



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 28, 2019

Date: March 22, 2019

From: Councillor Ben Isitt and Councillor Sharmarke Dubow

Subject: Enhancing Parkland and Community Services at 950 Kings Road

Background:

In the late 1960s, the parcel of land at 950 Kings Road was acquired and redeveloped as part of the Blanshard-Rose Project, an urban renewal project under the authority of the *National Housing Act, 1954*, that resulted in the displacement of 157 working-class and ethnoculturally diverse households. In place of single-family dwellings occupied by Italian-Canadians, Indo-Canadians and other residents, the City of Victoria in partnership with the Government of Canada and provincial agencies proceeded with construction of a six-lane highway through the neighbourhood ("the Blanshard Extension," connecting downtown with outlying areas), as well as the 180-unit Blanshard Court public housing project (now called Evergreen Terrace) and construction of the new Blanshard Elementary School, which opened in 1968.

In 2003, the Victoria School District 61 Board of Education voted to close Blanshard Elementary School. Control of the 2.6 hectare grounds and building was transferred to private entities when the board entered into 99-year leases for use of the parcels; between 2014 and 2016, the Capital Regional District through the Capital Regional Hospital District restored public control of these lands when it purchased both 955 Hillside Avenue and 950 Kings Road from the School District and the leaseholders, a divestiture of school lands authorized by the provincial Minister of Education at the time. Construction is now underway on a 320-unit dementia-care hospital on the parcel formally occupied by the school grounds ("The Summit at Quadra Village").

The future of the former Blanshard Elementary School building and surrounding greenspace at 950 Kings Road is yet to be written. The building is currently leased to the City of Victoria for operation of the Quadra Village Community Gym (under license to the Quadra Village Community Centre) and to the Vancouver Island School of Art for arts education classes.

At the time that 950 Kings Road was sold to the CRHD in 2016, the SD61 Board of Education indicated that it "strongly supports ... public engagement with the Quadra neighbourhood regarding the future development of the site." The CRHD Board has also gone on record favouring early and meaningful engagement with the Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee and neighbourhood residents on the future use of 950 Kings Road.

Victoria City Council has provided policy direction to inform decisions relating to 950 Kings Road through the action identified in the newly adopted *City of Victoria Strategic Plan, 2019-2022*, to "Explore opportunities to expand the Quadra Village Community Centre and greenspace in partnership with the Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee and the CRD." The City of Victoria's *Hillside-Quadra Neighbourhood Plan, 1996*, also provides policy direction for future

use, designating the property at 950 Kings Road as “Public School” in the Parks, Open Space and Community Facilities chapter of the plan.

In light of these policy directions, as well as the strongly expressed views from residents and other stakeholders of the need for enhanced parkland and community services to serve low-income and vulnerable populations, as well as other community members, it is recommended that Council place itself on record favouring the retention of parkland and community services at 950 Kings Road. It is also recommended that the City express its support for the creation of new nonmarket housing on the adjacent parcel at 2505 Blanshard Street (Evergreen Terrace), through engagement with Evergreen Terrace residents, DBAC and BC Housing.

Recommendations:

That Council:

1. Places itself on record favouring the retention of parkland and community services at 950 Kings Road, to provide a neighbourhood amenity and community amenity in an area that is seeing substantial current and future densification.
2. Places itself on record favouring the rapid creation of new nonmarket housing options on the Provincial government-owned parcel at 2505 Blanshard Street (Evergreen Terrace), subject to the following conditions:
 - (a) Early, meaningful and ongoing engagement with existing residents of Evergreen Terrace and with the Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee on the types of housing that is desired and the phasing of redevelopment.
 - (b) No net loss of family townhouse units and apartment units at rent levels equivalent to existing rent levels, with a right of first refusal for existing residents to occupy newly created units at equivalent rent levels.
 - (c) High quality design.
3. Directs staff to engage the Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee and the Capital Regional District / Capital Regional Hospital District and report back to Council on a priority basis with options for creating City parkland and community services at 950 Kings Road.
4. Requests that the Mayor write, on behalf of Council, to the Provincial Rental Housing Management Corporation (BC Housing), requesting a meeting between BC Housing, City Council and City Staff at the earliest opportunity to identify options for expediting the creation of new nonmarket housing options at 2505 Blanshard Street (Evergreen Terrace), subject to the conditions noted above.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Isitt



Councillor Dubow

Attachments:

1. Letter from Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee
2. Letter from North Park Neighbourhood Association