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Fernwood Village Design Guidelines

Victoria 2050 OCP Schedule 2I

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1. Introduction

1.1 Importance

Fernwood Village is the heart of the Fernwood neighbourhood, and a local and regional destination for arts, culture and dining. Its unique and human scaled heritage buildings and eclectic mix of restaurant patios, shops, arts and culture venues and organizations, frame and activate the public realm as a series of intimate and pedestrian oriented outdoor rooms. The renowned and iconic Belfry Theatre is a popular regional destination and neighbourhood landmark. The adjacent Fernwood Square is a popular neighbourhood gathering place and a venue for community events and festivals including the popular Fern Fest.

Fernwood, originally known as Spring Ridge, is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, who have lived on Southern Vancouver Island for thousands of years. Their presence on and relationship with the land continues to this day. The original neighbourhood name is a reference to the springs and streams which used to mark the area, and provided the first source of drinking water for the city. The present-day name is derived from assistant colonial surveyor Benjamin Pearse's 1861 manor house and estate, which he called Fernwood. The estate, and others like it, made up the majority of the neighbourhood before being subdivided into the Fernwood of today, beginning in the 1880s. This subdivision created a mix of homes and residents, with worker's cottages located alongside grand homes.

Gladstone Avenue and Fernwood Road.

The Emmanuel Baptist Church on the corner of Fernwood and Gladstone and the terminus of the streetcar line in what is now Fernwood Square instigated the development of the Village as the centre for community life, where institutions such as the church as well as local businesses including Rennie and Taylor Bakery and Fernwood Pharmacy were all located. The church is now the Belfry Theatre, serving as a draw to the Village and an integral part of the culture and vibrancy of the diverse community. The surrounding buildings remain home to a variety of local businesses and community organizations, and the gazebo in the centre of the square serves as a common meeting point for friends attending a play or going for dinner, and even for the neighbourhood's teenagers.

Fernwood Village is made up of a cluster of well maintained, intact and regionally significant heritage buildings centred on the intersection of Fernwood Avenue and Gladstone Street. Fernwood Village is designated as a Heritage Conservation Area in the Official Community Plan, due to its value as a historic small urban village that serves as a commercial and community hub for the urban and traditional residential areas surrounding it. A number of the properties within the boundaries of the Heritage Conservation Area have been recognized by the City of Victoria as being individually significant through inclusion in the City of Victoria Register of Heritage Properties. A handful of these properties are also formally protected through heritage designation bylaws.

As the Village and the surrounding neighbourhood grow and develop, it is important to retain the character that led to the Village's designation in the first place. Well designed new construction that is sensitive to the historic character, form and scale of the Village and its surroundings has the potential to enhance what makes this place special.

Emmanuel Baptist Church, ca. 1890.

2. Context

2.1 Statement of Significance

The following section is a Statement of Significance for Fernwood Village and the immediate surrounding area.

Purpose of A Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance is a summary of the historical, cultural, aesthetic, scientific or educational worth or usefulness of an historic place, whether it is an individual property or an area. It contains a description of the historic place and its key features, a summary of the area's heritage values and a list of character-defining elements. Character-defining elements are the aspects of an historic area that contribute to its heritage value and that should be retained in order to preserve this value. The guidelines in Chapter 5 should be interpreted with reference to the character defining elements and Statement of Significance.

Fernwood Village Statement of Significance

Fernwood Village is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and is the commercial and community hub for Fernwood and has been since the neighbourhood's origins. Today, Fernwood Village with the Belfry Theatre as its focal point, is also a regional destination for arts and culture. As such it has incredible social and cultural value to the neighbourhood, city and region as a whole. The orientation of the buildings centering around the square and the spire of the Belfry Theatre as a focal point and a draw into the space all foster the Village's role as a focal point for community life and public gathering. The buildings around the square host a diverse array of local businesses in ground floor commercial space with residential units above, making the Village a place where residents live and work, and come to spend their free time.

The Village also has architectural value. The commercial building styles and their positioning around the square with the church buildings as a focal point are reminiscent of village squares common throughout the United Kingdom at the end of the 19th century. The use of masonry as the primary construction material in the commercial buildings, three-part façades with a defined lower, middle and upper section, the buildings' location and orientation directly on the street frontage with no setback, and the rich and varied façades and pedestrian oriented shop fronts, all reinforce this association while contributing to a unique and cohesive village fabric.

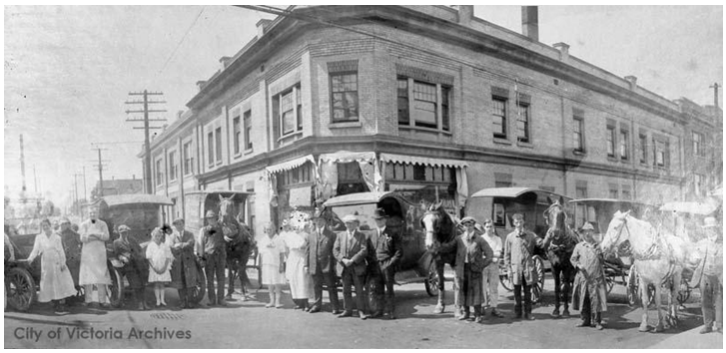
The human scale and pedestrian orientation of the buildings further define the Village as being a place for people, and more local and community-centered in scale. The Belfry Theatre, with its bell tower, spire, and wood siding, provides contrast in form and scale to other buildings in the village, creating a prominent and distinctive village landmark and firmly locating the square in its civic and colonial context. The transition from the surrounding residential neighbourhood to the Village further underpins this context, going from predominantly wood construction one or two storey homes setback from the street to a continuous masonry street wall of commercial buildings. This sudden transition is one of the key elements that sets Fernwood Village apart from other urban villages in Victoria.

2.2 Character Defining Elements

The following building elements are provided as a general representation of the range of architectural features and expressions that are evident in Fernwood Village in both heritage and non-heritage buildings.

These character-defining elements provide the basis for the related design guidelines outlined in this document and include:

- Orientation of buildings including primary entries and façades, towards and centering on the square and branching from it.
- Sudden transition when entering the Village from primarily wood construction buildings setback from the street to a continuous street wall of masonry buildings with chamfered/splayed building corners at street intersections.
- Views of the Belfry Theatre's spire serving as a landmark, focal point and visual terminus from the North, South, East and West.
- Primary use of high-quality masonry construction, predominantly brick or with brick accents.
- Classically inspired three-part building façades with a clearly defined base, middle and top.
- Vertical façades expressed by use of vertical elements and proportions including structural bays, and punched openings, including upper storey double-hung windows.
- Highly transparent and articulated ground floors incorporating recessed (raked) commercial entryways with large front display windows with multi-panelled bulkheads (window base) and continuous transom windows.
- Well crafted façade ornamentation and detailing.
- Low-scale buildings ranging from one- to three-storeys in height.



Two-part panorama of the staff at the Rennie and Taylor Bakery, ca. 1920

3. How to Use the Guidelines

The guidelines are a resource for designers, architects and property owners who are actively planning or considering a new building or addition to an existing building located within the Fernwood Village and Development Permit Area. They are also an evaluation tool for City staff and municipal decision makers reviewing proposals. The purpose of the guidelines is to clarify how to achieve the broad objectives for the Fernwood Village heritage conservation area. Designers, architects and property owners should reference the guidelines and consider the following questions before undertaking or planning any design work related to new buildings or building additions within Fernwood Village:

- How closely does the design adhere to the principles and intent of the guidelines?
- Where does it depart from the principles and intent of the guidelines and why?
- Does the design respond to the statement of significance and character-defining elements?

Design Guideline Structure

The design guidelines provide a range of baseline guiding statements that are intended to be used together to ensure that the design of new buildings or additions to existing buildings result in built forms that are complementary to the context of Fernwood Village and that reflect the design principles outlined in this document.

They provide detailed design intent, criteria and a rationale to guide, evaluate and support decision making on the overall form and character of new buildings and additions. Projects may also be subject to other guidelines depending on the zoning, proposed uses, location, building type and scale of project.

Each design topic is supplemented by an intent statement that describes the overall desired outcome followed by specific design guidelines. Each design topic is also supplemented with photographs and/or illustrations that support the intent statement and that provide examples of how the design guidelines can be implemented. Design guidelines should also be considered with the statement of significance and character-defining elements described in Section 2.

Applicants should clearly demonstrate compliance with all of the applicable design guidelines; however, it is also recognized that the ability to fully meet each design guideline may be influenced by land use, lot size, topography and the overall complexity of the development.

4. Design Principles

The following design principles provide the basis for the design guidelines in Chapter 5, which seek to ensure that new buildings and additions are responsive and complementary to the existing historic character, local topography, urban design and sense of place that is evident throughout Fernwood Village.

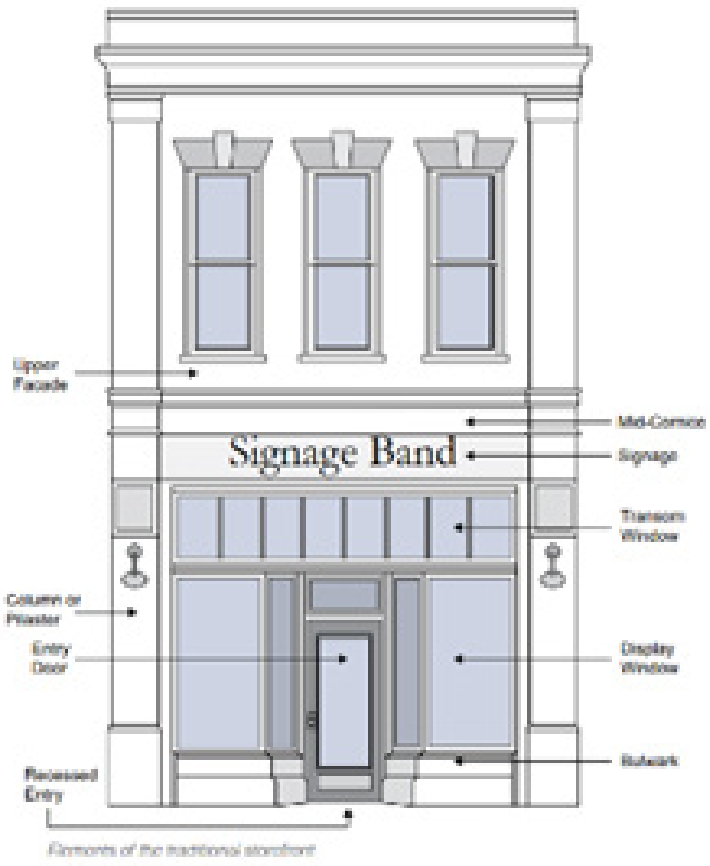
Good Fit: to foster infill building designs that respect, complement and contribute positively to the historic context of Fernwood Village while encouraging innovative, creative and timeless design solutions.

Reinforce Existing Character: to ensure that new buildings contribute and do not detract from the established character of the area.

Human Scale: to create visual interest and a comfortable environment for pedestrians by providing appropriately scaled building mass, articulating façades and incorporating a range of detailed building elements at street level.

Cohesiveness: to ensure that new buildings have a unified architectural composition that relates well to the fronting street and reflects the internal function and use.

Authenticity: to ensure that new buildings are distinguishable from the genuinely historic buildings of Fernwood Village (See Standard 11, Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada), while being sympathetic and compatible to their proportions, mass, scale and rhythm.



5. Design Guidelines for New Buildings and Additions

5.1 Building Form, Scale and Orientation

Intent: To ensure the design of new buildings and additions complements the form, scale, height and street wall pattern of nearby heritage buildings and the immediate context.

Guidelines

5.1.1 Within the boundary of the established Village, locate and site new buildings and additions to create a continuous 'street wall edge' consistent with the established street wall pattern. In the area directly adjacent to the established Village where new commercial and mixed use development is envisioned, locate and site new buildings and additions to achieve a minimum 4 metres from the curb to the face of building.

5.1.2 Design new buildings and additions to reflect the established proportions, composition and spatial organization of adjacent historic façades.

5.1.3 Design new buildings and additions in such a way as to preserve views of the Belfry Theatre's spire, including limiting height or utilizing stepbacks for upper storeys if necessary.

5.1.4 Include a distinct roof line in the building design, through such measures as a simplified or contemporary cornice or parapet.

5.1.5 Modulate the overall horizontal and/or vertical building mass on large buildings to reflect the pattern of structural bays, windows and entryways of adjacent heritage buildings.

5.2 Building to Street Interface

Intent: To ensure new buildings contribute to the established street rhythm and reflect the historic streetscape pattern. Buildings should relate positively to the fronting public street or open space and support pedestrian activity and achieve human scale.

Guidelines

5.2.1 For commercial and mixed-use buildings, incorporate frequent entryways at a spacing that reflects the pattern and frequency of entryways in adjacent heritage buildings.

5.2.2 Punctuate and emphasize entryways by incorporating recesses and a high level of design detail in the façade and ground plane.

5.2.3 Incorporate a rhythm of structural bays, windows, and features.

5.2.4 Articulate façades, especially for larger buildings, into a series of intervals, using vertically proportioned windows and bays, to reflect and fit within the established streetscape pattern.

Cornerstone Building, 1301-1313 Gladstone (Fernwood NRG) Victoria, BC, built 1910-11.

This historic building is a good example of many of the features listed in 5.2, including façade composition, punched windows, transparent shopfronts and recessed entries.

5.2.5 Provide windows, doors and other architectural elements that are of a scale and proportion similar to the historic architectural pattern and that are designed to support the functional needs of existing and future businesses and residents.

5.2.6 Incorporate punched windows with vertical proportions in upper storeys to reflect the general pattern of structural bays in adjacent heritage buildings.

5.2.7 Design shopfront entryways with a high level of transparent glazing along the street level.

5.2.8 Consider recessed entryways with unique designs and finishes such as transom windows, use of trim details for windows and doors, and attractive finishing materials on entryway flooring.

5.2.9 Incorporate small setbacks for portions of the façade at street level to accommodate sidewalk cafés, patios and other outdoor seating areas that support animation of the street.

5.2.10 Reflecting the existing pattern, maintain a 4m minimum ground floor height to support ground floor commercial uses.

5.2.11 Ensure that the design and finish of the underside of balconies and soffits are considered and integrated with the overall building design.

5.2.12 Vary the planes and textures of storefronts to be similar to nearby heritage buildings.

5.2.13 Design façades with architectural details and materials that create shadows and depth to achieve a three-dimensional quality.

5.3 Weather Protection, Signage and Lighting

Intent: To ensure weather protection, signage and lighting complement and enhance the fabric and proportions of the street without negative visual impact.

Guidelines

5.3.1 Integrate planned or future lighting and weather protection features to complement the building design and fenestration pattern.

5.3.2 Provide architecturally designed lighting elements that are appropriate for the use and scale of the building.

5.3.3 Use lighting to highlight building features and illuminate the public realm while avoiding over illuminating the building or projecting light into the sky or onto adjacent properties.

5.3.4 Incorporate pedestrian-scale lighting along the length of the building face.

5.3.5 Control the intensity and impact of building and signage lighting through dimming and variation in colours.

1310 Gladstone Avenue (Christine Lintott Architects/ Fernwood NRG) Victoria, BC.
The awning, signage and lighting on this new building are complimentary to the overall building design and pedestrian scaled.

5.3.6 Design and orient commercial signs so that they are scaled to pedestrians and do not overwhelm the building façade.

5.3.7 Limit commercial signage in number, location and size to reduce visual clutter and make individual signs easier to see.

5.3.8 Avoid commercial signage above the ground storey.

5.3.9 Preferred sign types for Fernwood include projecting two-dimensional or 'blade' type signs, externally lit signs, external neon signs and small neon signs inside windows, and restored historic sidewall signs.

5.3.10 Back-lit plastic box signs are strongly discouraged and should be avoided.

5.3.11 Minimize the visual impact of security features such as movable gates or roll-down doors by insetting such features into the storefront bay opening.

1308 Gladstone Ave., Victoria, BC.
The awning, signage and lighting on this historic building are complimentary to the overall building design and pedestrian scaled.

5.4 Façade Composition

Intent: To ensure that new building façades and additions create balance with, and relate positively to, adjacent and nearby heritage buildings.

Guidelines

5.4.1 Distinguish and define the building base, middle and top through façade articulation (projections and recesses), architectural elements or changes in proportions, materials, and finishes.

5.4.2 Ensure that façade elements such as storey levels, doors, and windows reflect a balanced proportion with respect to their placement, relative height, width and size.

5.4.3 Maintain a generally consistent building wall or build-to-line along the sidewalk edge with added setbacks to accommodate wider sidewalks, patio seating, and door or display zones (see guidelines 5.1.1 and 5.2.9 above).

5.4.4 Generally align floor heights, mid-cornice lines, window sills and top edges with those of adjacent heritage buildings.

5.4.5 Provide varied roof lines across different buildings to create visual interest along the street.

5.4.6 Incorporate repetitive structural bays with punched window openings in a vertical proportion.

5.4.7 On corner lots, consider a chamfered building edge or ground floor with a doorway, opening or other architectural feature to enhance the corner location. Alternatively, consider a small plaza or seating area.

5.4.8 Windows and window openings should be of similar proportion, recess, and alignment to the original windows in the historic context.

5.4.9 Blank walls that face public streets and open spaces are strongly discouraged and should be avoided. Where unavoidable, blank walls should be screened or enhanced with design elements appropriate to the context.

5.4.10 Locate and screen roof top structures and mechanical equipment so that they are not visible from the public realm.

1215 Broad Street, Victoria, BC
This new building has a defined base, middle and top, and vertical proportions.

4198 Main Street, Vancouver, BC
This new building has a defined base, middle and top, and vertically-proportioned window opening that fit a historic context.

5.5 Materials and Finishes

Intent: To ensure materials, colours and textures are complementary to those found in Fernwood Village.

Guidelines

5.5.1 Incorporate high quality, durable materials into buildings, façades and additions. Masonry construction and cladding is encouraged for commercial and mixed-use buildings within the Village.

5.5.2 Avoid the extensive use of highly reflective materials.

5.5.3 Use materials with textures and patterns that are visually interesting.

5.5.4 Avoid the use of paint on previously unpainted brick or masonry.

5.5.6 Use high-quality materials for canopies and awnings such as metal, wood, woven fabric, canvas or glass.

5.5.7 Use exterior materials and paint colours that reflect local heritage palettes (refer to municipal staff for specific guidance).

Fernwood Square

The majority of the historic buildings in Fernwood Square are masonry buildings, built with high quality materials and featuring a variety of textures and patterns.

Fernwood Village

Outside of the core village area, buildings are characterized by varied natural materials including wooden siding, posts and pillars.

5.6 Universal Accessible Design and Safety

Intent: To ensure that developments are safe and universally accessible to people of all abilities.

Guidelines

5.6.1 A high standard of accessibility in site, building and landscape design is encouraged to address the needs of all users, including people who have disabilities.

5.6.2 Disabled access should be appropriately designed and clearly visible from the main entrance, not relegated to a secondary building frontage for the sake of architectural convenience.

5.6.3 When provided, access ramps and related elements should be visually integrated with the overall building design and site plan so as to not appear disjointed from the building façade.

5.6.4 Smooth routes should be provided. Vertical disruptions along pedestrian routes should be avoided for ease of use by people with wheeled mobility devices, strollers, and bicycles.

5.6.5 Landscaping should be accessible for people with varying levels of ability and mobility.

5.6.6 Ensure accessible paths of travel between public sidewalks and pedestrian areas to common building entries.

5.6.7 Exterior accessible paths of travel should:

a. have a minimum clear width of 1.5m, to allow room for mobility devices and service animals going both ways along a path.
b. have a minimum head room clearance of 2.1m, to ensure paths are free of obstacles overhead that white canes cannot detect.
c. have firm, stable, and slip-resistant surfaces that canes, crutches, or the wheels of mobility devices will not sink into.
d. be free of stairs or other barriers to mobility aids.

5.6.8 Smooth walking surfaces are preferred. Where interlocking pavers are used, they should be laid on a firm, well-compacted backing (e.g., concrete base) be level, and with joints no greater than 6mm wide.

5.6.9 Gratings or grills should generally be located to one side of accessible paths of travel.

5.6.10 Any change in the level of a path should have a slope or ramp. Similarly, sidewalks with steep or depressed curbs should have curb ramps.

5.6.11 Accessible paths of travel should have a minimum number of curb cuts to keep the accessible path of travel as level as possible.

5.6.12 Where steeply sloping landscaped areas are located adjacent to pedestrian routes and where slope exceeds 3:1 (horizontal to vertical), a clear boundary edge; such as an up-stand curb or retaining wall, (minimum 150mm high) is desirable as a locational aid for persons who have visual limitations.

5.6.13 Common building entryways should be clearly lit and be fully accessible.

5.6.14 Benches, bike racks, bins and other furnishings should be located to one side of accessible entryways and pathways, and maintain a minimum pathway clear zone of 1.5m.

5.6.15 Benches should be mounted on a firm and level base, with space made available beside the bench for at least one person using a wheelchair or scooter with a minimum hard surface clearance area of 1.0m by 1.2m.

5.6.16 Signage should generally be designed using highly visible and contrasting colours.

5.6.17 Accessible entrances should provide basic protection from the weather and include doors and vestibules that are useable autonomously by persons with varying disabilities.

5.6.18 Main entrance doors and other accessible entrance and exit doors should be a minimum of 915mm wide to allow safe passage of persons who use mobility aids.

5.6.19 Entryways should be well light and clearly visible.

5.6.20 In buildings where there is a significant amount of glazing at grade, it is recommended that door frames be clearly colour differentiated to aid in locating the entrance.

5.6.21 Provide common spaces that are accessible to users of different abilities (e.g., areas for seating, gardening).

5.6.22 Incorporate the following Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in site planning and landscape design for increased safety:

a. Design for visibility by others (seeing and being seen).

b. Avoid entrapment spots (small areas shielded on three sides).

c. Provide lighting (others' faces should be visible and blinding glare avoided).

d. Maintain sightlines (ability to see the route ahead and open spaces from buildings).

5.7 Rooftop Additions

Intent: Ensure additions to buildings with heritage merit are compatible with Fernwood Village and maintain the prominence of the Belfry Theatre spire.

Guidelines

5.7.1 Rooftop additions should be generally avoided on buildings with heritage merit because of the unique, intact and small-footprint nature of the hsitoric core of Fernwood VIllage, and the prominence of the Belfry Theatre spire viewed from the public realm.

5.7.2 Where it can be demonstrated that a rooftop addition can help conserve or enhance a building with heritage merit, ensure the rooftop addition is compatible, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic façade, and minimize its visibility from the public realm.

5.7.3 When integrated, ensure new rooftop additions are designed sensitively to enable conservation of the entire historic building along with its original window openings and interior configurations to the greatest extent possible.

5.7.4 Combine the design of a new rooftop addition with the enhancement of the historic building through the restoration of missing original building features and the maintenance of existing features.

5.7.5 Minimize the detailing and articulation of rooftop additions and consider using simple forms and a subdued colour scheme in the same family as the dominant colour of the historic building.

5.7.6 Use high quality and durable materials.

5.7.7 Design and locate balcony railings, plantings, mechanical equipment, furniture or any other structures associated with a new addition so that they are minimally visible when viewed from the adjacent street.

5.7.8 Rooftop additions should be physically smaller in scale than the building they are connected to.

5.7.9 Rooftop additions should be stepped back from the primary façade a minimum 4m and further if necessary to preserve views of the Belfry Theatre's spire.

5.7.10 Use a less dominant colour or lighter shade of colour to reinforce the hierarchical relationship between the two buildings.

5.7.11 Design new rooftop additions with contemporary materials and finishes.

5.7.12 Use a slightly different ratio of solid to transparent materials than the historic building.

5.7.13 Incorporate setbacks from street-facing elevations to maintain the distinction between old and new construction.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