

November 10, 2020

Mayor Lisa Helps & Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

**Re: Revised Rezoning & OCP Amendment Applications for Harris Green Village
(903,911, &1045 Yates, 910 View St, 1205 & 1209 Quadra St)**

Dear Mayor Helps & Council:

This letter and related application materials updates our previous submission dated June 15, 2020. The revised submission incorporates City staff comments and includes the design team's in-depth analysis of the current DCAP and new draft downtown design guidelines. Revised application materials include the revised Rezoning Booklet and Urban Design Manual, and various other technical reports.

Background

The application proposes to rezone one and a half city blocks in Harris Green from existing commercial and mixed-use zones to a new site-specific zone. Given the combined size of the sites, the application presents a unique opportunity to achieve positive and transformative change within the neighbourhood.

Associated with the Rezoning application is a Development Permit application for the first phase of development located at 1045 Yates St, comprising the eastern half of the 1000 Block Yates St.

Project Amenities and Benefits

The size of the assembled parcels makes possible urban design opportunities and public amenities that could not be achieved via smaller, piecemeal development. The most exciting amenity is a signature public space in the centre of the 900-block Yates St. This half-acre plaza and green public space will allow for flexible use and community gathering. The other major positive contribution the project will generate is the increase in Victoria's rental housing stock, assisting with chronically low rental vacancy rates.

Key amenities and benefits include the provision of:

- a significant increase in the Victoria's rental housing stock with the addition of approximately 1500 rental units which will improve supply, choice, and flexibility for individuals and families;
- a range of unit sizes and types (studios to three-bedroom units) for individuals, couples, and families;

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- a regionally significant public space to create a vibrant “Yates Street Plaza,” a terraced area with amphitheater seating, and “View Street Green” that comprises approximately 1,982 m² which is approximately twice the amount of open space and public realm amenity identified in the Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP);
- children’s daycare and associated outdoor space;
- enhanced street animation and pedestrian connections between and within streets;
- corner plazas and unique public spaces;
- extensive on-site amenities for tenant residents;
- model stormwater management regime and raingarden systems along primary streets;
- comprehensive integration of landscaping elements within the site, and connectivity with the streetscape, pedestrian sidewalks, and boulevards;
- accommodation for a separated bike lane along Yates Street, the timing of which has been advanced because of the size and pattern of the development; and,
- provision of bylaw requirements for vehicle parking while also including TDM measures, including modo car share spaces, bicycle parking, including cargo bike stall with separate elevator access.

Urban Design Rationale for Height & Density

The proposed form and urban design respond to the site’s central and prominent location. The tower and podium typology allow for a sensitive relationship with the street, block, and neighbourhood context. Buildings are configured into pedestrian-scale blocks with corner plazas, and podium heights establish appropriate street wall-to-width ratios.

Updated design principles focus on: 1) framing the street, 2) sculpting the podium, 3) strategic placement of height, 4) splitting the blocks to prevent long continuous frontages, 5) addition of significant green space and public gathering areas; and, 6) within the residential blocks, the placement of residential courtyards.

Podium massing is shaped to address the street and provide sunlight into residential courtyards. Podium heights have been adjusted and decreased in height from 4-6 storeys, to 3-5 storeys, with the 5th floor significantly set back from the lower podium. Use of different exterior materials and colours on the 5th floor will serve to further reduce its visual prominence and to ensure its compatible relationship to the street. Digital 3D models have been prepared to illustrate podium height-to-street width ratios and these compare favourably with the downtown design guidelines. While the number of storeys in each tower have increased in the updated plans by transferring floor-space removed from the podium levels to the towers, the slender and elegant towers and relationship between the towers punctuate the block at strategic locations. The siting of the towers optimizes solar performance in the public realm and contribute to Victoria’s skyline. The tallest building is 32 storeys located in the center of the 900-block site, terracing down to two additional towers at being 28 and 27 storeys. The 1000-block contains two towers, 21 storeys and a lower 19 storey building closer to Cook Street.

The analysis has determined that taller, slender towers best-fit the site, and reduce shadow, wind, and sightline impacts. The positive outcomes of this approach are increased sky views and facades that define and vitalize the streets while minimizing shadow casting.

Please refer to the updated Urban Design Manual and Rezoning Booklet to see expanded design studies and rationale for the proposed massing, height, siting, and orientation of towers. Included in the revised manual and booklet are specific view studies along the streets, including distant views. Reference to, and relationship with, the Urban Forest Master Plan has also been included.



Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

The updated rezoning application includes a more detailed section describing the CPTED principles to be adopted in subsequent Development Permit applications. The rezoning booklet describes the design features to be incorporated that includes four main principles to be adopted in Harris Green Village. They are: 1) natural surveillance, 2) legibility/access control, 3) image/maintenance, and 4) territoriality/ownership.

Wind Study

A wind study has been prepared by Rowan Williams Davies & Irwin (RWDI) in which an instrumented scale model of the project was produced and placed in a wind tunnel. The study concluded that the project performed very well in respect of wind impact. Only one location – in the 900-block Yates St – was identified for minor wind mitigation by way of strategic landscaping or architectural treatment, and an appropriate mitigation strategy will be detailed when a Development Permit is submitted for that block. No wind concerns were identified in the first phase Development Permit currently with the City.

Building Setbacks Wall Punctation & Evolution of the DCAP Design Direction

The updated Rezoning Booklet and Urban Design Manual have refined setbacks and wall punctuations and building envelope criteria. Detailed studies have been conducted and setbacks established specific to the unique characteristics of each street. Additional design considerations include:

- The setbacks provide a variety of volumes that break down the visual scale for the massing, and they provide terraces that would be utilized for outdoor open space;
- The setback line has been determined by a 1:5 horizontal-to-vertical relationship and set at a height that is established by the scale of the street;
- The height and alignment of the building facades define the streets;
- Meaningful punctuations in podiums walls along all streets have been further accentuated to create an even friendlier and interesting public experienced; and,
- Increased setbacks of portions of the ground and second levels of building corners at street intersections to expand the public sidewalk space at the corners.



Harris Green Plaza Size

The key amenity of the project is the central plaza and park space located in the middle of the 900-block of Yates Street. Measured to the building frontages framing the plaza, the total area is 1982 m² (21,334 f²). This area is significantly larger than what is recommended in the DCAP, which indicates a plaza between 800 and 1,200 m². The revised guidelines and Rezoning Booklet provide greater detail on the plaza, as well as the hard and soft landscape features.

Updated Landscape Design: Public & Private Realm Open Space

The development falls within the Downtown (New Town) Public Realm Plan, and streetscape standards. Updated landscape plans provide greater design detail and respond to staff input and comments along public streets and the central plaza. Rain gardens have been refined and incorporated along the Yates and View Streets' frontages and coordinated with the civil drawings.

Pedestrian lighting, custom wood benches, and specialty paving will conform with the New Town design objectives. New raised planters, new boulevard trees, and raised concrete planters with custom

wood benches have been refined. Existing mature chestnut trees along Vancouver and Cook Street frontages are retained in combination with a grassed boulevard to minimize tree root disturbance. All boulevard trees are specified with Dobney grates.

The Harris Green Plaza is divided into three-character areas, each with its own features to allow for a variety of experiences within the space. The upper Yates Street area combines feature sculpted design elements, specialty paving, and raised planters with specimen trees and seating. The middle section, referred to as the “Harris Green Terrace”, combines seat steps and raised planters. The lower “View Street Green” area combines lawn, raised planters, and platform seating.

Interior amenity courtyards for residents of both the 900-block and 1000-block locations include a combination of grassed areas, benches, outdoor kitchens, enclosed dog-run areas and children’s play areas. In the 1000-block site, outdoor areas for a children’s daycare are also included on the plans.

Bike Lanes

An important element added to the public realm amenities is a new separated bike lane along Yates Street. Vancouver Street enhancements have already been firmly established and are in progress. Yates Street bike lanes has been prioritized and advanced with the Harris Green Project. Curbing, boulevard treatment, street lighting, street furniture and on-street parking has been designed with bike lanes in mind.

Site Servicing & Sewage Attenuation Report

The consulting civil engineer has prepared an updated and more detailed site servicing report and assessed the requirements for sewage attention. The assessment includes addressing storm water management and the coordination of rain garden features between the civil engineer and landscape architect’s plans. Generally, the site is well-served by underground services, and servicing requirements can be accommodated. No on-site sewage attenuation tanks will be required.

A 0.9 m SRW along Quadra Street is provided. Intersection detail has also been provided. Plans have been reviewed with the landscape architect to ensure coordination and consistency.



Traffic, Parking & Transportation Demand Management Analysis

All vehicle parking and freight access will be accessed from View Street. The project transportation consultants indicate a total of 1,351 parking stalls are required based on the amount of commercial floorspace, number of residential units, and children’s daycare space proposed, comprising 1,180 stalls for residents, 166 stalls for commercial space, and 5 stalls allocated to the daycare.

Given the proximity to Downtown, the integration of the development’s residential and commercial space, and the growing intention of people who live Downtown to minimize vehicle ownership, a greater emphasis on shared transportation initiatives is important.

A parking study prepared by Watt Consulting Group analyzes bylaw standards and, more importantly, sets out transportation demand measures (TDM) that result in proven reductions in parking demands. Chief among the TDM measures to consider are bicycle parking stalls and facilities (including end-of-trip cycling facilities for employees), electric bike parking, cargo bike parking, and carshare (e.g. Modo). It is noted that families are increasingly using cargo bikes, and these bikes have greater space requirements, but are proven substitutes to private vehicle ownership/usership.

Each phase of development will be subject to a Development Permit, at which time specific parking requests and any variance from Schedule C parking requirements will be submitted. The Watt Consulting report will be used to guide the size and extent of TDM measures appropriate for each phase.

The consulting transportation engineers have also reviewed and updated schematic plans to accommodate traffic signalization at Cook and View Streets, and a separate left-hand turn lane at Quadra and View Streets. They have also evaluated traffic/lane requirements along Yates Street all per direction by City staff.

Third Party Utilities

The project's civil and electrical consultants have been in contact with third party utilities (hydro/telephone/gas/cable) to confirm access to services.

BC Hydro have conveyed a reluctance to consider permanent underground wiring. Like many of the new projects Downtown, during construction, wiring may be temporarily placed underground in front of the developing street frontage for safety reasons but is re-established above ground once the project is complete. It is anticipated the same practices will apply during the phasing of this project. Ultimately that decision rests with BC Hydro.

In Closing

This letter summarizes the key changes made to the previous submission and highlights the major design elements of the proposal. The Urban Design manual and the Rezoning booklet provide both visual and more detailed written descriptions.

A separate Development Permit Application for Phase 1, comprising the 1000-block Yates Street (Yates/Cook/View Streets), is being submitted concurrently with this resubmission. The plans adopt the guidelines and directions contained in the updated Urban Design Manual and Rezoning Booklet.

The intention of this application is to facilitate a vibrant development that complements the character of the existing Harris Green neighbourhood, while providing significant purpose-built rental housing, a mix of uses and building forms, and important public open spaces. Harris Green Village is an exciting and significant project with the potential to positively shape the future of the neighbourhood and Downtown Victoria.

We look forward to working collaboratively with the City on this special opportunity to enhance and make better use of a significant Downtown location, while responding to the demand for rental housing in Victoria.

Should you require any further information about this application, please do not hesitate to contact me at 250.383.0304 x 122 or dstrongitharm@cityspaces.ca.

Sincerely,



Deane Strongitharm, RPP, MCIP

Attachs.

cc. Starlight Developments

