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October 18, 2023

**VIA EMAIL**

City of Vernon  
3400 30<sup>th</sup> Street  
Vernon, B.C. V1T 5E6

**ATTENTION: Matt Faucher and Roy Nuriel**

**Dear Sirs**

**Re:** Design Rationale for the mixed use commercial and residential development of 3300 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Vernon, BC (the “**Project**”)

**1. Introduction:**

We are excited to present the development permit application for the future development of 3300 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue which we believe will be an amazing addition to the downtown core of the City of Vernon. We trust that the Project firmly aligns with the type of product that each of City staff, City council and the people of Vernon want to see in the downtown core.

The proposed development is a mixed-use building that will feature two underground floors of parking, a first floor with 8,633 square feet of commercial space along with parking and common facilities, five floors consisting of 95 residential units and a roof top patio for common use. The Project will include several units that are wheelchair and family friendly. The Project aligns with the City of Vernon's objective to densify the downtown core and satisfies a number of the City's Official Community Plan growth strategies and land use plan objectives. These objectives include ensuring housing meets the needs of the whole community, creating a culture of sustainability, creating strong, compact and complete neighborhoods, revitalizing the downtown and creating a youth-friendly city.

**2. Site Context:**

The site for the proposed development is located in the downtown core of Vernon, which is prime for the development of high-density mixed-use projects. The Project is an urban infill project on a previously decommissioned “Legion Building” site and has the current use of bare land. The site is within walking distance of public transportation, Vernon’s main street shopping area and many other amenities, such as parks, recreation centers, theaters and restaurants.

### **3. Design Concept:**

The design of the proposed development is envisioned to create a modern and sustainable building that lifts the finishing level expected of future buildings in the downtown core. The building is designed to provide a welcoming and inviting atmosphere for residents and visitors. The building façade is appealing from all angles and goes well beyond the design level of current buildings in the City of like use and size. The development will incorporate greenery on ground and roof level that will be aesthetically pleasing from ground level and above. Considerable thought and effort has been made by the designers to break up the long façade of the building into distinct and aesthetically appealing sections. Original designs have been modified to add balconies to provide future residents with personal outdoor space in addition to a large communal balcony.

### **4. Building Design and Impact:**

The building design will incorporate clean lines to create a modern look that will be a welcomed sight in the City's core. The building is being designed with a mindset to maximize natural light and ventilation to reduce energy consumption and energy-efficient systems and appliances will be used to reduce the building's carbon footprint. The commercial units will add vibrancy to the street level and contribute to the City's economic development. The Project's location being one street from Vernon's Main Street will increase the finishing quality of retail store fronts and restaurants in the City's core. The Project will drive traffic to neighboring businesses by introducing a large population boost right in the center of town. The City of Vernon has long struggled to create a vibrant downtown largely due to the lack of housing in the area. This Project will strongly affect the traffic to local businesses in the downtown core that are already well positioned for increased patronage.

### **5. Unit Design:**

The residential units are be designed to accommodate a range of household sizes and incomes, with a focus on providing affordable rental options for low and moderate-income households. Several units will be wheelchair friendly and others are large enough to house small families. The units are designed to provide a comfort and functionality within compact, but useable spaces.

### **6. Community Amenities:**

The proposed development will include community amenities including a large shared rooftop terrace with the potential future uses of a community garden, barbeque station and variable sized gathering areas. The community amenities will be designed to promote social interaction and community among residents. Upon completion of construction and commencement of rental efforts, the building managers will assess the best use of common spaces that have flexibility in use depending on the final demographics and inputs of the residents.

## **7. Rezoning Request**

The Project is planned on lands currently zoned C7 and, at the direction of City staff, the applicant is requesting a rezoning of the Property to C8 zoning. The C8 zoning will allow for the property to include the desired commercial space on the main floor and residential space in a 6-storey configuration that is efficient in design and is commonly seen in the downtown cores of developing cities. All properties directly across the street from the Project are zoned C8 and the building immediately across the lane behind the Project is owned by the applicant's group of companies reducing the potential impact to neighboring properties. The reason for the rezoning request is to allow for the residential units to be constructed within floor space ratio requirements in the zoning code.

The viability of the Project is dependent on CMHC funding, which is dependent on a residential component. The building make up is ideally residential units above commercial ground floor space. Although the C8 zoning allows for far greater height, the applicants designs are limited to a 6 storey building. The applicant has submitted development permit drawings several months prior to this application which eliminates the risk of any variation in the plans. The applicant is also working steadfast in completing building permit drawings, which will likely be close to complete by the time this application is heard by City Council. We are working to add residential units to the City center as soon as possible and considerable permitting risk is being undertaken by the applicant to facilitate the City's and the developer's goal of adding residential units to the downtown core.

## **8. Variances to Zoning Bylaws:**

The Project if rezoned to C8 will comply with all items in the zoning regulations except the following:

### **a. Site lines**

We are requesting a variance to the site line required from the middle of the lane looking vertically above the building. The zoning bylaw requires the site lines looking from the middle of the lane towards the building to be clear at a 70° degree angle. This requirement is satisfied from both adjacent streets north and east of the Project. Further, all building setback requirements are within allowed limitations. However, a portion of the building does not satisfy this requirement when looking from the south lane. The building is designed in a U shape above the second floor, so this variance only applies to approximately a quarter of the building on the east and west sides of the building facing the lane. We believe the design allows the building to accommodate more residents within a smaller footprint while balancing the need for light in laneways through the U shaped design above the ground floor. In the future, building heights neighboring the Property are likely to exceed the site lines proposed on actual roadways as opposed to lanes where pedestrian traffic is greater.

## **b. Parking**

While adhering to zoning regulations is important for traffic management and infrastructure planning, there are cases where providing fewer parking stalls can be justified. The application includes a comprehensive traffic study prepared by traffic engineers from Bunt and Associates Engineering Ltd. that demonstrates that the proposed parking provisions are sufficient for the needs of the residents that will occupy the Project.

Based on the commercial floor space that the Project will encompass, the number of parking stalls required for commercial stalls is 12 stalls and 12 combined commercial/visitor stalls are being provided. The number of visitor stalls that are required are 14 stalls, which are being accounted for practically through the 12 combined commercial/visitor stalls. However, as the stalls can only be allocated to one or the other, a variance is being requested for a 14 stall reduction to the required visitor stalls. The rationale for the reduction is included in sections 3.2 and 3.3.2 of Bunt and Associates Engineering Ltd. report. Namely, the Project is appropriate for the consideration of shared parking between the required commercial parking stalls and residential visitor parking stalls. Visitor parking is known to peak in the evening periods at which time the demand for commercial parking uses are minimized. The applicant is retaining ownership of the entire building as a rental project and can ensure rules and enforcement of visiting parking are adhered to. Further, there is ample street parking and an Vernon's only and largest public parkade directly adjacent to the Project which eliminates negative impacts of the shared parking use and reduction.

The number of required residential stalls are 124 stalls and 76 stalls are being provided in the application. The rationale for the residential parking stall reduction is included in sections 3.1, 3.3., 3.4 and 3.5 of the Bunt and Associates Engineering Ltd. report that accompanies this application. Based on the analysis of existing buildings, registered ICBC vehicles in comparative buildings and the Metro Vancouver Apartment Study, the traffic engineers support the provision of a total of 88 parking stalls based on a residential parking rate of 0.8 stalls per unit and a visitor parking rate of 0.13 with shared parking, which is satisfied by the number of stalls being provided.

The Project meets the requirements of commercial and loading stalls.

The applicant is requesting a variance to each of the number of residential parking stalls and the number of visitor parking stalls. Original designs for the building included an additional 2 commercial/visitor parking stalls, however, BC Hydro transformer and other works resulted in a loss of multiple parking stalls on the ground floor and the first parkade floor. Considerable effort has been made to redesign the parking spaces to regain as many parking spaces as possible, however, this has resulted in 2 commercial/visitor parking stalls being lost.

The traffic and parking study attached to this application provides practical data from like buildings which show, based on the number of residential units, that there will be sufficient parking available for residents. In addition, the location of the Project in the downtown core allows residents to walk, within minutes, to all required daily services such as grocery stores, retail shopping outlets, medical services and pharmacies to name a few.

Most importantly, the City of Vernon's main bus station is also located only 2 blocks from the Project, which is far closer than the comparable buildings noted in the Bunt and Associates parking analysis provided.

Lastly, the Project also provides for a 183 bike storage lockers which far exceeds the 50 bike storage lockers that are required. Several of the bike storage spaces are being planned in unit, which will allow for the charging of ebikes which are growing in popularity and are an efficient, cost effective and environmentally friendly transportation solution.

## **9. Conclusion:**

The proposed mixed-use development is a sustainable and modern building that will provide much-needed rental housing in the downtown core of Vernon. The development aligns with the City's objectives to create a compact and complete community and provides affordable and accessible housing options. The development will also contribute to the City's economic development and create a vibrant downtown. The building design and common amenities will enhance the quality of life for residents, while the inclusion of commercial units will add vibrancy to the street level. We look forward to bringing the Project to life.

Yours truly,

