



Attachment 3

City of Vernon
Planning Department
Vernon, BC

July 21, 2023

Attention: Roy Nuriel
Barbara Everdene
Michelle Austin

Dear members of the Planning Department,

RE: Official Community Plan Amendment – Proposal for Zoning Change

I am writing to formally submit an application for an Official Community Plan Amendment to change the land use on a development property in the City of Vernon. The purpose of this proposal is to request a zoning change from the current P3 seniors care services designation to a multifamily zoning classification. This amendment aims to address the pressing need for attainable rental housing while incorporating sustainable and community-oriented features, including organic gardens for the benefit of the residents.

Our project represents a significant opportunity to align with the City of Vernon's overall housing strategy and contribute to the realization of its goals. The following rationale outlines the key reasons why this amendment should be considered favorably:

1. Meeting the Housing Needs: The City of Vernon, like many other communities, faces a critical shortage of affordable rental housing options. By rezoning the property to allow for multifamily development, we aim to create a diverse housing stock that caters to the needs of various demographic groups, including seniors, young professionals, and families. This zoning change would ensure that residents from different walks of life can find suitable and affordable housing in our community.

After the pandemic, it became abundantly clear that many seniors in our communities are facing severe loneliness. Increasing evidence demonstrates that social isolation has a detrimental impact on individual's health and well-being. Studies have found that social isolation and loneliness are major risk factors that have been linked with poor physical and mental health status: increased blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, diminished immune system functioning, depression, anxiety, poorer cognitive functioning, increased risk of Alzheimer's disease, and mortality. Social isolation has been associated with an approximately 50% increased risk of developing dementia, a 29% increased risk of incident coronary heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.

<https://ghrp.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s41256-020-00154-3>

A google search for "research on seniors isolation during covid" yields 201,000 results, with report after report confirming the above data and highlighting the severe and critical exacerbation of these issues through the pandemic. Seniors living in isolation is a real problem.



Western societies are one of the only places we see this cultural trend of, for lack of a more eloquent way of saying it, depositing our elderly in isolating and homogenous demographic homes to be visited on occasion, outsourcing their care to third parties.

One of the major take aways from the covid-19 pandemic is that we have to change the way we are thinking about how we take care of our elderly. By creating a more multi-faceted community building, we can ensure seniors are integrated into community networks, rather than isolated from them.

2. Supporting the Housing Continuum: As per the City's housing strategy, it is essential to provide housing options that cater to different stages of life. Our proposed development will include amenities and features that are conducive to seniors while also attracting young professionals and families. The proximity of the building location to more comprehensive seniors care facilities that include assisted living and more critical care allows seniors to age in place within their own neighbourhood. Being able to consider potentially transitioning to Creekside Manor, the neighbouring care facility, located on the same block. This approach aligns with the City's vision of a well-rounded and inclusive community, ensuring that individuals can age in place and families can grow within the same neighborhood.

3. Sustainable and Community-Oriented Design: Our proposal goes beyond the mere provision of housing units. We are committed to integrating organic gardens within the development, which will serve as a valuable resource for residents. These gardens will not only promote healthy eating habits but also foster a sense of community, as residents can engage in gardening activities and share the harvest. This sustainable and community-oriented design aligns with the City's goals of promoting healthy living and fostering a strong sense of belonging within neighborhoods.

We have to start innovating in building design – thinking of the environment, the wellbeing of the residents, the building efficiencies and the ability to reduce everyone's carbon footprint as part of an overall picture. Housing should be more than a building, it should incorporate a nourishing lifestyle, that benefits the residents, the environment and the community.

Getting our hands in the dirt, sharing in community, feeling good about our decisions and reduction of our footprint on the planet, sharing a communal meal and sharing of our wisdom and knowledge – old to young – is all part of an integrated community and a healthy lifestyle.

4. Economic and Social Benefits: The proposed zoning change will have a positive impact on the local economy. The construction of the development will create jobs and generate economic activity in the region. Additionally, by providing attainable rental housing options, our project will attract and retain a skilled workforce, supporting local businesses and encouraging economic growth. Moreover, the inclusion of organic gardens will contribute to food security, improve the overall well-being of residents, and promote a sustainable lifestyle.

5. Use Change Not Density Change: We know our request for RH1 zoning is outside of the COV current OCP, but so is our current P3 zoning. We are not asking for an increase in density, just a shift in use.

Our new request for an OCP amendment does not contemplate an increase in density at all, but merely a shift in building use to adapt to the changing situation as a result of the shifting demographic needs of the community.



The building use is still focused on seniors active, affordable, living, but in a mixed-use, community oriented building with younger individuals as well, rather than a homogenized setting, to allow for more community integration and to adapt to the dramatic shift in market conditions.

6. Seniors Care Services: The site was rezoned P3 almost 10 years ago now and we have struggled since that time to secure an appropriate seniors housing care facility operator for the site. This issue has continued to today as the site has some limitations that have prevented it from being attractive to a housing operator. It's proximity to Creekside seniors facility, which is currently expanding another 96 beds, further exacerbates this issue as the market saturation for seniors care facility beds is already met in this area.

7. Attainable Housing: We would consider as part of the rezoning efforts dedicating a percentage of the units for attainable housing, to meet the needs of seniors in the community that are struggling with the dramatically increasing rental housing market in bachelor/studio or 1 bedroom units. This would be a discussion with the COV to balance density with project feasibility and community needs being addressed. We would be open to a dedication of 10% of the future density towards attainable housing for the City of Vernon, and would enter into a Housing Agreement for same.

In conclusion, we believe that the proposed Official Community Plan Amendment to change the land use zoning is aligned with the City of Vernon's overall housing strategy and will significantly contribute to meeting the community's needs. Our development will provide much-needed attainable rental housing options while incorporating sustainable and community-oriented features such as organic gardens. We kindly request the Planning Department's careful consideration and approval of our application to bring this project to fruition.

Thank you for your time and attention. We look forward to the opportunity to present our proposal in detail and address any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

889769 BC Ltd

Per: *Krystine McInnes*
Krystine McInnes