

A request from a Fairfield resident who borders Rockland:

Hi All,

I just wanted to encourage you to write a letter to the City of Victoria asking them to tighten the requirements for a developer who is proposing to build an apartment complex where the Fairfield United Church is on the corner of Moss and Fairfield.

The Church was sold to developers who plan to bulldoze it and build a four story 16 unit apartment complex with retail space. I am not opposed to development nor to upgrading a building that needs remediation, however the proposed development diminishes the character of the community, increases congestion, reduces green space and does little to make the community more assessable to families. It requires significant rezoning to go from a single family dwelling to multi-use, doubling the height of the building, decreasing parking spaces, reducing setbacks and green space.

You can see the stage of the rezoning application at <https://tender.victoria.ca/tempestprod/ourcity/Prospero/Details.aspx?folderNumber=REZ00558> It is quite far along and if you have concerns about the development I'd like to encourage you to write to our mayor and members of council.

You can mail your letter to Mayor and Council, City Hall, 1 Centennial Square, Victoria, BC, V8W 1P6 or send it by email to mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca.

For your interest I've included my letter below. Please feel free to incorporate any relevant points into your letter. Also if you know of someone who shares these concerns, please feel free to forward this email to them.

Thanks,
Julie

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

January 29, 2018

**Re: Re-zoning Application 1303 Fairfield Road, Victoria, B.C.
(Fairfield United Church)**

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

I am writing regarding the re-zoning application 1303 Fairfield Road, which will tear down the Fairfield United Church and replace it with a 4 story apartment complex with retail space.

As a resident in Fairfield, I am writing to express my concern about the proposed high density development at this location and to strongly urge you to decrease the size of the development and maintain the character of this area. I am not opposed to development nor to upgrading a building that needs remediation, however the proposed development diminishes the character of the community, increases congestion, reduces green space and does little to make the community more assessable to families.

Too Much Densification

First of all, the size of the development is excessive for this small lot in a pivotal location. It requires significant rezoning, increasing the

maximum height from two stories to four and increasing the maximum allowable lot coverage from 40% to nearly 60%. Adding 16 one and two bedroom units to this corner along with retail space in addition to the church will significantly alter the community in this pivotal core of Fairfield.

Too Much Traffic

It will also greatly increase the traffic congestion. As it is, there is significant traffic around Sir James Douglas school, which is directly across from the school. A recent safe routes to school survey has identified a number of areas of concern for children around the school due to high traffic. Creating such density will significantly increase the traffic and put children at risk.

Loss of Parking Spaces

The proposal calls for a rezoning to reduce the number of parking stalls from 43 spaces to 16 spaces.

Since there are 16 rental units it is clear that this will not be enough parking for the residents let alone those visiting the church or retail space. It is already hard to find parking at this intersection for those who want to visit the retail locations or attend church. Eliminating 27 parking spaces while adding 16 rental units and a coffee shop or other retail outlet while still maintaining space for the church does not make sense.

Loss of Green Space

This development will dramatically reduce the green space in the area and does not reflect the historical character of the Fairfield community. The setbacks are significantly reduced so that the building comes right up to the sidewalk. The proposed setback for the front of

the building is reduced from 7.5 m to 0.07 m. This is more than a 7 meter reduction!

Not in Character with Community

Perhaps most disturbing is that this proposed development does not in any way reflect the historic character of the existing building or community. Fairfield United Church was built in 1926 and has been a cornerstone of the Fairfield community. It's a beautiful building of brick and stained glass, which complements the surrounding buildings which also include brick and heritage features. To bulldoze this and replace it with a modern cube designed to maximize space is disheartening. Clearly the church needs restoration and the cost of that led the congregation to sell it, however this proposed development is not the answer.

The city and council has a duty to protect the character of the community. This is the only historic church in Fairfield and once it is bull-dozed it will forever be lost. Although it doesn't have the protection of official heritage status, it should have. The Official Community Plan and neighbourhood plans identify historic resources that possess value for present and future generations and include policies for heritage conservation areas, building types and uses, landmarks, and features. There is no way one can't say that this church built nearly 100 years ago isn't a landmark in our community and is without historic value.

There are many examples of churches that have been successfully converted into living space. The developer is in a unique position to maintain this historic church by converting it into living units while retaining the external structure and only creating a new development on the portion of the lot where the newer building that currently houses

the dance studio sits. The developer would clearly not be able to squeeze in 16 units, however the reduced number of units would be more in line with the density appropriate to the area.

If it is not possible to retain the structure of the church, at the very least the design of new development needs to compliment the form and character of the corner. Design elements should better echo both the historic form of the existing church and the arts and craft style heritage design of the single family residential along Moss Street. This has not been achieved with the current design.

Not Accessible to Families

The developer is proposing 1 and 2 bedroom market value rental units. This does nothing to increase the affordability of Fairfield or make it more accessible to families. Fairfield has numerous 1 and 2 bedroom rental until but few 3 bedroom units which are desirable to families. This is particularly relevant to this development as it is located directly across from the school. Having students in the Fairfield catchment zone is crucial to the health of the English program at Sir James Douglas school. Our son is in the English stream in Grade 2 at Sir James Douglas school. There are less than 20 students in English grade 2, which means that they cannot have a single class of grade 2 students and they are spread out over 3 split classes. This is a big issue for SJD Elementary school, as the health of the English program depends on families being able to live in our neighbourhood. Furthermore, even though the notion of rental units makes them sound more accessible, these units will be priced at high rates that will likely put them out of range for most single parents and most likely will draw professionals without children.

As a resident of Victoria and homeowner in Fairfield, I am proud to call this community home for my family and to raise our 2 young children here. We greatly value the socially-minded community, green spaces and friendly neighbourhoods, and want to maintain that.

I understand the importance of creating additional housing, but this development will not address the problem of affordable housing in Victoria and only diminishes the community. It increases traffic congestion near our elementary school, reduces green space and destroys a part of Fairfield's history. I encourage you to reconsider the re-zoning application so that the character of the community and residents are taken into consideration. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Angus, BSc. MSc.

Author, Adventurer, Speaker

xxxx Minto St., Victoria, BC