



FERNWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

January 20, 2021

Attention: developmentsservices@victoria.ca

Regarding: 1326 Pandora Avenue Rezoning Pre-Application: Community Feedback

Dear Mayor and Council;

As you know, Curate/September have submitted their rezoning pre-application for the property at 1326 Pandora Avenue, where they propose to build four row homes, requiring a rezoning from R-2 to R-T. The pre-application consultation process unfortunately ran across the holiday season from December 10, 2020 to January 11, 2021, and this may have resulted in low uptake among those within 100 metres of the property who were invited by mail to participate; the use of an online forum as a covid-19-safe alternative to community meetings may also be resulting in less engagement overall at this stage in the development application.

For whatever reason, only one comment form was received before the pre-application consultation was closed and the pre-application listing on the City of Victoria's development tracker application was archived. The comment received is retained verbatim below.

Fortunately, it is the policy of the Fernwood Community Association Land Use Committee to request that developers hold the 'informal' stage of the pre-application consultation at a monthly meeting so that local residents have an opportunity to provide feedback at the earliest stage possible. Curate/September attended the Land Use Committee meeting on November 5, 2020, and we are pleased to be able to forward the feedback gathered at that meeting along with the comments collected by the City's pre-application consultation process.

A description of the feedback received is appended to this letter. These comments are offered in the spirit of encouraging the developer to be a good neighbour and to proceed with thoughtful consideration as to how their proposed project will fit into the existing neighbourhood, as well as how it may affect those living in proximity.

Should you wish to discuss these comments further, please contact Kristin or Alieda at fernwoodlanduse@gmail.com.

Yours sincerely,
Kristin Atwood and Alieda Blandford, Co-Chairs
Fernwood Community Association Land Use Committee

/send to caluc@victoria.ca



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Comments on the Proposed Development at 1326 Pandora Avenue:

1. Affordability

The neighbours understand that as a small development, this project is exempt from contributing to Victoria's affordable housing fund. However, some neighbours pointed out that the proposed price point means that this much-needed family housing will actually be out of the range for a family of average income in Victoria. Community members expressed the wish that the developer will find even some small way to contribute to the affordability housing fund, to acknowledge this urgent issue in our community.

2. Tree Loss

Neighbours expressed disappointment that the robust mature trees on the lot will be removed. The development plans indicate that in total five trees will be removed, including three protected trees, and that they will not be able to replace the removed trees at the required rate. The arborist assessment submitted by the developer indicates that two of these trees are suitable for retention, and we would like the developer to reconsider retaining these trees.

3. Sight Lines and Sun Exposure

This development amounts to a 3-storey building beside two smaller houses which have had an empty space beside them for a long time. Therefore, the LUC recommended that the developer make available information on sight lines for the adjacent properties (including neighbours to both sides and the adjacent property that backs on from Balmoral Avenue) as well as sun exposure. Concerns about sun exposure can be read in the pre-application comment as well, with the neighbour identifying the impact on their backyard garden as a potential issue. The LUC wishes to emphasize this concern as we are dedicated to supporting food security, including enabling residents to grow their own food as much as they desire.

Unfortunately, the developer did not take our recommendation and provide information on sight lines and sun exposure aimed at a lay audience, so neighbours were denied the opportunity to understand the impact on light and view. We would like the developer to complete this work before moving further in the application process and would like the City to ensure that immediate neighbours be given another opportunity to comment once this is provided.

4. "Look and Feel" and Fit

Neighbours indicated that they did not like the metal siding proposed for the buildings as it seems very industrial and not in keeping with the look and feel of other buildings in that area. We urge the developer to consider an alternative with a more natural and neutral appearance.

Relatedly, neighbours felt that the building seemed closed off from the street. While we understand the need to create private spaces and insulate the units from the busy traffic on Pandora, we hope the developer will give some attention to how the building interacts with the sidewalk and street. In addition to being a traffic connector, Pandora is used by many pedestrians and cyclists. A more open design that integrates with the street may be more appealing as well as adding 'eyes to the street' to address safety concerns.



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Verbatim comment submitted via the City of Victoria Development Tracker online Form:

Other (please specify) - I support a development for housing but I don't support the look or price point of the units.

I feel like 4 homes could work on that spot. Although the price point is very expensive per unit. I like modern design...west coast modern. More wood inter-mixed with other substances...like concrete or brick. This plan looks more like an office building. Why hide everyone in a 'bubble' or 'jail cell'. It just doesn't look like a warm and inviting structure as per the brochure. It would be better for the builder to consider the rest of the street and neighbourhood and try to fit in. Modern is good but this is over the top. You have backyard neighbours to consider as well. This structure would be an eye-sore, I'm sorry to say. We will have to grow our hedges quite high to block this and it will also be blocking our backyard light so our urban garden may suffer for the shade.