

Property Location: Lot A and C Gibsons Way
Application Number(s): ZA-2023-07 / OCP-2023-04
Date of Referral: 26-Jan-24

Referrals sent	Comments Received
<i>Sḵw̓wú7mesh Úxwumix (Squamish Nation)</i>	<i>No comments received as of Feb 16, 2024</i>
Gibsons and District Volunteer Fire Department (GDVFD)	<i>No comments received as of Feb 16, 2024</i>
Vancouver Coastal Health	<i>Feb 7, 2024 letter received. Attached.</i>
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI)	<i>No comments received as of Feb 16, 2024</i>
Infrastructure Services Department	<i>No comments received as of Feb 16, 2024</i>
Building Department	<i>No comments received as of Feb 16, 2024</i>
Public Works Department	<i>The Public Works Department has no issue with the change in zoning or height but would like to have some input with regards to the Infrastructure services locations.</i>

Feb 7, 2024

Katie Thomas
Town of Gibsons
474 South Fletcher Rd., Box 340, Gibsons, BC V0N 1V0
via email: kthomas@gibsons.ca

RE: OCP and Zoning Amendment for Lot A and C Gibsons Way

Dear Ms. Katie Thomas,

The Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) would like to express appreciation for the opportunity to provide input on the OCP and zoning amendment for Lot A and C at Gibsons Way. The proposed application was reviewed by the Medical Health Officer (VCH Coastal Rural), Healthy Public Policy Unit, local Tobacco and Vapour Reduction Coordinator, Healthy Environments & Climate Change team, and Manager (VCH Coastal Rural).

We support the amendment for Lot A and C at Gibsons Way as it supports the development of healthy communities in the Town of Gibsons. Healthy communities prioritize the physical, mental, and social well-being of their residents by promoting access to nutritious foods, nature, active transportation, and safe and affordable housing.

Access to housing has been recognized by the World Health Organization as a “fundamental condition and resource for health.”¹ Limited housing availability, especially affordable housing, creates barriers to accessing this fundamental determinant of health. The proposed development adds to the much-needed housing supply in the Town of Gibsons.

The proposed development at Lot A & C in Upper Gibsons supports the creation of complete, connected, and compact communities, as the proposal includes amenities that would support residents’ health including services through commercial spaces and a childcare facility. It is also within walking distance to other essential services, parks, and schools. It is located on a bike and bus route that allows ease of access to Lower Gibsons and the ferry terminal through modes of active transportation. Increasing the residential density in this area should allow more individuals to perform day-to-day activities while being less reliant on single-occupancy vehicles, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping to improve overall air quality.

In addition to the positive contributions of this proposal identified above, we offer the following comments for consideration to further improve the health of residents in this proposed development:

Social Connection

People who live in socially connected neighbourhoods have better physical, mental, and social well-being.² Multi-unit housing, like the proposed residential buildings B, C, and D, are becoming more common in densifying

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

² Sones, M. (2022). *How does social connectedness between neighbours support health and well-being?* Hey Neighbour Collective. <https://www.heyneighbourcollective.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/HNC-Evidence-Backgrounder-01.pdf>

communities, but have often shown lower levels of social connection between neighbours.³ Evidence shows that intentionally incorporating design strategies that foster social connections in multi-housing units can improve residents' well-being. Social connectedness also plays an important role in individual and community resilience for climate change adaptation and other emergencies.⁴ Shared amenity areas, which are currently proposed in Buildings B, C, and D, is one of the design strategies to encourage social interaction. In addition to dedicated shared space, activating spaces that are already communal, such as parking, lobbies, and hallways, can also improve social connectedness.⁵ Other examples include providing large porches or balconies in lower stories of the building, so that residents can talk with people outside.⁶ More design strategies can be found in [this report](#) that showcases a series of multi-unit building case studies for sociable design.⁷

Climate Change

Promoting healthy communities and addressing climate change are goals that demand immediate action and thoughtful intervention. [VCH's Climate Vulnerability Index](#) can be used to target interventions in higher risk areas; the maps show that the proposed development area has high vulnerability to extreme heat and smoke exposure. A development may mitigate health risks related to these exposures through the provision of mechanical and passive cooling measures, along with air filtration to address periods of extreme heat and poor air quality from wildfire smoke:

- We recommend that mechanical air conditioning systems be equipped with at least MERV 13 filters (ideally MERV 16+) to reduce exposure to wildfire smoke indoors. Note that air filtration can also be effective in reducing exposure to traffic related air pollution that may infiltrate the buildings from arterial roads and truck routes like Gibsons Way.
- Passive measures like increasing shade and tree canopy coverage can also provide residents with places of refuge, especially during extreme heat events. Increasing tree canopy coverage has additional health co-benefits, as exposure to natural environments and green space can also reduce stress, improve mental health, encourage physical activity, and foster social connections.² We recommend that any planned gathering spaces, including childcare play areas, are designed with tree canopy and shade coverage.

This development also provides the opportunity to mitigate climate change by including bicycle spaces within parking lots and around the buildings. In addition to bicycles, the use of electric vehicles (EVs) aligns with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Although the parkade in Building D indicates that there are a few dedicated charging stations for EVs, there are none indicated in the parkades in Buildings B and C. We suggest providing sufficient EV chargers in the parkades of the residential buildings, which makes it convenient for residents to choose a green mobility option.

³ Hey Neighbour Collective. (2023). Practice Guide #4: Roles for local government in strengthening social connectedness and resilience activities in multi-unit housing. <https://www.heyneighbourcollective.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Practice-Guide-4-v2.1.pdf>

⁴ Hey Neighbour Collective. (2020). Developing Truly Complete Communities: Social equity, social connectedness, and multi-unit housing in an age of public health and climate crises. https://catalystcommdev.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/HNC-discussion-paper_150ppi1.pdf

⁵ Avery, M. (2024, January 25). Can our homes make us less lonely? *Happy Cities*. <https://happycities.com/blog/can-our-homes-make-us-less-lonely>

⁶ Cleveland, T. (2024, January 17). Does density hurt happiness? *Happy Cities*. <https://happycities.com/blog/does-density-hurt-happiness>

⁷ Happy Cities. (2023). Building social connections: Case studies to inspire socially connected multi-unit housing. <https://www.heyneighbourcollective.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Case-studies-HNC-HC-2023-10-30.pdf>

Smoke-Free housing

We recommend designating all buildings in this application as smoke and vape-free to protect the health of residents and reduce the risk of residential fires.⁸ Per Health Canada, there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke and up to 65% of the air in multi-unit housing is shared, coming from other units, hallways, or the building exterior. While healthy, non-smoking adults have a higher risk of serious health conditions like lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder when exposed to second-hand smoke, other residents may be more vulnerable. Risks for infants and children include infant death syndrome, pneumonia, and asthma. Pregnant people and people with existing lung conditions also experience more serious risks.⁹ Over 90% of British Columbians do not smoke, are used to smoke-free policies at work and in public places and expect the same protection in their homes. It is legal, favourable, and easy to adopt a [smoke and vape-free policy](#). We strongly recommend adopting a smoke and vape-free policy for this development.

In conclusion, we support the OCP and rezoning amendment of Lot A and C at Gibsons Way and appreciate the opportunity to provide a population and public health perspective to this process.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Mark Lysyshyn MD MPH FRCPC
Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer
Vancouver Coastal Health

⁸ Smoke-Free Housing BC. (2023, November 20). *Why Go Smoke-Free*. <https://www.smokefreehousingbc.ca/why-smoke-free#healthandsafety>

⁹ Health Canada. (2023, June 21). *Health effects of smoking and second-hand smoke*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/health-effects-smoking-second-hand-smoke.html>