, 2020
7:00 PM to 8:15 PM

Address: 1120, 1124, 1128
Burdett Avenue

Developer: Empresa Properties
Presenter: Greg Damant, Cascadia Architects Inc.
Architect: Cascadia Architects Inc.

Attendance: 19

Role of Fairfield Gonzales Community Association Land Use Committee

- The CALUC encourages a respectful meeting environment allowing everyone the opportunity to speak and be heard. The meeting is about the proposal not about the applicant or others involved in the project.
- There is no decision by the CALUC to support or oppose an application made at, or after, community meetings.
- Community members are encouraged to share their views with City Council via email (mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca).
- If an application is submitted to the City, information can be obtained through the Development Tracker feature of the City's website. (<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/planning-development/development-tracker.html>)

Project Summary

- The developer proposes to construct a 5-storey purpose-built rental building. The use as a rental building would be protected in perpetuity by a covenant placed on title of the property.
- The proposed building would include 42 units including studio, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom suites.
- The design of the proposed building is intended to reflect the architectural features of surrounding homes and buildings. The proposed building will have a front courtyard and use natural appearing materials.
- The proposed building is within the Urban Residential area of the Official Community Plan, which provides up to 6 storeys in height and 2.0 floor space ratio. The proposed design is for 3 storeys on the east side and 5 storeys on the west side.

- The proposed building is surrounded by existing 4-storey buildings on the north (same) side of the street, a mix of 4-storey buildings and 2-storey homes on the south side.
- Vehicle access to the underground parking is proposed to be on the west end of the building where there is an existing parking lane for the neighbouring building
- The landscape is proposed to enhance the urban forest. 3 trees require removal. 12 trees will be planted to replace the removed trees. All plantings will include native species selected for the environmental conditions on each side of the building. There may be changes to the trees on the boulevard; however, that is a City of Victoria jurisdiction.

Project Element	Current	Proposed
Current Zoning	1120 – RB1 1124 – RB1 1128 – R3-AM-1	Site specific zone
Variances	NA	Reduced parking from 46 (42 Res and 4 Visitor) to 40 stalls. No visitor parking.
OCP Amendment required?	NA	No
Number of Units	NA	42
Car Parking Stalls	NA	40; proposed plan for e-cars, no car share spaces
Bike Parking Stalls	NA	56 long term, 6 short term
Set Back East	NA	3.75 m
Set Back West	NA	3.50 m
Set Back South	NA	4.25 m (SW); 6.74 m (SE)
Set Back North	NA	6.02 m
FSR (Floor Space Ratio)	NA	2.0
Height	NA	16.36 m

Community Questions and Answers

Theme	Question/Comment	Response by Proponent
Density and Growth Areas	Two separate attendees questioned: Is the proposal too large to be consistent with its position between urban residential and traditional residential zones as defined in the Official Community Plan?	The proposed building is consistent with the requirements of the Official Community Plan. A number of design features such as setting back higher floors, creating the front courtyard and choice of exterior materials will soften the proposed building's presence.
	Two separate attendees commented: The proposed building is too large relative to the size of the surrounding buildings	The design of the building has been adjusted to improve it visually fitting-in with the other buildings. It is important to recognize that the community is continuing to evolve, and the designs should be focused on balancing existing buildings, but also have an eye to the future needs of the community. The City of Victoria has also been clear that it is seeking more density and height in this area.
	Comment that the OCP allows up to 2.0 FSR, but the base FSR is 1.2 unless the developer meets certain conditions. The zoning across the street is residential (RB1), so this proposal is a very aggressive increase in density.	It is recognized that 1.2 FSR is the base. Going above is reasonable in this case in that it is a purpose-built rental building in perpetuity. The City of Victoria has recognized the challenge of building these types of developments and wants to encourage more purpose-built rental developments.
	This proposal has a larger number of units than the previously proposed development. Why did they increase?	When the proposed building was converted from a strata title development to a rental building, the number of units was increased to ensure economic viability of the project. A purpose-built rental building is more challenging to develop since the developer needs to finance the project until the project is completed, and the renters have moved into the project.

Theme	Question/Comment	Response by Proponent
Zoning	What exact zoning variances are being requested?	<p>Developer indicated that it is unclear at this time since a zoning has not been determined. The City of Victoria planner advised that there would be a new “spot” zone for the project. It anticipated that a parking variance would be requested to bring the number of parking spots down from 46 to 42.</p> <p><i>The CALUC advised that any significant changes to the proposal as a result of the final zoning would be brought back to the community through a subsequent public meeting.</i></p>
	A number of follow up comments were made that the approach by the City of Victoria to provide “spot” zoning on a project-by-project basis is deceptive and creates a lack of certainty for the community	The developer appreciated the concern and has used reasonable assumptions to make the proposed building consistent within the existing context of the building.
	Comment that the notification process has been insufficient. 100 metres capture area is too small and there is no public notice information on the properties.	<p>The City of Victoria sets the criteria to be used for notification and the developer follows those criteria.</p> <p><i>CALUC comment: Public notice on the property is only erected once the project has been submitted to the City of Victoria.</i></p>
	How long will the re-zoning take?	The re-zoning will take approximately 12 months. If the zoning is approved, the developer will begin seeking permits to allow work.
Children’s Area	Comment that with the building being designed for families, it doesn’t appear that there are any spaces designated for children play areas. Are there any amenities specifically for children?	2 and 3-bedroom units have been designed with larger balconies and ground patio space to provide more room for children. In an urban context, these are more family friendly units.

Theme	Question/Comment	Response by Proponent
Affordability	Question from a current tenant in one of the existing properties. What are the expected rental rates?	Response from proponent was the anticipated rental rates would be approximately \$3/square foot. This would translate to a \$1,200/month rental rate for a studio suite (350 square feet).
	In response to information, it was further commented that rental rates were not affordable.	The developer commented that new buildings are more expensive than the older buildings they are replacing. Compared to a new building in Cook St Village, \$3/square foot is at least \$1/square foot less expensive.
Parking	Question: Why there is so much parking in the proposal? Could it be reduced further? Suggested there should be no parking for studio suites.	The number of parking spaces are reduced from anticipated zoning requirements. It is anticipated that the parking demand in the building could be lower given the number of studio suites in the building. The developer also commented that there is only space for 40 parking stalls on the single parking level.
	Will there be bike storage, car share and e-car parking?	Bike storage for 56 bikes is planned on the ground floor, accessed by a separate secured entrance near the front of the building. The room will have access into the lobby. There is a plan for a bike maintenance area. No plans for car sharing specific to the building. There will be space for 6 bikes to be parked outside the building for visitors. Some parking spaces will be dedicated to e-car parking with details to be determined at a later date.
Light & Noise	Several questions from meeting attendees living in adjacent buildings about the impact of shadowing from the proposed building.	The project developers demonstrated videos from shadowing studies and offered to meet one-on-one to review the information in greater detail
Traffic	What is the expected impact on traffic?	The City of Victoria will undertake a traffic study for Cook Street.