



July 10, 2017

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
#1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W1P6



Mayor and Members of Council:

RE: 71 and 75 Montreal Street -Rezoning and Development Permit Application

At its Committee of the Whole meeting on February 2, 2017, Council considered my proposal to rezone the 2 properties at 71 and 75 Montreal Street to a new zone that would allow me to build a project with 19 attainable homes.

The principles behind this project are directly linked to ideas generated from *the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability* - to look at ways for the private sector to create neighbourhood scale, lower cost alternatives to housing ownership - a direct response to the expensive housing that is currently being built and is out of reach for many people. Other similar properties in James Bay are being redeveloped for 139 m² (1500 ft²) townhouses that are selling for \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 or more.

Committee recommended that *"...Council direct staff to work with the applicant to get a greater mix of units including two and three bedroom units in the building and that the developer be encouraged to meet again with the CALUC to identify and mitigate concerns of the public and that staff report back to Committee of the Whole."*

Based on this direction, my design team reworked the plan several times and we met with the James Bay CALUC Development Review Committee (April 17th) and CALUC again (May 10th) to present the changes we proposed for the project and hear additional input (see section at the end of this letter for a list of meetings I have participated in with James Bay CALUC and the neighbourhood to discuss this project).

Although we reduced the project from the original 19 to 14 units and changed the mix of unit types to include more 2 and 3 bedroom units, we heard, from the people who attended the meeting, that they still thought there were too many units, the project was too big and that there was not enough parking.

In response, I have further reduced the number of units to a total 12 unit, 6 per lot (see the unit mix below), ranging in size from 58 m² (620 ft²) to 102 m² (1100 ft²) and increased the number of underground parking to 12 stalls for a 1:1 parking ratio. The parking ratio is supported by a parking study prepared by *Watt Consulting Group* specifically for this project and is in keeping with the current R-2 zone requirement.



Comparison of February to Revised Proposal – Unit Type and Parking

February 2017 Proposal				
Unit Type and Number				
1 bedroom	1 bedroom + den	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	Total
15	1	3	nil	19
Number of Parking Stalls		11		
Parking Ratio		0.58:1		
Revised June 2017 Proposal				
Unit Type and Number				
1 bedroom	1 bedroom + den	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	Total
nil	2	5	5	12
Number of Parking Stalls		12		
Parking Ratio		1:1		

For the most part the exterior design of the project remains the same. Separated by a central mews, outwardly, the building will have the appearance of a modern townhouse project with individual entrances to a number of the units facing the street and others from the mews.



View from Montreal Street



The proposed 7.6 m (25 ft) height is the typical height for single family homes permitted under the current R-2 zone and is in keeping with the single family houses to the north and south. The site is unique in that it benefits from 300 feet of street frontage over 3 street fronts and the landscape plan provides for many opportunities for planting and outdoor areas, with terraced landscaped patios for many of the lower units, balconies, landscaped boulevards and a larger common patio amenity area extending over parking at the rear. We also identified the potential location for a lift at the rear of the building so that the units located off of the mews could be accessible.

The proposal is in keeping with the City's *Multi-Unit Residential, Commercial and Industrial Design Guidelines* and the building's form and character are sensitive and innovative in response its context. More specifically:

- The architectural approach, including the form, massing, building articulation, features, and materials is appropriate in relation to the character and pattern of development in this area (a mixture of apartments, townhouses and commercial institutional of various ages and styles).
- The building is designed to be sensitive to its context and relationship to adjacent properties and has an appropriate relationship to both the Montreal and Niagara Street frontages, with strong entry features that are expressed for the residential units.
- The exterior building materials are high quality, durable.

The design was unanimously supported by the City Advisory Design Panel.

As already noted, twelve under-building parking spaces are accessed from the lane for a parking ratio 1:1. Secure bicycle parking spaces are provided for the 12 units, either in the underground parking area, at the entrance to some of the dwellings or in a covered structure off of the lane that also has additional visitor bicycle parking.

This site is ideally located for people who wish to live without a car within easy walking or cycling distance of transit, shops and services and the Downtown.

Consultation

There has been a significant level of consultation with the neighbourhood and the James Bay CALUC on this project. Here is a listing of the meetings directed from the James Bay Neighborhood CALUC that I have participated in over the past 2 years:

1. Meeting with James Bay CALUC Development Review Committee (DRC) – October 1, 2015
2. Neighbourhood Open House – October 27, 2015
3. Meeting with DRC – November 10, 2015
4. Meeting with CALUC – December 9, 2015
5. Meeting with DRC – April 7, 2016
6. Meeting with JBNA – May 11, 2016

CALUC?



Urban Core
ventures

7. Meeting with DRC – April 17, 2017
8. Meeting with CALUC – May 10, 2017

There have been numerous informal meetings as well. The 2 years of consultation resulted in a reduction of the total number of units from the original 24 to 12, more 2 and 3 bedroom units, an increase in parking from 6 to 12 spaces and a landscaped patio at the rear of the project. At this point I think that all of the issues are clearly defined.


Conclusion

This proposal offers an innovative opportunity to promote the OCP's housing policies a way that supports an alternative neighbourhood-scale model for attainable housing ownership. Given the per square foot cost for a building of this nature, both the size of the units and number of units are critical to the determination of the ultimate purchase price.

My goal for these units is still to make them available for a purchase price that would be less than other typical townhouse projects in the neighbourhood. This won't meet everyone's needs but it will present a real housing opportunity for a market that is underserved and would add to the diversity of housing stock in James Bay.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


for
Leonard Cole, President, **Urban Core Ventures Ltd.**