

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: December 9, 2021 5:58 PM
To: Sharmarke Dubow (Councillor); Development Services email inquiries
Cc: 'Land Use VWCA'
Subject: 633 Belton Development Proposal

Hello, I'm a resident and home owner in Vic West, very close to the proposed development at 633 Belton St.

I understand this development will be going through an community engagement process in Vic West in the new year however, I've had an opportunity to meet with the developer, Julian West, on a Zoom call on Monday December 6th with some neighbors to learn more about this proposal. I appreciated this opportunity although approached it with some skepticism as I understand the developer has been in consultation with the City of Victoria and has already made adjustments to the design and apparently already selling the concept as he has a waiting list of people ready to move in. So, not very confident that my voice will make a difference, however, I'd like to bring a couple of key concerns to your attention.

Density in Vic West

- The proposal is to build a six plex which is double the number of housing units articulated in the Community Plan for this area of Vic West. While the proposal seems to meet other requirements (e.g. height) – this is the part of the proposal that is most problematic. The Community Plan has envisioned gentle densification – the proposal at 633 Belton is not gentle.
- Belton St and adjacent streets have over the years increased its density as many family homes have secondary suites. In addition, in this small area, the City of Victoria has already added additional density through the creation of small lot zoned houses on Reno St.
- By Mr. West's admission, there is no proof of concept – there is no comparable type of development or relevant data within the CRD to assist neighbors in understanding the experience of similar proposals. In essence he is asking neighbors to take a leap of faith, to participate in an experiment in an area that already has increased its density over time.
- While I appreciate the need for additional housing, Vic West, has in the last year been the recipient of a two projects by BC Housing, developments on 822 Catherine St. and 480/492 Esquimalt by the developer Aryze in addition to the existing projects at the Railyards and Dockside Green.
- There are limits to growth and the current proposal for 633 Belton St. is not appropriate for this narrow and tight street that is not a through street.

Parking and Proposed Contract with Strata Owners

- Mr. West is proposing that strata owners sign a contract to not park a car on the street. By his own admission, it has been a "legal quagmire" to develop the concept.

- The problematic aspect is that there will be no policy or legal structure for citizens to pursue grievances or hold anyone to account. It is difficult to envision how a developer once the structure is built will enforce parking violations or frankly has the capacity or intention to maintain this type of service over time. The City of Victoria will not be in a position to adjudicate or enforce bylaws as it's not their contract. As Mr. West says, he is not able to provide a complete guarantee on our concerns.
- In addition, even if data shows that visitor parking may not be an issue, people's circumstances change. The parking is already tight and many current residents bike but need vehicles for work. Mr. West references car sharing programs however, again with parking being tight, there will likely be spillover impact on other adjacent streets causing issues for other neighboring streets. In addition, if owners decide to use part of their homes as rental properties, this will create additional pressure.

Belton St and the streets adjacent are already a vital and livable part of Vic West with a great deal of diversity, comprised of retirees, seniors, singles, families with children of all ages. We are already living the aspirations within the Vic West Community Plan and are not change resistant. In fact this area is constantly evolving.

Mr. West's proposal does not add to the neighborhood—in fact is already creating conflict because his proposal is squeezing too many homes into a very tight area and he is asking us to take a big risk for his aspiration. I encourage you to not support his current proposal.

Thank you for listening, Terri

Terri Chyzowski



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: January 28, 2022 10:19 AM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council; 'Land Use VWCA'
Cc: Development Services email inquiries
Subject: 633 Belton Development Proposal

Hello, I'm a resident and home owner in Vic West and live very close to the proposed development at 633 Belton St. This is a follow up to an email I sent on December 9, 2021. On the evening of January 26th, I attended another presentation by the developer, Julian West.

My key concerns after listening to Mr. West's presentation remain and in fact are heightened.

Density and Change within Vic West

- The proposal is to build a six plex which is double the number of housing units articulated in the Community Plan for this area of Vic West. While the proposal seems to meet other requirements (e.g., height) – this is the part of the proposal that continues to be most problematic. The Community Plan has envisioned gentle densification (3-4 housing unit). The proposal for 633 Belton does not meet this standard. Mr. West refers to the Community Plan and its values in his proposal yet when asked about the number of housing units for this area of Vic West, he implies the Community plan is confusing and flawed. His key argument to inquiries about reducing the size of the project seems to be the profit margin.
- At previous meetings, Mr. West admitted there is no comparable for a six plex development in Victoria or the CRD. Yet at the meeting on January 26th, he showed a slide with pictures of developments not from this area but I believe were from Vancouver or other cities as a way of trying to address this issue. This is misleading and does not build trust. Instead of presenting the facts, Mr. West is now providing misinformation regarding the existence of this type of development in Victoria.
- Residents are not resistance to a development in keeping with the Community Plan. Belton St. and adjacent streets have over the years increased density as many family homes have secondary suites. In addition, in this small area, the City of Victoria has already added additional density through the creation of small lot zoned houses on Reno St.
- There are limits to growth - this proposal could potentially add 12-18 additional residents from a six plex onto a very narrow and tight street that is not a through street. It is not a through street for a reason; there are transportation and safety concerns that have been addressed by the beautification and installation of a landscaped boulevard that residents in this area worked diligently on with the City of Victoria staff
- While I appreciate the need for additional housing in the entire region, Vic West, has in the last year been the recipient of two projects by BC Housing and developments on 822 Catherine St. and 480/492 Esquimalt by the developer Aryze. This is in addition to the existing projects at the Railyards, Bayview and Dockside Green. These are only some of the bigger projects, there are others. The challenge of providing more affordable housing applies everywhere in the CRD yet, Vic West seems to be a target by both developers and Council.

Enliven the Neighborhood and Increase Diversity

- Belton Street and the streets adjacent are already a vital and livable part of Vic West which is why it is attracting attention and is a desirable place to live. It is already lively and diverse. The developer and his supporters are trying to convince us that this project will bring us all the elements that are already here. As a Block Watch Captain for this area for many years, I have witnessed how the neighborhood has evolved and changed. Residents are concerned about climate change as witnessed by the number of residents that bike to work, work from home and walk downtown to work. In addition, a diversity of residents and renters already live here including retirees, seniors, singles, families with children of all ages. We do not need Mr. West and his development to do this for us.

Parking and Proposed Contract with Strata Owners

- Mr. West is proposing that strata owners sign a contract to not park a car on the street. By his own admission, it has been a “legal quagmire” to develop the concept. The problematic aspect that continues is that there will be no policy or legal structure for citizens to pursue grievances or hold anyone to account.
- It is difficult to envision how Mr. West’s company will enforce parking violations or visitor parking or has the capacity or intention to maintain this type of service over time. The City of Victoria will not be in a position to adjudicate or enforce bylaws as it’s not their contract. As Mr. West has said in the past, he is not able to provide a complete guarantee on our concerns.
- I’ve also observed that Evo and Modo cars are starting to park in various places around the neighborhood. There has been little information provided about any future management of car shares and what recourse residents have if they encroach on current resident parking spaces.

The tone of Mr. West’s presentation is that anyone who is resistant to the proposal for a six plex in this small tight street of Vic West is change adverse and not supportive of climate change and more affordable housing. This is simply not true. With dismay, I have noticed this same stance from the Mayor and some members of Council when residents of a neighborhood raise concerns about a development that does not fall within the approved neighborhood community plan.

I respectfully request that developers and the City abide by the current neighborhood Community Plan which engaged residents. Mr. West is asking us to take a big risk for his aspiration. I encourage you to not support his current proposal.

Terri Chyzowski [REDACTED]

Terri Chyzowski
[REDACTED]

I wish to oppose the site specific zoning for a sixplex at 633 Belton Ave. I am an immediate neighbour of this property and it will significantly reduce the amount of winter morning sun and privacy on our home. The building height, massing, gross floor area, and building footprint of the proposed project all exceed the limits of the current zoning. The Neighbourhood Plan which feeds into and supports the Official Community Plan limits the size of a Houseplex on this lot to 3 units and requires shading and privacy of neighbouring properties to be accounted for.

I have further concerns about the impact of this project on our neighbourhood. The Northwest Corner of VicWest has been identified as "Traditional Neighbourhood" in the Neighbourhood Plan and as such allows for Houseplexes up to 3 units maximum on side streets such as Belton Ave. This provision is in place to protect and nurture the character of the neighbourhood and prevent it from becoming a sea of apartment buildings.

Recent studies, for example, "[*Urban Affairs Review*](#), Yonah Freemark of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) concluded in 2019 that Chicago upzoning efforts served only to increase prices of existing housing units."

Other studies have also indicated that the immediate effect of upzoning residential properties is an increase in property values which leads to a decrease in affordable housing. The housing crisis facing Victoria is one of a lack of affordable housing. There is no shortage of so-called "missing-middle" condos. This project, if approved, will exacerbate the housing crisis, not relieve it.

The demolition and removal of the existing home at 633 Belton also removes an opportunity for a young couple to enter the housing market and build "sweat equity" by making improvements to the property within the allowable zoning restrictions. This is how a great many of the families in VicWest have built their home equity and it would be a shame if all such properties became the exclusive domain of developers seeking to upzone and build houseplexes for profit.

A recent Statistics Canada survey of urban green space shows that cities across the country are getting greyer and browner as a result of "urbanization" ie. increased density in urban areas. The greatly increased footprint of this project over the allowable zoning will contribute to this reduction of green space to the detriment of the surrounding environment. No amount of "car-free" housing can offset the permanent loss of green space proposed by this development. In addition, there is no evidence that the use of car share co-ops and taxis over car ownership in urban areas results in fewer "car trips" and a reduction in greenhouse gases and traffic congestion. Even people with cars walk, use transit and bike to work.

The developer has insisted that a project complying with the existing Neighbourhood Plan is not financially viable, although no data has been provided to support this claim. I would like to point out that, as a taxpayer, I helped elect the City of Victoria's mayor and councillors to look after the interests of its citizens rather than to facilitate the profit making schemes of developers. If this project is not financially viable within the existing Neighbourhood Plan, it should be considered for a different location.

take care, be kind,

Peace,
Robert P. Anderson

To Whom it may concern,

I live on Belton Ave and do not support the proposed 6 plex for 633 Belton Ave. I believe that a 6 plex is not a good fit for our neighborhood. This area of Vic West, in the neighborhood plan allows for houseplexes up to a maximum of 3 units on side streets, and Belton Ave is a quite side street. I believe it's very important to keep this in the neighborhood plan in order to maintain the tradition character of the neighborhood. Belton Ave is a quite side street with smaller homes and lots. The building hight, massing, grass floor area, and building footprint of the proposed project all exceed the limits in the current plan.

The developer sees an opportunity to make a good profit by increasing the building size and units on the property. He claims he's helping the housing crisis by insisting on a six plex, and even claims that the outcome will be affordable housing. Yet at both presentations I've been apart of he has not indicated what he plans to charge for them. He did say 100k less than other similar places in the city that include parking. So minus the parking, he's labeling this plan as "car free". Minus the parking 100k less is average to the market. The housing crisis is due to affordable homes, these units will not be affordable in the end. There's just no way. We all know that. He says they will be to get the go ahead. He says it's not profitable I it's less thana a 6 plex. Clearly he's in it for profits, and that's the bottom line.

The current house can be divided into 2 suites and the detached garage can be updated and suited as well. That's 3 homes without leveling and blasting out the lot to fit in the monster building he has proposed. And 3 fits the neighborhood plan. This could also be an opportunity for a young family to get into the market and make 2 suites to support their mortgage. Not have developer waltz in with dollar signs in his eyes and disregard the neighborhood plans to profit from our beautiful and peaceful neighborhood. Having an individual or family buy the current home and create one or 2 suites is a solution to the housing crisis, and is more environmentally friendly.

He also claims that the property will be for car free families, having a 10 year contract with his buyers to keep it that way. His reason for 10 years is that he assumes that victoria will be a car free city in 10 years anyhow... wishful thinking! 10 years will go by in the blink of an eye, the strata then can renegotiate and make the place support cars. Since there is no parking being provided on site the cars, 1-3 per family will be parking on the street. Belton Ave already has too many cars on it and it can be very challenging to find parking on a good day. If he truly wants this to be car free and a solution to the problem of too many cars, then have a 100 year contract or more.

Thank you,
Sincerely,
Mark Johnson

Good evening Mayor and Council,

I am writing to express my opposition to the site specific zoning for a sixplex at 633 Belton Ave. I live on Alderman Road close to the proposed development. Based on the Neighbourhood Plan and subsequent Official Community Plan (OCP) which limits the size of a Houseplex on this lot to 3 units, the current proposal is incompatible with permitted zoning. The restrictions on development are in place to protect and nurture the character of the neighbourhood and prevent it from becoming a sea of apartment buildings. I understand the developer has insisted that a project complying with the existing Neighbourhood Plan is not financially viable. If that argument stands, what is the point of having Neighbourhood Plans or OCPs? Please do not let the simple argument of profit undermine the integrity of our community.

Thanks,
Ben

To whom it may concern,

I have had a chance to look at the Urban Thrive website and listen to the zoom meeting last week with regards to the proposed 6 unit development at 633 Belton Avenue, replacing the existing single detached home.

I am generally in favour of densification due to limited housing options for both owners and renters. However, I am not supportive of the proposed 6 unit development at 633 Belton because:

a. it is not fully in line with the Victoria West neighbourhood plan. My understanding is that the neighbourhood plan set a limit on units on a single lot, which is 3. This proposal is double that. With the current plan for 6 units (including 12 bedrooms) you can assume approx. 16-20 people. This street is a quiet street, with a permanent barrier. It is my belief that adding 6 units, and with it 16-20 people would create more density than what this single detached house street can reasonably handle. I would be in full favour of a 4 plex with parking, or conversely a duplex with legal suites, again with parking.

At the moment, it seems the developer is pushing 6 units solely due to profit, without thinking about long term effects on the street.

I would like to see the neighborhood, and specifically Belton Avenue residents have more of a say in the development, especially considering its impact. I expect we will have a chance to continue to voice our concerns before key decisions are made.

Regards,

Paul Roots
Belton Avenue home owner

Hi Mayor and Council,

This email is to provide feedback about the development at 633 Belton Avenue, Victoria, BC. I am a resident that lives across the street and two doors down from the proposal on Belton Ave.

While I do support increased density in our community and appreciate the sustainability and car free focus. I do not support the 6-unit development as it has been proposed. I would like the proposal to be reduced to 4 units in alignment with the Victoria west community plan. The Vic west plan took years to create and is based on feedback of local residents and accounts for the broader community needs, as well as appropriate density in various locations across Vic West. 3 to 4 units was determined for our block as to not overwhelm our small residential street. Noting there are other locations in Vic West where 6 units is allowed as part of the plan.

I will reiterate that I value high density and believe that 4 Units will allow for substantially more density than is currently located on that property as a single family dwelling, but is consistent with needs of the local community as outlined in the neighbourhood plan.

Kindly,

Rachel

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: February 7, 2022 10:04 AM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council
Cc: Development Services email inquiries
Subject: 633 Belton Ave

Hi

I've lived on Belton since the early 90's.

Since then I've watched developers jam in housing along the Gorge water way to the Bay St bridge as well as all the development down at dockside.

The other side of Dominion, although Esquimalt but very close to the area, is full of apartments.

The land use community plan does not say that the proposed multiplex unit is allowed; too many units.

Cramming more people into an area and changing the dynamics of the neighbourhood while doing so isn't going to solve the housing and homeless problems.

There has to be a population threshold that the area and infrastructure can handle.

With all the building going on in the area, up and down Pandora, Johnson, and other streets in Victoria I would think we are getting very close to that mark.

We don't need medium density in the neighbourhood. It's just a way for the developers to sell more units and make more money.

A very concerned resident.

JH

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A very concerned resident.

JH

Dear Mayor and Council,

The development proposal for 633 Belton St. in Vic West raises issues for the city's planning process itself.

This property is currently zoned single family residential. The Vic West Community plan designates the property as part of the Traditional Neighbourhood, and stipulates that future zoning changes might allow for such side street properties to increase density up to a maximum of 3 units.

The developer proposes to put 6 units on this property. Double what the Vic West Neighbourhood Plan defined as desirable for the coming 20+ years.

As you know, the Neighbourhood Plan took several years and a lot of consultation to create. As a long-time resident of Vic West, I attended meetings and presentations. I was stunned to discover that no area in the proposed Plan protected single family dwellings. The city's planners responded to my concern by saying that this was a long-term vision, for 20 to 30 years, and that in each case, rezoning would have to be applied for and the citizens would have a say.

Two things still trouble me about the development of the Vic West Neighbourhood Plan:

1) The term 'Traditional Neighbourhood' was used to soften, if not mislead, citizens. You have to read the fine print to discover that the Plan provides no areas where the vision is 'traditional' in the sense of predominantly single family dwellings.

2) There was an underlying premise that the city *must* plan for a significant increase in population (interesting that we have no plan in the event of a downturn in population). There was an underlying premise that Vic West *must* absorb more than its share of increased density. As the plan states, Vic West was (in 2018) already 10% more densely populated than the average part of town. These premises were clearly not open for consideration when input was requested.

Why 'must' all of Vic West take on greater density than other parts of town? Part of what makes Victoria Victoria, and what makes this a desirable place to visit, and to live, is the presence of 'traditional' and 'heritage' buildings, both commercial and areas of single-family housing.

Here we are only 5 years into the plan, and a developer expresses confidence (at the CALUC online meeting) that the city will seriously consider over-riding the Neighbourhood Plan's limits on density. This is disturbing.

Okay, enough about the planning process. I have a couple of other concerns. My property, 1209 Alderman Rd. shares a back fence with 633 Belton. Our house (built in the 1800's) is quite close to the back property line. The proposed development will increase the morning shade on our home especially in winter. It will reduce our view to the southeast. It will be significantly bulkier than the existing house, an imposing presence. I understand that a new single family home on the same property might be allowed to build something larger than the existing home, but I can't say I like it.

Of much greater concern to me is the assertion/lie that developments like this one (6 houseplexes on side streets) will address the 'missing middle'. The developer says his units will cost roughly \$100,000 less than a single-family dwelling in this part of town. The average selling price of a single-family home in Vic West is now close to \$1 million. My adult children, with two professional incomes and two teenage children, cannot begin to afford a unit in this proposed 6-house-plex. This is not affordable housing.

Furthermore, if a project like this goes ahead, property values in the neighbourhood will increase as other developers see the opportunity for such profitable rezoning. The net result would be a *decrease* in affordable housing.

Please, encourage developers to align their projects with the specifics of the Neighbourhood Plan as regards density limits for a given property. Do not undermine the city's planning process, or our faith in the process itself.

I heartily applaud the city's efforts to work with other levels of government to create not-for-profit housing projects. This is the only way I can see that we have a hope of addressing the 'missing middle'.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Sincerely,
Susan Ellenton
1209 Alderman Rd.
Victoria V9A 4A8

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: February 8, 2022 8:42 PM
To: landuse@victoriawest.ca; Development Services email inquiries; julian@urbanthrive.ca
Subject: 633 Belton - comments for consideration

Hello City of Victoria, James, and Julian,

I have just seen that the comment period for 633 Belton proposal has closed. But in case there's still room for input, please find below my perspective.

I support Urban Thrive's proposal for 633 Belton. I watched the recording of the January 26th meeting and have had some correspondence with Julian West to answer a number of questions and concerns. I think this kind of housing is a positive contribution to the future for our planet (climate change), our city, and our neighbourhood (livability & affordability). The proposal seems thoughtful and attractive. We appreciate that Julian seems responsive to concerns of the community.

REQUEST to CITY:

1. I believe that Vic West residents would appreciate being consulted on developing a new bylaw that clearly sets out density limits for multiplexes. E.g. If the 633 Belton proposal proceeds, is there a way to ensure that all of Belton/Reno/Powderly area isn't developed as sixplexes? I think we need to clearly articulate what "appropriate density" means for Vic West (and perhaps other parts of Victoria).

2. Are there ways the City can streamline the process for builders like Urban Thrive to develop 3 and 4 unit buildings and make them economical? Urban Thrive suggests that anything less than 6 units isn't viable with the fixed costs.

~

Thank you for your consideration and work reviewing this proposal.

-Stephanie Lepsoe
643 Belton Ave

Dear Mayor and Council,

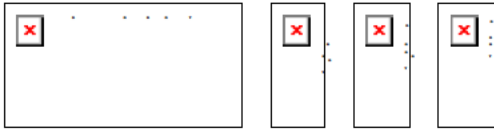
I am writing regarding the development application for a multi-unit dwelling at 633 Belton Avenue. I am strongly opposed to this development. I live at 627 Belton Ave., and if this development were approved it would significantly impact my family and our home. The developers are marketing their proposed development as affordable housing for those wishing to live a green, car free lifestyle. However, with no designated parking onsite, I'm certain there will be not only increased traffic on our small, dead-end street, but parking challenges, as well. I walk or take transit to my work downtown, but I also own a car for trips up island, etc. and I'm sure at least some residents of the proposed six-plex would have a vehicle, even if they primarily cycle or take transit to work, school, etc. The developers claim owners will be asked to sign a contract stating they will remain car free for 10 years, but who is going to enforce this? I can see many potential loopholes. I am also concerned about increased traffic from visitors, deliveries, etc. There is a large group of children who play in the street nearly every evening and I am concerned for their safety if there is any increased traffic.

I am also concerned about the size of the project. Six units is too much density for a lot of that size, on a small, quiet street. I support increased density in the city, but there are many locations that would be more suitable for a six unit dwelling. I may be able to support a triplex, or a four unit dwelling (and a smaller building) as stated as the maximum recommended density for our area in the official Vic West Community Plan.

The residents of Belton Avenue who would be most affected by this development are united in their opposition. We value our historic homes and gardens on a peaceful street where our children can play safely. In addition to concerns about increased traffic and a loss of street parking for current residents, for me, six new families immediately next door is too much; there would be a substantial increase in noise and a loss of privacy for us in our home and yard. The proposed building is very close to our property line, and the footprint of the six-plex is much larger than the current single family home that occupies the lot. I know there is a need for more affordable housing in the city core, but new development should not completely disrupt the character of a neighbourhood, or drive current residents from homes they have lived in and cared for for decades.

Thank you for your consideration of my arguments against approving this project.

Laura Patterson



The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt People.

From: Deanna F. <[REDACTED]>
Sent: August 29, 2022 9:23 PM
To: Engagement-External <engage@victoria.ca>
Subject: Proposed Project - 633 Belton Avenue

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regards to the proposed project occurring at 633 Belton Avenue in Vic West by developer Urban Thrive.

This project was proposed under the Missing Middle Housing Initiative; however, I do not believe the lot fits the project. Presently, the no-thru street has small single family homes; none are taller than two stories high and most have minimal yard spaces as lots were already split to maximize residential capacity. As this is the case, most residents do not have driveways and park vehicles on the street. It is already quite congested.

The proposed building is a three story home with no parking on site (which means more cars on the road).

This brings me to my next point; "car-free housing". The developer has been using this flashy new phrase; however, I have found no legal terminology in any Act or other regulations. When questioned by a number of my fellow residents, the developers' responses were mixed; from avoiding the question to a "let the city worry about it" type of answer to "it's being looked over by our lawyer but is more of a guideline". This last response is the most troubling as the developer is planning on having up to 6 families move into this small space and no legal repercussions can be taken if they choose to ignore the "guidelines" and bring multiple vehicles with them on an already crowded street (of which the community children are playing - again, we don't have much yard space).

Though the idea is a nice to have, with no legal stance on it, the developers seem to be putting the horse before the cart so to speak.

My last item is more towards the developers themselves. As they are inexperienced (having no actual completed projects) with no general knowledge and problem solving skills appropriate for this scale of a job, adding an entirely new concept with no real legal stance is much more likely to fail; put a quiet little community at risk of everyone from that missing middle (myself being one of them) in a perpetual noisy construction zone of delays and frustration. The end result of most moving on; the exact opposite of what the Missing Middle Initiative is all about.

This inexperience is shown clearly in the chosen location as the neighbourhood plan created by the city does not include this type of housing. The developer continues to evade this fact by using buzz words to distract from the problems already showing in their plan as evidenced on their website and webinars with ongoing concerns from the community.

If you wish to discuss anything further on my viewpoint, I'd be happy to address questions.

Regards,

Deanna Foster

Resident: 644 Belton Avenue