

By email to: councillors@victoria.ca

20 February 2017

To: Mayor and Council

Re: 1265 Vista Heights

With respect to the proposed development variance permit for the property above, which the proponents brought to our attention on 23 January 2017, we would like to offer the following observations.

At monthly NAC meetings and at community meetings related to other proposed developments, the residents of Hillside-Quadra have expressed time and again their love for the family-friendly and community look and feel of the neighborhood.

A reduced front yard setback has the potential to add to or subtract from the sense of community, depending on design. We would argue that when buildings connect to the street, and provide opportunities for social interaction between those on the sidewalk and those in the building, design adds to the sense of community. Under such circumstances, a reduced setback can be an asset.

It is not clear that the reduced setback proposed for 1265 Vista Heights would help to connect the building more closely to the street. The retaining wall and planter would appear to screen the front entrance from the street, creating additional privacy for the residents. They also appear to enclose a private landscaped garden. The portion of the building closest to the street consists of three garage style doors, which act as a barrier between the residence and the street, despite the closer proximity.

In addition, the retaining wall, planter, and driveway appear to encroach upon public space. With the reduced front setback and the three garage doors, the proposed driveway would be shorter and wider than usual, eliminating at least one existing on-street parking spaces. This represents a private enclosure of a public amenity.

The Hillside Quadra Neighbourhood Action Committee (NAC) does not typically take a position for or against a proposed development, rezoning, or variance, but strives to represent the perspectives of the members of the community who engage with NAC. The NAC Executive neither opposes nor endorses this specific variance.

We bring forward these observations with the recommendation that – rather than proceed on a property by property basis – the City more clearly identify conditions

under which it will and will not approved reduced front yard setbacks in residential neighbourhoods.

Sincerely,

Jenny Fraser
CALUC Chair, Hillside Quadra NAC
On behalf of the NAC Executive

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