

ATTACHMENT D
ISLAND HEALTH OCP REFERRAL RESPONSE



September 26, 2023

Kristine Mayes, Planner
Development Approvals
City of Nanaimo
455 Wallace Street
Nanaimo, BC V9R 5J6

Sent via email to: Kristine.Mayes@nanaimo.ca

Dear Kristine Mayes:

Re: Review – 502 Howard Avenue, City of Nanaimo OCP/Zoning Amendment

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the OCP/Zoning Amendment for 502 Howard Avenue. The past few years have seen significant advances in linking urban planning with a variety of health outcomes.

These include outcomes such as: the encouragement of physical activity, healthier eating, greater safety, cleaner air and healthier living environments, access to health services, food security, age friendly communities, and improved social interaction amongst other potential health criteria.

Island Health appreciates the opportunity to provide evidence based recommendations and comments for this referral. Highlights as well as recommendations are itemized below:

Highlights

- The proposed development will provide much needed 356 market and 34 below market rental units to the area. Access to more affordable housing decreases the frequency of moving between residences. Housing stability helps reduce stress and enables people to better care for themselves and their families. Quality housing is associated with an increased sense of safety, decreased crime, and improved social connections. These factors help people enjoy better health and improved quality of life.
- The multi-family complex will add densification to the area, which can increase proximity to work, schools and recreational opportunities therefore reducing vehicle dependency and increasing engagement in walking, cycling and physical activity, thereby providing a positive impact on health outcomes.
- The development location is positioned next to transit, active mobility routes, amenities and services to enable better access to services and encourage active transportation for increased physical and mental health outcomes. Health evidence shows that people who live in walkable neighbourhoods are two times more likely to meet the physical activity standards than those who don't and convenient access to public transit enhances mobility among a wide range of groups.

Gateway Village Health Unit

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- The inclusion of an outdoor area play spaces, garden areas, public gathering spaces and rooftop patio/garden space will support positive health outcomes. The addition of greenery and garden spaces will provide exposure to nature. Research supports a strong relationship between exposure to nature and the reduction of stress, chronic disease, depression, anxiety, improved concentration and cognitive functioning. Gathering and play spaces provide spaces that encourages neighbourly interactions. Studies have shown that the more socially connected a person felt, the better they perceived their mental and physical health to be.
- Retention or provision of trees on Howard Avenue and Fifth Street will contribute to the urban tree canopy to help mitigate the formation of heat islands and reduce heat impacts on health. Extreme heat events are strongly linked to cardiovascular, respiratory and cerebrovascular mortality. Studies indicate that the cooling effects of vegetation can be significant.
- The location of the parking underground will add to streetscape aesthetics. As well, the overall design and style will increase aesthetics and character of neighbourhood. Pleasing neighbourhood design increases a sense of belonging and pride in a community which can provide positive impacts on well-being.

Regulatory Considerations

Drinking Water

- Under the *Drinking Water Protection Act and Regulation*, any construction, installation, alteration, or extension of (a) a water supply system, or (b) works, facilities, or equipment that are intended to be a water supply system or part of a water supply system, must be issued a construction permit from our Public Health Engineer. Consultation with our Drinking Water Officer will also be needed (for more information: [Island Health - Drinking Water Legislation & Approval](#)).

Sewerage Disposal

- Sewerage disposal for the proposed development must be in compliance with the *Sewerage System Regulation* or the *BC Municipal Wastewater Regulation*.

Food Premises

- The Environmental Public Health department in Island Health have a regulatory role in food premises. Construction of any new food premises must be undertaken with the appropriate construction permit. Any new or existing and unapproved food premises must obtain an operating permit from our office.

Recommendations under Island Health's Healthy Built Environment Initiative

- The 2021 heat dome resulted in several heat related deaths across the province. With increasing concerns for hotter summers and more frequent heat waves consider cooling options such as impervious paving materials, drought resistant vegetation, light/green rooftops, provision of overhangs or awnings for west and south-west building faces, passive building cooling design features and energy efficient mechanical systems to help lessen heat related health impacts.

- Pedestrian walkways should be designed and installed for people of all abilities, such as ensuring easy access for mobility devices. Differentiation in materials from driveway and parking lot to delineate it as pedestrian use will improve safety and comfort. Provision of lights along walkways and pathways, especially in treed areas and incorporating traffic calming within the development will enhance walkability. Walkable neighbourhoods positively influence mobility and physical activity levels, especially in older adults.
- Provision of charging stations for mobility scooters and as well as storage for bicycles will help make alternative mode transportation options safer and more convenient. Transportation options that have a lesser environmental footprint and promote physical activity, leads to overall improvements in emotional and physical wellness, lessens the obesity rates and decrease the risk of chronic diseases.

If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned for further clarification or to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Angela Wheeler, CPHI(C)
Healthy Built Environment Consultant

AW/cmd

cc: Anthony Griffin, Environmental Health Officer, Nanaimo