

October 16th, 2023

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)

On behalf of BC Housing, our team 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 begun in early 2022. The intention of this comprehensive urban design plan is to guide the phased redevelopment of housing and spaces that are near the end of their functional life, into a more diverse and integrated urban neighbourhood, west of the Quadra Village.

Intention and Vision: Re-Imagining Evergreen

The Future Evergreen implies positive and hopeful growth and renewal. 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 improvements to livability in the Quadra West neighbourhood.

The intention of this urban redevelopment is to provide a setting where an increased residential population of Evergreen can better 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, intended to be relevant to and engaged with area residents and community stakeholders. The comprehensive urban design plan is the result of a humanistic collaboration with tenants and the local community. The plan strives for new 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, 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 not only more economical than continued repair, but that the capacity of the land is significantly larger and therefore 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 homes, including 175 social housing townhouse and apartment units and 21 supportive housing units in the temporary, modular Spaken House, operated by the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness. All the existing units will be replaced, and current tenants will be supported by BC Housing throughout the redevelopment process.

Future Evergreen achieves a net increase in housing

Redevelopment includes approximately 900 non-market and market rate rental units, including replacement of 196 existing affordable homes. This redevelopment is an opportunity to optimize the potential of the site and its location to achieve over 700 more units of needed housing in the Capital region. Through phased redevelopment, BC Housing intends to retain ownership of the land and achieve new housing through partnerships with other non-profit and market housing providers.

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 Evergreen site 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 areas range from 1.2:1 FSR up to 2.5:1 FSR, where substantial public benefits consistent with the objectives of the OCP are provided.

The HQNP also 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 through a comprehensive planning process. 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 on the site be informed by a Comprehensive Urban Planning process that would adhere to the intentions and principles identified in that general plan. The SPO acknowledges that greater heights and densities may be required to follow these principles, especially those concerning affordability, open spaces and amenities to augment current 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. 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 foundation of the comprehensive planning process for this plan. Following BC Housing’s Tenants First policy, engagement with people currently living at Evergreen occurred prior to broader community and stakeholder engagement. Existing tenants will continue to live in their homes during the planning and approvals process. The redevelopment 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.

Tenant and community engagement has shaped the plan

The approach has been 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.

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 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, and could begin in 2025. Build-out of the plan could occur over a span of 10 to 20 years.



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. The site planning priorities 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 siting 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 spacial 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 cherished social and supportive housing units, which will be replaced. New units will meet contemporary building standards and will follow BC Housing's guidelines, providing enhanced acoustic separation, accessibility, livability, and functional layout for existing and new tenants. Additionally, the new buildings will have resident common areas for social gathering and to support social connections. A new, larger central amenity area will be developed to serve the Evergreen community as a whole, with envisioned space for programs and activities, a shared kitchen and meeting rooms.

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

It is important to remember when looking at such a long-term plan that, over time, it is anticipated that the surrounding properties will also be redeveloped in accordance with municipal policies. The phased construction of the Evergreen's five sub-areas will grow organically along with the entire neighbourhood, 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.

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.

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.

Subject to the successful rezoning, the first phase of development could start in 2025, with full build out 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.

We look forward to working with staff through the Rezoning process. Please do not hesitate to request from us any clarifications or additional information that will assist in your review.

Sincerely,

D'AMBROSIO architecture + urbanism



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