



Mayor Helps and Council
City of Victoria
No.1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6
31 January 2022

Re: 1221 Blanshard Street - Rezoning and Development Permit applications

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

In accordance with the City's alternate CALUC process during the Provincial PHO, no in-person CALUC meeting took place but the applicant organized and participated in a virtual meeting for this application on 13 July 2021. Additionally, the community was asked to provide feedback on the proposal based on documents provided by the applicant posted to the Development Tracker. A summary of the information provided to the public and the public feedback are appended to this letter.

Based on the information presented at the virtual meeting and the documents available online the comments from the LUC is as follows:

- Refreshing to see a project that develops through principles, philosophy and observation. It seems a rarity so it's very welcome to see how the project has evolved. The proposal has a tremendous amount of merit when you look at it from a principle-based approach.
- Refreshing to see density that comes below the limits of the OCP.
- Trade offs are being made with respect to the requested variance for setbacks on interior property line (bordering Yello) so that there are greater impacts on fewer units as opposed to lesser impacts on a greater number of units. Similarly, building separations between the proposed building and the Yello are not consistent with DCAP.
- Concern whether enough consideration has been afforded the Heritage Landmark Building, St Andrews Cathedral, as the property under proposal is within the 90m-radius. With this proposal and the recently approved Montrose Wintergarden, are we losing the "visual prominence" of this heritage landmark as required in the DCAP?
- Appreciate the scale of this proposal and the use for a new office building in the Core Business District so we can hopefully avoid having people who live downtown having to commute to other communities for work.
- Concern that floor plate size does not comply with DCAP for the top three floors. The project is several thousand sqft over the maximum floor plate area above the 35m break point. While DCAP amendments are being considered to enlarging office floor plate maximums, these have yet to be considered at a public hearing or approved by Council.

- Encouraged that there will be multiple new access points for CRUs along Blanshard as this stretch is a dead zone.
- Potential design concerns around the “permeability” of the corner as the substantial rock and structure element at the entrance may present a “trip hazard”. It may look and read like a cut through corner but it may actually present unforeseen route challenges.

The first impression this application presents is that the developer has taken care with the massing and design of this project. The tower is positioned on its podium in a way that provides some relief for the residents immediately behind it and pushed back enough from View Street to preserve some pedestrian sightlines to the cathedral spire across Blanshard. The overall appearance, with a transitional storey between the podium and the tower allowed for significant rooftop plantings, is visually pleasing. The various cladding materials are of high quality and make for a serious, unostentatious presentation. The ground level hardscaping and landscaping features seem well thought out with wide sidewalks, overhangs with wood soffits, some seating and room for re-establishing trees. The plan aims for near maximum density as permitted by the OCP; a fact considered commendable particularly in the context that the majority of recent applicants consistently seek densities well in excess of already overly generous OCP density maximums.

A closer examination of the public feedback to the proposal and the DCAP policy regarding Heritage Landmark Buildings reveal that the proposed design has more impact on its neighbours than intended by DCAP policy. As demonstrated by the “DCAP Compliant Building” in the shadow study on page A1.07 of the plan submission, the tower portion is not pushed back nearly so far from the corner at View as DCAP guidelines for preserving the views of the church or maintaining the maximum floor plate size DCAP would require. That change allows for a tower floor plate 40% greater than the current guidelines permit; a size the developer claims is required by potential office tenants and that the as yet to be approved draft DCAP documents may support. So, while the Cathedral steeple remains somewhat visible, it is still closely framed and crowded beyond what might be reasonably required by the DCAP guidelines. Additionally, the residents in the adjacent building (Yello) have a much larger wall surface facing them (while acknowledging that the developers have paid some attention to the building’s appearance from the back).

This application, while carefully considered, still creates unmitigated impacts beyond that of a fully compliant application on the residential neighbours to the east and the Heritage Landmark Cathedral to the west. While the applicant may point to the proposed amendments to DCAP in support of its lack of compliance with the current DCAP floor plate maximums, a key factor in the impacts identified, we can only remind Council that the proposed DCAP amendments have yet to be publically reviewed or ratified by Council.

Sincerely,



Ian Sutherland
Chair Land Use Committee
Downtown Residents Association

Summary of CALUC Meeting Held 13 July 2021

Based on the information the applicant provided at the meeting:

Project Overview:

- A 10-storey commercial mixed-use project with a total floor area of 15,792 sqm with a floor space ratio of 5.89:1 and a height of 44.35m with a podium and tower massing.
- The project includes 3 floors of underground parking with 144 stalls, 99 Class 1 and 45 Class 2 bike parking spots.
- The height of proposed ten commercial storeys is comparable to the 14 residential storeys of the neighbouring Yello building.
- The property is located in the Core Business District in the Official Community Plan and the Downtown Core Area Plan.
- Propose to continue to deploy sustainable solutions and ensure this building is one of the most sustainable in the Province.
- Materiality has been drawn from the St Andrews Cathedral. Also drawing from the Atrium in terms of scale of the building and the scale of the public realm along Blanshard.
- The property is within the 90m radius of a Heritage Landmark Building, St Andrew's Cathedral and adjacent to numerous other heritage properties and low-scale buildings that require a sensitive touch.
- Three strategies have been employed to address proximity of St Andrews Cathedral. Shadow studies have been undertaken to demonstrate how the proposed massing reduces shadowing on the frontage of the cathedral.
- One of the challenges of the project is to be a good neighbour to the Yello building that is located quite close to the property line and has many units that have enjoyed an unobstructed view.
- The proposal has been compared relative to the current DCAP in addition to the new draft DCAP.
 - Proposal does not conform with the setbacks required from the interior property line adjacent to the Yello. The building core intrudes into that space for a length of 13m of a total of the 64m frontage. That portion is 3m off the property line and the rest is 10m as required.
 - Requesting setback variance for a portion of the building that intrudes at Blanshard and Yates.
 - The setbacks of the tower relative to the podium are not consistent with DCAP.
 - The upper floors are also not set back as proscribed in DCAP.
- Smaller tenancies are envisioned for the five commercial rental units on the ground floor with three facing Blanshard Street and two facing Yates Street for either retail or restaurant uses.
- Proposing a pocket plaza about halfway along the Blanshard that could potentially be used for a café/restaurant tenant. The siting would not impact the pedestrian flow.
- Programmatic flexibility for podium premises (2nd and 3rd floors) allowing for a civic or institutional use with a standalone entry. Neither tenant nor use have been secured at this time.

- Class A office space above podium space of quality consistent with previous projects such as 1515 Douglas and Capital Park.
- Fourth floor is pulled back to form tower and landscaping is proposed on this level.
- Driveway for underground onsite parking and service access is off of View Street.
- Parking programming may include a component of public use (similar to Atrium) after business hours but that won't be determined until a later date.

Comments and concerns raised by the public:

- Q: Architecturally has there been any consideration for any articulation along the front facades. It's pretty linear along Blanshard. Did you consider breaking it up or creating any jogs? A: It really wasn't part of the design.
- I find the design of the building kind of refreshing. I like the clean cut of the building much like the building on the corner of Douglas and Fort. It's a jewel box of a building with an international flavour.
- Additional questions regarding clarification on the requirements of the site and the relaxations or variances being requested by the applicant.
- Questions regarding the project timeline.
- Concern whether there will be windows or views from the first three floors of the new building that will be adjacent to existing windows of the residential units at Yello.
- Member of the public voiced concern about the difficulty in finding related City documents (DCAP, OCP, Zoning Bylaw 2018) in advance of the meeting.
- Concerns about on-site parking were addressed as they were satisfied to hear the proposal seems to supply sufficient parking for the building tenants and that a portion may be available for public use after business hours.
- Conversation regarding refinements made to the materiality of the proposal that help people anticipate how the building will read and be viewed.
- Conversation regarding lighting: how the building will be viewed at night and how bird impacts can be avoided generally by incorporating design elements such as fins and their reflections and shadows.
- Q: In the early days, was any consideration given to accommodate the new generation of small movie theatres? A: Difficult to design space that may preclude other uses without confirmed tenants. Potential for some use of the ground floor commercial spaces could be used. There is some flexibility there with public access.
- Concern regarding the loss of use of the space as a movie theatre in reference to the existing fabric of the city. It's a business case in an industry that's evolving that in many cases now include dining opportunities within the theatre model.
- Request consideration for seating and bench design that would also be suitable for anyone that has any sort of mobility challenges. They may be able to sit down, but may not be able to get back up without assistance, so they would be precluded from enjoying that area.

Comments and concerns raised by the public online:

Date	First	Last	Position	Comments
29-Jun	Julie	Gagne	Oppose	It breaks all the beautiful memories in Victoria! Also the heritage should be preserved! Less and less cultural architecture in this city! Nobody will enjoy the new place but the rich non-local people who don't care about esthetic anyway!
29-Jun	Julie	Gagne	Oppose	Gross! We don't want that because it will look ugly and shades everywhere around! Makes the city loose his culture!
29-Jun	Mathieu	Warnet-Pelletier	Oppose	This building is an eyesore to look at. Furthermore, it's gonna block the view, sun, and light of about 100 tenants living just next to it in the Yello building and it will also obstruct the sun for us living across the street in the winter. For what? For a handful of people coming to work in an office. I really hope they have a parkade for all these 650 cars because I tried renting a monthly stall in View or Johnson parkades last year and was told by the city there's currently a 10 year waitlist. And I live here. Not them. At the end of the day, they get to go home. This is my home.
29-Jun	Rachael	Fisher	Oppose	Please do not do this. Part of the reason we love living at the Yello building is because of the view & the quality of live in not being tucked in surrounded by other buildings. Part of our joy comes from the sunsets & the view of the ocean. This purposed building would completely take that away. I strongly oppose this.
29-Jun	Justin	Meeds	Oppose	I'm in the rental building beside the proposed development. My opposition is on three key fronts. One, I don't think there is a need for more office/commercial space, due to the fact that most businesses that need office space can work from home (as has become apparent in this pandemic). Two, a large reason for my living in the Yello on Yates building is the view that the apartment provides. If this building is built it will result in my partner and I moving elsewhere. And three, I think that the theatre in the proposed block is a work of art and a beautiful building, it would diminish the culture of the block, buildings with character are a part of the appeal of Victoria in general. Do we want to

				make Victoria like any other big city, or do we want to retain it's character?
30-Jun	Eric T.	MacKnight	Support	I am all for this. We need more density. I question only the parking garage capacity, which seems to assume that we will all continue to commute to work in cars—an idea out of sync with the looming realities of climate change.
10-Jul	Sarah	Littlechild	Oppose	We (the city) do not need another office space downtown. If anything, the city needs more affordable housing - of course it is mostly low-income or supportive housing needed, but we would be fine with this project if it were simply just actual affordable housing for those Victorians who are not making six figures per year. I realize you as developers know this, and that money is the most important thing to you, but you have to understand how devastating it is to both the existing space and the people who need housing. Aside from this, the Capitol 6 theater is a landmark and one of the last of its kind in the city and elsewhere. It is my experience that people who live in Victoria actually like buildings with history, not only an endless supply of glass and steel buildings. The shops (ie. "market") proposed on the lower level is a nice idea, but the city already has tons of shops that are similar (many of which close anyway while new ones continuously pop up due to lack of sales). Ultimately, the current building of the Capitol 6 is a special, interesting, and unique part of the downtown core. Unless you are planning to build even semi-affordable housing in this space, which align with the self-identified needs of the whole community, it is not worth developing into yet another office space.
11-Jul	Suzanne	Dwillies-Khan	Oppose	I live at the Yello On Yates Apartment Complex and I have seen the proposal for this property and I am very saddened and concerned. These are my reasons and I will add some questions at the end. 1. The apartments that will be facing this new complex will be completely blocked and lose all privacy, sunlight and view. Some of the balconies will probably be no more than a few feet from building losing complete privacy and debris landing on their balconies. 2. The noise and construction will ruin all comfort of the apartment units and cause a reduction in

				property value . 3. The construction will cause chaos, noise, disruption on two MAJOR streets 4. May cause tenants to move out of the Yello on Yates and they will lose income Will the Yello on Yates be guaranteed compensation (in kind or financially) and assurance that our complex will not be greatly disrupted? Will JAWL guarantee privacy, noise, and spacing concerns of the residents?
15-Jul	Richard	Weninger	Support	We are in need of density and more efficient use of land in the downtown area.
20-Jul	Jessica	Wolford	Support	Really excited to hopefully see this project move forward. This will boost people's confidence about the downtown core as a place to work and play. The building design and public amenities are quite impressive. This part of the downtown community is improving and becoming increasingly popular. This building would strike that right balance.