

1733-37 Fairfield Road
Letter to Mayor & Council

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ARYZE

May 2024

City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 1P6

RE: 1733-37 Fairfield Road

Dear Mayor Alto, Council and Staff:

We are pleased to present this updated letter which outlines some recent improvements to the proposal at 1733-37 Fairfield Road in the Gonzales neighbourhood. These changes have been as a result of conversations and feedback from City staff, local residents and further technical analysis of the proposal. We strongly believe that these improvements align with feedback from the Advisory Design Panel and the Committee of the Whole, and further reinforce Aryze's commitment to increasing housing supply in a manner that respects the existing neighbourhood while introducing innovative solutions to the current challenges the industry is facing. Taken together, we believe that the updates respond to the conditions in the staff report and meet the test in order to advance to Public Hearing.

Climate Change and Energy

Responding to the threat of climate change is increasingly a high priority for the City of Victoria and we take our commitment to supporting this goal very seriously. While the current BC Building Code has made some improvements in building for climate resiliency, we would like this project to exceed base requirements and achieve Step Code 4. Early in the project we committed to full electrification of the homes by removing natural gas. This was an important step for greenhouse gas reduction and now we would like to go further by delivering a highly energy efficient building.

We have completed energy model tests in order to determine the different pathways to Step Code 4 and through the Building Permit process we will provide further detail on the energy demand and intensity of the building. At this stage we are incredibly excited to be able to commit to delivering Step Code 4 before it becomes a requirement later in 2024 in Victoria.

We have also conducted a Solar Assessment for the project to understand racking layout, cost and payback period, and structural implications of adding solar panels to the roof, and will be providing conduit for future Solar Photovoltaic installation.

This will be important both as a case study for other buildings throughout Victoria, but also as a way to increase the knowledge and experience of both developers and builders ahead of these important policy changes.

Building Transition

The *Design Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential, Commercial and Industrial Development* state that a building should provide a transition in form and massing to surrounding buildings. Throughout the design of this project we have been sensitive to neighbouring properties to the side and rear of the site. On the north-east side of the proposed building we have relocated mechanical louvers away from this area and increased planting in order to create an improved interface with 1745 Fairfield Road.

Following further analysis we believe that the building form can be further amended to provide a transition that aligns with the recommendations in the *Design Guidelines*. We propose to step back part of the fourth floor to pull some building mass away from this side of the site. This will reduce overlook from the bedroom windows and provide some benefits to the shadowing impact. Fairfield Road is a major road connector in the City and we maintain that a 4-storey building form is appropriate in this location. This change will deliver both a 4-storey form on the front of the site and a more respectful building step to the rear to respond to the existing neighbouring condition.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the recent Missing Middle regulations would support a height of 12m and a side yard setback of 1.5m on the neighbouring property. Our proposal is only slightly above the maximum building height under Missing Middle policies (0.9m above the max.) and provides a greater setback. We therefore believe the proposal responds to current regulations and how the neighbourhood may develop in the future.

Through conversations with staff and the immediate neighbour to the north-east, we have made a number of design moves that, taken together, improve the relationship between the proposed multi-family building and the existing neighbouring home. These include:

- Removal of mechanical louvers on the north-east elevation and relocation to elsewhere on the site, thus removing any concerns with noise and aesthetics;
- Changes to the fence design on the property line and amendments to the street tree planting locations in order to ensure a safe travel path and increased visibility for cars in and out of the neighbouring driveway;
- Careful location of windows in order to minimize overlook and be respectful of privacy; and
- Stepping of the building at level 4 to respond to the Design Guidelines and provide a respectful transition.

Housing Mix

The Victoria Housing Strategy outlines the goal of increasing housing choice (Goal 3) by providing a mix of housing and unit types. Recognizing the evolving housing needs of our community—in particular the shortfall in larger unit sizes—we are proposing to increase the number of 2-bedroom homes by eliminating the smaller studio units. The project now includes a total of 29 homes of which 19 or 66% are providing a minimum of 2 bedrooms. Our commitment to providing diverse and inclusive housing options

remains as a cornerstone of this project.

Open Space & Parking

Through the evolution of the design we have aimed to provide a transportation strategy that balances the desire to reduce car dependency, while also providing sufficient vehicular and bicycle parking for future homeowners. This has also been balanced with delivering a landscape design that introduces new plantings to the site.

Underground parking should be avoided where possible as it disturbs significant volumes of soil, introduces a large ramp to the street presence, and limits soil depths for planting. We therefore believe that underground parking is not the correct solution for this site. While we appreciate staff's emphasis on minimizing parking to enhance green spaces, we believe the proposal provides a suitable balance for future homeowners and the neighbourhood at large.

Open space demands can be met through the proposed selective planting articulated in the landscape plan and the site's proximity to Hollywood Park. With the change in unit mix (removing the studios), private outdoor amenity space has now been provided to every unit. Responding to the conditions in the staff report, the ground floor Townhouse entry areas have been reconfigured to provide space for a table and chairs to the side of the suite entry door, creating more of a 'porch' feel for residents. This will be key for both the homeowners but also activating this part of the street.

Faced with competing priorities for space and the need to balance design and parking requirements, we are unable to reduce the number of impacted trees or provide more replacement trees on the property. We have however committed to a cash-in-lieu agreement with the Parks department where we can provide \$4,000 for each replacement tree, which is double the financial commitment in the current Tree Protection Bylaw.

Permeable Pavers

The project is committed to improving the on-site stormwater management and we have therefore increased the total area of permeable pavers in the rear parking area. All surfaces that are not under the cover of the proposed building will be constructed with permeable pavers that reduce the negative impacts of stormwater runoff. The landscape plans have been updated to reflect this change.

Building Materiality

In our ongoing efforts to refine and optimize the project, we are proposing a change to the material on parts of the building exterior. We are proposing to replace the brick with Ceraclad, a high performing fiber cement cladding product. This choice is meticulously considered, ensuring compliance with the *Design Guidelines* which advocate for the use of high-quality, durable materials to preserve the condition of facades. The coated cement panel (such as the Ceraclad product) will complement the metal panel and still maintain the design approach of how the townhouse units and overall 'base' of the building have

a more substantial and solid expression. One feature also worth noting with the Ceraclad product is that the triple coated membrane will block UV light and rain to reduce deterioration over time. This aligns with the *Guidelines* request for durable materials.

The project has been in design for over two years and this—combined with the construction cost pressures of achieving Step Code 4—have forced us to reconsider the use of brick. We believe this switch will still allow us to maintain the aesthetic integrity while also delivering upon other project benefits.

Summary

The proposed development at 1733-37 Fairfield Road will meet a number of policy goals that have been outlined in the OCP, Victoria Housing Strategy and related transportation and climate action plans. We believe that this location—on a major transit and mobility corridor close to a range of day-to-day services and popular destinations—is an ideal candidate for a four-storey residential building. The recent improvements outlined above strengthen the overall proposal and respond to the conditions in the staff report that was supported at the Committee of the Whole. The delivery of a Step Code 4 multi-family building will be an important milestone for the City and we are excited to bring forward this level of innovation in the housing sector.

Project at a Glance



Height
4 storeys

Site Area
18,751 sqft

Floor Area
33,506 sqft

FSR
1.79 FSR

Site Coverage
65%



North Setback
2.33m

East Setback
2.62m

South Setback
4.78m-11.90m

West Setback
2.73m



Number of Homes
29 Homes

Townhomes
6 Townhomes

1 Bedroom
10 Homes

2 Bedroom
6 Homes

2 Bedroom + Den
7 Homes



Short-term Bike Stalls
6 Stalls

Long-term Bike Stalls
51 Stalls

Parking Stalls
23 Stalls

Residential Tenure
Strata Ownership

Unique Features

- High performance & sustainable building strategies
- Built to meet BC Step Code 4 energy efficiency Standards wherever possible
- Oversized bike room and storage lockers for residents

- Zero-carbon / 100% Electric HVAC and hot water delivery system.
- The building will provide one on street Modo car for the use of the broader community

In conclusion, we acknowledge staff recommendations and commit to align with them as previously described, while continually striving to go above and beyond where possible.

We believe these changes not only align with the evolving needs of our community but also contribute positively to our City vision for sustainable, family-friendly and aesthetically pleasing urban development.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to any feedback or further discussion on these proposed changes.

Sincerely,



Mike Wagar

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