

Kirsten Rawkins
Planning Assistant
Town of Gibsons
Attention: Planning and Development Services Department
474 South Fletcher Road
Box 340, Gibsons, BC V0N 1V0

via email: krawkins@gibsons.ca

Dear Ms. Kirsten Rawkins,

RE: Development Application Referral, Zoning Amendment ZA-2019-06, 757 School 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, Zoning Amendment ZA-2019-06 for 757 School Road in Town of Gibsons.

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

Access to shelter has been recognized by the World Health Organization as a "fundamental condition and resource for health."¹ Limited availability of affordable housing on the Sunshine Coast creates barriers to accessing this fundamental determinant of health. In addition to affordability, the design and quality of housing significantly influence the health and well-being of the people who live there.²

Many aspects of the proposed multifamily residential project within the development application proposal appeared to support health and equity:

- The project adheres to the provision of affordable housing as per BC Housing Limits, which can provide housing opportunities for those with lower incomes and for the population to age in place as people move through their life cycle.
- The project location is well-integrated into the community and is in close proximity to schools, local amenities, and public transportation.
 - The current location can encourage use of active transportation for all residents, as well as independent mobility for children as schools and services are nearby. Use of active transportation is associated with a wide variety of health benefits (e.g. increased physical

¹ World Health Organization (1986). Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.

² BC Centre for Disease Control (2018). Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit: making the links between design, planning and health, Version 2.0. Vancouver, BC: Provincial Health Services Authority.

activity, decreased obesity, increased social connectivity), leading to improved physical, social, and mental well-being.²

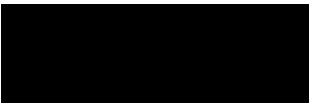
- Living within complete communities can also promote neighbourhood cohesion and increase social capital. Feeling connected to a community is often associated with lower stress, improved overall health status, and lower mortality rates.²
- The project will include a children's play area, which can support outdoor play. Play is essential to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth.³

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

- Active transportation for all and independent mobility for children can be enhanced by building infrastructure that facilitates these modes of transportation, including sidewalks and bike lanes. Any new infrastructure should complement existing infrastructure to enhance connectivity for efficiency and safety. Also, consider providing visual cues for all ages and abilities to walk to amenities located in the vicinity and/or placing bike lockers/storage in the development for convenience and ease of use.
- Incorporate universal design principles to design equitable, accessible, and adaptable housing that is comfortable, safe, and usable by everyone, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- Integrate more green space within the development to provide residents more opportunity to be exposed to nature. Exposure to nature and access to green space can reduce stress, improve mental health, encourage more physical activity, and facilitate social connections.²
- Design the play area for active, unstructured play, where children can lead their own play and have room to be creative. Recommendations on how to design play spaces for unstructured play include the following⁴:
 - Incorporate universal design principles to provide inclusive play elements to children of all ages and abilities.
 - Incorporate natural elements and loose parts to the play space.
 - Include play elements that provide sensory and tactile experiences.

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

³ Gomes, N & Maia, E & Varga, I (2018). The benefits of play for children's health: a systematic review. *Arquivos de Ciências da Saúde*. 25. 47-51. 10.17696/2318-3691.25.2.2018.867.

⁴ Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA). Children's Unstructured Play Position Statement. March 2019. Available at <https://www.cpha.ca/childrens-unstructured-play>.