

History & Vision

Owner's Vision Statement 721 Winn Rd., Gibsons BC

The property at 721 Winn Rd. was initially build in 1989 by Dr. Simpson. He lived in the single family dwelling on the Second Floor, and conducted his clinic based chiropractic practice on the First Floor. The names of his children are pressed by hand into the original concrete steps. In 1999 a permit (3219) was issued (new owner), and under a local architect's letter of assurance, was brought up to code, with allowance for the "keeping of not more than 2 boarders or lodgers", similar to the R1, R2 & R3 zones." At that time the permit addressed some unauthorized alterations, and included the conversion of the two car garage to office space.

When I bought the building in 2016, the Second Floor, residential level included 4 independent dwelling units. The property was badly neglected, and the condition of the furnishings and finishes was poor. I made the investment knowing that it would need a lot of work to bring the health and safety aspects up to acceptable standards.

In the intervening 3.5 years I have cleaned up the building inside and out, enforced health & safety aspects for all tenants by enforcing the smoking bylaw; I have worked with the GDVFD inspector to begin addressing urgent fire safety concerns; I have worked with the Town to address a ground water issue at the East PL; and, without evicting any residential tenant, have addressed many of the problems in apartment units that were caused by years of neglect. This included upgrading the residential level meter and electrical panel on a permit. The list of small improvements is long.

My vision for the property has been evolving. My primary objective is to bring the building into compliance with bylaws this year. Once accomplished, there are two remaining focal points for me.

Firstly, I plan to add retaining walls, level grades, and create a garden oasis in the rear for residential tenants' enjoyment. Plans include rainwater collection and a fruit wall to espalier several varieties of apples. I have designed the south/east facing yard with raised vegetable garden beds and a compost area. Beneficial flowering plants and shrubs are arranged on a slope to attract pollinators. A newly planted, 'bitter cherry' tree will provide shade, and attract crawling insects and the birds that feed on them. I will put bird houses high up on fence posts, and do what I can to keep the deer and cats out.

We have included a proposed, accessible deck area for the enjoyment of office level tenants...a place to take a break, removed from the bustle, to listen to the bird song and gaze out over the gardens to the view beyond. This south yard garden area should be complete and ready to plant by early next year.

Secondly, I want to improve the building generally, and change its physical appearance in subtle, but important ways. As it is now, the property has very little personality. Proposed, aesthetic changes to the front elevation and front gardens will define the office entry and office level as a focal point, drawing the business visitor's eye downward to the First Floor office entry.

Upgrades will include modern signage, a xeriscaped garden, and a newly clad and fenestrated exterior. Two Japanese maple will be retained. The cladding aspects and related work will evolve over 3-4 years as financing allows.

The overall design takes care to prepare for longer, hotter and dryer summers. It includes a non-combustible perimeter of ground cover, cementitious wall cladding, and a metal roof. It eliminates the use of sod as ground cover. Recent electrical upgrades included conduit to the attic

for a future solar array. There are two EV charging locations: one for commercial; and one for residential use.

Overall, the embedded design elements are forward looking, respecting the human user and the OCP. The overarching objective is to enhance the performance of my investment.

Thank you,
Blake MacLeod