

November 2nd, 2023

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

Dear Mayor Alto and Members of the Council,

We are pleased to submit a revised application for our rental project at 937 View Street that responds to the previous mayor and council's directive, which stated on June 14th, 2022, "***That this matter be referred to staff to work with the applicant to address concerns related to setbacks and have greater consistency with the 2022 [Downtown Core Area Plan] guidelines.***" Highlights of the re-submitted design include the following:

- **269 residential units** in a highly walkable and bikeable urban environment;
- **Near total compliance** with the **March 2022 DCAP** approved by the council;
- **Compliance with shadowing** of sidewalks and open public spaces requirements;
- **Efficiently sized** and functionally designed units that **drive affordability**;
- **5,500 sqft of amenity areas**, incl. a dog run, community garden, shared patio and gym;
- **Zero car parking** encourages bike and public transportation adoption;
- Residential units in a **rent-controlled regulatory environment**; and
- A **rental housing agreement for all 269 units** and a **\$50,000 donation to COV Housing Reserve Fund**.

937 View Street is a desirable location for residents, and with all the new development in the immediate area, soon to be one of the more attractive areas of Victoria to live. Looking at the Walk Score data for the site, we note that it is a **Walker's Paradise (99 points)** and **Biker's Paradise (100 points)**. We have worked hard with planning since 2017 to maximize the number of units, now 269, on the site to fully utilize the site's **existing R-48 zoned allowable density** on an **environmentally contaminated surface parking lot**.

Over the past year, we worked with our local, award-winning architect, dHKarchitects, to redesign the building to address the setback concerns raised by the 2022 DCAP. We now are in **greater compliance with all setbacks**, save for minor protrusions on the west, east and south elevations at levels 6 – 23 to create architectural relief to the point tower design. Please note that to maximize the rental housing density available on the site under our R-48 zoning, we increased the number of storeys to 23, up from 19. Note that View Towers (circa 1970) to the west is 19 storeys and that the 2023 approved Starlight Developments project to the north has 28 and 32-storey towers. Please see **Appendix A** for our **responses to Development Services**.

We have also studied the site context for shadowing. We **fully comply with DCAP shadowing regulations** of sidewalks and public open spaces, including at the newly approved Starlight Development's public courtyard on the north side of View Street. In fact, we have **improved in these areas since our last submission**.

We worked with award-winning interior designer Bidgood to drive affordability through efficient and compact layouts and incorporating interior design techniques, including **extensive built-in cabinetry** and **in-board bedrooms**, to improve the livability, comfort, and functionality of smaller-than-average-living spaces. The unit mix includes **16 three-bedrooms**, considered rare within the downtown core, one two-bedroom, 219 one-bedrooms and 33 studios. The building offers a mix of private access to the outdoors via **Juliet balconies, patios, and decks**. We have also designed the units to be portable **AC unit-ready**.

Overall, all things being equal, a **389 sqft unit (our average unit size) will rent for much less than a 600 sqft unit**, which means our units are generally positioned at the **lower range of the affordability scale**. Bidgood has provided a letter in **Appendix B** summarizing their **approach to the schematic design** of the suites and common areas.

Extensive tenant amenities include power for e-bikes and a bike maintenance area in the long-term bike storage area, a **1,935 sqft sun-lit outdoor dog walk area** and **tenant community gardens** on the 6th-floor side yard patio, as well as a **1,450 sqft rooftop patio** and **two 810 sqft interior gathering/exercise amenity spaces** with bathrooms on the penthouse level which will enjoy ocean and mountain views. Lastly, a wide and **double-height entrance lobby** with coloured glass panels above the entrance and a seating area provides a sense of arrival. We have also included a **1,350 sqft public café and lounge** and indoor and outdoor patio amenities on the northwest corner of the ground floor. We expect this amenity and three ground-floor residential units to help **activate View Street**. Overall, we have ~5,500 sqft of amenity spaces.

Leveraging excellent walkability and bike-ability, we have designed the building to have **no car parking and extensive EV-equipped bike storage** as an alternative. The building is ideally suited to tenants who choose not to own a car or cannot afford one and would prefer to use a bike or walk. Some estimates suggest that owning a car costs approximately \$10,000 a year. It is also worth pointing out that, rather poetically, we propose converting a **45-stall surface car parking lot into 269 residential units with no parking**.

In BC, we are subject to relatively significant rent control regulations. For example, the 2024 annual allowable rent increase for existing tenancies is prescribed at 3.5%, up from last year's 2%, while BC CPI over the past three years has been running at between 5-8% Y/Y. Delivering residential housing units into a rent-controlled market drives affordability over time for existing tenants. It prevents them from being priced out of the market in the long term.

Finally, we are willing to **secure the 269 residential housing units as permanent rental housing** in the form of a rental housing agreement with the City of Victoria **including the 2- bedroom and 3-bedroom units** and donate **\$50,000 to the COV Housing Reserve Fund**.

We are also willing to secure the public realm improvements (rain gardens, soil cells etc.) and TDM measures, which includes the revisions to the long-term bike parking to meet the Schedule C of the Zoning Regulation Bylaw as outlined within the comments from the Engineering and Public Works Department on the "Application Review Summary" provided by the planning staff on Monday, October 30, 2023.

We thank you for considering our modern, affordable, urban residential rental project.

Sincerely,



Chris Nelson, Nelson Investments Inc.

Appendix A: Applicant Response to Development Services Division Comments

Appendix B: Bidgood Approach to Schematic Design

APPENDIX B: BIDGOOD APPROACH TO SCHEMATIC DESIGN

BIDGOOD

September 8th 2023

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

Re: 937 View Street
Proposed Rental Development

Dear Mayor Alto and Council,

I am writing mayor and council for the first time regarding a project I have involved with since 2019, *937 View Street*, a development by our client Nelson Developments Inc. I write with my full support of the project and encourage Mayor Alto and council to consider all aspects of the design as presented, including the interior considerations made.

I am a registered interior designer and Design Director of Bidgood, a Victoria based interior design firm specializing in highly functional and expressive commercial and residential interiors. Prior to engaging in multi-residential work, our firm completed many single family residential projects, working closely with homeowners of all backgrounds and budget ranges. The data collected from years of consulting directly with our clients informs our multi-residential approach.

Our design team is comprised predominantly of renters given the inaccessible cost of housing in our city. The lack of consideration we often find in rental interiors is frustrating, however it motivates us to educate our developer clients to do better. Our ethos with our multi-residential work is to advocate for the end user as our muse. We imagine the person or household that ultimately does not have access to interior design services, so that we may dutifully consider the functional and aesthetic needs of their home. As a firm we employ best practices when considering amenities, storage, clearances, opportunities for personalization and longevity.

When we first met with our client Chris Nelson, it was clear that we were aligned in the desire to create an interior scheme at 937 View Street that was financially accessible for renters with a hospitality-led approach. The interior programme for the suites is above and beyond the typical offer. Common area interiors resemble a boutique hotel, and suites echo this approach by delivering high standards of livability in a space conscious footprint. Every inch of the interior programme has been considered, as outlined in the attached document.

As a Harris Green local myself, I encourage mayor and council to support the project at 937 View Street, and introduce 266 new hospitality-led rental apartments to our city.

Sincerely,

Christi Rivard, BID, NCIDQ
Design Director
Bidgood