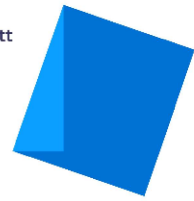


1011 Fort Street – Rezoning Application

Letter to Mayor and Council

Revised April 8th, 2024

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To: Mayor and Council, City of Victoria
CC: Development Services, City of Victoria
Colin Lang, Wild Coast Construction Ltd. (Owner/Contractor Representative)
Elsabe Fourie, Development Manager, BC Housing (Operator Representative)

Greetings,

On behalf of our Client, and subsequent to the approval of Building Permit #057359, Delegated Development Permit #00753 and Variance #00954 for renovations and exterior changes to the existing four storey building at 1011 Fort Street, please accept this letter of rationale outlining our Rezoning Application, which has been amended to reflect the most recent developments to the proposed operation and use of the building.

The proposed Rezoning application seeks to amend Zoning Regulation Bylaw #80-159 Part 6.55, 1(1)(k) & 2(2) – which currently prohibits dwelling units on the first storey and also requires that retail uses occupy not less than 75% of both street frontages – in order to allow the conversion of two small commercial suites facing Meares Street into residential use.

The scope of construction work currently under way based on the Building Permit is for the adaptive reuse of a formerly vacant four storey office building, with commercial frontage on the first storey. Interior walls on all levels will be reconfigured to create a total of seventeen (17) units, with two (2) commercial units at the ground storey facing Meares street whose conversion to residential use is the subject of this Rezoning Application.

Whereas the project had initially been intended for conversion to compact, urban-oriented strata apartments and offered for sale to residents as an economical alternative to unaffordable new construction condominiums, we are pleased to advise that BC Housing shall be the proposed owner of the building, with a contract for that transfer underway. The intended use of the building will be for affordable rental housing with supports. BC Housing's ownership of the building will meet a critical and specific housing need in the greater community, and the downtown site offers excellent access to other amenities, social services, and employment opportunities to complement the use

The scope of the active Permit shall create two small office suites on the first storey along the Meares Street frontage, the floor of which is approximately 1.1 m below the Meares Street sidewalk, owing to local topography and the building's main entrance facing the Fort Street commercial corridor. Both of the Meares facing suites are accessed through an interior corridor. The western unit will be provided with a door leading to a sunken exterior stair landing, which is neither accessible nor preferable for commercial tenancy. The approval of this request would enable both first storey suites currently designated "offices" to become residential suites. The existing exterior doorway from the Western Meares unit could be leveraged by BC Housing to enable multifunctional programs.

The commercial tenancy and frontage facing Fort Street is preserved, maintaining a predominantly commercial first storey there in keeping with the commercial character and uses associated with the Corridors Heritage" DPA (7B HC) designation. As part of the exterior changes associated with the DDP, existing balconies are expanded and upgraded to create semi-private exterior space for most units. On the first storey, space has been created for limited bicycle storage to support car-free downtown lifestyles. At the South facing side of the second storey, the existing patio that had formerly been planned

for semi-private use by the facing units shall be shared by all residents and users as a common outdoor amenity and gathering space. The southern edge shall be buffered from the street edge with a large planter box, whose ornamental reed grasses will enhance and separate the patios and streetscape.

Whereas Fort Street is decidedly more heavily used and commercial in character, this side of the 1000 block of Meares Street primarily comprises vehicular parking areas and non-public rear doors of commercial tenancies. Commercial activity is heavily concentrated on Fort Street, with Meares being significantly more residential in nature. On the opposite side of this block of Meares, all frontages serve multiple dwelling uses.

In consideration of the predominantly residential occupancy of both the renovated building and the 1000 Block of Meares Street, the reduced market demand for office space created in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the sidewalk elevation at Meares Street, we encourage support to amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow residential uses along that first storey.

The Neighbourhood Plan ("Downtown/Harris Green Neighbourhood Directions", Official Community Plan), which uses the "Core Residential" urban place designation, identifies the neighbourhood as a primary area for accommodating new population and housing growth. This would seem to support residential uses fronting onto Meares Street at the first, partially sunken Level.

In summary, we find the proposed Rezoning is an appropriate variation from the requirements of zoning district "CA-42", that it is supportable under the Official Community Plan's vision and strategic directions, and that it would support the critical work that BC Housing does to provide housing and social support services to many segments of our community. We thank you for your attention and look forward to hearing your input.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Kindrat', with a stylized, flowing script.

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