

August 26, 2017

Mr. John Chapman, Rezoning Planner
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue

Dear Mr. Chapman

RE: Casa Mia

At its June 17 meeting, the Seniors' Advisory Committee heard from the Applicant regarding changes to the above-noted rezoning application. We commend the Applicant for providing a thorough presentation and for being proactive in reaching out to us for feedback.

As you likely know, the Committee had previously expressed non-support for the first version of this application. While we applauded the potential addition of new housing and services for seniors in this underserved area, we were concerned that the proposed project was of an institutional nature and did not conform to the best practices of the widely regarded Green House Project model of housing and care.

We were pleased to learn that the revised project will adopt many of the Green House model practices, especially the arrangement of beds in a small home design of 12-14 single rooms with private ensuite bathrooms, as well as dining, lounge, and activity areas for each neighbourhood. These small clusters will help foster a sense of community and belonging for residents, help to reduce agitation and confusion, and improve participation in activities of daily living.

We were also pleased that 58 of 90 beds will now be publicly funded and managed under contract with Vancouver Coastal Health, providing more affordable housing options for seniors who wish to age-in-place in this neighbourhood. We are also pleased by the seamless integration of the heritage mansion with all three levels of the new building and design features that allow residents to freely and safely move around the entire facility without fear of getting lost. Other laudable features are the inclusion of some double rooms for couples; easy access to plentiful green spaces and pleasant views; enhancement of trees and hedging to increase privacy; and provisions to manage traffic flow in and out of the facility.

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The Committee would like to provide four recommendations for this project:

1. In keeping with the small home design of the project, we urge that the use of long, institutional-type corridors be kept to a minimum.
2. In keeping with the Green House Project best practices for care, we recommend that “total care workers” be used to the extent possible or, at the very least, that workers be trained and given the autonomy to do a range of tasks, rather than just one or two.
3. The developer should ensure that there are, indeed, a sufficient number of accessible parking spaces designated for persons with disabilities. Two may be insufficient.
4. Better transit options should be explored for this area. The nearest bus stop is at Angus Drive, which is quite a distance from the facility, and the area in general is not well-lit and lacks sidewalks. For staff and visitors who walk, take transit, or bike, this can pose a challenge, especially at night and during inclement weather. To address this concern, the Applicant has stated that car-sharing will be encouraged and has proposed a shuttle service from the bus stop to Casa Mia, but we are unsure whether this will be adequate. Perhaps the installation of a bus stop closer to the facility is an option that can be explored with the City and TransLink.

We commend the Applicant for their hard work on this project and for taking the time to hear and address our concerns. We happily support this revised rezoning application and look forward to the construction of this much-needed facility.

Yours truly,

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Copies to: Mayor and Councillors
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Janice MacKenzie, City Clerk

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