

May 27, 2015

City of Victoria Mayor, Council and Staff  
1 Centennial Square  
V8W 1P6

**Re: Affordable Housing at 370 & 384 Harbour Rd in Victoria West**

Dear Mayor, Council, and City Staff

On 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2014 Robert Brown of Catalyst Community Developments Society with his design team presented a proposed affordable housing project on the Dockside Green property known as 370 & 384 Harbour Rd in Victoria West which would be owned and operated by the Society.

Approximately 20 people attended the meeting. Those in attendance learned of the development targeting occupants who are singles and couples with net incomes between \$25-60 thousand per year. Forty nine residents are being proposed, including studio, one and two bedroom non-smoking units. The proposed development of affordable housing was considered a departure from what was believed to be market housing planned for that area of the Dockside development.

While the proposal was received respectfully and with appreciation and support for affordable housing at Dockside Green, most in attendance expressed some significant concern for this particular development proposal. Of concern to most of those in attendance is the **proximity** of proposed buildings **to neighbouring buildings** and to the central greenway, the **concentration of affordable housing** within the relatively small area, and **parking**.

The northern most building is proposed to be located approximately 2 metres from the central green pathway and just 11 metres from the nearest building at its closest point. While the development team indicated that these setbacks are consistent with zoning for density, and given the building height, parking, open space and use, there was a strong feeling of discontent expressed by those in attendance. Privacy, acoustic/noise issues, and significant encroachment on the greenway were articulated as the major concerns with site location.

Most people in attendance also expressed significant concern with the density of affordable housing within the proposed confined space. There was general appreciation stated for the pursuit of affordable housing, though awareness about the impacts of what 49 affordable housing units will have on residents within a stone toss away. The socio-economic circumstance of building occupants aside, two multi-residential tightly placed buildings within the narrow area between Balance and the existing and future commercial buildings along Harbour Road was considered highly problematic, particularly given the limited access options (via the greenway) available to the upper units. The inherent increase in pedestrian traffic

along the greenway (26 units will be accessed by the greenway only), and general household activity that is associated with medium density residency is expected to unduly and negatively impact the quality of lives of those in the neighbouring units and the sanctity/ecological integrity of the greenway. There was also concern expressed that the concentration of affordable units in the confined space would create a pocket ghetto situation, rather than the preferred integration of affordable housing that is more dispersed throughout the site.

The concern about parking was expressed as a growing issue in the area. The significant limitation in parking for existing commercial operations was raised, and additional pressures associated with the proposed development is expected to exacerbate the issue. Reduced parking requirements in affordable housing developments are somewhat understandable if there is a capacity to supplement within neighbouring areas. With the phase two development going ahead at the Wing, in this area, parking demand is already beyond availability. Severe parking conflicts are anticipated unless dedicated parking is developed as a priority in advance of additional residences at Dockside.

Additional comments articulated at the meeting in addition to or in reinforcement of the summary provided above include:

- “love the community”, “love the project”, “not trying to shut it down”, but...”parking is a huge issue. Without parking spaces people will not come to the bakery and other businesses”
- “City must face the fact that there is no public parking in Vic West. Pacifica already approved with less parking.” Recommendation that the City to look at developing a parking plan for the area.
- “Like almost everything but the parking plan.”, “Don’t like massive change in use of greenway where furniture, garments etc will be moving through. It’s a beautiful space.” “Move the entrances along the other side.”
- Suggestion (with general agreement) to move R4 (northern most building) further south to maintain open space and address concerns about noise, privacy etc.
- “not sure the site is right” for an affordable housing project
- Concern about lack of LEED certification
- Noise mitigation measures are required for the heat recovery ventilators
- bike storage is limited, requiring bikes to be brought into units – causing the greenway to be worn out
- “Not enough storage for recycling and bikes.”
- “Maybe change the medium of the laneway from gravel to something safer”
- “Lack of children’s facilities” on site where there will inevitably be families being housed
- Shadow study – concern about the quality of housing for the ground level townhouses (facing the existing and yet to be constructed building planned along Harbour Road)
- Too much density of development on the north side of the development

- There is a problem filling the restaurant because of parking and the Advertisement business moved out because of the parking issue
- “Street parking in the area is not well managed”
- Suggest “turning the parking into two or three hour parking”
- Unhinging the matching buildings; to help address some of the issue (i.e. larger units to R4 to reduce density of occupancy)
- The proposal is perfectly pitched to attract younger people with lower incomes
- “Like the design”, “beautiful”
- Concern for laundry facilities – could put laundry into the studios to mitigate outside access requirement of common facilities
- “Like orientation to the greenway and access to the greenway giving life and energy”; “two-story scale feels human”
- Likes the density
- Suggest changing ground floor studios to parking
- Appreciation expressed for the safety aspect of the having more people around

I trust this will help supporting modification to the proposed project as presented at the Community Meeting to better meet the interests of Victoria West residents.

I suggest that an additional Community Meeting be scheduled where modifications can be properly presented to interested community members to ensure concerns have been adequately addressed.

Cheers

Bernie Gaudet  
President, Victoria West Community Association

Cc:

- VWCA Board of Directors
- Norm Shearing (President, Dockside Green Ltd)
- Ally Dewji (Land Development Manager, Dockside Green)