

# Council OKs office tower

Mayor Alan Lowe argues 15-storey building is too large for the site at Blanshard and Fisgard

BY LOUISE DICKSON  
Times Colonist staff

Victoria city council has approved an office tower with a three-storey living green wall for the corner of Blanshard and Fisgard streets, despite objections from the mayor that it's too large for the site.

Mayor Alan Lowe was the only council member to vote against the 15-storey Gateway Green commercial office development.

Lowe praised the developers, however, for "being bold" and building an office building in the downtown core, even though residential development pays for itself much more quickly. "I also commend the developer for the design of the building and putting in environmentally friendly elements ... I think it will be a very nice gateway."

Council approved the developers' request to rezone the property for increased density — a bigger building with more floor space built right to the sidewalk — and an increase in the building's height to 58 metres. In exchange, Gateway Green Development Corp. will contribute \$100,000 to the city's housing trust fund and create a \$350,000 green wall, which consists of plants that help filter out air pollution. Earlier, the developers, who include Michael Jawl, Spencer Lee and Travis Lee, tried to have the green wall designated as public art, but that was turned down by the planning department.

Gateway Green will have shops and restaurants on the ground floor of what is now the site of Gold's Gym. It will have 143 underground parking spaces and 42 bicycle spaces and will be built to a silver rating in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design system (LEED).

At the public hearing Thursday night, Robert Randall, president of the Downtown Residents Association, said he supports a tall, more dense building, which he says will bring in more tenants and foster creativity. "It's an important part of the growth of the city," he said.

Thomas Guerrero, land-use chairman of North Park Neighbourhood Association, said the development "solidifies" Victoria as a regional centre and encourages residents to stay downtown, adding his wife has to carpool to her job at Telus on Keating Cross Road.

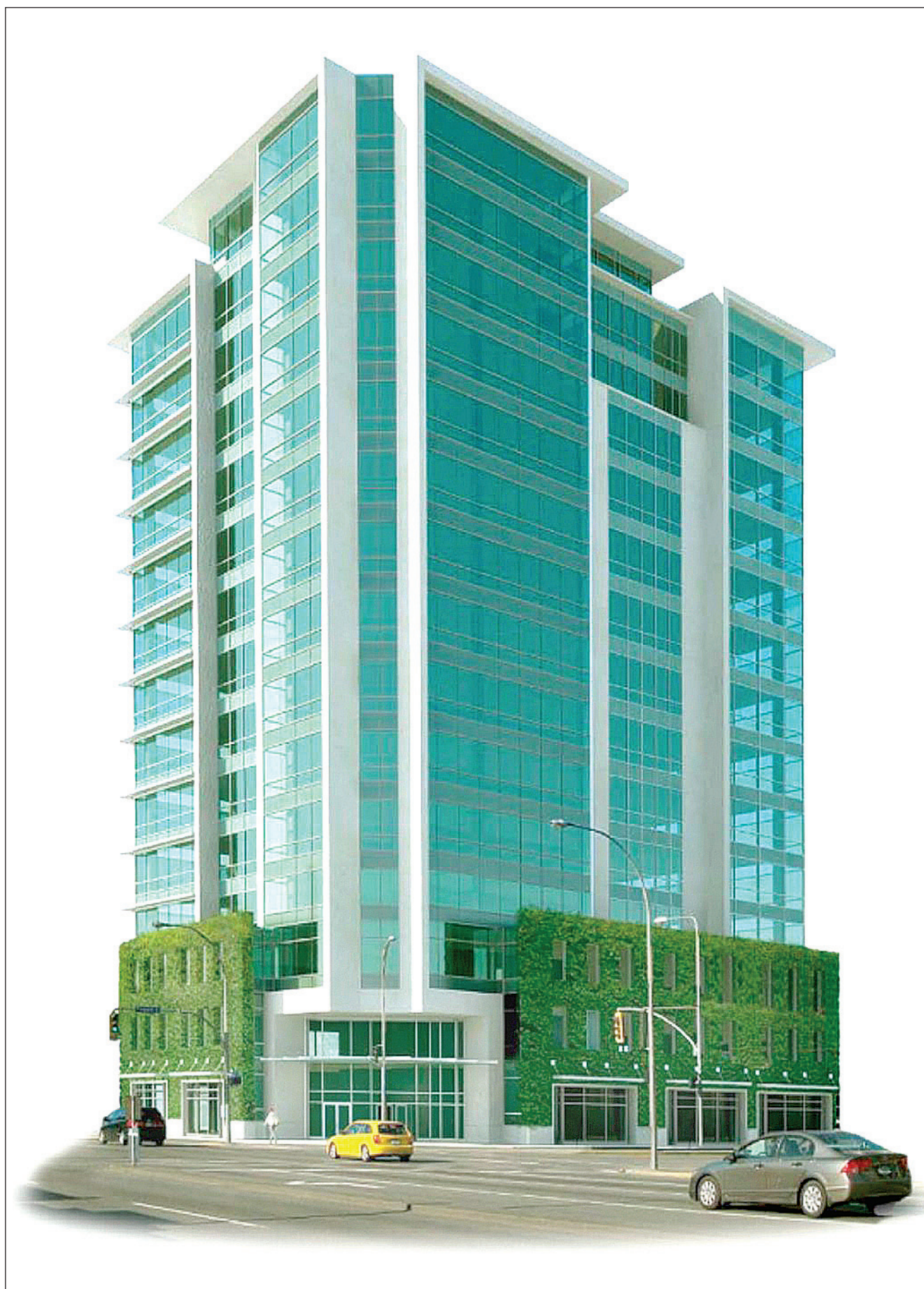
Guerrero also likes the building's focus on the street and pedestrians. "You're going to see the wall and the vibrancy in the stores that are there."

However, critic Betty Gibbons described Gateway Green as "an ordinary block of a building," and noted the developer is contributing three times as much to its living wall as to the housing fund.

"What is wrong with city council?" asked Gibbons.

"It should be \$350,000 to the housing fund and \$100,000 for art."

Robert Florida, who lives in the Cora-



Gateway Green Development Corp.'s proposed office building includes a three-storey green wall.

zon on Cormorant Street, said the building would be a wonderful addition to the city and would make the neighbourhood safer.

Victoria businessman Michael Burr

said the high-quality building would improve the area.

"It's a busy corner, a heartless corner, and traffic rushes by as fast as it can go," said Burr.

"I think bringing a presence like this to the side of the street, especially a green presence, gives it a lot more heart and life, rather than setting it back and letting the traffic echo off the walls."

# Car defect suspected in fatal crash on Malahat

TC sports editor was ejected when Infiniti hit a wall

BY ROB SHAW  
Times Colonist staff

A mechanical problem or defect in 1991 Nissan Infiniti sedans may have contributed to the death of popular *Times Colonist* sports editor Gavin Fletcher, who was ejected from the vehicle along with the driver's seat when it crashed on the Malahat a year ago.

A lengthy B.C. Coroners Service investigation into the crash has centred on the mechanical issue, said coroner Rose Stanton.

"It would appear the accident was due to weather on that evening, however it is possible that the cause of death may be partially as a result of a mechanical failure in Mr. Fletcher's car," said Stanton.

She would not elaborate on the type of problem, but said her office is waiting on a response from experts who have been analyzing the vehicle.

Fletcher, 39, lost control of his Infiniti while rounding the hill near the Malahat's Big Rock lookout during a particularly rainy and windy night on Dec. 11, 2006.

The married father of two was making his daily commute from a shift at the *Times Colonist*, where he had worked nine years, to his home in Nanaimo.

Authorities believe his car hydroplaned in the water, spun backwards, slid across the highway and collided with a rock wall with its back end.

He and the driver's seat were violently ejected through the rear windshield. He was killed instantly.

Police have said Fletcher was wearing his seatbelt at the time and traveling the speed limit.

It's unclear how much longer it will take to complete the investigation, because the coroner's service is relying upon external agencies to examine the vehicle, said Stanton.

Fletcher's widow, Natalie, said she hopes to see some answers in the report, "but it's not going to bring Gavin back."

Sadly, Fletcher had bought the '91 Infiniti only two or three months prior to the accident, as a replacement for his 1981 Mercedes, she said.

Natalie said she also wants to know why that part of the Malahat was so treacherous, and why the road wasn't closed that night.

Fletcher left behind two children, Claudia, now 7, and Sophia, now a year and a half.

It has been a difficult year since Fletcher's death, but Natalie said she appreciates the support of the sporting community, which has dedicated annual running events and hockey games in his memory.

"It has been an absolute surreal experience," she said.

"It is just bizarre how we laugh and live life just like when Gavin was here. It's just so strange how we have gone on. But we're broken inside."

The 1991 Nissan Infiniti's most well-known problem was a seatbelt defect, although it's not known how — if at all — it relates to Fletcher's accident.

The '91 Infiniti was one of more than 900,000 Japanese- and Korean-made cars in Canada that were subject to a recall in 1995 because broken pieces of the belt-release button could jam the locking device, preventing it from locking properly.

In the United States, the problem affected 8.4 million vehicles.

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# Speedy motorist ducks fine for trip to hospital

BY JEFF BELL  
Times Colonist staff

A driver who sped to hospital last summer with a co-worker who had a nail stuck in his head will not be paying a traffic ticket after all.

The pair's vehicle had been stopped by a Central Saanich police officer for going 92 in a 50-kilometre-an-hour zone en route to Saanich Peninsula Hospital from the construction site where the accident occurred.

The officer didn't issue a speeding ticket, but accompanied the men to the hospital and decided to issue a ticket for a seatbelt infraction. The fine would have been \$167.

Gavin Docherty, the injured man,

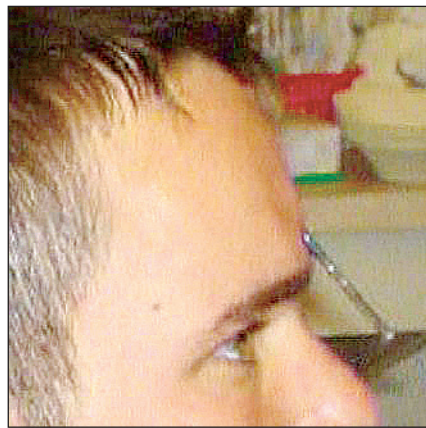
expressed shock that his friend was issued the ticket.

Docherty's injury turned out to be relatively minor, and he was back at work the next day. Police suggested calling an ambulance would have been a better option.

Central Saanich deputy police chief Clayton Pecknold said the case attracted its share of attention last August, but "finer details" were glossed over in some reports.

He said the ticket was rescinded after the officer met with the driver to discuss the impact of speeding, "and the officer was satisfied that the educational aspect of traffic enforcement was resolved."

The disposition of tickets is left to offi-

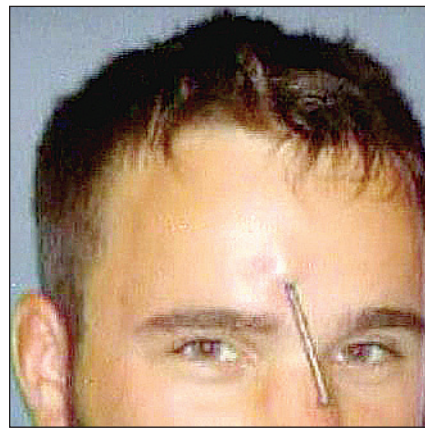


Gavin Docherty, seen here with a nail in his head, was surprised that his friend received a seatbelt infraction. It was later rescinded.

cers, as long as they are properly issued, Pecknold said.

"So it was put back to the officer who wrote it, and he decided on his own to use alternative measures as opposed to allowing the ticket to go forward."

Pecknold said the officer issued the ticket because he felt the driver, who



headed away quickly after the original stop, hadn't heeded the warning not to speed.

He said the officer had also determined the nail stuck in Docherty's head wasn't "embedded," and that the injury was not serious. He said the vehicle was delayed only briefly on its way to the hospital.

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