

January 11, 2021

For Inclusion in Public Hearing Agenda, on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 6:00 PM
Attn: Don McArthur, Planning and Development Services Manager

Re: proposed development above Lindley Creek Road

Your Worship and Council members,

My name is Gray Anscomb, and my wife Carmin and I have lived in Merritt for more than 25 years; with the last 23 of those years at 2077 Aspen Street in Collettsville. As Collettsville residents (and in that my wife has taught at CV Elementary school across from this proposed development for 25 years), we feel that we have a vested interest in protecting the land above Lindley Creek Road (AKA "The Flats"). For years we have watched countless youngsters learn how to ride bmx, dirt bikes, quads and snowmobiles on the trails that crisscross this property. We have watched scores of Merrittians walk their dogs here, or simply hike the Flats for exercise and enjoyment, or to journey on to enjoy hiking Windy Canyon. As Collettsville Elementary School has always organized district elementary cross-country runs on the Flats, my wife and I have witnessed hundreds of students making great use of this property for more than two decades. That being the case, therefore, I feel that it is our responsibility to advocate for judicious planning of this land.

While we certainly do not oppose land development in Merritt, and in the surrounding area, we do, however, strongly question the direction that the City's community plan is taking here, and we worry that this proposal is being rushed through Council at an alarming pace, simply to acquire short-term financial gains through real estate sales. Along similar lines, we would certainly hate to lose the visually appealing rural feel that the Flats provides Merritt residents, as they look out their windows, walk, jog, ride or drive by this area. By implementing this huge hybridized development plan which seeks to pair a mobile home park, with townhouses and condominium units, the natural beauty of this area will be forever lost for all of the residents of Merritt: a steep price to pay for any short-term financial growth.

Where is the road infrastructure that will support a development of such size? Surely Lindley Creek Road cannot be expected to accommodate such a residential boom, as it can barely handle vehicular traffic in conjunction with the influx of parent driven vehicles that appear Monday through Friday up and down the street during student drop off and pickup times at Collettsville Elementary. Does the property plan include creating further roadways to hook up with Midway Valley Road? I can only imagine the traffic bottlenecks that will take place during Rodeo events, as residents of this proposed subdivision attempt to exit or enter their respective complexes while rodeo participants and spectators attempt to enter or leave the rodeo grounds or the overflow parking lot that exists right beside this proposed property.

I wonder how prospective buyers will view purchasing property in this area, once they walk the grounds and perhaps hear the intermittently audible hum of electricity in the powerlines overhead on this property; the operating sounds of the Biomass Power Plant on Midday Valley Road; or rock being crushed or moved out of the quarry (frequently starting prior to 7:00 in the morning) which is right beside this proposed development? Surely reducing the size of this development, making it more uniform (perhaps just townhouses, a seniors' complex or larger residential lots) and moving it further away from Lindley Creek Road would make more sense financially, and make the development more visually appealing to both potential buyers and current landowners alike.

Why do we continue to promote new residential developments when we still have vacant property lots in Merritt? The Country Pines subdivision on the other side of Lindley Creek Road still has lots for sale, and this development sprung up over twenty years ago. Why are we scrambling to create new residential developments, when we do not have any community industries to provide new jobs? With the cost of an average residence in the Lower Mainland projected at 1.7 million dollars by the end of 2021, retirees from the coast will not be moving up to Merritt to purchase small lots or mobile homes, but they might possibly be attracted to a more uniform living arrangement, like an attractive seniors' community.

In conclusion, I would like to add two last items:

1) I do not feel that using a virtual council meeting to discuss a development of such magnitude is appropriate. According to a number of the residents whom I have spoken to, they would much rather state their case in person, with much-needed moral support from like-minded members of our community present. Surely this proposal could have been tabled to a later date.

and

2) Reflecting the feelings felt by the residents of Westbank, when their community was arbitrarily renamed West Kelowna, with virtually no public input, I feel that our Council's intent to rename Collettville as South Merritt, without the input of those who reside in this area, equally egregious.

Respectfully yours,

Gray Anscomb