

Date: Jan 3, 2022

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
#1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Re: Application for a site specific zone, based on the existing CR-4 Zone, to allow a space for limited manufacturing use within the existing building

Dear Mayor and Council:

We are proposing the rezoning of 1105 Caledonia, the location of the Fernwood Coffee Company building, to allow the continued use of the space for roasting and distributing coffee. The necessary rezoning to allow for this use would be:

1. A site specific zone, based on the existing CR-4 Zone, to allow a space for limited manufacturing use within the existing building (i.e. the use would not exceed 48.5m² or 25% of the total building floor area).

Changes since BP & DDP (summary of changes from the previously approved plans with explanation)

Changes to enclosed bike shelter and reduction in long term Bicycle Parking

For security reasons we made a decision to modify our enclosed staff bicycle shelter. After two years of use we know the number of staff bike parking necessary is 3 secure stalls. We also required more secure storage so our bike shelter had to be modified to support 3 bicycles and allow for extra storage with a closing security door.

- Bike shelter has been enclosed and converted to storage garage with o/h door
- Size of building has been enlarged and encroaches into 2.4m min setback from primary building
- Proposal is to use this for 3 long term bicycle stalls
- Originally shown 8 long term in bike shelter.
- New plan shows 3 new bike stalls in the enclosed shed.
- Short term bike parking is unchanged with 14 in bike racks on Cook Street frontage, this is less than originally stated on previous DP (16) but remains unchanged from how it was accepted by the city after construction.

Revision to Exterior Elevations

Due to the initial COVID 19 lock down we were forced to convert our cafe to a take out operation. The new heater and awning were added to offer customers shelter while patronizing the take out window. The design was done to stay consistent with the existing facade of the building.

- New retractable awnings and patio heater on Caledonia

Landscape changes

The original landscaping plan was not viable due to the foot traffic along Caledonia. Certain beds of boxwoods were consistently being destroyed through normal public foot traffic along the sidewalk. New plan will reincorporate new greenery that will be more resistant to foot traffic damage and beautify the corner while adding permanent bench seating that will also enhance the corner during the evenings when we are closed.

- Boxwood shrubs from DP have been removed along Caledonia street edge
- New planter with grasses in front of parking stall, new benches, re-instate boxwoods around base of tree and new benches around planted area to prevent people walking through.
- Planting strip between parking stall and sidewalk has been removed and proposed to be infilled with permeable pavers to match surrounding parking and patio

Neighbourhood

We are seeking the support of the neighborhood to continue using the space for roasting and distributing coffee as we have been for the last three years. Our experience is that we have established a great relationship with the neighborhood. We are not asking for the rezoning to make any changes, we simply want to continue our current business but amend the zoning so that our daily business is not in contradiction to its allowed uses. A few of the actions we have taken to work with the residential and business neighbors are:

- We have invested in an “Afterburner” for the coffee roaster which eliminates all smoke, particulates and smell.
- We have recently added an insulated door to mitigate noise from our production area.
- We have rented off site storage at 3 other locations to minimize the number of deliveries to and from the site. The roasting and distributing of coffee accounts for less than 5% of the traffic to the building. The other 95% is created by our Parsonage cafe which is compliant with all zoning. *If the roastery were to move the change to the traffic flow and outward appearance of the day to day business would be imperceptible. Any business replacing the roasting operations would actually likely increase the traffic. With our cafe being our biggest wholesale client we would also have to deliver coffee daily to the site, which would also increase traffic to the area.*
- We are extremely active in keeping two street fronts clean on our property. We also have hired a cleaner to take care of our property and the surrounding sidewalks. Our cleaner is a resident of Fernwood.
- We have signage directing patrons to the three legal parking stalls on the property and asking them to not use any residential street parking spaces. We rent two off site parking stalls for our delivery vehicles. We allow use of our three parking spots for our patrons and deliveries. After hours we provide the three off street spots for our neighbours including the Little Thai Place Restaurant's delivery drivers, patrons of Royal Athletic Park and The Save On Memorial arena and the general public.
- We offer a Wellness Program through Limitless Fitness for our staff – we give a free gym membership to our staff to encourage good health and wellbeing. Since moving to this location we were awarded the 2019 Employer of the year by the Victoria Chamber of Commerce and one of our owners sits on the board of Think Local First.
- We have provided 16 Bicycle stalls for not just our patrons but anyone who wants to use them to enjoy North Park Village and the Fernwood area. We have a covered locking shed for our staff to store bikes.
- The majority of our existing customer base are people shopping in the neighboring businesses who will walk in for a coffee or lunch. We feel there is a strong symbiotic relationship with our business neighbors. We are a large piece of a thriving economic area and the mutual benefits are evident when you look at the growth and success rates of the businesses in the area.
- We are active in our community sponsoring over 50 charities, schools and fundraising events per year. We were fortunate to be able to provide free onsite coffee for the VIHA health unit during the first critical months of the COVID 19 lockdown at the COVID test center and are a main sponsor of the Victoria Film Festival. We also support The Victoria Harbourcats with advertising revenue.
- We are open to the amended zoning being conditional to its current use. We are not looking to benefit long term from a change of use that would open the door for undesirable types of manufacturing or distribution.

Background

Our family has operated The Parsonage Café & Fernwood Coffee Company serving the Fernwood and North Park communities for almost half of the 30 years that it has existed in the neighborhood.

Circumstances forced the relocation of our businesses in 2018. At that time we were fortunate enough to get an offer from a retiring neighbor and customer sympathetic to our situation. He agreed to sell us a suitable property to move to; 1105 Caledonia Avenue – Stan Thompson Upholstery. At the time, the site required a variance to the parking requirement stated in the zoning to make it viable.

With the support of the neighbors, city staff and city council we were granted the variances that we applied for. At the time members of city council remarked:

"I too am pleased to support the application"

and,

"there has been a degree of neighborliness in the consideration that we don't always see and I can't tell you how welcome that is because it makes our job easier that you have done it"

and,

"I want to commend the applicants for the work they did with their neighbors to create the kind of support that's evident, not just tonight but from the various communications that we've had. It really shows that a significant effort was put out to try and make sure that this new location was complementary to the neighborhood."

Description of Proposal

We currently operate our café along the Caledonia street facing side of the building. The other half of the building has been divided in two parts for the Fernwood Coffee operation. The Cook Street frontage houses the training space, our coffee training bar, a tasting room for tours, storage for our café, and serves as a retail area for merchandise and coffee equipment. The space accessed from the rear of the site is the coffee roasting and packaging area.

Owning this property has given us the opportunity to grow the sense of community even further than our original location with the improvements we have made to the exterior and with landscaping. We have lots of bike racks, a dog stop outside the shop with a tie up area and water bowl and lots of space for stroller parking. It has been very rewarding to transform this corner into a bustling gateway to the village. Most of our patrons are stopping into our shop and also spending money at one or more of the other local businesses that are within Fernwood/North Park village area.

The restrictions imposed on us would force the business to move in order to operate as we currently do.

Transportation • Parking Variance

We have 3 stalls, two at the rear and one stall parallel to Caledonia Street. This is due to the available site space for parking with how the existing building is sited on the property. We were successful in an application for two variances to allow the business to operate with this configuration.

Design

We have changed the exterior colours of the building and replaced the existing awning on the Stan Thompson Auto Upholstery building. We have successfully updated the look of the building to better suit its prominence as a bookend to the lively commercial block between Northpark and Caledonia as well as reflect the recognizable Fernwood Coffee branding. The building's context opposite Royal Athletic Park and adjacent to its commercial neighbors warranted a visual statement matching the vibrancy of the neighborhood. The light scheme after sunset gives the corner a warm glow.

In response to the City of Victoria's Design Guidelines we maximized the amount of glazing and potential for interaction between pedestrians and the interior commercial space with a window bar that is currently in use as our take out window so we are able to meet and exceed COVID 19 safety protocols.

Additionally, we have removed an existing overhead door at the rear of the building to provide a new insulated door for increased soundproofing as a courtesy to our neighbors and to provide the necessary second means of egress. The implementation of the painted stripe motif on the exterior was used to emphasize the public entrances and provide visual interest to the existing building's block façade. As a response to the COVID 19 pandemic we also added a retractable awning and 35 foot industrial gas heater to provide a warm sheltered area that our patrons can enjoy while maintaining social distance comfortably outdoors.

We used all of our Caledonia Avenue side yard and Cook street front yard as a sidewalk café area with exterior seating to create an outwardly visual connection to the building's use and promote pedestrian interaction. This has elevated the building's aesthetics and ability to activate the site to suit the property's designation as part of a Village Centre.

Landscaping has been used to extend the boulevard tree planting seen along Caledonia and soften the transition to the neighboring residential zoning to the East. Planting in addition to a screening fence is also used to help clearly define public and private space separating the parking area from the staff bicycle and refuse area.

We have retained the existing pylon sign at the corner of Quadra Street and Caledonia Street with the Stan Thompson branding because it has become a heritage icon in the streetscape of the area and we've been told it is the oldest freestanding business sign in the city.

Green Building Features

1. Reuse of an existing building and its elements
2. 24 bicycle stalls provided (16 public and 8 staff).
3. Future solar hot water ready with pre-plumb lines stubbed at the roof.
4. Commitment in future to permeable pavers along the Cook Street and Caledonia Street property (from the property line to the existing building faces).
5. Planting 5 new street trees to City of Victoria standards
6. Insulate existing building exterior walls (currently only concrete block)

Green Business Practices

1. Fitness club memberships for staff to encourage wellness. The vast majority of our staff arrive at work by "human powered" means.
2. Taxi vouchers are available for staff who have early or late shifts (to promote leaving vehicles at home)
3. 80% of the coffee Fernwood Coffee roasts is organic.
4. Fernwood Coffee reuse a lot of the roastery waste - 100% of the chaff goes to local farms and compost programs.
5. Fernwood Coffee is involved with Claremont High School's environmental projects - they pick up our coffee grounds for compost.
6. Parsonage Cafe composts all of it's kitchen waste with Community Composting.
7. Fernwood Coffee donated to Vic High for their electric car conversion program
8. The coffee roasting business is climate friendly certified by Offsetters, organic certified and a member of Fairtrade..

Infrastructure

The business has been operating for three years on the site in its current state and we are unaware of any negative impact on the existing services.

Neighbourhood Consultation

We are delivering an information letter to the residents on Caledonia Street and immediate Cook Street neighbours inviting them to a virtual session. The date will be set by the Fernwood Land Use Committee. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this. Any thoughts or advice would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ben and Terra
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