

Nareka Jacques

From: Jeneric [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 2:47 AM
To: Municipal Hall
Cc: Mayor Ryan Windsor; Niall Paltiel; Sarah Riddell; Bob Thompson; Zeb King
Subject: Re: Subject: Inquiry Regarding Proposed 1903 Mount Newton Cross Road Project

Dear Members of the City Council of Central Saanich,

I have been reflecting on the meetings that have taken place and considering the feedback from my neighbours. I feel obligated to express further concerns about any expansion in our community and to present the following points for your consideration.

Unfortunately, I am writing to voice my apprehensions regarding the potential impacts of rapid development in our small community of approximately (-/+) 18,000 residents. While growth may seem beneficial at first glance, it is essential to consider the long-term consequences that such expansion could have on our quality of life, safety, and environment.

Our community has experienced a modest growth rate of about one percent per year. However, we must recognize that the proposed developments, particularly the focus on veterans' housing, represent only a small portion of the broader expansion plans. The implications of this growth could be significant and detrimental to our small community.

1. Infrastructure Strain: Rapid development can overwhelm our existing infrastructure, including roads, water supply, and waste management systems. Increased traffic congestion will not only hinder mobility but also impact emergency response times, posing serious safety risks for our residents.

2. Environmental Degradation: Expanding commercial and residential spaces can lead to the loss of green spaces, parks, and natural habitats. As a community that values its environment, we must prioritise preserving our green areas, such as the 1903 green space, rather than selling them to developers. These spaces provide essential recreational opportunities and contribute to our community's overall well-being.

3. Public Services Burden: The influx of new residents can place additional demands on public services, including schools, healthcare, and emergency services. Our current resources may not be equipped to handle a sudden increase in population, leading to diminished services for both new and existing residents.

4. Economic Impact: While developers may promise economic growth, the ultimate costs to taxpayers could be staggering which most don't see yet. Millions have already been spent directly and indirectly on infrastructure improvements, and additional expenses will likely arise, leading to increased taxes and financial strain on our community. Additionally, I would like to highlight the economic context in which these development discussions are taking place. The Bank of Canada estimates that investment in the Canadian economy could decline by 12 percent and that exports will fall by 8.5 percent if tariffs imposed by the United States last for a full year. This projected decline would lead to an overall reduction in Canadian growth by three percent over the next two years.

Given this uncertain economic climate, it is crucial to consider how the proposed expansions could strain our community further. Many residents are already facing challenges, and the need for additional services is pressing. Expanding infrastructure and development during such a precarious time may exacerbate these difficulties rather than alleviate them.

5. **Community Identity:** Rapid expansion can dilute the unique character of our town. It is crucial for us to maintain the community spirit and identity that we cherish, rather than allowing outside interests to dictate our development trajectory.

6. **Social Cohesion and Community Bonds:** Rapid expansion can disrupt existing social networks and community bonds. New developments often bring in transient populations that may not engage with or invest in the community, leading to a decline in social cohesion and a sense of belonging among long-term residents.

7. **Mental Health Impacts:** The stress and anxiety associated with rapid changes in the community, including overcrowding and loss of familiar environments, can have mental health implications for residents. A thriving community often relies on a stable and familiar environment, which can be jeopardised by unchecked growth.

8. **Loss of Historical and Cultural Identity:** Development can lead to the erosion of local history and culture. As new commercial spaces and housing developments replace older buildings and neighbourhoods, the unique character of the town may be lost, impacting residents' pride in their community and diminishing its cultural heritage.

9. **Environmental Impacts Beyond Green Spaces:** Beyond just the loss of parks, rapid development can lead to increased pollution, loss of biodiversity, and changes in local ecosystems. These environmental changes can have long-term consequences for wildlife and natural resources, which may not be immediately apparent.

10. **Increased Demand for Public Safety Resources:** With population growth, there may be a greater need for law enforcement and emergency services. This demand can stretch resources thin, potentially leading to longer response times and reduced community safety.

11. **Infrastructure Longevity and Maintenance:** New infrastructure may require ongoing maintenance and upgrades that can be costly. The initial investment may seem manageable, but as systems age, the financial burden on taxpayers can increase significantly.

12. **Impact on Local Businesses:** While new developments can bring new businesses, they can also threaten existing local businesses that may not be able to compete with larger commercial enterprises. This can lead to a loss of local jobs and the unique character of our shopping districts.

13. **Public Transportation Strain:** If new housing developments increase the population without adequate public transportation planning, it could lead to increased reliance on personal vehicles, exacerbating traffic congestion and air pollution.

14. Potential for Gentrification: Rapid development can sometimes lead to gentrification, where existing residents are priced out of their neighbourhoods due to rising property values and rents. This can lead to displacement and further exacerbate socioeconomic divides within the community.

15. Long-term Planning vs. Short-term Gains: Emphasise the importance of long-term planning and foresight. Decisions made now could have repercussions for decades, and prioritising immediate financial gains from development can lead to regrettable outcomes in the future.

In light of these concerns, I urge the council to consider a more prudent approach to our community's future. Keeping the 1903 green space intact and renovating existing structures instead of selling them to developers would not only preserve our environment but also enhance the quality of life for our residents.

Additionally, these points are just preliminary points, as I plan to research other credible studies on expansion in similar small communities. I believe there are several potential drawbacks that could arise, many of which may be unforeseen. Understanding these challenges will be crucial as we navigate the path forward.

I would also like to remind the council that planning and development companies often have significant self-interests, as their business models thrive on ongoing expansion and profit. While they may advocate for rapid development, our perspective as a community is different. We must prioritise sustaining what we already have and pursue growth that is reasonable and beneficial for all residents. It is essential to ensure that any development aligns with the long-term health and wellbeing of our community, rather than solely serving the interests of external developers.

By prioritising thoughtful, sustainable development, we can ensure that our community remains a vibrant and welcoming place for generations to come.

Thank you for considering my concerns. I hope we can work together to protect the integrity of our town and the resources we have worked so hard to achieve. As the saying goes, "Don't spend when it's time to save!"

Respectfully,

Eric

Please excuse any typos. My phone aggressively autocorrects

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 4, 2025, at 1:28 PM, Jeneric [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Central Saanich Council,

I have been reflecting more on the discussions surrounding the proposed expansion, as these concerns have been raised by some of my neighbours. Collectively, we share a number of reservations, and I wanted to take a moment to share a few additional notes as

a precursor to our discussions. These points can be reviewed later, especially since not everything gets addressed in Town Hall meetings.

I also want to express my appreciation for the hard work and dedication you all put into addressing the needs of our community. I know you are striving to create a safe, vibrant and thriving environment for all residents. Over the years, I've been in extremely heated situations where parties eventually reached an impasse, so I believe it is crucial that everyone's voice is heard in these discussions. The concerns raised by community members are what ultimately make our community stronger and more united. By listening to diverse perspectives, we can better understand the challenges we face and work together to find effective solutions.

As someone who has spent years working with entrepreneurs, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that arise when ambitious plans meet the realities of execution. Many promising ideas and great people have struggled to succeed because their projections often overestimate revenue potential by at least three times while underestimating expenses by at least half. This is a common occurrence. This gap can lead to significant cash flow issues, which is why I believe it's crucial to recognize that "cash is king." These hidden cash service demands, along with the timing required to generate revenue, are often what most entrepreneurs overlook.

With any expansion, especially one aimed at increasing our housing stock, we must consider the necessary contingencies. For instance, our local hospital is currently facing long and treacherous waiting lists. If we proceed with additional housing, we may find ourselves with only a limited number of beds to accommodate the increased population, particularly with more seniors potentially moving into our community. The current ratio of beds per 1,000 residents highlights this gap—more housing could exacerbate an already strained healthcare system. Unfortunately, mentioning the doctor-to-patient ratio is often a non-starter for many.

Furthermore, as our community grows, we will need to strengthen our public safety resources. With our current dedicated police officers serving our population, we are likely operating below the recommended staffing levels, especially considering that our community is currently considered safe. Unfortunately, this raises concerns about our ability to maintain safety and security, particularly as new residents from various economic backgrounds join our community. Similarly, while we are fortunate to have many volunteer firefighters, the number of full-time firefighters is limited, which could hinder our emergency response capabilities, especially in light of increased seismic activity.

These are just a few examples that contribute to the need for substantial cash flow to support the demands that come with expansion. Additionally, we are confronted with various external challenges that could compound these demands unexpectedly, such as earthquake risks, storm events, and extreme temperature fluctuations. This unfortunately necessitates a very stringent contingency plan.

These are just a few of the issues that add layers of complexity to our infrastructure and services.

While we recognize these issues, the more significant concerns stem from the 'unknown unknowns'—the unforeseen challenges that can lead to unintended consequences and mismanagement of funds in projects like this. Based on my experiences, these unpredictable factors can create a compounding effect that exacerbates existing challenges.

Given the cost of living these days, I am deeply worried about who will bridge the potential cash gap that could arise from these increased demands, as it often results in higher taxes for residents.

Please understand that I do not intend to overwhelm you with these questions; rather, I wish to share my perspective based on my experiences and those of my neighbors.

The recent discussions about the facilities for our police and firefighters, especially considering seismic concerns, are certainly valid. However, I am cautious about whether our community can sustainably support the proposed expansion without compromising our quality of life.

Moreover, I am still very concerned about the traffic congestion that additional residents may bring, as expressed by other neighbors. Does this full expansion truly align with the character and infrastructure of our small community in Central Saanich?

Again, my intention is not to point fingers or cause unnecessary distress, but only to offer my insights as a long-time resident since 1998. I am wary of rapid expansion without fully addressing the potential repercussions on our infrastructure and services.

This is why I continue to believe that any expansion should be done in increments, to build trust and address any incidental costs that will affect all community members, both metaphorically and pragmatically.

As my late grandfather used to say, 'I may want a Mercedes, but what I really need to get the job done is a reliable Honda.' That said, perhaps any reserves we hold as a community would be better utilized in a larger, ongoing plan to address unforeseen future demands within our current community members.

Thank you for reading my email and considering my thoughts on this critical matter. I appreciate your ongoing efforts and look forward to seeing how our community evolves.

Warm regards,
Eric

Please excuse any typos. My phone aggressively autocorrects

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 3, 2025, at 1:53 PM, Jeneric [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Central Saanich Council,

Firstly, thanks for your prompt response, Mayor Ryan!

Secondly, after reading your recent communication regarding the proposed civic redevelopment project, I want to express my appreciation for the time and effort you and the Council have dedicated to addressing community concerns. I hear you that your intentions are rooted in the betterment of our community, and I commend your commitment to ensuring our facilities will meet the needs of residents.

However, I still have many hesitations regarding the expected costs and potential unintended consequences of this ambitious project. So, my perspective is that it may be more prudent to consider an 'incremental approach' to development, allowing for greater community involvement and adaptability over time. I understand your points about the importance of providing safer, post-seismic arrangements for our emergency and municipal workers. However, as we move forward, additional priorities and external factors are likely to emerge, and we must be prepared to respond to these evolving needs. Therefore, I suggest a phased development strategy or an incremental development approach. This method allows municipalities to manage risks, control costs, and progressively meet current community needs.

As for housing, based on my preliminary research, I found that there are 599 housing units either built or under construction in Central Saanich from 2020 to 2024, including:

- 51 Affordable Rental Units at 1909 Prosser Road (Built)
- 40 Affordable Rental Units at 7247 West Saanich Rd. (Built in 2020)
- 28 Affordable Rental Units at 7611 Central Saanich (Built on Tsawout land)
- 40 Supportive Housing Units at 7606 East Saanich Road (Built)
- 70 Rental Units at 1036 Stelly's X Rd. (Built on Tsartlip land)
- 235 Rental Units at Starlight at Marigold
- 61 Rental Units at 7701 East Saanich Rd. (Under construction)
- 50 Condo Units at Sequoia at Marigold (Built)
- 24 Condo Units at 7098 Wallace Dr. (Built)

Given this substantial development, we should reevaluate the need for additional housing, as it contradicts the objectives outlined in our current Housing Needs Assessment for Central Saanich. As previously mentioned, I do have concerns about traffic; a cluster of six-story condominium buildings and the additional vehicles will effectively disrupt the Saanichton business triangle. I sincerely question how further building will impact our small community. Respectfully, I believe that any additional construction costs should not accidentally fall on the shoulders of taxpayers.

Unfortunately, I still have significant concerns about the financial implications of this project, particularly regarding unforeseen demands that may arise in the future, potentially leading to broken promises of tax hikes. Even the best financial experts can miss the mark, and I have seen this firsthand.

What guarantees can you provide that there will be no tax hikes? As you know, we must plan for our future as families living in a society that is becoming increasingly expensive every day.

The long-term sustainability of our community should be paramount, and it is crucial that we carefully assess how these developments will impact our budget and resources over time, especially in the future.

Projects of this scale often face unexpected challenges that can significantly alter their course. For example, unforeseen construction costs, changes in community needs, or shifts in funding availability can lead to adjustments in timelines and project scopes. By taking an incremental approach, we can remain flexible and responsive to these challenges, allowing for adjustments that better serve our community without overextending our resources.

Here are my thoughts on where our priorities should be:

1. **Phased Development:** Implementing the project in clearly defined phases could help manage costs more effectively and ensure that each stage aligns with community needs and staged priorities. This approach would allow us to evaluate the success of each phase before committing to subsequent ones.
2. **Community Engagement:** Increasing community involvement in the planning process will not only build trust but also enable us to better understand the diverse needs of residents. Regular opportunities for input and feedback can help guide the project in a direction that reflects our collective vision.
3. **Financial Transparency:** Providing detailed financial projections and discussing potential contingencies will help alleviate concerns about unexpected costs and reassure residents that the project remains fiscally responsible.

After some thought, I truly believe that by embracing an incremental and community-focused approach, we can build a redevelopment plan that not only meets our current needs but also positions us to adapt to future challenges. I encourage the Council to consider these suggestions as we move forward in this important undertaking.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I want to express my respect for you as members of the community. I'm sure you understand that this is a

significant decision, and our homes are where we find relaxation amidst the various agendas that society imposes on us.

I look forward to hearing more thoughts from both the Council and the residents of this community as we work towards finding an applicable solution in this important conversation. Ultimately, this is a community decision.

Sincerely,
Eric

Please excuse any typos. My phone aggressively autocorrects

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 2, 2025, at 2:52 PM, Jeneric [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Central Council,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the potential 1903 Mount Newton Cross Road project in our area and to seek clarification on several important points that I would like the council to address.

Firstly, this project appears to be quite excessive, especially in light of the current economic climate, where many Canadians are facing financial difficulties. With rising costs of living and increased strain on households, allocating resources toward such an ambitious initiative seems inappropriate.

As of August 15, 2024, nearly half (45%) of Canadians reported that rising prices are significantly affecting their ability to meet day-to-day expenses, which is a notable increase from 33% just two years prior.

Furthermore, we have yet to see any estimates for the new building, and it is important to note that there is still an unresolved multi-million dollar lawsuit between the former owner of the Hovey Road site and the District. My experience with lawsuits indicates that costs can increase unexpectedly, which may necessitate drawing from reserves. Do you have a contingency plan in place to address this risk?

In light of these concerns, I respectfully ask the council to respond to the following questions:

1. Community Needs Assessment:

- What data or assessments were conducted to determine the necessity of this structure in our community?
- How does this proposed structure align with the current needs and priorities of residents?

2. Financial Impact:

- What will be the total cost of the project, and how will it be funded?
- How will the proposed tax increase impact families and individuals, particularly those in lower income brackets?
- What are the projected long-term financial implications of this project on the community's budget?

3. Alternative Solutions:

- Have alternative solutions or projects been considered that could better serve the community's needs without imposing a tax burden?
- Can existing facilities be upgraded or repurposed instead of constructing a new structure?

4. Community Input:

- What plans are in place for community consultation and feedback regarding this project?
- How will community members be involved in the decision-making process? I believe a referendum may be appropriate.

5. Economic Considerations:

- What are the expected economic benefits of this project for the community?
- How will this structure create jobs or stimulate local business growth?

6. Environmental and Social Impact:

- I have concerns about traffic; a pod of six-story condo buildings and the associated cars will virtually shut down the Saanichton business triangle.
- What environmental considerations are associated with this project, and how will they be addressed?
- How does this structure contribute to the overall quality of life for residents?

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it." From what I have gathered, this project does not align with the Official Community Plan. We are zoned as a Residential Neighbourhood rather than Multi-unit, and there are significant reasons for this zoning designation given our small community status.

I understand that there are likely other factors influencing your intentions. However, I recognize that you have one of the most challenging jobs as public servants. Provincial and federal governments often seem disconnected from local residents, but you live in our community and have been elected to serve us. Therefore, it is your responsibility to care for us, safeguard our interests, and listen to our concerns, allowing the community to have a meaningful say in these important decisions. Better yet, stand up for what your local community wants, rather than relying on outside resources, because that is why you were elected. Having two young daughters, there are additional safety factors that I will not address in this letter, but I have evaluated and seriously considered the ramifications and unintended consequences involved.

Folks, I met and then voted for each of you because you demonstrated genuine concern for our community. Therefore, I ask you to listen to our voices and consider our perspectives as it's always about the families who live here.

As a resident of this community since 1998, I oppose this project for various reasons.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. I look forward to your responses and hope for a transparent discussion about the potential impacts of this project on our community.

Sincerely,
Eric Verscheure

Sent from my iPhone

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