

# Staff Report to Council

Planning and Development

FILE: 6635-20-2022-02

**REPORT DATE:** June 13, 2022      **MEETING DATE:** June 21, 2022  
**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**FROM:** Colin O'Byrne, Acting Director of Planning and Development  
**SUBJECT:** Non-adhering Residential Use Application for 13000 Harris Road

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW/APPROVAL:**



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**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

THAT Council:

- A. Direct Staff to forward to the ALC, with a recommendation of support, the application for a non-adhering residential use application at 13000 Harris Road, to permit migrant farm-worker housing; OR
- B. Other.

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**PURPOSE**

To present to Council an Agricultural Land Commission application for migrant farmworker housing at 13000 Harris Rd.

☐ Information Report      ☒ Decision Report      ☐ Direction Report

**DISCUSSION**

**Background:**

The City has received an application to construct a building to house 40 migrant farm-workers at 13000 Harris Road. Under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, housing for migrant farm workers requires approval from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC).

## **Application Background**

**Owner:** Ryan, Rajan, Sulinder Thiara  
**Civic Address:** 13000 Harris Rd  
**Property Size:** 13.81 ha (34.12 acres)  
**OCP Designation:** Agricultural (20 acre min)  
**Zoning:** A-1 (General Agricultural)

Thiara Farms owns and operates several farms in Pitt Meadows and Langley, totalling 79 ha, of which 67 ha is planted with blueberry crops. This includes three farms in Langley totalling 35 ha and the following parcels in Pitt Meadows:

- 19050 McDonald Road
  - total parcel size 3.8 ha / 9.5 acres
  - residential uses: single family dwelling
- 13000 Harris Road
  - total parcel size 13.81 ha / 34.12 acres
  - residential uses: vacant single family dwelling
- 16979 Ford Road
  - total parcel size 18.5 ha / 45.8 acres
  - residential uses: single family dwelling, housing for 10 migrant farm workers
- 16982 Ford Road
  - leased area 8.1 ha / 20.0 acres

Thiara Farms' average annual production is 1.5 million lbs of blueberries. At the subject site, 13000 Harris Rd, the average annual production of blueberries is approximately 400,000 lbs. Presently, at 13000 Harris Road, there is a single family dwelling, barn and pump house for irrigation. The single family dwelling is vacant, and the applicant is in the process of determining whether to renovate the approximately 1250 ft<sup>2</sup> building or demolish and rebuild.

### **Relevant Policy, Bylaw or Legislation:**

The City's Official Community Plan (OCP) states:

- 4.2.3 b) All seasonal farm labour housing must conform to health and fire code regulations and not create housing opportunities for non-farm workers.

The property's A-1 (General Agricultural) zoning permits agriculture and related uses. Migrant farm worker housing is permitted under certain conditions, which this application appears to meet. A housing agreement is required to be registered on title, confirming the occupancy of the housing for farm workers only, and the owner is required to sign a statutory declaration each year also confirming this. If the housing ceases to be used by migrant farm-workers, then it must be removed from the site.

## Analysis:

### *Proposal*

The applicant is proposing to add a 471 m<sup>2</sup> (5,072 ft<sup>2</sup>) building to house 40 seasonal, migrant farm workers. The majority of the farm workers will live here during the harvest season, approximately three months. 10-20 of the workers will remain to prune the crop, about 8-9 months total, which is the longest duration permitted under the federal Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

The proposed building is two storeys, comprised of four three-bedroom units (see Attachment D). The building is proposed on a slab with no crawl space or basement. The proposed building site is located near the existing single family dwelling, in an area where there are no blueberry crops planted, which limits the impact of this housing on the productive agricultural parcel (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1: Proposed location of migrant farm worker housing*

The exact location of driveway and septic treatment system have not been determined, but the applicant advised that these will be located where no blueberry crops are currently planted.

The existing farm worker housing at 16979 Ford Rd will be decommissioned if this new application is approved.

#### *Agrologist Report*

The applicant supplied an agrologist report in support of this application and as required by the City (see Attachment E). It notes the shortage of local farm labour, resulting in the need for migrant farm workers and that the plan for Thiara Farms to construct housing for 40 farm workers is justified to maintain a viable farm operation.

#### *Agricultural Advisory Committee*

At their meeting on May 12, 2022, the City's Agricultural Advisory Committee considered this application, identified there is a lack of local housing for migrant farm workers, and passed the following motion:

“It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** THAT the Agricultural Advisory Committee supports the non-adhering residential use application for 13000 Harris Road, to construct housing for 40 migrant farm workers”.

#### *Agricultural Land Commission*

A non-adhering residential use application only proceeds to the Agricultural Land Commission for review if it receives approval from the local government to be forwarded in the form of an authorizing resolution. Council has the option of:

- Not forwarding the application to the ALC; OR
- Forwarding the application to the ALC with a recommendation of support; OR
- Forwarding the application to the ALC with no comment; OR
- Forwarding the application to the ALC with a recommendation of no support.

If an application is forwarded to the ALC, the ALC will consider the local governments input but ultimately any decision is made by the ALC. Conversely, if Council does not resolve to forward an application to the ALC, then the application does not proceed any further. There is no appeal process to the ALC that an applicant can make in that case.

#### *Conclusion*

Based on the agrologist report, the large scale and labour-intensive nature of this agricultural operation, and the building being situated so as to maintain as much agricultural productivity as possible, staff have no objections to the application.

If the application is not approved, then no migrant farm worker housing will be permitted on this parcel, except in the existing single family dwelling if it is retained.

### **COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

- ☐ Principled Governance    ☒ Balanced Economic Prosperity    ☐ Corporate Excellence  
☐ Community Spirit & Wellbeing    ☐ Transportation & Infrastructure Initiatives  
☐ Not Applicable

**Agriculture.** Support and advocate for the continued viability of our agricultural industry

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### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- ☒ None    ☐ Budget Previously Approved    ☐ Referral to Business Planning  
☐ Other
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### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- ☒ Inform    ☒ Consult    ☐ Involve    ☐ Collaborate    ☐ Empower

This application was referred to the City's Agricultural Advisory Committee where it was supported.

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### **KATZIE FIRST NATION CONSIDERATIONS**

Referral    ☐ Yes    ☒ No

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### **SIGN-OFFS**

**Written by:**

Allison Dominelli,  
Development Services Technician

**Reviewed by:**

Colin O'Byrne,  
Acting Director of Planning and Development

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### **ATTACHMENT(S):**

- A. Neighbourhood OCP Map
- B. Neighbourhood Zoning Map
- C. Aerial Photo Map
- D. Building Plans
- E. Agrologist Report

# Attachment A: Neighbourhood OCP Map







