

Rezoning and Development Permit Application
13 January 2022

480 / 492 Esquimalt Road

ARYZE

City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps, Council and Staff,

Please accept this letter as part of our Rezoning and Development Permit Application for 480 & 492 Esquimalt Road, a proposed mixed-use development, including eighty five (85) residential rental units situated atop three (3) commercial / industrial units. We are requesting to amend the property from the current M-1 zone to a new site-specific zone.

Proposed Development Overview

480 / 492 Esquimalt Road is envisioned as 85 purpose-built rental apartments situated atop a series of high quality, employment spaces, which have all been earmarked for local businesses.

The favourable location of the proposed development is in close proximity to a variety of restaurants, parks and schools—as well as established transit routes—providing future residents with easy access to amenities, including the building's own ground floor commercial spaces.



Project at a Glance

**Height**

6 storeys
+ rooftop garden patio

Site Area

23,657 sqft

Floor Area

70,886 sqft

Commercial Space

13,000 sqft

FSR

3.0 FSR

Site Coverage

65.8%

**North Setback**

3.0m
at residential level

East Setback

4.0m
at residential level

South Setback
Esquimalt Road

1.1 m
at residential level

West Setback
Russell Street

3.7m
at residential level

**Number of Homes**

85 Homes

Studio

25 Units (30%)

One Bedroom

30 Units (35%)

Two Bedroom

30 Units (35%)

Residential Tenure

Rental

**Parking Stalls**

62 Stalls

**Car Share**

1 Modo Stall

**Long Term Bike Stalls**

144 Stalls

Short Term Bike Stalls

24 Stalls

**Storage Lockers**

47 Lockers

Area Context & History

Victoria West was crucial to the economic and industrial hub for early Victoria, and in the years following, the area grew into a popular residential area. Canadian National Railways introduced rail service in 1922 and a further blossoming of industry followed as entrepreneurs took advantage of access to railyards, steamship terminals and a growing base of employment. This was an early example of a modern mixed-use neighbourhood, with amenities and work situated within an easy commute from residential areas.

The proposed development is located on the land of the Lekwungen People, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. Victoria West, as the area is known today, is of cultural and historical importance as it was once the site of the Songhees village.



Neighbourhood Grain

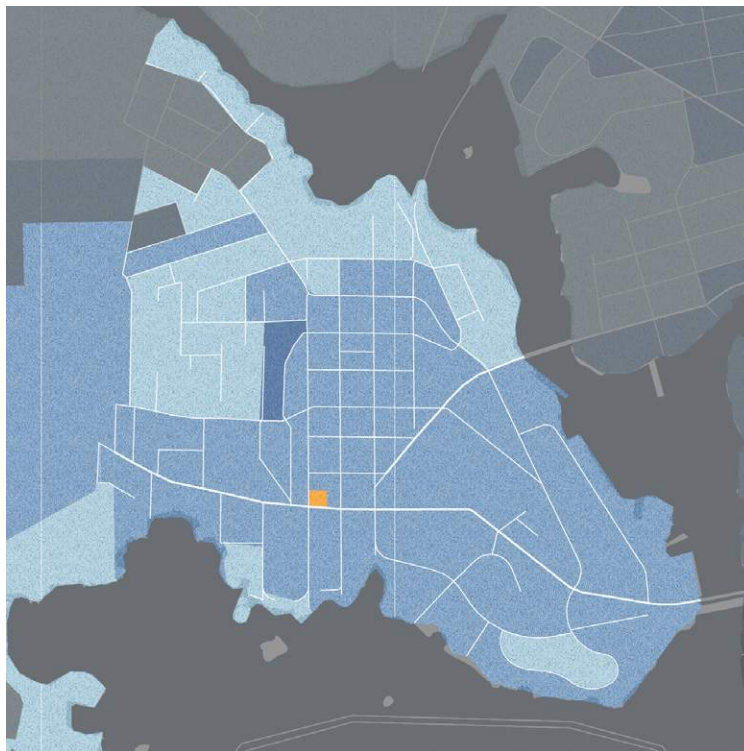


The proposed development is located in the Victoria West neighbourhood which consists of a variety of housing forms and land uses. Immediately adjacent to the site is a car dealership to the East and a car repair shop to West across Russell Street. 480/492 Esquimalt's northern neighbours comprises a 4-storey multi-family building followed by a mix of single-family character homes. The materiality of these structures vary from wood-siding, shingles and stucco cladding with some minimal brick features. Finally, across the street and to the south there is a mix of commercial, industrial and single-family dwellings which further contribute to the neighbourhood's diversity.

The charming old Ormond's Biscuit Factory is a block away from 480 Esquimalt Road. This well-proportioned brick industrial structure epitomizes the typology's enduring appeal, where Victoria's early populations worked in buildings designed and constructed with a sensitivity to materials, proportions and human comfort.

Proximity Indices

Because of its unique location and designation, the subject site boasts close proximity to both Westside Large Urban Village and Craigflower Small Urban Village offering a wide range of local retail, commercial businesses and services nearby. Opportunities for recreational activities exist within a short walking distance from the subject site and include Banfield Park, Rainbow Park, Vic West Elementary, Victoria West Park, Songhees Walkway and the Galloping Goose Trail.



● Project Site

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low

All Proximity Indices



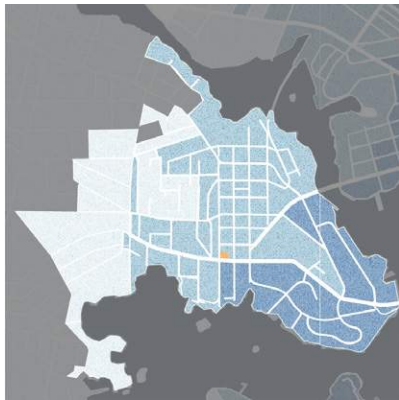
Childcare



Employment



Grocery



Healthcare



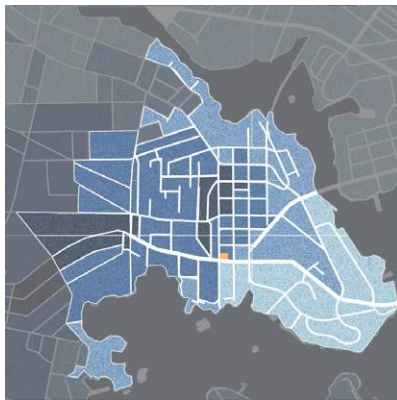
Library



Park



Pharmacy



School



Transit

Policy Context

Our project proposes a **density of 3.0 FSR** which is within the limits of the present zoning requirements. It is above the Official Community Plan allowance but there are provisions in the Official Community Plan to exceed the stated density for the advancement of certain plan objectives; in this case, the provision of rental housing in perpetuity and providing local employment and business opportunities through the commercial spaces on the ground floor.

OCP Designation

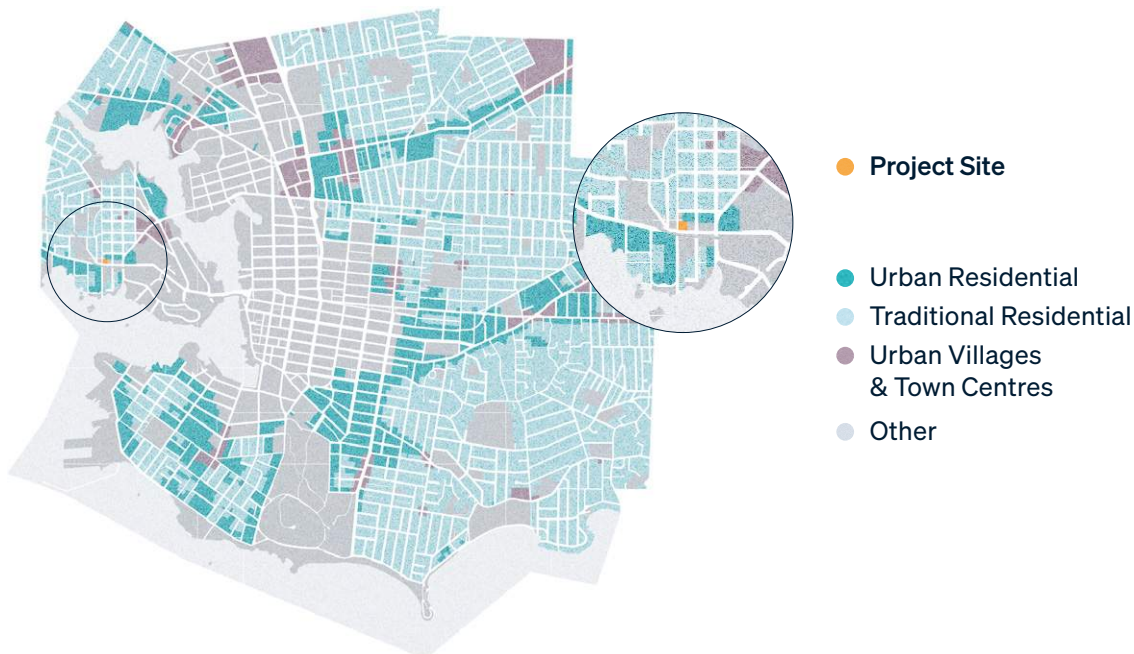
General Employment with Limited Residential

Our proposal is also aligned with the design guidelines of policy documents, including:

- Ground-oriented employment uses
- General commercial and/or residential uses
- Active frontages with storefront windows

The proposed development is also supported by several other strategic plans, including:

- Go Victoria Mobility Plan
- Climate Leadership Plan
- Go Victoria Mobility Plan
- Missing Middle Housing Study
- 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan Action Items
- Housing Strategy Phase 1 and 2



The Vic West Neighbourhood Plan identifies several 'big moves', which have guided the planning of this proposal.

- **Adding housing that fits** by creating more housing diversity while maintaining the character of the older areas.
- **Creating more places to live near transit and amenities** by enlivening Esquimalt Road with residential units above employment.
- **Supporting jobs and businesses** by adding new upper floor commercial and office spaces, and encouraging light industrial.

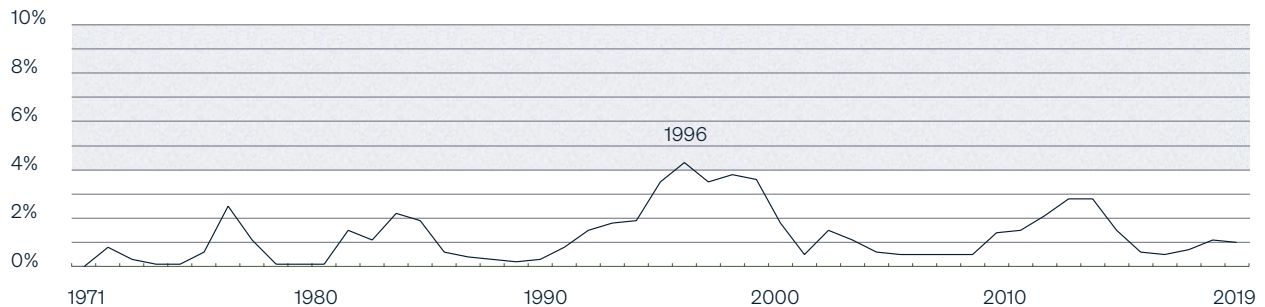


Current Landscape

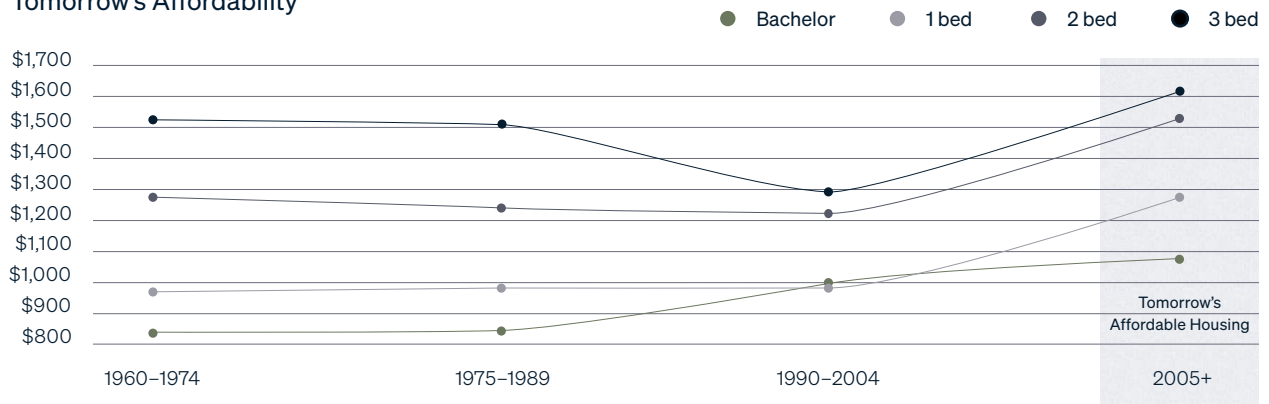
In the last 48 years, the rental vacancy rate has gone above 4% once (in 1996). This problem is central to the affordability and health of our cities.

Will all of these new homes be affordable? No. That's not the point. When we look at rental rates by unit type and age, the older stock is Victoria's affordable housing stock. We unfortunately had a 35-year gap in rental housing construction that we need to make up for. What we build today, is tomorrow's affordable housing. If we don't build it today, we perpetuate the problem and learn nothing from the past. This, paired with the reality that many of the purpose-built rental (PBR) homes built in the 1960's and 1970's are nearing end of life, means we need to have new housing options for residents.

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation: Vacancy Rates of Apartment Structures of Six Units & Over



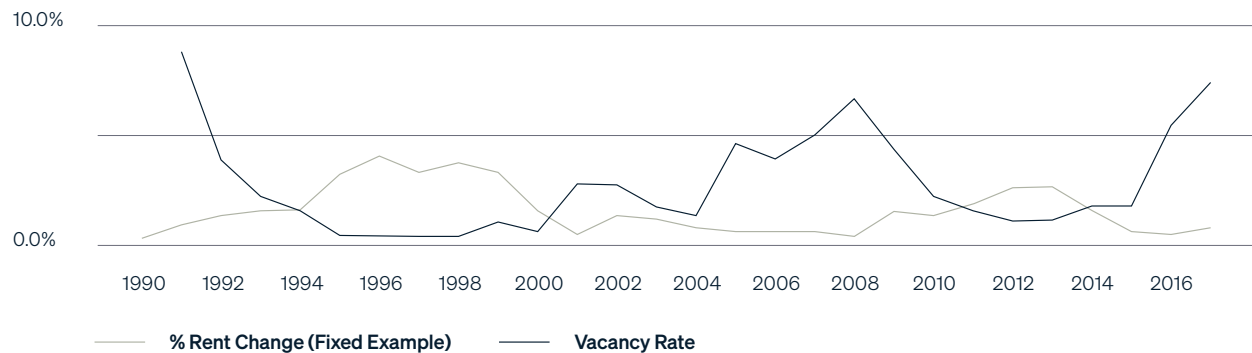
Victoria Age vs Rate:
Tomorrow's Affordability



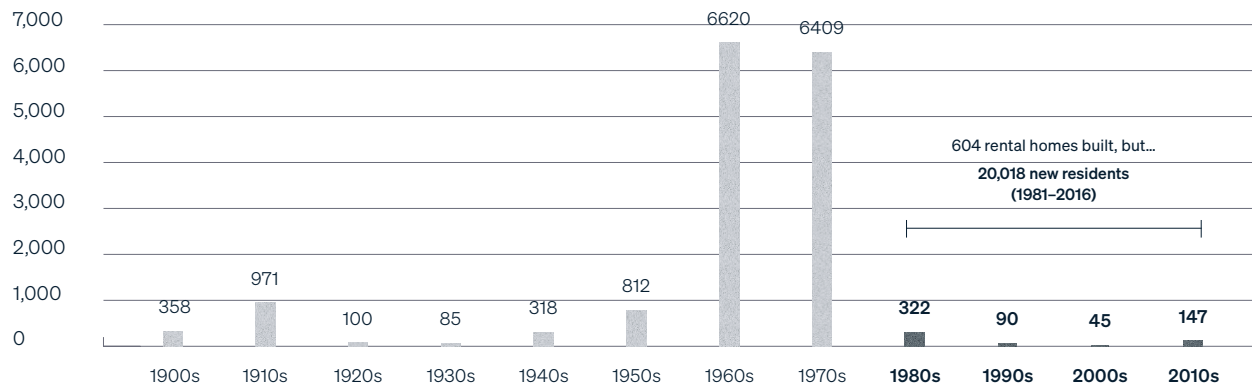
The relationship between supply and demand is directly correlated to affordability; positive or negative fluctuations in rent rates expressed as a percentage are inversely connected to the vacancy rate. In summary, when the vacancy rate is low, meaning low supply, rents go up. When supply increases, rents flatten or go down. This teaches us the best thing we can do for affordability across the board is to build more housing, period.

Between 1890 and the end of the 1950's, approximately 2,644 PBR homes were constructed, equating to roughly 38 per year. During the Federally incentivized multi-unit residential building (MURB) program, Victoria's rental stock skyrocketed to 13,029 PBR homes in a 20-year period, averaging 651 per year. As this program was phased out, only 604 PBR homes were built between 1980 and 2011, however, the city's population grew by 20,018 residents. Herein lies the problem; population growth outnumbered rental housing construction 20 to 1, even adjusted for Victoria's proportionate share of rental households.

Vacancy Rate vs % Rent Change (City of Victoria)



PBR Built by Year (City of Victoria)



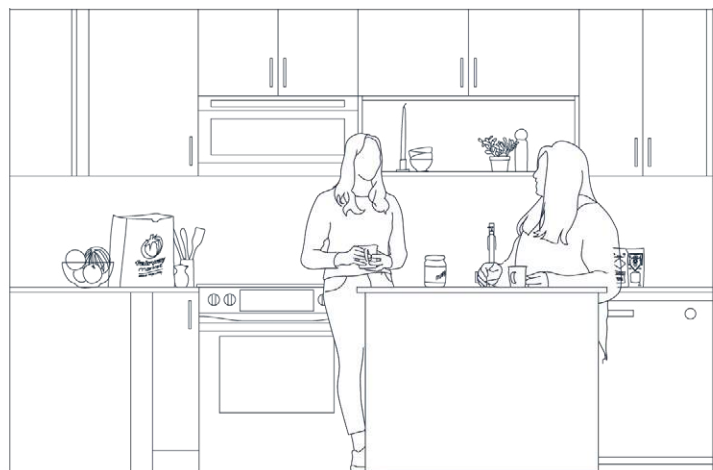
Why Rental?

Housing is a human right and with homeownership increasingly out of step with local incomes, Purpose Built Rental (PBR) housing is the strongest form of tenure and represents a possible—and sometimes beneficial—alternative to homeownership. Common benefits to rental housing are the lack of maintenance or repair costs, increased access to amenities, no property taxes, more flexibility where you live, predictable monthly payments and no requirement for a down payment.

If we are going to make urban progress in affordability, climate change and social equity, we need to increase rental housing across the city in areas well connected to walking, cycling and transit corridors.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of households in Victoria rent their home; of these, almost half (48%) are one-person households. The building programming in our proposal for 480 Esquimalt is reflective of these statistics with proportionate studio, one bedroom and two bedroom units throughout.

As a Purpose-Built Rental, our proposal at 480 Esquimalt Road has been designed with leasing in mind. That means all rental units in our proposed development have been designed to increase livability through the form and function of the unit and to support the likelihood of long-term tenancies. Lastly, in an effort to provide more attainable housing solutions, the building will qualify as an income restricted rental under the BC Housing 'Housing Hub' program, with a select number of the units being leased for below market rents.



Benefits & Impacts

Apart from meeting the policy goals and objectives outlined above, the project also provides several amenities to its residents and the community as a whole:



Increased number of trees throughout the site



Courtyard as an inviting public space



Rooftop green spaces to benefit the resident and neighbouring views



Generating new employment opportunities with the addition of commercial and industrial space



Streetscape improvements along Russell & Esquimalt Rd



Co-working spaces for public use



Modo memberships for residents to decrease traffic and the need for car ownership

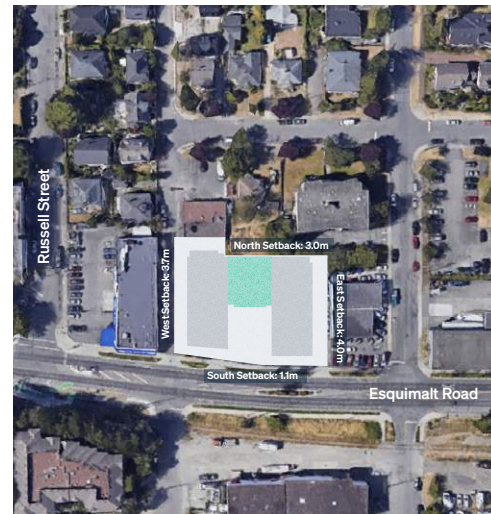
Our proposed development would complement the existing mixed use characteristic and provide a welcoming liveliness to the neighbourhood. Not only will commercial spaces increase foot traffic, but the open courtyard and co-working spaces will provide a warm and inviting public space for all to enjoy while support growing business and entrepreneurs in the area.

The new building design has been revamped to ensure as little shadowing as possible on neighbouring properties. Massing has been broken down and green spaces have been added to the north of the property to avoid overlooks and to allow for a gradual transition into the nearby single family neighbourhood. On the east of the building, setbacks are generous to allow as much sunlight and views to the tenants in the building north east to the property.

The neighbourhood will also benefit from the proposed and upgrading and undergrounding of hydro lines that the development will prospectively pay for as a part of this proposal. A Pad Mounted Transformer being suggested for the proposed development will likely also serve the neighbouring commercial building on the west across Russell street, providing them with an upgraded service at no loss of additional real estate.



Site Layout & Building Form



Our proposal—positioned at the intersection of Esquimalt Road and Russell Street—seeks to provide a more urban, street-oriented building that not only resonates with the trajectory of growth of an evolving neighbourhood, but also respects the character of the heritage in the vicinity.

Envisioned to be a landmark along the Esquimalt Road corridor, the building is expected to bring both social and economical benefits to the neighbourhood. Where the residential spaces will provide much needed rental housing, a coffee shop on the ground floor will enliven the corner and the courtyard and co-work spaces will provide social interaction and work spaces for the community. The manufacturing and retail space will bring in fresh footfall in the area and also create new employment opportunities for the area. Additional civil improvements and landscape will further activate the streetscape, with additional boulevard planting and public seating.

The building has been broken down to two six storey with ample space between to respect the single family home neighbours to the north. Due to a significant grade difference between the south and north property lines, the main level is almost underground making the building essentially five storeys tall to an onlooker from Dundas Street.

From a birds eye view the building fits in nicely within the lot, with the height and massing being relative to the existing and proposed developments within a radius of a couple of blocks from the subject site.

The building has been set back generously from the east property line to maintain sunlight and access to views to the neighbours along the north east corner. Meanwhile, the commercial spaces and courtyard have been brought forward to Esquimalt Rd to provide a street wall that enlivens and activates the corridor. The loading bay has been tucked at the back of the building to minimize disruption to high traffic areas.

Design Inspiration & Material Palette



**1. Corrugated
Metal Siding**



**2. Profiled
Metal Shingle**



**3. Commercial
Glazing**



**4. Residential
Glazing**



**5. Perforated
Panels**



**6. Rooftop
Railings**



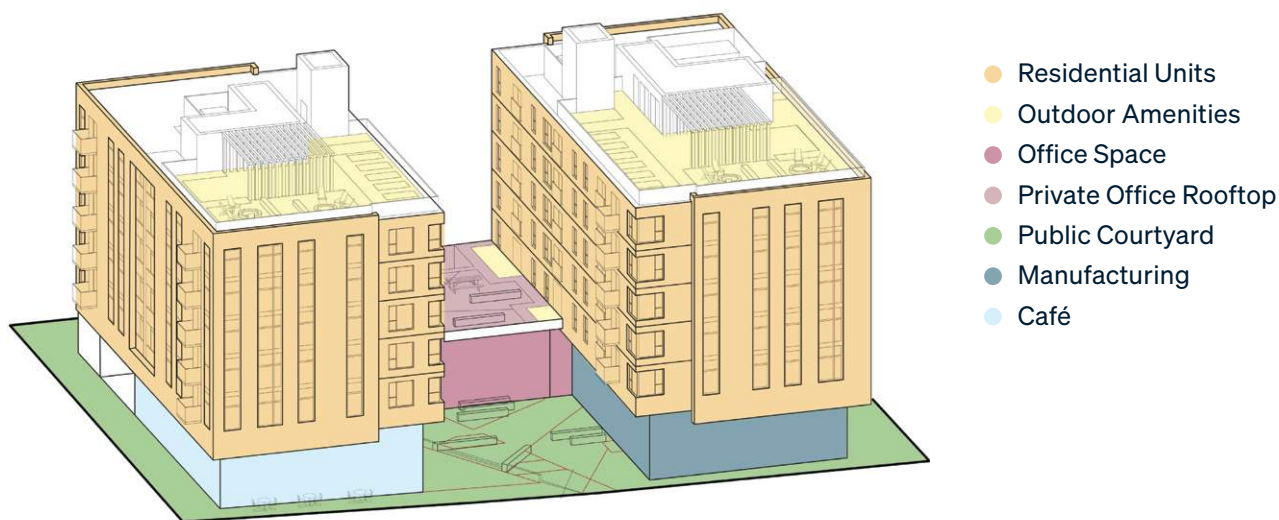
7. Concrete



Mass Timber
(interior columns,
floors, walls)



Building Program



Parkade

The two level underground parkade is accessed from Russell Street and houses various building services: vehicular parking, secure bicycle storage, storage lockers and utility rooms. Elevators and stairs connect the parkade levels to the entrance lobbies and residential floors above.

Loading Bay

The loading bay will be accessible from Russell Street, and has been intentionally tucked in at the back of the building to make use of the 'notch' at the back of the property and to keep it separate from heavy traffic areas. Commercial and industrial tenants in the building can access the loading bay through an interior corridor, providing easy access for deliveries.

Level 1

Level 1 consists of a prospective coffee shop in the west block on the corner of Esquimalt Road and Russell Street where the current bakery stands as a way to honour the existing activity and legacy of that corner.

Coworking and shared desk spaces in the mezzanine levels will promote and support both budding entrepreneurs and residents who are looking for a space outside of home to work. The Mezzanine offers seating and gathering areas with a view down to the plaza, with plantings focused on creating privacy for the unit patios.

The Courtyard flows into the Commercial Spaces with trees and planters as a part of the interior design of the commercial units.

Benches will be included to mark the public realm, and used as a tool to invite people inside and socialize.

Private offices will be designed for efficient use of space to promote collaboration. This includes shared meeting spaces and an open-air rooftop. Ecologist, a popular local clothing manufacturer and retailer, is proposed to lease a ground-floor commercial unit, making the proposed development a landmark destination.

Levels 2 - 6

The building is split into two separate blocks from levels 2-6. These are the 'typical' levels featuring identical floorplans with 17 residential units each. The unit mix includes studios, 1 bedrooms and 2 bedrooms. All units have been optimally positioned to

capture ample natural light and provide views of the courtyard and cityspace wherever possible. While all studios and one beds will have juliet balconies, the two bedroom units will have bigger conventional private balconies giving an indoor-outdoor experience while avoiding any overlook into neighbouring properties.

Rooftop

The rooftop is the amenity space for the residents and has been updated to include both the east and west buildings. Garden boxes will be available for residents to grow their own food, providing food security and healthy recreation opportunities in an urban setting. This space will be programmed for tenants to relax, enjoy the outdoors and spend time with their neighbours, and will include a community BBQ.



Landscape Design

The approach to the main plaza area was to play with geometry using the doorways as focal points to lead pedestrians, while still allowing for social experience and interaction with nature via planting beds, trees and benches along the way. In order to blur the lines between inside and outside, below grade plantings step up to metal planters as they move between environments, bringing nature from the outside in. Similarly, rectilinear concrete benches in outside gathering spaces pop up along focal lines and reflect into interior spaces, creating communal seating with interesting juxtapositions.

A living wall is proposed at the back of the courtyard to draw people into the space and to highlight the main office entry. Materials and cladding from the building will be incorporated into the expression of this vertical green-space, providing a modern fresh take on the typical green wall aesthetic.

Proposed hardscape materials are a mix of cobblestone and concrete with subtle colour (warm grey tones) and texture variation, in order to soften the intensity of angled line-work while complementing the black and white of the building architecture.

Exterior to the courtyard, and adjacent to the retail spaces, the landscape settles into a less complex expression while maintaining a connection to nature through at grade plantings and outdoor seating.

A wide secluded strip along the east of the building allows for another fun expression of geometry, visible only from above and through side windows of the easternmost retail space. At grade plantings and a row of trees creates an intriguing atmosphere.

On the main rooftop area, we have proposed productive food gardens, a BBQ area and space for communal dining. We have provided areas for both lounging alone or in small groups and also sit down for dinners as desired. The desire was for multiple users to enjoy the space at the same time and to evoke a causal community feeling.

The lighting concept for way-finding at the ground floor is to down light under the benches with LED strip lighting. The planters will also have LED lighting recessed into their bases. The Wayfinding signage which will present in the central planting bed as you enter the space will be back lit as well, while the rest of the lighting will be incorporated into the architecture.

**1. Glass Terrace**

Glass walled terrace with tree and raised planter

2. Vining

Metal slat and vining plant screen around mechanical equipment

3. Rooftop Amenities

Rooftop amenity area with BBQ prep area, picnic tables, trellis and bistro lighting

4. Seating Area

Casual seating area with pea gravel portable propane fire pit area

5. Garden Spaces

Raised garden plots

6. Mezzanine

Outdoor mezzanine and casual gathering area

7. Tree Screening

Evergreen tree screening on Level 1 terrace

Green Building Features

Our proposed development at 480 Esquimalt has been designed with numerous 'Green Building' features in mind. These include:



1. Ample Bike Parking

Increased short- and long-term bike parking stalls, well beyond minimum requirements

2. Enhanced Tree Canopy

Significantly increased tree count on-site, green vertical surfaces and planted courtyard and rooftops

3. Car Lite Lifestyle

Modo memberships included for all residents to decrease traffic and reliance on car ownership

4. Easy Access to Transit

Located on a key transit corridor, providing easy access to alternative transportation

5. Urban Agriculture

Opportunity for productive vegetable garden boxes on roof landscape for residents

6. Building Performance

Building envelope targets 40% window to wall ratio to meet BC Energy Step Code (Step 3) for improved building performance

7. Air Quality

Heat recovery within the building using air source heat pumps

Mobility Context

Multi-Modal Network

From the subject property's doorstep there are diverse cycle routes, bus routes, and walking options, including the Galloping Goose Trail, E&N Trail, and the Songhees Walkway. The City of Victoria's twenty-five year transportation master plan places even more focus and investment in alternative transportation options with additional transit service and bike lanes planned.

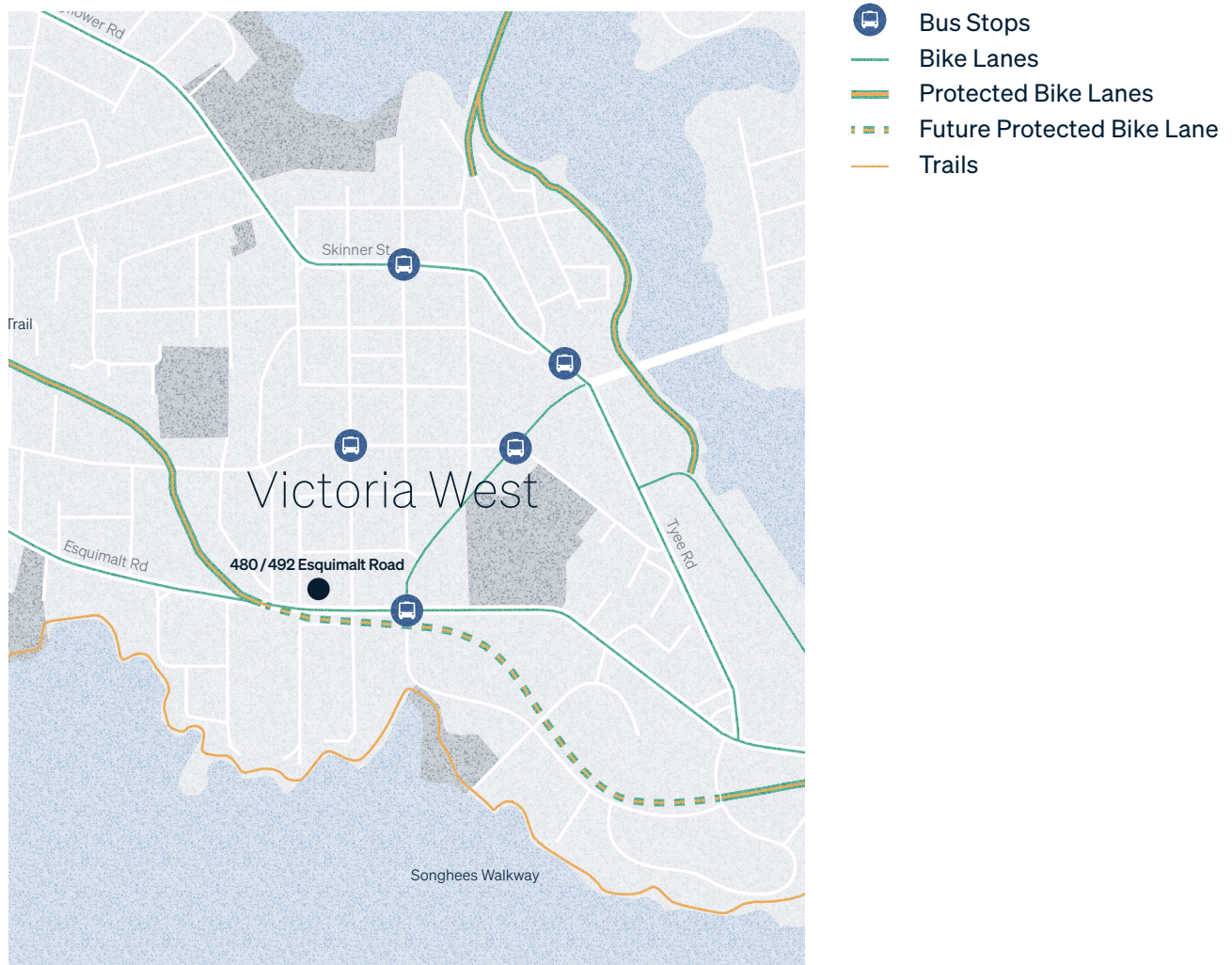
Street Network

Esquimalt Road adjacent to the site is a two-way arterial road with cycling lanes along each edge. It has a centre median with sporadic left-turn lane pockets and is designated as a truck route. Russell Street, where the access to the proposed development will be located, is a one-way northbound local street that operates similar to a lane. On the north and east edges of the development's city block, Dundas Street and Mary Street are local streets.

Trip Generation

The proposed development would be anticipated to generate approximately 41-83 vehicle trips during the peak hours and the adjacent intersections are expected to encounter an increase of 26-57 vehicle trips during these hours. Residential streets are estimated to see approximately 12 additional vehicles during the peak hours, which is not anticipated to result in significant operational impacts.

Active Transportation



Cycling and Pedestrian Networks

The site is very well connected to both walking and cycling networks. Future residents will be able to access most everyday amenities and services either on foot or on a bike. The site is an approximate 6-minute walk from the Westside Village Shopping Centre, which contains a grocery store, pharmacy, and discount store, as well as several other shops and restaurants.

The site scores a 78 for walkability which it defines as “Very Walkable” and due to its mix of land uses and its commercial component, the development is expected to further enhance the neighbourhood’s walkability. The location receives a perfect Bike Score of 100 out of 100, placing it in Walk Score’s “biker’s paradise” category.

The site is one block east of the E&N Rail Trail, providing safe and convenient cycling access to Esquimalt and municipalities to the east. The site is also only a short bike ride from the Galloping Goose Regional Trail. Planned AAA cycling network expansions by the City of Victoria are expected to further improve the neighbourhood’s bikeability by providing an official AAA cycling option directly from the development site to the Johnson Street Bridge. With its large supply of bike parking, the proposed development at 480 Esquimalt Road is well-positioned to support cycling as a transportation mode of choice to and from the site.

The proposed development provides for one hundred and forty-four (144) long-term bicycle parking spaces and twenty four (24) short-term spaces. We are also adding end of trip facilities in the building. Electric bicycle charging capabilities will also be provided along with a prospective bicycle repair station. This supply exceeds bylaw requirements and is expected to help promote cycling to and from the development.

Car Share

Modo is a two-way carsharing service; registered members can pick up the vehicle from a parking spot and must return it to the same spot when they are done. Vehicles range from compact cars and sedans to SUVs and minivans, all of which are present within 800m of the site.

Currently there are six Modo car share vehicles located within 800m of the subject site, the closest of which is located approximately 250m away on Kimta Road near Catherine Street. Downtown Victoria has approximately twenty additional vehicles, all of which are easily accessible by bike or transit.

As per section 3.9.1 of the Vic West Neighbourhood Plan to ‘make at least one on-street location available for car sharing in or near each large and small urban village, and in new multi-unit buildings to reduce single vehicle dependency’, we propose to provide one new car share vehicle located at Russell Street for easy accessibility. Each tenant will receive a Modo car membership for the length of their tenancy.

Transit

The site is well served by public transit, with four transit routes within 400m of the site—an approximate five-minute walk. Transit routes accessible include: #10, #14, #15, #24 and #25.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

The best transportation demand management strategy is the location efficiency provided by building denser housing forms in compact, walkable/cyclable neighbourhoods with ample access to public transit such as Victoria West.

The proposed development offers wide range of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) offerings such as:



Minimized Disruption

Russell Street loading bay to minimize disruption along Esquimalt Road.



Modo Memberships

Modo memberships for each residential unit for the term of their tenancy, effective for the lifetime of the building.



End of Trip Facilities

Designated space to shower and change after cycling commute



Parking

Sharing of Visitor, Commercial and Residential spaces. These uses typically have differing peak demand periods making this shared-use a valuable synergy.



Bicycle Accessibility

Significant bicycle parking, along with a ebike charging capabilities



Car Share

One car share vehicle in coordination with Modo to serve building tenants and the wider community.



Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicle charging stations.

Contributing to a Sustainable City

This proposed development is intended to create the kind of sustainable middle density development, carefully positioned in relation to alternate modes of transit, that contributes to a vital, low carbon, sustainable future envisioned for the City of Victoria.

According to researchers, densification holds the key for cities' fight against climate change as reducing automobile trips is the most significant component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As outlined above, the central location of the subject site in relation to multiple local amenities encourages a pedestrian and bicycle oriented lifestyle. The proposed development has been designed assuming walking, cycling and transit as primary transportation options for future residents.

The building will be designed and constructed to BC Step Code 3, in accordance with the City of Victoria's phased Step Code guidelines which were updated as of January 1st, 2020. Step Code 3 represents a 20% increase in efficiency. This includes designing the building systems in a way that will reach high levels of performance in Thermal Energy Demand Intensity (TEDI), Total Energy Use Intensity (TEUI), and airtightness.

Community Consultation

We are committed to being good neighbours and having honest, open dialogues within the communities we do our work. We are available to discuss project details with stakeholders through a variety of channels to build trust and shared vision for the project all while maintaining a respectful and open conversation. Our goal is to create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable to share their ideas, hopes and aspirations for the community and for them to ultimately see these values reflected in the end project.

Aryze Developments held a Community Information Session via Zoom on the evening of April 8th, 2021, wherein we welcomed members of the neighbourhood and community to learn more about the proposed development and to provide comments and feedback. A further meeting was held with the Vic West Land Use Committee April 20th, 2021. The design for our proposed development has changed since these preliminary meetings, and we intend to present to the Vic West Land Use Committee again before the application proceeds to the Committee of the Whole.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vinit Jain". The signature is stylized with a large "V" and a cursive "Jain".

Vinit Jain
Development Manager
Aryze Developments Inc.