

Christine Lintott
Architects Inc.



February 8, 2024

City of Victoria
Attention: Mayor and Council
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Re: 1042/1044 Richardson Street – Rezoning Application No. 00753 and Development Permit with Variances Application No. 00158 (Fairfield-Gonzales)

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the developer, Bart Johnson, we are very pleased to submit for your consideration a twenty unit purpose-built market rental proposal at the above noted address. The mix of market rental units includes three 3 bedroom, fifteen 1 bedroom and two studio units. Three of the 1 bedroom units are adaptable and one ground level unit is accessible. This proposal is aligned with the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan, Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan, Strategic Plan and Inclusionary Housing and Amenity Policy and this letter summarizes the rationale for your consideration.

Background

On July 14, 2022 Council, sitting as Committee of the Whole, considered an application for Rezoning and Development Permit with Variances for this project. A motion to refer as amended was carried and is noted as follows:

That the matter be referred to staff, to work with the applicant on a revised application for rental housing that achieves greater consistency with the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan and other City of Victoria policies, particularly as it relates to livability of future residents on this parcel as well as livability of residents on neighbouring parcels.

In response to the motion, the applicant explored a significantly revised application with staff for a rental housing proposal for the adaptive reuse and addition to the existing building. The yield on this revised proposal (11 units) is a reduction of 9 units and affords limited suite types (no family housing). The feasibility of this revised approach was contingent upon the retention of the existing building. The design guidelines and policy considerations applied by staff in reviewing this revised application were houseplex oriented and therefore misalign with the intent of the approach taken. The direction suggested by staff is not financially viable.

As such, the applicant wishes to have a revised version of the original application reconsidered. We submit that this application is consistent with the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan and other City of Victoria policies, particularly as it relates to the livability of residents on neighbouring parcels. In addition, the proposal aligns with considerations of development of rental housing, alternative transportation, sustainability and form and character. These four key considerations are articulated below.

1. Rental Housing

This property is designated as part of the Urban Residential Rental Retention Area in the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan (2019). This part of the neighbourhood contains a significant supply of the City's rental housing stock in multi-unit buildings. Loss of rental housing in this area can significantly impact the supply of rental housing across the City; as such, the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan aims to increase the overall supply of rental housing in this part of the City through retention, replacement or enhancement of rental units.

The proposal will increase the supply of housing in Fairfield, and will provide housing options to residents by offering a mix of unit types, including family-sized three bedroom units, adaptable and accessible units, as well as studio units. This unit mix supports community feedback from the Fairfield Neighborhood Plan, which suggested more housing in Fairfield targeted to families, seniors and working individuals.

2. Alternative Transportation

The subject property is located in a part of the City that is close to downtown, jobs, community amenities, shopping, and parks and open space, with residents able to reach goods and services and meet daily needs within a 15 minute walk of the proposed residences.

The project exemplifies support of alternative transportation in providing 45 long term bicycle parking stalls, 10 of which are oversized. Charging outlets are provided at 33 of these long term bicycle parking stalls, and a bicycle maintenance station is provided on the ground floor. In addition to the 45 long term bicycle parking stalls which meet the requirements of Schedule C, there is an oversized bicycle stall with charging on Levels 2-4 (3 total) and Levels 2-5 each have a designated mobility scooter stall with charging (4 total). These provisions on Levels 2-5 are in direct proximity to resident suites. Situated on the Richardson Street AAA bike route, this unique configuration enables bike forward mobility for individuals and families. These abundant spaces are further supplemented by visitor bicycle parking.

Car share memberships registered to each unit in perpetuity are proposed for tenants and the subject property is well serviced by multiple transit routes. A developer-supplied electric vehicle parking space is proposed at the street, which aligns with the City's goal to support electric vehicle use and expand charging infrastructure. Underground parking is provided for six resident vehicles, plus two visitor vehicle stalls.

3. Sustainability

The proposed building meets and likely exceeds Step Code 3, accommodates renewable/alternative energy with the inclusion of solar panels at the roof. The fully electric project reinforces decarbonization objectives for new buildings. Green spaces feature native and adaptive planting and stormwater management.

4. Form and Character

The proposed development recognizes and maintains the Fairfield character of multi-unit buildings fronted by green spaces along public streets. The pedestrian friendly and community-oriented building frontage hosts front balconies and a prominent entrance to provide eyes on the street.

The quality of the site design and pedestrian environment is enhanced by minimizing the impact of off-street parking with placement underground.

A shared rooftop amenity space for residents supports sociability and livability, while grade level trees support urban forest objectives.

Further Considerations

The Official Community Plan designation for this property is Urban Residential and it is located along the AAA bike route of Richardson Street and one half block off Cook Street, a future frequent transit service candidate. The proposal aligns with the many of the goals and objectives of the Official Community Plan including realizing compact development patterns that use land efficiently, land use that reinforces values related to equity, diversity and inclusion, accommodation for current and future populations in or adjacent to the Urban Core, proximity to goods and services, and the provision of a range of housing types.

The Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan (2019) alignment focuses on the addition of new multi-unit housing within a half block of the identified Northwest Area of the neighbourhood, valued for proximity to downtown, jobs and amenities, provision of a range of housing options to attract a diversity of residents, and massing up to 6 storeys where rental replacement is proposed.

The recently adopted Strategic Plan (2023-2026) indicates housing as a priority. This project aligns with the goal of enabling more market and non-market housing and a diversity of housing types and distribution. Climate action and environmental stewardship priorities are achieved through an all electric building.

The project aligns with the updated Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy (2023) as it is one hundred percent purpose built rental, which will be secured by legal agreement in perpetuity.

And finally, notable refinements to the original application have been made in response to staff and Council comments and are summarized as follows:

- Architectural expression - exterior material revisions including removal of walkway screening and transition of stair cladding to screening, colour change and material/layout updates, and removal of the accent colour;
- Alternative Transportation - additional long-term bicycle parking stalls of a variety of sizes;
- Alternative Transportation - additional on-street EV parking stall
- Transportation – an accessible van parking stall has been included in the parkade as per Transportation's request

The intent of the changes in architectural expression are to lighten the appearance of the overall massing (over the previous iteration) and impart a muted, mannered expression for “fit” with the adjacent context, one that is considerate of the livability of adjacent parcels. In these refinements, we submit that the objectives of DPA 16 *to integrate new developments in a manner that complements and enhances the established place character of an area through high-quality architecture, landscape and urban design* is met.

In summary, we submit that this application is consistent with municipal policies and directions, as well as the broader direction of Council to deliver rapid and meaningful housing solutions in the City.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'C' and 'L' intertwined.

Christine Lintott, Architect AIBC, FRAIC
Founding Principal
Christine Lintott Architects Inc.