

November 27, 2024

City of Victoria
No.1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Attention: Mayor and Council

Re: Evergreen | Application for Rezoning for a Comprehensive Development Urban Design Plan at 2501 Blanshard Street (also known as Evergreen Terrace), Resubmission Update

BC Housing is proud to submit this application to update the Municipal Zoning Bylaw of the 7.8-acre Evergreen Terrace site. The rationale, planning and urban design supporting this application is the culmination of considered planning and consultation process begun in early 2022. The intention of this comprehensive urban design plan is to guide the phased redevelopment of housing and open spaces that are near the end of their functional life, into a more diverse and integrated urban neighbourhood, west of Quadra Village. Since originally submitting the application in December 2023, regular consultations with City staff resulted in a Rezoning Resubmission in June 2024, and subsequently, in the enclosed comprehensive Rezoning Resubmission that responds to staff comments.

*Intention and Vision:
Re-Imagining
Evergreen*

The Future Evergreen implies positive and hopeful growth and transformation. Located near the heart of the Quadra Village, and an emerging midtown district in Victoria, a renewed Evergreen will provide new housing for present and future residents as well as robust urban infrastructure and enhanced livability in the Quadra West neighbourhood.

This urban redevelopment proposal is intended to provide a setting where a larger local residential population can connect with and grow deeper roots in an inclusive community. It is intended to become an active heterogeneous place that will house a larger diverse population integrated with support uses and ample outdoor spaces, on and off the site.

The Guiding Vision

Evergreen is a diverse, accessible, and sustainable mixed-income neighbourhood that provides a range of housing options for people of all ages and backgrounds, and is connected to, and forms an integral part of the city.

Future Evergreen has been planned holistically, and humanistically and is to be relevant to and engaged with community residents and stakeholders. The comprehensive urban design plan is the result of a humanistic collaboration with tenants and the local community. The plan strives for high levels of sustainability and balances the economic, environmental, and social parameters of current and future populations. It has been informed by a multidisciplinary creative and technical team, assigned to obtain the best long-term results for the Evergreen lands and the host neighbourhood, in the service of its residents - present and future.

The goal has been to arrive at an evergreen solution: an inspired comprehensive plan that reflects peoples' needs, offers a renewal of inclusive housing and integrated urban uses,

anticipates responsive and humanistic architecture, and makes provision for a more sustainable future.

Need and Capacity: A fundamental rationale for redevelopment

The existing buildings at Evergreen Terrace were completed in 1970 and, even with regular maintenance and major renovation work, the buildings have reached the end of their useful and economic life. It has been determined that replacement is more economical than continued repair, and that the land's capacity is much larger and can help address the increasing need for urban housing in Victoria.

All existing homes will be replaced

BC Housing's Evergreen Terrace now accommodates 196 dwelling units, including 175 low income townhouse and apartments and 21 supportive housing units in the temporary, modular Spaken House, which is operated by the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness. All the existing low income Rent Geared to Income (RGI) and Supportive Housing units will be replaced, and current tenants will be supported by BC Housing throughout the redevelopment and relocation processes.

Future Evergreen achieves a net increase in housing

Redevelopment includes approximately 900 non-market and market rate rental units, including replacement of 196 existing low income apartments. This redevelopment is an opportunity to optimize the potential of the site and its location. It will create 704 more units of needed housing in the Capital region. Through phased redevelopment, BC Housing will retain ownership of the land and develop new housing in partnership non-profit and market housing providers.

The Inclusionary Housing Policy is exceeded

All of the 900 non-market and market rate units will be rental in perpetuity. Rents will range from Rent Geared to Income (RGI), moderate to middle incomes up to market rents. Of the 704 net new units, a minimum of ~ 145 units will be operated by a non-profit organization. Rents for the net new units, whether rented at or below market rate rents, should not exceed 30% of the gross household income and remain affordable for a minimum of 60 years for eligible tenants, based on BC Housing's Middle Income Limits which are updated roughly annually and reflect regional realities.

The Inclusionary Housing Policy expectation is to provide 8% of the project's total FSR or total number of units as affordable rental units. The proposal exceeds this by providing:

~ 22% of total units as RGI low income units

~ 38% of total units as RGI low income units and non-profit operated.

The proposal aligns with City policy

The comprehensive plan has been guided by, among other City planning documents, the Official Community Plan (OCP) and the 2022 Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Plan (HQNP). The OCP and HQNP designate the subject property as a Housing Opportunity Urban Place. This identifies primarily multi-unit residential uses in low and midrise apartment building forms. Densities envisioned for the Housing Opportunity range from 1.2:1 FSR up to 2.5:1 FSR, where public benefits consistent with OCP objectives are provided.

The HQNP (Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Plan) designates the site as a Special Planning Area. During the City of Victoria's Villages and Corridors Planning Process, the Evergreen site was recognized as a focus of renewal. To that end, a set of detailed principles and directives were prepared through community engagement to help inform the redevelopment planning process. While the Evergreen site is designated as Housing Opportunity with Floor Space Ratios of approximately 2.5:1 FSR and heights of generally 4-6 storeys, the applicable Special Planning Overlay (SPO) suggests uses, heights, and densities be informed by a Comprehensive Urban Planning process adhering to the principles identified in that general plan. The SPO acknowledges that greater heights and densities may be required to adhere to these principles, especially concerning affordability, open spaces and amenities, to augment present and satisfy future demand.

This rezoning application is the outcome of a comprehensive planning process as envisioned in the Special Planning Overlay. It proposes a density of 2.5:1 FSR, and building heights from 6 to 20 storeys, consistent with the SPO, achieving a complement of resident and public open spaces that integrate the site with the neighbourhood. The application was reviewed and supported by the City's Advisory Design Panel. A summary of all City policies guiding this proposal is included in the application book.

All existing tenants will be supported

Tenant and community engagement was the basis for the comprehensive planning. Following BC Housing's Tenants-First policy, engagement with residents of Evergreen occurred prior to broader community and stakeholder consultation. Existing tenants will continue to live in their homes during the planning and approvals process. The construction phases will occur only after the affected tenants are re-housed. Tenants will be supported by BC Housing at every stage to minimize disruption for everyone. As each phase of construction is completed, current tenants and Spaken House Family Members will be offered new homes first, which reflect their existing rental arrangement structure, unless their income or household size has changed. BC Housing will prepare an individual Tenant Support Plan, in compliance with the City's Tenant Assistance Policy described in further detail in the application. Since originally submitting the rezoning application, work has continued to inform tenants of the phasing plan; tenant support plans are currently being developed for all tenants affected by the proposed first phase of development.

Tenant and community engagement has shaped the plan

The approach was to listen and to learn from the people of Evergreen and the surrounding neighbourhood, so that the design solution is a realization of the community's preferences, needs and values into an imaginative and practical plan. A Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) was formed and has been meeting with the project team, providing guidance and feedback through the design development process.

Through outreach and engagement efforts, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, the descendants of the Lekwungen People on whose territory Evergreen Terrace is located, have been invited to co-create opportunities for both Nations to participate in and inform the redevelopment planning of Evergreen.

The Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) is directly involved in the project planning as operator of the on-site supportive housing, Speqəŋéutxw (Spaken) House. The project team has been working directly with ACEH, and Spaken House staff and clients/ Family Members.

The engagement-informed vision and guiding principles employ a three-phase method:

Let's Envision It Together, 2022 - 2023

Phase 1 of the planning process included tenant, First Nations and key stakeholders engagement, to inform the design team during the exploration of the site's potential as well as to envision and explore redevelopment options.

Let's Plan It Together, 2023 - 2024

Phase 2 included broader community meetings, submitting this Rezoning Application to the City of Victoria, and advancing the application through the municipal approvals process. Phase 2 could take between 12 and 18 months (about 1 and a half years) to complete.

Let's Build It together, 2025 +

Phase 3 involves the redevelopment of Evergreen based on the final approved plan. After completion of the planning and overall Zoning and Development Planning process, redevelopment is likely to take place in phases over time, with construction starting in late 2025 or early 2026. Build-out of the plan could occur over a span of 10 to 20 years. The first phase of development has been identified and work is underway to advance detailed design.



Illustrative Urban Design Plan D'AMBROSIO architecture + urbanism/DAUSTUDIO

*The Comprehensive
Urban Design Plan
for Future Evergreen*

Based on a deep understanding of the site and its context, the plan considers and was shaped by the needs of its future and current residents as well as the aspirations of the surrounding community, as articulated in the OCP and HQNP and through direct community input. Importantly, the site and massing plan prioritizes open space at the ground level of approximately 50% of the site. By strategically locating floor area in taller buildings, more of the ground level is retained as open space.

The site planning objectives were to:

- Recognize, interpret and honour pre and postcolonial human and natural histories
- Retain viable trees and plant many more
- Improve existing, and make new neighbourhood connections
- Create a safe, all-ages recreational circuit path
- Make a variety of public outdoor spaces
- Make defined, secure private outdoor spaces
- Visually connect buildings and spaces with streetscapes
- Mitigate stormwater and micro-climate impacts using integrated green methods

The site plan framework is shaped by the pathway and open space network, and an ambitious urban tree canopy strategy. Building locations and relative positioning has been composed following best urban design principles and practices, including: a balance of views, sunlight, and shade between buildings, and for all apartment windows; maximizing space for landscaping and new trees, recreation spaces, private outdoor patios and balconies, and secure play spaces, on the ground and on available roof tops; making safe pedestrian and cycling connections within the site and into the adjoining neighbourhood; minimizing the negative impacts of vehicles and traffic by calming the adjacent streets and locating parking underground. The strategic positioning of taller buildings provides ample spacing and a formal visual rhythm for the site. The tall structures frame key corners of the property and take advantage of the spatial aspect of the intersections. The plan is for ground-oriented units to be located at the ground level of all multi-storey buildings.

Redevelopment offers broad social, economic and sustainability benefits

Planning for the redevelopment of the Evergreen Terrace site has been underway for many years. The existing buildings accommodate appreciated and well used social and supportive housing units, that will be replaced. New units will meet contemporary building standards and follow BC Housing's guidelines, providing enhanced acoustic separation, accessibility, livability, and functional layout for all tenants.

Family Housing

While not applicable to this rezoning application, the proposal exceeds the City's emerging Family Housing Policy by providing 34% 2-bedroom or larger units, with 35% of those units containing 3 or more bedrooms. Of the 196-replacement low income rental units, 143 family-friendly units will be provided including 84 x 3-bedroom and 21 4-bedroom units.

The project will also provide a minimum of 25% 2-bedroom and larger suites in the ~704 net new units, confirming a commitment to the creation of new family-friendly housing in Victoria.

Newcomer and Multi-Generational Housing

The proposal includes larger units that support newcomer and multi-generational households. Plans consider the design of flex-units, whereby a studio or 1-bedroom unit could be renovated to connect with an adjacent 3-bedroom or 4-bedroom unit to support larger households to meet tenant needs.

Indigenous Housing

Spaken House, a temporary modular structure, provides housing for unhoused Indigenous women with priority given to those fleeing violence. It is operated by the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH). These 21 units will be replaced onsite in a new and permanent building.

Publicly Accessible Areas:

The concept plan features publicly accessible open space areas as additional community amenities, beyond the core housing contributions which are in excess of the City of Victoria's inclusionary housing policy requirements.

BC Housing's Provincial Redevelopment Program (PRP) is dedicated to preserving and renewing housing opportunities on provincially owned land of the Provincial Rental Housing Corporation (PRHC). Maintaining fee simple ownership of PRHC-owned redevelopment sites is a key aspect of the PRP. Disposition of public land is not considered within the PRP program. As such, BCH is not able to consider land dedications for park or road/ highway purposes at Evergreen. Instead, public access to open space, roadway, and sidewalk areas on the PRHC-owned Evergreen property is proposed to be facilitated through Statutory Rights-of-Way (SRWs).

The proposed publicly accessible areas at Evergreen include Evergreen Plaza, Evergreen Commons, Evergreen Lane, and The Loop. Evergreen Plaza and Evergreen Commons represent approximately 5% of the existing site area; while all of the publicly accessible areas together represent approximately 20% of the existing site area, as further described in Appendix C.

Child Care

A child care centre is being planned for the first phase of development and could provide 12 spaces for children ages 0 - 3 and 25 spaces for children ages 3 -5, for a total of 37 spaces. Exterior play spaces will be provided on site for this facility.

Resident and community amenity areas

Additionally, the new buildings will have resident communal areas for social gathering and to support social connections. BC Housing and/or a future development partner will provide a 10,000 SF central amenity area to serve the Evergreen community with space for programs and activities, a shared kitchen and meeting rooms. The amenity space is in addition to the amenity space included in each building and is envisioned to have a generous ceiling height, a kitchen, and be designed for multi-purpose, recreation and education spaces.

Evergreen residents will have priority use of the space though BC Housing is open to

accommodating community use. Programming, operations, and agreements regarding community use are to be determined in collaboration with the City of Victoria and the Quadra Village Community Centre.

*An Integrated Mixed
Income
Neighbourhood*

Expanding the range of housing at Evergreen to include non-market and market rate rental units provides social benefits that can help knit the new development with the broader community. Through thoughtful site design, the plan includes physical connections to the surrounding neighbourhood, housing for a range of incomes, ages, traditional and non-traditional families and lifestyles, and the allowance for some commercial or community services to draw residents from the area. The result is will be a more balanced and complete setting that contributes to the vibrant Quadra West neighbourhood.

It is important to remember that, over time, it is anticipated that the surrounding properties will be redeveloped in accordance with municipal policies. The phased construction of the Evergreen's five sub-areas will grow organically and incrementally along with the entire neighbourhood. The host neighbourhood redevelopments will be guided by the BC Housing mandates, the proposed Municipal Zoning Bylaw, and this Comprehensive Urban Design Plan.

Financial analysis of the concept plan options helped arrive at a preferred plan that can support replacing of the existing homes and building mixed-income housing to meet additional needs. BC Housing's Redevelopment Program requires that BC Housing is responsible for delivering the net new units as affordably as possible while still supporting the ongoing rental cross-subsidization of the replacement RGI units on site.

*Livability and
Sustainability*

Redevelopment of Evergreen envisions a more sustainable future and supports provincial climate goals to actively contribute to low-carbon, healthy and future-proof housing. Replacing buildings that are close to the end of their design lifespans, with new buildings that will be designed and constructed to current best practice standards of energy efficiency, resiliency and accessibility offers greater sustainability.

The site offers inherent sustainability, being proximate to public transit and linked by active modes of transportation; local shops and services; and neighbourhood parks and open spaces. The site is within a 15-minute walk of both the Quadra and Humber Green large urban villages and redevelopment will enhance connectivity. On-site parking supply will meet demand and the implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies will further promote active transportation.

At this rezoning stage, the application establishes the proposed uses and density of development for the re-imagined Evergreen. Full building and site designs are to follow in subsequent Development Permit applications for each phase and will detail each building and their respective sustainability features, as described in the accompanying application documents.

*Phased
Redevelopment*

The comprehensive planning process for Evergreen is a multi-phase initiative to guide redevelopment over time. This plan identifies the overall design and development approach, including recommended land uses, building forms, open spaces, amenities, transportation, and site servicing requirements that together reflect a vision for a renewed Evergreen site.

A phasing strategy will minimize the impacts on existing tenants and site operations, while allowing the option for tenants to remain on site. With the completion of a phase of development, any tenants temporarily displaced will be offered a new home to return to under the same terms and conditions as tenant's current arrangement and program with BC Housing and the Provincial Rental Housing Corporation.

Subject to the successful rezoning and subsequent development permit application, the first phase of construction could start in late 2025 or early 2026, with full build out of the entire plan over 10 to 20 years.

Conclusion

BC Housing, DAU and the Design Team have worked collaboratively with tenants, community members and City staff to bring forward a design concept that will see Evergreen evolve into a more diverse and integrated urban neighbourhood, providing much needed rental housing and ample open space.

It is anticipated that legal agreements will secure various amenities and commitments, subject to BC Housing/City of Victoria discussion and approval.

We value the time and effort of staff in working with us since the outset of this comprehensive planning process and look forward to continued collaboration with staff through the completion of the Rezoning process. Please request clarifications or additional information that will assist in your review.

Sincerely,

D'AMBROSIO architecture + urbanism



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