

DATE OF MEETING December 6, 2021

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**SUBJECT OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION
NO. OCP96 - BOWERS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present for Council's consideration, an Official Community Plan amendment to include the Bowers District Master Plan as a schedule to the "Official Community Plan Bylaw 2008 No. 6500" to guide the long-term redevelopment of the property located at 6261 Hammond Bay Road. |

Recommendation

That:

1. "Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 2021 No. 6500.045" (to include the Bowers District Master Plan as Schedule M of the "Official Community Plan Bylaw 2008 No. 6500") pass first reading; and
2. "Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 2021 No. 6500.045" pass second reading.

BACKGROUND

On 2021-MAY-01, Williamson & Associates Professional Surveyors submitted an Official Community Plan Amendment Application (OCP96) on behalf of 1165035 BC Ltd. for the property at 6261 Hammond Bay Road. The applicant proposes to create a master plan to guide the future use and development of the subject property into a mixed-use village centre and residential neighbourhood.

The property is approximately 17ha in area and contains the Green Thumb Nursery, which has been operating on the site since 1959. The existing business includes a garden centre along Hammond Bay Road and a garden nursery across the remainder of the parcel.

Mature trees are located in portions of the property, generally along the periphery of the site, with the highest concentration near the intersection of Hammond Bay Road and Uplands Drive. The property slopes from west to east generally, with an approximately 20m elevation difference between the high point at the south edge of the parcel, and the low point at the midpoint of the Uplands Drive frontage of the property. The primary vehicle access to the property is via Hammond Bay Road with a secondary access off Marlin Way. |

DISCUSSION

Proposed Development

The proposed Bowers District Master Plan (BDMP) envisions the long-term development of a comprehensively planned urban village and residential neighbourhood within the subject property. The conceptual plan shows approximately 2,500 residential units, commercial uses and a network of greenways, parks and open spaces. The branding of “Bowers District” is inspired by the historic horticultural use of the site, referencing a ‘bower’ as a place of rest or refuge under trees or in a garden or wood. The vision of the BDMP is to create a distinct and vibrant place that brings people together; honours and celebrates the land; creates a green refuge in the city; and provides a place where people can live, work and play.

To achieve this vision, the BDMP outlines a number of development goals, planning principles, and design guidelines to achieve:

- A compact urban village with a central plaza and mixed use ‘main street’;
- A large park and gathering space connected to an extensive trail and open space network;
- Preserved and expanded tree stands to offer abundant tree canopy;
- A land use transition between existing low-rise residential areas to the east, and high-density commercial and residential areas to the north and west within the Woodgove Urban Node;
- Pedestrian-friendly streetscapes rich with landscaping and high-quality architecture;
- Sustainable low-carbon building design with a range of housing types and tenures; and
- Green infrastructure and landscaping to manage stormwater, provide urban habitat, and support healthy ecosystems.

Land Use

The BDMP proposes to establish four precincts within the plan area, as summarized in the following table:

Land Use Precinct	Description	Building Typologies
Urban Mixed Use	Mixed-use (residential / commercial)	Mix of ground-oriented, low-rise (2-4 storeys), mid-rise (3-6 storeys), high-rise (6+ storeys)
Urban Residential	Residential	Mix of ground-oriented, low-rise (2-4 storeys), mid-rise (3-6 storeys), high-rise (6+ storeys)
Village Mixed Use	Mixed-use (residential / commercial)	Low-rise (2-4 storeys) to mid-rise (3-6 storeys) with active ground floor uses and residential above
Village Residential	Residential	Townhomes, low-rise (2-4 storeys) to mid-rise (3-6 storeys)

The land use policies reference two areas of transition in the form of development, including:

- *Urban Residential* – A height transition will be created from the north and west edges of the site, adjacent to Hammond Bay Road and the Island Highway, with taller buildings (6+ storeys) complementary to the Woodgrove Urban Node stepping down to low- and mid-rise buildings (up to 6 storeys) to the east and south within the Village designations; and
- *Village Residential* – South of Parkwood Drive and adjacent to Uplands Drive, the upper storeys of buildings taller than 4 storeys will be stepped back to create a sensitive transition to existing residential neighbourhoods.

The developer proposes to develop the site from south to north generally, beginning with the Village Residential and Village Mixed Use precincts, and following with the Urban Residential and Urban Mixed Use precincts. This approach would allow the garden centre to continue to operate during the earlier phases of the project, with higher-density land uses proposed in the later phases adjacent to major transportation corridors.

Parks and Open Space

The BDMP includes a comprehensive and multi-functional open space network that envisions:

- A range of active and passive recreation amenities (e.g., playgrounds, trails, natural areas, public seating);
- Enhanced ecological function (mature forest, rain gardens, wetlands); and
- A green and landscaped sanctuary.

Each land use precinct would connect directly to the proposed public parks network, linking future residents, employees, and visitors to the development via off-street open space.

Sustainability and Place-Making

In addition to the land use and parks policies, the BDMP contains sustainability and place-making policies that will reinforce a unique sense of place in the Bowers District including:

- A cohesive landscape design and an abundant urban forest;
- A multi-modal transportation network that supports active transportation;
- A 'blue-green strategy' that maximizes green space and integrates stormwater management (retention, detention, and treatment);
- Green buildings with low-carbon designs and advanced energy performance;
- Interactive public art that reinforces the site's history; and
- Focal points and gathering places to foster social cohesion.

Policy Context

Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) currently designates the property as Corridor. Corridor lands are characterized as land along a major road supporting higher residential densities, services, and amenities. The OCP's density target for corridor-designated areas is 50 to

150 units per hectare in building forms up to six storeys. Adjacent to the BDMP area are the following land use designations:

- Woodgrove Urban Node (to the west); and
- Corridor (to the north, south, and east).

The BDMP would re-designate the north (Urban Mixed Use) and west (Urban Residential) portions of the subject property from Corridor to Urban Node, while retaining the Corridor designation for the remainder of the property (Village Mixed Use and Village Residential). The OCP's density target for urban node-designated areas is 50 to 150 (or greater) units per hectare in high-rise building forms (6+ storeys).

Overall, the BDMP proposes a residential density of less than 150 units per hectare on the site, as envisioned in the Corridor designation. However, the applicant is seeking greater flexibility in building heights and density within the Urban Mixed Use and Urban Residential areas to exceed six storeys in height and 150 units per hectare as permitted in the Urban Node designation.

If supported, the proposed amendment and BDMP would achieve a number of OCP policy objectives, including:

- New development would include a mix of land uses with transit-supportive densities;
- BDMP supports a variety of housing forms to meet changing demographics;
- Development would transition from higher-intensity uses adjacent to the existing Woodgrove Urban Node to lower-intensity residential uses on lands designated Corridor to the east and south of the site;
- New development would provide safe and efficient travel for all modes, including active transportation linkages for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Energy-efficient building design and practice will be incorporated;
- The BDMP addresses OCP policy to provide future park acquisition within the subject property. The Plan proposes approximately 30% of the site as open space, which includes approximately 15% as publicly accessible parks, trails, plazas and open space.

The applicant has also participated in the REIMAGINE NANAIMO OCP engagement (Phase 2) and considered the land use scenarios during the development of the BDMP. Should Council support the "Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 2021 No. 6500.045" (the "BDMP Amendment Bylaw"), the proposed Master Plan would be incorporated into the REIMAGINE NANAIMO process. However, should Council deny the BDMP Amendment Bylaw, the subject property would be assigned a future land use as part of the REIMAGINE NANAIMO process.

Staff support the proposed Bowers District Master Plan, which achieves a number of OCP policies.

Affordable Housing Strategy

The applicant considered the City's Affordable Housing Strategy during the development of the BDMP. The BDMP includes housing policies that:

- Encourage the provision of universally accessible and adaptable units to meet the needs of diverse populations over time;

- Provide a mix of housing types and tenures to support rental units, strata and fee simple ownership, lock-off suites, a range of unit sizes, and family-sized units.

The BDMP's housing policies are consistent with the policies and actions of the Affordable Housing Strategy.

Transportation Master Plan

The Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan (NTMP) identifies 'mobility hubs' as compact, mixed-use urban nodes that promote walking, cycling, and transit. The subject property is located within the 600m buffer of the Woodgrove mobility hub. The BDMP land use and transportation plans align to support a compact mix of commercial and residential uses with transit-supportive densities within the mobility hub.

The proposed concept would accommodate expanded transit service and provide a fine-grained road network with traffic-calmed streets and trails and greenways to reinforce the NTMP objectives to:

- Shift towards more active and sustainable transportation modes (walking, cycling, transit); and
- Reduce the daily distance driven by residents.

The conceptual plan is well-integrated with the existing road network and includes:

1. *Frontage Improvements* – Development of the site will complete a number of frontage improvements to existing roads (e.g., Uplands Drive with a completed sidewalk network);
2. *Expanded Active Transportation* – New linkages through the site will serve both existing and future neighbourhoods (e.g., Parkwood Drive multi-use trail connection through the site to the Metral Drive 'complete street' corridor [via Enterprise Way]).
3. *Completed road network* – A new north-south collector road would link Hammond Bay Road at Calinda Street to the Island Highway at Enterprise Way. The proposed connection would complete the southeast portion of a 'ring road' around the intersection of Aulds Road / Hammond Bay Road and the Island Highway, as envisioned in the City's Transportation Master Plan and the OCP's Mobility Plan (Map 2). The BDMP network would enhance redundancy in the existing network with routes through the site, and would mitigate short-cutting through the site with no direct vehicular access from the Island Highway to Uplands Drive.

The applicant submitted a preliminary traffic impact assessment (TIA) in support of this application that has informed the BDMP. Should Council support the proposed BDMP, a comprehensive TIA would be required as part of a subsequent rezoning application to authorize the proposed development.

Community Consultation and External Referrals

The developer has consulted with members of the community after submitting the OCP amendment application, including hosting an open house at the Nanaimo Rugby Clubhouse (6700 Dover Road) on 2020-OCT-21. Approximately 33 people attended the developer's open house, and the developer provided information to 27 additional individuals via email. The applicant provided a summary of community feedback and noted support for the overall land

use concept (compact walkable village) with taller buildings located towards the Island Highway and Woodgrove Centre (north end of the site), proposed green space network, and stormwater management and frontage improvements. Participants asked questions about the timing and phasing of development, and expressed concerns about potential density adjacent to existing residential areas (e.g., Cedar Grove and Parkwood residences) and traffic impacts, with strong opposition to any direct vehicular connection from Enterprise Way to Parkwood Drive that might allow short-cutting through the neighbourhood.

Through the application review, the proposed land use and road network plans evolved to further address community concerns including:

- Reducing the extent of the Urban Node designation from the entire site to the north and west portions of the site to give greater certainty that high-rise buildings (6+ storeys) will be oriented towards the Island Highway and Hammond Bay Road. The balance of the plan area would retain the existing Corridor designation with policies to support stepping buildings down in height towards existing adjacent residential neighbourhoods; and
- Prioritizing the proposed collector ring road to direct traffic primarily north-south through the site from the Island Highway/Enterprise Way to Calinda Street/Hammond Bay Road with other indirect connections and active transportation linkages east-west to Uplands Drive.

The applicant plans further community engagement, should the proposed BDMP Amendment Bylaw be supported by Council.

The subject property is not located within an active neighbourhood association area; however, Staff requested a referral response from the Dover Community Association due to its proximity to the site. As of the date of this writing this report, the Association has not provided a formal response to City Staff.

The Island Highway is managed by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI), who has the authority to establish development requirements to maintain or improve the function of its assets. MOTI has advised that to allow a new access to the subject property from the Island Highway at Enterprise Way, the resulting road network must enhance the overall transportation network and include a collector road through the subject property. Staff have confirmed that the proposed ring road would be to a collector standard as previously envisioned in the NTMP and OCP. Should Council approve the proposed OCP amendment, MOTI would review more detailed analyses of the transportation network through a subsequent rezoning application.

Should Council pass first and second reading of the “Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw No. 6500.045”, the City will send a formal referral to the following stakeholders and external agencies prior to the bylaw proceeding to Public Hearing:

- BC Transit;
- Dover Community Association;
- Island Health;
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure;
- Regional District of Nanaimo;
- School District 68;

- Snaw-Naw-As; and,
- Snuneymuxw First Nation

OPTIONS

1. That:

1. “Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 2021 No. 6500.045” (to include the Bowers District Master Plan as an amendment to the “Official Community Plan Bylaw 2008 No. 6500”) pass first reading; and
2. “Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 2021 No. 6500.045” pass second reading.

- Advantages:

- The proposed BDMP would provide a clear vision for the redevelopment of approximately 17 hectares of land adjacent to the Woodgrove Urban Node.
- The development concept would provide a transition from higher-density commercial and residential uses near Woodgrove Centre to lower-density residential areas to the east along Uplands Drive and the south boundary of the property.
- The proposed development would achieve transit-supportive densities and allow a mix of housing forms and tenures, with ground-oriented low-, mid-, and high-rise building forms located to consider existing and adjacent uses.
- The plan would mitigate short-cutting through the site with no direct vehicular access from the Island Highway to Uplands Drive.
- The conceptual site plan would prioritize active transportation, and integrate city infrastructure, including roads, trails, and stormwater features into the parks and open space system to create a compact, green, and connected neighbourhood.

- Disadvantages:

- Supporting the BDMP would increase the development intensity on the north and west portions of the site by extending the Urban Node designation. This would allow taller buildings adjacent to the highway and Hammond Bay Road, which is a change in context for existing surrounding neighbourhoods.

2. That Council deny the Staff recommendation to pass the first two readings of “Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 2021 No. 6500.045”.

- Advantages:

- The future development of the site would continue to be guided by the existing Corridor land use policies that limits building heights to six storeys.

- Disadvantages:

- The developer proposed the BDMP to guide the future development of the site and may not proceed with development authorized by the existing OCP land use policies.
- The proposed BDMP applies comprehensive planning and key urban design principles to guide the development of the lands. The development of the land would be guided by general OCP policy in the absence of the BDMP. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The owner of the property at 6261 Hammond Bay Road proposes to redevelop the 17 hectare site (Green Thumb Nurseries) into a compact, mixed-use neighbourhood.
- The proposed Bowers District Master Plan would provide development goals and planning principles to shape the long-term redevelopment of the property.
- The Master Plan would create four Precincts: Urban Mixed Use, Urban Residential, Village Mixed use, and Village Residential; each supported by a fine-grained road network, traffic-calmed streets, and a network of trails and greenways designed to support walking and cycling; and a comprehensive and multi-functional open space network.
- The proposed Bowers District Master Plan would also provide a new vehicular connection through the site linking Hammond Bay Road (at Calinda Street) with the Island Highway (at Enterprise Way), and provide active transportation linkages with existing adjacent neighbourhoods.
- Staff support the proposed Bowers District Master Plan and re-designating a portion of the subject property from Corridor to Urban Node in the existing OCP to support the plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Context Map
ATTACHMENT B: Existing OCP Land Use Designations
ATTACHMENT C: Location Plan
ATTACHMENT D: Link to Bowers District Master Plan
ATTACHMENT E: Conceptual Site Plan
ATTACHMENT F: Aerial Photo
"Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw 2021 No. 6500.045"

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