

Drinkwater Apartments

Drinkwater Apartments is a comprehensive purpose-built rental development located in the growing community of North Cowichan. The proposed rezoning application from Residential Rural Zone (R1) to Residential – High Zone (RH) accommodates 262 units in two four-story buildings and one five-story building. This comprehensive development continues Woodmere’s commitment to providing apartments that accommodate various lifestyles and demographics and improves housing options for the Municipality of North Cowichan.

Policy:

Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP)

The Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP) was approved in 2018 to provide planning policies that direct future growth for North Cowichan’s Bell McKinnon neighbourhood. The Land Use Plan shows that the subject lands are identified as Residential – High (RH). This designation accommodates apartments with min-max heights of 3-5 storeys, which aligns with the intent of the proposed application. Furthermore, the proposed application conforms to design elements stated within the BMLAP by:

“Streets for People Create streets that are comfortable and safe for all users – including pedestrians and cyclists.”

Frontage improvements down Drinkwater Road, Ford Road, and the internal connector road include on-street parking separating pedestrians from vehicular traffic. Sidewalks, street trees, and streetlights create a desirable walking experience and are aesthetically pleasing.

Smart Growth Facilitates compact development that creates vibrant, walkable places that provide long-term community growth while avoiding urban sprawl and worsening impacts on the natural environment.

Drinkwater Apartments is an intensification of density in an appropriate location as identified in the BMLAP. Its proximity to significant employment and commercial centres such as the future hospital and the Cowichan Commons Retail Centre make walking and cycling to work and shopping a reasonable endeavour for residents.

“Housing Choices Provide a range of housing types and tenures to serve local residents through all stages of life.”

Unit types include studio, one-bed, two, and three-bed apartments to accommodate various lifestyles, demographics, and families. Moreover, the three-bedroom units appeal to families and allow existing residents to remain in the community and age in place without maintaining a property.

“Blue-Green Infrastructure Develop a comprehensive blue-green space network that enhances local ecologies and supports a healthy community.”

Woodsmere dedicates approximately 1480m² towards the central park located in Cell “K” of the Blue-Green network. Additionally, approximately 312m² has been dedicated to a future laneway on the north property line.

Commitments to green infrastructure include implementing stormwater best management practices such as rain gardens that collect and polish roof drainage, absorbent landscaping, and a grass swale. Lastly, the Drinkwater Apartments exceeds the 30% minimum tree canopy requirement outlined in the BMLAP.

Site Design & Characteristics:

The site design provides underground and surface parking. Enhanced landscaping compliments the existing community and increases North Cowichan’s tree canopy. The northeast portion of the site includes parkland dedication to form part of a “Central Park” concept and a 5m dedication along the north property line to accommodate a future laneway. Interconnected roads, sidewalks, and walkways provide permeability through the complex and facilitate connectivity to employment and commercial centres and the regional open space system. Ground floor private amenity spaces abut Ford Road and the future Laneway fostering ground floor interaction between the public/private realms.

The parkade ramps have been internalized to avoid pedestrian/vehicle conflict on the public roads.

Currently, Woodsmere intends on applying for the CMHC MLI Select program for affordable housing at the time of the rezoning approval. The MLI Select program is an innovative multi-unit mortgage loan program focused on affordability, accessibility, and climate compatibility. Typically, this entails a commitment of 10% of units at 30% of median renter income established by Statistics Canada, and a 25% above code Energy Efficiency and GHGs Reductions over 2017 NECB/ 2015 NBC. This attestation to energy efficiency is provided by a qualified professional with energy modeling experience.

Drinkwater Apartments benefits from the Woodsmere car-sharing program – a station-based electric car service for apartment residents. This robust car-share program offers a minimum of three fully electric cars reducing a common barrier to vehicle ownership which is to have a vehicle for non-regular, non-commuting trips that cannot easily be fulfilled by transit or active modes such as out of town trips. Further, our carsharing service ties into Woodsmere’s affordability narrative, by providing tenants an alternative to the burden of car ownership costs. Details can be found using this link:

<https://woodsmerecarsharing.ca/>

Lastly, on-site unsheltered, and sheltered bike storage supports the sustainability directives of the BMLAP by facilitating alternative modes of transportation.

Please see the enclosed Site Plan and Landscape Plan to refer to the design components mentioned above.

Architecture:

The Drinkwater development is comprised of three apartment complexes: two four wood-framed storey buildings to the south end of the site and a five-storey third building towards the north end. Fully concealed below grade parkades serve all buildings, and are accessed from the onsite parking area at Buildings A and C, and directly from the Paddle Road connector at Building B.

An internal corridor system will serve all residential units with elevator access. Unit type allocation is approximately split between studio /one-bedroom units and two bedrooms/three bedrooms units. Ground-level private amenity spaces facing Ford, Drinkwater, and Paddle Roads encourage interaction between private/public realms. Further, units facing the new park laneway will similarly connect using hard landscaping, helping to activate a public/private streetscape realm.

Each building will be organized around a rectangular ground level "plinth," with portions of higher storeys extended outwards to achieve a visual variety of forms and suitable transitions among cladding types and colours. Cladding will be selected with an eye for durability and attractiveness, with a variation among cementitious horizontal lap siding, cementitious panel siding with trimless reveals, and prefinished metal lap siding. The fifth storey facade of the northerly building-C will be stepped back from the park laneway, helping to alleviate its visual impact. Furthermore, building C will employ timber-clad struts to support the canted west coast style shed roof structure facing the laneway, as well at ground level locations supporting second-storey extensions above.

Landscape:

Landscape components include passive, naturalistic rain gardens for stormwater treatment and benching provides places for residents to relax and contemplate life. A pavilion with seating also allows residents to congregate and socialize.

We have suggested a palette of plant materials, primarily native and drought-tolerant species. The abundant tree planting enhances the tree canopy in conformance with the BMLAP.

Please refer to the enclosed Landscape Plan.

Servicing:

Existing sanitary and water services extensions from Drinkwater Road and Ford Road provide servicing for the proposed development. McElhanney Consulting has conducted a conceptual servicing study and stormwater management analysis to demonstrate the feasibility and identify upgrades required to accommodate the proposed development.

McElhanney has engaged municipal staff regarding their LTR review comments, and issues pertaining to high-level servicing are resolved.

Transportation:

Approximately 643.3m² widening of the Ford Road right-of-way has been included for the entire frontage of Ford Road. Another 94.4m² widening has been included for Drinkwater Road right-of-way. Also, 5.0m wide land dedication across the full northern property line of 6455 Ford Road is included to accommodate a future laneway.

A Traffic Impact Assessment has been conducted to assess the performance of area roads after development. These technical documents reviewed traffic operations for the proposed residential development at the northeast corner of Ford Road and Drinkwater Road in North Cowichan, British Columbia.

DRAFT Residential – High (RH) Bylaw:

Parking Variance: Overall parking for the site achieves 1.09, instead of the required 1.25. Also, there is confusion regarding the underground parking requirements related to the RH zone. Cumulatively, the application proposes 61% underground parking. At the request of North Cowichan staff, a Parking Demand Study has been prepared by McElhanney and submitted for review in support of this variance request.

Rear Property Line Setback: Each building requires a rear property setback as they do not meet the 6m rear setback prescribed in the RH Zone:

Building A – 3.23m Setback Variance

Building B– 3.23m Setback Variance

Building C– 3.98m Setback Variance

We feel these locations warrant relaxation as there is reasonable space to avoid crowding against Drinkwater Road and the future Laneway.

Common Space Amenity Relaxation: The proposed application allocates approximately 4.8% of common amenity space, therefore not meeting the RH zone requirements. However, residents benefit from the proximity of the adjacent central park and the future stormwater amenity across the Ford Road. We request a relaxation on this condition.

Community Amenity Contributions:

Woodsmere has worked extensively with the Municipality of North Cowichan to agree on equitable Community Amenity Contributions for the proposed development. The following highlights the main contributions:

- A 1480m² land dedication towards the central park;
- A five-metre land dedication towards the public walkway along the north property line, including a financial contribution towards the walkway construction;

- A commitment to providing 40% tree canopy;
- A 1390m² land dedication towards Paddle Road Connector;
- A Financial contribution of \$3000 per residential unit;
- A commitment to affordable housing through the CMHC MLI Select program; and
- A commitment to providing the Woodsmere Carsharing program for development.