



**To:** Mayor Lisa Helps and members of Victoria City Council

**From:** Alex Robb, Community Liaison for Victoria's Natural Way

**Date:** July 7, 2017

**Subject:** Rezoning for Cannabis related business for 1545 Fort Street

Dear Mayor and City Council,

It is my honour to be submitting this letter along with our completed application for rezoning for cannabis-related business for the property at 1545 Fort Street.

### **Description of Proposal**

The property at 1545 Fort Street is located in the Large Urban Village designation of Stadacona Village, at the corner of the area known as the Oak Bay Junction. Victoria's Natural Way began operating this medical cannabis storefront in May of 2015. It was the first dispensary in the neighbourhood and has proudly served the neighbourhood by providing affordable cannabis products, educating clientele about the use of cannabis as a medicine, and providing advice to medical cannabis users in the area on safe and effective methods of consumption and appropriate dosing of cannabis.

The location does not fall within any 200m radius surrounding a school or community centres, and there are no cannabis retail stores within a 400m radius of the storefront.

### **City Policy**

This rezoning application conforms to the City's Cannabis Storefront Rezoning Policy in every way. It is appropriately zoned and has adequate parking, and no public nuisance is created by its operation. The location of the medical cannabis storefront in this area has made the streets safer by putting more "eyes on the street" at this busy intersection, and increased foot traffic which has benefited neighbouring businesses.

### **Project Benefits and Amenities**

The economic, environmental, and social benefits of this project are numerous. Cannabis is an emerging sustainable industry on Vancouver Island. The regulation of this business sector in Victoria is likely to stimulate the local economy, making Victoria a hub of this emerging regulated and taxed business activity in the city and so help transition this industry toward a better regulated marketplace. The cannabis industry on Vancouver Island contributes significantly to the economy and offers quality, high-paying employment for Victoria's younger population, many of whom are highly educated (especially in the field of alternative healthcare), and dedicated to improving society, but unable to find secure employment in their field.



Victoria's Natural Way has sought to promote education about cannabis as a medicine, adjunct therapy for terminal illness, alternative to opioid pain management, and harm reduction tool, by offering educational workshops in our own storefront and at other venues across town

### **Neighbourhood**

The proposed development contributes significantly to neighbourhood vibrancy by sponsoring and promoting arts and culture events in the neighbourhood, and providing space and funding for harm reduction and community health initiatives. The proximity of the dispensary to the region of Oak Bay has made our services accessible to residents of that region seeking medicinal cannabis products and so who may work downtown and park at the parkade.

### **Impacts**

This storefront on Fort Street aspires to offer a "boutique" medical cannabis retail experience, it is bright and spacious, and well-appointed with plants and artwork that harkens to BC's outdoor spaces. After rezoning and licensing we intend to invest further in the design and aesthetic of this store in order to change the public mind about the image of the cannabis industry. The space will be plant-filled, wood laden, and present an earthy aesthetic that is pleasing to walk-by traffic, and complements the visual appeal of the neighbourhood. We mitigate negative neighbourhood impact by maintaining air filtration systems and strictly prohibiting consumption of cannabis on site or in the vicinity of the storefront.

### **Design and Development Permit Guidelines**

The current site of 1545 Fort Street has a C1-NM zoning which allows for the use of the premises for retail sales. This proposal does not require any development or building additions as the building already meets guidelines.

### **Safety and security**

Victoria's Natural Way presence in the area has contributed to the safety and security of the neighbourhood and may contribute to a decrease in overnight petty crime in the immediate area. The increased foot traffic in the area as a result of operation of the business has attracted customers to other nearby businesses, and our staff have maintained the area surrounding the business clean, and free of litter, and other refuse, and have safely removed used syringes from the area near the storefront. Our 24-hour high definition camera system can be used to provide information on crimes that may happen in the neighbourhood after hours.

The large windows make clear what is happening inside the storefront, and the location on a busy intersection makes the location less likely to be targeted by criminals seeking to break-in or rob the location. The entrance area is visible, well-lit, and monitored by security cameras and motion sensors. Third party alarm and fire monitoring is provided by Price's Alarm, and security camera footage is maintained for 30 days on a secure server.

**Transportation**

This rezoning applications meets the parking standards set out in schedule C. The site of 1545 Fort Street has a zoning of C1-NM, and sufficient parking for the use is afforded at the rear of the property. Additionally, bicycle parking for employees is afforded inside the store.

**Heritage**

This property does not have heritage status and no heritage buildings are effected by this application.

Thank you for your consideration and for your efforts to bring about regulation to this business sector in Victoria.

All best wishes,

Alex Robb

Community Liaison, Victoria's Natural Way