

Q&A and Comments from Community Info Session 1693 Fort Street Project – Aryze Developments Jan 11, 2020 | Zoom Meeting 7-9pm

This is a summary of public questions & (developer) answers, along with other comments (recorded in the zoom chat box), from a community meeting, held on zoom, about 1693 Fort Street. The meeting was hosted by Aryze Developments, in collaboration with South Jubilee Neighbourhood Association (SJNA). The development is a 6 storey 23-unit student rental proposed for 1693 - 1699 Fort Street. This Aryze proposal would consist of 12 4-bedroom pods, 4 3-bedroom pods and 7 2-bedroom pods. The building would be at the southwest corner of Fort and Belcher where there are presently 4 row houses.

In Attendance

- **SJNA CALUC Committee:** Ben Ziegler (Moderator), Gail Anthony, and Kathleen Laird (Recorder), Jean Johnson (NJNA CALUC)
- **City of Victoria,** Chelsea Medd
- **ARYZE Developments,** Carly Abrahams, Development Manager
- **D'Ambrosio Architecture,** Erica Sangster
- **47 members of the public**

Questions/Answers

Students

Q: How is this building going to be guaranteed student housing? How is it possible to not have people other than students living here if not affiliated with any school? **A:** We are following a model used across Canada and still working on the details. Speaking with post secondary institutions about partnerships.

Q: I'm not satisfied with the response to my initial question about how this will be guaranteed student housing. Is there a chance that after this building is built it will be used as something other than student housing? **A:** This project is intended for students. The style would not work for other types of rentals.

Q: Is it only for students? Once someone graduates, they are no longer allowed to rent there? Who will monitor and enforce that? **A:** Only for students and we are looking at different models already in place. We would require income qualifications and proof of registration.

Q: Are the units for grad or undergrad students? Is the project solely targeted to international students or would domestic students be eligible tenants as well? **A:** Will be open to any student and for both domestic and international students enrolled in a local post secondary school.

Q: Did Aryze consult with UVic given they are building residences right now? **A:** Yes, discussions with UVic and will continue to talk further. Still require more housing even with the new UVic housing underway. This is a missing demographic and will be looking to fill this gap.

Q: I am concerned about a transient student population that is primarily homogeneous and not reflective of the “diversity” of population this project stresses. **A:** The students will be vibrant and diverse. When they come to Victoria for school it will still be home while they are here, and we want to make it feel like home to foster education.

Q: What type of market research was conducted with international students that led Aryze to believe this is the kind of housing they would want to rent? **A:** We have been working with other organizations to understand the needs of international students. We have approx. 7000 international students in Victoria. New students are paired with other students to create a buddy system and create community within the building.

Q: Who will manage this building? **A:** We are looking at various options and models in other locations. We have further research to do but we know of various successful models used in other places.

Q: Who will be managing the building, and will there be a live-in manager? Student housing (if it is indeed only students), has certain management challenges. **A:** We are aware of this and have been working closely with organizations that manage other sites. Tenant selection may help. We aim to design a program that works, and success is our mandate. Not just design but working with the community is something we take seriously. We are looking for the most effective model.

Q: What is the plan for the units during school breaks? **A:** Our research shows that students stay and do not want to give up units during breaks and love to stay in Victoria. Many options for summer programs and possibly of those students using them. If students leave will sub-let through the management agency and will come up with creative options to give back to the students. There was talk of Airbnb as a model and students could offer up the room and would receive a portion of the profits.

Q: Will there be a limit to the number of residents in each pod? If so, how will it be enforced? **A:** Yes, only one occupant in each bedroom and one bed. Management of building will oversee.

Q: Is there a financial advantage to limit it to students? **A:** There is a gap in the marketplace for students. We want to see housing for all types but there is a need for students. Many taking up valuable space in single family homes right now. This project could free up that space and address the lack of affordable student housing.

Transportation

Q: What makes Aryze think this neighbourhood is “car lite”? **A:** This site has good access to bus transport outside the door and with access to post secondary between 10-20min. Modo in place in neighbourhood and will be on site. Students can’t afford vehicles and parking at school is expensive. Bus passes part of tuition. Bike score for this area is 93.

Q: With 75 rooms, why 85 bike stalls? Could bike parking be more creative and maybe two level or more parking spaces? **A:** We expect visitors to arrive more on bike than car and that is why

we only have 7 car visitor spaces. Cars are not primary for students as on campus parking rates are high. Average rates per day of \$15 for off campus/\$8 for on campus students. Modo is \$4/hr to rent.

Q: Does that mean that Aryze will pay for Modo for decades, or what does that mean? **A:** Yes, we will be paying for it approx. \$39,000, like a coop style. Each share is \$500 and will stay with the room and building. Students will pay for time used at \$4/hr to a max of \$48/day. Also, students get a UPass as part of tuition fees that gives access to the bus.

Q: I'm looking for what analysis on traffic impact has actually been done. **A:** We have worked with engineers and transportation experts to analysis neighbourhood and demand from university at peak times. Studies show that bus will be the main form of transport and students use the bus pass. Bus routes 11/14/15 in front of building and 10-20 min to most universities. Useability is high. Bike use will be high esp when bikes routes established. Future applications will include full transport studies and will be available to the public.

Q: Bike theft is a huge problem in Victoria. What are the planned security measures to keep thieves out of the bike lock-up? **A:** There will be internal bike parking inside, accessed with a fob to the bike storage. We will follow crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) protocols looking at lighting, viewpoints, and fobbed entry.

Design

Q: Why is this building 6 storeys high? All the other surrounding buildings are only 4 storeys high. **A:** Under the OCP this area can have buildings up to 6 stories. Many of the buildings in area from the 60's/70's. As the area develops there is a need to increase density and not under build. We have a housing shortage and as land costs increase, we need to utilize sites to full potential. Most new development will be multi unit residential buildings (MURB). A balancing act with thoughtful density which we feel we have found a balance. It is in keeping with current precedence with other MURU.

Q: Your images show the building with a larger than 0.745m from the edge, the set back is smaller than on your images. **A:** setback correct. Set back is .745m. window bay. Corner of the bay window will mark the entrance. Set looks small technically.

Q: What does that mean "meets the era into which it was designed?" **A:** Maximize the potential of new developments as the City allows 6 stories and it is expected the future developments will see increases in building heights. We are the first.

Q: Does this project require the creation of a new zoning type? **A:** Zoning type will be site specific with a variance for setback and density (?)

Q: What type and vintage for the "4 proposed replacement trees"? **A:** We are working closely with the city of Victoria and they have reviewed the trees and we will select them from the City recommended tree list. It is likely that the road will be widened, and the City is satisfied with the placement so far. We would like to see Black Cherry Plum. These are shorter and will not interfere with power lines.

Q: Wheelchair accessible units? **A:** No, as there are many wheelchair accessible units in the city. All doors and access will be to code and wheelchair access into building and movement within.

Q: Are these units furnished? **A:** Yes, with a single bed, closet, desk, bathroom or shared, living spaces with furnishing. Similar to other student designed accommodations.

Q: What led the exterior design to look like a modernist disorganized bookshelf, rather than design to look like a Victorian mansion, craftsman style, or a modern version of the Bank Street School? **A:** We feel that it will be the appropriate scale and expression of use and will define the street frontage over time as Fort St develops and becomes denser and widened. We gave thought to human interest and scale, materials, pattern, definition of the ground floor. Looked at other buildings in area that are neutral with brick, wood, and soft colors. Picked up on the neutral pallet with warm light greys, charcoal, metal cladding and texture.

Q: I've heard both that it blends with current buildings and that it will blend with future buildings. I'm unsure of how both of these can be true, can you please clarify? **A:** OCP looks to increase density to 6 stories. Our N/S profiles with taper down to 4 stories. Façade will fit with neighbourhood and a balance of materials with muted neutral tones to match current buildings, and seamless materials such as brick/stucco.

Q: What type of climate-friendly features are included (green roof, water conservation, no fossil fuels used)? **A:** Will be at Step 3 within BC Step Code (1-5) and industry standards. Will ensure reduction in carbon and energy efficiency. Balancing act and will be unique and will be doing energy models. Work is just starting on this and we will be including feedback. This is a pre application process and not require information at this stage, but we have already initiated this research.

Q: Will the foundation excavation require any blasting? **A:** No underground parkade. Need to do more study and that might show some minor rock possibly. Would require more engineering studies after the removal of the current buildings.

Q: Does the current pod design create any concerns regarding future need to maintain social distance and limited bubbles. **A:** Pods will be same as roommates and bubbles such as families. Not sure of future of covid currently.

Q: Would you consider upgrading the bare concrete at the base of the building to a finished surface such as stone or more ceraclad? Bare concrete in this area tends to grow a lot of green algae - see the recently build condo at 1531 Elford (by Stadacona park) as an example. **A:** Only a small amount of concrete on outside and accents with concrete, mostly glazing and will create a canvas for art.

Community and Infrastructure

Q: What is being arranged for tenants in existing building? **A:** Tenant relocation will be arranged by us. We will assist with finding new rental accommodation and moving expenses. Will work with the Tenant Assistance Program (TAP) through the City of Victoria and a tenant relocation coordinator will be assigned.

Q: What contribution to the City are you offering for the increased density and no parking? Eg. Halifax has a fee (over \$3000) for each parking stall not supplied! **A:** Will be paying the standard developer cost charges and other fees required.

Q: What is the forecasted cost of this building and is it the intention of Aryze to keep owning this building, or what is the plan as to ownership? **A:** Aryze will own this building long term. Possible partnerships with other organizations. We want to add value for residents and looking at reviewing other models. We are a company that cares, and we want the right fit and a project that works for the site and community.

Q: Aryze talks about lower rental rates. What will the rental rate for this building? **A:** This has not been determined yet. Will be in line with market rates for on campus housing.

Q: Is Aryze the developer/owner of the proposed project and title to the property? **A:** Conditional on Aryze choosing to move forward. We want to make sure the context works now and in the future with thoughtful density. OCP allows for increased density and allowances. Setbacks of 6th floor lessens height impact.

Q: Do you have data on how much rental housing units that rental students take from our housing market? **A:** There is approx. 5200 students and 7000 international students. 2/3 have no on campus housing and only 10% live on campus. Even with 600 new units coming on campus, purpose build student rentals will free up 74 spaces in other houses around Victoria.

Q: What about storm sewer and water lines on Fort St? **A:** Engineering and civil engineers would look at the infrastructure and outputs required to manage stormwater. We have McElhanney engineers working for us.

Q: What archaeological studies will be done before construction, assuming Aryze is successful in its building application. **A:** Will only be undertaken if required. If anything were found, we would follow provincial process. Experience shows most sites would be closer to the water.

Q: Can I have a review of the questions I sent you? Can we have a report out from this meeting please? **A:** A copy of the recorded session and notes from the meeting will be on the SJNA website. The development manager will respond directly to questions sent to her. If you have more questions, please contact Carly Abrahams at Aryze: 1839 Fairfield Rd. Victoria, BC, V8S 1G9, o: (250) 940-3568 Ext. 348, c: (250) 883-5675, w: <http://aryze.ca/>

Comments from Community Resident Attendees

- ✓ Not sure what you mean here when you use words like “fragmented neighbourhood” which is just a way to rationalize the increase in density. People and parking pressures. “Maximizing the potential of the property” are also slick words for more people and smaller spaces.
- ✓ Major concern is the lack of parking. Is not geared towards students, most do not have vehicles but what about the visitors and staff.
- ✓ There is a total of 3 modo cars within walking distance of this site. Garden works project is also doing Modo.
- ✓ This also sounds like Aryze will only pay for Modo for the first year. It appears that they are going to build, sell it off and then leave the neighbour hood to deal with the reality of this building.
- ✓ It’s naive to assume that students only bike. It will put huge pressures on street parking.
- ✓ Streets are already at capacity for parking.

- ✓ Modo will bring more cars to the area if usage goes up, and the building could be assigned dedicated cars if needed (our family uses modo cars)
- ✓ Yes, there is NO more room for anyone new for street parking. Fern street is already over capacity.
- ✓ This looks like the project presented for Duchess and Fort, which was not a popular design. Same slab sides. Like Jubilee Hospital?
- ✓ I doubt there is any room for the trees to grow on Fort street, 0.7 m to the sidewalk.
- ✓ Doesn't look like anything in the neighborhood.
- ✓ That's the other major concern I have (apart from the height), is the treatment for the trees.
- ✓ Want native trees of a similar vintage or cherry blossom trees to match the trees on Belcher.
- ✓ I have a family member who is a professor at UVic. She says students would love to have a place like this especially for their first year. Most would team up with people they meet and move into apartments for year 2. She also says almost none of her undergrad and grad students have cars.
- ✓ There is resident parking on Belcher, so I imagine students with vehicle will park there.
- ✓ Victoria NEEDS more student housing. This project is beneficial. Its not being built to meet your aesthetic preferences.
- ✓ I'm very much in agreement and support for student housing. The point of this meeting is for everyone to air their concerns, opinions, and feedback, positive or negative.
- ✓ I'm certainly not against student housing, I want to understand how it will be maintained as student only housing.
- ✓ I am also not opposed to student housing. Just wanting to understand the scope and scale, and impact to our neighborhood!
- ✓ Our tenants in the building next door will now be subject to noise from 74 students (loud music and coming and going all hours of the night)
- ✓ The project is far too large. The site coverage and density are 3 times the current allowable zoning.
- ✓ Sounds like a great development! We need more housing and student specific housing in this area of the city.
- ✓ I am curious why Aryze puts this project out as a sort of altruistic opportunity. I am sure that there must be some profit to be made otherwise why would Aryze bother with development?
- ✓ I think transient is a rather negative term to use, many students would love to stay in Victoria long term and (many do) but must move due to a lack of employment opportunities.
- ✓ I'm still stuck on the parking and density issues. The number of cyclist involved accidents in this city is statistically significant, especially those involving parking/parked vehicles. With younger or inexperienced drivers, this number only increases. Care Share rates per capita are elevated as well. In the past year, there have been three cyclist-involved accidents within a block, that I am aware of, and perhaps more.
- ✓ I respect the fact that ARYZE has used studies to gather auto ownership rates among students. With that said however, given that street parking is already completely saturated, and Fort has an abundance of bike traffic already, even if there is precisely zero auto ownership among residents of the building (obviously not enforceable and/or reasonable to enforce), is it responsible to be adding as much side-street traffic as this development potentially does on streets adjoining Fort?

- ✓ Regarding answers from the Aryze representative, respectfully, I'm not looking for a 'we think' or 'we believe' answer here, I'm looking for what analysis on traffic impact has actually been done.
- ✓ I can understand the business model, but I am struggling with 3 times site coverage to 60.4%, FSR 2.78:1 which is 26,802 sq. ft. while the current FSR is 1.2: 1 which equals 11,569 sq. ft. Why not reduce FSR and site coverage to conform to current zoning as per the OCP. It would be more appropriate that Aryze find a site which would be more acceptable to the scale of this development.
- ✓ This also sounds like Aryze will only pay for Modo for the first year. It appears that they are going to build, sell it off and then leave the neighbour hood to deal with the reality of this building. I am not against student housing but the “we believe” and “we are looking at 2-3 different options” doesn't sound good, too pie in the sky.
- ✓ I appreciate this presentation, but I would have appreciated more specific numbers and statistics presented as evidence attached to the reasoning behind decisions made in this plan.
- ✓ This is purely my perception, and certainly not a question, but there is a lot of "we think" or "we believe". I'm absolutely for this kind of housing in the right circumstances, when it has ongoing management and a good long-term plan. I would like to see what analysis has been done, and what the ARYZE's actual plans are here. Respectfully, without this kind of information, a presentation like this is premature.
- ✓ Agree with Chris' and other comments above regarding “we believe”. Is there going to be another meeting with factual answers?
- ✓ As a student, I think this is a great location. Victoria needs more housing and increasing density along major transit corridors like Fort Street has been identified as a priority by the City. 6 storeys on Fort Street seems perfectly reasonable.
- ✓ Not a fan of “sub-letting”.
- ✓ Sublets are entirely legal, many students must move home for the summers to save money and work elsewhere, regardless of opinion. “A landlord can't unreasonably refuse a sublet or assignment of a fixed-term tenancy agreement if there are six months or more remaining in the term.”
- ✓ My family housed international students for three years, but it was simply too challenging for our family. Most students left and found regular rental units, hence taking them away from Victoria families.
- ✓ Love the student specific housing option! Considering the tens of thousands of students in the Victoria area and the astronomical price of housing, as a former UVic student it's great to see something not specific to retirees or those with money already.
- ✓ Does it not make sense to encourage bike traffic as opposed to car traffic, which would also increase street parking? I'd argue students are less likely to have cars than those already in the workforce.
- ✓ Not sure how “Fort has an abundance of bike traffic already.”
- ✓ I repeat my earlier question and comments: I would like to see numbers and market research attached to how Aryze arrived at all of the assumptions they are making about student's rentals preferences, traffic patterns, etc. What I'm hearing is rather vague. I rented in this area as a student, so to me it's an obvious location, but I want some evidence as to why pod-style student housing is the best use of this location.
- ✓ Current precedent with multi family dwellings but ONLY to a height of four stories. Not 6 stories. Aryze wants to “maximize the potential of the site” just means higher density, higher parking pressures and more bikes and people.

- ✓ OCPs are continually updated as needs change, the current OCP was updated in 2012....9 years ago.
- ✓ To make the housing more affordable to students, I think a higher density site would offset the expense of the land while keeping rent prices lower. Less density = higher cost = less friendly to students that need affordable housing the most.
- ✓ Lots of good thought put into this concept. If the stated intent is to try to have affordable rent that will go a long way to show the basic project design has merit.
- ✓ The pandemic has shown the need for green space and large setbacks offer that with a shortage of park space.
- ✓ Black Cherry Plum trees are not native trees to Victoria.
- ✓ I believe UVic only guarantees on-campus housing for first year students.
- ✓ Thank you for the opportunity to see the presentation and the effort and time. It is appreciated.
- ✓ Many students are also being forced out of the city center in order to find affordable housing.