



Interior Health
Every person matters

August 27, 2020

James Moore,
Urban Planning & Development Policy Manager
City of Kelowna
1435 Water Street
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1J4
jmoore@kelowna.ca

Dear James Moore:

RE: Thomson Flats Area Structure Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments to the Thomson Flats Area Structure Plan (ASP) with a population health perspective. Compact, complete and connected with more diverse housing options are tenets of creating a healthier, more equitable and more sustainable community. The Thomson Flats ASP does not contribute well to Kelowna achieving a more complete and compact community because it primarily proposes lower density, non-mixed use residential, green-field development away from urban centres. Interior Health strongly recommends the City support developments which significantly contribute to a healthier built environment for Kelowna citizens.

A healthy built environment (HBE) is planned and built in a way which health evidence demonstrates has a positive impact on the physical, mental and social health of the population. The [HBE Linkages Toolkit](#) is an evidence based resource developed by the BC Centre for Disease Control which links planning principles to positive health outcomes (link to full report below). A HBE allows residents to easily connect with each other and with a variety of day-to-day services such as schools, workplaces, recreational facilities and grocery stores. Roads and pathways are perceived to be safe, accessible, aesthetically appealing and well connected. There are diverse housing forms and tenure types and natural elements are protected. Including these principles in community planning has shown at a population level to increase family resources, physical and social activity and consumption of healthy foods, which decreases stress, body mass index and unintentional injury, and increases social cohesion and mental health. Health equity, which are differences in health status due to social, political, and economic factors, is also improved. In addition, these principles support a more financially and environmentally sustainable municipality by increasing economies of scale and decreasing the environmental footprint.

The Thomson Flats ASP does include some healthy planning principles. For example, proposing to contribute to a more efficient and safe transportation network, providing parks, trails, and access to nature, and assessing the landscape to ensure there is minimal exposure to environmental hazards. However, when this proposed development is considered in terms of how it would contribute to the overall HBE of the City the location becomes a large detriment. A more financially and environmentally sustainable approach which would better support the health of Kelowna's population would be to first focus on more mixed-use development toward urban centres and on land that has been previously

developed before disturbing a natural asset on the fringe of the community. In doing so, the road, transit, power, communication, and waste, storm, and drinking water infrastructure would remain closer to core areas; thereby lowering the ratio of operation and maintenance costs to size of population contributing to these costs. There would be less reliance and travel distance by single occupancy vehicles; thereby lowering the community's green house gas emissions which directly and indirectly impact health. Lastly, focusing development and resources toward core areas of the City will create more complete better connected neighbourhoods that provide the resources citizens need for overall well-being, as described in the HBE paragraph above.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that Council not endorse the Thomson Flats ASP at this time. Instead, it is recommended development be directed toward urban centres and previously developed land until density has increased sufficiently. The fundamental HBE principles are compact, complete and connected. This proposed development would not contribute to a compact community because of its peripheral location. It includes plans to improve road connectivity; however it cannot overcome daily travel distance. Its location also hinders the ability to contribute to a more complete community. Having said this, the plan would be strengthened by including a higher proportion of diverse housing forms and tenure types and including or contributing to mixed-use/commercial development.

Lastly, as the City is aware there is a responsibility to ensure all new drinking water connections are provided with safe and reliable water that meets the provincial Drinking Water Treatment Objectives. This includes both the initial infrastructure as well as the long-term operations and maintenance.

If there are any questions or more resources are needed please contact Anita Ely at 250-253-3679 or anita.ely@interiorhealth.ca.

Sincerely,



Anita Ely, BSc, BTech, CPHI(C)
Specialist Environmental Health Officer
Healthy Communities Program
Population Health



Katrina Lehenbauer, MPH
Healthy Communities Facilitator
Healthy Communities Program
Population Health

AE/kl

Resource:

BC Centre for Disease Control. Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit: making the links between design, planning and health, Version 2.0. Vancouver, B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority, 2018. <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/healthy-built-environment-linkages-toolkit>