



Rezoning and Development Permit Application 736 Princess

July 21, 2017

Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps and Councillors
Corporation of the City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6



Introduction

The application before you is a unique proposal for 75 Workforce Housing rental units in the downtown area. We are proposing a new concept for Victoria - "work-live" units where tenants pay one monthly rent and have access to:

- Completely furnished, self contained professionally designed micro units with full bathroom, kitchen area, bed/sitting area, storage.
- Over 3000 sqft of amenities on the main floor – Full kitchen / entertainment area; TVs, games, quiet sitting areas; communal sitting areas; outdoor patio space with BBQ and more.
- Electric car and electric bike rental IN the building available to tenants – no need for car ownership!
- Full time operations staff to support the building and tenants.
- Coffee shop accessible to the public to promote community living.

The impetus for this plan comes from the City's need to provide 'affordable' living. This building combines housing, amenities and transportation needs and more than supports this demand. I look forward to presenting more details as the application is reviewed.

Community Consultation

Burnside Gorge Community Association

We have met three times with the executive and twice with the Community at large. Concerns raised at the initial meeting in January 2017 were addressed at an updated presentation July 17, 2017. Letters from the Chair have been submitted to the City.

Green Building Features

The project has been designed with a combination of active and passive energy principles:

- Provision of an electric car rental fleet on the lower floor for tenants, complete with electric charging stations.
- Provision of an electric bicycle rental fleet on the lower floor for tenants complete with electric charging stations.
- Building is oriented to take advantage of the south facing site to allow better penetration of natural daylight into the main level and inner courtyard.

- Construction will use a high-performance wood frame system.
- Storm water mitigation.
- Permeable paving on Coffee Bar patio.
- Heat Recovery Ventilation systems.
- Designed to the 2014 energy code.
- Constructed to Built Green standards

Summary

This is a wonderful opportunity to create new an innovative, community affordable living in the City. I look forward to sharing a detailed presentation.

Sincerely,

Kim Colpman
Large and Co.



November 17, 2017

Mayor and Council
Corporation of the City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6



To help navigate the information presented, a list of contents has been provided.

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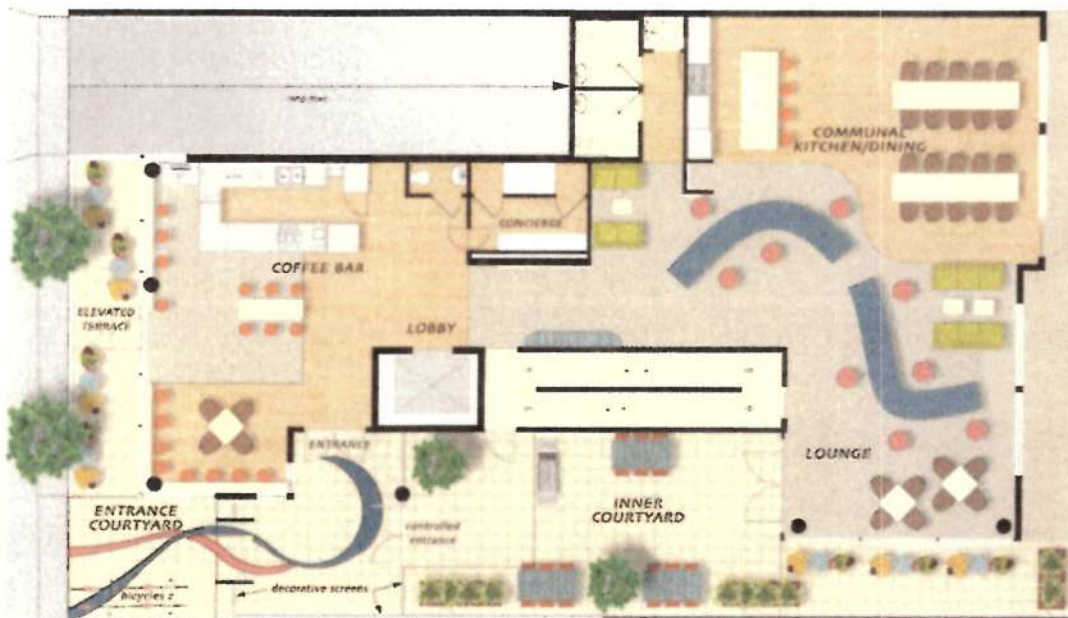
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1 Description of Proposal

The Hive, located at 736 Princess Avenue (currently a vacant parking lot), is a purpose-built Workforce Housing rental project that Large and Co. is proposing to build, own and operate. By partnering with CHMC, housing can be offered at below market rates, as defined by CMHC. A letter of intent for this partnership is included with this submission.

This is a 6-storey building – 1 floor of commercial and 5 residential floors. There are 75 micro-units ranging in size from 220 – 320f². Every unit has a window and are fully self-contained with full/queen size bed, a complete kitchen and full bathroom. Final design will consider maximizing personal storage and flexible living spaces. Of the 75 units, 5 are accessible – 1 on each residential floor. It is anticipated 5 units would be made available as needed for resident's out of town guests. There are 70 bike/personal storage lockers in the basement as well as laundry and garbage/recycling facilities.

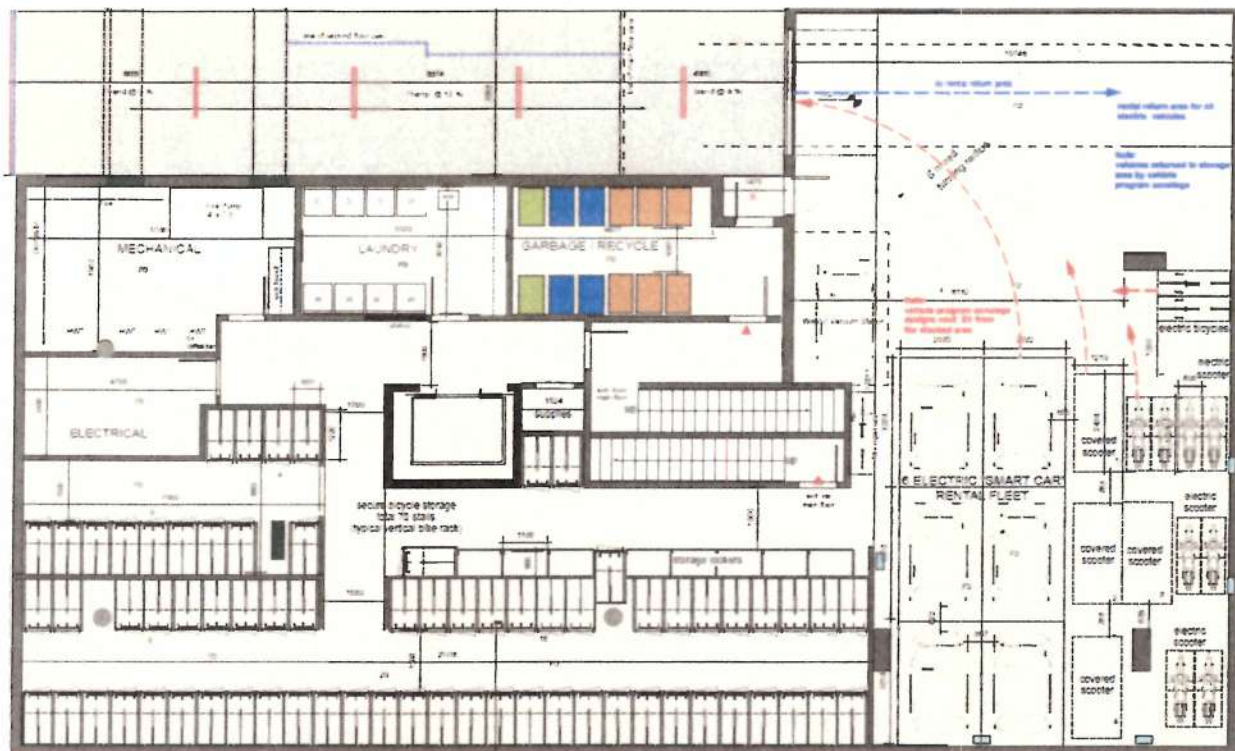
Technically, that's what The Hive is. But practically, The Hive is a new way of living. It is a housing 'type' or concept not yet seen in Victoria! It offers a quality of life typically not provided in non-market rentals. In support of our residents, we have allocated the entire main floor (3,000f²) as amenity space.



JC Scott Design, an expert in micro-unit and community space design, has created flexible, welcoming liveable spaces on the main floor where residents can convene, work, play games, cook for their friends or 'just be' - a space that becomes a focal point for The Hive community. It includes a full kitchen, harvest tables, quiet nooks for reading, TV monitors, gathering spaces and more. The entire building is wi-fi enabled and there is access to 2 outdoor patio areas.

As well, there is a café at the front of the building that sits behind floor-to-ceiling glazing. This creates an indoor/outdoor appeal and 'eyes on the street'. The café is available to residents and the public, offering a welcome connection to the surrounding community. This area will operate like Café Fantastico at Parkside Hotel whereby café patrons may walk through and enjoy the lounge areas.

The other innovative, not yet been done concept of our proposal, is the on-site electric Vehicle Share Program (eVSP). This is a fleet of all electric vehicles (combination of eBike, eScooters, eCars) for rent on an as-needed basis.



Often people with low incomes cannot afford a vehicle, or simply don't want the burden/expense of car ownership. For this reason, and because The Hive is ideally located for walkability and transit, The Hive does not provide parking to its residents. What it does offer, is direct access to the eVSP. Vehicles are stored on-site, and are charged and maintained by the building owners – residents only pay when they use one. Access to a variety of transportation options and convenience are the keys to reducing car ownership. *(See Section 2.2.2 Transportation for more details)*

A full-time concierge will be employed to oversee the administration of the building, its residents and all the amenities/services. The main floor central desk area is a focal point and will be the 'face' of The Hive.

Providing this quality of living in non-market rental housing can be done. It does however require an understanding of the key affordability features for The Hive.

- 736 Princess Ave is a vacant parking lot just north of downtown, which has a lower land cost than central downtown.
- Increased density is needed to support its economic viability.

It is rare to find bare land in the Urban Core. This, combined with increased density provides an opportunity for Mayor and Council to support the affordability goals of the OCP and Housing Strategy for Victoria residents. The Hive will set the standard for micro-apartment living.

2 Government Policies

2.1 Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)

The following sections highlight how The Hive aligns with specific RGS objectives.

Keep Urban Settlement Compact

The Hive is ideally located in the City's Urban Core - an area expected to accept approximately 50% of Victoria's forecast growth to 2041, or a minimum of 10,000 new residents. RGS asks the City to support opportunities that accommodate this population growth.

Build Complete Communities

The RGS supports urban development contributing to greater community completeness - specifically within 500 metres of the Urban Core and within 400 metres of transit routes. The Hive is located *within* the Urban Core between both transit corridors of Douglas and Blanshard streets allowing residents to complete many daily activities close to home.

Improve Housing Affordability

Workforce non-market rental housing is the vision for The Hive. By offering 75 new units at below market rent, we are increasing much needed supply and reducing the number of low income renters in core housing need.

Increase Transportation Choice

Hive residents can conveniently cycle, walk or take public transit. They can also readily access our on-site, all electric Vehicle Share Program (eVSP). (See Section 2.2.2 Transportation for more details).

2.2 Official Community Plan (OC)

The following sections highlight how The Hive aligns with specific OCP objectives.

2.2.1 Land Management and Development

Building coherent, liveable places where a mix of uses and activities is the norm, with goods and services close by and where a range of housing types is available across the City. This is an OCP initiative and the objective of The Hive – to provide a liveable housing alternative with on-site activities and amenities in a walkable, transit oriented location.

The Downtown Core Area is meant to remain the primary economic, social, arts, cultural and entertainment centre. More people living in the Urban Core help to attain this goal and keep downtown vibrant and progressing.

The Hive is designated as a Core Employment area, which allows for buildings from 8-20 storeys of residential mixed-use, work/live or commercial between Douglas and Blanshard. Our building is 6 storeys, with main floor commercial and residential on 5 floors. The density FSR allowed is 3:1 – 5:1 with residential maximum at 3:1. Our proposal is 3.99:1. The increased density is necessary to a) include 3,000^{ft}² main floor amenity space which is crucial to the quality of life offered, and b) provide below market rent.

2.2.2 Transportation

Consideration may be given to reductions in parking requirements where:

- Geographic location, residential and employment density, housing type, transit accessibility, walkability, and other factors support non-auto mode choice or lower parking demand.
- Activities and circumstances of land uses, structures or buildings include the provision of a comprehensive suite of permanent on-site alternative travel supports.

As well, the Housing Strategy outlines a priority to reduce parking requirements and consider parking innovations that support affordable housing projects. It highlights how structured parking is a significant contributor to the cost of housing and the City is looking at ways for parking regulations to better support affordable housing.

These objectives are fully supported by the proposed on-site, all electric, Vehicle Share Program (eVSP) offered as a service to our residents and to the community at large. Watt Consulting Group has prepared a detailed report to fully explain this innovative TDM approach. The report is attached.

To summarize here, initially the eVSP would include a combination of 20 electric vehicles to offer diversity of trip purposes and to suit all budgets. Vehicle units at the outset are proposed to be:

- 6 electric cars
- 8 electric scooters
- 4 electric covered carts/scooters
- 2 electric bikes

2.2.4 Climate Change and Energy

The OCP embraces transportation options that reduce fossil fuel dependence, help conserve energy and produce low greenhouse gas emissions and other air contaminants.

The on-site electric Vehicle Share Program (eVSP) fully supports this initiative. Additionally, research tells us per capita emissions are significantly lower in compact urban neighbourhoods where multi-unit building forms are more energy efficient.

2.2.5 Placemaking - Urban Design / Community Well Being

According to the OCP, placemaking is the creation of place. It is the practice of building communities with a unique identity. To achieve community well-being, a sustainable community provides both the physical and social infrastructure. These values are at the core of The Hive vision.

Living at The Hive will be like renting a 3000f² home. Residents will have a private, fully contained unit plus a massive 'Living Room' on the main floor where they can hang out with friends or relax on their own without being alone. Community exists right in the building giving residents an chance to know their neighbours, connect with their community and take advantage of many opportunities for social interaction.

2.3 Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood stakeholders have expressed a strong interest in supporting additional and diverse housing choices to accommodate new residents. Recognizing most land is already developed, there are few opportunities for new housing, and new multi-unit housing should be developed along transportation routes. Specific objectives for The Hive fall under the Downtown Area Core Plan.

2.4 Downtown Area Core Plan (DACP)

This plan was developed to advance the objectives of the OCP for the Downtown Area. Most of the objectives listed here have been addressed in detail under the OCP section. This section therefore, summarizes how the DCAP aligns with The Hive proposal.

The site at 736 Princess falls within the Rock Bay District (RBD) of the Downtown Core. RBD objectives support transforming this area into a key employment center. However, the plan also recognizes the City's desire to place people close to their employment and amenities, and as such has outlined an objective for residential and residential mixed-use development being supported primarily between Douglas and Blanshard streets.

Specifically, The Hive supports the following DCAP goals:

The combination and number of vehicle units would be adjusted as necessary to meet demand, with a goal to provide the appropriate mix based on need. There is sufficient space in the building to add vehicle units should the need arise. It is interesting to note, a 318-unit condominium in Toronto, located within 5 minutes of transit, has no resident parking and offers only 9 on-site cars in their share program. *(Details in Watt Consulting Group report).*

To maximize vehicle utilization and ensure program success, the vehicles would also be available to the surrounding community. Building residents would have priority, but during times when residents may not require a vehicle, utilization would be maximized by expanding the program offering. This would in turn, increase the potential for reduced car ownership in the neighbourhood.

Why not MODO? Because research shows that ‘convenience’ is the key to reducing car ownership. Having vehicles available on-site, maximizes this potential. It also creates the ‘complete community and amenity’ rental package we are offering at The Hive.

To provide the City with certainty, we will guarantee a minimum 10 electric vehicles (combination of eBike, eScooters and eCars) in the program for the first 5 years. This number supports the recommended number of vehicles outlined in Watt Consulting Group report.

2.2.3 Housing and the Housing Strategy

As mentioned previously, housing affordability is a key objective for the City. The OCP encourages new housing initiatives that create viable partnerships that help achieve new affordable housing. Large and Co. is currently working to partner with CMHC for this project. A letter of partnership intent is included in the submission.

The OCP is looking for a range of housing types to meet the needs of residents at different life stages. Residents of The Hive are likely to be millennials age 24-35 – the largest group seeking rentals in the Urban Core. The innovative housing concept of The Hive with a private unit, plus huge amenity space, a public coffee shop and access to eVSP, appeals to this demographic and offers a quality of life not seen in other Workforce rental buildings.

The Victoria Housing Strategy was developed to advance OCP initiatives. It aims to increase supply and diversity of non-market and market housing across the housing spectrum and throughout Victoria. Primarily, the Housing Strategy focus is on ‘affordability’. It describes purpose-built rental housing as the most stable source of rental housing as it becomes more affordable over time since rental rates rise more slowly than housing prices.

- Consider opportunities to reduce motor vehicle parking stalls in high density buildings in exchange for dedicated on-site car share. The eVSP fully supports this initiative.
- Explore development standards such as reduced parking requirements, to facilitate the provision of smaller dwelling units in multi-residential development.
- Support the redevelopment of vacant land, including surface parking lots, with more intensive uses that support the economic function of the Downtown Core Area.
- Encourage commuter options through sustainable transportation options, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.
- Ensure the Downtown Core Area has enough residential space available to keep up with short- and long-term growth forecasts (*additional 10,000 residents in Urban Core by 2041*).
- Concentrate higher density development along the Douglas Street/ Blanshard Street corridor to relieve development pressure within the historic Old Town Area, Chinatown and Victoria Harbour.
- Offer a variety of housing options within the Downtown Core Area.
- Support development of non-market housing as the Downtown Core Area grows.
- Encourage outdoor dining areas on public or private property, coupled with adjacent indoor spaces suitable for cafés and lounges.

3 Neighbourhood

Our proposal was originally located at 735 Queens. The owner of the commercial building at 755 Queens also owned the parking lot at 736 Queens. He approached us to do a land swap which resulted in the consolidation of 735/755 Queens and parking now adjacent his commercial building – a much more sensible land use allocation which was fully supported by Planning.

We are now proposing to construct on this vacant parking lot. The street is comprised of mixed uses such as autobody detailing, private car collection storage, office rentals and private residential homes. The Hive is yet another element of mixed-use architectural building that compliments the industrial nature of the area to modernize and refresh the streetscape. Its public café amenity creates a connection to community. The additional residents bring further vibrancy to the neighbourhood. When businesses are closed in the evening this street presence and vibrancy will remain.

4 Impacts

By its very definition 'change' comes with some impact both positive and negative. The positive aspects of our proposal have been underscored throughout this report. With respect to neighbours, they have expressed concern around disruptions during construction. This is no different than other developments in the City and we will communicate with our neighbours and strive to minimize inconveniences. They have also voiced concern about no on-site resident parking. Our innovative approach to transportation for this building, we believe, resolves this concern by eliminating the need for car ownership.

5 Design and Development Permit Guidelines

The following outlines how The Hive aligns with the Design and DP Guidelines:

- The building respects the neighbourhood character by incorporating building elements complementary to the industrial feel of the area. Material elements and design contribute to visual identity and quality of streetscape.
- The front glazing, public patio and café spaces create a strong relationship to the street with visual and physical connections.
- The building base is well designed with varied architectural materials, to enhance the street frontage.
- A prominent entrance with building name signage as well as colored concrete accents, directs pedestrians to the main entry.
- Perceived building mass is mitigated through architectural elements and building articulation creating a rhythm of visual interest.
- Exterior materials are high quality and durable and are used all on sides of the building.
- Open spaces (main floor, courtyard, front patio) are extremely liveable, attractive and well-integrated with the design of the building.
- A lighting plan has been reviewed by an Electrical Engineer to ensure appropriate and effective design.
- The building is designed to allow for easy access for disabled persons. As well the café patio is at grade from the entry pathway.
- Front glazing maximizes opportunities for casual surveillance and “eyes on the street”.
- The building is sited and oriented to overlook the street.
- Vehicle entry is at the opposite side of the building from the pedestrian entry.

6 Safety and Security

CPTED guidelines were reviewed and incorporated into our proposal.

- Full time concierge employed to monitor building activity.
- There are unobstructed views along the entire front of the building – front glazing; low, unobstructed view railing at front patio
- Mixed use development ensures presence of people more often.
- Coffee shop placed at front of building for ‘eyes on the street’
- Walkway to front entrance clearly defined through architecture and design
- Adequate lighting provided, reviewed by Electrical Engineer.

7 Green Building Features

Site Selection and Design

- Building is designed with passive energy principles with orientation taking advantage of south facing site. This allows better penetration of natural daylight into the main level and inner courtyard.
- Existing asphalt parking lot is repurposed for urban housing.

Innovation and Design

- Recycled materials are incorporated into the building envelope construction such as profiled metal cladding, and includes recycled steel into feature design elements.

Transportation

- On-site all electric Vehicle Share Program (eVSP) supports non-fossil fuel modes of transport.
- Personal bike storage available on-site for 70 bicycles.

Energy Efficiency

- Project will meet Step 1 of The BC Energy Step Code.
- Construction uses a high-performance building envelope tightness system.

Renewable Energy

- Project will incorporate HRV's (Heat Recovery Ventilators).

Water

- Project incorporates low flow fixtures.

Site permeability

- Permeable pavers on café patio.

Landscaping

- No net loss of any trees or vegetation.
- Additional trees planted.

8 Conclusion

The Hive is envisioned as ‘the place to be’. This much needed non-market rental housing in the Downtown Core is a concept that addresses more than basic shelter requirements. The Hive also embodies the physical and the social; it creates an environment of ‘place’ and community well-being for its future residents.

When someone lives at The Hive, they will pay a single monthly rent. This includes:

- Fully self-contained furnished unit (bed, built in furnishings)
- Utilities (heat, electricity, water, garbage)
- Wifi throughout the building
- Concierge services
- Access to all amenities on the main floor (TV, games, lounge areas, café)
- Ability to reserve kitchen for dinner parties
- Access to electric Vehicle Share Program (eVSP)
- Bike/personal storage locker
- Access to outdoor spaces

The only additional cost(s) would be laundry, purchases at the café and eVSP rental, should residents require it. People can move in feeling secure in their monthly expenses.

Freedom from the burden of car ownership falls directly into the wheelhouse of this demographic and low-income earners. The on-site eVSP is an affordable, convenient service to our residents and fully supports the transportation and affordability objectives of the OCP.

This is an exciting opportunity to be part of an innovative solution that not only supports the City’s objective to increase the supply of affordable housing in the Downtown Core, but does so in way that meets the physical, social and emotional needs of its future residents. We believe The Hive will set a new standard for non-market rental buildings.

Sincerely,

Kim Colpman,
Applicant