

Sandstone FAQs

1. What is the vision and plan for the Sandstone development?

Sandstone presents a unique opportunity to create a vibrant new mixed-use, master planned community in south Nanaimo where local residents can live, work and recreate. Totalling 726 acres in size, this development will become a new southern gateway for the City.

In addition to providing a diverse range of housing options, Sandstone will be a major focus of employment growth, creating new jobs and economic development for the region through the development of modern employment zones that encompass a wide variety of retail, commercial and much-needed industrial uses. This broad range of land uses will be complemented by an extensive parks and open space network for the community to enjoy, comprising of nearly half the total property area, among other amenities. Ultimately, the vision and plan is to establish Sandstone as a preeminent destination within Nanaimo and the central Vancouver Island region.

2. This development has been talked about for years. What is the history and background on the Sandstone development?

Sandstone was acquired by Seacliff Properties in late, 2018 though for well over a decade the Sandstone development lands have been envisioned as a future growth node for the City of Nanaimo. Through numerous iterations of public engagement, master planning, and ownership changes, a plan has emerged to develop the Sandstone lands into a vibrant new mixed-use community. In keeping with the vision set out by the City of Nanaimo in their Official Community Plan, Sandstone will offer a diverse range of housing options, along with a significant new employment zones that will encompass a variety of retail, commercial and industrial uses.

3. Who is the owner/developer of Sandstone?

Sandstone was acquired by Seacliff Properties in late, 2018. Seacliff is a private, family-owned real estate company based in Vancouver with more than 30 years' experience in the successful development, acquisition and management of large-scale real estate projects throughout Western Canada. The Seacliff team has experience in every aspect of the development, construction, and management of residential, commercial, office, and recreational projects.

Over the past decade, Seacliff has increased its investment on Vancouver Island, which now represents the company's main focus with five large-scale (totaling in excess of 1,500 acres), master-planned communities at various stages of the development process. To learn more about Seacliff Properties, visit our website at <http://seacliffgroup.com/properties/projects/>

4. What stage of the development approvals process is Sandstone at? What is the development and construction timeline?

An application to amend the existing Official Community Plan and rezone the lands was submitted in May 2019. Since that time, we have been working through the review process with the City of Nanaimo.

The proposed amendments largely reflect measures to provide appropriate diversity and flexibility within each document. These measures will ensure that a planning framework is established for a successful long-term community development that can respond, adapt, and evolve to rapidly changing market conditions as well as technological and environmental innovations. The proposed updates will also create the basis to provide for significant residential and employment opportunities while also providing the community with substantial parks, open spaces and other much-needed amenities.

Before a shovel can hit the ground the Sandstone application needs to go through the public approvals process, going before Council for readings of the bylaws along with a public hearing. The goal would be to commence development immediately after receiving the required approvals.

5. How will the new development be accessed? How will the existing roads handle the increased traffic volume?

Having worked closely with the community over the past 2+ years, we understand that there are a number of existing concerns from both a safety and efficiency standpoint with the current transportation network in this area. Knowing this, a huge focus of the Sandstone development has been working closely with our traffic engineers to assess and understand the current traffic network and associated concerns, analyze what additional impacts to traffic the Sandstone development would bring, and most importantly provide a number of proposed improvements in order to increase the safety and efficiency of the road networks in this area, both now and into the future.

The new development in the Cinnabar Valley will be accessed from Extension Road, which will see several improvements to accommodate the new development. The scope and scale of those improvements and the ultimate build out of Extension Road has yet to be determined. Ongoing conversations are being had with the City of Nanaimo Transportation Department to establish how Sandstone could help with the existing traffic issues and mitigate future traffic impacts from the development as much as possible, including improvement of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along Extension Road and establishing further connectivity options for vehicles. Some of these connectivity options include Sandstone potentially contributing to existing City of Nanaimo improvement projects such as the Cranberry Connector and alternative route studies.

Several highway intersections and areas along Cedar Road will also be improved or changed to accommodate the Sandstone development. In addition, the Sandstone team has proposed a multi-use corridor along the decommissioned portion of Fielding Road to encourage all kinds of walking, cycling and rolling and further connect the south end with the rest of Nanaimo. There is also a proposed transit exchange located within the lands directly south of Cedar Road which will contribute to more rapid service in this southern portion of the City and Regional District of Nanaimo.

6. What is the plan for emergency responses and evacuation from the Cinnabar Valley during major events like an earthquake or a forest fire?

The Sandstone team is working closely with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure as well as the City of Nanaimo Transportation Department to establish an alternative route out of Cinnabar Valley for times when an emergency or other unforeseen events occur and an alternative exit is necessary. Providing this redundancy within the Cinnabar Valley transportation network along with safety improvements to existing infrastructure is a main priority of the Sandstone development's traffic improvement planning process.

7. What is the plan for the parks and open spaces throughout the development?

In total, we are proposing to dedicate nearly half of the Sandstone lands as parks and open space – that is nearly 360 acres of lands that would be preserved for natural uses and public enjoyment in perpetuity!

In the Cinnabar Valley there will be approximately 90 acres of parks and open space, largely based on the existing trails and natural spaces that the public uses today. Many of these natural spaces and trails will be formalized with the development, while some may need to be relocated. In the area near Elaine Hamilton Park and the future school site there will be opportunities for a variety of amenities including a new trail head, playground, off-leash dog park, a foraging forest and more!

For lands located on the eastern side of the highway there will be a mix of ecologically diverse parks and trails that link the employment lands through a linear greenbelt network which will link the natural, community and city parks – like the proposed Community Centre together. There will also be a multi-use corridor for multi-modal transportation along the decommissioned portion of Fielding Road.

8. What kinds of housing will be built?

A wide range of housing is contemplated in the Sandstone plans, ranging from single family detached homes, to townhomes, condos, purpose-built rentals, senior-oriented housing and beyond.

9. Why is the City taking so long to review the traffic and the overall development?

The Sandstone Official Community Plan Amendment and Rezoning application was submitted to the City in May, 2019. Since that time, we have continued to work with the City as they conducted their review, providing additional information and details when requested. In February 2021, we then received a Comprehensive Letter with the City's feedback as of that date, which we continue to work through, responding and resolving each of the outstanding matters.

A major component of discussion over the past number of years has been around traffic management, a topic that the Sandstone team continues to actively work with the City of Nanaimo on. It is a complex matter with some long-standing issues and our team is confident that we can contribute to solutions to address both today's concerns and our development's impact.

Our team has also been asked why the City has spent millions on bike lanes instead of traffic and safety improvements in the Cinnabar Valley? Questions like this are best directed at the City of Nanaimo for response. Each year, Council decides on capital projects and strategic priorities, which are then implemented by staff. Unfortunately, many of the Chase River area projects have been delayed. Questions for the City staff can be directed to the [Public Works and Engineering Department](#) and questions or comments to Council can be directed to mayor.council@nanaimo.ca.

The Sandstone team continues to work closely with our team of consultants and the City of Nanaimo staff to move the project closer to approval by Council but cannot say with any certainty at this point in time on when that will occur.

10. What are the amenities and other improvements the development is proposing?

The Sandstone plan has several proposed community amenities. Firstly, nearly half of the 726-acres that make up Sandstone are being proposed to remain as a comprehensive parks and open space network. Throughout this network, there would be a number of recreational amenities provided such as trails, playgrounds, off-leash dog park, foraging forest, outdoor fitness areas and more. In addition to the recreational amenities, a significant portion of the open space will be focused on preserving and protecting the beautiful natural creeks and wetlands. Current plans also propose including a 5-acre elementary school site in the Cinnabar Valley, located beside Elaine Hamilton Park; a 2.5 acre Community Centre site in the node area directly south of Cedar Road, as well as a possible City of Nanaimo owned affordable housing opportunity and a future transit exchange.

Want to receive more information? Register here to receive more information and updates as this project moves forward.