



North Park Neighbourhood Association
PO Box 661
#185-911 Yates Street
Victoria, BC, Canada V8V 4Y9

July 19, 2021
Grace Lore, MLA, Victoria-Beacon Hill
1084 Fort Street
Victoria, BC
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RE: BC Housing Developments at 930 Pandora, 953/959 Balmoral, and 938 Mason Street

The North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA) would like to support the provincial government's ambitious leadership to address the housing crisis. The decisions and developments already in motion will improve housing availability in the capital region. We are also encouraged to see a distributed approach being adopted with new developments in neighbouring municipalities.

Over the past year, the NPNA learned an incredible amount while attempting to advocate for, and serve the needs of the many neighbours experiencing homelessness living in Central Park, 940 Caledonia (Royal Athletic Park parking lot), the Save on Foods Memorial Arena, and now the Tiny Home Village. Overwhelmingly, the feedback from neighbours experiencing homelessness was that there simply aren't enough units of affordable and supportive housing to meet the need. We know that these three developments at 930 Pandora, 953/959 Balmoral, and 938 Mason Street will help to meet the need.

We also know that between these three developments - which are located in three, consecutive, parallel blocks - will add a significant amount of supportive housing to an area already saturated with supportive and subsidized housing. To be specific, an additional approx. 150 units of supportive housing, and approx. 170 units of affordable housing. This is in addition to the hundreds (thousands, if the Starlight project moves forward) of market rate rentals and condos in development and construction in the surrounding blocks. All housing types are necessary in a thriving, vibrant neighbourhood. It is our desire to see a diverse balance of housing types that takes into account the demographics and needs of North Park.

North Park's motto is "*edgy to the core.*" We embrace North Park's diversity, and believe it's what makes our neighbourhood so unique. We are also not afraid of development or change. That said, our job as the neighbourhood association, is to advocate for the best change possible for the neighbourhood that takes into account the existing fabric of the community.

Achieving the best possible supportive and affordable housing projects in the city is an ambitious goal, but it is our goal. The following are several ideas and requests that we feel are necessary to be successful.



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1. That the province and BC Housing and the province acknowledge that the 930 Pandora, 938 Mason Street, and 953/959 Balmoral property are all located in a compact three block area, and that these developments need to be discussed in tandem, with an understanding of how they relate to each other.
2. That BC Housing develops a density metric that they feel is acceptable for each neighbourhood, and the proportion of supportive housing and associated supports and services - and share this with the public.
3. 959/953 Balmoral:
 - i) That a permanent street level parklet in 2-3 parking spaces featuring landscaping and seating be included in the design and located in front of 953/959 Balmoral
 - ii) That the bylaw protected heritage chestnut tree, and heritage rose bush be saved and incorporated into the design of 953/959 Balmoral
 - iii) That the design of 953/959 Balmoral incorporates a purpose built amenity space that facilitates relationship building between 959 Balmoral residents and neighbours, and supports job creation and skill development. (For example, a woodworking workshop, rooftop urban garden for food production, bicycle repair shop, laundromat, etc.)
- b) That BC Housing supports the creation of a permanent public park with a community garden, seating, landscaping, shade structures in the street of the 900 Block of Mason Street and includes the concept into the design of the 930 Pandora and 938 Mason Street buildings. (see image 1 below)

We are eager to see supportive and affordable housing that new neighbours will be proud to live in, and existing community members will be excited to welcome to North Park.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

North Park Neighbourhood Association Board and Staff

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Image 1: location of proposed permanent park (900 Block Mason Street), and proposed parklet (in front of 953/959 Balmoral)





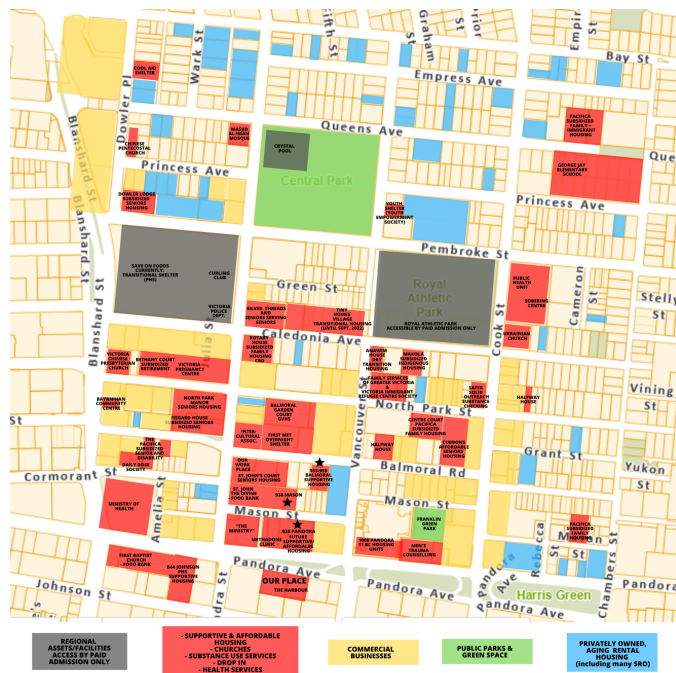
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Additional information:

North Park is already a greenspace deficient neighbourhood

According to City of Victoria documents, North Park has 1.23 hectares of park per 1000 residents, and this calculation includes RAP despite the lack of public access. This is well below the City average of 3.16 hectares of park per 1000 residents and an even starker contrast to some neighbourhoods that have over 90 hectares of park space per 1000 residents (James Bay and Fairfield).

COVID-19 has brought to light the extreme importance of public green space for public health. North Park is home to many residents without access to private green space, as well as many residents who may not have the resources (transportation, financial, time, etc) to access the many regional parks in the area. It has become evident that urban green spaces and parks are vital to public health as a place to socialize, recreate, and access nature.



Existing concentration of supports and services

North Park is already densely populated with supportive housing, subsidized housing, supports for those who use drugs, mental health supports, government agencies, drop in centres, overnight shelters, and overdose prevention sites. Below is a map of North Park that demonstrates the concentration of these supports and services. The purpose of this map is to illustrate the existing and upcoming land uses in the neighbourhood and to demonstrate the need for proactively incorporating community benefit into everything we do and plan in North Park. (Included as well, as Image 2)

Support from the community for a variety of housing types

The NPNA conducted a [Community Values Survey](#) in October 2020 that identified 5 broad values for the North Park neighbourhood. They are helpful in understanding what the neighbourhood would like to see in this portfolio of developments. However, more consultation will need to be done to get more specific feedback on these projects. The 5 broad values are listed below along with some statistics that relate to this development.

- 1) Access to green space/parks



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- 57% of respondents believe that North Park does not have enough green space.
- The top responses for desired green space amenities include: community gardens, natural vegetation, open/flexible green spaces, covered spaces to gather, Indigenous art and culturally appropriate gathering spaces, off leash dog park, more and varied seating.
- 2) An inclusive neighbourhood that welcomes people of all incomes, races, ethnicities, religions, gender identities, and sexuality
- 3) Family-friendly (family housing, traffic calming, safe places to play, etc.)
- 4) Arts, culture and entertainment (public art, art galleries, musical and theatre performances)
- 5) Affordable housing for a range of demographics
 - 89% of respondents agree or strongly agree that having a diversity of housing types is part of North Park's identity and should be encouraged
 - 86% of respondents feel that having housing that accommodates a diversity of incomes is part of North Park's identity and should be encouraged.
 - Respondents had wide-ranging views on what affordability objectives should be pursued in new developments. Affordable units for families and affordable home-ownership units were most frequently selected, perhaps indicating a lack of choice in affordable housing options (with few family-size units) and the difficulty in moving from a renter to being a homeowner (See Table 8 below)

North Park Demographics

North Park is one of the most diverse and lowest income neighbourhoods in the City and the region. Many residents live in lower income, higher density housing, and 79% of residents are renters, and 51% of residents live in core housing need. 30% of adults and 50% of seniors are low income based on the Low-income measure. The median after-tax income of lone-parent household is \$30,288, and the median after-tax income of a family household is \$48,928.

We are eager to make room for new residents at 930 Pandora, 953/959 Balmoral, and 938 Mason Street, but we also know that there are already a lot of residents in North Park who require assistance, programming, space to recreate, and support. By incorporating elements in these projects that benefit the entire community, we can ensure that these developments are as successful as possible.

Image 2: Map illustrating concentration of services in North Park

