

[REDACTED]

From: Victoria Mayor and Council
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2022 9:57 AM
To: Public Hearings
Subject: FW: 822 Catherine St

From: Justine Semmens [REDACTED]
Sent: July 27, 2022 5:08 PM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>
Subject: 822 Catherine St

Dear Mayor and Council,

The Victoria West Community Association (VWCA) invited the leadership from Aryze to attend its May 31 board of directors meeting to discuss concerns that I had outlined in my letter sent to mayor and council on May 18, 2022. The meeting was attended by the board of directors of the VWCA and approximately 47 community members who attended in person and online via Zoom.

Mr. Mari, the Lead at Aryze, addressed the board and assembled community members to express his regret about the nature of previous community engagement and provided an opportunity to receive feedback from the community on their experience of engagement and comments, questions, and concerns that they had about the development proposal. Members of the public were aware that the meeting was not part of the formal CALUC process but represented an opportunity to build better communication.

Among those who attended, approximately half expressed approval of the development and approximately half expressed concern with the current proposal. Those who expressed approval of the development cited the addition of more rental housing during the current severe housing shortage and the need to add density as a means to address housing shortages, housing affordability, and climate-related development priorities. Others expressed approval of the reduced parking allotment as in line with the active transportation and climate emergency mitigation goals of the City and of the community more generally. Others expressed interest in the expansion of commercial/ retail space on the main floor as a welcome addition to the small urban village located at Catherine Street. Specific concerns included the dislocation and loss of affordable housing to current tenants and the definition of market and affordable rent in the new development, the ways that the height and commercial use of the main floor do not fit with the neighbourhood plan, the expansive footprint of the proposed building and its proximity to neighbouring houses, potential parking issues with which neighbours on Langford Street and Catherine Street and the nearby Catherine Street business would potentially have to contend, the loss of a heritage tree, and the aesthetic appeal of the architecture. Some community members construed the development of taller buildings on Catherine Street, in general, as a matter of concern for the character of the neighbourhood and the neighbourhood plan, which the community spent several years helping to develop with City staff.

Discussion was lively, collegial, and fruitful. Although this meeting cannot replace the lost opportunities for input and information that the insufficient engagement earlier in the process did not provide, many of my concerns with the engagement process were addressed during this meeting and the community was provided an opportunity to share concerns – an opportunity that previous engagement opportunities did not provide.

Yours respectfully,

Justine Semmens, PhD
President
Victoria West Community Association

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Traditional and unceded territories of the Lekwungen speaking people of the Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations