

759 8th Street Multi-Residential Development: Rationale for Divided Parking Plan



This document provides in-depth rationale for the divided parking arrangement outlined in the 759 multi-residential development project plans submitted to the City of Courtenay on January 7th, 2022. The rationale is informed by information found in the City of Courtenay's 2005 Official Community Plan (OCP), relevant by-laws, and our observations and insights as 8th street home owners since 2008.

As long-term residents of the area, we have witnessed the immediate neighbourhood develop and observed the ways that residents and visitors use the private and public spaces on a daily basis. The proposed fourplex was thoughtfully designed to build upon observed successes, prioritize safety, ensure liveability, and seamlessly integrate into the Harmston Avenue Civic Precinct.

The rationale for two parking spots fronting on 8th Street and two parking spots fronting on the alleyway fall into three categories:

- 1) Visual impact of parking**
- 2) Safety and security**
- 3) Neighbourhood Knowledge**

1. The Visual Impact of Parking

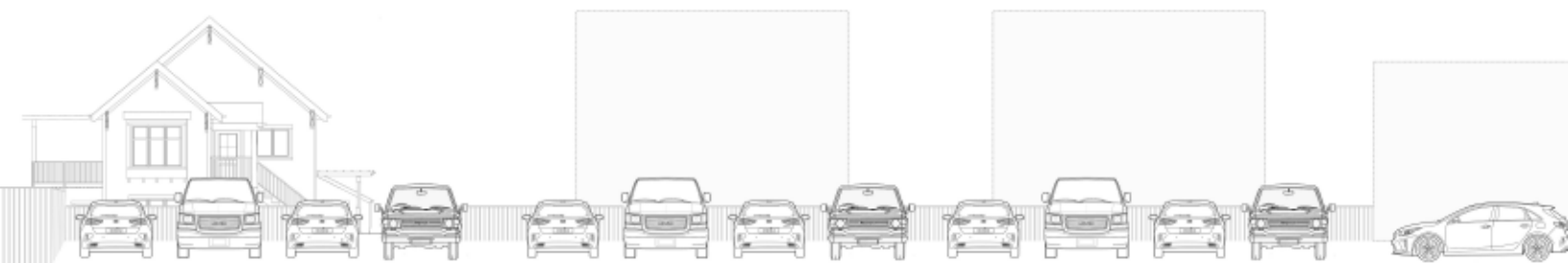
Official Community Plan

According to the OCP multi-residential guidelines, developments should ***“minimize the visual impact of parking”*** (p. 103). Specifically, Section 3.E.1 includes the recommendation that ***“large surface parking areas should be broken down into smaller parking lots evenly dispersed throughout the developments and integrated with planted landscaped areas.”*** (p. 100).

The first image below shows the visual impact of parking with all four required parking spots at the rear of the property. The image depicts a cross-section of the alley running from McPhee Avenue eastward to the proposed development at 759 8th Street (right to left).

Rather than minimize the visual impact of parking, the above arrangement results in **increasing** the visual impact of parking in the lane which is, according to Bylaw 2500 considered a street. With that, minimizing the visual impact of parking on the street front should not take greater priority over trying to accomplish the same in the lane.

Increased Visual Impact of Parking:



Conversely, our proposal (depicted below) is intentionally designed to minimize the visual impact of parking by locating two parking spots off 8th Street and two parking spots off the alleyway. In addition to fulfilling the OCP multi-residential parking guidelines to minimize the visual impact of parking, dividing the parking zones permits the incorporation of liveable amenity space at both the front and the rear of the property with the goal of increasing the appeal, usability, and resident activity in the outdoor spaces.

Decreased Visual Impact of Parking:



2. Safety and Security

As noted in Section 8.11 of the OCP Bylaw 2387, ***“The city will work with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in the consideration or designing buildings and landscaping.”***

Also, section 3.3 of BC Housing’s *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* recommends:

“Individual car parking arrangements are preferred but where communal car parking areas are necessary, they should be in small groups, close and adjacent to the suites which they serve, and open to view of the residents from frequently occupied rooms.”

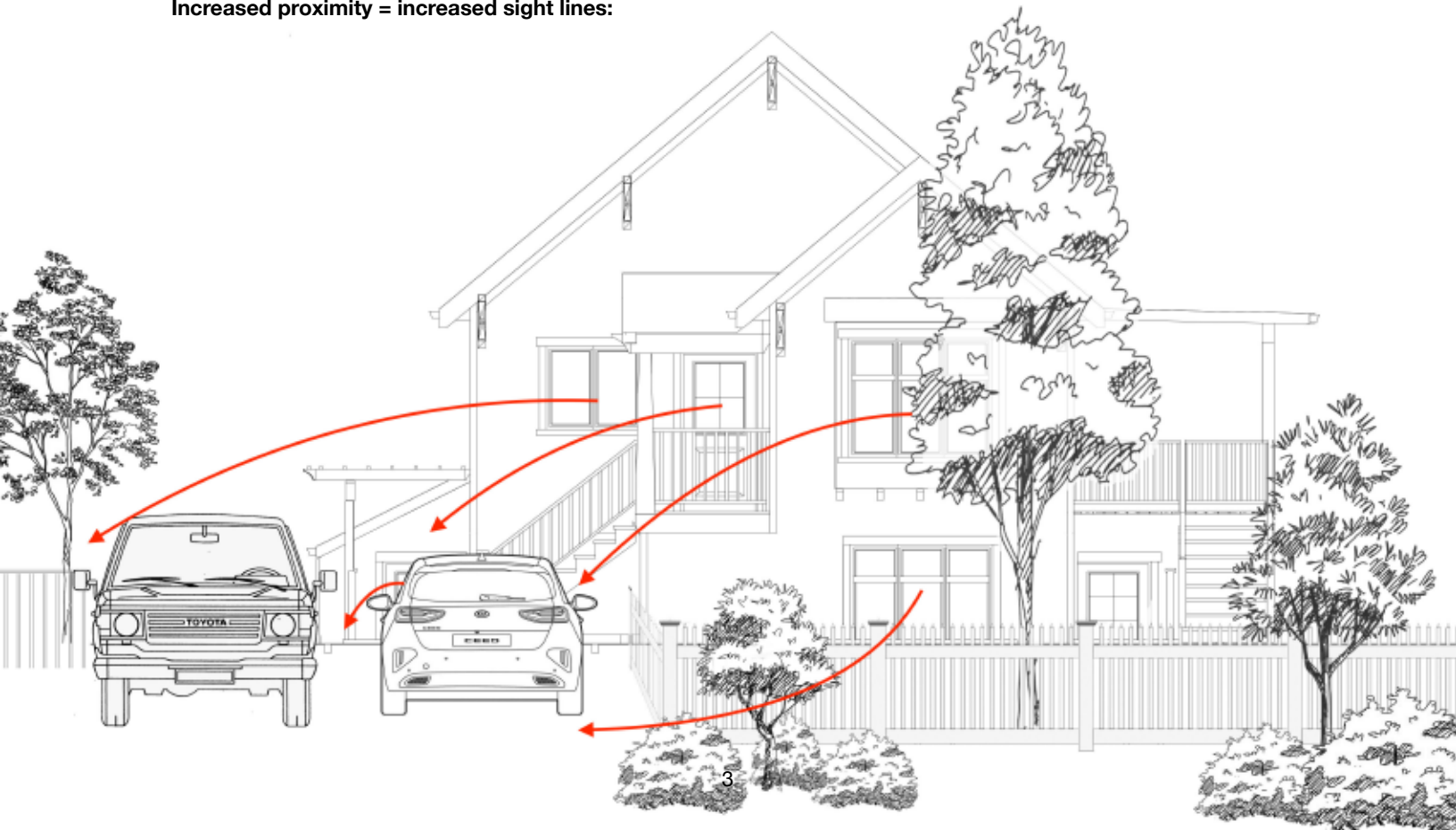
Principle: Natural Surveillance

(maximizing the ability to spot suspicious people and activities)

We have been told by our neighbours in the adjacent fourplexes (767 & 775 8th Street) that people fronting 8th Street will often park on the street instead of in their allocated alley spot because having their vehicle in view offers them a greater sense of security and peace-of-mind. This is evidence of the importance of the principle of natural surveillance. The requirement for all parking to be located to the alley discounts individual preference and contravenes the principle of natural surveillance.

Dividing the parking between the front and the rear of the property situates occupant’s vehicles in close proximity to their respective dwellings and, as suggested by the natural surveillance principle, provides greater “opportunities to see and be seen”.* The proposed divided parking arrangement, acknowledges individual preferences as occupants of both the front and rear dwellings are provided the security and convenience of greater proximity to their vehicles.

Increased proximity = increased sight lines:



Principle: Territoriality

(fostering residents interaction, vigilance, and control over their neighbourhood)

Requiring all four parking spaces to be located in the alley results in no amenity space at the rear of the property, and subsequently a decreased occupant presence. A decreased occupant presence in that area of the property risks the potential for an increase in undesirable and even criminal activity in the alleyway.

Divided parking zones permit the inclusion of attractive and usable amenity space at both the front and the rear of the property with the goal to increase occupant activity in these outdoor spaces. Yard space at the rear of the property will permit occupants to have an active presence near the alley. When occupants use outdoor amenity areas, opportunities to interact with neighbours and pedestrians are increased and ownership of the neighbourhood increases. Additionally, amenity areas at both the front and rear units ensure that children of all units can be safely observed when using the allocated outdoor spaces.

Therefore, the CPTED principles clearly support our design to stagger the parking zones with liveable amenity space at both the front and the rear of the property with the goal to increase the appeal, usability, and resident activity in the outdoor spaces.

3. Liveable Communities

Neighbourhood Knowledge

For the past 14 years we have experienced the alley between 7th and 8th Streets as a popular pedestrian thoroughfare connecting people to the downtown core. The alleyway, rather than the adjacent streets, has served as a community-building and social hub for both residents and those passing through during dog walks, while gardening, or taking out the garbage.

In the last 5 years, several of the previously single-residential properties that back onto the alleyway have had multi-residential developments completed and in one case, change from a dwelling to a Day-care facility. These developments have subsequently increased the amount of cars parked and travelling through the alley. As a result, the alley is gradually transforming from a secondary to a primary vehicular thoroughfare. This results in motorists travelling at increased speed and as more and more vehicles are directed to the alley, with no traffic control measures in place, this trend is bound to continue. The diminished sense of occupant ownership is also evidenced by the increased amount of litter in the alleyway.

We recognize that this alley is a vital multi-modal thoroughfare for the neighbourhood and that its historical design has allowed for connections to be created and nurtured over the years. Going forward, requiring that all parking be located in the alley would result in further increased vehicle traffic and decrease the human interactions that are essential to healthy and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Prioritizing vehicles in this space is a detriment to the neighbourhood community and contravenes the liveable community goals laid out in the OCP. Specifically, the OCP recommends that any new development ***“maintains and enhances the existing neighbourhood’s sense of place and community”*** and that a project should ***“preserve the integrity and character of existing residential areas with any redevelopment proposal”***.

We are confident that our divided parking design proposal upholds these OCP recommendations.

Health and Social Impacts

For the past 4+ years we have had the opportunity to observe how tenants use the outdoor spaces of the adjacent multi-residential developments at 775 & 767 8th Street. While the landscaping is attractive and well maintained, the outdoor spaces are underutilized. We infer that when dwelling units don't have a specifically linked outdoor yard areas, the residents simply don't spend much time outside.

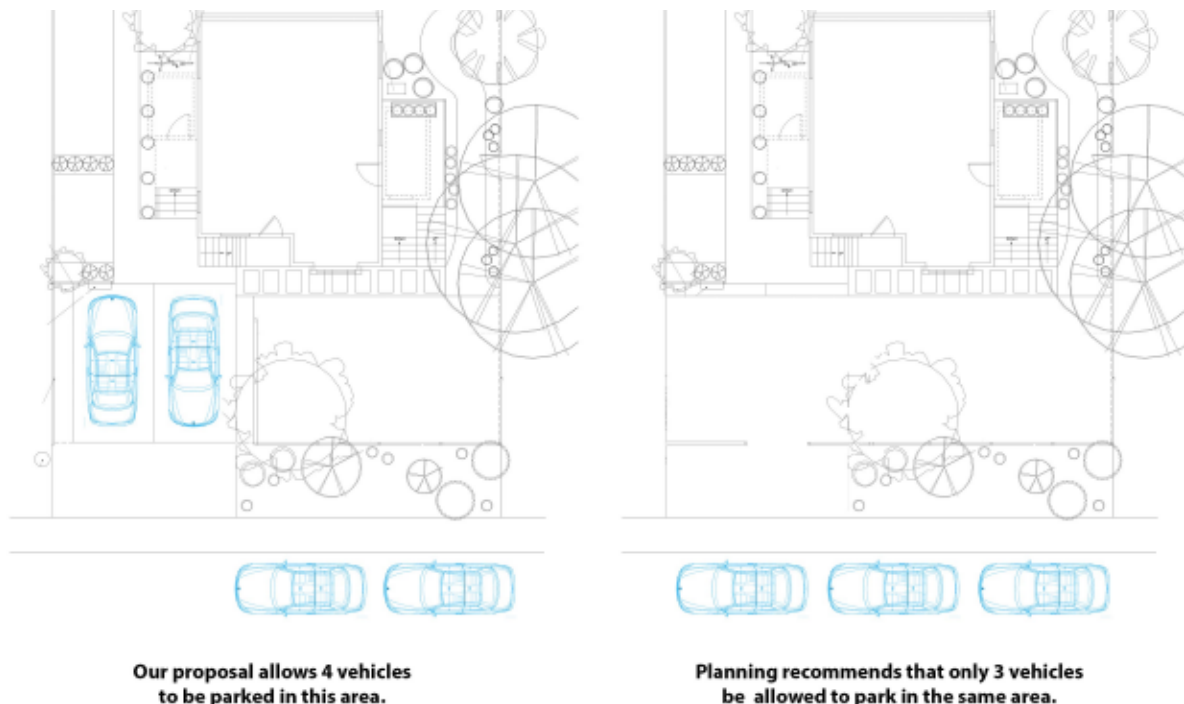
Our proposal offers a solution to this by creating ***“places with distinct identities”*** for each unit where residents will actually want to spend time outside and will, in turn, ***“encourage social interaction among residents”***. This is achieved by splitting the required parking and creating more livable outdoor space in *“both”* the front and rear portions of the development. This yard space also acts as a buffer for both units closest to the alley to reduce the number of vehicles located just a few feet from their living room windows and exposure to vehicle exhaust.

Fortunately our property is 33% wider than the above mentioned lots. This should allow for some flexibility in design. As established in preliminary dialogue with planners, our plans achieve the required frontage while also creating the maximum open space for each dwelling unit and the development at large.

Proximity & Accessibility:

Along with the previously referenced CPTED principles that encourage safety and security, our proposal to have two parking spots fronting on the street also creates greater accessibility for those proximal dwelling units. We have seen in the fourplexes next door that these street-facing residents will often choose to park on the street for convenient access to their units even if they have a dedicated parking stall at the rear of the property. This personal preference is understandable in consideration of the pragmatics of carrying purchases, belongings, children, and/or pets between one's vehicle and residence.

Incidentally, providing street-fronting occupant parking increases the available spots on the street for visitors and the public as illustrated below:



With the knowledge that street-facing residents will park on the street for reasons of safety and convenience our proposal allows for greater overall parking availability.

Precedents

8th Street

743 & 735 8th Street



Section 4.4.2 of Bylaw 2387: *A Blueprint for Courtenay* states that a goal of the The Official Community Plan is to ***“preserve the integrity and character of existing residential areas with any redevelopment proposal.”***

On our very short block of 8th Street there are three single family dwellings that are brimming with character and have driveways fronting on 8th Street. These are the buildings that define the neighbourhood's historical character.

In the spirit of maintaining neighbourhood integrity we've created a design that harmonizes well with these existing dwellings in architectural form. We propose that, as long as a reasonable amount of landscaping frontage is part of our plan, we should be permitted to follow this existing design form in matching our neighbours' parking arrangements.



7th Street

Fourplex at 784 7th Street



Although we have issues with the way this project was designed and has materialized, it's worth including as a way to demonstrate that, from an engineering perspective, including parking in both the front and rear of a property in the Harmston Precinct is entirely possible.

Fortunately our proposed development will provide substantially more landscaped amenity space than was approved for this project.

2nd Street

Duplexes at 919 & 917 2nd Street



Two recent infill projects close by on 2nd Street can be looked at to see successful examples of densification that permit on-site parking on both street and alley while also achieving maximum liveability for the residents by including dedicated and useable amenity space alongside the parking areas.

These are great examples of well-regarded developments that meet as many OCP criteria as possible, including increased security by implementing ***CPTED design principles, minimizing the visual impact of parking, and “creating “places” with distinct identities within the project”***.



9th Street

759 & 751 9th Street



One block over from this proposal are two developments on 9th Street that were built about ten years ago under the same bylaws and OCP. In these cases, two parking spots have been permitted in the alley and in the street frontage. This is precisely what our original plan proposed.

