

MEDIA RELEASE -Stop Sprawl Vernon challenges claims about proposed 580 Commonage development

Stop Sprawl Vernon says a new media campaign by Kerkhoff Develop-Build's in support of its proposed development at 580 Commonage Road makes claims that don't stand up to closer scrutiny:

Claim 1: 580 Commonage is not sprawl

Leonard Kerkhoff, President and CEO of Kerkhoff Develop-Build, claims that their proposal "is technically not sprawl." But in reality, the proposal ticks every box to be classified as sprawl development. It is 7km from the city core, in lightly used rangeland outside of the city's Urban containment boundary. It requires extensive new urban infrastructure, and provides primarily low density housing.

Claim 2: The development will pay for itself through tax revenues

The financial screening report produced and submitted by Kerkhoff Develop-Build shows the project could cost the city more to operate and maintain than it generates in taxes — by over \$500,000 per year even after all of the planned houses are built, which NO hillside development in Vernon has achieved to date. The real tax burden will be even greater.

Claim 3: The development will provide "attainable" housing

In a report prepared by Kerkhoff Develop-Build, the developer lists \$813,522 as the average taxable value for single-family homes in the development. Even the average value of \$453,324 for condominium units referenced in the same report would require mortgage payments of roughly \$2,300 per month, before taxes, utilities, strata fees/lease payments, and transportation costs. "These costs are well beyond the reach of many working people and young families in Vernon," said Barry Dorval, SSV spokesperson. This is NOT what the city's own Housing Needs Study calls for.

Claim 4: The development protects wildlife habitat

The developer states "The plan balances habitat protection and wildlife movement with opportunities for public access, recreation, and long-term trail connectivity." These contradictory aims are difficult to 'balance' as the development would fragment natural areas, increasing edge effects such as wind exposure, invasive species, higher wildlife mortality from human interaction and vehicle traffic, and the gradual isolation of wildlife populations.

Claim 5: This development is the best way to "protect" nature from an intensive agriculture future.

High-input farming is very unlikely here because of limited irrigation infrastructure and the distance from water sources. This area is not suited to development OR agriculture. It's 'best use' is as a critical component of a connected natural area corridor spanning the Okanagan.

In summary, by ignoring the OCP, 580 Commonage undermines public input into decision-making. The City of Vernon's current and previous Official Community Plans, the 2015 Master Parks Plan, the Transportation Plan, and the 2019 Regional Growth Strategy all call for compact, sustainable development rather than expanding hillside sprawl.

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“These plans were developed with extensive public input from thousands of people and reflect a long-term vision for a more sustainable community,” Dorval said. “The 580 Commonage proposal runs directly counter to those goals.”

Stop Sprawl Vernon is urging residents and city council to look closely at the evidence before moving forward with a proposal that could have irreversible financial and environmental consequences for the community.

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