



Health and well-being for all

Quality | Integrity | Compassion | Safety

June 11, 2025

Krishna Shah and Shiming Huang, Planners
City of Merritt
2185 Voght St. Box 189
Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Sent via email: planning@merritt.ca

Attention: Krishna Shah and Shiming Huang

Re: File No. DP 2025-012
1799 Menzies Street

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed DPA 2 Urban Centre application for a proposed multi-family affordable housing building. We are pleased to learn of this proposal because it aligns with City of Merritt 2021 housing needs assessment which recommends working with nonprofit housing providers and it would provide housing for people facing disproportionate housing insecurity and homelessness. **Overall, we are in support of this development.**

The last Objective of DPA 2 (section 12.2.4) states the “guidelines are intended to... Enhance the public realm, provide ample opportunities for residents and visitors to gather and socialize....” With this in mind, I am sharing the following resources and suggestions for how the development can further support social connection, mental health, physical activity and overall wellbeing.

Resources:

- [Fact Sheet: Supporting Health Equity Through the Built Environment](#) (BC Centre for Disease Control). See planning principles 2 on page 5, 1 and 2 on page 6, 2 on page 12.
- [Building Social Connections – Toolkit of design actions to nurture wellbeing in multi-unit housing](#) (Happy Cities)
- [Shade Lookbook – A Guide to Designing Sun Safety](#) (BC Cancer Prevention, SunSafeBC and UBC School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture)
- [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Principles](#) (CPTED Canada)

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Fence along alley:

My first recommendation is to not have the tall concrete fence along the alley on the west side of the property because it would open the ground floor at the back of the building to more light, views, natural settings and sightlines to allow more people to watch out for each other. Without the physical barrier the distance and busier roads children would need to travel to reach the school and playground would significantly decrease. Thereby increasing the accessibility to outdoor green and play spaces children have. Parents would be more apt to allow older children to play unsupervised at the school ground knowing the distance to home is short. Research has shown that regular exposure to physical activity and natural settings, even landscaping and views from a window, can increase mental and physical health.

Social connection:

Social connection, social safety net and sense of community belonging are all very important to support the mental and overall well-being of community members and the overall community to be more resilient. During challenging times, such as extreme weather events, family, friends and neighbours are best positioned to offer support. In order to foster social connection in multi-family settings the [Happy Cities toolkit](#) speaks to maximizing opportunities for spontaneous interaction using the location and design of social features. In the case of this proposed development, it is also important to consider how the design can be sensitive to the local Indigenous culture of the people. The following are some examples of how the concepts in this resource could apply to the proposed development:

- Have more outdoor gathering space near the front entrance that meets needs of all generations to create opportunities for spontaneous lingering and interaction. For example, raised community garden beds, seating and/or play area/structure, or a gazebo or other circular gathering space.
- Choose plants and art that resonate with local Indigenous culture.
- Having outdoor space for individual units. Patios for ground floor with transition to public space, and balconies or Juliette doors for upper floors. These provide opportunities for social interaction, eyes on the neighbourhood providing access to natural elements (views, fresh air, trees and plants).

Adapting to climate change:

The intensity and frequency of extreme heat is expected to increase significantly due to climate change. Exposure to prolonged heat in indoor environments is the most hazardous

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environmental hazard which disproportionately impacts people with lower socio-economic status. Ensuring units have adequate ventilation and climate control is very important.

The [Shade Lookbook](#) offers design principles and many great examples of natural and built forms of shade to help with climate change adaptation and create outdoor spaces for lingering, children playing and being social with neighbours.

Overall, we are pleased to learn of this development and are in support. I trust the resources shared above are beneficial for designing the space to fit the needs of future residents as best as possible. We are committed to working collaboratively with the City of Merritt and community partners to create policies and environments that support good health. Please contact me if you have any questions or require resources at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Anita Ely
Specialist Environmental Health Officer
Healthy Communities, Healthy Families

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Resources:

Happy Cities. *Building Social Connections – Toolkit of design actions to nurture wellbeing in multi-unit housing*. <https://happycities.com/building-social-connections-toolkit>

BC Cancer Prevention, SunSafeBC and UBC School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture. *Shade Lookbook – A Guide to Designing Sun Safety*.

http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/prevent/Documents/ShadeLookbook_May2024.pdf

BC Centre for Disease Control - Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit webpage

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/healthy-built-environment-linkages-toolkit>

CPTED Canada. [CPTED Principles](#) webpage

Interior Health Response for Development Variance Permit

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Krishna Shah

From: Ely, Anita [IH]
Sent: August 20, 2025 5:36 PM
To: Krishna Shah
Subject: RE: Referral | DVP 2024-003 - DP2025-012 | 1799 Menzies Street | Referrals

Hello Krishna,

Sorry I haven't gotten get back to you until now.

I have reviewed the proponent's rationale for requesting private space be considered space that is public/common space to other residents of the property but not public/common space for the broader community. What they have put forward for consideration is reasonable and very specific to the context of the people that they anticipate will be living in this space. The suggestions and examples that I describe are applying the planning principles/guidelines that are outlined in the Happy Cities resource to what I understand of the proposal, which is much less than the proponents and their architecture consultants.

The best would be to find the balance of protecting residents' safety and perceived safety, low construction and maintenance costs and creating space(s) that foster sense of community belonging. If balconies and other private spaces that offer opportunity to engage with others outside of each individual unit are too cost and safety prohibitive, then I encourage the proponent and their architects to consider other ways the built environment they are designing can foster and support social connection and looking out for each other.

The overall project will be a much needed addition to the community. These healthy built environment design considerations to support the social environment would contribute to quality of life and wellbeing of residents. However, affordability and safety, especially in this context, is most important.

Anita Ely (she, her, hers)

Specialist Environmental Health Officer
Healthy Community Development



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