

Dear Mayor and City Council:
October 22, 2017

Re: 1201 Fort St / 1050 Pentrelew Redevelopment

By now you will have seen two radically different summaries of Abstract's proposed development at the above address.

One is a summary by the Rockland Neighborhood Association's Land Use Committee Community meeting. It acknowledges the brutal fact of how little Abstract has done to meet the stated concerns of the Council and the neighbors in its new proposal.

The other is by your Planning Department, apparently written with the generous help of Abstract itself.

The big picture here is that if Council wants to find a way to rationalize this outsize development for this spot, it's going to be able to find a way. Even if that means overriding the almost unanimous opposition to the proposal by neighbors and the local community.

That rationalization appears to be happening due to the current panic about housing in Victoria.

But this is a radical, extreme development in its current form, outsized the spot. Approving this would hand the developer "windfall profits," as Councilor Ben Isitt first said of the proposal at the Committee of the Whole meeting on April 6, 2017.

In the face of those windfall profits, Abstract is proposing to build a meagerly 10 units of affordable housing elsewhere, and if it doesn't, to pay a fine to the city of \$250,000.

Will Council let itself be bought for such a laughably low price?

This proposal for 94 units would mostly be luxury condos that will be out of reach of most citizens in Victoria. You should demand more, and demand that affordable units be built into this project, not deferred to years down the road.

What does the community get out of this extremely large development? It radically changes our neighborhood, so what is in it for us?

Just this one small thing: a pathway.

If you look at Abstract's most recent buildings in the City, you can see its design principle: it's never met a setback it didn't want to eliminate. Or trees. In its efforts to cram the most units into this space, the setbacks along Pentrelew are almost non-existent. Even the setback of building A on Fort Street, according to the published plans on the City website, has been reduced from 3.8 to 0.2 meters.

One of Council's legacies, if it approves this project, would be the appalling Great Wall of Pentrelew, a massive block of very tall townhomes with almost no setbacks.

Local neighbors have long said what we'd be willing to live with here. No re-designation of the southern portion of the lot from Traditional Residential to Urban Residential. Let Abstract build some attractive, in-context multiplexes in the southern portion, not a huge wall of townhomes. On Fort, let them build an apartment building commensurate with the 4-story buildings of the area. Preserve as much of the greenspace as it can.

Abstract will still make money. The City will still get more housing stock – and hopefully some of it more affordable. And the community will be happy. That is a win-win-win situation.

The bottom line is: you can rationalize this if you want, against good sense and community standards. You can hand a big corporation windfall profits as it builds yet more luxury condos most citizens won't be able to afford. What a message you'll be sending.

I append two documents. The first is the comparison between the condo prices that developers are building and what citizens of the City can actually afford. It's from the City's own [Capital Region Housing Data Book & Gap Analysis](#) from 2015.

It shows the mismatch between what people can afford in Victoria and the kind of housing stock Abstract is proposing to build at this site. This development isn't going to help solve our housing crunch, but it will make the developer a lot richer.

The second is a spreadsheet showing how minimal the changes are between Abstract's current proposal and the first one that Council sent it back to revise. The green indicates positive changes in scale, height, and setbacks, while the red is where the revision is worse. As you can see, there is more red than green.

Sincerely,

Chris Douglas

Housing Gap Analysis for Victoria:

Source: <https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/regional-planning-pdf/capital-region-housing-data-book-and-gap-analysis-2015.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.

ABSTRACT PLANS FOR 1201 FORT ST / 1050 PENTRELEW PL

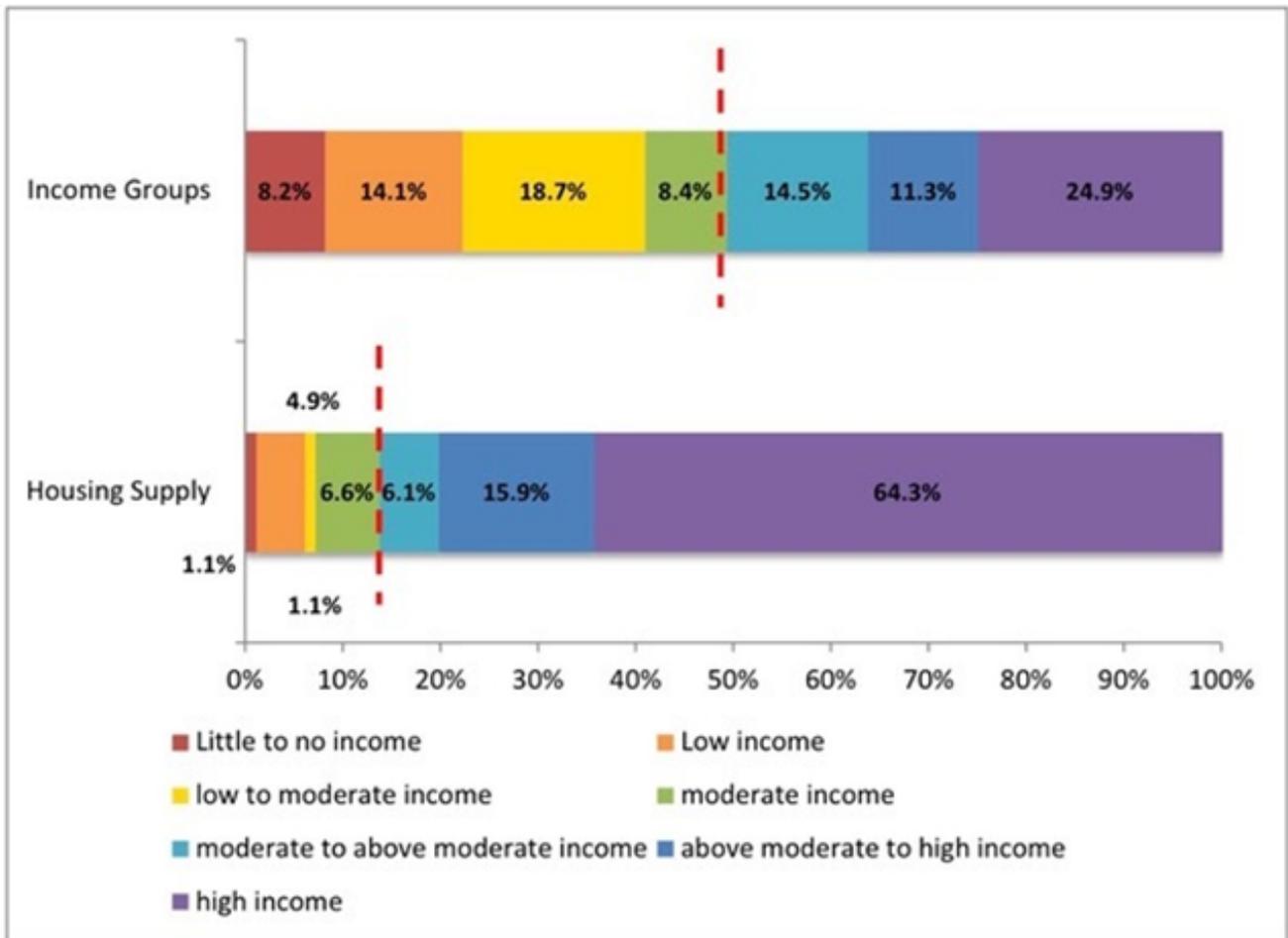
FEBRUARY '17 REVISION

JUNE '17 REVISION

all measurements in meters unless otherwise stated

numbers taken from page 7 of Feb '17 plans and page 6 of June '17 plans

Building A		Building A		Net change
height	21.4	height	21.42	-
storeys	6	storeys	6	-
total floor area	5,360	total floor area	6,200	840 more sq m
setback from Fort	3.8	setback from Fort	0.2	3.6 less m
# units	47	# units	58	11 more units
Building B		Building B		
height	18	height	15.11	2.89 fewer m
storeys	5	storeys	4	1 less storey
total floor area	3,500	total floor area	2,900	600 less sq ft
setback	4.67	setback from South	4.67	-
# units	34	# units	26	8 fewer units
Building C		Building C		
height	10.23	height	10.9	.33 m higher
storeys	3	storeys	3	-
total floor area	639	total floor area	535	104 fewer sq m
setback from Pentre	2.66	setback from Pentre	1.91	.75m less setback
# units	4	# units	3	1 less unit
width facing Pentrel	84	width facing Pentrel	66	
Building D		Building D		
height	10.74	height	11.43	.69 m higher
storeys	3	storeys	3	-
total floor area	640	total floor area	720	80 more sq m
setback from Pentre	3.71	setback from Pentre	2.16	1.55 m less setback
# units	4	# units	4	-
width facing Pentrel	84	width facing Pentrel	87	
Building E		Building E		
height	10.73	height	11.33	.6 m higher
storeys	3	storeys	3	-
total floor area	638	total floor area	535	103 less sq m
setback from Pentre	2.2	setback from Pentre	2.03	.07 m less setback
setback from 1225 F	2.41	setback from 1225 F	2.4	-
# units	4	# units	3	1 less unit
width facing Pentrel	84	width facing Pentrel	66	
TOTAL FSR	1.39	1.386		-
TOTAL SITE COVER	4,411 sq m (56.2%)	4491 sq m (57.2%)		1% more
TOTAL # OF UNITS	93	94		1 more



Sources: 2014 Facility Count (GVCEH), BC Housing (2015), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2014), and 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada