

515 & 519 Rithet Street  
Proposed Re-Zoning and Development Permit  
Letter to Mayor and Council



May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Attention: Mayor & Council

Good Day,

We are pleased to submit this Rezoning and Development Permit Letter to the Mayor and Council for 515/519 Rithet Street on behalf of James Bay Ventures Ltd. (the Owner) also referred to as Casman Properties.

**INTRODUCTION**

The development proposes to construct a five-storey multi-unit residential building with underground parking. The 16-unit building will provide (3) One-bedroom, (6) Two-bedroom, (2) Two-bedroom with Den, (4) Three-bedroom, and (1) Three-bedroom with Den apartment style condominium homes. This project on Rithet Street is the fourth multi-unit residential project in the Casman Properties portfolio in the Greater Victoria area. Each of these projects has been thoughtfully designed to meet the needs and character of their surrounding neighbourhood, all of which are proudly built by Casman Projects, a division of the Casman Group, who have been building neighbourhoods for over 40 years.

A Development Permit with Variances (Application No. 00187) was previously approved by the Mayor and Council on September 8<sup>th</sup> 2022, however to satisfy Structural and Seismic requirements of the forthcoming Building Code, and improve upon the Multi Transportation and Mobility Approach of the project and to implement Climate Forward Initiatives, as well as better address the need for both down-sizing and family friendly housing, a revised design is being proposed.

This revised design maintains the considerations that had been taken, addressing the privacy of the neighbouring properties, of the previous iteration.

While we are confident the adjustments provide for a project that better fills the needs and lifestyle of today's and future James Bay residents, this revised design requires a rezoning application process due to the variances in parking and density from the property's current zoning; R3-2 Multiple Dwelling.

**EXISTING ZONING, OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP) AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS**

The current zoning is R3-2 Multiple Dwelling District.

The site is located in the block between Dallas, Menzies, Rithet and South Turner. Rithet is a Local Street with the main access from Menzies St. which is a Secondary Collector. The OCP identifies most of the block (including the project site) as 'Urban Residential'. 'Traditional Residential' areas are present on Menzies St. adjacent to the project site and further on South Turner Street.

This proposed development conforms with the Vision in the citywide context and Strategic directions of the OCP contributing to:

- Increase the city's residential stock (OCP 21.15.6)
- Maintain a variety of housing types and tenures for a range of age groups and incomes (OCP 21.16.1)
- Maintain an interesting diversity of land uses, housing types and character areas (OCP 21.16.3).

The 2 parcels incorporated by the proposal are 963.2 m<sup>2</sup> in total area and are currently occupied by 2 houses and one single car garage. Neither home has heritage status.

The site is generally flat sloping down approximately 0.7m from the south to the north corner of the property and approximately 0.5m along Rithet Street.

The neighbourhood encompasses a mix of Four-plex Rental (37 Menzies and Rithet corner), Tri-Plex (29 Menzies), 5-Suite Rental (23 Menzies), 5-Suite Transient Hotel-style Vacation Accommodations (19 Menzies), 6-Suite Short-Term Rental (15 Menzies), 7-Suite Condominium (502 Dallas), 4-storey multi-unit residential buildings, a 7-storey building at Rithet / South Turner St. corner, a 12-storey high Beckley Manor and the 4-storey Somerset House retirement living on Dallas Road. The immediate neighbourhood does not have a consistent architectural style and character that would establish an overriding design context.

## **COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

Shortly after purchasing the property in 2021, the Owner undertook a consultation process with the owners of neighbouring properties, the JBNA, and with City of Victoria planning staff to achieve a project which compliments its surroundings and provides a desired mix of housing to the community. Casman presented the plans for the site originally at a JBNA Community Meeting on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Many of the comments surrounded a concern for privacy as well as a desire to have a separation from the proposed building from the houses on Menzies. These comments strongly informed the design of the project.

As required for the Rezoning process, a formal CALUC was held with the JBNA at their Community Meeting on November 8, 2023. 65 neighbours attended. The response from the neighbours acknowledged that the building design was shown to have taken their 2021 feedback into consideration and did its best to mitigate neighbour concerns, with primary concerns from the two homes adjacent on Menzies. A letter to Mayor and Council from the JBNA dated November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 is included with our submission.

## **IMPACTS**

There are two homes currently on the site. 519 Rithet is unoccupied. 515 Rithet is temporarily occupied by a close associate of the Owner and has plans to be vacated well ahead of any construction activities. There are no residents being displaced as a result of this project.

These properties have a total of 4 bedrooms currently between the two existing homes. Neither homes are designated as Heritage. This site has been zoned multi-family for many years and is primarily surrounded by multi-family buildings, and this proposed development, once brought to its multi-family intended use, will add a total of 30 bedrooms (34-4) to the James Bay Housing Stock.

As noted in the Community Engagement section, considerations have been taken in regards to addressing the privacy of neighbouring properties including focusing on a North & South Outlook and privacy screening, and obscure glass on balconies.

### **INCLUSIONARY HOUSING & COMMUNITY AMMENITY POLICY**

As per the 2023 City of Victoria Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy, a contribution of \$31,100 cash in lieu contribution will be provided by the developer.

### **MASSING & SITING**

The building design concept is based on several imperatives:

- Contribute positively to the pedestrian and urban experience along Rithet St
- Massing and architectural expression be sensitive to the smaller scale multi-unit buildings to the west, transition and connect to the multi-unit residential to the east and across Rithet St
- Proposing a reduced building height (5 stories instead of 6) in exchange for exceeding the minimum setbacks and aligning the floor plates to meet seismic structural requirements

### **STREETSCAPE / RELATION TO STREET**

The ground floor unit facing Rithet St. is accessible directly from the street, through a large private patio which provides a soft, small scale residential street-to-building connection.

The muted and soft colour palette blend harmoniously with neighbouring properties.

A modern design wood fence surrounding the property will replace any existing fencing and provide privacy and security to the ground floor units and neighbouring properties.

### **EXTERIOR FINISHES**

The project uses a palette of durable materials capable of weathering gracefully, such as cementitious panel cladding and anodized or coated aluminum railings at balconies and patios with glass panels at balconies.

The smooth surfaces of cementitious panels and glass will be complemented by accent materials and colours, as well as natural wood fencing on the property line and harmonious landscape.

The combination of these materials relates to components of the existing context while contributing to the aesthetic direction of future developments and generating visual gratification for residents.

### **URBAN FORESTRY**

Tree protection and replacement plans developed by an Arborist and the Landscape Architecture firm have been incorporated into the design.

A Tree PRZ permit was obtained to investigate the trees on neighbouring properties #OS1, OS2, OS3, OS4, OS5 and OS6. Refer to the arborist report included in the application. During the investigation it was determined that there will be little to no impact to these offsite trees during the construction phase.

### **TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

The site is well located and fully serviced by City infrastructure. It provides immediate proximity to amenities, public transportation, ocean, parks, trails and bike lanes.

- James Bay Village – 350m / 5 min walk
- Dallas Road, trails and cycling network – 200m
- Beacon Hill Park – 700m
- Inner Harbour – 1.3km
- Two bus stations - 200m away on Niagara Street and 750m away on Douglas St. provide direct travel to Esquimalt / Royal Jubilee Hospital / South Oak Bay and Willows and convenient connection to other transit routes.

The numerous nearby employment opportunities available in the service and tourism industries and in the Provincial Government offices make this site desirable.

A Multi Transportation and Mobility Approach has been taken for this project to address the City of Victoria's CLIMATE LEADERSHIP PLAN AND the GO-VICTORIA Sustainable Mobility Strategy. The proposed development includes secured underground parking accessed from Rithet Street to provide 10 stalls for the 16 residential units (a ratio of .62) . Electrical Vehicle charging will be provided to meet the City of Victoria's standards. Long term secured bicycle parking within the underground parkade and short-term bicycle parking at the ground level will meet or exceed existing by-laws. Special consideration has been made to accommodate the growing popularity of E-Bikes and their need for larger horizontal stalls and access to power for charging. Two secure cargo bicycle parking spaces are also provided. 10% of bicycle parking for cargo bikes and 50% of bicycle parking with access to an electric outlet has been implemented into the design. A car share membership for all residential units will be provided by the developer. One electric cargo bicycle will be purchased by the developer for residents use.

**BC Hydro Requirements:** BC Hydro has been engaged and consulted by the Project's design team of engineers in regards to the total power demand for the designed project once completed and the current power available to the site from existing infrastructure. It has been confirmed that a pad mounted transformer (PMT) will not be required.

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND GREEN/CLIMATE FORWARD FEATURES**

The building will be developed to meet Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code, with durable materials and a design that optimizes natural daylight.

All building systems and appliances will be Electric, no natural gas appliances or equipment are incorporated into the design and therefore no natural gas infrastructure will be brought to the property. Additional features, such as EV chargers, LED lighting, ERVs (energy recovery ventilation units), highly insulated building and rooftop gardening are included. The design addresses a multi transportation mode approach to encourage shared and active transportation. It also supports electrification of vehicles while reducing transportation related greenhouse gas emissions (OCP Transportation and Mobility 7.0 Goals)

### **CLIMATE FORWARD BUILDING FEATURES**

- **NEAR ZERO EMISSIONS:** Design mechanical systems as fully electric
- **TRANSPORTATION:**
  - Embrace multi-modal design and connectivity, including access to sidewalks, bike lanes, car share services, transit stops, etc.
  - Exceed requirements for EV charging, such as providing charging for e-bikes
- **URBAN GARDENING & FOOD PRODUCTION:**

- Design community-building outdoor spaces for gardening and food production: rooftop gardening
- CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTION:
  - Use future climate predictions to design mechanical systems
  - A Cooling (A/C) system will be included in every suite.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED) Strategies incorporated into the design include:

- Clustering dwelling units to create neighbour-to-neighbour surveillance
- Landscape design and maintenance to allow clear and unobstructed views
- Walkways and entries to be visible and well lit
- Glazed doors in stairwells and lobbies to reduce hiding places
- Design symbolic barriers through landscaping, changes in grades, and use of fences
- Adequate lighting surrounding building positioned properly
- Fob access system and high security keying system for door access
- Cameras and monitored security system in common areas and parkade

## **LIFESTYLE**

The future Rithet multi-family project will provide 16 units of thoughtfully designed 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes that the development team anticipates will attract homeowners spanning a range of demographics. With proximity to outdoor activities as well as downtown, the location will attract downsizers who already call James Bay home and multi-generational households, to first time buyers into the Victoria market. The ground-oriented units on the main floor are well suited for family living and the rooftop amenity space provides opportunities for gardening, gathering, and community building within the property.

Sincerely,



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