

August 28, 2018

Mayor and Council
City of Burnaby
4949 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC
V5G 1M2

Re: REZONING REFERENCE #18-35
Norland Avenue Supportive Housing Project

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the Burnaby Board of Trade, the leading business association in the city representing over 1000 member organizations, I am writing to share our support for the Norland Avenue Supportive Housing Project being considered in rezoning application #18-35.

In reviewing the proposed Norland project, the Burnaby Board of Trade (BBOT) believes that it provides an opportunity for Burnaby to make considerable inroads in addressing the issue of homelessness and precarious housing in our city. While maintaining a cautious outlook on behalf of our members in the area, this project's scope, its built-in supports and services, and its unique location all lead the BBOT to support this proposal.

While the BBOT is first and foremost a business-focused organization, it has long recognized the interconnectedness of economic success, environmental sustainability and societal health. Our businesses are more successful when they are part of a thriving community, and social issues such as homelessness are indeed 'business issues' insofar as they can either undermine that success or contribute to it.

Street homelessness and its related issues can negatively impact businesses by discouraging patronage of a business or business district. In addition, both homelessness and precarious housing sap those who experience it of their potential to be full actors in our economy---without housing, an individual will have a very hard time being the customer, employee or supplier that our local businesses need.

As we understand, the project will support only Burnaby residents, creating a homegrown solution to the issue of homelessness in our community. Further, while it is always difficult to ascertain the precise number of individuals affected by homelessness, the 52 units in this project will undoubtedly do much to address this issue in Burnaby. The BBOT is supportive of the scope of this project and its potential contribution to a homelessness solution.

Housing, while critically important, is often only the first step in addressing homelessness; housing should be paired with supports and services to ensure those being housed are able to maximize the opportunity for a more secure and productive future. The proposed Norland project will provide access to a variety of supports to residents of the facility, such as employment services, life-skills programs, and other health and social services. In addition, we understand there will be 24/7 on-site staffing to provide immediate supports for residents and to provide stability and security at the site. The BBOT strongly supports the provision of supports and programs to assist residents to transition out of supportive housing and into independence.

The unique location of this proposed project provides further reason to support this application. Instead of locating this project in a strictly residential or commercial district as is often done with similar projects, this project is planned for the 'Central Administrative Area', which is largely occupied by government and institutional facilities. With Burnaby City Hall and the Burnaby RCMP detachment located very near the Norland site, this proposal is putting the project directly in the local government's neighbourhood. This illustrates to us the City's interest in being an active participant in this project's success, and creates a unique opportunity to quickly identify and address concerns that arise related to safety and security. The BBOT supports the unique location of this proposed site.

Finally, in regards to safety and security specifically, concerns do still exist about this site and potential negative impacts on neighbouring businesses. We are encouraged by the security measures proposed for the site (lighting, fencing, secured access) and the proposed use of tenant agreements that mandate behaviour and outline expectations of the residents, but the potential for issues remains. While we do believe that this proposal can be managed in a way that minimizes negative impacts for the neighbouring businesses, the BBOT will continue to monitor the site and the experiences of our members in the area and expects all parties involved to address future issues should they arise.

For all of the reasons cited above --- the scope of this project and its impacts on Burnaby homelessness, the services and supports built-in to the proposal, and the unique location that minimizes impact on businesses and residents --- the BBOT offers its support of the proposed Norland Avenue Supportive Housing Project.

Sincerely,



Paul Holden
President & CEO
Burnaby Board of Trade