

D'AMBROSIO

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City of Victoria 1 Centennial Square Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Attention: Mayor and Council

Re: 450 Dallas Residential Infill: Application for Rezoning and Development Permit

On behalf of the Applicant Reliance Properties, we're pleased to share this outline description and rationale for the infill residential proposal for the property at 450 Dallas, Victoria BC. The proposed redevelopment is an opportunity to retain a significant rental residential building while upgrading and increasing residential rental supply in a strategic location. The proposal supports key policy objectives, has aspects that point to it being suitable for increased residential density, and has been designed to mitigate any potential impacts of additional density on the surrounding neighbourhood with special consideration of its immediate context.

Proposal<br/>OverviewThe current building on site is comprised of a 12 storey tower (built in 1963) on the Menzies<br/>Street frontage, and 3 storey 'annex' wing (built in 1965) on the Lewis Street end of the site.<br/>Reliance Properties purchased the property in 2019 and tasked the design team with finding<br/>ways to optimize and refresh the property. High level goals for redevelopment were to<br/>increase the site's housing capacity and at the same time improve the project's<br/>neighbourhood fit.



Existing site view from Dallas Road at Lewis Street



Lewis Street existing condition

The 'Annex' north-facing balconies

While the property has provided valuable rental housing for almost 60 years, the buildings and site illustrate a design approach that is outdated and due for improvement. The open site space is underutilized, being dominated by surface parking. The areas that are landscaped are decorative and do not encourage active social uses. The project is generally lacking in shared amenities for residents. The residential units have little connection to the landscape nor to the street frontages; in fact, the project turns its back to Lewis Street with a tall opaque fence and a relatively closed facade that impedes active street interaction.

Furthermore, the interface with neighbouring houses to the North lacks consideration for safety and privacy. Along the rear property line, a haphazard collection of storage structures and fencing forms a harsh and unattractive edge with poor safety sight lines. There is little positive overlook to the parking from the residential units, which are quite disconnected from the ground plane and parking areas. There is, unfortunately, negative overlook to the adjacent single family homes and yards that compromises privacy, as about half of the Annex units depend entirely on the North frontage for daylight, views, and private outdoor space.



Rear property line existing condition The 'Annex' north-facing balconies over ground level parking



In its current form, the site has an allowable FSR of approximately 1.68:1 and contains 73 residential apartments. This proposal would retain the 12 storey tower and replace the lower annex with a 6 storey rental building with an additional roof top amenity level (7 storey building under building height definition), to produce a net gain of 38 rental suites and a proposed total FSR of 2.41:1 (a net increase of 2,391m<sup>2</sup> or 25,737s.f.). The new building would be constructed over a new underground parkade that will provide parking for residents of both buildings, as well as building services and bike storage. The surface parking area will be reinstated in a smaller portion of the rear yard, with a higher level of finish and edged with landscape screening. The overall site will be renewed and reimagined as an extension of the natural landscape.

*Policy Context* The site is currently zoned 'R3-H High Density Dwelling District'. The Official Community Plan designates the site as Urban Residential, which is characterized by *"attached and detached buildings up to three storeys and low-rise and mid-rise multi-unit buildings up to approximately 6 storeys"* (Figure 8 Built Form). The proposal is aligned with this vision, being a 6 storey massing with a shared amenity roof deck at Level 7. The six storey massing provides a mid-rise transition for the Dallas Road frontage, striking a balance between the existing high-rise tower and the adjacent two and three storey neighbourhood.

Anticipated densities for Urban Residential range from 1.2:1 to 2.0:1, with allowance for further increased densities of approximately 2.5:1 in strategic locations. Consideration of increased density is based upon whether proposals support policy objectives and upon project location. This proposal is suited to increased density as it is located on a secondary arterial (Dallas Road), and warrants special consideration for the retention and renewal of a significant existing rental property. The project will be phased to maintain occupancy of the 12 storey tower through the construction period. Removal of the existing annex is justified by the needs to increase the housing capacity of the site and improve the project's site design and public interface. The proposed increase in density responds to the need for rental housing and provides the economic basis for site upgrades and the challenges of demolition, excavation and new construction in close proximity to the 12 storey tower.

	Current Zone Allowable	12 Storey Tower to Remain	Proposed 6 Storey Massing	Total Proposed
GFA	4,932 m <sup>2</sup>	3,589 m <sup>2</sup>	3,487 m <sup>2</sup>	7,077 m²
FSR	1.68 : 1	1.22 : 1	1.19 : 1	2.41 : 1

The existing and proposed density framework for the project is as follows:

At the neighbourhood level, the project is aligned with the James Bay Neighbourhood Directions in terms of the beautification of the Dallas Road frontage, adapting and renewing the existing building stock by taking a sensitive infill approach to development, and contributing to the variety of housing types and tenures for a range of age groups and incomes.



View illustrating the new building's relationship to the existing tower and Dallas Road streetscape

Need and Demand, Benefits and Amenities The development proposal advances OCP objectives to increase rental supply and diversity while retaining and refreshing a significant rental building. The Developer has undertaken a market study to assess neighbourhood demand and has identified a need for Studio, One Bedroom and Two Bedroom Units, all with access to high-quality amenity space. It is important to note the proposed unit mix compliments that of the current tower (which contains larger Two Bedroom and Three Bedroom units) and that the new units incorporate modality so that living spaces can also function as extra sleeping spaces.

Following discussions with the JBNA Land-Use Subcommittee, the plans were revised to include larger 3-bedroom units, for a more diverse and inclusive unit mix:

19 (35%) Studios / Junior 1-Bedroom Units 20 (37%) 1-Bedroom Units 7 (13%) 2-Bedroom Units <u>8 (15%) 3-Bedroom Units</u> 54 Units Total

As part of this proposal, consideration is being given to discounted rental rates for a portion of units within the retained 12 storey tower.

The new building will not only introduce additional rental units to the site, it will also improve livability through carefully designed and programmed resident amenities. At the ground floor, the main entrance lobby includes a shared amenity lounge, looking out towards Dallas Road waterfront and directly connecting to the outdoor amenity patio. At mid-levels of the building, corridors will be daylit and look out onto intensively landscaped green roofs. At the top level, a gracious amenity roof deck will provide residents with space for a range of social gatherings as well as a flexible open space for yoga and children's play. Outdoor amenity spaces have been thoughtfully designed to preserve neighbour privacy, through physical setbacks and landscape screening.



Improvements to the project's site design and public interface will improve quality of life for both on-site residents and neighbours. Lewis Street will be reconfigured as a

pedestrian friendly frontage, using a proposed SRW to expand the public right-of-way to include a landscaped boulevard, street trees, and sidewalk. Units along this frontage will be ground-oriented with garden patios that connect with and overlook the public sidewalk. The Dallas Road frontage will be enhanced through new landscaping with improved aesthetic and ecological qualities designed to reference the meadow grasses and native perennials of Holland Point Park. Landscaping along Dallas Road will incorporate native and adaptive plantings to visually extend the natural landscape onto the site. Critical to the site design are a series of interconnected rain gardens that will clean and slow (detain) stormwater run-off from the buildings and paved areas on site.

Similar to the Lewis Street frontage, Menzies Street will be refreshed with a new inbound sidewalk and a landscaped boulevard with street trees. To the rear of the site, surface parking will be less prominent and the higher level of finish will create a more aesthetically pleasing aspect. The reinstated parking area will be barrier-free and will have better definition of pedestrian pathways to the building entrances and new ground-oriented units. Refuse and recycling will be concealed within a new accessory building, and the rear (North) property line will be provisioned with new fencing augmented by shrub and green wall plantings.



Proposed Dallas Road view, where the new building entrance creates a strong connection to the public sidewalk

*Neighbourhood and Impacts* In terms of contextual fit, the streetscape along this portion of Dallas Road is a heterogeneous assembly of building heights, forms and styles. In a location characterized by 2-3 storey single family homes and townhouses, the existing 12 storey tower is visually prominent. The proposal seeks to position the new building massing such that it will soften the transition between the tower and the surrounding low-rise buildings. In this approach the building shape and form is respectful of the existing streetscape character.

The architectural expression of the proposed development is complimentary to the mid-century expression of the existing tower, so that in the final build-out the project will present as a cohesive complex. The proposed infill building takes a contemporary contextual approach through the following design moves:

- Solar Orientation: The building is oriented on a North-South axis to minimize its shadow impacts and optimize daylight access to units within the building. Northfacing windows are limited and carefully positioned to prevent overlook onto the neighbouring property, thereby improving the existing compromising condition.
- Sensitive Massing Transition: The North end of the proposal is stepped back to reduce shadowing and oversight onto the immediate neighbours. Roof areas created by the North-facing steps are mainly landscaped, with accessible areas restricted in size and screened to minimize noise and privacy concerns for the neighbouring property.
- Positive Street Connectivity: An increased setback is provided on the Lewis Street frontage, to provide more spatial clearance and landscape buffering to the street and facing neighbours. A sidewalk and boulevard would be constructed on Lewis as part of the development proposal. Units along Lewis Street are ground-oriented with patios that overlook and connect to the sidewalk through pedestrian gates creating an active streetscape, that improves security of the current blank response and null interface building-street.
- Contextual Scale: The Lewis Street building façade expresses a 2-storey base to better relate to adjacent building forms. Human scale is expressed through generous inset balconies with edges expressed as horizontal projecting elements.



Proposed view looking South on Lewis Street; West (Lewis) Building Elevation illustrating the stepped massing.

Furthermore, the proposed site design will enhance the project's interface with the public realm and larger landscape setting. The landscape design takes inspiration from the site's unique location on the ocean front and adjacent to Holland Point Park. The design draws inspiration from its site for materials and plant selection, to ensure a natural 'fit' of the project into both the neighbourhood and larger ecological context. The undulating hills, groves of trees, Garry Oaks and rare meadow grass landscapes are important features of the park and are referenced in the proposed landscape design. From the property line to the rooftop, the landscape design will incorporate rain gardens, planting mounds featuring Shore Pine, Garry Oak and native bulbs (such as Camas and Fritillaria), in an effort to make the generous front yard and roofscapes of the development look and feel like an extension of the park.



View of the proposed building at the corner of Dallas Road and Lewis Street

*Community Engagement* The development proposal has benefitted from and been informed by productive consultation with the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA). The project was first introduced to the association's Land-Use Subcommittee in April 2021. In response to initial feedback, the project massing was fine-tuned to improve the height transition to the adjacent single family homes on Lewis Street. Also in response to this feedback, the building plans were revisited to increase the number of family-friendly units within the proposed development.

The revised proposal was presented at a well attended JBNA meeting in July 2021. The meeting discussion, as well as correspondence provided to the City's Development Tracker, highlighted neighbourhood concern with traffic impacts, in particular the proposed underground parking access on Lewis Street. Accordingly, the

design team studied alternate parking access designs and reviewed these options with City staff. Ultimately the proposed location was confirmed as the optimal solution, being both bylaw compliant and spatially efficient, (other locations contravene the Highway Access Bylaw and/or significantly reduce the number off-street parking stalls for the project).

To better address neighbourhood concerns with the driveway location, the Team returned to the JBNA Land-Use Committee in September 2021 to informally discuss ways to further mitigate the parking access impacts. In addition, the Developer hosted a subsequent meeting December 16 with residents on Lewis Street and in the Dunelm Wynde townhouse complex. At this meeting, participants provided more detailed information on their experiences on and use of the roadway, which helped the Team focus on more specific roadway design strategies. It is acknowledged that participants also voiced general concerns with the project, such as the change in character of Lewis Street, the removal of the Sycamore Maple on Lewis Street, and the proposed building's shadow impacts. These design issues have been studied in depth by the Team over the past year of application progress, and we believe the current design strikes an appropriate balance between neighbourhood fit, housing delivery / project feasibility, and municipal policy objectives. We saw an opportunity to address traffic & pedestrian safety concerns through an improved design for the Lewis / Dallas intersection. In collaboration with City staff, the Team has developed a 'driveway style' intersection design that clearly presents Lewis as a lower volume, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood street. Additional road markings are proposed at the Lewis & Dallas corner, to improve sight lines for vehicles exiting Lewis onto Dallas by restricting parking (one stall has been removed) and delineating a 'no traffic' zone for vehicles to ease out onto Dallas for better visibility. For more information please refer to the included Access Review memorandum prepared by Watt Consulting Group (dated 23 March 2022).

Design and Development Permit Guidelines The proposal's architectural and site design further support policy goals through the following:

- The project makes a positive contribution to neighbourhood place-making through high-quality and integrative architecture and landscape architecture. The building form is a sensitive response to the unique site conditions that mitigates shadow impacts and improves privacy for adjacent single family dwellings.
- Improved public realm interface along Dallas Road through landscaping and clearly expressed entrances with overlook and connection to the public sidewalk. New dedicated SRWs are proposed along the Menzies Street and Lewis Street frontages, including a new sidewalk and treed boulevard on Lewis Street.
- The new building and updated site approach improve livability through humanscaled design and improvements to the quality of open spaces, privacy impacts, safety and accessibility. The building is oriented and articulated to optimize access to daylight and views for residents, while mitigating negative overlook to adjacent private homes.
- The building and site redevelopment utilize high-quality, human scaled materials that will be an attractive and durable complement to the landscape architecture. Open spaces are thoughtfully programmed to promote active use and to create appropriate transitions between public and private spaces.

- The new building's architectural expression is a contemporary reflection of the 12 storey tower's design; the horizontal expression of balconies and roof overhangs is a cohesive language for the site. Other elements inspired by the existing tower are the decorative frieze on the Dallas Road façade and the 'wave-form' roof over the roof top amenity access. These details provide visual interest and create a unified visual identity for the site.
- Transportation The project site is well located to encourage alternate modes of transportation, being within a 20 minute walk of the urban core and located on a transit route and all ages and abilities cycling route. The parking strategy is to reduce parking demand for the site through Transportation Demand Management (TDM), and to shift as many as possible of the required vehicle parking stalls to the new underground parking structure. Only supplemental parking will be retained in the rear yard for building services, car share and visitor stalls. Accessed off Lewis Street (mirroring and aligned with the west side Dunelm Wynd driveway), the new underground parking level will be built under the new proposed building and will also extend underground to the rear of the existing tower. In order to retain the existing tower, clearances must be maintained between the tower foundations and the new underground structure, meaning the available footprint is somewhat limited. The parking level is also held back from the Menzies Street and Lewis Street frontages to accommodate future City services within the new SRWs. The underground parking structure has been optimized to provide as much parking for vehicles and bikes as is possible within the available site area.

The new level of parking will increase the number of vehicle and bicycle stalls accommodated on the site as follows:

	Existing	Proposed
Total Residential Units	73	111
Vehicle Stalls	47	67
Visitor Bike Stalls	n/a	12
Secure Bike Stalls	10	160

A detailed parking study was conducted to assess the expected parking demand for the proposal, based on observational data collected from representative sites in James Bay and ICBC vehicle ownership data for market rental sites in the City of Victoria. The report will be appended to this letter for formal application. In brief, the analysis yielded an estimated parking demand of 85 vehicle stalls (74 stalls for residents and 11 stalls for visitors), for the combined units within the existing tower and the new building.

A range of TDM measures were evaluated and have been incorporated into the proposal, including:

- provision of 2 Modo cars with parking stalls at the rear surface parking area and with easy immediate access to the neighbourhood.
- additional long-term bike parking for both the proposed and existing units (minimum 26% additional to bylaw requirements), including 6% cargo bike parking and 50% energized for charging
- bike maintenance facility

The combined effect of these TDM measures is a reduction in parking demand of 26 stalls, for a total estimated demand of 59 parking stalls, (well below the proposed total of 67 stalls). With the design improvements and integration of parking reduction strategies, the redevelopment will have a net positive impact on neighbourhood parking.

Infrastructure The infill building will be integrated with the overall site in terms of design and also in terms of servicing. Project phasing will include steps to maintain services to the existing tower through demolition of the 'Annex' and excavation and construction of the new building. BC Hydro service to the overall site will connect to a new pad mounted transformer (PMT) at the Northeast corner of the site; the PMT will be in place to service the tower ahead of demolition, and will be designed to support the overall project in its final build-out.

The site is well serviced and has the benefit of access along three street frontages. Subject to detailed design and coordination with City Engineering, the new building will have stand alone connections to the sanitary sewer, water service, and third party utilities. Stormwater management will be more integrated, with run-off from both building roofs and surface paving being collected and treated in landscaped rain gardens, with overflow directed into the City system.

Per City standards, independent servicing and controls will be provided on boulevard frontages as required for the irrigation of new municipal street trees.

*Green Building* The building is designed to meet Step 3 requirements for the Energy Step Code, and will incorporate sustainable building features as follows:

## **Rating System**

While the building is not registered with Canadian Green Building Council, and not intended to apply to be LEED certified, the design team includes experienced, LEED accredited professionals, enabling environmental responsibility to be a natural priority throughout the design.

### **Site Selection**

- i. Infill redevelopment of a previously developed site
- ii. Site located on a secondary arterial with excellent pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and within a short walk of transit

### Innovation and Design

- i. Multi-disciplinary, integrated design team
- ii. Durable building & cladding materials

### Transportation

- i. Service rough-in for electric vehicle charging stations
- ii. Provision of car share program membership and 2 car share vehicles, with parking accommodated on-site
- iii. Provision of bike storage facilities beyond bylaw requirements, including cargo-bike storage and a bike repair station

# Energy Efficiency / Renewable Energy

- i. Whole-building energy modelling to meet BC Energy Step Code requirements
- ii. Energy efficient building systems (HRVs)
- iii. Incorporate 'Energy Star' rated appliances
- iv. Incorporate motion sensors in common area LED lighting to reduce energy consumption
- v. Programmable thermostats
- vi. Buildings are designed to manage solar heat gains through use of high performance glazing and designed with balconies and building articulation that provide passive solar shading

## Water

- i. Low flow plumbing fixtures and water efficient appliances will be specified
- ii. Selection of native and adaptive planting and water efficient irrigation techniques (drip, rainwater catchment in planted areas and swales) to reduce demand on the city's water service

# Site Permeability

- i. Landscape based stormwater management
- ii. Intensive green roofs at multiple levels of the proposed building (L2, L4 and L6)
- iii. Plantings and trees integrated into parking areas to provide shade and screening for residential uses and along shared property lines

# Landscape Urban Forest / Urban Agriculture

- i. Hardy native and adaptive ornamental species of trees, shrubs and groundcovers that mimic the Garry Oak meadow plant typology found at the adjacent Holland Point Park. Garry Oak meadows are one of the nation's rarest ecosystems and yet also one of its most culturally significant given their importance to First Nations. These plant species will also play an important ecological role by helping to reduce water use and require less chemical maintenance.
- ii. High efficiency irrigation system A water efficient irrigation system will be implemented to reduce water use. High efficiency irrigation features will include:
  - a. Rain sensor delay and evapotranspiration module.
  - b. Water efficient nozzles.
  - c. Drip irrigation components.
  - d. Programmable "Smart Irrigation Controller".
- iii. Reduced Heat Island Effect as a result of green roofs and summer shading of paved areas through deciduous tree planting.

# Materials & Resources

i. Provision of facilities for storage & collection of recyclables & compost on site for residents.

In conclusion, the Owners and the design team have worked collaboratively to bring forward a design concept that will add 54 new rental homes in a strategic James Bay location, breathing new life into this established and significant rental property and improving the existing interface conditions with the neighbourhood. In preparing this application, careful consideration has been given to the objectives of the City guidelines and to thoughts expressed by the JBNA Land Use Subcommittee. We look forward to working with staff through the Rezoning and Development Permit process and will be happy to provide additional information as needed.

D'AMBROSIO architecture + urbanism

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