

HELP US STOP THE "VANCOUVERIZATION" OF GONZALES

The Proposed Plan for Gonzales

The new plan proposes dramatic changes from the 2002 Neighbourhood plan — We believe these changes will negatively impact the landscape, look and feel of Gonzales.

The new plan:

- Designates, *in advance*, appropriate land usage; taking away the ability for residents to oppose unwanted types of development.
- Allows for condos and double rows of 3-storey townhouses along Fairfield Road.
- Encourages land assembly and allows for townhouses throughout Gonzales except on waterfront lots. 7 out of 8 lots in Gonzales could be zoned for multiple units.
- Encourages new development and construction which will result in a less affordable neighbourhood as developers buy-up affordable rental accommodations and replace them with unaffordable "luxury" units.
- Provides no protection for mature trees or streetscapes.
- Removes Richardson as a major transportation route, diverting traffic volumes to Fairfield, Rockland and Oak Bay Avenue.
- Makes no provisions for schools, transportation, parks or other public infrastructure to support such density.

Housing Shortage and Affordability

According to Statistics Canada, there was a population of **85,792** in Victoria in 2016. The number of dwelling units in the city including houses, condos, and apartments was **49,212**. Of those dwellings, **45,762** were occupied. That left **3,450** dwellings that were not occupied (that's **7%**). Clearly, a shortage of housing is not the problem.

So what is really going on?

There is **not** a housing shortage in Victoria, there is a shortage of "**affordable housing**."

In a nutshell, *new* housing development in Victoria is being geared toward the wealthy and those "cashing-out" in Vancouver and other places and moving to Victoria. Also, the ultra-wealthy are using our housing for investments. All the development in Victoria seems to be doing nothing for the housing affordability crisis.

According to CMHC, 30% of gross income is an acceptable amount to spend on housing. Based on that number, a family would have to earn over \$180,000/yr to afford a \$700,000 townhouse or condo. The housing we see being built is getting less affordable all the time, and it is public money (property taxes) being used to build the infrastructure to accommodate "future residents" who are displacing existing residents who can't compete financially.

Gonzales residents know there are a LOT of rentals in this area providing housing for many people. When developers buy-up property to build luxury units, they often tear-down homes that were not "tear-downs" and that would have been affordable homes. A recent example is a \$750,000 house, with a suite, torn down and replaced with a luxury duplex selling at \$1.1 million per side — for the developer, sacrificing the building just makes good business sense.

The proposed Gonzales plan will make it even easier for developers to buy property, get zoning changed and variances approved. If a lot can have multiple units built on it, the land becomes more valuable than land zoned for a single-family home. If developers can get the property rezoned, the removal of an existing single-family home becomes just a "cost of doing business."

The city is encouraging the "consolidation of lots" in the new plan, this will enable developers to accumulate multiple lots and build high-end townhouses throughout Gonzales. An example is the Rhodo project on Fairfield, which only involves two houses, and is currently going through the development approval process. The plan calls for 19 tightly-packed, 3-storey townhouses with estimated starting prices of around \$700,000. All of this overlooking Hollywood park. Is this "affordable" or "accessible" housing?

"This is our job — to balance the needs of current residents with the needs of future residents."

**Mayor Lisa Helps while voting for a development
in James Bay**

Please, write to City Council and let them know what you think.

For more information and to sign our petition, visit us at www.gonzalesna.ca

The majority of residents in Gonzales bought homes here because they loved the area and its character. It is a residential neighbourhood with front and back yards, where you can raise children. We have a strong sense of community in Gonzales, and with its natural beauty and parks, we have a sense of safety here. Unfortunately, these are not the reasons that developers are buying property here, and every time they target property for development, they push the boundaries by asking for variances so as to put more building on less lot, and crowding out neighbours in order to increase profits. Some would have you believe that it is not economical to do it any other way. The math does not support that assertion.

Densification in Gonzales

*Densification has been happening in Gonzales "organically" for many years. Secondary suites, raising houses and garden suits are commonplace. Families have bought homes, invested some money, and built suites. The result has been residents obtaining somewhat affordable home-ownership while providing a tenant with a somewhat affordable place to rent. Our **opposition** is to the "pre-approval" of land usage to the extent that developers get rezoning and build for the purpose of speculation and **profiteering**.*

Property values being driven up due to speculation do not create inclusivity. The sad reality now is that most residents currently living in Victoria who do not already own property are not able to get into this market. This means there are more "renters" looking for homes.

For renters, the situation is becoming dire. To try and protect tenants, the Province has enacted new legislation. However, because homes on land targeted for development in Victoria are now frequently being left vacant, the legislation is limited in its ability to help. This is, in part, why Vancouver has implemented an "Empty Home Tax" to try and address their housing crisis.

Our aim is to see a densification plan that will create homes while maintaining the character of our neighbourhood and limit run-away development which will destabilize our environment and replace affordable housing with unaffordable housing. We believe this can be achieved through the gentle density envisioned in the 2002 Gonzales plan. With slight modifications, this plan can be aligned and consistent with the city's Official Community Plan (OCP).