

Application for Development Permit

Project location: 1560 Grieve Avenue, Courtenay BC

Present use: Single family residence

Project description

This is an application for a rezoning and Development Permit to allow L'Arche Comox Valley to build *The Anchorage*, a development which will provide safe and affordable housing for adults with diverse abilities. The proposed development will consist of stand-alone, duplex and four-plex structures, plus an amenity building that includes a suite for an on-site resource and support person, set in an extensively landscaped site. The project will be constructed in two phases. The initial phase comprises the amenity building and eight suites; phase two, expected to be built within the next six to eight years, will have an additional eight suites in two buildings.

Project Background and Objectives

L'Arche Comox Valley, the project proponent, is a member of a national and international non-profit organization (L'Arche Canada, L'Arche International) that works to create homes, programs and support networks for people with diverse disabilities. L'Arche communities exist in 38 countries around the world. In the Comox Valley, L'Arche operates the IBC Suites at 1465 Grieve Avenue and Jubilee House, a shared residence on 19th Street. They also operate the I Belong Centre, a community hub that offers social and recreational activities.

The Anchorage is a response to the need for additional housing options for adults with diverse abilities who are not well-served by the rental market. It is also intended to function as a community, where residents know each other, socialize together, but still live independently. Each one-bedroom unit has a full kitchen and laundry facilities, storage, and ample bedroom and living/dining areas. In addition, residents have the use of a common amenity building where they may gather socially, for entertainment, meals or other activities. Located in this same building, the 'Good Friend and Neighbour' acts as an on-site support person, assisting tenants with a wide variety of tasks including cooking, household maintenance, medical or personal care.

Response to OCP objectives

The project meets many of the goals, policies and guidelines of the Courtenay Official Community Plan's Section 4 "Land Use Designations" as well as Section 8 "Development Permit Areas – Residential":

- Optimizes the use of existing lands in the City;
- Encourages multi residential development in the Downtown area of the City;
- Ensures the provision and integration of special needs and affordable housing;
- Encourages housing opportunities and convenient community services for individuals with special housing requirements;
- Ensures new housing projects introduce innovative and creative design and streetscapes;
- Preserves the integrity and character of existing residential areas with its redevelopment proposal;
- Increases the supply of affordable rental housing;
- Disperses affordable and social housing, while creating a walkable “campus” between the three LCV locations;
- Includes a comprehensive design concept giving attention to the overall architectural style, detailing, two storey pedestrian scale, representative natural materials, character of fenestration, articulation of shingled roofs, distinctive treatment of entrances, stepping of building heights that follow the natural topography, relationship of indoor and outdoor spaces, design and placement of common areas, parking arrangement and circulation exploiting the existing lanes, and a verdant and functional landscape character and design;
- The proposed arrangement of buildings on the site creates an enclosing walkway and courtyard spaces that provide a level of security and sense of safety that is of paramount importance to the prospective tenant group. The project seeks to achieve a balance of exterior privacy and neighbourly interaction amongst residents, encouraging interactions and casual surveillance while defining boundaries between units;
- Many of the existing trees on site will be retained

Site Location and Characteristics

The site chosen for The Anchorage is located at 1560 Grieve Avenue, a street of primarily single-family bungalows with a few storey and a half homes, dating from the 1950’s and 1960’s. The 22m wide by 72.7m deep lot is bounded on the SW side by Grieve Avenue, and on the SE and NE sides by 6m laneways. There is a gentle slope totalling 1.8m from the front to the rear. Numerous mature trees, both confers and deciduous, are found on the property, as is a one-storey dwelling and outbuilding, which will be removed. The property is currently fenced on three sides. The site location is within walking distance of shopping, services, and close to major bus routes.

Site Design Concept

The site concept chosen for this project – detached structures arrayed around a central courtyard and shared amenity building - reflects the desire to create a safe and welcoming intentional community for the residents. Design principles such as those found in Cohousing communities - such as: windows facing the commons, vehicles at the periphery, a good balance of public and private spaces - are employed to foster a sense of belonging and connection between residents.

At the same time, there is a desire to fit into both the social and the built fabric of the street. Socially, a precedent has previously been set in the neighbourhood with the construction of the I Belong Centre at 1465 Grieve Ave.

Building Design

As it is the strong desire of L'Arche Comox Valley to fit this new residential community into the neighbourhood, the proposed construction will use forms based on vernacular examples existing in the neighbourhood, retaining the same sense of scale by using a number of smaller structures instead of one large block. Lower roofs on south and east sides will allow light into the central courtyard area and soften the visual impact at the Grieve Avenue corner. A gazebo over the main entryway provides a neighbourhood amenity that enhances pedestrian experience on Grieve and delineates the transition from the public to the private realm.

All dwelling units are to be one-bedroom, single occupancy and are fully self-contained with complete kitchens, in-suite laundry, 3-piece bathrooms, generous entry halls, living/dining and bedroom areas. Principles of Universal Design are followed, which will allow residents to remain independent despite any physical disabilities which may arise. All units are designed with ample weather protection at each entrance, large doorways, with turning clearances for those with limited mobility that will facilitate aging in place. Kitchen windows are oriented to the central “street” for community connection and security. Interior finishes will be low-VOC, durable and aesthetically pleasing choices such as Marmoleum flooring, wood doors and trim.

Exterior cladding will be HardieBoard bevel and Board & Batten siding, with a playful and strong colour palette, except around entry doors where horizontal clear cedar siding highlights will create welcoming warmth and visual interest. Roofs will have laminated architectural shingles in middle grey tones with fascia and trim flashings in dark greys to match the shingles; soffits will be beaded vinyl. The overall intention is to convey the impression of quality construction by using good materials and darker colours, ample fascia boards and trim, with careful attention to detailing.

Landscape Design

The project landscaping has been designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Creation of an inviting entrance to the site for visitors and residents at each point of entry;
- Site design offers a 'homey' feel and a clear designation of private lands. Low fencing aids in the identification of private to public land making the site more defensible;
- Low maintenance, low water consumption and manpower needed;
- A gently sloping grade to each internal pathway to ensure that accessibility is achieved creating an inclusive approach;
- Retention of existing trees where possible, including mature fir, oak and dogwood trees;
- Visual improvements to the abutting lanes along with greening to contribute to the aesthetics of the neighbourhood.
- An open plaza along Grieve to allow for handyDART pickup and an open interaction with the neighbourhood;
- Native species utilized in plantings for reduced maintenance, water consumption and a natural aesthetic;
- Vegetative screening along site edges to soften the impact of structures
- Courtyard offers open gathering spaces for residents to interact in a pleasant environment;
- Private outdoor living spaces for some units in the form of rear patios large enough for table and chairs;
- A bicycle friendly site with secure bike and scooter storage;
- All planted areas will be constructed with the following minimum depth of soil:
 - Shrubs – 450 mm;
 - Ground cover & grasses – 300 mm;
 - Trees – 300 mm around and below the root ball.

Sustainability Design

- The project hopes to exceed BC Step Code Level 3 as mandated by the City of Courtenay for residential buildings;
- The site use complements surrounding land uses and is contoured to respond to site topography;
- The project demonstrates high walkability, and is transit-oriented. As residents will be largely car-free, there will be a HandiDart stop at the curb on Grieve Avenue as well as convenient and secure storage for bicycles and scooters on-site;
- Level-2 electric vehicle charging will be provided in the rear parking area;
- Many of the larger existing trees on the lot will be maintained;
- Roofs are asymmetrical to provide more roof area for solar PV panels. Up to 24 kW of PV generation is possible on south-facing roofs in Phase 1. Units will be pre-wired for grid-

tied solar. The actual amount of installed capacity will be determined at time of construction;

- Modern, low flow plumbing fixtures will be used throughout the project;
- Where possible, construction materials and finishes are to be locally produced and non-toxic;
- Runoff generated on the site will be returned to the water table via porous paving and a rainwater detention system;
- Air source heat pumps will provide heating and cooling. With a low energy use and air tight building, air quality will be handled with the installation of HRVs (heat recovery ventilators). These ventilators will bring fresh air continuously into the building while exhausting the stale, used air. The combination of minimal heat loss through the building envelope, air tightness, and HRV fresh air supply will create comfortable, healthy and low-operating cost dwellings.

Safety and Security

Safety and security are of key importance to the potentially vulnerable population that will be housed in this project.

- The presence of the 'Good Friend and Neighbour' is the single most important factor: an individual living centrally within the development, with eyes to the life in the outdoor spaces;
- Additional 'eyes' will be provided by interior-facing kitchen windows;
- Controlled lights on motion sensors for night-time safety will be included;
- There will be clearly marked transitions from public to private space at entry points, with the option for additional access control (i.e. entry keypads) should it prove necessary;
- Fences will be installed between buildings and along laneways to provide a continuous perimeter;
- Benches in gazebo will not be built large enough to permit sleeping.
- Secure storage for bicycles and scooters will be provided.

Neighbourhood Impacts

The existing house and property were developed in the 1950's, and the site has seen minimal improvement or maintenance in the past ten years. While tidy, the house and yard are not a cheerful addition to the streetscape. Neighbours who attended an early Open House on the project expressed excitement at the site plans. Additionally, the project will include:

- Fence and planting to maintain privacy for neighbours at 1540 Grieve;
- Controlled lighting to minimize night sky pollution;
- Modest but attractive landscaping, including perennial beds and new trees;
- A friendly gazebo seating space at the project's street-facing entrance;

- 6 off-street parking stalls, which will be adequate for the mostly non-driving residents.

Project Phasing

This project will be completed in two phases. Phase One will include eight units of resident housing in four separate structures in addition to the entry gazebo, the common amenity building, bicycle and scooter storage building, fencing, internal and external landscaping, pathways, garbage and recycling station, and gravel-surfaced parking areas. The rear part of the site will be fenced at the property line and the site remnant will be maintained in lawn until the commencement of construction in Phase Two.

Phase Two will add eight more suites in two, two-level quad-plex structures and complete the hard-surface walkway to the rear of the site. One or two of these suites will be equipped for full accessibility with the implementation of Universal Design features including dropped countertops, adjustable cabinets, floating vanities, lever door hardware and wide doorways.

Summary

We believe the project shows a high level of design refinement in both buildings and landscaping, while being strongly respectful of the scale and texture of the surrounding urban fabric. The scale of the buildings will be in accordance with adjacent homes and the improvements to buildings and landscape will have a positive impact on the surrounding streetscape. The Anchorage will provide affordable housing for an underserved segment of the Comox Valley population and allow its residents to live in safety and community. It is expected that impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood will be minimal, and that project phasing will allow for integration and adjustment to occur over time.

Rezoning Request

The unique attributes of this project mean that it does not fit the requirements of the current R-2 zoning. As such we request the site be rezoned to a CD designation. Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.