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City of Prince George
1100 Patricia Boulevard
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Subject: Covenant Amendment and DP Resubmission for 4500 Ospika Boulevard

We are pleased to resubmit the revised covenant amendment and development permit for the seniors' housing project at 4500 Ospika Boulevard for Council's consideration. Following the City Council's decision on May 8, 2023, and a thorough review of the feedback provided, HUB Collection Ltd., in collaboration with Praxis Solutions Ltd., has taken significant steps to engage the community, review concerns, and enhance the proposal to better meet the needs of Prince George's senior population.

Community Engagement and Positive Feedback

On October 9, 2024, we hosted an open house to gather community input and ensure transparency around the project's design and objectives. To maximize community awareness and participation, we placed a print ad in the *Prince George Citizen*, reaching a wide local audience. In addition, notices were delivered to surrounding residents and property owners, ensuring that those most directly affected by the development were invited to attend. We also reached out to key local organizations, including the Prince George Council of Seniors, the Elder Citizens Recreation Association, and Ginters Green to ensure their members had the opportunity to participate and provide input. Project details were shared with City Council members, resulting in the attendance of three City Councillors and the Mayor.

The open house saw 11 attendees and 6 phone and email responses. Attendees included local seniors, seniors advocates, neighbours, and Councillors. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly supportive, where seniors expressed interest in renting a unit and raised questions that were addressed with proposed solutions. Some of the comments from attendees comment sheets include the project "fits in with the natural surroundings", the building "is modern and very attractive" and that it would be a valuable addition to Prince George's housing stock. Based on the feedback and input from the community, we have proposed minor adjustments to the plans to further strengthen the proposal and ensure it aligns with community expectations. The developer also has a list of the programming and services seniors are seeking from an independent living project.



Enhancements to the Project Design

1. Landscape Adjustments:

- **Stormwater Management:** In response to concerns regarding stormwater management in the area, soil cells are proposed in the courtyard and along the northern walkway. Soil cells are an innovative structured system for soil and root growth, allowing for enhanced groundwater absorption and filtration. They support healthy tree growth and improve the site's capacity to manage stormwater by increasing soil volume while minimizing surface runoff. Pictured below, soil cells are an engineered load-bearing system which can also limit conflict between root systems and underground services. This approach integrates well with the natural environment, reduces the burden on conventional stormwater systems, and aligns with our commitment to green infrastructure, further enhancing the project's environmental profile.



Soil Cells



Trembling Aspens

- **Reforestation the Northern Property Line:** Following feedback from adjacent property owners, we have updated the planting plan to add trees along the northern property line. Trembling aspens were chosen (pictured above) which are a native tree species that are fast-growing with a large canopy to address concerns about the impact of tree removal on the neighborhood (greenery, privacy, etc.).



2. Architectural Improvements:

- **Adaptability:** While 18 units are already designed as accessible in accordance with the BC Building Code as well as the main common areas, in response to feedback from seniors' advocates, the developer has committed to reviewing the potential to add adaptable features to all non-accessible units at the building permit stage. It is agreed that incorporating minor modifications, such as wider doorways and reinforced walls, will increase the building's appeal and functionality for seniors. However, widening hallways may not be possible in all cases and not all units will require hallways to suit wheelchair users. We want to ensure the building meets the future needs of residents.
- **Parking:** Opportunities to create more accessible parking spaces will be explored within the existing layout at the building permit stage; however, no variances are being sought and any additional accessible parking spaces would be over and above the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. While there were some requests for covered parking, this would increase the price of the units, meanwhile seniors' advocates at the open house agreed that seniors significantly reduce their car use after moving into independent living developments, preferring more social transportation options such as the shuttle bus service being proposed.

Both the adaptable units and accessible parking spaces will need to be reviewed during the detailed design phase ahead of the building permit application because any expansion of the existing building or parking footprint would have major budget implications due to geotechnical considerations and therefore impact the affordability of the proposed new housing. Any design features over and above the BC Building Code and Zoning Bylaw will be made on balance with consideration to the affordability of the housing units.

Market Demand and Project Rationale

The [2021 Housing Needs Report](#) for Prince George identifies a critical and growing need for seniors' housing due to the city's aging population. By 2031, the senior population (65+) is projected to reach 16,632, requiring an additional 300 seniors-supported housing units over the next decade to meet this demand. The report highlights a significant gap in housing for seniors, with a clear need for more housing options across a continuum of care, ranging from independent living to full care homes.

In response to these findings, our project at 4500 Ospika Boulevard directly addresses this unmet demand by providing independent rental housing designed specifically for seniors. The pivot from student housing to seniors' housing is not only driven by market trends but also aligns with the City's strategic priorities in addressing housing shortages for its aging population. The Housing Needs Report underscores the importance of increasing housing supply for seniors while not specifically mentioning a need for new student housing.



Moreover, the original student housing proposal became financially unfeasible due to external factors, such as changes in federal policies regarding study permits directly impacting enrolment at UNBC and CNC as well as escalating construction costs. The shift to seniors' housing, however, aligns with current market conditions and the City's identified need for housing options for seniors. By targeting seniors, the project also mitigates concerns from the public related to traffic volumes during peak hours, as seniors' housing generates fewer vehicle trips than student housing. This directly addresses a key issue raised during the original project review and demonstrates the added community benefit of reduced traffic impact in the area.

Project Location

This property at the top of Ospika Boulevard along Tyner Boulevard offers close proximity to essential services and amenities such as healthcare and shopping in College Heights . The serene, natural surroundings provide a peaceful living environment and access to recreational opportunities for residents. The Heights is designed to foster supportive, vibrant and dynamic senior living opportunities for our aging but active population. A shuttle bus service is proposed to ensure convenient access to amenities and services.

Environmental and Economic Benefits

In addition to revisions to the landscape plan to add trees along the north property line in response to neighbourhood feedback, the project's landscape plan includes preserving over 50 percent of the site as natural areas. The proposed use of soil cells further enhances stormwater management and supports sustainable landscaping practices.

From an economic perspective, while the unit count has decreased from 220 to 118, the total habitable floor area (or "rentable floor area") has increased by 1,385 m², leading to higher taxable value and greater long-term tax revenue for the City. As a rental development, the project will contribute positively to the local economy and provide much-needed housing for seniors.

Conclusion

We believe this resubmission addresses the feedback from both City Council and the community. The changes we've made demonstrate our responsiveness to community concerns and our commitment to providing high-quality and much-needed housing for seniors in Prince George. Should you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Rachael Tremblay
Praxis Solutions