

CASCADIA ARCHITECTS
DESIGN + LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



**MURDOCH
DE GREEFF INC.**
 Landscape Architects



27 September 2017

City of Victoria
 No.1 Centennial Square
 Victoria BC
 V8W 1P6



Attn.: Mayor & Council

Re: REVISED 1201 Fort Street ReZoning & Development Permit Application

The 1201 Fort Street development proposal has been substantially revised in response to community feedback, comments received at the April 13th Committee of the Whole, and the input of City staff. The changes have jointly prepared by Cascadia Architects (CAS), Murdoch de Greeff Landscape Architects (MDI), and Zebra Design (ZD) in consultation with the project proponent, Abstract Developments (AD), and are summarized below as point form responses to the May 4th letter issued by Legislative Services:

Zoning Application Comments

1a. Massing and height and setbacks of buildings A and B from the point of view of Pentrelew Place:

CAS: The primary change in the proposal has been to push density to the north end of the site by moving building A closer to Fort Street and re-shaping it to a more efficient footprint. As a result, the massing of building B is reduced by one storey in height, and the number of townhomes on Pentrelew is reduced from 12 to 10. This fundamental shift in strategy results in the loss of one additional mature tree near Fort Street, but significantly improves the transition of the project to the single-family properties to the east and south and opens more breathing space between the townhomes along Pentrelew. This openness helps with creating views and access into the site as well as creating a more traditionally residential rhythm.

Additionally, the design team has further refined the south elevation of Building B in order to improve the transition to the property to the south. The balconies along the south elevation have been visually opened up by eliminating the corner pillars, and have been stepped gently northward from L2 to the L4 deck area. The significant setback of 8.4 meters (27' 6") on L4 remains as proposed. Due to the presence of mature landscaping at the south property line, overlook to the adjacent property is not a primary concern, and the team believes these changes accomplish an improvement of the scale transition of building B to the house beside. As indicated by the rendering of the view to the Building B entrance, the building remains well set back from Pentrelew Place and does not actually 'front' onto the street. Where it is visible behind the townhouses it presents as a 3 storey building stepping up to four, in a way that is very similar to the current appearance of the 3 and 4 storey apartment / condominium buildings on Linden Street behind the site. The architectural expression has been significantly revised to create a more permanent and traditional character – primarily through the introduction of patterned brick as the main building material. The regular rhythm and form of brick vertical piers and spandrels speaks to the historic atmosphere of the Rockland neighbourhood.

- 1b. Siting and Design of the 5-storey multi-unit residential building and the nearest townhouse building (buildings B and C) to improve the building to building relationship, to address livability concerns and to ensure a sensitive transition to the lower density area to the south of the subject site:

CAS: Removal of 2 townhomes has alleviated the 'pinch-point' condition between building B and C, enlarging the minimum distance between them from 7m (23') to 9.55m (31'-4"). As noted in 1a., the significant change to the relationship between building B and the townhouses and neighbouring property to the south is the reduction in height from five to four stories. The refinement of the massing of the south end of building B has maintained the setback of the upper floor, reducing the parapet height at the south to three storeys. Also, the projected bay at the south is now composed as balcony space, with the roof over L3 being open to above. The result is that the south parapet line is not a continuous solid plane but instead is visually permeable and further reduced in presence. By reducing building B to a four-storey height the project also further addresses neighbour concerns regarding item 1.6 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which suggests the scale of next generation of apartments and commercial development along Fort Street and Oak Bay Avenue should be related to the residential properties to the south. Building B now reflects the stepped 3 to 4 storeys that the adjacent buildings on Linden Street currently present, which is a scale that is common at this west end of Rockland where it meets the downtown core.

- 1c. Removal of the Roof Decks on the Townhouse Units:

CAS: As per the detailed description of townhome changes provided by Zebra Design (item 1e), the rooftop decks have been reconfigured and re-oriented to open to the west as level 3 terraces, looking into the site and not visible from upper Wilsperencer Pl. The stair and elevator overrun are now concealed within the roof structure.

ZD: The private terrace areas at the rear of the Townhouse units on the uppermost levels, now face on to the common landscaped area and are completely obscured from the front (on Pentrelew) by the new roofline. These terraces are enclosed by railings, and are separated with obscured glass privacy dividers between units.

- 1d. Alternate alignment and/ or widening and refining the design of the public pathway connecting Pentrelew Place and Fort Street:

CAS: The public pathway entrance from Pentrelew has been relocated further south, between buildings C and D. The pathway width between C and D is now 5m, where previously the path had a pinch point of 2.4m between D and the property line. This alignment reflects a specific request from Planning staff. The entrance from Pentrelew provides a long view into the site, and will be marked with a masonry gate structure to clearly indicate it as an entrance and public access point leading to Fort Street. At the Fort Street end the path has shifted eastward slightly to accommodate the reconfiguration of building A but is essentially the same in character as previously presented. The presence of the park-like grove of Garry Oak trees on Fort Street has been maintained as the natural setting for the pathway, maintaining the atmosphere of the current condition and the pedestrian access into Rockland.

MDI: The most current proposal presents a new path alignment of the public walkway connection from Pentrelew Place to Fort Street. The new alignment meanders through the site more gracefully, respecting the existing Garry Oak trees and integrates effectively with the newly designed open space

network and stone feature walls. The path width has also been increased, from 1.8m to 2.0m wide and the alignment more closely follows the Pemberton Greenway Trail layout from the City's OCP.

Proposed Landscape design elements enhance the public realm for the community while providing privacy and amenity space for residents. Not only does the public path follow the existing desire lines, it provides a unique pedestrian experience that passes through a Garry Oak parkland, rich naturalized plantings, and shaded grassed open spaces. The spaces created offer opportunities for social interaction, supports health and well-being through access to green space, and creates the potential for temporary public art displays.

1e. More breathing room, less wall-like feel, and more design diversity of the townhouses:

CAS: In terms of site-planning, the townhomes have been reduced in number from 12 to 10 to alleviate the pinch points and open larger gaps between the townhome groups. This breaks up the repetition of the previous scheme by changing an almost continuous line of 12 units, into 3 consolidated groups of 3, 4, and 3 units. Zebra Design has provided a detailed description of the architectural changes to the townhouses in their portion of this resubmission rationale.

ZD: Modifications to the design of the townhomes in response to Committee of the Whole comments include the reduction of the overall number of units from twelve to ten, resulting in an alternating configuration along the streetscape of 3, 4 and 3 units per building and more space between them. Siting of the townhouses has been adjusted with a widening and relocation of the pedestrian walkway (as mentioned by CAS and MDI) creating extra space between buildings D and E; separation has also increased between buildings D and C; these changes are visible in the Pentrelew Road streetscape and from other viewpoints, with an aim to a more open appearance. Similarly, revised building locations have allowed additional distance between buildings C and B, for a more open feel in the transitional area towards the residences to the south of the site. The pathway entrance has been elaborated with a more defined and inviting access gateway at the east end of the walkway.

Adding diversity to the building elevations, on building D a two-storey bay window profile has been incorporated, interfacing the building with the street and passersby. Buildings C and D now have bay windows on the lower level. A wrapped entry porch for Unit 7, along with the addition of further windows on building facades oriented toward the public path, contributes a more friendly presentation to the pedestrian walkway. Reducing the number of dormers on buildings C and D has also added variety to the building façades, which have been further differentiated by revising the shape of the dormer roofs themselves on buildings C and E compared with building D. On Unit 8, a full two-storey bump out at the living room has been added, and the bumpout at the dining room, removed.

In addition, modifications to the exterior colours and materials have been made to more closely associate the townhouses with the greater Rockland neighbourhood and traditional homes within it, and the nearby, related MURBs. The brick cladding on the townhomes, matched to that on the MURBs, is in a soft grey which interplays with warm white painted details and crisp dark bronze accents, resulting in a subtle reinterpretation of traditional row houses.

- 1f. Staff report back on the proposal's response to principles in development permit area 7b and the Rockland Neighbourhood plan, and work with the applicant to address the following: a) window placement and exterior design of buildings A and B; b) exterior materials and colour:

CAS: DP Area 7B is intended to establish objectives for the form and character of commercial, industrial, and multi-family residential development along Fort Street. The revised application responds to the principles of DP Area 7b as follows:

1. The project continues to prioritize enhancement of the pedestrian experience along Fort Street through the primary site planning decision to extend public realm improvements along Fort Street and through the site as a right-of-way walking path and park space (DPA 7B item: 3b, 4b & Neighbourhood Plan item 1.9).
2. The project also continues to maintain the vista of this 'de-facto' park space for people and traffic leaving downtown on Fort Street, by keeping the majority of significant trees that exist at the north end of the site. This response to the Core Area plan requirement 6.18 to maintain visual points of interest and landmark views in the City. This commitment to maintaining the 'leafy character' of the site is also a direct response to section 2.6 of the neighbourhood plan.
3. The project still realizes the latent potential along Fort Street for intensification of transit-oriented multi-family residential uses (DPA 7B 3c,d) but, as stated previously, moves building A further north to address Fort Street more directly. Responding directly to planning staff recommendations the lobby is now prominently located and visible on Fort Street. The revised architectural expression is more traditional and grounded in a character reflecting the Rockland Neighbourhood vernacular. The building elevations are organized in traditional bays defined by vertical brick piers that respond both to the scale of the mature trees and to the historical stone and masonry materiality of Rockland. The result is a presence on Fort Street that helps to achieve a "cohesive design and enhanced appearance through high-quality architecture, landscape and urban design responsiveness" (4c) and acknowledges more directly the traditional architectural styles expressed in some of the heritage home structures along Fort Street (3e).
4. The parkade access ramp is further separated from the lobby entrance and carefully integrated into the landscape with little impact on the Fort Street façade.
5. The detailing of the brick is proposed to incorporate 2 different textures of brick pattern in articulated vertical and horizontal bands that will present a "rich detailing" of a more traditional style and "high degree of public interest" in the building faces that present to the public spaces and street, as per Core Area guideline 6.18.
6. The revised building A design incorporates a sweeping brick façade to shape and frame a more cohesive and formal park space between Fort Street and Pentrelew Place. This façade now incorporates at-grade access for the ground floor units which will help to activate and make lively the park space as desired by core area plan guidelines 6.42 and 6.43. As well, site CEPTED design continues to be a priority as demonstrated by the sensitive design of site lighting presented in the landscape drawings.
7. Although more composed in their architectural expression, the buildings A and B also now exhibit a nuance of site planning by different treatment of balcony spaces to the east and west.

To the east, facing the townhomes and single-family residences, the balconies are pulled into the building façade, reducing overlook and creating a simpler, more traditional architecture that acts as a calm backdrop to the townhomes. To the west balconies are expressed as patterned metal projected boxes, in a pattern that echoes the stacking of the brick units in the facades, and presents a more visually expressive façade. These treatments wrap to the front of building A to create an articulated, recognizably residential front façade for the project.

8. The materiality of the brick, and its arrangement in unique and distinctive patterning connects the buildings A and B with the townhomes, which otherwise, in their overtly historical architectural expression, act as a bridge to the single family neighbourhood to the east. This blending of contemporary multi-storey, multi-family building forms with lower-rise historically characterized townhomes is an approach that is acknowledged in the neighbourhood plan (Section 2.4.4) as an appropriate way to maintain the atmosphere of Rockland while in-filling appropriate density along the Fort Street corridor.

MDI: The following sections describe the design team's responses to the City of Victoria, OCP (2012), DPA 7b. (HC) Objectives, and the Rockland Neighborhood Plan (1987) Objectives and Policies.

Public Realm and Pedestrian Experience Improvements

Public realm improvements to connect residential areas to pedestrian and cyclist corridors are provided via the creation of the new dedicated pathway through the site. The prioritization of enhanced pedestrian and cyclist corridors with human scaled urban design is reflected in the lighted accessible public pathway (Fort to Pentrelew), new separated sidewalks, bike parking facilities, and the streetscape provisions of landscaped traffic bulges planted with Garry Oak trees.

Fort Street interventions include new Garry Oak trees in lawn, formalized parking, new separated sidewalk for pedestrian safety, stone feature walls with integrated lighting, and wayfinding signage. The stone feature walls help to create a quality public realm experience along the Fort Street frontage. Amenity planting will be integrated with the wall and will create a pleasing green edge for pedestrians. We expect the design to widen the feel of the sidewalk and avoid having pedestrians feel they are being pushed against a busy vehicle and transit corridor on Fort Street. The alignment of the stone walls respects the root zones of the existing mature Garry Oaks with the tree trunks forming the centre of the arcs. Pentrelew Place interventions include new Garry Oak trees within low shrub planting, a new partially separated sidewalk and pedestrian safety improvements, formalized parking and wayfinding signage.

Both street frontages use the concept of 'borrowed landscapes' to visually extend the public realm environment beyond the road right of way. Street trees are proposed along the Pentrelew Place frontage with associated amenity plantings, existing mature Garry Oaks are preserved along with proposed successional plantings and clusters of camas bulbs, grassed open space is retained for passive recreation, and sightlines are maintained and designed to offer views into the site and respect CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles. These interventions aim to create a holistic experience for the pedestrian and the community to enjoy. The use of these high quality public realm elements conserve the special character features of the surrounding context and the Rockland Neighborhood.

Increased Transportation Choice

In addition to bicycle parking facilities, pedestrian paths have been integrated into the plan to accommodate access for residents to the various street frontages. Paths connect Building B with Fort Street and Pentrelew Place. A public pedestrian path with SRW also connects Fort Street with Pentrelew Place which supports the strategic directions for the neighbourhood by strengthening the connection between the residential neighborhoods the upper downtown area.

As described above, the streetscape upgrades contribute significantly to the neighborhood public realm and walkability, as well as significantly reducing transportation mode conflicts, i.e. between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. A SRW is being provided along the northern half of the west property line for the future implementation of the Pemberton Trail Greenway path as identified in the OCP.

Place Making

As called for by the OCP, the project seeks to preserve and enhance the site's sense of place and unique identity. From a landscape perspective, this is accomplished by building on the landscape character of the neighbourhood. The large greened open space adjacent to Fort Street supports the large lot character of the streetscape as does the stone walls and evergreen plant material along the Fort Street sidewalk. The stone elements and Garry Oak plantings are brought through the site to the Pentrelew Place frontage and streetscape as unifying elements.

Preservation of Treed, Leafy Character of the Neighborhood

A key strategy that the design team pursued for site planning was to protect the existing mature Garry Oaks on site. It was decided that the Garry Oak character could be further enhanced and maintained through successional plantings and understory plantings that fit the Garry Oak meadow character, such as young Garry Oaks trees (successional plantings), Camas bulbs, and other associated native plantings.

Along with the design team's effort to retain existing trees and mature landscape, and enhance the Garry Oak character of the site, we are proposing to install 106 new trees. Tree species are a mixture of natives and regionally adapted species. Our tree planting approach will make a significant contribution to the 'leafy' character of the neighborhood as well as promote a healthy urban forest, add habitat value, and form a best practice streetscape public realm environment.

Garry Oaks

8 out of the 9 existing mature Garry Oaks are being retained on site. 20 young Garry Oaks will be planted to support the long-term success of this grove of native trees, 6 of which are proposed within planter bulges in the streetscape (3 on Fort Street and 3 on Pentrelew Place). Grassed open space has been retained around existing Garry Oaks and successional plantings of new Garry Oaks and clusters of camas are being proposed.

Rock Outcrops

There are no existing significant or publicly accessible rock outcrops on the site.

Urban Forest Value

A key element of the proposal is to promote and support a healthy urban forest. Some of the many well-known benefits are; improved aesthetics, environmental (wildlife habitat, energy conservation, storm water, pollution suppression), and social (psychological well-being, connection to nature). The retention of mature

native Garry Oaks and the planting of 20 new Garry Oaks will have a positive contribution to urban forest succession on the site.

Retention of Mature Landscape, Parkland Landscape Character and Open Space Network

An integrated design approach has been taken for the site in efforts to retain trees and mature landscape. Considerable site planning effort has gone into retaining many of the significant and bylaw protected trees on site. An arborist was consulted early in the planning phase to review trees and building locations. The building and parking garage footprints were adjusted to accommodate the large tree canopies and root systems. The driveways, pathways and parking layouts were modified to avoid sensitive areas. Much of the existing site character is being retained in the north-east area of the site. This area is publicly accessible open space with a parkland character.

Heritage References and Traditional Use of Materials

The most current proposal better integrates the traditional use of materials. Landscape design elements throughout the project use natural, high quality materials that reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Walls, fences, arbors and screens will be constructed of durable materials that will age gracefully.

Stone walls have been proposed as feature elements within the public realm of the project and at the entrances of Building A and B. They are a material reference to the traditional use of stone within the surrounding neighborhoods.

Private residential patio spaces interfacing the public path use a low, stone wall with top mounted, vertical, metal picket fence, and matching gate. This is a common example seen around the surrounding neighborhood. It creates an effective defensible edge for security and uses high quality, durable materials while maintaining transparency (and sightlines) for CPTED. Low planting will be used to layer the scale of the landscape elements. Fences have been integrated to align with Architectural elements and the design detailing will complement the immediate context and neighborhood character. Where we have proposed gates to control access from the public pathway into private (shared/strata) spaces, stone pillars and/or stone wall sections will act as gate posts.

The team has carefully reviewed the City's feedback and input related to the previous design, and has worked with City Staff, meeting on site and at intervals during the development of these revisions, to fully address the comments of Committee of the Whole. If you have any questions or require further clarification of any part of the application, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,
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