



## SHELTER AMERICA GROUP

9620 SW Bank Road Vashon, WA 98070

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** NANCY HOPKINGS GOREE, SENIOR PLANNER  
**FROM:** CHRISTOPHER BRIC  
**SUBJECT:** CREEKSIDE VILLAGE ON VASHON – OWNER RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS  
**DATE:** MARCH 11, 2024

As part of the permitting process for our affordable housing development, Creekside Village on Vashon (CVV), the County has received a variety of public comments regarding the project. On behalf of our nonprofit sponsorship, ownership, and development of CVV, we want to respond to the general themes addressed in these comments and assure the County and local Vashon community of our commitment to provide quality affordable housing aligned with County development requirements.

The expressed concerns regarding this important affordable housing project largely relate to local planning and land use policy – not to SEPA-related matters in connection with CVV – and therefore are not relevant to this project’s permitting. Furthermore, these concerns rely heavily upon anecdotal evidence, distrust of the expert reports, and incorrect or false conclusions and assertions based on the same. While we recognize that an owner’s response is not required, to show good faith in this permitting process we submit this letter to respond factually in addressing these comments and concerns, and to provide a clear project record.

The expressed comments and concerns largely fall into the following bolded categories. We provide our responses in subsequent language.

1. **In several instances we noted that respondents alleged that the project had obtained “spot zoning” to allow for its development as affordable housing.** Neither the project nor property obtained spot zoning, rather, the property was zoned as part of the County’s extensive and closely reviewed comprehensive planning process in which public comment was provided and carefully reviewed. Nearly 30 years ago the site was zoned to allow a maximum of 12 du/acre to ensure low-income housing, at the time a mobile home park, could remain on the property and continue to provide critical low-income housing to the Vashon community. In 2016, as part of King County’s four-year major Comprehensive Plan amendment process, King County amended the language to allow for the use of *any* low-income housing at the property, not just mobile home parks. This was part of the County’s larger effort to encourage diverse housing options throughout its jurisdiction to meet critical community needs and support vulnerable populations. The process included opportunities

for public comment and was received favorably by the King County Council. The County also established a Special District Overlay to encourage diverse housing options which benefitted this property and is allowing this project to help meet low-income housing needs. The Special Overlay District applied to numerous properties, not just the project property. The County's efforts to encourage diverse housing options throughout King County by allowing additional means for properties to foster such housing does not constitute "spot zoning" on the project property. Rather, the record demonstrates the property's zoning reflects an expansive, needs-based and jurisdiction-wide approach to support critical housing needs within its diverse population.

2. **Claims that our development plan is situated on unbuildable land (e.g. those burdened by critical areas) and should not be counted as part of the du/acre density calculations.** The project complies with King County regulations set forth to protect critical areas and adequately mitigates impacts, while providing the Vashon community with important diverse housing options. King County land use policies set forth in its Comprehensive Plan emphasize the importance of protecting critical areas, and both SEPA and project-specific King County permitting review ensure every project adequately protects the environment consistent with King County critical area regulations. *See, e.g.,* 2016 King County Comprehensive Plan Policy U-125. The project has been carefully designed to ensure this affordable housing development complies with applicable critical area regulations and does not create unmitigable impacts to the surrounding environment. Technical documents demonstrating this are available for public review as part of the project record. Concerns raised in public comment attack how King County land use policy dictates du/acre density calculations, rather than application of those codified policies or project-specific SEPA concerns, therefore the comment should not impact the County's review of this project. Our design considerations for Creekside Village on Vashon comply with King County's comprehensive critical area regulations and fully respect the wetland boundaries of the site. All applicable regulations clearly establish the property is buildable for its intended purpose – affordable housing.
3. **Subjective comments that the property is too far from the Town Core.** The property is within the Rural Town which borders the Town Core, and is quickly and readily accessible to Ober Park and Ride, Vashon Library, Thriftway, and the hub of many retail and business enterprises on the island – most of which are well within a mile from the site. Adjacency to the Town Core is not a SEPA related issue, and such a comment should not impact the County's review of the project. Furthermore, extensive King County planning efforts which incorporated public involvement included the property within the Special Overlay District, demonstrating the property is adequately situated to support much-needed affordable housing within the Vashon community.
4. **Several comments were directed at potential traffic issues and perceived shortcomings in the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA), including claims that it failed to consider turning from Gorsuch Road onto the Highway.** The TIA was prepared by professional traffic engineers who appropriately considered potential impacts from the affordable housing development and used required available data to support its conclusions. Traffic impact Analyses are required to base their analysis on specific data, meaning these

analyses provide guidance based on this data, rather than unsupported, conflicting anecdotal accounts. One comment surmised there are more accidents than reported on certain roads, however, did not provide specific data or information to support that claim. The TIA incorporated and carefully reviewed WSDOT data, among other documents and resources, to support its findings. Nonetheless, to better protect the local community, the project's TIA considered road conditions of the surrounding area and suggested specific mitigation to decrease the risk of accidents, including that the project ensure vehicles are afforded clear sight lines, especially where vehicles may be turning. The TIA also considered the complexity of turning onto and off Gorsuch Road. Safety-related concerns were addressed to the extent possible based on WSDOT crash data. The TIA addresses the impact on the Intersection Level of Service (LOS). The TIA satisfies SEPA requirements as it was developed by traffic engineer experts and provides a comprehensive accounting of potential impacts due to the affordable housing project and provides its findings based on the appropriate, required available data. One comment also alleged the project should have used 171<sup>st</sup> street for vehicle access to the property. The project is required to comply with King County critical area regulations which would not allow access from 171<sup>st</sup> St. for this project given another access point was available that did not require the destruction of or intrusion into a protected critical area.

5. **Concerns that Gorsuch Road does not have pedestrian sidewalks, making it unsafe for pedestrians and inappropriate for development of the project.** Pedestrian sidewalks on Gorsuch Road are not required per King County Code or road standards, nor is it the responsibility of this affordable housing project to build such municipal infrastructure. On Vashon-Maury Island, sidewalks are not a common feature for road-related walkways beyond the Town Core. Though our local community could benefit from additional sidewalks throughout the Island, it is not this affordable housing project's responsibility to build them. The sidewalk-related concerns expressed in the comments relate to general infrastructure planning and County project priorities, rather than project-specific SEPA concerns.
6. **Subjective concerns that the project will look too big.** The project is allowable under existing zoning laws and has engaged in a design to setback buildings from both Gorsuch Road and neighboring properties to help alleviate concerns about it building to its allowable density and size. Furthermore, the site layout achieves this while respecting its wetland boundaries. The project team did not identify any shadow or glare impacts associated with this affordable housing project.
7. **Concerns about construction related impacts regarding light and noise.** As disclosed in the project's SEPA Checklist, Creekside Village will comply with King County requirements and guidelines to mitigate these potential impacts during construction.
8. **Claims that the property was once a meeting place for indigenous tribes and that these claims were never investigated.** A Phase I ESA was conducted and did not uncover any indigenous ties or significance to the property. To further ensure responsible development on Vashon-Maury Island, which is within the traditional and ancestral homelands of the s̓w̓əbabs (Swift Water People), and for both the Puyallup Tribe of Indians

(spuyaləpabš), of which many descendants of the sŕvəbabs are members, and for public benefit, a cultural study is being conducted and will be submitted as part of the permit application.

9. **Allegations that the project will have “unspeakable” environmental impacts.** The project obtained an Environmental Area Assessment with specific mitigation to address environmental impact concerns. Using this mitigation, the project will adequately meet County and State requirements to preserve and protect the local environment. Unfounded concerns about the affordable housing project’s impact on the environment that fail to provide any data, facts, or specific information should not be a consideration for SEPA purposes.
  
10. **Opinions that there are other better places to build the project.** These opinions are not related to the County’s SEPA review and should not impact the County’s review of this affordable housing project. Furthermore, over the past eight years we have not found this opinion to be true. It is worth emphasizing how singular this opportunity is for Vashon-Maury Island given the elements that have come together: a motivated land seller with a long-standing vision for affordable housing, the site’s access to sewer, the ownership of the water rights to make CVV possible, and strong community support for our development proposal. We strongly believe this is an important affordable housing opportunity for our island community, as do the many organizations and individuals who have and continue to support our efforts.
  
11. **Concerns related to how the previous trailer park residents were treated.** The development team contracted with a 3<sup>rd</sup> party company that specializes in tenant relocation matters under the Uniform Relocation Act, including by finding replacement housing and determining rental subsidies on a per household basis so that these households would not be financially burdened. The relocation company worked closely with each tenant and with the Island’s Interfaith Council to Prevent Homelessness, and this collective effort effectively relocated all households in rental properties on the island – a significant achievement. Finally, these households will have a priority to move into the completed project when it is placed in service. While any rumors or innuendos of ill treatment of former trailer park residents should not affect the County’s SEPA review, we wanted to underscore the diligent work of this Island’s dedicated community leaders and our development team in working alongside and supporting these households, including by providing ample financial assistance.
  
12. **Allegations that the public meeting regarding the project did not meet Code requirements due to problems with mail notifications and the online meeting link.** Creekside Village on Vashon complied with the public discussion requirements for the Special District Overlay and KCC 20.20.035, notwithstanding temporary technological issues that were resolved early on during the meeting. The County has accepted the August 7, 2023 public discussion as sufficient and meeting code requirements for submission of project permit applications. Furthermore, the allegation does not relate to SEPA, and therefore the comment should not impact the County’s review of the project.

On behalf of CVV's ownership and development, thank you for this opportunity to engage with public comments as we work to bring critical affordable housing to the Vashon-Maury Island community.