



## Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of Feb. 21, 2019

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** Feb 13, 2019  
**From:** Andrea Hudson, Acting Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development  
**Subject:** Referral of Proposed Esquimalt OCP Amendment at 899 Esquimalt Road

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### RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to:

1. Forward this report to the Township of Esquimalt as comment on the Township's referral of the Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment for 899 Esquimalt Road
2. Communicate that Council encourages the Township of Esquimalt to recognize the status of Esquimalt Road as part of the City of Victoria's bicycle network, the CRD's Priority Inter-Community (PIC) network, and the Frequent Transit network, as well as its status as a commuter cycling route in Esquimalt's earlier *Bicycle Network Plan* (2001); the opportunity to complete a missing link in this important regional connection; and the value of the urban forest, in order to:
  - a. determine a desired cross-section for Esquimalt Road which includes sufficient space for safe cycling facilities, pedestrians, a bus waiting area, and street trees;
  - b. consult with City of Victoria Engineering staff in developing the above cross-section;
  - c. seek Statutory Right-of-Way or highway dedication to achieve this cross-section along this section of Esquimalt Road and frontage works as part of redevelopment, as appropriate;
  - d. Consult with BC transit to locate, design and secure an appropriate shelter/waiting area for the Frequent Transit route.
3. Communicate that Council is supportive of:
  - a. The Township of Esquimalt considering community amenities to offset any impacts of added density to the community;
  - b. the diversity of housing proposed in this project, including 2- and 3-bedroom units, in a location convenient to shops, services, amenities, transit and the downtown core.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to consider a referral from the Township of Esquimalt regarding a proposed Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment at 899 Esquimalt Road and provide comments to the Esquimalt Municipal Council.

Staff find the proposed OCP amendment to generally be in alignment with Victoria OCP objectives regarding the location of new housing within walking distance of amenities, shops and services for daily living, and transit, with good access to the downtown core.

The proposal, as presented, does not address significant questions regarding the design of bicycle facilities and transit shelter along Esquimalt Road, which is a designated bicycle route in both the City of Victoria's *Official Community Plan*, 2012 (OCP) and the approved *Bicycle Network* (2016); as well as, as part of the Primary Inter-Community (PIC) network in the CRD's *Bicycle Master Plan* (2011) and a designated Frequent Transit Route in BC Transit's *Transit Future Plan* (2011). As the proposal is located along a 1.5-block portion of the Esquimalt Road bicycle route, it is expected to see high bicycle and pedestrian traffic; therefore, it is recommended that Esquimalt staff consult with City of Victoria staff on an appropriate design and request for a Statutory Right-of-Way or highway dedication from the applicant.

Staff also find the Township of Esquimalt's consideration of community amenities to be in alignment with Victoria OCP Policies (OCP 19.7-19.8), as the issues of housing are regional in nature and the proposed amenity will be of benefit to both residents of Esquimalt and Victoria. The potential amenity of dedicated community space for an urgent care clinic use also is in alignment with goals of the *Victoria West Neighbourhood Plan* (2018), which expressed a desire for expanded community services and facilities (13.1.1.) Therefore, staff encourage Esquimalt to consider contribution of a public amenity, or of affordable housing.

Staff also find the proposed diverse housing mix (including 2- and 3-bedroom units proposed by the applicant) in alignment with Victoria OCP objectives for diverse housing (Policy 13.9, 13.10, and 19.), as the Victoria Housing Strategy recognizes a need for larger housing units.

## **PURPOSE**

To consider a referral from the Township of Esquimalt regarding a proposed Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment at 899 Esquimalt Road and provide comments to the Esquimalt Municipal Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Township of Esquimalt has referred a proposed OCP amendment at 899 Esquimalt Road (Esquimalt Road at Head Street) to the Victoria City Council for comment.

The proposed amendment would change the current envisioned height and density from six storeys and 2:1 floor space ratio, to twelve storeys and up to 4:1 floor space ratio. The Township of Esquimalt is seeking amenity contributions, or affordable housing provision, to offset the impacts of this development. Current discussions include the possibility for a dedicated clinic space.

The proposed development would include 57 residential units, ranging from studio to 3 bedrooms, approx. 415 sq. metres of commercial or amenity space, and 94 parking spaces in a structure.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

Staff have the following comments:

### Transportation Impacts and Considerations

The City of Victoria desires to encourage increased visits to Victoria's urban core by walking,

cycling, transit and related modes of transportation, as identified in the OCP (for example, see policy 7.30). Vehicle use is a key source of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and creates congestion in the region.

Esquimalt Road is a designated bikeway in the City of Victoria's OCP (Map 7: Cycling Network) and is identified as part of the secondary, long-term bicycle network in the City's designated *Bicycle Network* (2016). It is also identified as part of the Primary Inter-Community Network in the CRD's *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* (2011), Esquimalt's earlier *Bicycle Network Plan* (2001).

The proposed OCP amendment is located along an approximate 1.5-block gap in the cycling route along Esquimalt Road. Both east and west of this gap, Esquimalt Road includes striped bicycle lanes along most of its length. Thus, for these 1.5 blocks, cyclists are forced to merge into relatively heavy automobile traffic while crossing a busy intersection. There is significant existing, and potential residential density, commercial destinations, and a kindergarten-grade 12 school (École Victor-Brodeur) in the immediate area, indicating that there will likely be significant pedestrian and bicycle traffic, including that of vulnerable persons. In the Township of Esquimalt, Esquimalt Road is currently 20m wide, while the desired width for an arterial road in Victoria is 25m-30m.

In addition, Esquimalt Road has been identified as a Frequent Transit Route in BC Transit's *Transit Future Plan* (2010). There is currently a bus shelter adjacent to the development site.

The plans shared with the City of Victoria do not indicate if a Statutory Right-of-Way or highway dedication would be requested from the developer, nor if any types of bicycle facilities are envisioned on Esquimalt Road; however, at least one image seems to imply that bicycles would travel in the pedestrian crosswalk. In addition, the submitted plans do not include any indication of where, or how, bus passengers would be accommodated as no waiting area or bus shelter is shown.

#### Urban Forest and Stormwater Impacts

The City also recognizes the importance of street trees as part of the urban forest, enhancing air quality, climate resilience and pedestrian experience and reducing stormwater runoff (see OCP 10.14, Urban Forest and Urban Forest Master Plan). The proposed roof garden is seen as a positive aspect of this development in mitigating climate change and urban runoff impacts. The plans shared do not show any trees or landscaping on the proposed street frontages. Given the high proposed site coverage, we encourage the inclusion of healthy canopy street trees within the right-of-way where possible and consideration for alternative stormwater solutions such as raingardens.

#### Public Amenities and Housing Impacts and Considerations:

Staff find the proposed OCP amendment to generally be in alignment with OCP objectives regarding the location of new housing within walking distance of amenities, shops and services for daily living, and transit, with good access to the downtown core.

Staff find the proposed unit mix, with a high proportion of 2- and 3-bedroom units, to be a welcome addition to housing supply as the Victoria Housing Strategy has identified a lack of 2- and 3-bedroom units within Victoria and the OCP envisions a diversity of housing choices (Policy 13.9, 13.10) to meet the needs of residents at different life stages and household types. While the proposal does not displace any current residences, the proposed market-rate units, if stratified, are unlikely to address housing needs at low- and moderate-income ranges, which are identified as a need in the region and within the Victoria Housing Strategy and OCP.

Thus, the provision of public amenities offsetting the local impacts of an increase in population,

and/or non-market housing balancing the creation of market strata development, is encouraged. This is consistent with Victoria's *Official Community Plan* (section 19.7: Density Bonus) and current City policy and practices. We recognize the Township of Esquimalt is discussing potential public amenities with the proponent, with one possibility being dedicated space for a clinic; City Staff encourage this direction. A desire for expanded community services and facilities is in alignment with the *Victoria West Neighbourhood Plan, 2018* (Policy 13.1.1.), and medical services were mentioned during the recent neighbourhood planning process as one desirable use. Such space would benefit Victoria residents; thus, offsetting impacts on the community.

## **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

There are no accessibility impacts to the City of Victoria.

### *2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan*

The proposal, while in Esquimalt, could further goals in the draft Strategic Plan, particularly achieving community amenity contributions or housing objectives and expanding the active transportation network.

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

The proposed OCP amendment in Esquimalt does not impact Victoria's Financial Plan.

### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

The proposed OCP Amendment, while in Esquimalt, supports several of the City of Victoria's OCP objectives, including the provision of housing within the region's core within walking distance of shopping, services, amenities and transit. If the proposed public amenity (clinic space) is provided, it would support OCP objectives regarding community well-being. The recommendations staff provide in this report seek to enhance the project's support for Victoria's OCP goals related to completion of a bicycle network, support for Frequent Transit, and enhancing the urban forest, all of which encourage residents to choose walking, cycling or transit when commuting to Victoria.


## **CONCLUSIONS**

City of Victoria staff find that this proposed amendment to Esquimalt's OCP aligns with City of Victoria OCP goals related to sustainable land use and the provision of housing near shopping, services, amenities, transit and employment. Staff do not find specific impacts to the City of Victoria of the proposed built form.

Staff have key comments regarding width and design of the Right-of-Way of Esquimalt Road related to this project, in order to support access to the downtown core by walking, cycling, or transit, with particular concerns for supporting the shared designated bicycle route and Frequent Transit route along Esquimalt Road.

City of Victoria staff support the Township of Esquimalt's consideration of the contribution of amenities. If dedicated Urgent Care space can be secured, this will be a positive development supporting Victoria's OCP goals regarding density bonus and community well-being. Community facility space was identified as a concern by residents of Victoria West during the recent *Victoria West Neighbourhood Plan* engagement process, with medical services being one desired use.

Respectfully submitted,



Marc Cittone  
Senior Planner



Andrea Hudson  
Acting Director, Sustainable Planning and  
Community Development

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date:

Feb 15, 2019

**List of Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Proposed OCP Amendment for 899 Esquimalt Road (Township of Esquimalt)