



Council Green Lights More Than 250 New Rentals, Helping to Close the City's Housing Gap

Date: Friday, December 11, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – Last night, Victoria City Council approved 258 new rental homes at two properties, including 105 coming to the former Wellburn's Market building at Pandora Avenue and Cook Street in North Park and 153 rentals at Gorge Road and Irma Street in the Burnside Gorge neighbourhood.

"These developments will add much-needed rental housing to our community and will provide homes not only for single professionals and couples, but also for families," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "We all know there is a housing crisis in Victoria and our low vacancy rates – especially during the pandemic – have some people feeling nervous about their housing options. That's why these new units are so welcome in the community."

The 153 new rentals located in the heart of the Burnside Gorge neighbourhood will be part of a dynamic six-storey, mixed-use development by PC Urban Properties that aligns with goals to expand the village area in the recently adopted neighbourhood plan. Approximately half of the apartments will be family-friendly two and three-bedroom homes. The development will include street level commercial space that could bring retail, a restaurant or coffee shop, or personal services to the neighbourhood. A new public plaza at the corner of Gorge Road and Irma Street will also be created, as well the developer will contribute \$17,500 towards traffic calming measures on Irma Street.

The Wellburn's development by Pandora Cook Development will deliver 105 new rental apartments near the growing downtown core. The transformational project includes the rehabilitation and heritage-designation of a portion of the existing Wellburn's building and construction of a new four and six-storey addition surrounding an internal courtyard. Local-serving commercial uses will be located along the Pandora and Cook Street frontages and the developer is also providing an amenity contribution of \$17,800 for upgrades to Franklin Green Park.

In addition to these rental buildings, Council approved a 35-unit four-story condo building on Oak Bay Ave at Redfern to be built by Jawl Residential.

Thursday, Council also received the first annual report on Victoria's Housing Strategy. Over the past year –and despite the COVID-19 pandemic – the City has made significant strides in achieving its housing goals and is on track to achieve its target that 50 per cent of all new housing is affordable to people with moderate and lower incomes. In addition, there are of currently nearly 900 non-market affordable and below-market homes either in development or in the approval process.

While progress is being made, more work is still needed to improve housing choice and affordability. In 2020, the City completed a housing gap analysis that reinforced the importance of accelerating the development of affordable housing in neighbourhoods across the city.

In response, the City has created a new and expanded set of housing targets to meet growing demand and catch up to the already existing need. The City plans to create approximately 1,450 new affordable non-market homes over the next six years, as part of a total of 3,900 new homes across all housing types.

“The annual housing report shows progress towards creating more diverse and inclusive housing that people across a range of incomes can afford,” said Mayor Helps. “Everyone deserves a good home. And, by building homes close to work, schools and amenities, we’re creating a sustainable, compact and healthy community.”

Victoria’s Housing Strategy includes a 44-point action plan to increase housing choice and affordability and provides guidance for housing policies and initiatives to meet the needs of residents across the full range of housing options. This includes non-market housing, affordable rentals, market rental housing and affordable or entry-level ownership.

To learn more about Victoria’s Housing Strategy, visit: victoria.ca/housing

To view the public hearing and presentation to Council click [here](#)

—30—

For More Information:

Bill Eisenhauer
Head of Engagement
City of Victoria
250.858.1061
beisenhauer@victoria.ca