



## The Corporation of the District of Saanich

# Report

**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning

**Date:** April 15, 2025

**Subject:** Development Permit Application - 4211 Commerce Circle

**File:** DPR01055

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

That Development Permit DPR001055 be approved.

### PURPOSE

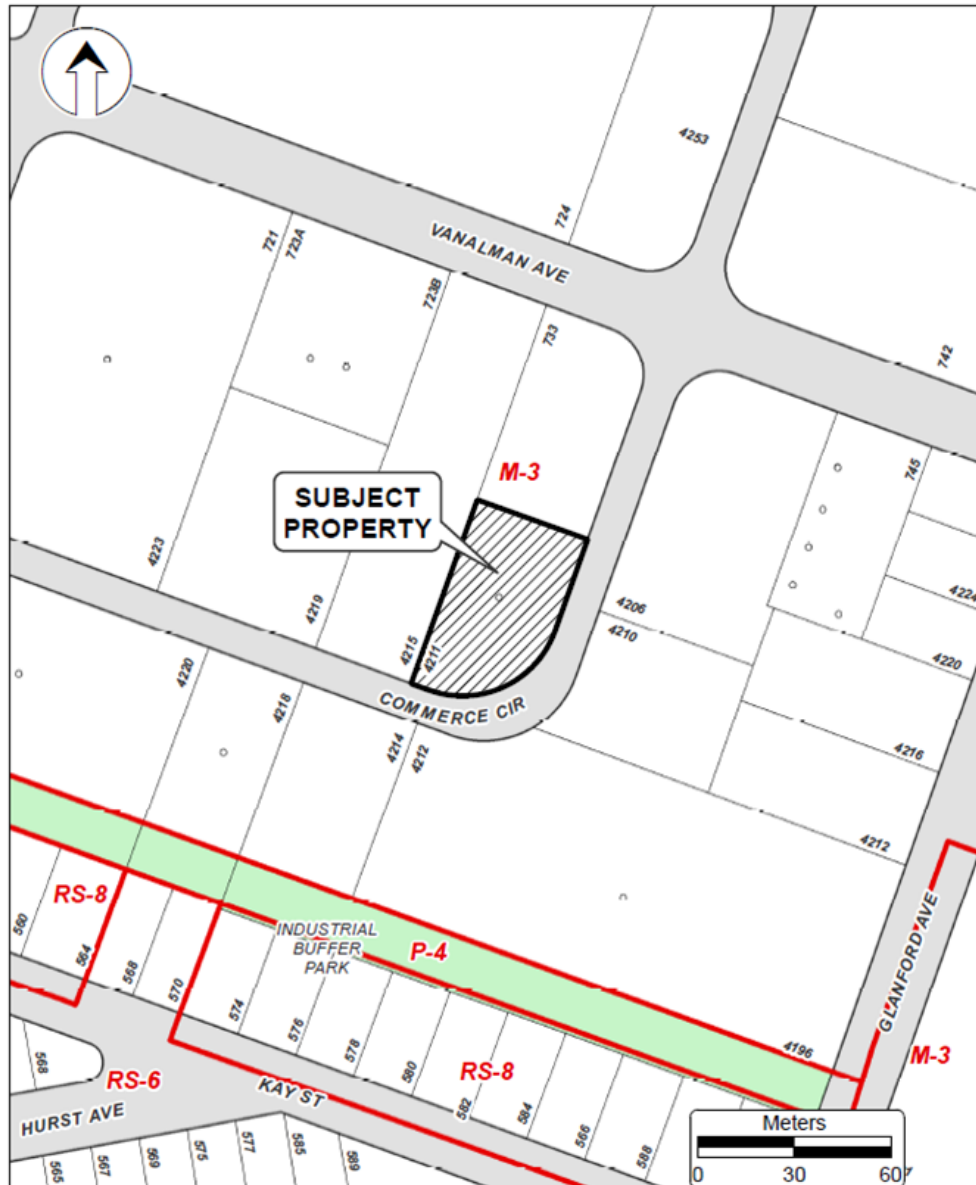
The purpose of this Report is to introduce an application for a Development Permit for form and character, to construct a 3-storey office and warehouse storage building with surface parking for the 'Berwick Retirement Communities' company. Variances are requested for siting, building height, parking, and loading space. The applicant is Low Hammond Rowe Architects (Jackson Low).

### DISCUSSION

#### Land Use and Neighbourhood Context

The 2025.96 m<sup>2</sup> site is located within the Carey Local Area, in the Royal Oak Industrial Park, on the north side of Commerce Circle (see Figure 1). The site currently contains a one storey, light industrial building, parking area and landscape plants. A three-storey industrial building with warehouse, office space and underground parking is being proposed for the site.

The property is within the Royal Oak Industrial Park, is designated "Industrial Lands" in the Official Community Plan and is zoned M-3 (Industrial Park) which permits uses including warehousing and office use. Surrounding land use includes other industrial M-3 zoned uses such as the BC Transit Operations and Maintenance facility to the east, a beverage distributor, and a bus charter company to the south and a courier service to the west. The property to the north includes a parking lot and the Vancouver Island Netherlands Association (Holland House).



**Figure 1: Neighbourhood Context**

### Consultation

Planning sent referrals to the Royal Oak Community Association who indicated that they are supportive of the proposal and have no identified concerns for the building or the proposed zoning variances.

The applicant held an open house at 733 Vanalman Avenue (Holland House), the property directly to the north of the subject application. The applicant sent invitations to property owners within a 50 m radius of the property as well as other interested parties including the District of Saanich and the Royal Oak Community Association. Three members of the public attended the open house.

### Proposed Development

The proposed development includes the construction of a three-storey commercial and industrial building (office and warehouse storage) with surface and underground parking in the Royal Oak Industrial Park. The proposal provides warehouse storage on level one and offices

above on the second and third levels. Due to the slope of the site, the entrance to the office area is at grade on the south end of the site. Surface parking and loading at the warehouse level is provided on both the eastern and southern edges of the property with underground parking and bike parking also provided via an access from the north eastern end of the site. The project data is outlined in Table 1 with the items requiring variance noted in bold. These variances are discussed in more detail later in the Report.

**Table 1: Project Data**

Project Data	
Site Coverage	36.6%
Height	<b>12.2 m</b>
Setbacks	
Front (south)	<b>7.52 m</b>
Rear (north)	<b>0.6 m</b>
Interior Side (west)	<b>2.9 m</b>
Exterior Side	15.0 m
Parking in a yard abutting a street	<b>1.7 m</b>
Parking Total	<b>43 spaces</b>
Accessible Parking	1 space
Loading space	<b>1 space</b>
Bike Parking Total	10
Class I	8
Class II	2

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

### Policy

#### Official Community Plan (2024)

- 7.6.1 Preserve the integrity of our industrial land base (Map 6) by:
  - a. Permitting a mix of ancillary employment uses to industrial including office, commercial, and community uses; and,
- 7.6.2 Apply the following criteria when assessing applications for industrial uses: access/egress, traffic volume, transit routes, lot size and orientation, density, form and massing, surrounding land use context, accessibility, environmental impacts, and economic considerations including employment loss or generation.
- 7.6.3 Promote a regulatory framework that encourages retention of industrial uses and supports their economic vitality.
- 7.6.4 Identify priorities and provide direction for new and existing industrial lands, with an emphasis on future employment opportunities and goods and services delivery, as part of the implementation of the Saanich Economic Development Strategy.

#### Carey Local Area Plan

- 13.1 Restrict new industrial uses to the Royal Oak Industrial Park
- 13.5 Review the parking standards for the industrial park and if necessary, consider ways to address the operational needs of the occupants.

The proposal is supported by the Official Community Plan (OCP) which promotes the preservation of the industrial land base, the encouragement of employment opportunities and supports permitting ancillary uses such as office space in addition to the industrial uses present on site. The proposed mixed office and warehouse will allow the applicant, Berwick Retirement

Communities, to combine their current office and warehouse locations on to one site that suits their operational needs.

## Design Review

The proposed design incorporates a high level of detail and materiality for an industrial building and overall aligns with the Development Permit Area Guidelines.

The application was considered by the Advisory Design Panel (ADP) at their February 5, 2025, meeting at which the design team was commended for their thoughtful and well executed approach to the project. The ADP moved “That it be recommended that the design to construct a 3-storey mixed use building (office and warehouse storage) at 4211 Commerce Circle be approved subject to considerations of:

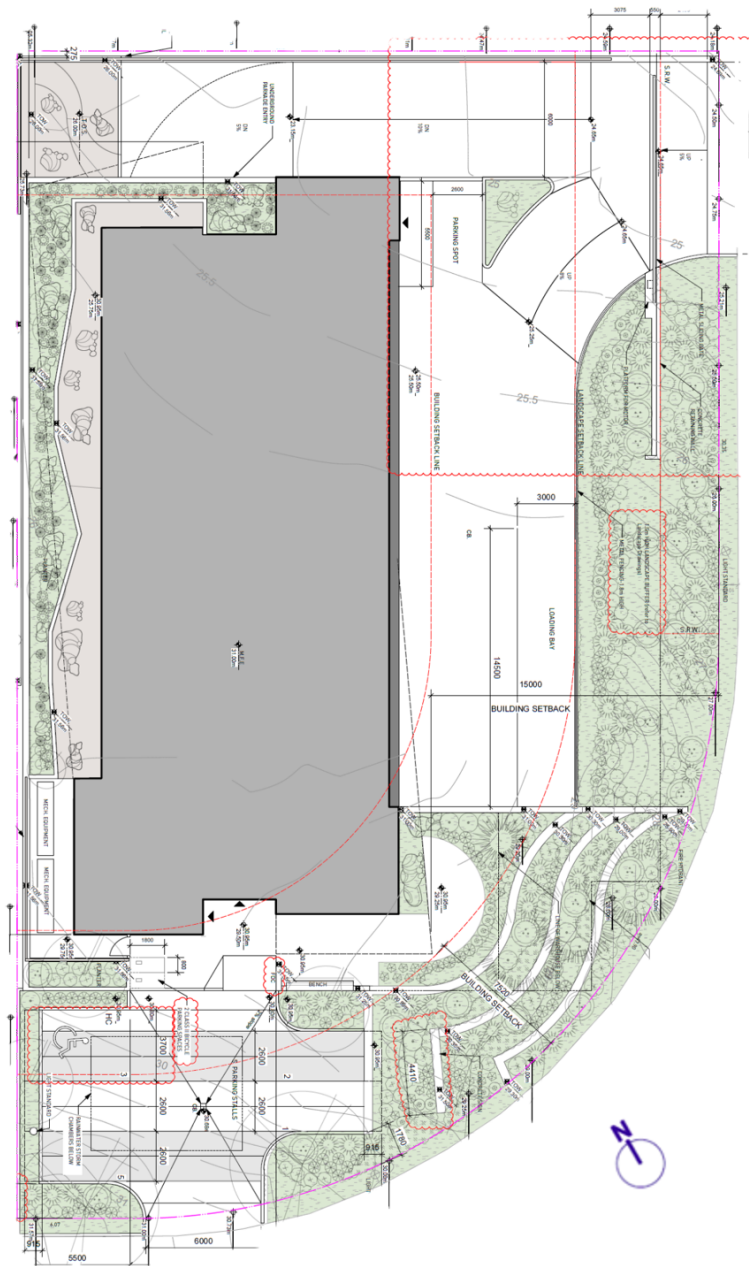
- Softening the visual impact of the retaining walls and fencing”

There is an approximately 6.0 m grade difference on the site from south to north. The office entrance and visitor parking are located at the south entrance of the site at grade providing a public entrance from the street. The entrance to the warehouse level, loading space and underground parking is located at the lower, north end of the site. With recognition that the retaining walls and fencing are necessary to retain soil for landscaping and for the safety of users of the site due to the significant grade change, the ADP suggested that softening the visual impact may include changing the colour of the fencing to coordinate with the tones of the building behind or lowering fences and guards where possible (without impacting the safety of the site or zoning bylaw requirements), to reduce the visual impact of the fencing and to allow the landscape and architectural elements to take prominence.

A 7.5 m landscape buffer and 1.8 m fencing has been provided along the Commerce Circle frontages, except for the two driveway areas, to visually screen the warehouse and loading areas from the street. Over time, the impact of the fencing and some of the more visually dominant walls is expected to soften as the vertical greenery planned in these locations matures. Outdoor areas with landscaping, seating, and weather protection are provided including a balcony on the second storey with covered outdoor seating space for employees. A covered bench is also located at the office entrance. The extensive landscaping helps to soften the interface between the built form and the surrounding uses.

In response to the ADP comments, the applicant has indicated that they do not intend on making changes to the plans at this time, but based on the ADP discussion, will be reviewing the heights and colours of the fence and guards. A change to the fence colour may be pursued through an inconsequential change to the Development Permit at the time of building permit application.

The distinct entrances for the office and warehouse areas of the site helps to distinguish between these uses. With consideration for the safety of pedestrian and private vehicle flows on site, the visitor parking and bike parking at the office entrance provides an inviting entrance for visitors to the site with separation from the warehouse loading area. However, it is noted that access to the underground parking for employees is a shared driveway with the warehouse level.



**Figure 2: Site Plan**



**Figure 3: Proposed East Elevations (from plans by Low Hammond Architects)**

## Variances

Table 1: Requested Variances

Proposed Variance			
	REQUIRED	PROPOSED	VARIANCE REQUIRED
<b>Front Lot Line Setback (South)</b>	15.0 m	7.52 m	7.48 m
<b>Rear Lot Line Setback (North)</b>	7.5 m	0.6 m	6.9m
<b>Interior Side Lot Line Setback (West)</b>	6.0 m	2.9 m	3.1 m
<b>Setback for Parking in a Yard Abutting a Street</b>	7.5 m	1.7 m	5.8 m
<b>Building Height</b>	10.0 m	12.2 m	2.2 m
<b>Parking</b>	50 stalls	43 stalls	7 stalls
<b>Loading Spaces</b>	2	1	1

More details regarding the proposed variances are discussed below.

### Setbacks

Zoning Bylaw, 2003 requires that where the provision for the parking or loading of vehicles is to be made in a yard abutting a street, there shall be a continuous landscaped area a minimum of 7.5 m in depth abutting the property line (except for driveways). The visitor parking on the south side of the lot is within 1.7 m of the property line and requires a 5.8 m variance. It is understood that this provision was likely included so as to provide some visual separation between the industrial uses and the street. In this instance, the location of the requested variance is in front of the entrance to the office levels of the building. Along the eastern property line where the warehouse level is exposed, a 7.5 m landscape buffer and 1.8 m fence have been provided.

While the majority of the building is setback between 14.7 m and 15m from the front (south) and exterior side lot lines, one corner of the office level of the building does encroach into the front setback by 7.48 m. Between the corner of the building and the street the required 7.5 m landscape buffer does provide for some visual screening, lessening the impact of the reduced setback in this location.

While the majority of the building is set back 3.0 m to 4.0 m from the rear (north) lot line, the retaining wall for the underground parking is located 0.6 m from the rear lot line. There is a 1.8 m fence on top of the retaining wall. There is currently a retaining wall and fence on the site in this location, so the requested variance is expected to have minimal impact on the surrounding properties.

A setback of 2.9 m is requested from western the interior side lot line. A landscape strip is provided along the interior side lot line to provide a buffer between the building and a drive aisle on the neighbouring property.

Overall, the requested setback variances are supportable.

### Building Height

The M-3 (Industrial Park) Zone allows a maximum building height of 10.0 m. A maximum building height of 12.2 m is proposed. The 2.2 m variance is considered minor and is supportable where it is not seen to unduly impact adjacent properties. The design features an atrium space in the centre of building. While the building height around the exterior is 10.4 m, the atrium space in the centre is 12.2 m. Given the sloping nature of the site, the building has a two-storey appearance from the front entrance and will not appear overly tall in comparison to neighbouring uses to the west.

#### Parking

Zoning Bylaw, 2003, requires one parking space per 175 m<sup>2</sup> of gross floor area for warehouse and storage uses, and one space per 25 m<sup>2</sup> for the first 1000 m<sup>2</sup> of office space, plus and additional 1 space per 30 m<sup>2</sup> for any additional gross floor area of office space. The total number of parking spaces required is 50 spaces, and 43 parking spaces are proposed. An additional six parking sized stalls are available in the underground parking area; however, these spaces are tandem parking spaces and therefore may not be counted towards the parking space total as access to and egress from these spaces cannot be freely provided at all times.

The site is located within 250 m of Glanford Avenue which is an identified frequent transit corridor and bike network. The site is within 350 m of a bus stop serviced by Route 31 (Downtown)/ Route 32 (Cordova Bay/ Royal Oak Exchange) and 500 m from a bus stop serviced by Route 30 (Royal Oak Exchange) which provide local service every 20 to 120 minutes.

Overall, the required variance of seven spaces is supportable.

#### Loading Spaces

The applicant is proposing one loading space. Table 8.1 of Zoning Bylaw, 2003 requires one loading space for floor areas between 0 - 700m<sup>2</sup> and two loading spaces for a floor area of between 700 m<sup>2</sup> - 2,800 m<sup>2</sup> in the M-3 zone. While the total gross floor area for the office and warehouse levels is 1,855 m<sup>2</sup>, the warehouse portion specifically is only 700 m<sup>2</sup>. Both the warehouse and office uses are for the same company, and the loading space is anticipated to primarily be used in relation to the warehouse use of the site. Therefore, a reduction of one loading space is supportable.

### **COUNCIL OPTIONS**

1. That Council approve the recommendations as outlined in the Staff Report
2. That Council provide alternate direction to staff.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

The subject proposal works towards achieving one of the District of Saanich – Council Strategic Plan 2023-2027 objectives, namely: “focus on economic development to further diversify and expand our economic base which is foundational to a vibrant community.”

### **CONCLUSION**

The proposal is consistent with the Official Community Plan (2024), which supports maintaining the industrial use of the site and supports varied, compatible uses on industrial sites such as the proposed mixed office and warehouse building in the Royal Oak Industrial Park. The requested variances for setback, height, parking and loading space are supportable.

For the above noted reasons, staff support the Development Permit application, subject to the recommendations outlined on page 1 of this Report.

Prepared by: Fiona Titley, Planner

Reviewed by: Carl Purvis, Manager of Current Planning

Approved by: Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning

Attachment 1: Development Permit

**ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS:**

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Planning.

Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer