

Lapis Homes Ltd.  
4291 Oakfield Crescent Victoria, BC, V8X4W4  
Phone 250-413-7121  
[ryaniabs@laphomes.com](mailto:ryaniabs@laphomes.com)  
[www.laphomes.com](http://www.laphomes.com)



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Dear Mayor and Council,

We are the developers of this proposed six-two-bedroom unit townhouse project at 937 Colville Rd., and part of a small, family-run company called Lapis Homes. Our company has also proposed the 10-three-bedroom unit townhouse next door to this property, at 825 Lampson and 939 Colville, which is also making its way through rezoning.

We are writing to provide you with details about our proposal, as well as to let you know that we are available to meet with you if you'd like more information or have some specific questions about the project in advance of a council meeting.

### **Design Made for People**

937 Colville is approximately 7,000 square feet large and is currently zoned single family. As a single-family home, it's right between our proposed 10-unit development to the west, the Buddhist temple to the east, and the 18-unit townhouse development to the south and to the east. In addition, the municipality has an underground right of way running along the western three meters of the property.

We feel that we have come up with a proposal that works well for this lot and for the mix of housing in the neighbourhood – a proposal that will create people-sized, gentle density that is consistent with the Township's Official Community Plan.<sup>1</sup>

For example, the building is set closer to the sidewalk, with the entrances, great rooms, balconies and patios of the front units facing out – with the eyes of the residents oriented towards the street. And while a little different than some proposals, this type of design encourages residents to be more engaged with the daily activity of kids playing in the park across the street, and with neighbours and students walking by.

As noted on page 122 of the OCP, designing this way helps “create street activity and association among neighbours,” encouraging a healthier, safer and more engaged community.

In addition, moving the building closer to the street allows us to put people before their cars.

Traditionally, we've designed houses for cars, with larger setbacks that were used for pavement and parking, rather than for people. Moving the building towards the street allows us to tuck the parking in the back, hidden from view by the townhouse and landscaping (OCP – Pg 93, #5). This is not only more visually pleasing, it focuses the development around the people living there, rather than their cars.

<sup>1</sup> Esquimalt *Official Community Plan*, pgs 93-94 and 121 to 122  
[https://www.esquimalt.ca/sites/default/files/docs/business-development/OCP/2018/toe adopted official community plan 2018 0.pdf](https://www.esquimalt.ca/sites/default/files/docs/business-development/OCP/2018/toe%20adopted%20official%20community%20plan%202018%200.pdf)

### **The Official Community Plan, Form & Character:**

As noted above, this property is surrounded by a number of existing townhouses, as well as our proposed 10-unit development next door. In addition, both the current and the previous Official Community Plans designate this property as townhouse residential.

And while we're not proposing a cookie cutter box, these townhouses will have long-term appeal, fitting well with the buildings around it. Our Architect, Christine Lintott, has designed the building to look like many of the larger, character houses in the neighbourhood, taking elements of the neighbouring buildings into our design so that it fits quite nicely in the mix and style of housing in this small section of Colville.

For example, we've gone with gabled peaks, wood-like siding and shingles, large living room windows and traditional design elements, which match the form and character of the neighbourhood.

And at two-and-a-half storeys, the building will transition well from the proposed 3-storey development on the corner to the two-storey Buddhist temple next door.

### **Smaller homes, more options:**

This proposal will also provide a more affordable mix of new townhouse housing in the neighbourhood.

At 825 Lampson and 939 Colville next door, for example, we're proposing 10 family-style townhouses with three-bedrooms and a bonus flexroom. Those units will be great for established professionals with younger or growing families and are similar to the other townhouses and single-family buildings in the area.

But they're also twice as large, more expensive to build – and more expensive to buy.

These two-bedroom units will compliment and be more affordable than the larger three-bedroom townhouses next door. They'll also provide housing for a broader mix of people in the neighbourhood – such as young working professionals, with future plans for a family (whose options currently are moving to Langford or buying a condo), or for downsizing retirees.

We also believe these units will be well received by the Esquimalt (and the greater Victoria) market. For example, according to 2016 Statistics Canada data, 76% of homes in Esquimalt had only one or two people living in them. Despite the large percentage of one and two-person households, only 62% of private houses, condos and townhouses in the Township had two or fewer bedrooms.

These units will help close that gap by providing more options in a people-sized townhouse building, rather than in a larger condo building.

### **Cycling, Modo and parking:**

Parking is often one of the more controversial elements of any development, and we're asking for a variance to build fewer parking spots than units. From our perspective, providing fewer parking spots with strong alternative transportation options is a good thing that should help meet the Township's goals (cleaner



environment, less congestion, possibly a stronger local economy<sup>2</sup>), as well as benefit the residents (better health for those who cycle or walk<sup>3</sup>, lower housing costs).

Following a trend in many cities across North America, Seattle recently reduced parking requirements in multifamily buildings near good transit services.<sup>4</sup> This decision was based in part on a 2015 report they commissioned. In that report, they found that 40% of parking in multi-family dwelling was not being used. In fact, the researchers noted that having an oversupply of parking actually encourages people to buy and rely on vehicles when making future transportation decisions.

If parking is not available, the King County researchers note, people will choose other forms of transportation.<sup>5</sup>

The Lampson Park neighbourhood is well connected to cycling trails, sidewalks, good transit services, and groceries (Wholesale club). It's also close to the Esquimalt base, the township centre and downtown Victoria, making it ideal for people who choose not to have a car.

We want to encourage these decisions.

We're going to support people to use alternative transportation in a number of ways:

- Build a 10-bike lock-up room inside the building for residents to securely store their bikes.
- Install a bike rack out front for guests and residents making a quick stop at home.
- Providing annual transit passes to the two units that won't have dedicated parking.
- Give every unit a membership to the Modo car share network, with easy access to the Modo vehicle at the development next door (if it's approved).
  - Research shows that multi-family developments that include car share memberships can reduce the demand to own their own vehicle, particularly when the site is well supported by transit, cycling and walking options.<sup>6</sup>

To further support this request, we hired Watt Consulting to review the traffic impact of our two projects (The report is attached to our application and concluded the traffic impact would be minimal).

While Watt's focus was on traffic volumes from the two developments, they also discussed parking requirements for this proposal, in combination with the 10-unit townhouse that we're proposing at 939 Colville and 825 Lampson (16 total new units). This included referencing a study that they did for a 16-unit townhouse project in Saanich, which suggested similar developments in the city had an average parking demand of 0.85 vehicles per unit. This is equivalent to 14 spaces for the 16 units in the two projects that we're proposing (five spaces for the six-unit and nine spaces for the 10 unit).

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<sup>2</sup> *Consumer Behaviour and Travel Choices*: [http://kellyjclifton.com/Research/EconImpactsofBicycling/OTRECREport-ConsBehavTravelChoices\\_Nov2012.pdf](http://kellyjclifton.com/Research/EconImpactsofBicycling/OTRECREport-ConsBehavTravelChoices_Nov2012.pdf); more readable summary:

<https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2012/12/cyclists-and-pedestrians-can-end-spending-more-each-month-drivers/4066/>

<sup>3</sup> British Medical Journal, *Active Commuting is Beneficial for Health*: <https://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j1740>; Medical News Today summary article: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/317058.php>

<sup>4</sup> *Seattle cuts parking requirements near transit [...]*: <http://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2018/04/seattle-cuts-parking-requirements-near-transit-unbundles-costs-for-carless-tenants-in-new-buildings/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://metro.kingcounty.gov/programs-projects/right-size-parking/pdf/rsp-final-report-8-2015.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Martin & Shaheen. 2011. The Impact of Carsharing on Household Vehicle Ownership. Access Magazine. Available at: <https://www.accessmagazine.org/spring-2011/impact-carsharing-household-vehicle-ownership/>

In Watt's report for us, they went further to note that "in previous studies where carshare memberships are provided and a carshare vehicle is easily accessible, it is Watt's experience that a 10-15% reduction in parking demand is expected."

The final benefit we'd like to highlight is that reducing the number of parking spots will also lower the cost for the units without cars, as we will charge lower prices for those units. This means that people who choose not to have a car won't have to subsidize the cost of building parking spots for people in the building that have a vehicle.

### **Building Green**

Vehicle traffic is one of the largest contributors to an individual's carbon footprint in North America. And as noted above, with Modo memberships, good bike storage and transit passes, we're taking steps to make it as easy as possible to help future buyers use their cars as little as possible.

In addition, we're planning to take the following steps to achieve a greener development:

- Construct the building to at least Step 2 and possibly Step 3 in the step code.
- Install two outdoor chargers for electric vehicles in the parking area.
- Build a rain garden to collect and handle the rain water runoff from the roof – reducing the building's impact on the storm system.
- Install pavers, rather than concrete, for all vehicle hardscaping.
- Wire the building for future solar panels.
- Install a number of new trees and shrubs throughout the property.

### **Affordable Housing:**

As noted above, these units will provide more affordable options for people looking for townhouses in Esquimalt. However, with the costs of land and increasing costs of construction, they will still be out of reach of many who are looking for housing in the community (although, over time, they will become more affordable as the building ages).

As I've noted in my previous application, as a small developer proposing smaller people-sized projects, it's challenging to build affordably or incorporate affordable housing units into my projects.

However, I still can contribute to affordable housing in the region.

As I've mentioned to previous councils, out of our profits from our earlier project in Esquimalt at 521 Foster, we donated \$60,000 to the Anglican Diocese towards the 24-unit affordable seniors housing project that they're working on in Esquimalt.

And as a good corporate citizen, Lapis Homes will continue to contribute out of our profits to affordable housing in the communities where we work.

### **Wrap**

We are excited about this proposal – and we're hoping you will be too. It's an opportunity to build a unique, people-sized development to a neighbourhood that could use this mix of housing.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this letter and for reviewing our proposal. We look forward to discussing this project with you and with your staff in the coming months.

Take care,



Ryan Jabs  
250-413-7121  
[ryanjabs@laphomes.com](mailto:ryanjabs@laphomes.com)  
[www.laphomes.com](http://www.laphomes.com)



Jesse Cook  
250-216-0052  
[jessercook@gmail.com](mailto:jessercook@gmail.com)

"If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places." - Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces