

Assignment 1: Development Planning Project Brief

APPL 5140: Planning Process & Law | Langara Fall 2025

Re: 1934 Hovey Rd - OCP Amendment, Rezoning and Development Permit

Prepared by: Marina Miller (100275287)

Development overview

A new housing development has been approved for the District of Central Saanich. Initially proposed as two six-storey buildings with 197 dwelling units in 2023, the final approved project will consist of two four-storey buildings with 187 units. The proposal required an Official Community Plan (OCP) Amendment to facilitate a land use designation change, and therefore necessitated a public hearing which took place over two days in March 2025.

Each of the two buildings serve a different purpose: the West Building is market rental which facilitates lower rental costs for the East Building, which is for veterans and seniors.

Municipality	District of Central Saanich, British Columbia
Applicant name	Aryze Developments (Based in Victoria, BC)
Collaborators	South Vancouver Island Housing Society Royal Canadian Legion
Address(es)	Consolidation of five properties (7551 East Saanich Rd and 1934-1966 Hovey Rd) into one (1934 Hovey Rd)
Type	Affordable rental and market rental housing
Density and form	<p>Initial application was for two six-story buildings, but this was revised to four storeys each, totalling 187 dwelling units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• East Building to have 57 affordable studio and one-bedroom units for seniors and veterans (53,817 sqft)<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ FAR = 1.06• West Building to be market rental with 130 units ranging from studio to three-bedroom (106,179 sqft)<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ FAR = 0.55

Bylaws and Permits

Bylaw or Permit	Details
OCP Amendment Bylaw No. 2205, 2024	From 'Neighbourhood Residential' to 'Multi-Unit Residential'
Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 2206, 2024	Amend Zoning Map from Residential Neighbourhood (RN) and Residential Corridor (RC) to Residential Attached (RM-5)
Housing Agreement Bylaw No. 2207, 2024	Lays out the terms and conditions of affordable housing between the municipality and the owner (LGA, Part 14, Division 5, Section 483).
Development Permit Application 3060-20-10/23, which includes variances	Variances include building height, balcony projections, lot coverage, yard setbacks, parking spaces, and bicycle parking.

Consistency with Official Community Plan

The District of Central Saanich's [Official Community Plan](#) was adopted in 2023. It designates part of the development site as 'Neighbourhood Residential', which allows for mixed housing up to eight units. The other part of the site lies along the 'Main Corridor Development' designated area, which allows for townhouses and up to four-storey apartments. Without amending the OCP, the proposed project would exceed density and height limits, and does not meet requirements for massing.

A [Staff Report](#) created for the November 25, 2024 Council Meeting discusses the above misalignment with the OCP, but also encourages Council to consider the need for certain types of housing in the community. The proposed development provides housing which is identified as a need for the District, and the unit type per bedroom and seniors' inclusion is in line with the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). Staff also express that the location in the community is appropriate, 800m from the village centre.

Public response

This project was considered controversial by the community, which is evident from [news coverage](#), letters, and the highly attended two-day public hearing in March 2025. The hearing was initially set for December, but was abruptly cancelled in light of a revised proposal from the developer which needed staff and council consideration. The community was invited by the developer to review the revisions and ask questions in January.

Based on comments from the [public hearing](#) and two opinion letters published in Saanich News:

Points of public support

- There is a need for housing in the community
- There is a need for market rental housing in the community
- There is a need for affordable housing in the community
- There is a need for senior, veteran, healthcare, and/or family housing in the community
- Allows seniors to “age in place”
- Aligns with the District’s Strategic Implementation Plan
- Supports the adjacent Legion housing complex
- Supports a stronger local economy
- Creates positive social impact
- It is the best use of residential land
- It will benefit the entire community

Points of public concern

- Not aligned with OCP
- OCP should not be amended
- Devalues the OCP
- Central Saanich should remain a small community
- It is a bad fit for the neighbourhood
- Sets a bad example for North Saanich
- No need for more density
- Negative environmental impact
- Market rentals not affordable enough
- Impacts neighbours
- Creates orphaned properties nearby
- Issues with massing, setbacks, parking, lack of second stairwell in one of the buildings
- The tree removal is problematic
- May cause strain on economics and social services

Staff recommendations and discussion

Recommendations and discussion was included in a Staff Report created for the November 25, 2024 Council Meeting (where first and second readings of the proposal were passed.) It should be noted that this report was created after the applicant made some initial adjustments to the proposal. Overall, the Staff Report recommended that council do a second reading and public hearing. They discussed project alignment with the OCP, overall supportive of the project’s ability to address housing needs and the suitability of the site. They also mentioned the project’s alignment with Council’s 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. On parking, traffic, housing agreements, trees, etc. there were no major concerns raised. Their main concerns were around misalignment with zoning, which led them to make several recommendations for variances.

Decisions and next steps

After the November 2024 Staff Report was published, Council voted to hold a public hearing, but it was cancelled because the applicant decided to provide revisions. The applicant also decided to hold a public meeting to review these revisions in January 2025. The official public hearing took place in March covering both the OCP and Development Permit with variances. A third reading took place a few days later. The project was [approved on July 14, 2025](#). The proposed Bylaws were all adopted, and the Development Permit was authorized for issuance (Carried 4 to 3). The next steps for the applicant Aryze Developments is the submission of a building permit, and for the project to begin construction.

Recommendations

Based on the information available on this approval process, one of the key points of tension was the cancelled public hearing in December 2024. After staff recommended a hearing, it was scheduled and ready to go, but was abruptly [cancelled the day-of](#), leaving attendees from the community frustrated and confused. There could have been a lack of effective two-way communication between the applicant and staff, as the applicant decided to inform staff of further revisions so last-minute. What political or strategic motivations lay behind this is unclear, but it's likely due to miscommunication or internal pressures on either side. Staff justified the hearing cancellation by saying the revision would include public input, and "having a public hearing on a half-baked plan is bad policy." Even if this is true, this event may have fuelled the fire for such an intense public hearing by the time it happened in March 2025.

Although the developer hosted its own public meeting/open house to show the revised plan in January 2025, there still seemed to be something missing in the communication and education process, both for the stakeholders and the public. Staff could have perhaps created some more public resources in December describing their recommendation for variances in plain language, including at the January public meeting. This could have helped citizens understand how variances could act as a tool to better align the project with the city's vision.

There was some clear NIMBYism in the list of concerns from the public (such as stating they are opposed because it simply isn't the right fit for the neighbourhood), but variances would ultimately be included in the project permits, and the height reduced by two stories, indicating there was some influence from public concern.

It is possible that controversy would have arisen from the public no matter how well the developer and staff communicated; perhaps this project simply reveals growing pains of a densifying island District. These pains are being felt across the province as we build 'up' and not 'out'. The principles of early and frequent public consultation are still necessary for all projects, and we must also consider the overall comprehensive communications plan, both internal and external, so that the considerations and decisions are clear to all parties throughout the process. This is no simple challenge.