June 19, 2019

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

Dear Mayor Helps, Council and Staff,

**Re: Rezoning Application - 2558 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC**

## Introduction

Founded in 1956, Greater Victoria Housing Society (GVHS) is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing affordable rental housing. For over 62 years GVHS has provided homes to low to moderate-income seniors, families, working individuals, and adults with disabilities. GVHS owns and operates 17 properties and 726 units of affordable housing throughout the region. GVHS currently owns and manages 427 units of seniors, workforce, and family housing in the City of Victoria

2558 Quadra Street, currently known as Forest Heights, is a 54-year-old, 3-storey, 19-unit apartment building owned and operated by GVHS. The building was purchased in 2008 with the intention of future redevelopment and is well past its effective life and is not accessible or barrier free to tenants especially since it does not have an elevator. The site is under utilized and a recent feasibility study indicates that the property can support a building more than twice its size. Situated within the growing Quadra Village, it is in a prime location for additional affordable housing. The property is located close to shopping, employment, and recreational facilities.

## Proposal Summary

We are pleased to submit the attached application form and accompanying documents to rezone the property at 2558 Quadra Street to a mixed-use 5-storey 40-unit affordable rental redevelopment project. We are requesting that the property be rezoned from C1-QV (Quadra Village District) to C1-QV to enable a change of use from multi-family to mixed-use. Total FSR proposed is 2.3:1. A variance will be required for an increase in height from 4 to 5 storeys. The building is being designed as a purpose-built rental development owned and operated by GVHS with affordable rental rates geared to those earning very low to moderate incomes.

The building will include 16 studios, 16-one bedroom, 4-two bedroom, and 4 fully accessible studios for a total of 40 units. The ground floor of the building will have one commercial unit. The accessible units will include roll-in showers, 5-foot turning radiuses in living spaces and washrooms, low-hanging cupboards, roll-under counters, and wide doorways, building entries will be built barrier free using full universal design standards.

Tenant rights have been identified as an important topic to be addressed by the City of Victoria. GVHS has an extensive tenant relocation assistance plan that has been amended for this project to meet and exceed the City of Victoria Tenant Assistance Policy. See attached GVHS Tenant Relocation Assistance Plan.

## Policy Framework

The project has been carefully designed to conform with the *Official Community Plan (OCP)*. The OCP recognizes the site as a part of Quadra Village – designated as a Large Urban Village. The proposal meets the strategic directions laid out for the Hillside-Quadra neighbourhood by increasing residential and commercial density within the Large Urban Village. The building will also have community spaces available for rent to the public, thus enhancing the public realm provided by the new building.

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| Large Urban Village | Low-rise and mid-rise multi-unit buildings up to approximately six storeys including row-houses and apartments, freestanding commercial and mixed-use buildings. | Ground-oriented commercial and community services reinforce the sidewalk.<br>One to three storey building facades define the **street wall**.<br>Regularly spaced boulevard and street tree planting, wide sidewalks.<br>Off-street parking underground, at the rear or otherwise screened.<br>Central public green space or square. | Low to mid-rise multi-unit residential and mixed-use.<br>Commercial, including visitor accommodation.<br>Live/work.<br>Home occupations. | Total floor space ratios generally up to 1.5:1.<br>Increased density up to a total of approximately 2.5:1 may be considered in strategic locations for the advancement of plan objectives. |

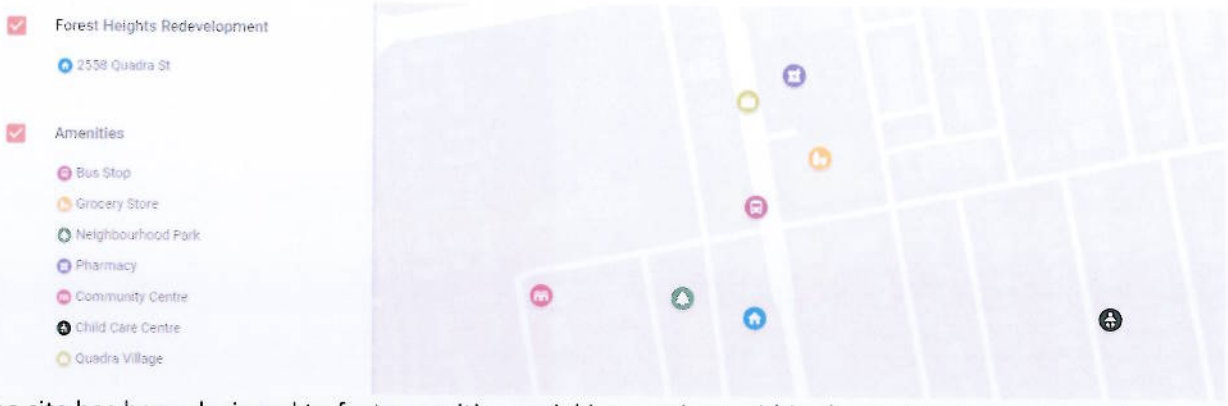
The proposed development conforms to the OCP as being designed to a 5-storey mixed-use build (6-storeys permitted) with ground-oriented commercial, a one-storey street wall accompanied by a large boulevard with tree planting, public benches, and a large sidewalk, all while taking a municipal SRW over the street frontage of the property into consideration to allow for future sidewalk and road improvements. The *Off-Street Parking Bylaw Schedule C* is being exceeded having planned for 22 underground and 8 surface vehicle stalls. Based on the current design, 28 total stalls would be required under the bylaw.

The OCP states that an increase of density of up to 2.5:1 may be considered in strategic locations. The proposed building would have a density of 2.3:1. The location of the site within the Quadra Village, on a major transit corridor, in a vibrant commercial district provides ideal conditions for a gentle increase in density on site. The *Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Plan (1996)* states that within the Quadra Village, a density bonusing provision in rezoning for commercial use should be encouraged by adding 40% more floorspace for the inclusion of housing.

## Project Benefits and Amenities

The addition of 40 residential units (+21 net) and 1 commercial unit on site will provide many benefits to tenants, neighbours, and the community at large. The increase in density on site will be beneficial to the local economy as it will add more tax payers to the neighbourhood as well as consumers and employees for local businesses. Due to the location of the site within the Quadra Village and its proximity to

downtown Victoria, the site relies on its proximity to amenities and services that enable users to carryout daily activities without the need of a vehicle. This provides an added environmental bonus to the property, allowing tenants to live an urban lifestyle providing the opportunity to live, work, and play all within their community.




The site has been designed to foster positive social interactions within the community. Vehicle and bicycle access off the laneway will eliminate all vehicle access off Quadra Street and improve the overall safety, accessibility, and walkability of the streetscape. With public benches along the street front and inviting landscaping, the building will provide an improved social connection between pedestrians and the property. The site will include a common patio for residential and commercial users of the site. This will help encourage tenants to interact with one another and create a sense of community.

## Need and Demand

The issue of the high cost of housing in the Capital Region is well documented. The demand for affordable rental housing is projected to grow substantially particularly in the City of Victoria for low to moderate income households. The GVHS contribution of 21 additional units supports the demand for over 365 affordable housing units a year (for more detail see attached Need and Demand Analysis).

The site being rezoned from multi-family to mixed-use supports this. The *Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Plan (1996)* requests commercial frontage along Quadra Street. The OCP's designation for the site as Large Urban Village also calls for mixed-use and ground-oriented commercial and community services that reinforce the sidewalk.

## Neighbourhood

The site marks the south edge of the "Large Urban Village" OCP designation for Quadra Village, and is distinctly positioned to extend and enrich the pedestrian-oriented commercial core. In keeping with the community plan, this proposal succeeds at adding gentle density within the "Large Urban Village" boundary. Situated within a block characterized by aging 3-storey apartment buildings, this proposal is similar in scale and character to the recently completed *Urbanité* project next door (2560 Quadra St.), and will complement its patterns of usage and occupation.

## Impacts

New affordable / mixed-use housing projects such as the one we propose simultaneously revitalize the village and provide safer, more efficient, more accessible, and more affordable housing options.

While planning policy allows for up to 6 storeys in building height, a 5-storey building is proposed to provide the best fit with the neighborhood and in particular to moderate shading and overlook of its 4-storey neighbour. Currently almost all of the open space on site is asphalt parking lot and driveways. This will be replaced by a more balanced mix of soft and hard landscaping, including at-grade patio spaces and gardens.

## Design and Development Permit Guidelines

The massing, form, and character have been developed in keeping with all applicable development permit and multifamily guidelines. The project satisfies long-range planning policies in general, and addresses particular local guidelines as follows:

- Provides ground-oriented commercial within the village core.
- Defines the street wall with a 5-storey facade and a single-storey secondary street wall.
- Locates all parking and vehicle access away from Quadra Street and off the lane instead. With a small amount of surface parking, the bulk of parking is enclosed underground.
- Accommodates population growth in large urban villages.
- In conjunction with recent and future redevelopment it will establish a southern gateway into the Quadra Street Village.

## Safety and Security

Quadra Village has a lively and diverse street life night and day. This project is designed (while referencing CTPED principles) to enrich that street life while also promoting the safety and security of residents and visitors. To minimize opportunities for concealment the building footprint is simple and rectilinear with minimal alcoves and recesses. Landscaping is similarly articulated with a combination of low ground cover and high crown plant species that provide clear sight lines into front, rear, and side yards without any blind spots. The outdoor amenity space and side yard will be secured by a 7' fence and locked gate to limit use to occupants only. All building faces have expansive glazing, especially at the ground floor, which maximizes the effectiveness of passive surveillance of the site. Appropriate levels of shielded lighting provide safe, well lit pathways and garden areas around the building, especially at entry and exit doors.

## Transportation

The proposed parking will exceed the minimum *Off-Street Parking Bylaw Schedule C* requirements by 4 spaces. The bicycle parking requirements will be fully satisfied.

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Since 1956

## Heritage

There is no heritage designation associated with the site or existing buildings.

## Green Building Features

The building will comply with the BC Energy Step Code - Step 2 at a minimum, and may meet Step 4, subject to senior government funding. Additional environmental building features will be illustrated as part of the development permit application. GVHS's goal is to try to create a Zero Emission building by not relying on natural gas for domestic hot water heating, thereby reducing our annual $CO^2$ outputs by more than 75%. Electrical conduits for future EV plugin stations will be run to all parking stalls and plugins will be provided for 10% of the parking spaces. Charging for electric bicycles will be made available within the secure bicycle storage.

## Infrastructure

Quadra Village is well equipped with both social and civil infrastructure to support the densification of this redevelopment. The heart of the village in the adjacent block offers a full spectrum of products and services and includes a major grocery store. Also, nearby is the Quadra Village community centre as well as Wark Street Park. Quadra Street itself is a major arterial route with frequent bus service and nearby bicycle greenways including Vancouver Street and Kings Road.

We look forward to hearing further on our application to rezone 2558 Quadra Street.

Sincerely,

Kaye Melliship
Executive Director

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