

# Report

Date	February 8, 2017	File: ZB000044
To	Council	
From	Natasha Horsman, Community Planning Coordinator	Endorsed:
Subject	Summary of Public Engagement on Proposed Affordable Housing Projects	

## Purpose

This report provides a summary of public input received at two information meetings about North Cowichan’s proposed affordable housing projects at 3191 Sherman Road and 9800 Willow Street.

## Background

In 2015, Council identified affordable housing as one of its top 20 priorities. Since then, Council has taken a number of steps to make progress on this goal, including entering into an agreement with the Community Land Trust Foundation of BC (CLTFBC) to explore the feasibility of affordable housing on two Municipally-owned properties.

In December 2016, the CLTFBC confirmed that it could feasibly build and operate affordable housing projects on 3191 Sherman Road and 9800 Willow Street. Council then directed staff to begin the process to rezone both properties to allow for this type of land use.

On January 18, 2017, Council gave first and second reading to Zoning Amendment Bylaws for each property. The following week, staff held public information meetings in the South End and Chemainus.

The public information meetings were intended to: 1) provide nearby neighbours and the broader community with information about the proposed projects in advance of formal Public Hearings on the proposed rezonings, and 2) gather early feedback from neighbours and the broader community on their interests or desires for the proposed projects.

Both of the meetings began with a 2-hour drop-in period in which attendees could review posterboards and discuss questions, concerns, or ideas with Municipal staff, the CLTFBC, and the project architect. This was followed by a short presentation on the proposed project and an audience Q&A.

## Discussion

### South End Public Meeting – January 25, 2017

Approximately 120 people attended this meeting in total, with approximately 90 people in the room for the presentation/Q&A. Overall, attendees at this meeting communicated low levels of support for an affordable housing project at 3191 Sherman Road.

The main points of feedback received from meeting attendees are summarized below. These are based on the statements and questions made during the Q&A period, as well as on the 34 feedback forms that were completed and provided back to the Municipality.

- I am opposed to this density
- I would like the property to stay how it is
- This project is better suited to another location
- The project should be scaled down – the site is too small for what is proposed
- I don't like the idea of 3 and 4 story buildings in this area
- This site should be used for recreation; this project will result in a loss of recreational land
- I am concerned that this project will decrease my property value
- I am concerned that this project will affect neighbourhood safety and security
- Using this property for housing will affect the safety of all stakeholders
- It's important to ensure that drainage can be properly addressed to not create offsite issues
- Parking:
  - I prefer for this property to be dedicated to parking
  - Parking is already inadequate during large soccer events
  - Parking is inadequate if there are concurrent soccer and curling events
  - Street parking is a problem and causing practical and safety concerns on Sherman Road, Moorfield Road, and Gilana Place
- Traffic:
  - It is already too busy on Sherman Road
  - It is difficult for me to get out of my driveway and onto Sherman Road
  - I would like to see traffic control measures in place to slow down traffic speeds on Sherman Road
  - I don't like traffic congestion
  - I do not want Sherman Road to be classified as an Arterial Road

In addition to the feedback summarized above, a petition was given to North Cowichan at the public information meeting; it includes 152 signatures stating that they do not support "the Municipality of North Cowichan's proposed 64 unit affordable housing project to be located at 3191 Sherman Road..."

#### Chemainus Public Meeting – January 26, 2017

Approximately 75 people attended this meeting in total, with approximately 60 people in the room for the presentation/Q&A. Overall, attendees at this meeting communicated moderate to high levels of support for affordable housing at 9800 Willow Street.

The main points of feedback received from meeting attendees are summarized below. These are based on the statements and questions made during the Q&A period, as well as on the 21 feedback forms that were completed and provided back to the Municipality.

- I would like the building to allow for multi-generational occupants
- I would like the building to focus on seniors
- I would like to see multi-purpose space available for community organizations and non-profits
- I would like the building to include a basement for community storage

- Please ensure that the building is architecturally compatibility with the immediate area, especially the adjacent library building and Waterwheel Park
- I would like the building to be as green as possible (i.e. sod roof, graywater reuse, heat pump)
- Create small units to maximize the number that fit in the building
- Ensure the units are not too small
- I think this is the best use for the size of lot
- I would prefer this project to be in another location
- I think it's important there is enough parking to support this building, the library, and tourists
- I would like information on how future tenants will be chosen
- I would like to see North Cowichan build more than one affordable housing building – Chemainus needs family-oriented housing too
- Suggest an exercise room or social space for residents on ground floor
- Create a garden or recreational space on rooftop – worth slight increase to cost of rent
- Consider allowing pets in the building
- Consider involving the community earlier in projects like this

In addition to these comments, North Cowichan was provided with a document prepared by the Chemainus Residents' Association (CRA) titled "Possible Guidelines for Affordable Housing in Chemainus" (see ATTACHMENT 1). This document outlines a number of suggestions, many of which are consistent with the project as currently proposed:

- Accessibility – having some units designated for persons with disabilities
- Tenure – prioritizing rental units
- Mixed uses – having commercial or community space on the ground level with housing above
- Location – having affordable housing in any residentially zoned part of the community and adhering with OCP policies
- Design – units should resemble surrounding housing on the exterior<sup>1</sup>

Some suggestions in the CRA guideline are not aligned with the proposed project at 9800 Willow Street. The CRA has communicated that they looking at these and will inform North Cowichan if they wish to make any recommendations on these points:

- Project size – housing complexes should not be larger than four units (in this case, 18 are proposed)
- Building size – units should not be taller than three stories (in this case, 4 stories are proposed)
- Intended population – priority should be family housing and housing for single persons (in this case, seniors are targeted)
- Pet friendly – units should be pet friendly (this detail is still to be determined)

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<sup>1</sup> Note: while detailed design has not yet been conducted for the building, both North Cowichan and the CLTFBC are committed to a design that fits with the character of Chemainus.

### PlaceSpeak

In addition to hosting two public information meetings, North Cowichan has posted an information and discussion forum on our online engagement platform, PlaceSpeak. Eight (8) comments have been posted to date, and can be summarized as follows:

- I support this project, but also want to see open spaces and neighbourhood parks
- I am interested in how neighbourhood concerns will be addressed
- I would like details on project financing, municipal role, prospective housing arrangements and maintenance, and impacts to existing landlords
- I do not support 3-4 story buildings at 3191 Sherman Road and I'm concerned about the overall lack of parking and congestion in this vicinity
- I would like to see some housing targeted to people with disabilities
- I don't think 9800 Willow Street is the right place for housing; this is a key commercial area that should be used for commercial activities
- I see this as a broader topic about overall community housing needs; I would like to see this discussion tied in with the conversation about the lifecycle of our community infrastructure.
- Would North Cowichan consider a housing project in partnership with Habitat for Humanity?

### **Implications**

#### 3191 Sherman Road – Issues and Follow-Up Actions:

Many attendees at the public meeting expressed a desire to stop this project or move it elsewhere. This input will need to be weighed by Council along with other decision criteria, which may include: the need for a site that is close to services and transit; the benefits to the broader community; the community need for affordable housing; the availability of other Municipally-owned properties; design and density requirements in order for the project to be feasible; and input from other stakeholders.

North Cowichan and CLTFBC heard that residents around 3191 Sherman Road are concerned about traffic volumes and availability of parking to support recreational activities. Since then, North Cowichan has commissioned a traffic impact study to look at the effect of the proposed affordable housing project on traffic flows during high volume times. The study is anticipated to be ready for discussion at the Public Hearing on February 21, 2017. This study will provide current data about traffic volumes and will recommend future improvements that could be pursued moving forward. However, it must be acknowledged that this neighbourhood is changing and will continue to change as more people move into the area. An associated increase in traffic is likely to continue whether or not this affordable housing project moves forward.

Finally, comments were received at the public meeting and on PlaceSpeak that 3-4 story buildings are not appropriate for this neighbourhood. Council should note that there are two existing 4 story buildings in close proximity to 3191 Sherman Road. Tweedsmuir Manor is a 4 story apartment building located approximately 750 metres from the property on Sherman Road (see ATTACHMENT 2). Mountain View Terrace is another 4 story apartment building located approximately 1100 metres from

the property on Auchinachie Road (see ATTACHMENT 2). Both of these buildings have existed for some time and appear to be well integrated into the neighbourhood.

In response to public input, staff will explore the following topics with the CLTFBC:

1. If any of the units can be designed to accommodate people with disabilities.
2. If there can be flexibility on the height or location of proposed townhomes on the northeast corner of the property.
3. If new parking spaces can be created to the west of the existing curling club building (where there is currently a ditch).
4. How many additional parking spaces could be created in the existing gravel parking lot at the turf fields on Sherman Road by reconfiguring the existing gravel lot and adding painted lines.
5. If additional or improved pull-in parking spaces can be created in the general vicinity of the soccer fields and curling rink.
6. If there are immediate traffic calming measures that could be implemented on Sherman Road.

9800 Willow Street – Follow-Up Actions:

In response to public input, staff will explore the following topics with the CLTFBC:

1. If it is feasible and administratively possible to allow for mixed-ages in the building.
2. If it is feasible to include a rooftop recreational space and/or indoor exercise room or social room in the building and how much that would impact future rents.
3. If pets can be allowed in the building OR at what stage this will be determined.
4. How the building can be designed to fit well with its surroundings.
5. With the CRA: site-specific comments on building height, number of units, intended population.

**Recommendation**

That Council receive this report for information.

ATTACHMENT 1: Chemainus Residents' Association Possible Guidelines for Affordable Housing in Chemainus  
ATTACHMENT 2: 4-Story Apartment Buildings near 3191 Sherman Road

## POSSIBLE GUIDELINES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CHEMAINUS - SECOND DRAFT

Prepared by Chemainus Residents Association (bjislander@shaw.ca)

**OVERALL VISION:** For a small community like Chemainus, affordable housing, whether rental or owned, should take the form of a number of scattered, small developments - a few units here, a few units there, or units incorporated into larger market-rate developments. Affordable housing, whether rental or owned, should be neither stigmatized nor ghettoized nor of a scale that is not compatible with existing housing, thus generating NIMBY opposition.

**MIXED USES:** Chemainus already has a few instances of housing above commercial businesses and more such mixed-use arrangements would be good for affordable housing and for downtown-area businesses.

**SECONDARY SUITES & CARRIAGE HOUSES:** These represent another way to build in more affordable rental housing while also providing extra income for homeowners. Financial incentives can help make such arrangements more attractive for home owners.

**PROJECT SIZE:** Affordable housing complexes should not be larger than four units, with the exception of co-housing (owned) developments which might have a couple dozen clustered units.

**LOCATION:** Affordable housing should be permissible in any residential-zoned part of the community, assuming guidelines below are followed. (Resource limitations, e.g., land or funding, will likely determine location). Developments should adhere to OCP policies re: densification and avoidance of sprawl and be near public transit.

**BUILDING SIZE:** Units should not be taller than three stories since almost all Chemainus housing is that size or shorter.

**INTENDED POPULATION:** Priority should be family housing and housing for single persons who meet appropriate income guidelines.

**TENURE:** Priority should be rental units since those are in short supply.

**DESIGN:** Affordable housing units should resemble surrounding housing as much as possible on the exterior.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** A certain proportion of affordable units should meet current established guidelines for accessibility for persons with disabilities (e.g., <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/acho/acho/index.cfm>).

**PET FRIENDLY:** All affordable units should be pet-friendly.

**OWNERSHIP:** A local non-profit organization is the preferred owner of affordable housing, though the units might have been developed by the public sector or the private sector or some combination/partnership.

**NOTE:** These guidelines represent strategies for increasing the affordable housing stock. There are a whole slew of other mechanisms that have become part of the national and BC conversation about housing affordability, such as property transfer taxes and taxes on foreign ownership as well as municipal requirements for inclusion of affordable units in developments.

## ATTACHMENT 2

Existing 4-Story Apartment Buildings near 3191 Sherman Road

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### **Tweedsmuir Manor (2974 Sherman Road)**

Approximately 750 metres from 3191 Sherman Road



**Mountain View Terrace (3420 Auchinachie Road)**

Approximately 1100 metres from 3191 Sherman Road

