



August 31, 2023

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC
V8W 1P6

Attention: Mayor and Council

Dear Mayor and Council:

RE: Rezoning Application Re-Submission - 133-135 E Gorge Rd.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

We are pleased to submit the enclosed proposal for 133-135 E Gorge Rd., on behalf of Belmont Properties, a professional family owned and operated company since its founding over 50 years ago, who remain committed to providing and maintaining high-quality rental homes in the City of Victoria.

The proposal has been developed to support the vision, guiding principles, and goals of the Burnside Gorge Neighborhood Plan (BGNP). The site is well-connected to existing and proposed future transit infrastructure, as well as to an established bike network.

Located within the Gorge Sub-Area, the site is comprised of two existing parcels: 133 and 135 E Gorge Rd, both currently zoned T-1 Limited Transient Accommodation District.

- Existing improvements on 133 E Gorge Rd include a converted motel to residential rental use comprising 59 rental homes, which have aged past their useful life. An adjacent surface level parking lot encompasses a large portion of property area.
- Existing improvements on 135 E Gorge Rd include three low-rise residential rental use apartment buildings comprising 141 rental homes, which have aged past their useful life. An adjacent surface level parking lot is bordered by the three existing buildings.

The redevelopment proposal is compliant with the Burnside Gorge Neighborhood Plan (BGNP) and OCP. The BGNP envisions an Urban Residential Land Use, allowing for multi-unit buildings of six-stories in height and densities up to 2.0 FAR with the provision of amenities.

The proposal seeks to amend the zoning to a new, comprehensive zoning district in-line with the BGNP and OCP with five-buildings at six-stories in height and densities at 2.0 FAR. In consideration of preserving rental stock in the City of Victoria, a 100% rental Phase 01 re-development is proposed, with a mix of unit types and sizes from 1 bedrooms to 3 bedrooms, and the inclusion of ground oriented patio units, the project will increase and revitalize the rental housing stock in Burnside Gorge and offer a wide range of housing options for people of all ages and stages of life.

Redevelopment is proposed in two sequential phases:



Phase 1

Comprises the redevelopment of the 133 E Gorge Rd building and surface parking lot, replacing the existing 59 rental homes with 174 new rental homes, as well as 3 CRUs providing neighbourhood serving shops and services.

Phase 2

Comprises the redevelopment of 135 E Gorge Rd and surface parking lot, replacing the existing 141 rental homes with approximately 310 new homes.

To connect the site to the community, a series of publicly accessible plazas are proposed with rich landscaping and an animated public realm to support a thriving and vibrant neighbourhood. A key driver of the proposal is to reconnect the existing private waterfront for public access, and the proposed shoreline improvements and boardwalk, complete with floating dock structure, is carefully designed to minimize impacts to existing trees and wildlife habitat, whilst allowing for public enjoyment. We envision this proposal as the catalyst for change which will connect the waterfront from Arbutus Park to Lotus Street west of the Gorge Road Hospital, a priority of the BGNP.

The intent of the application is to create a complete, fully accessible community through redevelopment, with diverse uses to support the new residents and Burnside Gorge neighbourhood. Tenant impact, active transportation, accessibility, family friendly design, and environmentally conscious sustainable design have shaped the core of this application.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The proposal has been developed to support the vision, guiding principles, and goals of the Burnside Gorge Neighborhood Plan. As noted in the Plan, stakeholders have expressed strong interest in supporting additional housing choices, including housing attractive to families with children, to accommodate new residents, and to revitalize the neighborhood, with supporting local retail, services, and amenities. The proposal is consistent with the intent of the OCP and advances the goals and objectives of the BGNP. Land use, height, and density, aligns with the Urban Residential Land Use designation. Development Permit Area Guidelines 7A and 8 and Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential, Commercial, and Industrial have also been reviewed and incorporated into the concept.

The proposal responds to the BGNP by:

- Supporting a mix of housing units, including units that meet the needs of a diverse demographic ranging from seniors to families with children.
- Supporting informal recreation and social gathering through the provision of green spaces and outdoor amenity plazas.
- Supporting business vitality through the provision of an additional retail node along the Gorge Rd frontage.
- Orienting buildings to create a more attractive and pedestrian friendly streetscape environment, prioritizing pedestrians, and minimizing vehicles.
- Providing public access to the current private waterfront, considering Green Shores principles, sea level rise, and sensitive and unique habitats through the provision of a low-intrusive multi-use boardwalk.
- Dedicating the waterfront to the community linking additional connection to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail network along the waterfront.
- Supporting the Gorge Road 'All Ages and Abilities Pathway' by way of providing a SRW to the City of Victoria along with offsite improvements.

Further benefits of the redevelopment proposal, as well as responses to the BGNP have been envisioned as part of the design package and are presented below. In preparation of our proposal, we have met with and received input from city staff, Burnside Gorge CALUC, key stakeholder groups, existing tenants, and neighbours, helping to shape the current concept.



KEY PROJECT BENEFITS AND AMENITIES:

FAMILY HOUSING AND LIVABILITY

Per the BGNP – Land Use Policies [12.2.6], a mix of housing units attractive to families with children is encouraged. As a result of this redevelopment, a net increase of 284 rental homes will be added to the City's housing stock, providing a diverse mix of housing options and affordabilities, with homes ranging in size from 1 bedrooms to 3 bedrooms, catering to a range of users including seniors, families, students, singles, and couples. Diversity in tenure is proposed both through secured market rental for Phase 01 meeting the needs of residents at different life stages and allowing existing residents the opportunity to age in their existing community.

PUBLIC REALM AND PUBLIC PLAZA IMPROVEMENTS

Three major design principles have formed the heart of the overall design concept: Connectivity, Community Building, and Placemaking.

The Commercial Hub provides a gateway to the development for the larger community. It creates an inviting retail environment with opportunities for people to shop, work, and enjoy the company of their neighbours. Accessible from Gorge Road, with pedestrian public realm improvements such as widened sidewalks and furnishings to encourage streetscape activity.

The Central Plaza is centrally located, serving as a place for gathering and celebration. Raised platform seating, and a substantial kids play area playground creates a flexible space for active uses. Places to lounge with sheltered trellis lounge structures and seating platforms shaded by trees support year-around activation. This supports the landscape design principles of connectivity, community building, and placemaking.

The Residential Commons, located centrally within the Phase 02 future re-development area will provide for a variety of social spaces for the community building. The design will be intended to provide opportunities for large or small gatherings, including nature play, outdoor dining, flexible green space, and tree canopy. Clear waterfront site lines will encourage access to the boardwalk.

The Boardwalk Commons will provide access to the waterfront for all. It offers significant recreational value and numerous opportunities to relax and enjoy the shoreline and surrounding nature. The incorporation of educational wayfinding and interpretive signage is proposed to encourage stewardship of the Gorge Waterway, promote bird watching and the preservation of marine ecology. The boardwalk is connected to the community through a pedestrian network extending from Gorge Road to the north. Protection and restoration of the shoreline ecosystem is a key component of the overall experience.

COMMUNITY-SERVING COMMERCIAL RETAIL

In addressing the BGNP [2.3 - Neighborhood Issues and Analysis], stakeholders have identified a lack of local shops, entertainment, and gathering places within comfortable walking distance of residents and employees. The redevelopment proposes an urban node through the provision of three commercial-retail units fronting Gorge Road East. to enhance livability for neighborhood residents. Supporting the development of a small-scale urban village along Gorge Road west of Cecilia Ravine is identified as a key policy for land management and development in the Plan. The proposal is a direct response to this priority.

Community serving uses are envisioned as neighborhood serving retail, anchoring the site as a new hub for the community.



AMENITIES

Public and private amenities have been at the forefront of the design. The includes street front commercial-retail space, a focal public plaza, residential outdoor dining and deck lounge spaces, terraced public view decks and public access to a waterfront walkway and dock.

Each building will offer substantial amenities tailored to its residents, with a primary focus to create a sense of community and improve livability. In phase one, the amenity uses provide flexibility of uses including lounging, recreation, fitness, and co-working. Uses will cater to all demographics including children and pets.

WATERFRONT ACCESS FOR PUBLIC USE

The proposal offers an opportunity to advance a key goal of the BGNP, Principles for Parks Trails, and Natural Areas [6.1.1 - Provide Access to the Waterfront]. The existing waterfront is largely privately owned west of the Selkirk Trestle. The redevelopment addresses the Plan by introducing a public walkway secured through a public SRW, returning one of the key assets of the Burnside Gorge Neighborhood back to the public.

As noted in the Plan, key improvements focusing on accessing the waterfront through trails, overlooks, and opportunities for nature and water-based recreation are sought. The proposal has been designed with public access at the forefront with a waterfront pathway termed the 'Boardwalk Commons', in addition to a proposed publicly accessible floating dock for non-motorized vessels and swimming.

Additionally, BGNP Objective [12.15.1- Waterfront Pathways] envisions the completion of a waterfront walkway from the Galloping Goose Regional Trail to Lotus Street, a priority for the neighborhood. The project envisions the Boardwalk Commons waterfront pathway as further progress toward completing that link.

GREEN BUILDING FEATURES

The project will align with City of Victoria requirements as well as BC Energy Step Code, meeting Step 3 on Residential and Step 2 on Commercial occupancies. Based on the "BC Energy Step Code, A Best Practices Guide for Local Governments" published by the Energy Step Code Council and the Building and Safety Standards Branch, dated July 2019, these step code targets align with 20%+ energy reduction beyond the BC Building Code 2018 baseline (i.e. ASHRAE 90.1-2016 / NECB 2015).

The following are the preliminary strategies being explored as part of the Green Building Features:

- Improved building shape / massing as part of passive design to mitigate heat loss intensity from reduced vertical surface to floor area ratio, where possible.
- Appropriate window-to-wall ratio to balance advantageous passive heating gains and daylight usage versus disadvantageous heat loss in cold seasons and overheating in warm seasons.
- Passive cooling from distributed balconies for solar shading, low-e coating on glazing for solar heat gain control, and operable windows and patio doors for natural ventilation.
- High efficiency building envelope for thermal energy demand reduction.
- Air barrier continuity, commissioning, and testing to meet an appropriate level of air tightness for limiting uncontrolled air infiltration / exfiltration and the associated heat losses.
- High indoor air quality from direct ventilation provided to occupied spaces.
- Appropriate ventilation rates to balance indoor air quality with thermal energy demand.
- Waste heat recovery via high efficiency heat / energy recovery ventilators in all residential suites.
- GHG reduction from majorly electrified mechanical systems for space and domestic water heating with supply from BC Hydro's clean electricity.
- High efficiency lighting with smart controls in the common area and outdoors.
- Improved water management from low flow hot water fixtures.



Additionally, redevelopment will result in improved stormwater management quality. As the existing site is approximately 72% impervious with no stormwater management or best management practices in place, the primary focus of the stormwater management plan will be on run-off control to reduce downstream impacts while improving overall quality. On-site, a series of passive treatments including rain gardens, oil/grit separators and stormwater treatment chambers will be utilized to treat run-off from paved and travelled surfaces to meet local rainwater management standards.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT

In consideration of Policy Objective - BGNP [12.17.1 - Habitat Restoration]. The Project Team has met with the Gorge Waterway Initiative, as well as many other ecological advisory groups, to discuss habitat enhancement of the shoreline and aquatic ecosystems.

The landscape vision for the Gorge Waterway DPA8 will include the protection and enhancement of the existing forested edge and will aim to maintain the ecological value. Tree protection will be a priority and based on the current site layout and tree assessment, approximately 85% of existing trees on the site will be retained. The majority of the shoreline trees in the DPA will be retained, and those few that have been determined to be unsafe will either be reduced in height and allowed to remain as habitat snags or felled and placed on the ground to become coarse woody debris which will provide a source of decay as well as ground habitat for small mammals and herpetiles.

The proposal includes the removal of invasive species, additional planting of drought-tolerant and native vegetation with native flowering shrubs and perennials which will support resident and migratory birds populations (particularly important due to the adjacent Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary), various pollinators, small mammals and herpetiles. Plantings will take into consideration both pollinator species as well as birds and therefore several species of flowering shrubs will be planted including saskatoon, Nootka rose, red-flowering currant, oceanspray, common snowberry and thimbleberry.

The landscape design provides an urban tree canopy which reduces heat island effect and provides a natural habitat for local bird communities. The proposed tree palette is diverse and composed of large canopy street trees, supplemented by smaller native flowering and multi-stemmed deciduous tree species and larger native evergreen species.

SHORELINE IMPROVEMENT AND RENEWAL

In consideration of Policy Objective - BGNP [12.6.5]. The Policy intends to preserve, enhance, or establish native shoreline ecosystems and maintain habitat and views of a green shoreline.

A proposed shoreline boardwalk will be carefully designed to minimize impacts to existing trees and habitat. It will be field fit and built under the supervision of an arborist, using screw piles which allow it to be constructed around the existing trees, mitigating any potential root zone impacts with far less disturbance than typical concrete footings. The boardwalk deck will float above the ground, to protect existing soils and allow for understory planting along the edge.

The Green Shores program was created to encourage solutions that treat land in a shore-friendly way. Green Shores designs are intended to restore habitats and coastal ecology, manage sediment transport processes.

As a priority of the landscape approach, shoreline improvements will contribute towards Green Shores Accreditation in the following ways:

- Outdoor lighting will be at low levels to not impact aquatic wildlife.
- Protect the majority of existing shoreline trees with no net loss of existing habitat.
- Invasive plant material will be removed and replaced with native plantings.
- Riparian vegetation will be conserved and restored.



- Making the shoreline publicly accessible through an improved pedestrian trail and sidewalk network.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A community engagement program was initiated in 2022 to establish communication with neighbours and stakeholders and gather feedback on the proposed redevelopment. Existing residents were specifically engaged through group meetings and individually to inform a Tenant Assistance Plan.

Through the City's Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC) process, preliminary development concepts were posted on the City's development tracker site and a digital meeting was hosted by the Burnside Gorge Land Use Committee. Additional meetings were held with residents of a neighbouring strata, and a site tour and discussion with environmental stakeholders was held. Comments, concerns and ideas were shared and the project team carefully considered how to incorporate valuable feedback into the concept plans.

Key updates to public feedback include:

- Revising building rooflines to minimize view impacts.
- Consideration of setbacks from the west property line to increase building separation distances.
- Consideration of setbacks of underground parking structure to preserve adjacent trees on the west property line.
- Ensuring boardwalk, elevated pier, and dock design align with Green Shores principles.

Communication with neighbours and stakeholders will continue to be important at all stages of the process. Existing tenants will be engaged on an ongoing basis to assess their needs and keep them informed.

NEED AND DEMAND

The proposal supports many of the OCP and BGNP objectives, as well as the Victoria Housing Strategy. The project seeks to provide housing options to meet the needs of the City's current and future residents across the housing continuum.

The existing buildings are at their end-of-life, built over fifty years ago with a decaying structure, low environmental considerations, and low energy efficiency. The highly impervious area of the existing surface level parking lots throughout poses a continued detriment to stormwater quality running into City infrastructure as well as the Gorge Waterway. The redevelopment will allow for renewed and increased housing stock with a diversity of housing types, accessibility, tenure, and cost, to support the City of Victoria's continued growth in an area already envisioned for higher density. Furthermore, the proposal will result in net environmental improvements along with sustainable building construction, as well as additional community amenities such as the commercial node and publicly accessible waterfront.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

The proposal relates to the neighborhood and immediate context by scaling height and density less than the west neighbouring strata condominium building to the west, which currently includes two 8-storey buildings. The proposed development will maintain the 6-storey height restriction of the OCP but at a lower topographic base datum elevation than the neighboring property. The neighbouring properties to the east exist as aged apartment buildings with 5-storey and 4-storey forms.

The site topography slopes significantly from north to south, with highest elevation along the Gorge Road frontage, with major sloping occurring at the southern portion of the parcel nearest the waterfront.

IMPACTS

Of utmost importance to this redevelopment proposal, tenant displacement has been a critical consideration. A Tenant Assistance Plan has been approved by Staff, which ensures tenants receive benefits over and above the City's minimum policy requirements. Furthermore a professional tenant relocation specialist has been engaged to lend their expertise. The City of Victoria's Tenant Assistance Policy has



shaped the draft Tenant Assistance Plan, with the key intent to mitigate the impact of displacement on tenants and by providing adequate relocation support to the affected tenants. A key component of the proposal is the phasing which allows for 70% of existing rental units to remain in place until the completion of Phase 1. This extended timeline allows us to fully understand the needs of existing tenants over a period of time, allowing for a tailored, solutions-based approach to tenant relocation to meet the needs of the Phase 2 tenants. Several engagement sessions have already commenced, both in group format as well individual, to keep tenants apprised of the intent to redevelop and understand their rights under the City's Tenant Assistance Policy. Ongoing communications will continue throughout the entirety of the project to maintain an open dialogue and provide support for displaced tenants.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The design of the buildings and public realm has considered four main principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) including natural surveillance, legibility and access control, image and maintenance, and territoriality and ownership. Building design can maximize opportunities for natural surveillance, thus limiting the opportunity for crime. Well-lit public spaces, including pathways, plazas, building entrances and parking areas allow for ease of movement and safety.

Appropriate signage and wayfinding features help residents and visitors navigate the site, entrances will be fob controlled, and parkades offering secure vehicle parking, bike rooms, and storage spaces. As a publicly accessible site, careful consideration will be given to the transitional spaces between the public, semi-public, and private spaces using materials, grade changes, landscaping and architectural elements to delineate different areas. Lighting, fencing, signage and other approaches such as hours of operation and monitoring may be utilized to ensure everyone can safely enjoy the public waterfront.

TRANSPORTATION

The site is located along Gorge Road, which is well served by public transit, with three transit routes within 500 metres of the site, or an approximate six-minute walk. Additionally, cycling and pedestrian networks are well connected, with bi-directional painted bike lanes on Gorge Road connecting to the regional cycling network. The Galloping Goose Regional Trail and its Selkirk Trestle are under 500m from the site.

In response to the BGNP [12.12 - Roadway Improvements], Gorge Road is identified as part of the City's priority All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network and is identified as an important Frequent Transit Corridor. Consistent with the Bicycle Master Plan, improvements to the Gorge Road Street Section will result through this redevelopment. Furthermore, Plan Objective [5.2 - Transit Routes] will continue to realize improvements for the Frequent Transit Route along Gorge Road as a result. Finally, a trail connection along the waterfront is proposed to improve connections along Gorge Road to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail.

The proposed development will meet the Parking Bylaw requirement for accessible parking spaces, consisting of both van accessible and residential and commercial uses. An overall residential parking variance is proposed, with data analysis and Transportation Demand Measures (TDM) supporting the anticipated parking demand based on tenure, unit size, geographic area, and supporting TDM by transportation consultant Bunt & Associates Engineering. TDM measures include bicycle parking over-and-above bylaw requirements, bicycle repair stations, and provisions for information sharing about local transportation options for residents.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The site is currently serviced with water, sanitary and storm connections to City infrastructure in the following ways:

- Water is supplied to the site from the existing watermain located within the Gorge Road E corridor.
- The current building services feed into the existing 675mm trunk sewer main located within the City SRW running east-west through the proposed Phase 2 property boundary.



- Storm and building drainage infrastructure on-site is collected via a complex network of building drains and catch basins.

The development will utilize the same connection points to public infrastructure while re-aligning and upgrading the aging on-site infrastructure to meet the latest standards and demands.

SUMMARY

After extensive and thorough discussions with City Planning Staff and consideration of community input, we feel the proposal has been thoughtfully prepared to create a vibrant and robust concept that delivers much needed housing and amenities to the Burnside Gorge Neighborhood.

Yours truly,

INTRACORP PROJECTS LTD. ON BEHALF OF BELMONT PROPERTIES

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Kolec', written over a light grey horizontal line.

Matt Kolec

Senior Development Manager