

Vista Apartments Sidewalk Backgrounder

BACKGROUND:

Silvera for Seniors owns and Operates Vista Apartments (previously known as Lakeview) – a 120-unit Independent Living affordable rental apartment building for seniors that is located at 2622 39th Avenue NE, Calgary. Rents for all units in Vista Apartments are subsidized and classified as Rents Geared to Income (RGI). Vista Apartments houses some of the lowest-income and most vulnerable seniors in the city.

Silvera acquired the Vista Apartments building and property in 2020. Initially, the building was a 120-unit suite-style hotel. During 2020 and 2021, Silvera converted the hotel into an Independent Living seniors rental apartment building. The conversion was funded by the Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation’s Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) 1.0, through the City of Calgary, and Silvera equity. The conversion was completed in late 2021 with first tenants moving in in December 2021.

Table 1.0: Breakdown of Funding for Vista Hotel Conversion Project	
Funding Source	Amount (\$million)
CMHC Rapid Housing Initiative 1.0	\$15.5
CMHC Seed Funding Contribution	\$0.2
City of Calgary Housing Incentive Program (HIP)	\$0.1
Silvera Equity	\$4.3
TOTAL	\$20.1

In 2020, as part of the building conversion, Silvera submitted a Change of Use Development Permit application to the City to allow for an Assisted Living use in Vista. The Change of Use Development Permit number is DP2020-7178. In 2021, the DP was approved by the City. Within the Advisory Comments of the Conditions of Approval was a comment stating that City Administration “will require the developer (*Silvera*) to construct a new sidewalk connection along 26th Street NE...any time up to the end of 2023 or when there is a subsequent new development permit application proposing an expansion to the Assisted Living facility.” The full condition is below. The purpose of the sidewalk connection is to make it easier for Vista residents to walk to the existing bus stop #57 on 37th Ave NE. The City initially indicated that this cost could likely be funded through a neighbourhood improvement grant for which Silvera could apply.

19. Based on the meeting between Silvera For Seniors and Community Planning North Team management that occurred on January 20, 2021, Silvera For Seniors accepts the findings of the final TIA (prepared by Watt, 24 November 2020) and understand that Administration will require the developer construct a new sidewalk connection along 26 ST NE (between 37 and 39 AV NE) any time up to the end of the 2023 or when there is a subsequent new development permit application proposing an expansion to the Assisted Living facility.

In Spring 2023, the sidewalk was publicly tendered in order to allow Silvera to better understand what would be actual costs of construction. Two bids were received. After obtaining clarifications from the bidders, the bids came in at approx. \$400,000. These amounts did not include contingency or soft costs. With contingency and soft costs, the total would be approx. \$460,000-\$500,000. Silvera, given this substantial cost, inquired to the City of Calgary's Partnerships & Housing Solutions Group to see if there were any grant opportunities available through the City, such as the neighbourhood improvement grant indicated earlier, that Silvera could apply for to offset the high cost of the sidewalk. The City confirmed that there were no available grants.

Given the \$460,000-\$500,000 cost and no availability of grants, Capital Development decided not to award to one of the two bidders and either defer the sidewalk to a future phase or seek other funding alternatives as these expenses were not included in the original budget.

In Fall 2023 / Winter 2024, Capital Development re-tendered the sidewalk utilizing the exact same drawings as the initial tender. Four bids were received.

In reviewing these bids and addressing additional required work to move a signaling cabinet, as well as contingency and escalation, the total cost of the sidewalk would to approximately \$300,000.00 . Given the time since bids were received and the lack of available funding to award these contracts, it is likely that this would require retendering.

Alternatively, Silvera explored the possibility of changing the existing bus route that runs on the 39th Ave NE to extend west bound on 39th NE to Barlow Trail and then head south to 37th Ave as opposed to connecting to 37th on 32nd Street NE as it currently does. Calgary Transit was not receptive to exploring this possibility. A March 31st, 2023, report by Manager of Transit Service Desing Chris Jordan made the following conclusion:

“Alternative Route Summary:

The Silvera Lakeview site meets current Council approved walk distance standards. The deficiencies that exist can be addressed through improving a single pedestrian crossing and adding a sidewalk on 26 St NE.

Both realignment scenarios provide a moderate walk distance improvement for the Silvera site. However, both come with significant trade-offs either for operations (Partial Realignment *Scenario*) or broader community service coverage and customer access

(Full Realignment *Scenario*). Thus it was recommended that efforts focus instead on addressing the walk distance deficiencies from the site rather than realign bus service.”

FORMAL REQUEST:

Given the subsidized nature of Vista Apartments, the vast majority of tenants residing in the building rely on public transit to get around the city. At the moment, the closest existing bus stop to the property is the west-bound stop #57 located at the intersection of 37th Avenue NE and 26th Street NE. Currently, there are no existing sidewalks that safely and accessibly connect Vista Apartments to Bus Stop #57. The closest and direct route of connecting Vista Apartments to Bus Stop #57 would be constructing a sidewalk along the western edge of 26th Street NE.

Given the subsidized nature of Vista Apartments and the initial RHI funding that brought Vista Apartments to fruition, Silvera is not in a position to pay for construction of the sidewalk. Furthermore, the structure of the RHI funding model is not conducive for properties to create a surplus large enough to pay for major off-site capital projects. The sidewalk and improved transit access would also provide better connectivity to students and staff of the Islamic School and Islamic Centre, as well as businesses in the area. Please see Attachment A on the back page showing details of the sidewalk.

Silvera is formally requesting a grant, collection of grants, or some form of forgivable funding in the amount of \$300,000.00 to pay for constructing the 26th Street NE sidewalk.

Construction of the 26th Street NE sidewalk would not only benefit the tenants of Vista Apartments, but also the nearby Akram Jomaa Islamic Centre, the Calgary Islamic School, and the surrounding Horizon community. Silvera has already been in contact with both the Islamic Centre and Islamic School and notified them of Silvera’s need for the sidewalk.

Attachment A: Details of Sidewalk (included in tender packages)

