



May 02, 2023

City of Courtenay Mayor and Council,
via Nancy Gothard, Manager of Community and Sustainability Planning/ Acting Manager of Development Planning

Re: Development Variance Permit, NIC Student Housing

North Island College is seeking a Development Variance Permit to begin construction on NIC's first student housing building. The two (2)-building, 4-storey student housing project at the Comox Valley campus. The project consists of 217 total beds for student housing (Main Building, 157 beds) and family housing (Family Building, 60 beds).

The project offers a range of rental rates, lease-lengths and unit types, including short term leases to meet the needs of students in trades and short-term programs. While a Student Housing Operations Committee will review rents closer to opening day, the College is committed to providing housing at below market rates.

With rental rates below .4% in the Comox Valley (CMHC Rental Market Survey, 2021), housing availability and costs present a significant barrier to education for students across the region. Student Housing is expected to increase access to post-secondary education across the region and alleviate pressures on the Comox Valley's housing stock.

The College expects the project to become a home and a community for a wide variety of students across the region, and are currently developing admissions policies to support Indigenous students, former youth in care, and those with distinct needs. In addition, the buildings are designed to achieve Rick Hansen Accessibility certification.

The buildings are fully electric and will achieve the rigorous BC Energy Step Code 4. The high-performing building envelope includes triple glazed windows and high efficiency elements throughout the design. Energy will be further offset with roof-mounted photovoltaic panels and construction will include using mass timber and traditional wood framing. In addition, the project encourages active transportation with bike storage and access to schools and retail outlets.

Finally, the provincial government estimates the project is expected to add 341 direct jobs, and 129 indirect jobs to the local economy.

A Development Variance Permit is sought for height restrictions owing to the 4-storey construction of the buildings, an increased floor-to-floor height to accommodate larger-scale use to accommodate student meeting spaces and college community uses, as well as articulation of the roof form, which represents local and traditional vernaculars.

Thank you for your consideration of this height relaxation for this important community building.

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