

**ARYZE****480 Esquimalt Road**

# Re-design Rationale

Dear Mayor and Council and City of Victoria Staff,

Since our last resubmission on May 31, 2022, our proposed development at 480 Esquimalt Road has gone through a series of thoughtful redesigns in response to Staff and community feedback, site constraints, changing market conditions and escalating construction costs. While the drawings submitted in this package will provide the in-depth details of the changes that have been executed, we have summarised a justification for the larger proposed revisions.

## **Added Work/Live Units**

The previous iteration of the proposal included an emphasis on commercial retail units (CRU) across the ground floor as a way to contribute to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the current landscape has seen lenders place restrictions on the amount of space a mixed-use rental project can have on non-residential floor area, which has resulted in a reduction of CRU space in favour of 10 work/live rental units.

Feedback from CMHC was that the commercial space previously proposed was challenging the project's viability, and as such, we compromised with CMHC to instead design those areas to be work/live rental units that can offer much needed housing, while also contributing to the commercial activity in the neighbourhood. Without this revision, we will be unable to secure any financing for this project, which means it would be unable to advance—ultimately resulting in less employment opportunities and less rental housing.

We have maintained CRU units at the south faces, ensuring high visibility from Esquimalt Road, contributing to a positive pedestrian experience. The 10 work/live units will not only add a vibrancy to the ground floor but also add diversity to the unit typology in the neighbourhood, and the overall rental stock in Victoria. The materials at Level 1 are proposed to be a profiled panel with a feature wall at the work/live entries, adding a tactile element to the at-grade experience.

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## **Increased Liveability & Family-Friendly Homes**

The organisation of commercial and work/live units on Level 1 has enabled us to expand the building floor plates, while providing valuable living spaces to the north end of the courtyard at Level 2. This, in turn, has allowed us to introduce larger family-friendly units in the development. The floor to floor heights have also been increased to maximise ceiling heights within the units, which improves light exposure and livability for the residents.

## **Reduced Parking**

We are proposing to reduce the underground parking from 1.5 levels to a single level. This change is primarily to ensure that the parking spaces provided are in conjunction with the expected needs and the parking demand for rental buildings in this neighbourhood. This also aligns with the City's overall goals for decreased carbon-based mobility dependence. The redesign allowed the parking entry to be shifted north, which further improved the adjacency between the loading area and the residential lobbies which results in a better entry and exit experience for the future residents.

Another positive result of this change is that several bike stalls and storage lockers moved to Level 1 which improves resident access and promotes cycling. The commercial bike parking and end of trip facilities are now located in P1 adjacent to the entry ramp to grant easy access.

## **Reconfigured Landscape**

Due to structural constraints and desire to create additional rental opportunities for larger, family friendly units, we have had to redistribute the rooftop planting plans. The rooftop access at Level 2 has been eliminated, but this has been compensated with the addition of small patios with surrounding plantings at Level 1 for each of the work/live entries, providing a privacy buffer from the street and courtyard. Some larger trees on the rooftop have been replaced with lighter planting to work with the structural constraints and also to have a more easily maintainable rental building.

## **Retained BC Hydro Infrastructure**

In working with BC Hydro, it was deemed that under grounding of the adjacent power lines was adding significant complications to BC Hydro's infrastructure—and the development as a whole. As such, we are now proposing to keep the existing overhead power lines along Russell Street, as they are today.

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In closing, this revised proposal focuses on a few key re-designs:

- Reduced commercial retail unit space, in lieu of increased work/live units
- Increased floor plates allowing for more family-friendly housing choice
- Floor to Floor ceiling heights increased to maximise natural light
- Reduced underground parking to align with anticipated parking demand
- Commercial bike parking and end of trip facilities are now located in P1
- Reconfigured planting scheme and revised rooftop access
- Addition of small patios for each of the work/live units
- BC Hydro infrastructure to remain above ground along Russell Street

While we acknowledge that some elements of the proposal have evolved, we are confident that we have balanced priorities based on Staff and community feedback to result in an improved resubmission. We look forward to reviewing these changes further and answering any questions you may have.

Thank you,



**Vinit Jain**

Development Lead

Aryze Developments