



April 27th., 2023

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square,
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 1P6

Re: Rezoning and Development Permit Application, 624/628 Manchester Road
Letter of Rationale & Project Summary

Dear Mayor Alto and Councillors,

This letter of rationale & summary of project details is in support of a proposed family friendly, ground oriented multi-family development at 624-628 Manchester Road. This letter is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings as re-submitted on April 26th., 2023.

We have thoroughly reviewed the Official Community Plan and have also ensured that the proposed development of this property will substantially conform to the Development Permit Area guidelines and the design guidelines for Multi-residential, Commercial and Industrial. The information provided in this letter will briefly outline the project characteristics, making references to the current zoning bylaw and the OCP, focusing on the pertinent issues applicable to this development.

Since this project was initiated in late 2021 there has been much talk about the need for “Missing Middle” housing, and the recent initiative is a huge step forward to addressing the problem. Pointing to the direct need for this type of housing, the City of Victoria Housing Strategy Annual Review 2021 stated:

“As of 2021 only 10% of the targeted number of building permits for missing middle homes have been issued, making this the poorest performing Housing Strategy target. To get back on track for 2022 approximately 400 units of missing middle homes would be needed.” Now, in 2023, we suspect the numbers are not quite there yet.

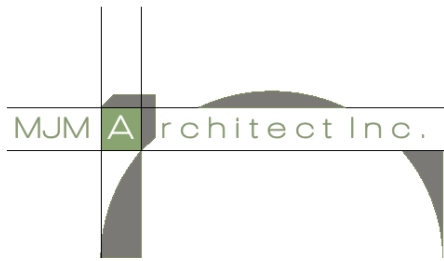
The Project Brief:

The development proposed for this location consists of 11 townhomes in two buildings, separated by a common amenity space. The two existing properties, 624 and 628 Manchester Road, are currently occupied by single family homes which are nearing the end of their usefulness and will be selectively deconstructed with any useable materials being directed to the appropriate recycling depots. The two lots will be amalgamated into a single lot with a resultant area of 1,018m² (10,958s.f.). Currently zoned R1-B, we seek to rezone the property to allow for the much needed multi-family aspect of this development.

The project consists of 5 townhomes facing Manchester Road, designated Building A to the south, and 6 townhomes facing the rear lane, designated Building B to the north. In this building we have agreed to modify Unit B2 into an Adaptable Housing Unit to help support the need for housing of this type. Modifications include an inclined wheelchair lift, accessible showers, adjustable countertops, and a dedicated handicapped parking stall.

The total area of the proposed development is 1,187.2 (12,778.9 s.f.) with a unit mix consisting of 2- Two Bedroom Units, 2- two bedroom units with Den, 5- Three Bedroom and Den Units, and 2- Four Bedroom Units.

We are providing 13 parking spaces, including 5 garages for the front block (Building A), and an 8 space carport below Building B, giving each unit one parking spot each with two additional spaces for visitors. Additionally, there are 13 long term bicycle parking spaces and two, three space short term bicycle racks, in substantial conformance with the current Schedule ‘C’ off-street parking bylaw. Please note that in order to support a more car free lifestyle, and possibly *carefree*, the owner is committed to providing car share membership to offset the minor parking variance. A garbage and recycling area is conveniently located at the bottom of the driveway for ease of access by the tenants and the garbage/recycling collection company.



This proposal has an FSR of 1.17:1 aligning with the City of Victoria's density objectives, has a site coverage of 61.3%, with an open site space of 19%. It is worth noting that the central amenity court feature, suspended over a necessary but uninviting parking access area, contributes to the calculation of site coverage as a "structure", by zoning definition.

The open site space calculation would remain the same if the central courtyard was there or not. Ironically, the introduction of the central amenity courtyard, which was actually suggested by the chair of the Burnside Gorge Community association, was intended to compensate for the perceived lack of useable open space. Yes, eliminating the central courtyard (with an area of 141m²) would reduce the site coverage percentage from 61.3% to 47.4%, but at loss of what we feel is a very valuable asset to this development.

Site Selection and Green Building Strategies

The sites for this project are two rectangular shape properties oriented on an approximate North/South axis. The sites slope down from the North-east corner to the south-west corner approximately 2.0m (6'-6") making the south-west corner the lowest part of the site. In consultation with the City of Victoria Transportation Department, it was determined that access from the rear lane would exceed the permitted driveway slope of 15% and therefore, the southwest corner of the site was chosen as the most efficient location for the driveway access.

Our proposal for a multi-family development in this location will maximize the land-use efficiency by ensuring that increasingly hard to find urban land areas are not imposed on, city services and infrastructures are ample and close at-hand, and energy and water consumption are lessened by the very multi-family nature of this project.

The site has been designed to direct the majority of the surface water run-off into the central parkade between the front and rear buildings. Water from the roof is collected in gutters and directed down to splash pads and then into the parkade level. Water from the surface parking areas would flow to a centrally located oil and grit separator, used to reduce surface pollution from infiltrating into the storm system.

With respect to climate change, adapting to the effects of this troubling phenomenon is becoming increasingly critical in minimizing greenhouse gas emissions. Creating airtight building envelopes and utilizing state of the art equipment and appliances are just some of the measures we've undertaken to alleviate climate change and minimize the impact of this development on the environment.

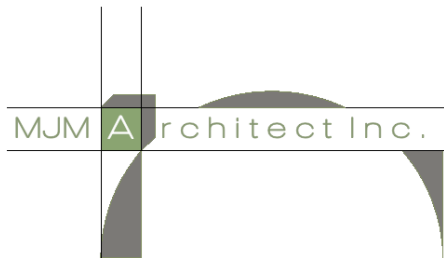
MJM Architect Inc., along with the Owner, Trent Praski, are strong proponents of the Integrated Design Process and will work collaboratively with the other consultants and sub-consultant team to ensure the building's structure, its systems (including lighting, HVAC, the indoor environment) as well as the site, are treated in a holistic manner. There are numerous green strategies that will be incorporated into the design of this project which will provide greater energy efficiency, enhanced indoor air quality, and better use of resources, all while reducing the overall environmental impact of this development and reducing its carbon footprint. Some of the green strategies we anticipate utilizing include:

- high performance building envelope (rainscreen) materials
- dual flush low volume toilets will be used
- energy star rated appliances
- use of durable finishing materials
- the concrete portions of this project will incorporate high fly-ash content.
- every effort will be made to use locally manufactured materials where available
- on-site blasted rock will be used for retaining wall construction and veneer stone

CPTED Principles

The design of the multi-family development will incorporate CPTED principles throughout the parking area and ground floor areas including locked bicycle enclosures, high efficiency LED lighting, and clear sight lines with minimal obstructions. We have included transparent and see-through guardrails and fences to increase security safeguards while maintaining a sense of privacy.

Form, Character and Sustainability



Throughout this design process we have been in constant contact with the planning officials at the City of Victoria and have worked with them through multiple revisions to fine tune this project to better align with their requirements and suggestions. We've met with the Burnside Gorge Association board members on one occasion, and a second event included interested community members, resulting in an overwhelming positive response community.

We humbly feel we are presenting a building scheme that respects the neighbourhood theme and character in this unique and increasingly desirable area of Victoria. Taking clues from architectural elements that prominent found in the adjacent neighbourhood homes, the design we've arrived at includes such elements as:

- raised and recessed front entries and landings
- sloped canopies supported by detailed wood brackets
- pitched roofs with high quality asphalt shingles
- projecting bay windows
- narrow horizontal wood siding and stucco finishes
- rectangular window groupings vertically aligned
- picket railings

The colours of the exterior finishes are contextually coherent and are composed of durable materials as well. We've varied the roof lines and blurred the distinction between individual units to reduce the apparent massing of the overall development, so it visually appears as three townhomes facing Manchester Road, as opposed to the actual five units. Similar gestures have been employed on the north elevation facing the lane to the South.

The horizontal articulation of the facade has been varied by providing spacious balconies to each unit, supported by heavy wood columns and beams on west coast inspired stone piers with concrete caps. We are proposing large windows and doors with window sills raised to +/- 18" above the finished floor. The white window frames with black trim accent the light grey horizontal siding and off-white stucco siding.

Working with the Landscape Architect, Mary Haggerty, we have integrated the layout of the two buildings into the two sites taking into consideration a multitude of factors such as the significant N/E to S/W slope, the central amenity area, the rear lane yard areas, and the important side yard areas between the adjacent homes to the west and east of the proposed development.

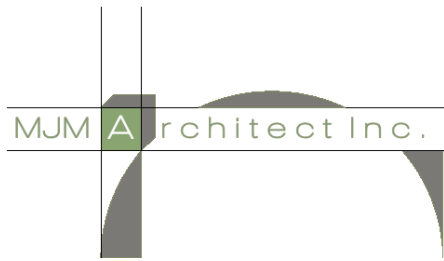
Building A, fronting onto Manchester, has the main entry to each of the five units accessed via a gated front yard. In Building B the entries to units B1, B2, B3, and B4 are conveniently accessed directly from the parking area. However, these 4 units are really ground-oriented units with a "front yard" facing onto the quiet rear laneway, akin to the laneway housing in Vancouver which increases the diversity of housing types in currently low density neighbourhoods. Units B5 and B6, both two levels units, are accessed from an open set of stairs accessed from the parking area up to the rear lane, and then to another short flight of stairs up to the second level. Each of these face the quiet rear lane but also have easy access to the central courtyard area.

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The meeting held in June of 2022 with the Advisory Design Panel again resulted in an extremely positive outcome. Suggestions from one member to vary the proportion of materials on the east and west elevations (facing adjacent neighbours) was gladly incorporated, and comments from the landscape contingent on the panel were relayed to and revised by our landscape consultant.

Common and Private Amenity Space

Each residential unit has access to their own private balconies and/or decks with landscape screening adjacent to other units for increased privacy. This development also includes a common amenity space for the enjoyment of all the residents. Accessed by either open stairs, or directly from the balconies of individual units and protected by a 3'-6" high guardrail, the amenity space would be a common place for residents to enjoy the sunlight, or perhaps take in some star gazing during the evening hours, and includes areas for some of the residents to practice their gardening skills in separate gardening planters. Appropriate lighting would be provided as well as a hose bib for maintenance and gardening purposes.



In Conclusion

One of the most significant points in the OCP is that it stresses sensitivity when addressing land use and focuses new development towards a sustainable community. Now, more than ever before in Victoria's history, we see an ever-increasing demand for accommodating new residents and families without expanding into environmentally sensitive outlying rural areas. With the growing scarcity of vacant land, the need to densify in a respectful manner within the community, and keep the development more compact, will naturally reduce the impact on the surrounding environment while, at the same time, providing more homes for the growing "missing middle" housing market. Not to belabor a point, but we note that in the Victoria Housing Strategy Phase Two report, one of the outcomes for missing middle housing is to increase the proportion of new ground-oriented housing forms in each neighborhood...with the aim to quadruple the number of missing middle housing units.

We've gone through extraordinary means and efforts to help achieve those results and feel confident that we have taken every measure possible to ensure this project is in every way compliant with the OCP guidelines and other City of Victoria requirements. With your support we hope that there will soon be 11 more family friendly homes to alleviate some of the missing middle drought. We trust that the contents of this brief letter and accompanying documentation not only addresses the City of Victoria's regulatory requirements, but will also satisfy residents of Burnside Gorge in the immediate vicinity, and the City of Victoria in a more holistic sense.

Thank you for your valued time and efforts in the review of this development application for 624-628 Manchester Road. If additional details are required, or there are any questions that arise, we will most certainly be available to respond immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Jon Moody'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping 'M' and 'J'.

Architect AIBC, MRAIC, LEED® A.P.