

Urban Thrive & Lapis Homes
10-864 Central Spur Road, Victoria, BC, V9A 0C1

UrbanThrive.ca

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are excited that our proposal has advanced to the Committee of the Whole and we hope to have the opportunity to present it to you at public hearing. These homes have been designed from the ground-up around the car-free lifestyle, making sustainable transportation options (walking, cycling, transit, and car-share) practical, convenient, and fun. To our knowledge, this project will be the first of its kind in North America.

We are proposing 4 three-bedroom homes and 2 adaptable design two-bedroom homes in a building that is well below the height and density allowed by the Official Community Plan, Neighbourhood Plan, and proposed Missing Middle Housing Initiative. It has a beautiful and socially connected design that's sensitive to the scale and character of the neighbourhood. This project represents concrete and meaningful progress toward our climate, housing, road safety, urban forest, and community livability goals.

While we are disappointed by the staff report recommendation, we recognize that our proposal reflects a departure from past expectations, aligning more closely to Victoria's future vision. We have enjoyed collaboratively working with staff and also understand that the uniqueness of our project has put staff in a tricky position. That said, we would like to provide some context to the basis of the report's recommendation – specifically, *“the lack of two off-street vehicle parking stalls, one accessible and one for car share use”* (page 3) – a suggestion that would require a complete redesign of our project with numerous negative impacts and little tangible benefit.

Overall, the staff recommendation appears to be based on the parking requirements within the Missing Middle Housing Initiative which, as you know, isn't approved policy yet. Our proposal isn't required to provide an accessible parking stall, however, we have proposed an on-street stall for community use. This allows us to provide accessible parking without giving up an existing on-street stall to accommodate a new driveway drop. We believe this is a equitable use of public curb space and in the best interest of the neighbourhood.

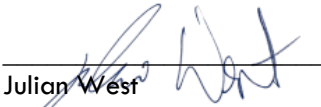
Similarly, the report suggests that we place the car-share vehicle off-street to be “more consistent with past applications.” There is no policy to support this position and preference of the car-share provider (Modo) and their users is for the vehicle to be located on-street where it's more visible and accessible.

Conversely, our proposal is supported by an enormous amount of established policy. The report noted our strong alignment to the Official Community Plan, Neighbourhood Plan, and Design Guidelines. What was overlooked in the report was Victoria's ambitious commitments toward climate action and accelerating the shift toward sustainable transportation – namely, reducing vehicle miles traveled per household by 20%, reducing vehicle ownership per household by 30%, and having 80% of all trips to be made by walking, cycling, and transit by 2030.

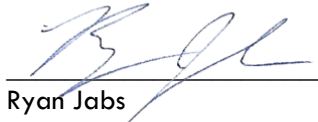
We are very surprised that the staff report can recommend rejecting our proposal without a firm basis in policy while ignoring the extensive amounts of climate action and sustainable transportation policy found in GoVictoria and the *Climate Leadership Plan*. Our proposal represents the largest investment in sustainable transportation alternatives per home that the City of Victoria has ever had. This is what meaningful progress towards climate action looks like. This is desperately needed family housing. This reflects all the best practices in sustainable community development and creating people-centric neighbourhoods.

Please let us continue our work to bring this project to life and help to build a more sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive future. Please advance our proposal to public hearing and let us demonstrate that people are ready for this kind of housing.

Sincerely,


Julian West
Urban Thrive - Founder

URBAN  THRIVE


Ryan Jabs
Lapis Homes – President

 **LAPIS HOMES**

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to express my support for the 633 Belton housing project proposed by Urban Thrive.

As a Victoria citizen and planning professional I support moderate-priced, moderate-density infill housing in walkable urban neighborhoods. This project is an excellent example. It includes six 2-3 bedroom homes for families (including two age-in-place homes with accessible at-grade and wheelchair adaptable design), private outdoor entrances, shared community commons green space and food garden, carsharing and bike storage, and a very accessible location. My research indicates that occupants of such households minimize their vehicle ownership, which increases affordability and reduces traffic impacts on our neighborhoods.

Please approve this project!

Best wishes,

Todd Litman ([REDACTED])

Victoria Transport Policy Institute (www.vtpi.org)

1250 Rudlin Street

Victoria, BC, V8V 3R7, CANADA

Dear Victoria Council,

I'm writing to express my strong support for the 633 Belton Ave project. It's a fantastic design in line with the neighbourhood, a great use of space and I'm thrilled to see that it's a car free home as well. Our family of four is car free – we own a home in Fairfield but would have jumped at an opportunity such as this one. I'm thrilled to see projects like this being proposed.

I lend my full support.

Best,

Tamara

[Tamara Krawchenko](#) | PhD Assistant Professor (she/her)

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

Dear Mayor and Council,

I sent my original letter in support of this proposal before the staff report came out. I continue to support this project. Furthermore, having read the staff report, I support the "alternate motion". I understand why staff typically recommend an off-street accessible stall and car share stall; on a busier street where on-street parking might be removed to enable transit lanes, sidewalks, or active transportation infrastructure, I would also advocate making the stalls off-street. Belton, however, is a small, low traffic, neighbourhood street and is never going to have a bus lane or a protected bike lane. Putting an EV charger and an accessible curb let-down on the street is a good solution in this situation, and has the additional advantage of benefiting the entire community.

Sincerely,

Jim Mayer
389 Tyee Rd, Victoria

Dear Mayor & Council

This letter is a follow-up, since the Staff report and recommendation had not yet been published when I sent my previous letter on 633 Belton. When I first saw that Staff had recommended against this proposal, I was disappointed and a bit angry. But I've had jobs where it was my duty to identify risks and compliance issues with a project, even if I personally supported the project, so I decided to give Staff the benefit of the doubt and read their report again.

What jumped out at me on my second reading relates to both this specific proposal for 633 Belton, and to Council's request that Staff analyze the implications of removing parking minimums.

- Staff list many ways in which 633 Belton aligns with the city's goals and vision, and they say that having Zero **regular** parking stalls is fine. Their only reason for recommending against the project is the lack of car share and accessible parking, which are standing priorities for the City. Staff go on to say that the car-share and accessible parking could be placed ON street, instead of OFF street, then explain that they discourage that as a general approach because it carries some risk of interfering with future changes to the street. I imagine they are thinking of future improvements like removing parking space to enable wider sidewalks, bike lanes, etc, and how those would be in conflict with removing ON street car-share and accessible parking spots.
- So, even if Council had already eliminated parking minimums for **general** parking, the issue about car-share and accessible parking for this project would still need to be resolved. I think the obvious solution is to put the car-share and accessible parking stalls ON street instead of OFF street. It's clear that Staff considered this option as well, since their report tells Council exactly what's required to do it, and even provides the wording for the alternative motion Council would need to pass.
- The general risk with putting car-share and accessible parking stalls ON street messing up future street re-designs isn't a concern on Belton, as it's a small dead-end residential street, with little chance of future bike lanes, sidewalk widening, or other changes that would necessitate removal of the car-share and accessible spots.

As you move forward with eliminating general parking minimums city-wide (which you should obviously do), the issue of how that interacts with requiring car-share and accessible parking will need to be considered. The simplest first step is probably to say car-share and accessible parking needs to be OFF street, then process situations like Belton, where it's fine to put it ON street, as an exception. Once Staff & Council get more experience with different situations, you may be able to write a smarter rule.

Thanks for listening
Irene Allen, Tyee Rd, Vic West

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am a resident of Vic West and am writing in support of the proposal for 633 Belton Ave, which is coming to the Committee of the Whole on January 19.

I've been following the proposal for some time, and am delighted to see this family oriented houseplex come to council. It's a perfect location for families: on a quiet street just a short walk from Banfield Park and the Vic West Community Center, around the corner from Craigflower Village, a short walk from Vic West Elementary School, ten minutes by foot from Esquimalt High School, a six minute bike ride from Save-on Foods, and an eleven minute bike ride from City Hall.

It's also a perfect location for families who want to avoid paying tens of thousands of dollars for automobile parking that they don't need. It's two to three minutes by bike from both the E&N and the Galloping Goose, so virtually all of the services needed by residents of Victoria are easily accessible by bicycle.

As a senior citizen living in Vic West who does not own a car and who uses a cargo bike as my primary transportation, the list of things that Urban Thrive has done right here is impressive:

- For six homes, they are providing space for seven cargo bikes, fourteen standard bikes, and 16 child bikes. That's huge! I own a cargo bike, and having a convenient place to store it makes a big difference to my life. A safe place to keep a vehicle is nice. A seamless, convenient, place to keep one is even better.
- They will have a Modo car share on site, and there are other Modo cars available a few minutes walk away. I have two Modo cars near my home, and between the two of us, my wife and I probably use one about once a month. Having one nearby is very useful!
- The location is walking distance from many locations. When there's heavy snow it can be difficult to drive or cycle, so having a grocery within walking distance is handy.
- The location is only a two minute walk from bus stops on Craigflower Rd, which provides a handy link to other work, school, healthcare, shopping, and additional transportation options.

The building itself is lovely, and the common areas are well thought out. It looks like a wonderful place to live, and one that my wife and I would definitely have considered if it had been available when we moved here. Furthermore, many of the things that make it so attractive are only possible because that space is not being used for car storage. In truth, the conversation around "car light" lifestyles is often warped: "concerned citizens" often worry about "giving up" a private car, but they rarely ask about the amenities people give up when they devote huge amounts of money and space to keeping cars!

This is a great project and deserves your enthusiastic support.

Jim Mayer
Tyee Road, Victoria BC

Dear Mayor and Council

I live in Vic West, a 15 min walk or 5 min bike ride away from 633 Belton. Having attended all the community meetings about this project, and studying the plans, I am in strong support of this proposal.

The design is outstanding

- Even people who oppose the development on density or parking grounds agree that the design is attractive and fits well with the neighborhood's look and feel.
- It's clear that the developer really understands the needs of families, singles, and retirees living car-free. The bicycle storage and access is well-thought out, and there's enough of it!
- It allows for a variety of units, encouraging a mix of ages, incomes, and living situations, and rich outdoor space.

There's a huge need and desire for this type of housing

- A significant number of people want to live car-free, and this Vic West location is a perfect fit for that. I'm a 67 year old timid rider, and I haven't owned a car in 4 years. I constantly meet singles, families, and seniors who don't need or want a car.
- Page 87 of the 2017 CRD Origin Destination Report told us that 20% of City of Victoria household did not have a car/truck. And that was before most of the current bike infrastructure went in, before cargo and ebikes became an everyday thing!

This project is a great example of gentle infill that's a win-win. More people get homes. Our cute local businesses in Craigflower Village get more customers. Our Community Association gets more members. We keep the quiet tree-lined street feeling that people love. And we do it all without adding pavement, cars, or environmental impacts!

Irene Allen
389 Tyee Rd, Victoria