

Backgrounder

The City of Victoria's new state-of-the-art, post-seismic Victoria Fire Department Headquarters is located at 1025 Johnson Street.

The new 3,762 square-metre (40,500 square-foot) downtown facility replaces the 2,480 square-metre (26,700 square-foot) former Fire and Rescue headquarters on Yates Street that has served Victoria since 1959.

The new public safety building was built under an agreement with local developer Dalmatian Developments Limited Partnership. The fire hall is part of a new 12-storey, mixed-use development that includes 130 units of purpose-built, affordable homes for low- and moderate-income seniors, families and individuals, and is operated by Pacifica Housing.

The City owns the first three levels of the building where the Victoria Fire Department operates. With funding from BC Housing, Pacifica Housing owns and operates the top eight storeys of the building. There is also a single level of commercial office space on the fourth level.

In addition, BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) will occupy 297 square metres (3,200 square feet) of space from the City to operate a stand-alone, two-ambulance bay, downtown location for paramedics under a planned 20-year lease agreement.

The new public safety facility meets BC Building Code standards for buildings designed to remain operable post disaster. This means it was built to a seismic design load that is significantly higher than typical buildings.

This is one of the largest mixed-use fire hall developments of its kind in Canada that combines affordable housing and fire department operations.

Features and Benefits

The new public safety building includes the following:

- six bays for Victoria Fire Department apparatus
- a decontamination room with a state-of-the art ventilation system
- Victoria's first purpose-built Emergency Operations Centre
- the Department's Administration, Fire Prevention, Training, Suppression and Emergency Management divisions
- individual dorms are more gender inclusive, providing privacy and quiet space; additional dorms are available to accommodate future growth in fire suppression operations

Downtown is growing with more buildings, workers and residents. The new facility meets current and future needs for an urban fire hall and rescue centre.

In 2022, the Victoria Fire Department performed 3,365 life safety inspections, provided community safety education to 5,439 attendees and responded to 9,481 emergency incidents.

This new location provides valuable access to primary north-south (Cook Street) and east-west (Johnson/Pandora/Yates Streets) emergency response routes and meets the industry standard for a four-minute response to all areas of the city.

As part of this project, traffic pre-emption was installed for the intersection of Johnson and Cook. This traffic control system clears the intersection heading east, north and south and allows fire trucks and ambulances to leave the facility and the immediate area, minimizing the need to activate sirens.

The City will be exploring the future use of 1234 Yates Street. In the meantime, it will continue to support the fleet maintenance needs of the Fire Department for the next two years.

Project Completion and Costs

The project was delivered on time and on budget. The project cost of \$35.9 million was paid for through available funds in the City's Debt Reduction Reserve. There is no property tax impact and no grants required from senior levels of government.

Timeline

- April 2023 – The Victoria Fire Department moves into new public safety building.
- April 2021 – A construction milestone is achieved: the level one concrete pouring for eight bays (six bays for Victoria Fire Department; two separate bays for BC Ambulance)
- October 2019 – Following a public hearing, Council votes to approve a rezoning application, a development permit application and an Official Community Plan amendment to increase density and add residential uses for a phased development that includes four development areas with four main buildings (12, 14, 15 and 17 storeys).
- March 2018 – City announces that a new Victoria public safety building will be built downtown under an agreement with local developer Dalmatian Developments Limited Partnership, a Jawl Residential and Nadar Holdings Ltd. venture. City Council authorizes the funds.
- February 2016 – City Council directs staff to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the replacement of the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters, with the intent of providing a multi-use facility that minimizes the cost to the taxpayer. Interested parties have the option of proposing a new facility be built at the current site at 1234 Yates Street, across the street at the City-owned property at 1240 Yates Street or at a new property. The City receives three submissions. Upon evaluation, City Council directs staff to enter negotiations with Dalmatian Developments as their proposal has the greatest potential to generate the best overall value to the City.

- April 2015 – The City embarks on a three-stage procurement process to replace or refurbish the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters. An initial nine-week market sounding process takes place. The City is open to all ideas, the more creative the better, and uses a non-traditional approach to determine what interest may exist within the private, public and non-profit sectors in partnering with the City of Victoria on this initiative. During the market sounding process, the City is in contact with a number of groups who express initial interest. The market sounding process is purely explorative at this stage and there is no commitment to any potential proponent or to dispose of or acquire land.

Victoria Fire Department – Snapshot

- The Victoria Fire Department has a proud and distinguished history of protecting its citizens dating back to 1858.
- It was the first career fire department established west of Toronto and north of San Francisco. Fast forward to today – it proudly delivers fire and rescue services, fire prevention education and emergency management to the Capital City of the province of British Columbia.
- 121 professionals provide a multitude of fire rescue and emergency management services in the following divisions: Fire Suppression and Rescue, Fire Prevention, Administration, Emergency Management, Training and Staff Development and Fleet Maintenance.
- The Victoria Fire Department has three fire stations which house important fire fighting apparatus, vehicles and administrative offices to serve the community. The three fire stations are located in the following Victoria neighbourhoods:
 - Headquarters/Fire Station No. 1 – Downtown (1025 Johnson Street)
 - Fire Station No. 2 – James Bay (650 Michigan Street)
 - Fire Station No. 3 – Hillside Quadra (740 Bay Street)
- The fleet also includes two fire boats.