

April 22, 2022

City of Victoria
No.1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC
V8W 1P6

Attn.: Mayor & Council

Re: 1030 Fort Street Rezoning and Development Permit Application

We are pleased to submit this Rezoning and Development Permit application for 1030 Fort Street (the "Site") on behalf of 1030 Fort Holdings Ltd. (the "Applicant"), an affiliate of Jawl Properties Ltd. The proposed project details outlined within this application have been carefully crafted to respect the spirit and intent of the Official Community Plan, the Downtown Core Area Plan, and Development Permit Area 7B-HC (Fort Street Heritage Corridor) guidelines. Thoughtful, responsive, and iterative design processes have shaped the form and character of this development proposal (the "Proposal" or the "Project"). It is our belief that this Project is contextually appropriate and will enrich and complement the city fabric in which it is situated, as described within the contents of this letter.

Existing Site Characteristics:

The Site is located mid-block on the north side of Fort Street between Cook and Vancouver Street and is currently comprised of a single storey building occupied by four food service and/or retail tenants. The CA-42 Harris Green Commercial District Zone currently regulates the site and allows for a 4-storey building with an FSR of up to 2.5:1. The Official Community Plan designates the site as Core Residential, supporting multi-unit residential and mixed-use buildings with an FSR up to approximately 5.5:1 and height up to approximately 20 storeys.

The Site's Fort Street frontage is generally flat and flanked by low rise buildings with retail uses to the east and west. The neighbouring sites to the north of the property fall into the R3-C Central Area Residential District zone. The site's north property line abuts the above-ground parkade structure of the 10-storey residential building located at 1039 View Street. 1029 View Street, a 9-storey residential building referred to as the Jukebox, overlooks the site from the northwest.

Located in the Harris Green neighbourhood, home to a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses, the Site is highly walkable and well serviced by a range of amenities including a grocery store, restaurants, cafes, and small-scale retail shops. This level of walkability is further emphasized by the Site's direct adjacency to the thriving arts, culture, and entertainment district downtown, and its location along Fort Street, a well serviced transit and dedicated biking



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corridor classified as a secondary arterial road. The combination of these factors creates the foundation for a vibrant, distinctive urban neighbourhood with rich opportunities for social, residential, and commercial growth.

Description of Proposal:

This Development Proposal envisions a 6-storey building containing 2,460 sq.m. of gross floor area incorporating 30 purpose-built rental residential units and commercial use at grade. There is no underground or at-grade vehicular parking component included with this application, due in large part to untenable soil conditions identified by the Project's geotechnical consultant early in the design process, the small Site size which forestalls vehicle ramping and circulation routes, and a strong belief that its location makes it well suited for non-car dependent types of transportation.



View of Proposal from Fort Street (West)

The building design concept is based on the following fundamental tenets and guiding principles:

- The Project should deliver much-needed purpose-built rental housing in one of the most livable sections of the downtown core.
- The Project should embrace its walkable, bikeable, and amenity-rich location to facilitate a no-compromise car-free lifestyle for residents.
- The Project should retain the animated and vibrant street front retail character typical to upper Fort Street.
- The Project should incorporate high quality architecture which is contextually appropriate while acknowledging that the immediate adjacencies are sites in transition to future higher densities and heights.
- The Project should work within the substance and spirit of the Official Community Plan and Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP) guidelines applicable to the location.

Official Community Plan:

Identified as a key high-density residential neighbourhood in the Urban Core, strategic directions for the Harris Green neighbourhood include the accommodation of a significant share of the anticipated population growth in the region. Located in the heart of this neighbourhood, the development of this Site with a 6-storey purpose built rental building will advance this objective while simultaneously reinforcing the mid-rise “perimeter-block” form that the DCAP guidelines promote to knit together the scale and form of anticipated taller and denser tower developments along Fort Street with the many existing, pedestrian-friendly low-rise buildings. The Site is designated Core Residential Urban, meaning that the Project’s proposed FSR of 4:1 is well within the 5.5:1 maximum FSR range and 20-storey height limit outlined for the area west of Cook Street. The proposed 6-storey building provides a reasonable increase to the density and height along Fort Street, in a form that is contextually appropriate in scale and height, and while also providing much needed livable rental units to the area.

Land Use and Density: Commentary on Rental Covenant / Residential Rental Tenure Zone

The Applicant is amenable to entering into the appropriate legal agreement with the City of Victoria as a condition of rezoning to secure the tenure of the proposed rental dwelling units on the upper floors of the Proposal. Specifically, the Applicant is agreeable to a non-stratification commitment within a housing agreement with effect for the greater of: 60 years or the life of the building. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Applicant is not willing to include the Project in the Residential Rental Tenure zone.

Development Permit Area 7B (HC): Corridors Heritage:

The 7B (HC): Corridors Heritage development permit area applies to the Site, and consideration of the heritage value and special character of Fort Street has informed the conceptual approach for this Proposal since inception. In keeping with the objectives of this designation, this Proposal will intensify multi-unit residential and mixed-use development and maintain an active street frontage. The architectural expression employs an historically-referential language of narrow bays organized in a tri-partite façade composition, and clad with a traditional material palette of terracotta masonry on the Fort Street frontage at the residential levels. At grade, concrete pilasters meet expressed beams to visually support the cantilevered residential levels and partition the frontage into small-scale bays that accommodate the residential, commercial, and service entrances. This human-scaled bay-rhythm of the building’s design combined with the visual

connection of residential level balconies and the retail use at grade will enhance the experience of pedestrians and cyclists moving along this corridor, re-enforcing the atmosphere of a local neighbourhood community.

Draft Downtown Core Area Plan Design Guidelines & Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential:

It is the Applicant's understanding that the City of Victoria is in the process of adopting new Downtown Core Area Plan Design Guidelines, so the Proposal aligns with the principles contained in the draft document, as directed by Planning Staff. Early assessment of both the draft DCAP principles and the Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential, Commercial and Industrial has allowed for the integration of the substance and spirit of these guidelines into the fabric of the Proposal.

In accordance with the DCAP draft guidelines, the Proposal's scale, form, and orientation have been calibrated to foster a human-scaled, pedestrian-oriented public realm on Fort Street. As a 6-storey building located on the perimeter of the block, this Project will form a part of the street wall and base building perimeter block, allowing for a continuous sense of enclosure along Fort Street while maintaining reasonable sunlight penetration and privacy at the rear yard. Site depth constraints prevent the introduction of an internal courtyard space and dual aspect residential units. However, sizeable lightwells have been incorporated at the east and west sidewalls, providing augmented natural light and cross ventilation to twelve residential units while daylighting the public corridor at all residential floor levels and improving livability for all residents of the building.

Residential units are arranged in a front and rear orientation, with nominal zero setback sideyards as preferred by the DCAP guidelines, and accessed via a common central corridor, elevator and two exit stairs. These circulation elements are all contained within the 18m width of the site. This being the case, certain minimum sizing constraints within unit layouts for washrooms, kitchens, closets, and bedrooms become drivers for the Proposal's total building depth, and therefore determine the rear yard setback in minor variation from the DCAP recommended 8-meter minimum setback. The Project incorporates a mix of 20 one-bedroom units and 10 studio units. Creative floorplan layouts have been utilized to incorporate a den/home office into all one-bedroom units, with access to natural light wherever possible, providing adaptability and flexibility for residents. Additionally, assumed Site Class D soil conditions require significant shear wall requirements at all residential floor levels for earthquake resistance, substantially limiting the flexibility of unit configurations. Further reductions to unit depth and size will have significant adverse impacts on their livability, providing a strong rationale for variation from this draft DCAP guideline. The Fort Street facing balconies depth has also been decreased to 1.7 meters, varying from the 2-meter minimum recommended by the draft DCAP guidelines. The rationale for this reduction in depth relates directly to the design team's efforts to balance livable, functional unit layout and private outdoor space with a maximized rear yard setback.

The Proposal's design in relation to the street will activate and support a dynamic and vibrant public realm and is in alignment with the building to street interface principles outlined in the draft DCAP guidelines and Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential. Primary entrances along the building frontage are clearly visible from the street and located well within 15 meters of one another. Ample glazing and generous floor to ceiling heights enhance the visual presence of ground floor uses along the street, and swathes of blank wall have been minimized. Substantial efforts to locate non-active uses away from the street frontage have been undertaken, including the positioning of bike storage and building utility spaces at the rear of the building, and there are no curb cuts or parkade entrances disrupting the rhythm,

proportion, and pedestrian flow along the street frontage. The ground level building face steps back from the property line, allowing for the introduction of a south-facing weather-protected commercial patio area, that provides spill-out activity space and visual and physical connection between the public street use and the building interior uses.

The Project's façade composition and architectural expression have also been thoughtfully and intentionally developed in keeping with these guidelines. The massing of the building is comprised of a simple volume punctuated by a singular recess on each façade. The east and west sidewalls are clad in warm, rich coloured metal panels, shifting in alignment from floor to floor. A lightwell at each sidewall provide light to the centre of the building and break up the visually mass of these walls. These metal sidewalls project beyond the building face at the rear yard, providing additional privacy between units and to adjacent buildings, creating the effect of an extruded metal shroud. The Fort Street facing façade is comprised of rich dark terracotta panels organized in a simple grid pattern. A distinctive vertical slot of uniquely treated balconies with fritted glass guardrails breaks the façade's rigorous architectural grid into two well-proportioned elements and distinguishes residential from public uses at grade. The eastern section features recessed balconies that step back behind the terracotta frame and are wrapped in warm wood-grain material with elegant picket guardrails. The western section features large glazed openings proportionate with the adjacent framed balconies. Continuous weather protection is provided by the ground floor recess at Fort Street, and pedestrian-oriented signage is integrated into the overarching language of the building at the ground floor level.

The architectural concept for this Proposal is simple and understated, using a minimal palette of high quality cladding materials that will weather gracefully, organized in a vertically oriented grid producing a visually balanced composition at the residential levels, while an open, highly glazed and recessed ground level with a concrete material expression creates a modern and dynamic contribution to the animated and vibrant street front retail character typical of upper Fort Street.

Discussions with Neighbouring Building Owners:

The Applicant appreciates the OCP's encouragement of logical lot assembly to support the best utilization of the permitted development potential for the area. Accordingly, the Applicant engaged a real estate agent to make approaches to each of the adjoining property owners (1028 Fort Street and 1038 Fort Street) to see if either or both would be willing to sell their properties to the Applicant to enlarge the Site's size. Verbal indications were made to each owner that the Applicant was prepared to acquire either or both properties for an amount equal to the same price per land foot paid for the 1030 Fort property in early 2021 (essentially a perfect comparable transaction) or a modest premium thereto. Neither of the adjacent property owners indicated a willingness to engage in discussions with the Applicant on such basis so the Applicant was left with no alternative but to advance the Proposal with the Site configured as currently shown.



View from Fort Street (East)

Transportation

This Project is exceptionally well situated in a highly walkable and bikeable location that is also directly serviced by public transportation. The designated AAA two-way protected Fort Street bike lane runs directly in front of the Proposal while the recently completed Vancouver Street shared use neighbourhood bikeway is located on the nearest street to its east. The Proposal offers 48 long term bicycle parking stalls in a conveniently situated bicycle storage room at grade, providing substantially more secure bicycle parking stalls for residents than required by City zoning requirements. A bicycle repair station, six oversized cargo bike parking stalls, and electric bicycle charging capacity are also incorporated into the Project. Short term bicycle parking is centrally located and entirely covered by the cantilevering building above, providing visitors with convenient, highly visible, weather protected stalls directly adjacent to both the commercial and residential primary entrances. Eliminating parking from the project not only addresses the geotechnical limitations of the Site's Soil Class and constraints implied by the Site's size, but also prevents the significant 6m wide disruption of the commercial space, the sidewalk, and the bike lanes that would otherwise be created by a vehicle parking entrance.



View of Fort Street Frontage

In addition to the enhanced bike parking proposed, the Applicant is amenable to providing car share memberships and usage credits for each of the residential units along with 3 BC Transit eco passes for a 3-year term for the ground floor commercial retail unit.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of building occupants and the general public have been carefully considered and CPTED principles have been incorporated into the Proposal wherever possible, especially along the Fort Street frontage at grade. The creation of a robust resident population is an important contributing safety and security benefit provided by the Proposal, encouraging 'eyes on the street.' This natural surveillance is supported by the incorporation of extensive transparent glazing at street level and the introduction of an animated and human oriented commercial use in this location. The building cantilevers above the commercial frontage, removing the deep recesses and compromised sightlines that may otherwise be created by structural columns in this location. Lighting integrated into the expressed concrete columns and cantilevering beams at grade create a well-illuminated and animated ground floor, while simultaneously controlling glare and light pollution.

Infrastructure:

Fort Street's electric service voltage capacity is significantly below the typical standard, which would typically create a heavy reliance on natural gas for domestic water and space heating. However, in keeping with the spirit of the B.C. Energy Step Code, the Applicant prefers to minimize the use of fossil fuels in servicing the Site and mitigate the generation of resultant greenhouse gases. The resulting electrical load requires either a pad-mount transformer located on Fort Street, or a customer-supplied interior substation transformer. To avoid disrupting the patio space and public frontage on Fort Street, the Applicant proposes to proceed with the more costly customer-supplied interior transformer located at the rear of the building. This has the additional benefit of eliminating the requirement for a gas meter, further improving the proposal's street frontage and reducing GHG emissions.

Green Building Features

The Applicant has reviewed and is prepared to construct and develop the Project in accordance with the principles of sustainable design, and to meet B.C. Step Code Level 3 energy performance as required by the City. In combination with the employment of an elective all-electric servicing approach as outlined in the infrastructure section of this letter, the resulting mixed use rental building will be highly efficient with minimized GHG emissions during its operational lifetime. This being the case, this Proposal will meaningfully contribute to the City's efforts to reduce community emissions produced by commercial and multi-unit residential buildings, providing a strong example of the viability of a low carbon, high-performance rental building in the downtown area.

Revisions in Response to Staff and Advisory Design Panel Comment:

The following list summarizes significant revisions undertaken by the design team in response to feedback received from City Staff and Advisory Design Panel comment;

1. The rear yard setback has been increased by 0.34m to reduce the proposal's variation from draft DCAP guidelines. Further reductions in building depth were explored but were determined to be unfeasible when considering the functionality and livability of the proposed suite configurations in light of highly limiting geotechnical constraints and resultant constraints on structural shear wall locations and sizes, which significantly influence suite layouts.
2. A regular rhythm of concrete beams and pilasters have been introduced to the at grade commercial level to better complement the pedestrian scale and heritage character of Fort Street.
3. The detailing and material expression of the at grade commercial frontage have been further refined, resulting in the vertical increase in storefront glazing and the increase of clear height under beams, providing more daylighting opportunities for interior spaces and creating a more appropriate sense of scale along Fort Street.
4. The floor-to-floor heights have been reconfigured to increase the height of the 'building base' facing Fort Street.
5. The materiality of the inset lightwells at the east and west sidewalls have been reviewed in anticipation of future development on adjacent properties. The metal panels shown in these locations have been simplified to a flat panel type, subtly differentiating them from the decorative curving panels running the length and height of the Proposal's sidewalls, while simultaneously allowing for ease of possible future conversion to a lighter paint finish in the scenario that these lightwells are enclosed by neighbouring buildings, allowing for maximized light infiltration into units and corridors.

Conclusion:

In preparing this rezoning and development permit application package the design team has carefully considered the relevant Official Community Plan and Downtown Core Area Plan draft guidelines applicable to this location. It is our belief that this Proposal will provide a high quality, contextually sensitive building to the Fort Street corridor, benefiting the Harris Green neighbourhood. This Proposal will provide important rental housing stock to the area and will contribute to the animated and dynamic public realm of upper Fort Street. Its proposed scale and architectural language are sympathetic to its surroundings, while also looking towards the future built fabric of the city. We look forward to further steps with the City of Victoria regarding this Proposal. If you have any questions or require clarification of any part of this application, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

CASCADIA ARCHITECTS INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Damant', written in a cursive style.

Gregory Damant, Architect AIBC LEED AP
Principal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Johannknecht', written in a cursive style.

Peter Johannknecht, Architect AIBC, LEED AP
Principal