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November 20, 2026

Dear Mayor & Council,

RE: Saanich Application Nos. DPR01079 / REZ00782

TO REZONE FROM C-3 (SHOPPING CENTRE) ZONE TO A MIXEDUSE ZONE TO CONSTRUCT AN 18 STOREY BLDG WITH 311RESIDENTIAL & 104 HOTEL UNITS & COMMERCIAL AT GRADE AND UNDERGROUND PARKING (REVISED DRAWINGS)

The Gorge Tillicum Community Association (GTCA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed development at 3468 Tillicum Road.

The GTCA respectfully requests that Council defer its decision on this application to allow for meaningful community engagement and further consideration of the proposal. While the GTCA has been aware of the project and has met with the applicant on several occasions, we have only had the opportunity to review the final designs and the accompanying staff comments in the staff report released this past Wednesday, just a few days before the application is scheduled to go before Council.

Given the scale and significance of this proposal, we believe this is an insufficient opportunity for the broader community to understand the **final** proposal, assess its implications and provide informed feedback. The GTCA would argue that for developments of this scale and significance, the municipality has an obligation to actively seek and listen to community perspectives, rather than relying primarily on volunteer community associations to facilitate or represent those perspectives.

The GTCA is a volunteer community association. We do not have the capacity, resources or mandate to undertake a comprehensive consultation process on a development of this magnitude. While we appreciate the opportunity to engage with applicants and municipal staff, community consultation on a project of this scale should be led and facilitated by the municipality, with appropriate time and opportunity for affected residents and the broader community to participate.

It is important to clarify the planning context in which the GTCA's discussions with the applicant. All of our early discussions were informed by the updated 2024 Official Community Plan (OCP), under which the proposed building height and density were understood to be OCP-compliant. We confirmed this Saanich Planning staff. On that basis, the GTCA understood that the fundamental parameters of the development, including its height, were consistent with the municipality's recently adopted growth framework. Consequently, our discussions were not initially approached as an opportunity to challenge the proposed height or density, but rather focused on the details of the development, its proposed amenities and potential community benefits.

There is, however, an additional planning consideration worth noting. While the proposal is understood to be compliant with the current OCP, it would not align with the first draft of the Tillicum Burnside Plan. This creates a potential disconnect between the current OCP and the neighbourhood planning process, particularly if the eventual neighbourhood plan establishes a different vision for this area. We believe this is an important consideration for Council as it evaluates the application and the longer-term direction of the Tillicum Burnside Centre.

There are several matters arising from these discussions and our review of the final proposal that we believe deserve particular attention from Council.

1. Parking and Transportation

We were encouraged by the applicant's indication that the development would provide approximately 140 parking spaces, substantially more than the minimum requirement understood to apply under the current OCP framework.

Nevertheless, we question whether this provision is adequate for a development comprising 311 residential units, 104 hotel units and commercial space. The hotel component, in particular, may generate additional parking demand from visitors who are not necessarily able to rely on the same transportation arrangements as residents. We also imagine that the hotel would have a significant number of staff who may also require parking.

We understand that the applicant has been exploring opportunities for additional off-site parking. In our view, this is an important issue that needs to be resolved as part of the application, rather than deferred until after development approval. If additional parking is necessary to make the project workable, we believe the applicant should demonstrate a credible and secured plan for providing it, including any proposed arrangements with neighbouring properties such as Tillicum Mall.

We encourage Council to seek clarity on the applicant's overall parking strategy and to satisfy itself that the proposed residential, hotel and commercial uses can be adequately accommodated.

2. Community Amenities and Public Space

We appreciate the applicant's interest in providing flexible outdoor space that could serve both building occupants and members of the wider community. An appropriately designed and genuinely accessible gathering space could be a positive addition to the neighbourhood.

At the same time, questions remain about how public access, ongoing activation and the long-term availability of this space would be maintained. We encourage Council to consider how any commitments made in this regard can be appropriately secured through the development approval process, including in the event of a future change in property ownership.

3. Hotel Accommodation

The proposed hotel component is potentially a positive contribution to the neighbourhood. Hotel accommodation in the Gorge area has declined over the years, in part through the conversion of existing accommodation to residential uses. There continues to be a need for temporary accommodation for visitors to the area, including families visiting patients at nearby hospitals, visiting sports teams and others who require short-term accommodation. The proposed hotel could help address this gap.

As noted above, however, the hotel component also raises questions about parking and transportation demand that should be considered as part of the overall application.

4. Building Scale and Neighbourhood Context

The GTCA recognizes the importance of accommodating growth and understands that the Tillicum Burnside Centre is intended to accommodate increased density and a more urban form of development.

We are not opposed to high-rise development in principle and recognize the Tillicum Burnside Centre, including the Anthem property (Tillicum Mall), as an appropriate location for significant future growth.

Nevertheless, the scale and configuration of the proposed building at 3468 Tillicum Road raise questions about its relationship to the immediate neighbourhood. Its constrained site, height and proximity to existing and planned residential developments, including existing Parkside townhomes and the Odyssey project currently under construction, are considerations that we believe warrant careful assessment.

We are also mindful of the future residents of the Odyssey development, many of whom will be moving into the neighbourhood in the coming months and will have limited opportunity to comment on the implications of this proposal before doing so. We encourage Council to consider the cumulative effects of development in this immediate area, including neighbourhood livability and the quality of the resulting residential environment.

5. Development Feasibility and Completion

This is perhaps our most significant practical concern. The GTCA does not want to see a situation where businesses are lost, the site is cleared, excavation begins, and the project subsequently stalls, leaving a large hole in the neighbourhood while the property sits on the real estate market for years waiting for market conditions to improve.

Our neighbourhood has already experienced the consequences of development sites remaining vacant for extended periods. The site at the corner of Earl Grey and Gorge Road West, for example, has been a hole for almost a decade. These situations have a lasting negative impact on the surrounding community and undermine confidence in the development process.

Given the scale and complexity of the proposed development, we believe Council should carefully examine the applicant's ability and commitment to proceed with and complete the project. We encourage Council to ask what measures, assurances or other provisions are available to minimize the risk to the neighbourhood should the development encounter significant financial or other difficulties after construction has commenced.

6. Building Design and Aesthetics

We recognize that aesthetics are inherently subjective and that people will have differing opinions on the architectural design of a building. Nevertheless, we share some of the concerns expressed by the Advisory Design Panel regarding aspects of the proposed design.

At 18 storeys, this building will be a significant landmark, not just for the immediate neighbourhood or the Tillicum Burnside Centre, but for Saanich as a whole. Its design, massing, appearance and relationship to its surroundings will have a lasting impact on the community and on how this area is experienced by residents and visitors.

We believe that the significance of a building of this scale warrants careful consideration of the design feedback provided by the Advisory Design Panel and further opportunity to consider whether the final design appropriately reflects the prominence of its location.

Conclusion

We recognize that this proposal presents both potential benefits and legitimate questions for the neighbourhood. We are not opposed to growth or high-rise development in principle, and we recognize the potential contributions this project could make. However, the scale and significance of this proposal, together with the limited opportunity for the community to review the final designs and staff assessment in advance of the Council meeting, lead us to believe that a deferral is warranted.

The GTCA respectfully requests that Council defer its decision on this application and direct the municipality to provide a meaningful opportunity for broader community engagement. A project of this scale should not proceed to a decision without adequate opportunity for the community to understand the proposal, consider the implications and provide informed input. This responsibility should not fall solely on volunteer community associations, whose resources and capacity are inherently limited.

The GTCA is not asking Council to approve or reject this application at this stage. We are asking Council to defer its decision so that the proposal can be considered through a more meaningful and inclusive process.

We believe this would better serve the interests of the neighbourhood, the municipality and the applicant, and would help ensure that a development of this significance is considered with the care and community input it deserves.

Sincerely,

Vera Wynn-Williams

Vera Wynn-Williams
GTCA President on behalf of the GTCA Board