

July 8th, 2019

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

RE: **1301 Hillside Avenue,**  
**Resubmission – Development Permit Rezoning and OCP Amendment Application**

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of NVision Properties, I am pleased to resubmit for your consideration our development proposal for the vacant land and former gas station at 1301 Hillside Avenue.

Over the past few months we have been working with City Staff and our Consulting Team on a number of improvements to this unique and innovative project. We have recently had a second CALUC Meeting , as well as been through the Advisory Design Panel process. As a result, 1301 Hillside is now a 49 unit market condo project with 14 units of affordable ownership housing ( 28.5%) – through a partnership with BC Housing. The site is a former gas station site on 2 arterials. The FSR is 2.38 and the difference from the site zone 2.0 to 2.38 is the affordable housing component.

Parking is provided at 0.48:1

The scope of improvements include:

- a) New parking access point off Cook St.
- b) Parkade entry is set back from the street to allow for more efficient pickup and drop off as well as 2 visitor parking spaces.
- c) The ground floor has three – 2 storey live/work units along Hillside Ave.
- d) Bicycle Parking has been moved from the mezzanine level to the Main Floor – with convenient street level access points along Hillside. As biking is an affordable and likely transportation option for this site and building, a 1.34 : 1 bike parking ratio is proposed.
- e) Electrical bike parking is also planned.
- f) A bike wash, and pet wash are proposed.
- g) We have changed the project from a purpose built rental to an affordable ownership housing project. Of the 49 total homes in the project – 14 will be targeted as Affordable Ownership Housing. We are in discussions with BC Housing to set up a program where units can be affordable by a) being priced at a value below market b) purchasers will have maximum income qualifications and c) minimum tenure requirements. Further details will follow.



- h) While the lower floor plans remain the same shape, the building will step back on the upper two floors – to give the building a lower feel and more sensitive relationship to the street.
- i) Second floor units that face onto the Cridge lands, have been designed to open onto the same level as the Cridge Park – which will give these units more of a townhouse at grade feel. An exterior walkway leads from the street to these “ground oriented” units.
- j) A two storey brick base – will give the building a traditional/heritage feel to the lower levels. The brick material compliments the Cridge brick as a building material.
- k) As the site is situated along a number of major bus routes, a bus seating area has been incorporated along the Hillside street level
- l) The total FSR at 2.38 is under the DCAP large urban village of 2.50.
- m) The difference between the total FSR (2.38) and the zoned FSR (2.0) will be designated as affordable ownership housing.
- n) The building as designed has 49 units, 16 are studios including 3 live/work units, 21 are one bedrooms and 12 are two bedroom units.

In response to the City’s concerns:

- a) Floor areas now shown have been taken from the inside dimensions of all units.
- b) We recalculated grade as per the City’s comments and so Average Grade changed slightly in the data tables as well as affected building height. Also, we adjusted the building grades at Level 1 to better accommodate existing grades and sidewalk as per comments.
- c) The parking area access point has been redesigned so that stalls 22 and 23 have a minimum of 7.0m rear aisle clearance.
- d) Parking Calculations for both bicycle and vehicles are shown on Drawing A1.02 – as well as in the recently submitted Watt parking study.
- e) Visitor Parking stalls have been identified as 22 and 23.
- f) % value of driveway and parking slopes have been added to the drawings A2.01
- g) Property lines and SRW lines have been removed from elevations.
- h) Architectural and Landscape Plans should now be coordinated.  
The Bike Wash and Pet Wash areas have been moved – to be closer to the garbage room
- i) All Data tables have been adjusted to match revisions
- j) A sewage attenuation report was previously submitted.
- k) In terms of transportation comments:
  - i. The size of stalls 22 and 23 have been adjusted to comply to requirements.
  - ii. The Cook St drop off zone has been eliminated – as suggested.
  - iii. Measures identified in the Parking Study to reduce the projects parking requirements are currently being worked on. We will advise when finalized.



With the attached development permit, rezoning and OCP amendment application, NVision Properties offers The City of Victoria a unique solution to a challenging and important development site in the Hillside Corridor. Contained in this package are the details for what I believe will become a landmark building at the corner of Hillside Avenue and Cook Street. As mentioned, unique to this 49 unit project will be the 14 affordable ownership housing units that have been developed into this building.

Our proposal speaks to Victoria's future as a less car dependent city and directly addresses the need for new affordable ownership housing in our rapidly growing city. For this project – 24 parking spaces are provided - a rate of 0.48: 1.0 Sub Surface parking at this site, cannot be achieved due to the previous use of the site as a gas station. Bike parking is intended to be convenient – with the Bike parking room with bike wash at grade – with direct access from Hillside. Scooter parking is also available in the parkade.

We have taken the opportunities and constraints inherent to the land at 1301 Hillside head on and designed a timeless building that speaks to the future of Victoria and the future of the Hillside Corridor as articulated in the Official Community Plan. The site has amazing opportunity in the form of; an Urban Residential designation; its location directly adjacent to two major arterials that provide transit access to the Downtown, Camosun and UVic; as well as its central and walkable location, which is book-ended by Hillside Mall to the east and Quadra Village to the West. Due to all these locational benefits – we believe that a building with a 2.38 density can be justified.

Additional parking is constrained as a result of its past use as a gas station, by way of a restriction on any subsurface uses (i.e. underground parking), a result of the environmental remediation process that it has gone through.

As such, an ordinary approach to this site would be inappropriate. Instead, our building program was carefully thought out and custom tailored to the site and built on the assumption of limited vehicle parking, given that we are prohibited from constructing underground parking. Our solution to this challenge was to propose an affordable housing project with the following components:

- a) smaller unit sizes
- b) a high volume of bike parking
- c) transit accessible
- d) 3 live/work units on the main floor of the building

The walkable location will attract residents who are interested in living a less vehicle-oriented lifestyle. With a strong understanding of the market and potential users of the site, matched with intelligent product design that delivers on the needs of these users, we feel confident that we've designed a winning project, whose limited parking supply will not negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood or our future residents.



Strategies and policies to support our proposal include; the inclusion of 3 live/work units, secure bicycle parking at a rate of 1.34 stalls per unit – directly accessible from the street, we feel the building will be compelling to young professionals, small families and students who may be looking to live car-free or with only one vehicle. An on-site transit stop, walkability to nearby parks, schools, the Cridge Center for the Family and the amenities found in Quadra Village, such as groceries and coffee shops rounds out the package.

From the policy perspective, the OCP calls for Hillside Avenue to become a major apartment Corridor and suggests higher densities are appropriate in locations that are within walking distance of the corridor. We believe that our proposed density of 2.38 is consistent with these objectives.

We feel the timing of this proposal is right and that it supports the vision Victoria Council has embarked on to reduce our collective reliance on single occupant vehicles and instead encourage more trips to be made by walking, cycling and transit. As one of the first major projects in the Hillside Corridor, we take comfort in knowing that our proposal is taking many of its cues directly from the vision Council has articulated for a better designed, healthier Hillside Corridor. Our proposal plays a vital role in supporting Council's vision for this area, transforming a forgotten corner and a former gas station into something much more valuable to the community.

We envision a landmark building that creates a new design language for the neighborhood, one that will improve the pedestrian experience at Cook and Hillside and spur positive change in the Quadra Village. Our future residents are exactly what is needed to rejuvenate this corner and bring new life to this forgotten site. They will use the new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure upgrades that Council is implementing today. Many will rely on transit as their primary mode of transportation for long distance trips and will walk or cycle for their daily trips to pick up groceries or visit the local coffee shop.

Our novel approach to this formerly contaminated site directly supports Council's goal of transitioning the Hillside Corridor into a transit-oriented multi-family area. Most importantly, although this application is in progress and not subject to Council's new housing policy – we are proposing an ownership project that provides 28% affordable housing units – that can be supported through increasing density.

We are very excited to submit this application for your consideration and sincerely hope you will find merit in our proposal. I hope Council can share in our vision of this site and recognize that such a unique property requires a unique solution. We believe passionately that this proposal represents the best possible outcome for the site and that it will be very successful in creating appropriate and accessible housing. We hope that you will feel as passionate as we do look forward to presenting the details of this project to both City Council and the general public.

Sincerely;

Michael Bacon  
Development Manager

