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Mayor Helps & Council City  
of Victoria  
City Hall  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

**September 14, 2022**

Dear Mayor & Council,

## Description of proposal

BC Housing, working with S2 Architecture, has prepared the attached proposal for land use redesignation and development permit for a new housing project to be built at 722 Discovery Street in Victoria, British Columbia. The proposed building is an 8-storey steel-framed, modular, multi-unit residential building with a commercial kitchen, dining area, and support staff areas on the main level. The site will include an outdoor amenity area, bike storage, and landscaping.

Changes to the land use zoning are requested to allow an 8-storey supportive housing residential building to be constructed on the subject parcel located at 722, 726, 732 Discovery Street Victoria, B.C.

Currently the land is zoned as M-1 Limited Light Industrial. A site-specific land use zoning is requested that would use R3-C as a base and allow the following:

Permitted Use:	Multi-residential (rental)
Building height:	37 m (8 stories)
Building footprint:	551 m <sup>2</sup>
Total building (GFA):	4,665 m <sup>2</sup>
Building setbacks:	Front (Discovery Street): +/-3.0m Rear (North): +/-3.0m Side (East): +/-2.5m Side (West): +/-14.5m
Floor Area Ratio (FAR):	3.56

The proposed development will include the following:

Site area:	1,344.83 m <sup>2</sup>
Type of tenure:	Residential supportive housing rental suites
Number of suites:	90
Types of suites:	Studio (76), Accessible Studio (9), Adaptable Studio (5)
Adaptable housing:	9 accessible suites and 5 adaptable suites are proposed

## Project benefits and amenities

The proposed development, including the Chard development to the south, will revitalize the neighbourhood by creating a variety of housing types and a “15-minute neighbourhood”, where all residents live within a short walk of offices, childcare centre, and community-serving retail that includes a grocery store.

- The supportive housing proposed for 722, 726 & 732 Discovery Street would replace the existing shelter spaces in the Capital City Center Hotel.
- Approximately 90 community members currently rely on the Capital City Center Hotel supports and accommodation.
- BC Housing is committed to ensuring that no one is displaced as a result of this redevelopment.
- If approved, the redevelopment would happen in stages, with a replacement supportive housing site being built on the parking lot at 722, 726 & 732 Discovery Street first.
- We know that hotels are not a suitable long-term solution for people experiencing homelessness. Purpose-built supportive housing such as this provide the best outcomes for the most vulnerable members of our communities.
- Supportive housing is an opportunity for people to leave the streets and shelter system for safe and stable housing, towards improved quality of life.
- At least 1,523 individuals were experiencing homelessness in the last Capital region Point-in-Time Homeless Count in March 2020.
- The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need to get people off the streets and out of shelters and into safe, stable housing.
- Supportive housing is self-contained suites (including private washroom and a kitchenette) with support services provided on-site, to ensure people can achieve and maintain housing stability.
- Supports include resident support workers, life skills training, employment assistance, connection and referral to community services and support groups.
- All residents would sign a program agreement and would pay rent.

## Neighbourhood

The subject site on Discovery Street is located across the street from a separate project at 710 Caledonia Street and 1961 Douglas Street. Together, these two projects will result in a diverse, multi-purpose development. The proposals include purpose-built and designed supportive housing, market rental units, below-market rental units, office units, childcare, a public plaza, commercial retail, a grocery store, and condominiums.

The proposed residential use of the Discovery site is not supported in the current zoning of M-1 Limited Light Industrial.

## Design and development permit guidelines

The project team has consulted extensively with the City of Victoria through email correspondence and 3 pre-application meetings. The proposed development plans were reviewed by a City development panel with revisions made to the design to accommodate design guidelines, best practices, and Downtown Core Area Plan requirements.

Following these meetings, several accommodations were made to the proposal that include:

- Enhanced architectural articulation with projections, windows and variety in exterior cladding choices and applications
- An activated street frontage with building articulation and wrap-around canopy

- A playful approach to glazing, articulation, and floor stacking to break vertical lines and create a more complex pattern and rhythm
- Materials that provide visual cues consistent with a multi-tenant residential tower
- Location of bike storage and waste and recycling enclosures so that they are accessible but visually screened
- On-site handling/staging of all waste and recycling
- An accessible vehicle drop-off zone for loading/unloading
- An increased setback on the west property line
- Screening and landscaping around the BC Hydro pad-mounted transformer
- Screening of the private outdoor amenity space
- Architectural treatment of the bicycle enclosure and gates
- Screening along the west property line

## Transportation

The project will provide 90 affordable residential rental studio units. As these units are purpose-built for supportive housing, they are substantially unique from a vehicle parking perspective as residents are not anticipated to own a vehicle. The proposed development does not include on-site parking therefore, a parking variance of the City of Victoria's bylaw requirements of 28 vehicle parking spaces is requested.

With the building's location near Victoria's downtown core, the proposed site offers a robust transit network and easy access to amenities via walking and cycling. The site will utilize its publicly available curbside site frontage area (estimated spaces for 1 vehicle) for visitor and staff parking. It is recommended that one of these spaces be reserved for a car-share vehicle.

Bicycle parking will meet bylaw requirements with 30 Long-Term and 6 Short-Term bicycle spaces.

One loading space is included in the site plan which is intended for garbage and recycling pick-up activities.

Bunt & Associates were retained by BC Housing to conduct a parking review for the proposed parking variance and propose Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to help reduce the development's demand for vehicle parking. Refer to the Parking Variance report included with this submission.

## Heritage

Although the subject site does not have heritage status, the building to the west is designated as Heritage.

Considerations were made to minimize impact to the neighbouring heritage building such as:

- The proposed main building is located as far as possible from the west property line
- Existing site retaining walls on the west property line are to be preserved
- Additional space was added to the setback between ancillary structures on the subject parcel and the neighbouring site
- The west property line includes screening for aesthetics and privacy

## Green building features

This project will be constructed to meet BC Energy Step Code Level 3 energy compliance. An energy model report authored by Focal Engineering has been provided as part of this submission.

BC Housing is considering installing solar voltaic rooftop panels to offset the building's power consumption and reduce the project's greenhouse gas footprint.

## Infrastructure

The existing property is serviced by sanitary, storm and water services. The existing services will be abandoned or removed, and new services installed. We understand that the existing municipal system for water and storm sewer capacity in front of the property is adequate. The existing water main is 150mm and existing storm main is 200mm fronting the site.

The existing sanitary main on Discovery Street is 200mm. A memo identifying the design flow rate has been prepared for use by the City to determine the developments impact to the existing system capacity. In the event that sewage attenuation is required, this will be secured in a legal agreement with the City.

The site frontage will be upgraded to meet the city of Victoria's Downtown Public Realm "New Town District" Specifications Including sidewalk, curb & gutter replacement along the entire frontage, new driveway crossings for the proposed site and neighboring property to the West, and road structure replacement along the site's frontage to centerline on discovery Street. A new midblock crosswalk is proposed at the East side of the frontage complete with overhead signage and downlighting.

Pedestrian access to Central Park and Royal Athletic Park via Caledonia Avenue, Quadra Street and Pembroke Street is an approximately 1km (14 min) walk with sidewalks/crosswalks throughout.

## Streetscape

In response to comment from the City of Victoria during the application review process, the project will include the following public realm improvements to meet the New Town District Specifications:

- A widened Sidewalk that extends from property Line to the back of curb along the frontage, the sidewalk will include the New Town District sidewalk scoring pattern with trowel joints
- A widened section of sidewalk (bulb) with letdown area and bollards facing the street at the new midblock crosswalk location
- Proposed frontage improvements include street trees, short-term bicycle stalls and street parking.
- The final design will be confirmed with the City of Victoria at the building permit stage.

## Summary

BC Housing is committed to providing a spectrum of housing options in communities across British Columbia. The existing hotel at 1961 Douglas Street is not a viable long term option for the tenants living there. BC Housing seeks to redevelop these vacant lots on Discovery Street to provide permanent housing with supports, which will better suit the needs of those sheltered at 1961 Douglas Street and also allow redevelopment of the hotel at 1961 Douglas Street to a more comprehensive mixed use property which will benefit the neighbourhood for the years to come.

Sincerely,



John McEown

Associate Vice President, Development Services

BC Housing