

# ATTACHMENT D

## LETTER OF RATIONALE

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19 February 2019

Project #17109

### OCP AMMENDMENT/REZONING DESIGN RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT 388 MACHLEARY STREET – NANAIMO'S OLD CITY

The Molnar Group is proposing a multi-family residential development at the site of City of Nanaimo's first general hospital located at 388 Machleary Street. This building was most recently occupied by Malaspina Gardens, a senior's care facility but has since been demolished. It currently is a vacant lot.

This lot lies within the Old City Neighbourhood Concept plan of the Official Community Plan (OCP) and Sub-Area 1a (Single Family/Duplex) which permits single family and duplex use only. The community development being proposed reflects the residential use objectives within the OCP "in order to allow development in a manner that is compatible with the existing residential character of the neighbourhood". It is our intent to follow these objectives yet still create a residential "community" development with greater density, amenity opportunities and a high level of design that Nanaimo residents will be proud to call home. We are looking to provide a varied mix of unit types in the form of town homes and multi-storey structures designed to accommodate modern living.

This proposed residential development will accommodate three multi-storey residential buildings (Buildings D, E and F – all containing four levels of micro, studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units), along with 15 three-bedroom town home units in three separate buildings facing Machleary Street. It will be a mix of market rental units and strata condominiums. The density is approximately 151 units per hectare.

We understand the potential impact that a development of this size may have on a predominantly single-family lot neighbourhood. We appreciate the concerns neighbours may have regarding a density increase and have strived to have as much public consultation and feedback as possible. To this point the Molnar Group has engaged with the public and City of Nanaimo staff on several occasions throughout this process to introduce our design team, describe our vision, and work with the neighbourhood to create a vibrant family-oriented community sympathetic to neighbourhood and city concerns. Our approach and evolving design has clearly shown our commitment to engage, educate and listen to City staff and neighbourhood residents. This has been a two-year process.

We approached this potential development site knowing that the Nanaimo Old City Association (NOCA) was quite organized and had already held a workshop regarding the future of this site and what it could mean to their standard and way of living. "The Report on the Outcomes of the Community Workshop on the Future of the Malaspina Gardens Site" July 2017 was a great tool for us to develop the initial concepts of our proposed development. With this report in mind, we held our first "Open House" public engagement on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The subsequent letter we received from NOCA made it clear that we would have to address issues/concerns in greater detail and in coordination with City of Nanaimo staff. We would focus our design to reduce the visual impact and massing of buildings along Machleary, reduce the massing/size of the multi-storey structures by keeping them to four levels of residential units with the top penthouse floorplate set back, organize the configuration of all buildings so as to maintain a significant water view corridor and provide all necessary resident parking underground. With these changes in development, we participated in meetings at City Hall with staff and NOCA on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and another on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 where our revised scheme was well received. We subsequently agreed to meet with the larger community/neighbourhood in a town-hall type presentation held by NOCA on March 27, 2018 as well as a Molnar organized public presentation of our revised scheme held February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Our design team presented our project and answered questions from the public to the best of our ability. The result of this meeting and collected questionnaires/surveys were overwhelmingly favourable in nature.

Although the public comments and discussions varied widely in topics, we were able to identify four main areas of concern. They were:

1. **Added traffic and loss of street parking** – the Molnar Group has engaged Watt Engineering Ltd. to provide analysis and recommendations with respect to how best to integrate a development of this density within a predominantly single-family lot neighbourhood. We have looked at traffic patterns and analyzed how traffic flows would be affected by the added number of vehicles within a 6-block radius around the site. This information will then be used to propose traffic directing and calming strategies. Bike and pedestrian means of transport are strongly encouraged through the inclusion of multiple entry points into this community as well as a significant increase in the number of bike storage/parking facilities.



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2. **Obstructed views and overwhelming density**– We have been very sensitive to neighbouring views. We have reduced the size of this project from our initial four six-storey building concept to include two-level street side town homes and three four storey residential buildings. We have utilized the existing grade to integrate the height of buildings within the topography and have dug into the site to completely hide the parking structure. We have provided a framed view along an axis that connects the existing hospital stairs (retained at Kennedy St) and a public seating area along Machleary Street.
  3. **Architectural vocabulary and how well it fits into the existing fabric and character of their neighbourhood** – We have familiarized ourselves intimately with the existing built-form of the neighbourhood. We understand the implications and importance of the Craftsman aesthetics and are well versed in the guiding principles that resonate within this historical architectural style. A more detailed description of the principles of Arts and Crafts can be found below.
  4. **Public engagement** – the Molnar Group is keenly aware of the importance of public engagement in the development of communities within established neighbourhoods. They have been doing this for over 40 years and have prided themselves in producing high-quality successful residential developments. Being a Vancouver based development company, they have been extremely careful not to be perceived as the big corporate developer out to maximize their profits to the detriment of the communities they develop in. This is a Molnar Legacy project. It is their intent to keep and manage the rental portions of this development for generations to come. Their commitment to this project requires a “good neighbour” approach in our design and project programming. It has been an interesting process getting to know the neighbourhood and discussing all aspects of this project.

We understand the significance of this site and its importance to the City of Nanaimo. We are working with our Landscape Architect and City of Nanaimo staff to properly honour and celebrate this site's history and significance. We endeavour to reflect and memorialize its past in some form of public amenity that speaks to its past and its future.

#### OCP Goals

This proposed development addresses most of the OCP goals identified. They are:

- **Goal One** – Manage Urban Growth – by providing higher density (151 units per hectare) within the lower density neighbourhood of Old City Neighbourhood, we are responding directly to urban sprawl. As stipulated within this section of the OCP, higher density neighbourhoods lead to more efficient use of roads, sewers, water and storm services and provides tax savings as new development can use existing infrastructure as well as allowing for better and more efficient public transit systems.
- **Goal Two** – Build a More Sustainable Community – This proposed development will utilize modern, efficient and durable construction methods and materials; therefore, contributing to lower energy use and longevity of the building. Energy Star appliances and LED lighting will result in lower energy consumption, reducing the demand on the city's infrastructure. This proposed development will be subjected to a Built-Green evaluation (checklist) to identify improvement strategies to the environmental impact of this build. Retention of existing municipal trees in addition to the design and planting of native drought resistance plants and materials will contribute positively to our environment.
- **Goal Three** – Encourage Social Enrichment – Part of the design intent of this development is to create a community with various opportunities for residents to interact and meet through space planning and programming. By providing communal amenity spaces and services (such as a community plaza, park benches within landscaped courtyards, community gardens, community announcement boards and shared multi-function and fitness rooms), we will encourage “community” and social participation. The development will provide rental and market condos thus providing housing for a large cross section of the population. Our efforts to remind residents of the past history of this site contributes to the history and social enrichment of this neighbourhood.
- **Goal Four** – Promote a Thriving Economy – A density increase alone encourages and supports local businesses and increases the tax base for the betterment of the community.
- **Goal Five** – Protect and Enhance Our Environment – Similar to environmental comments stated in Goal Two, this project will help protect the environment through densification and sustainability measures being implemented.
- **Goal Six** – Improve Mobility and Servicing Efficiency – By creating higher density, this project will contribute to a more efficient use of City of Nanaimo's infrastructure. It will also allow for better and more cost-effective public transit system.



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Nanaimo's Old City Multiple-family Residential Guidelines – September 1990, is a document put together to provide a general direction as to the form and character of a predominantly single family and duplex home neighbourhood. It speaks to an Architectural vocabulary based on the Arts and Crafts (or Craftsman) movement and is a rejection of massed-produced minimalist architecture. It is detail-rich with an emphasis on the quality of old-world craftsmen honing their skills. Although this document provides a component driven method of describing this aesthetic, it is limited in its approach in addressing larger multi-residential multi-storey structures. It is our strong belief that the guiding principles of the craftsman style can be used effectively to create a successful community within Nanaimo's Old City neighbourhood that supports and accentuates the existing character of this unique area of Nanaimo. One does not have to copy a style verbatim in order to properly address and recognize the distinctive characteristic of the neighbourhood. It is our opinion that the replication of existing aesthetics only serves to diminish the impact and importance of the original and authentic architecture. We will use

We have identified four main driving principles of the arts and crafts movement that served to design this community. They are:

1. Materiality – We are proposing a rich palette of materials and colours. The emphasis is being given to durable and natural-looking materials.
2. Proportions and scale – a sensitivity to the pedestrian scale has been utilized throughout this development. It is most evident the strategies utilized to bring down the perceived scale of the multi-storey buildings. Strategies such as stepping back the top floors, identifying the entries, providing individual exterior spaces and using elements (extruded boxes) to break down the massing all serve this purpose. The town homes along Macleary serve as a transition to the higher density and massing of the multi-storey structures further down the site.
3. Covered and protected exterior spaces- All units and town homes are provided with private and generous outdoor space that is delineated and protected. This is a common theme of craftsman style.
4. Expression of structure and Interior Space – where possible, expression of post and beam construction, wide trim, and an articulated base. Expression of interior functions of space.

## OCP AMMENDMENT PUBLIC AMENITY CONTRIBUTION

The development team is working with City of Nanaimo Staff to identify and implement a substantial public amenity contribution as part of our OCP Amendment and Rezoning process. It is our recommendation that City of Nanaimo allocate the required Developer's Public Amenity contribution funds to the immediate neighbourhood of Old City Neighbourhood Sub-Area 1a (Single Family/Duplex) for public beautification and infrastructure projects.

It is our intent to continue with public engagement through the remaining protocols and processes outlined by City of Nanaimo's OCP Amendment and Rezoning policies. We feel strongly that this proposed development can serve to strengthen and activate the Old City neighbourhood and create a family-based community within this larger established neighbourhood. We look forward to our continued work with City staff to bring to fruition some badly needed quality rental stock within a well thought out residential community plan.

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