

Jenny Farkas/Edward Farkas
Citizen Developer Rezoning Proposal
Carriage House Development at 1029 Queens

July 25, 2019

Dear Mayor and Council

The purpose of this rezoning application is to permit the construction of a second duplex (Carriage House) on the property at 1029 Queens Ave, to increase the number of perpetual below-market rental units from two to four. The duplexed Carriage House would be situated on the existing ample gravel driveway, so as to preserve the south-facing backyard greenspace for use by tenants and to preserve several existing mature trees. The Carriage House mimics many of the simple design features of houses built in the early 1900s, including similar roof slopes, similar window scaling/proportions, similar combination of lap and shingle siding and similar trim details.

Proponents

Jenny Farkas has lived with her family next door at 1033 Queens for 15 years, and has developed her property in the spirit of what is now commonly referred to as “gentle” density. Her father, Ed Farkas, purchased the duplex at 1029 Queens in 2015, and spent close to \$100,000 on structural and earthquake-resistant upgrades to make the house safer and more resilient. Jenny manages the house, which contains two units – one 2-bedroom and one 3-bedroom that operate as perpetual below-market rental housing.

We call ourselves “citizen developers” because we feel we have an understanding of and appreciation for the existing social and built fabric of the Queens Avenue neighbourhood. And, because we don’t have the burden of integrating the land value into the cost of development, we are able to construct a reasonable and modest building that can add to the much needed below-market rental housing supply.

Background of Queens Avenue

Queens Avenue was one of the very first subdivisions built by the Hudson’s Bay Company in the late 1800s. Development over the years has left the street largely intact, with older, well-maintained homes lining both sides of the street as well as around the block to Princess Avenue. The only exception is the apartment building next door to 1029 Queens, that replaced a general store (formerly 1027 Queens) and several residential houses. See IMAGE ONE.



IMAGE ONE: Former general store at 1027 Queens (grocery store with apartments above). The location of this general store is now the driveway for the apartment building at 1017 Queens. The main house at 1029 Queens is visible on the far left of the image.

Proposed development

We want to help with the City's affordable housing crisis by building two 1-bedroom below-market rental units. To achieve this, we are proposing a second structure on the property - a small, two-storey 'carriage house' – built on the ample driveway so as to preserve the south-facing back yard. No tenants will be displaced by the construction of this second structure; the existing tenants who occupy the duplex will not be disturbed by this project, and are fully behind increasing the availability of below-market housing.

This development will not change the look and feel that has been established on Queens Avenue, and – in fact - will fill a gap that was created when the general store was demolished. See IMAGE TWO.

Presently, a row of tall Cypress trees presents a pleasant green visual barrier on the western-property line of 1029 Queens (ie. between 1029 Queens and the apartment building at 1017 Queens). A professional arborist has determined that there is a high likelihood these trees will succumb to disease in a few years. This development will replace the trees with similar greenery the arborist has indicated is suitable for that location (see IMAGE FIVE, and Landscape Plan section, below). The apartment at 1017 Queens benefits from this greenery as there is no other greenery on their eastern and southern boundaries (only an asphalt driveway and parking lot). The Carriage House will be obscured by the western-edge greenery and retaining wall/cedar fence, and will not

significantly change the view from the eastern-facing windows of the apartment building – see again IMAGE TWO.

The design of the carriage house is sensitive, and sympathetic to elements of the existing duplex (roof slope and cladding), and some of the trim details from the general store (IMAGE ONE). The siting of the carriage house fills a “missing tooth” as a result of the general store being replaced by a driveway. The resulting starkness of the area between the apartment building and the existing duplex is softened by the positioning of the carriage house.

This proposal will also facilitate much needed upgrades to the stormwater management system and the 100-year old sewer and water lines. An upgrade to the electrical service will also be required. The Carriage House will contain a sprinkler system to address spacial separation issues and allow lots of natural light and passive solar energy into its two units. Interconnected smoke alarms and CO2 detectors will enhance tenant safety. The gravel driveway will be upgraded to a permeable surface. A new driveway apron will bring the pedestrian realm up to standard.



IMAGE TWO: Proposed carriage house will fill significant visual gap between 1029 and 1017 Queens.

Relationship with next door apartment building

The small windows on the eastern-side of the apartment building at 1017 Queens look out onto the apartment building driveway, retaining wall and fence, and between a gap in the 1029 Queen’s trees – see IMAGES TWO, THREE and FOUR. Replacement greenery will be strategically placed to obscure the views between the west-facing Carriage House windows and the east-facing apartment building windows. See IMAGE FIVE, and Landscape Plan section, below.



IMAGE THREE: View of apartment's east-facing windows from driveway at 1029 Queens. The centre column of windows is the apartment stairwell. The small windows on each side of the stairwell are probably bedrooms (the curtains are rarely open).



IMAGE FOUR: View from north-east corner of 1017 Queens. This driveway replaced the general store shown above.

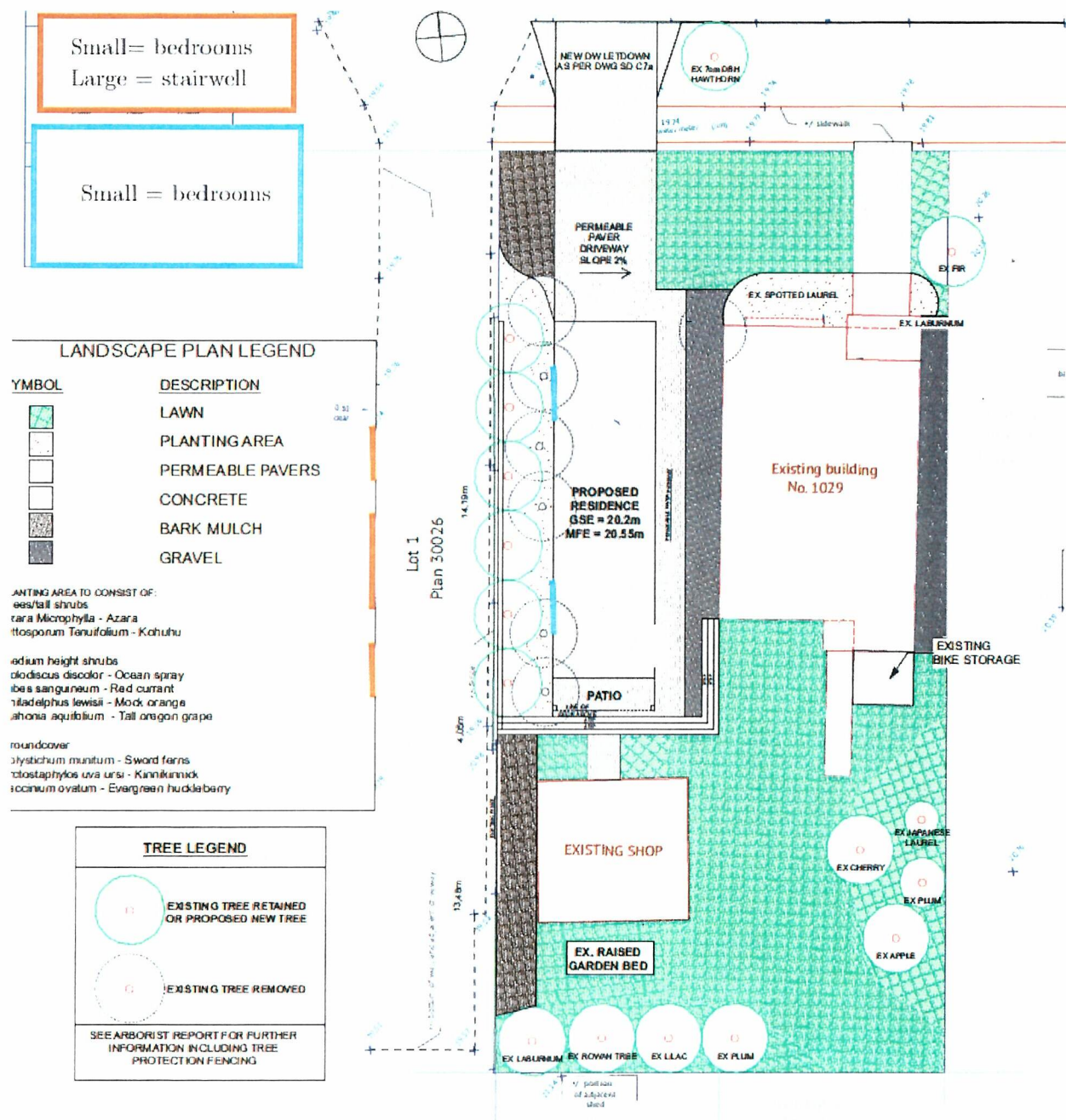


IMAGE 5 - WINDOW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APARTMENT BUILDING AND CARRIAGE HOUSE

Planning context

The City does not have any zoning provisions that allow a second residential structure to be built on a duplex property. For this reason, we are asking for a site-specific zone.

Currently the property at 1029 Queens is zoned R-2 (**two family residential**), and our Carriage House proposal complies with every requirement of this zoning (e.g. setback, site coverage, floor space

ratio), except for parking. If the property at 1029 Queens was 5.75 feet wider, we could apply to subdivide the lot, and we could build a two-storey dwelling under the **R1-S2 zone (Restricted Small Lot)**. Our Carriage House proposal complies with every requirement of this R1-S2 zoning (e.g. setback, site coverage, floor space ratio), except for parking.

We did not pursue a Garden Suite on this property for two reasons: (1) we would have to build it on the south-facing backyard greenspace, eliminating tenant access to this valuable asset for socializing and growing food, and (2) we would be restricted to a single unit, whereas our Carriage house will add two much-needed smaller units to the non-market housing stock. We did not wish to pursue an addition to the rear of main house for the first reason, cited above. Furthermore, an addition onto the main house would potentially compromise its heritage value.

We will provide one vehicle parking stall. This vehicle parking stall and location of stall complies with the City's new Schedule C (Off-street Parking Requirements) – specifically the “affordable dwelling units secured in perpetuity through a legal agreement” provisions. We will attach a Modo membership (and \$100 in usage credits) to each unit, to offer an affordable alternative to vehicle ownership for tenants. And we will sign an affordable housing agreement for all four units on the property (with the proviso that one unit can be owner-occupied). We already provide weather protected, secure bicycle parking for tenant and visitor (short-term) bicycles in the backyard.

The existing storage building on the property will be retained for storage. The tenants already make use of it to store belongings and to undertake projects.

Heritage status

The existing house at 1029 Queens is not designated heritage, nor is it on the heritage register. Anecdotally, the house is the second oldest duplex in the City (the first is in Esquimalt). The duplex at 1029 Queens will remain in its current state as part of this redevelopment proposal – keeping the block and streetscape of similar-era houses intact. As part of this project, we will add the main house to the heritage register.

Landscape plan

The six Lawson Cypress trees and one chestnut tree on the western boundary of the property will be removed during construction, and replaced with the following plantings. (For reference, see Talbot, McKenzie & Associates' letter, and landscape plan in submitted drawings.)

- For privacy between the 1029 Queens Carriage House and the 1017 Queens Apartment Building, we will plant tall Azara and Kohuhu shrubs.
- For aesthetics for the occupants of 1029 Queens Carriage House, we will plant water-resilient native plants such as red currant, mock orange, tall Oregon grape and sword ferns.

The fir tree at the north-west corner of the main house will be removed, as its large trunk is growing into (and breaking) the foundation of the house. This will be replaced with a tall Oregon grape bush as well as some low-level, water-resilient native plants.

Green building /resilience components

The proposal includes the following green building features:

- Retention of the existing duplex on site (versus tearing it down to build a new 4-unit structure).
- Retention of south-facing backyard for use by the tenants, including the fruit and other trees and vegetable garden space.
- Provision of greenery on the western boundary of the property which offers visual screening and beauty to the apartment dwellers at 1017 Queens, as well as the tenants at 1029 Queens.
- A small-footprint carriage house, that aligns north-south, is easy to heat and integrates passive solar.
- Provision of bike storage (covered, at back of house) and recycling storage facilities (existing storage building).
- Use of permeable pavers and other permeable materials in the driveway and surrounding the main house and carriage house.
- Use of dual flush toilets, and low flow faucets and showerheads.
- High-performance, energy-efficient heating system using recommended available technologies and incentives
- Use of low VOC materials in construction
- Fire suppression sprinkler system
- Community emergency muster, medical, food and storage kits
- Rainwater diversion and catchment system (green stormwater infrastructure)
- CEPTED designed common areas, access and egress to ensure safe spaces

Respectfully submitted,
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