



ATTACHMENT A

This forms part of application

OCP22-0010/Z22-0059



City of
Kelowna
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Planner
Initials
WM

July 12, 2022

City of Kelowna
Attn. Wesley Miles
Urban Planning Department
1435 Water Street
Kelowna, BC

RE: 2809 Benvoulin Road, Gurdwara Guru Amardas Sikh Society Proposal

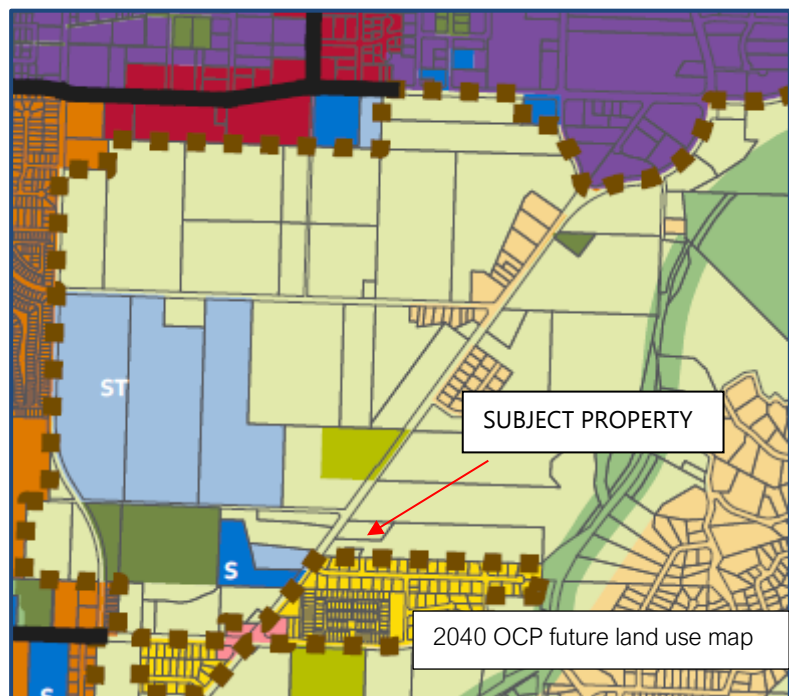
File no. Z21-0095 and OCP21-0023

Dear Wesley,

We appreciate that the various members of the Planning Department have been working with our group to find a suitable location for a new Gurdwara. The existing location at 220 Davie Road has become too small to serve our Sikh community. Through our mutual investigation, it has been determined that very few locations exist for a place of worship, leading to the exhaustion of all current options. Unfortunately, the original submission for the property at 2090 Byrns Road is no longer an option. The Society has sourced a different site at 2809 Benvoulin Road for the purpose of building a new Gurdwara.

The purpose for this application is to obtain the appropriate approvals to construct a Gurdwara. Specifically, we are seeking to rezone the subject property from A1-Agriculture (outside of the ALR) to P2-Educational and Minor Institutional zone with an associated Official Community Plan amendment from R-AGR Rural Agricultural Resource to EDINST- Education/Institutional. Institutional uses are found in the immediate vicinity including the Heritage Christian School and the Fortis Utility site.

This rationale will outline how the site is ideal for the development of a Gurdwara through social linkages of the Sikh community to agriculture and overall community benefits.



Social Linkage to Agricultural Land

People from the Punjab region of India began immigrating to British Columbia in the 1890's. The majority settled in rural areas (including the Okanagan), working in industries such as forestry and agriculture. Sikhism was founded in northern India (Punjab region), where, for hundreds of years, Sikhs have been integral to farming operations. They are proud farmers and constantly seek opportunities to expand farming. Many local farms are now owned by people in the Sikh faith who are willing to do the difficult and gruelling work, as well as take the risks associated with this occupation.

The Sikh community in Kelowna farms over 2,000+ acres of land. Financial challenges and pressures often arise in the farming industry. As an outlet, it's important for the community to have a location to **practice their faith** and connect with the community.

History of the Site

The subdivision plan for the property addressed 2809 Benvoulin Road was registered in April 1957, as a 2.25ac (0.91ha) lot, at a time before this area was part of the City of Kelowna. In observing the air photos over the last 20 years, it seems that the agricultural activity on this property has been minor in nature. The property to the south was recently subdivided through an existing Land Use Contract and the land to the east and north are in the ALR. This property is not in the ALR.

History of the Gurdwara Guru Amardas Darbar Sikh Society

Gurdwara Guru Amardas Sikh Society commenced in 1999 and has served the community for the past 20 years with weekly congregations and special events such as weddings, festivals, and religious celebrations. It has become a central hub to gather for worship and fostered a sense of belonging for the Okanagan Sikh community.

Kelowna's population has been growing and is expected to grow for the next decade. It is one of the fastest growing cities in British Columbia with new residents of various ethnicities, including Sikhs, moving to the region from the other parts of British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. An increasing number of the Sikh population, through immigration and existing growing families, is making Kelowna their home. With recent growth of the community, the Society is unable to meet with societal demands, and the Sikh community has outgrown its current location.

Development of a larger Gurdwara and providing space that allows communities to flourish will benefit locals as they will have the opportunity to hold weddings in their hometown rather than holding these events in other cities/communities. The current Gurdwara on Davie Road is no longer able to hold large events, including weekly congregations, and general space shortages have become a barrier for regularly holding congregations and events. At these events including the weekly congregations, limited parking has resulted in the congregation parking their vehicles away from the Gurdwara. Parking shortages present a safety and security concern to the congregation and have become an inconvenience to nearby residents. The indoor shared spaces, dining halls, kitchen, and public washrooms are unable to accommodate the size of the community on a usual congregation, resulting in congestion or overcrowding. In addition, visiting preachers often attend special events and require accommodation which is not available.

Proposal

A 2,335m² the Gurdwara is proposed for the approximate centre of the property. The proposed site plan features the main access to the site at the end of Boyd Road. There will be a secondary vehicle and pedestrian access directly from Benvoulin Road that will be gated. The secondary entrance will allow for pedestrian/bicycle access through a walkway in the centre and one on the south side of the site.

The proposed building will be 2.5 storeys in height and will cover approximately 8.3% of the site. The site has been carefully developed to ensure that the activities in the Gurdwara will not impact the residential neighbours directly using decorative shrubs, perennials and ornamental grasses and several large deciduous trees. Appropriate parking and creation of ample green spaces are provided with gardens leading to the Gurdwara including seating areas, a rivered water feature and a small plaza at the flag pole. The building will house the Langar Hall (space to receive rest and nourishment), a large Darbar Hall (main worship hall), a smaller Darbar Hall, a large kitchen, youth education rooms, Gurdwara offices, visiting preacher accommodations and all associated utility, washrooms and other needs. The building will be finished in traditional colours and modern design style to match associated Gurdwaras worldwide.

The location is suitable as it is easily accessed using multiple modes of transportation. Benvoulin Road in this location has bike lanes on each side and is also a bus route. The closest transit stop is at the corner of Benvoulin and KLO road approximately 500m to the south. Sidewalks are available from the bus stop to the corner of Fisher Road. Bicycle pathways link to Orchard Park mall on Benvoulin adjacent to the project. Alternatively, a bicycle pathway is located on KLO where worshipers could access through the Fisher Road neighbourhood. Okanagan College (2.0 km west) and the Hospital (3.8km west) are in close proximity.

The proposed redevelopment will provide a direct linkage and connection to agriculture. First and foremost, almost 600m² (6458 square feet) of the land would be utilized for a **vegetable garden and fruit trees**. The land would be cultivated and would generate produce. On the west end of the property, 206 m² (2,217 square feet) of land would be used for a vegetable garden. Various types of vegetables would be produced in raised beds (6 feet by 12 feet). The Sikh society will partner with “Bridges to New Life” and donate vegetables to their organization. Due to the specific requirements for the agricultural buffer on the north and west property lines, no fruit trees are planned.

Community Benefits

The Sikh Society, like other faith organizations, promotes prosocial attitudes and behaviours through education and upbringing from senior community members. Children and youth who attend a place of worship put a distinctively high value on a sense of belonging, friendliness, and kindness.

Through avenues such as language classes, summer camps, and cultural activities, children can learn about their religion and history in a fun and engaging way. Engagement promotes prosocial behaviours and values, and principles learned at an early age are often carried later into life and translated to altruistic and humanitarian acts of forgiveness, generosity, and concern for others.

The Sikh society understands and appreciates the City's desire to have the Benvoulin corridor and this parcel connected with farming. In addition to the Gurdwara, the Society proposes to utilize the parcel for agricultural purposes and commits to annually donate 13,000 pounds of fruit to the community. Notices will be provided through social media and local newspapers with the date and time. This fruit will be provided at the subject property 2809 Benvoulin Road. The society hopes to partner with local Kelowna Food Bank and Interior Health branches, where efforts can be targeted to those families that are low income and may not have access to nutritional food.

The Bridge Youth and Family services will be using some of the garden and growing spaces for a horticultural therapy component of their programming (letter attached). It will allow the participants of their program the opportunity to learn about plants and lifecycles and the cycles that are present in their own recovery.

Finally, an outdoor washroom with a shower will be provided for anyone in Kelowna who wants to access a free warm shower, no questions asked. At times there are members of our community who face hardship, we have seen articles in local newspapers of individuals living out of their vehicles. While they have access to toilet, a hot shower they do not. This connection fits well with the Gurdwara, as the third Guru (Guru Amardas), would collect water in the early morning and provide that for the second Guru (Guru Angad Dev Ji) for twenty-three years. Security measures will be in place to ensure appropriate use of the washroom.

The development of the new Gurdwara will enable the society to better serve the members and offer space for the community to grow resulting in a prosperous society. Moreover, this expansion will allow our local Sikh population to flourish and be a social and economic benefit to the city and surrounding areas. By integrating traditions out of the Sikh faith and welcoming the surrounding community to participate and benefit from the uses at the site, the Sikh society will be a good neighbour.

We look forward to bringing this project to Council for their consideration and welcome any feedback. Please contact, Birte Decloux, Urban Options planning directly at 250.575.6707.

Regards,

Birte Decloux, RPP MCIP
Urban Options Planning Corp. on behalf of the Guru Amardas Sikh Society