
June 20, 2019

Kristen Rawkins, Planning Assistant
Planning and Development Services Department
474 South Fletcher Road
Box 340, Gibsons, BC V0N 1V0

Via email: krawkins@gibsons.ca

Dear Ms. Kristen Rawkins,

RE: Development Application Referral OCP-2019-01, Zoning Amendment 2019-01, 571 Shaw Road, Town of Gibsons, BC

Healthy communities are places that are safe, contribute to a high quality of life, provide a strong sense of belonging and identity, and offer access to a wide range of health-promoting amenities, infrastructure, and opportunities for all residents. It is well documented that a community's built environment, defined as the human-made surroundings that provide the setting for human activity, and how it is planned can have a significant influence on the physical, mental, and social health of its residents.

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) would like to thank you for the opportunity to review and provide the comments below for consideration on Development Application Referral OCP-2019-01, Zoning Amendment 2019-01, 571 Shaw Road, Town of Gibsons.

The proposed development was reviewed by the Medical Health Officer, Environmental Health Officers, Population Health and the Healthy Built Environment Team. Please accept the following comments for your consideration:

Housing

Housing policies that promote health within smaller communities are respectful of the social, economic and cultural attributes of rural life and not just the criteria of environment and landscape. In this context, partnership-based local planning processes may enable the exploration of competing rural narratives to be re-orientated towards local needs, capacities, and the perspectives of local people, as well as the adoption of cultural, environmental and community values within the policy process.¹

¹ Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Healthy community design: policy statements for official plans April 2014 Available from: www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

² Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) 2019. Accessible Housing by Design. Date Published: Mar. 31, 2018. Available from: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/accessible-adaptable-housing/accessible-housing-by-design>

³ Middlesex-London Health Unit (2013) Linking Health and the Built Environment in Rural Settings: Evidence and Recommendations for Planning Healthy Communities in Middlesex County. London, Ontario: Author.

Many aspects of the housing proposal appeared to support health and equity:

- Minimum targets for the provision of housing which is affordable for low and moderate-income households, will be established and implemented.
- Feeling connected to a community is often associated with lower stress, improved overall health status and lower mortality rates. Complete communities that allow residents to live in close proximity to neighbours, workplaces, schools and services can promote neighbourhood cohesion and increase social capital. Communities that integrate diverse and affordable housing can provide opportunities for those with lower incomes and for aging in place as people move through their life cycle.¹

The housing proposal may further promote health with the following considerations:

- Ensure that diverse housing options are available where a certain percentage of units would meet the needs of a family, which typically includes units with 3+ bedrooms.
- Incorporate universal design principles to design accessible and adaptable housing that work for all ages and abilities and to create spaces that are comfortable, safe and usable by everyone, including children, older adults and people with disabilities:
 - Equitable use focuses on promoting equitable access for everyone in an integrated and dignified manner. It implies that the design is appealing to everyone and provides an equal level of safety and perceived safety for all users.
 - Consider the flexibility of the design of the development and its location, acknowledging a wide range of individual preferences and abilities throughout the life cycle of the occupants.²
 - Utilize the size and space approach which focuses on the amount of room needed to access space, equipment and controls. This includes designing for the appropriate size and space so that all family members and visitors can safely reach, see and operate all elements of the home.²
- Community gardens or other raised beds may be considered to amplify local food growth and supply in the area. Research also suggests that small-scale urban agriculture activities such as backyard or community gardens have the potential to build community and influence food knowledge and preferences.
- Consider incorporating more green space within the development to help reduce health inequities. By locating green infrastructure in areas where everyone can access green space, including vulnerable populations, and designing it to improve health can lead to cleaner air, reduced stress, improved mental health, more physical activity and stronger social connections.

Transportation

Small and rural towns have great potential for creating viable transportation networks that serve residents and visitors. Common attributes of a small town network include connections between communities that are located along highways and access to retail businesses and schools in a relatively small area within the community core. Communities with strong ties to public lands may also prioritize connections to natural areas.

A safe, direct and complete network provides convenient access to key destinations, while minimizing exposure to motor vehicle traffic. In addition to physical safety, user comfort and perceived safety is an important aspect of a multimodal and shared network. Typically, additional separation between motor vehicles and those walking or cycling, or lowering motor vehicles speed limits is desired to create a more comfortable network.³ These networks may be comprised of varying facilities that appeal to a range of ages and abilities, such as shared use paths, sidewalks, and bike lanes. These facilities also provide equitable transportation for people of all income levels.

Several aspects of the development proposal may require further consideration to better promote health through improved transportation and neighbourhood design:

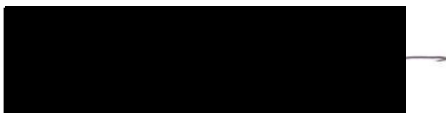
- Providing easy access to trails and paths can encourage walking and cycling for active transport. Trails and paths can be located within residential areas to improve accessibility and convenience. Enhancing connectivity can encourage people to walk or cycle for recreational or transportation purposes and can

further support local initiatives, such as active school travel with children and parents. Connectivity has the potential to increase total physical activity levels and social connections within the neighbourhood.

- The proposed development is adjacent to a wooded area, where a pathway leads to the local community centre. It may be advantageous to connect the proposed development to the nearby community centre. Research indicates that access to recreation facilities is important to help residents meet their physical activity needs. This is especially true for suburban residents who rely more on recreation facilities for physical activity.³
- Implementing infrastructure to promote active transportation networks, such as walking, cycling and/or taking transit, can facilitate independent mobility and improve healthy behaviours. For example, consider creating safer pathways, providing visual cues for all ages and abilities to walk to amenities located in the vicinity, or placing bike parking/storage in the development for ease of use and to promote active travel or recreation.
- The proposed parking area is located in front of the commercial/residential units. In order to facilitate more walking and active transportation to the area, it is encouraged to move some of the parking to the back of the site. Being able to move thorough the site by foot or cycling, allows for more pedestrians to access the site and promotes physical activity and healthy movement.
- Encouraging the implementation of a car share and/or providing charging ports for electric vehicles which can help achieve reduction targets greenhouse gas emissions.

VCH looks forward to reviewing future documents associated with the Town of Gibsons. If you have any further questions or comments, please contact Dr. Geoff McKee.

Sincerely,



Geoff McKee, MD, MPH
Medical Health Officer
Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Central Coast
Vancouver Coastal Health