

By email to: Michael Angrove,
City of Victoria mangrove@victoria.ca

14 December 2020

Dear Michael Angrove:

Re: Hillside-Quadra CALUC Community Meeting for 3150-3152 Somerset Street

Community Meeting Details

Date: 14 November 2020

Location of meeting: 950 Kings Road Gymnasium

Meeting facilitators: Hillside Quadra Neighbourhood Action Committee (NAC): 3 members

Attendance: 15: 2 in notification distance, 11 outside notification area, emailed questions; 2 proponents

Meeting Chair: Jon Munn

Note takers: John Hall; Barbara Clausen

Proposed Development Details

The proponents— Russ Collins and Dave Yamamoto of Zebra Design presented the proposal and answered questions.

Currently there is one duplex (two family dwelling unit) on the subject property. The plan is to rezone the lot in order to replace one duplex with two duplexes. The proponents presented several sets of plans to show a plan (lot) view, elevations and three-bedroom interiors. The buildings are designed to meet construction standard Step 4 of the BC Building Code.

Discussion

Issues

A number of issues were discussed.

Garry Oak Trees/ Open Space Retention

Two neighbours of the proposal who indicated they represented several nearby residents, spoke about the value of the two large Garry oak trees (perhaps hundreds of years old) on the subject property. These neighbours are in favour of retaining the trees.

Another attendee spoke about the nature of Gary oaks and that disease-like symptoms may come and go. They expressed a desire that the trees are not wrongly assessed and that both trees remain. They are wildlife trees, significant to species such as owls. The previous structure was built between the trees, so any new development should also retain these trees The City of Victoria should ensure the trees are protected.

The proponents replied that an arborist has been retained, and a final report can be provided to residents and the NAC. They also noted that one tree might be saved if a smaller footprint building was built – say a single family not duplex. Attendee wanted it noted that if two single family houses were done instead of a duplex then both trees might be saved.

Another attendee asked how much of a front yard requirement variance would be needed to move the footprint of the building forward on the lot so as to move it farther away from the Gary oak tree. The presenter said a variance in this regard could be about 5 to 7 feet and they are waiting for hear from the arborist for further details.

A further issue was raised regarding the open space design. Why is non-permeable paving only used around the back near the trees. The proponent expressed a willingness to do permeable paving elsewhere.

[A letter dated November 27, 2020 was subsequently provided by Zebra Design which indicated the results of an arborist report. The letter stated:

The preliminary consulting arborist review from July 2020 showed that there was significant decay present in the lower trunk and root collar of the Garry Oak tree located in the middle of the subject properties (#591) and that in their opinion, the tree was unsuitable to retain on a residential property such as this. This tree was recommended to be removed due to the proximity to existing nearby and proposed homes.

However, we are happy to relay that tree #592 in the northwestern corner of the lot is in much better condition and has been found to be in a good location in relation to the proposed siting of the proposed new buildings. Exploration of the root system has now been done and the arborist is confident that with protection measures in place, this beautiful tree can be preserved.

The professional arborist will be retained to take the required steps to protect the tree prior to construction, and also to supervise excavation for the buildings or landscaping work within the critical root zone of the bylaw-protected and municipal trees, as well as to undertake any other reviews and consultation required.]

Design – Building Form and Character

A question was raised regarding front yard parking. What was the reason not to have some of the garages to the rear of the houses, as per the neighbourhood norm, instead of garages in the front of the houses facing the street? Zebra Design indicated that having the garage on the first floor allows for additional second floor space. They already chose not to have a basement because of the blasting required – there will be some basting as it is – this design will allow for more greenspace in the rear yard.

An attendee asked about the details of the fence. Presenter indicated it would be a Cedar 6 feet high wood fence dropping down to 4 feet near the front.

Conclusion

The discussion regarding the proposal for 3150-3152 Somerset Street centred on retention of Garry oak trees. Additional questions were raised about the site design and the duplexes' fit within the neighbourhood.

Jon Munn
CALUC Co-Chair
Hillside Quadra Neighbourhood Action Committee

cc. Hillside Quadra NAC, Zebra Design