

February 12, 2019

Dear Mayor and Council,

**Re: Zoning and OCP Amendment for 461 Quatsino Blvd**

After hearing the concerns of the residents living in Strawberry Meadows, and careful self-reflection, I would like to issue my support for the zoning and OCP amendment of the Tamitik Status of Women (TSW) proposed housing project.

I can understand why residents have such a strong, visceral reaction. Many of us have been afforded comfortable lives, and potentially have been fortunate enough not to need access to such services. These normal reactions are part of the process of personal and community growth. I do believe regardless of where we stand on this project, we all want to thrive in an inclusive and safe town. This project takes us a step closer to achieving this, and the location is key in its success.

It is well established that the women and children requiring these services span all socio-economic statuses, and not only deserve, and have the human right to live in a residential area, but it encourages overall wellbeing and participation in a community. For these reasons, I do not feel a commercially located property is appropriate, and it would be detrimental to the overall purpose of the TSW programs. This location allows for both residential living and access to the essential services and amenities.

Countless times, I have also heard the rhetoric regarding proximity concerns to the work camp. I believe this rhetoric to be harmful in two ways:

1. It presents the assumption that *all men* use violence, which is not only incorrect, but is actually harmful to preventing violence against women and children as it creates isolation and further divide. We need to empower not only women, but also men to participate in this conversation and champion it.

2. If we decide to operate on this inaccurate premise that the location is considered 'dangerous' for those accessing the TSW services, or clients themselves pose a risk, are we not in fact victim blaming? It creates a community culture that we will protect those we view (incorrectly) as potentially 'violent' as they represent economic growth, and view the victims as inconvenient, costly, and problematic to our daily lives.

This narrative shows we have a large opportunity to mature as a community, like most, in understanding the realities and needs of our women that use these services. I also feel these concerns, are at times, used to hide motivating factors of "not in my backyard". It appears everyone is in agreement that this project is needed, however some would like it to remain "invisible". I can only speculate the reasons why this may be, but am led to believe it is due to perceived monetary concerns, fear, and misinformation. We will fail to progress if these social realities remain hidden and we do not challenge our previously accepted norms.

It is important to acknowledge and respect that some residents have very legitimate concerns and insights, and from my understanding, TSW and the District may engage deeper into structure/design discussions in the appropriate permitting phase.

As we head towards economic growth, I'm hoping Mayor and Council will also move our community towards inclusion.

Respectfully,

Amanda Martins