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## Elk Lake condo tower clears public hearing despite locals' concerns



Artist's rendering of Doral Forest Park, a proposed condominium development on the edge of Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. COURTESY D'AMBROSIO ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

**DARRON KLOSTER**  
 Times Colonist

A controversial condominium development rising 11 storeys on the edge of Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park has cleared a public hearing with the support of Saanich council.

Councillors approved development variance permits for the angular 1.3-hectare property along Elk Lake Drive after a two-day public hearing, where the proposed development drew both criticism — for its height and proximity to the regional park — and support, for its design and the need for density and housing options for the growing municipality.

Mike Geric Construction Ltd. is proposing two buildings on the Doral Forest Park site, starting at 11 storeys and “terracing down” to a five-storey structure beside neighbouring apartments and townhouse developments.

The project would contain a total of 242 condos, including 43 that would be secured in perpetuity as “affordable” and sold at 15 per cent below the appraised value.



Council ultimately decided the way to prevent more urban sprawl and provide new housing options was to build higher, voting 7-2 to move the project to a final reading.

The only hurdles that remain include an agreement with the developer on amenities and environmental features and other technical issues, as well as a contract with the Capital Regional District on the affordable-housing component.

Judy Brownoff and Nathalie

Chambers were opposed, both citing environmental concerns.

The Royal Oak development, on the edge of the municipality's urban containment boundary, will be a landmark along the Pat Bay Highway as one of the tallest buildings in Saanich, although buildings in the Uptown area could eventually go as high as 18 to 22 storeys.

Coun. Colin Plant said the decision wasn't easy, acknowledging the community is split on the issue. “I live in Royal Oak and I've watched [the site] sit undeveloped for years. There is a dire housing shortage, and an acute shortage in Saanich. Density will help lessen the demand and [contain] more urban sprawl.”

Residents of two Royal Oak community associations expressed concerns about the development's height and potential impact on the park, as well as noise and traffic.

Council heard dozens of speakers and received hundreds of emails during the public hearing.

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## New vaccine advice gets mixed reaction from AstraZeneca double-dosers

**LOUISE DICKSON**  
 Times Colonist  
 and **AMY SMART**  
 Canadian Press

Alison Malis is not a second-guesser. “If I make a decision that's just the way it is,” she says.

That's why the 61-year-old Langford woman has no regrets about receiving her second dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine on June 12.

Malis had a choice — to receive a second dose of AstraZeneca at a Save-On-Foods pharmacy or make an appointment for a second dose of an mRNA vaccine such as Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna at a provincial clinic.

Malis went ahead with her scheduled second dose of AstraZeneca — as did Premier John Horgan, who tweeted about it.

“There's nothing wrong with AstraZeneca,” Malis said.

“I have no issues with it at all. I have issues with the government and their ham-handed way of handling this. They've made people think there's something wrong with the vaccine. But there isn't.”

“Twenty-five million British people can't be wrong.”

On Thursday, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization said an mRNA vaccine is the “preferred” choice for a second dose for AstraZeneca recipients.

The new recommendation is drawing mixed reaction from those who've already received two jabs of AstraZeneca.

“When I got my second shot, I thought, ‘I'm set. This is good.’ But it's sort of disappointing that it's better to get Pfizer or Moderna,” said Victoria resident Adrian Chamberlain, who writes about theatre for the *Times Colonist*.

“Now you think: ‘Well I guess it's OK... We're not upset. We're just surprised.’”

Chamberlain said he is worried that the U.S. might not recognize the AstraZeneca shot. He and his wife Penny were thinking of going to Hawaii in January. “Maybe this is not going to be good for that,” he said.

Lynne Williams told the *Times Colonist* that she and her husband, who both got two doses of AstraZeneca, are feeling let down by the news.

“We would have waited if it was safer, but we have been told to get the first vaccine that came along and we did,” she said.

The committee's guidance is based on the increasing supply of mRNA vaccines, growing evidence that a second dose of an mRNA vaccine produces a stronger immune response,

and because of the low but serious risk of vaccine-induced blood clots associated with AstraZeneca.

“People who received two doses of AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD vaccine can rest assured that the vaccine provides good protection against infection and very good protection against severe disease and hospitalization,” NACI's advice says.

The committee also updated its previous recommendation that people at high risk of exposure to, or serious illness from, COVID-19, could opt to get AstraZeneca rather than wait for Pfizer or Moderna. Now NACI says everyone should always get the mRNA vaccines first, unless they are allergic to them.

However, officials in Quebec and British Columbia didn't move to follow NACI's advice, instead saying residents can still make a personal choice for either a mixed schedule or two doses of AstraZeneca.

“The very real-world evidence shows us we have good protection across the board with both vaccines in our community,” said provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry.

As of June 5, 2.1 million Canadians had received one dose of AstraZeneca, and 15,186 had received two doses. There are no further shipments of AstraZeneca scheduled, but there are still about half a million doses of it in the provinces.

“A lot of people who had been booked to receive their second vaccine just cancelled,” said Tara Jones, a pharmacy technician at the Medicine Shoppe on Fort Street. “We still had people coming in today, but we've been slowed down. There's still a few that want it.”

Fewer people are coming in for first and second doses, said Caleb De Hoog, an assistant at the Cridge Pharmacy on Fort Street.

“The uptake is a little slower than the first time around for first doses and when we first got the second doses. We are still getting some people coming to get their second dose, just a lot less than it was initially,” said De Hoog. “And there have been a couple of cancellations.”

The Medicine Shoppe has 45 remaining doses, the Cridge Pharmacy about 100.

Mike Farnworth, B.C.'s minister of public safety, said he got his second AstraZeneca dose last week and would do the same if it was available this week.

He said his message to other British Columbians who have received two doses is the same: “Don't worry, you're fully vaccinated.”  
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