

January 30, 2020

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

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

Dear Mayor Helps & Council:

On behalf of Starlight Developments (the Owner), CitySpaces Consulting is pleased to submit this application for rezoning and Official Community Plan amendment for the properties located at 903, 911 & 1045 Yates Street, 910 View Street, and 1205 & 1209 Quadra Street. Today, these properties are known as the location of London Drugs, the Market on Yates, and the Harris Chrysler car dealership. The project is referred to as "Harris Green Village".

This letter provides a summary of the key elements of the application, which includes the appended rezoning booklet, urban design manual, and other supporting documents (e.g., civil engineering, transportation, and arborist reports). As this is a large application, we have made a conscious effort to prepare a comprehensive plan, recognizing the proposal's significance in potentially shaping the future of the Downtown Core Area in general, and the Harris Green neighbourhood in particular.

Three design firms, with local and international reputations (IBI Group, D'Ambrosio architecture + urbanism, and Hapa Collaborative), have been engaged to collectively develop the guiding principles, urban design strategies, development concept, and public realm design for this project. Notably, the overall process started with deliberate public engagement to inform the guiding principles and development strategies that culminated in the proposed development concept. Applications for Development Permit (DP) will be made in phases, and the design and development strategy provided herein will form the framework upon which those more detailed DP submissions will be made.

It is with great pleasure that we present this application, on behalf of Starlight Developments, for Councils' consideration. Appended to this letter is the formal application and all supporting information.

**CitySpaces
Consulting Ltd.**

Suite 101
848 Courtney St.
Victoria BC
V8W 1C4

250.383.0304 Tel

www.cityspaces.ca

Victoria

Vancouver



C
I
T
Y
S
P
A
C
E
S

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

The Harris Green Village application proposes to rezone two separate city blocks from existing commercial and mixed-use zones to a new site-specific zone. Given the combined size of the sites, and their prominence within the Harris Green neighbourhood, this application presents an exciting opportunity for a positive and transformative change that will solidify many of the goals and aspirations envisioned in the City's *Downtown Core Area Plan* (DCAP) and the *Official Community Plan* (OCP). The program will feature residential rental homes, street level shops, office space, and daycare space. A collection of large and small public realm spaces will include a publicly accessible open space as the signature element of the overall project.

The two sites represent a total of 19,860 m² (or approximately five acres of land) in downtown Victoria. The sites will have three primary building uses:

1. Residential, all in rental tenure;
2. Commercial retail; and
3. Commercial office.

At build-out, the intention of this project is to provide approximately 1,500 purpose-built residential rental units, 10,200 m² of commercial retail or office space, and 4,500 m² of amenity space that includes about 500 m² allocated for daycare. A total of 119,500 m² of floor space is planned to be developed in three phases.

The plan for the 900-block of Yates Street (the larger of the two sites) proposes a total floor area of approximately 74,085m² of residential, 5,715 m² of commercial retail and food service, and 1,369 m² of commercial office. The 1000-block Yates Street plan proposes a total of 38,025 m² of floor area comprising 34,776 m² of residential, 3,246 m² of commercial, and 490 m² of day care space.

A central feature and public amenity of the Harris Green Village project is the creation of a central plaza and open space. This public space is envisioned as a signature element that will include both active and passive areas for the enjoyment and benefit of the Harris Green neighbourhood, and all residents of Victoria.

An OCP amendment is also part of this application in order to address two key design items:

1. Adjusting the existing DCAP design guidelines to allow for more innovative design opportunities than are currently permitted; and
2. Addressing modest additional density that is supported by the size of the site, the intended design and building massing objectives, and the purpose-built rental residential focus of the project.



PROJECT INTENT

Due to the size and complexity of the proposed development, the application comprises three parts, as outline below:

1. A binder that contains this letter, owner's authorization, and the current titles and charges for all subject parcels, as well as preliminary servicing, transportation, and arborist reports, and other miscellaneous items;
2. A rezoning booklet that describes the development concept; and
3. An urban design manual that details the design intent and guidelines for the subject sites that would supercede DCAP guidelines, and provide guidance for the processing of subsequent Development Permit applications for each of the three phases.

The central elements of the project are:

- A significant increase in the City's rental housing stock that will improve supply, choice, and flexibility for individuals and families in Victoria;
- A range of unit sizes and types (studios to three-bedroom units) for individuals, couples, and families;
- A regionally significant open space area to create a vibrant "Yates Street Plaza", a terraced area with amphitheatre seating, and "View Street Green" that comprises approximately 2,000 m² (one-half acre);
- A children's daycare and associated outdoor space;
- Enhanced street animation and pedestrian connections between and within streets;
- Extensive on-site amenities for future tenants;
- Development of a model stormwater management regime and raingarden systems;
- Comprehensive integration of landscaping elements within the site, and connectivity with the streetscape, pedestrian sidewalks, and boulevards;
- Provision of a separated bike lane on Vancouver Street, with connectivity to the established bike lane network; and
- Development of extensive and comprehensive design guidelines and zoning criteria that reflect the significance of the sites, and this unique opportunity to pursue excellence in the built form.



LAND USE POLICY

The sites are located within the Harris Green Neighbourhood, and are subject to the City's OCP and DCAP. Within the DCAP, the project sites are located in the *Residential Mixed-Use District* that encourages multi-residential development, higher densities, and the provision of commercial services and amenities to enhance the public realm.

This project achieves many of the key objectives described in the DCAP, including:

- *Ensuring that Downtown Core Areas has enough residential and office space to keep up with short and long-term forecasts;*
- *Providing a broad range, of easy-to-access community services and public amenities, such as transit, pedestrian and cycle paths, retail health and medical offices, childcare facilities, playgrounds, schools, and recreational facilities;*
- *Promoting sustainability and addressing climate change by encouraging 50% of all population growth to be accommodated in the downtown/urban core area....Harris Green is identified as the key contributor to absorb downtown residential growth;*
- *Promoting memorable streets and places that serve both to attract people and to benefit the community;*
- *Incorporating and linking public amenities, such as open spaces, parks, plaza...;*
- *Providing safe and direct walking connections throughout the Downtown Core Area that also link public spaces, such as parks, plazas, open spaces;*
- *Increasing height and density along Yates Street;*
- *Providing a central plaza in the vicinity of the 900-block of Yates Street;*
- *Developing diverse housing types and sizes to attract both individuals and families; and,*
- *Providing high level, quality design in all aspects of the urban form, including building design, street frontage treatment, landscaping, street and public realm lighting and street furniture, and the relationships of buildings to the pedestrian experience, as well as with adjacent neighbours.*



HOUSING OBJECTIVES

Renters make up more than 61% of Victoria's population. The current vacancy rate in the city is approximately 1%, which is well below the desired rate of 3% to 7%. The *Victoria Housing Strategy - Phase Two: 2019 - 2022* report speaks to the existing rental housing stock and states that:

"a significant proportion of [Victoria's] market rental stock is purpose-built rental housing, which provides greater security of tenure than secondary rental units because [secondary rental units are] unable to support long term tenancies ... The majority of the City's purpose-built rental stock was built in the 1960s and 1970s."

The OCP (Section 13) also provides specific policies and broad objectives that support the application, including that:

- *Housing development that responds to future demand is facilitated through land use policies and practices.*
- *The existing supply of rental housing is expanded through regeneration.*
- *A wide range of housing choice is available within neighbourhoods to support a diverse, inclusive, and multi-generational community.*

This application proposes approximately 1,500 purpose-built residential rental units with a mix of studios, one-bedroom, one-bedroom + den, two-bedroom, two -bedroom + den, and three-bedroom units. Approximately 30% (or about 450 units) are planned to be two-bedroom and three-bedroom units, including all ground-oriented units with direct access to the proposed urban plaza and park. The proposed number of purpose-built rental units will significantly assist the City with achieving many of the housing objectives identified in the OCP and Housing Strategy.

The City of Victoria has been a leader in developing strategies and policies related to the current housing shortage in which renters are finding it difficult to find appropriate and affordable housing. With its primary use being purpose built rental housing, the Harris Green Village project will have a meaningful impact on the rental housing shortage in Victoria.

City housing policy recognizes that purpose-built rental projects do not have the same economic characteristics as condominium developments, so they are exempt from the requirement to provide affordable housing per the *Inclusionary Housing & Community Amenity Policy* and DCP density provisions. To support the City's comprehensive approach to increasing the supply of affordable rental housing, Starlight is very interested in exploring the feasibility of obtaining "additional" density above current DCAP provisions in order to provide an affordable housing component within the project. Starlight commits to working with City staff throughout the application review process to explore affordable housing opportunities beyond the provision of purpose-built rental housing.

EXISTING USES, TENANTS, PHASING & CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

As the sites comprise one-and-a-half occupied city blocks, existing tenants are an important consideration in the overall redevelopment strategy. The current uses and buildings are very low density, consisting of mostly single and two-storey structures, with large surface areas devoted to above-ground parking or vehicle storage. Relative to City planning policies, objectives, and sustainability goals, these sites are underdeveloped.

Many of the existing tenants have contributed to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood for a long time, and are an important community assets. Starlight has had regular correspondence with all tenants (key anchor tenants in particular), and will continue to work with them as the project moves forward. The intention is to deliver a phasing plan that facilitates a smooth transition to new replacement commercial space for those tenants wishing to remain in the neighbourhood.

The 900-block site also contains 15 residential rental units. Starlight is mindful of its obligations to those tenants, and to providing a respectful relocation plan in keeping with the City's *Tenant Assistance Policy*. In many respects, Starlight is better equipped than a lot of developers to provide seamless tenant transitions, because of its management strength and other existing rental projects it owns in Victoria.

The two sites will be developed in three phases, each with a substantial residential component. Phasing will be refined based on discussions with existing anchor tenants, as well as market demands. Because of phasing, certain allowances have been considered for the siting and design of building podiums, and the layout of underground parking and servicing.

In terms of the timeline, the development program anticipates commencing construction of the first phase as soon as possible following development approval and building permit issuance. It is acknowledged that existing residents in the area may be experiencing some "construction



fatigue". While there are certain limitations on how noise and construction traffic can be eased, Starlight promises to work with the City and its neighbours to develop construction and traffic management plans to mitigate construction impacts to the greatest extent possible.

SYNERGY OF DESIGN & AMENITIES

Although this application comprises two different sites on two adjacent city blocks, the context, vision, and urban design principles and approach have been developed as if the sites were one. It is rare that an entire block and a half can be planned and designed in a downtown urban setting, and the design approach is based on the most favourable massing, building form, functional relationships, and site context for the overall project and surrounding neighbourhood.

Like the design approach, community amenities and public realm space are addressed comprehensively. While the most significant community amenity is the public realm open space on the 900-block of Yates Street, of equal importance is the substantial space allocated on the 1000-block site for the provision childcare. Amenities and services will be available for residents living in both sites, as well as to the neighbourhood and community at large.

PUBLIC REALM

The signature element of the Harris Green Village project is the focus on public open space on the 900-block that will become the heart of the neighborhood. At 2,000 m² (approximately one-half acre), the new space will be a significant contribution to the downtown public realm and community open space, comprising three distinct elements:

1. A more active and vibrant "Yates Street Plaza";
2. A middle amphitheatre-style terraced feature; and
3. A quieter "View Street Greens" facing View Street.

These three elements function together as a mid-block common that is intended to be a major community, social, and recreational space. Design principles and guidelines for this central public realm space include:

Yates Street Plaza

- Facilitate the use of the space as a gateway to the site;
- Design to accommodate a variety of public events and programming;
- Line the plaza with active, at-grade uses, such as retail and restaurants;
- Promote a safe and animated public space;
- Design the space to be universally accessible; and
- High quality paving and pedestrian-scale lighting.

Harris Green Terrace (mid-block amphitheatre)

- Provide connectivity between View and Yates Streets;
- Provide amphitheatre space/seating for performances and special gathering events; and
- Provide a terraced area overlooking the View Street Green space.



View Street Green

- A prominently featured lawn area along View Street;
- Facilitate the use of View street a gateway to the site;
- Provide a universally accessible route from View to Yates Street; and
- Provide for seating along and around the View Street Green.

See the appended *Urban Design Manual* and the *Rezoning Application* booklet for more detail.

SERVICES & UTILITIES

Prepared by the consulting civil engineer, a preliminary servicing assessment indicates no significant site servicing issues.

- A large trunk sanitary sewer is located on View Street, meaning sewage capacity is not a limiting factor.
- Existing storm drains are located on all sides of the two sites. As part of the landscape and storm water management strategies, specific attention is being paid to developing a very high standard of stormwater retention and rainwater infiltration to ensure the development will have no net negative impact on the flows reaching the City's stormwater system.
- Water mains are found on all adjoining streets, and preliminary investigations conclude that water services are able to meet demand.

TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS & PARKING

Transportation consulting engineers have been retained to examine off-site transportation implications, vehicle access, and truck loading. Proper integration with the City's separated bike lane plans for Yates and Vancouver Streets is also being reviewed. Preliminary conclusions indicate that with increased traffic along View Street, some modest improvements are recommended for the intersections of View/Quadra Streets and View/Cook Streets.

Pre-application meetings with the City indicated a strong desire for vehicle access to be from View Street, and the project design has been developed based on those comments. As a practical matter, View Street has both the lowest elevations and pedestrian volumes and, as such, is best suited for vehicle access to underground parking and loading.

From early on in the process, the intent has been to adhere to the City's "Schedule C" parking standards, and the rezoning submission demonstrates how such parking can be achieved. However, given geotechnical conditions, and that a partial underground Parking Level 4 (P-4) would be required, Starlight and the project team are reviewing the viability of meeting the City's full "Schedule C" parking standards. As additional geotechnical and construction cost information is obtained, it may be concluded that a P-4 level is not viable. In that event, introducing transportation demand management (TDM) measures would potentially represent a more positive use of resources toward meeting the City's social, transportation, environmental, and sustainability goals.



SUBDIVISION

Both sites currently comprise several different legal parcels. The intention is to consolidate the parcels into one lot for each site. Given the necessity of phasing the project, consolidation of the 900-block site may result in a two-step process, or in two separate lots at build-out.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Preceding this application, there has been an early and robust public engagement process, which included two interactive public open houses and a subsequent design workshop. These activities provided valuable input and direction, and informed the team's approach to the development concept and rezoning application. An engagement process was initiated in the summer of 2019, prior to the preparation of the design concepts. Greater detail about those sessions, and their findings and outcomes, can be found in the *Rezoning Application* booklet. Public engagement activities included:

- Two "Ideas Open House" events held in June 2019; more than 150 members of the public participated, with invitations delivered to 4,000+ addresses. The events were highly interactive, and allowed a wide range of stakeholders to share their perspectives;
- A Design Workshop with about 50 participants was held in July 2019, and included nearby residents, students, local business community groups, and others who live and/or work downtown. Participants were asked to schematically design the sites by using plexiglass blocks (representing floor area) in order to create a model that achieved their aspirations for building massing, height, and open space;
- Early preliminary engagement was established with the Victoria Downtown Residents Association (VDRA);
- Discussions with residents of the Regents Park Apartments, who are the most immediate residential neighbours of the project;
- Numerous contacts and updates with existing tenants;
- Meetings and conversations with members of the community;
- Project website (www.harrisgreen.ca) to provide a source of information, and opportunity to sign up for news; and
- Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC) meeting on December 3, 2019 was attended by more than 100 people.



GREEN FEATURES & ENERGY EFFICIENCY

A more extensive discussion of the sustainability elements and rating analyses for the project will be addressed at the time of Development Permit applications. However, the provision of 1,500 residential rental units within walkable distances to places of work, recreation, community and medical services, shopping and other services will significantly reduce the use of vehicles. With transit hubs nearby, and the location on/near the extensive bike lane network, it is possible to get to most areas of the region without the use of private vehicles.

Green elements of the project include:

- A comprehensive stormwater management system, and stormwater strategies that capture, convey, intercept, and transpire stormwater on the site;
- Direct rainleaders from buildings to infiltration galleries and street planting;
- Significant areas of public and tenant greenspace, and places for urban garden plots;
- Convenient and accessible indoor space for bicycle storage to meet City standards, and electrical outlets for electric bike charging;
- Compliance with the City of Victoria/BC Energy Step Code standards that ensure building energy performance;
- Occupancy sensors and other “smart” building management systems;
- General use of water efficient fittings; and
- Durable materials, incorporating recycled and sustainable materials where possible.

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

The appended *Urban Design Manual* incorporates the principles of the City’s CPTED guidelines. More detailed review and adherence to the City’s guidelines will occur during the design development stage of the project.

IN CLOSING

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 shape the future of the Harris Green 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, 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

