



March 8, 2022

Robert Publow
Manager of Planning
City of Mission
A – 7337 Welton Street, Mission, BC, V2V 3X1

Dear Robert,

RE: 33368 1st Avenue – Rezoning Application

About SARA for Women

SARA for Women is a feminist, non-profit society providing safe refuge and community-based resources for women in Mission and Abbotsford. With approximately 100 employees, SARA operates transitional, short, and long-term housing facilities as well as counselling and outreach services. SARA is an acronym that stands for Support, Acceptance, Resource, and Action. Through trust, respect, integrity, compassion, commitment, and communication, SARA employees partner with women who are seeking to experience freedom and to write a new story for themselves and their children going forward. The Society offers free programs including transition housing, counselling for women and children, counselling and pregnancy outreach, a drop-in center for street-engaged women, and the Fronya Thrift Store Boutique. Through innovative programming, diversity practices, social enterprise and partnerships SARA supports women in their cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual growth.

SARA's Success

SARA is the largest women and children serving organization in the Fraser Valley and provides essential services and resources for women and children fleeing violence.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 SARA Programs provided the following breadth of services to local women and children;

- 75 women and 68 children were housed in Second Stage buildings;
- 527 counselling appointments
- Pregnancy outreach and nursing care supported 24 pre-natal referrals and 27 post-partum women;
- Food hampers were provided to 25 women and 52 children;
- In addition to responding to over 6,100 phone calls, 1,588 women received assistance through the outreach program which provides emotional, housing, legal and financial resources to community. This includes;
 - assisting 565 women with legal support services;
 - free legal advice to 62 women over the phone; and
 - housing support for 591 women.
- The Drop-In Centre, which offers a variety of support services for women who are socially marginalized, supported 6,990 total clients including;
 - Over 2,600 shelter guest;

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- 2,875 meals donated; and
 - 780 food hampers and care packages containing toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and feminine hygiene products were handed out.
- Fronya Thrift Boutique donated \$854 in clothing for SARA women programs and \$572 in clothing to women living on the streets or shelters.

Why Rezone?

There is a much greater need for the services that SARA provides in the community than we can currently accommodate. Between April 2020 and March 2021, 884 Women and 648 Children were turned away from SARA transition houses in Abbotsford and Mission.

SARA needs significantly more housing capacity to support the community needs. The Santa Rosa facility is currently prime for redevelopment given the extensive growing capital cost of upkeep of the existing facility. Given the age and condition of the building, there is currently a risk of losing the existing essential beds and space.

The proposed redevelopment of the Santa Rosa by SARA for Women at 33368 1st Avenue will offer:

- affordable housing
- offices and program space for SARA for women
- counselling services
- temporary shelter including showers and laundry

SARA, and the powerful community within the building, will support vulnerable women in building strength, resilience, and autonomy. Our request for rezoning, is to enable SARA to welcome more women and children who are in need, and to expand the impact and reach of our services to the broader community.

Capital Funding Opportunity and Driver for Project

SARA is uniquely positioned to benefit from the CMHC Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative which has an impending application deadline of May 31, 2022. This federal program has the potential to provide full capital funding to the build out of much needed housing and program space. The rezoning will allow SARA the opportunity to submit for funding of additional housing to serve the need in the community which is not adequately covered within the current zoning. It is a key requirement of this funding program that the site zoning needs to be in place prior to the application deadline of May 31 when the application needs to be made.

Acknowledgement of School District Referral

We heard from Corien Becker from the School District, in advance of a formal referral, so that we could acknowledge and address any of the School District's comments. The only item of consideration from Corien's perspective was the ability for the project to provide a 'Safe Route to School'. Although this is

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outside the walls of the development itself, SARA staff has established the following response to address Corien's suggestions;

- In recent history, there have been no children over the age of 8 at Santa Rosa. All resident children were accompanied to school by an adult.
- As this is a building focused on building community, this serves as an opportunity for women to help women. A walking train would be coordinated when 1 or more students need to attend school to ensure that an adult is always present.
- As part of the orientation to Santa Rosa, new residents would be provided a safe walk map to provide the best and safest route to school.
- There is the possibility of the caretaker having the added responsibility of accompanying students to school.
- There are discussions about SARA acquiring a van. There may be the possibility that the van resides at Santa Rosa and serves as an unofficial school bus for resident children.

The above demonstrates SARA's commitment to ensuring that safety and security are at the forefront of everything we do.

The future of 33368 1st Avenue

The SARA for Women project located at 33368 1st Avenue will be a physical space that empowers a community of women to build each other up, to provide safety and care for each other. It will serve as a building that symbolizes strength, security, safety and emanates support to the broader community through services, outreach, and a non-judgmental welcome. The future Santa Rosa is a beacon that sheds light far beyond its footprint.

We are extremely grateful to staff and Council for recognizing the immeasurable benefit to hundreds of women and children, by expeditiously moving through the rezoning.

Kind regards,



Jennifer Breakspear
Executive Director
SARA for Women