



West Bay Residents Association



March 31, 2021

To: Mayor and Council
Corporate Services, Laurie Hurst, Bill Brown, Trevor Parkes

Re: **Proposed OCP Amendments for 819, 821 and 823 Esquimalt Road**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Avenir Construction's proposed amendments to the Official Community Plan ("OCP") regarding their 3 lot development proposal along Esquimalt Road.

The Esquimalt Road Corridor is a natural place for development and increased density to occur, and seniors' rental housing will fill a needed market niche. However the proposed development's height, density, massing, lot coverage, how the building relates to adjacent and surrounding sites, and the lack of significant commercial space on the main floor is inconsistent with the objectives of the OCP for this area.

The geographic boundaries of West Bay extend to the north side of Esquimalt Rd between Dunsmuir and Lampson. The area is designated Development Permit Area ("DPA") No. 11 West Bay, and is informed by the West Bay Neighbourhood Design Guidelines:

"The West Bay Neighbourhood is a neighbourhood with unique characteristics that is under increasing development pressure. In order to retain the form and character of the neighbourhood while at the same time allowing redevelopment to occur, a set of robust design guidelines is required. With increased multi-family development comes increased densification in the neighbourhood. This makes it imperative to have guidelines that address such issues as the relationship of the building to the street, privacy, and neighbourliness.

Buildings should respect adjacent properties by siting and designing new development to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings, and by ensuring buildings are sited to complement the type, scale and use of adjacent buildings.

New projects should provide a sensitive transition to nearby, less intensive zones or areas with different uses. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in actual or perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of adjacent zones. Buildings and groups of buildings should step down to be similar in height to adjacent buildings."¹

The requested rezoning for these three lots would also see a change from DPA No. 6 Multi-Family Residential to DPA No.4 Commercial:

"...the primary objective of DPA No. 6 is to ensure that the development of multi-unit residential

¹ Township of Esquimalt, OCP, DPA No.11: West Bay

sites is compatible with surrounding uses...It is essential that new multi-unit residential development not have a negative impact on, or be out of character with, existing residential neighbourhoods.”²

The proposed change to DPA No. 4 (Commercial) is of concern as it has a different set of priority objectives and does not include any such compatibility requirement.

When Esquimalt Council ratified its OCP in 2018 following a rigorous consultation process, the south side of the 800 block of Esquimalt Road was designated Neighbourhood Commercial Mixed-Use to encourage an active neighbourhood streetscape together with a vibrant mix of commercial and residential units in buildings up to a maximum of 6-storeys.

DPA No.11 West Bay and the West Bay Neighbourhood Design Guidelines are in place to ensure future development accommodates a sensitive and respectful transition and stepped down approach to massing that compliments the type and scale of adjacent buildings, both actual and those anticipated in the future.

This proposal is not sensitive, respectful or “neighbourly” to adjacent properties, and will loom over the backyards of homes to the south on Wollaston - a beautiful well established street of one and two storey family homes - significantly impairing their privacy and quality of life.

The current OCP allows for future development of townhouses up to 3-storeys in height along Wollaston. The height and mass of this development proposal will not only have a significant impact on current adjacent homes as they exist today and for years to come, but on those anticipated 3-story redevelopments of the future as well.

The proposed OCP amendment to Commercial Commercial Mixed-Use that would allow for buildings of up to 12-storeys, and the change from DPA No.6 to DPA No. 4, are designations that will remain in place into the future whether the sale of the properties in question go through and or whether the proposed development is built or not, further eroding the intended robust set of guidelines for the West Bay neighbourhood that form part of the Township’s OCP.

In conclusion, the West Bay Residents Association does not support the up-zoning of these 3 properties and asks that Council not approve the proposed OCP amendments. As much as we support the revitalization of this portion of Esquimalt Road, this particular building design and mass is not a good fit for this side of Esquimalt Road or the surrounding community, nor does it align with the objectives of the OCP for this area, and, therefore needs to be rethought. The West Bay Residents Association is happy, however, to continue to engage on an appropriate development for this site and would certainly be supportive of a project which respects the existing OCP and is sensitive to the transition with the existing neighbourhood.

Sincerely

Rozlyne Mitchell
Chair, Board of Directors
West Bay Residents Association

² Township of Esquimalt, OCP, DPA No.6: Multi-Family Residential