

THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the West Vancouver Design Review Committee meeting held at
4:30 p.m. on September 10, 2009 in the Municipal Hall Council Chamber,
West Vancouver, and B.C.**

Members Present:

Voting Members: Erik Lees (Chair); Jennifer Marshall (Vice-Chair); Alexandra Bennett;
Tom Bunting (until 6:30 p.m.); Stuart Hood (until 6:20 p.m.);
Donal O'Callaghan; Karl Ray; Duane Siegrist.
Non-Voting Members: Councillor Shannon Walker (until 6:40 p.m.).

Members Absent: Michael Richardson.

Staff Present:

Staff Liaison, Colette Parsons, Senior Planner – Urban Design; Stephen Mikicich,
Senior Community Planner; Recording Secretary, Mandy Emery, Permits and
Inspections.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m.

2. CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

Colette Parsons advised there will be 2 staff updates added under Reports: Item
5.2 Wetmore Motors Site and 5.3 Old Horseshoe Bay Fire Hall Site.

It was Moved and Seconded:

THAT the agenda for the September 10, 2009 Meeting be confirmed as
amended.

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF JULY 16, 2009 MINUTES

It was Moved and Seconded:

THAT the minutes of the Design Review Committee held July 16, 2009 be
adopted.

CARRIED

4. APPLICATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

4.1 DP 08-04 – 2031, 2047, 2063 ESQUIMALT AVENUE. REZONING THREE SINGLE FAMILY LOTS TO A DUPLEX AND COACH HOUSE ON EACH LOT.

Background:

Stephen Mikicich provided a brief introduction for a proposal to develop three individual single-family lots, each with a duplex fronting Esquimalt Avenue and a coach house/3-car garage in the rear, with vehicle access from the lane. The proposed infill development requires an OCP Amendment, Rezoning, and a Development Permit. The site provides a unique opportunity and conditions for alternative zoning. If approved, this concept has the potential for replication elsewhere.

Project Presentation:

Architect Mehrdad Rahbar presented PowerPoint images, elevation drawings and model. He spoke about the history of the site and consultations with staff, neighbours and community. He feels that the application achieves a balance in proposal and design. He went over the site context and provided a site plan of the block showing the existing houses with the proposed units configured on the three lots. Eleven of the fourteen neighbouring properties have indicated that they are supportive of the concept and want to participate in a possible whole-block OCP amendment. He went on to a plan drawing illustrating what the block might look like if neighbouring properties added coach houses or secondary units.

In relation to the 3-lot application, the architect presented the duplex and coach house conceptual designs:

- Floor plans are flexible and open
- Dwellings will conform to the maximum building height under current single-family zoning.
- First two duplex structures are identical; third one has change in floor plan and elevation.
- Architectural expression is traditional with pitched roofs and wall shingles, and includes flat roof entry canopies, and aluminium and glass balconies railings.
- Coach houses are as small as possible with 1250 sq.ft. on 2 levels. Façade and elevation treatment tied into duplexes but changed cladding material to horizontal siding.
- Treatment at lane and street is conceptual due to on-going discussions with the District.
- Landscape concept includes semi private spaces for each unit with patios and small gardens for people to plant their own flowers.
- Sustainability features include bioswales, use of native plants and reduced automobile reliance with only one parking space per dwelling.

Committee Questions:

Committee reviewed the drawings and model and then questioned the presenter on the project, including: Retention of existing landscape, intent of communal space, duplex facades on Esquimalt, walkways through site, parking ratio, concept of “country lane”, storage in units, parking on Esquimalt, sustainability incentives, bioswale on Esquimalt, coach house decks, and setbacks.

Committee Comments:

The Committee provided comments on the proposal including the following:

Overall:

- While the project is not ground-breaking, it would be precedent-setting.
- Overall concept is good; good location for this type of development and glad the District is entertaining this.
- Site could take more density, but like approach here.
- There is an opportunity for greater density on the site due to its location. Row houses or townhouses would be ideal with some other form at the rear. A higher density could fit in with the streetscape and character of neighbourhood.
- Staff needs to reconsider the front yard setback and think about ‘engaging’ the street. If going to be multi-family or higher density let it show (rather than masking as single-family appearance).
- The presentation material was very thorough, and the applicant was commended on the graphics and presentation. In order to assess the project’s ‘fit’ with adjacent properties; the Committee noted that contextual information showing the neighbouring properties and adjacent land uses would be needed in order to provide more informed comments.

Duplexes:

- While one member was concerned with the three duplicate facades on Esquimalt Avenue – i.e., as the repetition becomes a weakness and looks like a ‘cookie cutter’ approach, another member felt that duplicating character is fine when done well.
- The unit plans needs more work to achieve both liveability and marketability.

Coach houses:

- The scale of the coach houses should be smaller or subordinate to that of the duplexes. From a market perspective, the coach house units should be a different (smaller) size so as not to compete with the duplex units. Consider a ‘one bedroom with den’ plan or open studio space living arrangement in the coach house units.

- Massing has not been resolved well and needs to be scaled down so that the coach houses do not loom over the lane or adjacent backyards.
- There is a missed opportunity here to create private outdoor space on the second level.
- The number of garages creates a wall at the lane. Consider open carports or gravel parking areas to break up the continuous building frontage.
- The outdoor patio space that is enclosed on three sides will very likely be closed in when sold. The developer must assume that this will be the case and address it. Staff clarified that these areas would be included in FAR calculations.
- Would have liked to see sections of what happens if similar form of development is envisioned across the lane.

Landscape:

- Landscaping in general seems ambiguous, compressed and lacking a strong concept.
- The outdoor spaces need to be clearly defined between what is private and what is shared. Front yard can allow more flexibility i.e. common lawn or less programmed.
- The landscaped open space is where this project falls flat, particularly the pathways. Encourage fewer crossings and have the crossings function as the meeting places. The project is losing the opportunity to create great open spaces by including too many pathways.
- Not sure of patio materials or how porches are constructed. We would like to see more detail on the landscape plan.
- The “country lane” concept does not work here as it is moving to an urban environment. Consider the lane as a “community space”. If the overall layout can free up a bit more room at the back, a far more interesting, engaging and useable space can be created. Planting areas should be provided so the lane character is not just a wall of garage doors. The applicant should work with staff to make the laneways as multi purpose as possible, including treatments that are not necessarily urban.
- In such a small area, the social patios will not function. People want their own private spaces; shared space is good but should not be forced.
- Existing large tree and hedges (along Esquimalt) add character to the site and benefit the neighbourhood. Consider opportunities to retain some vegetation.
- Most of the landscape is ornamental, not native – we must be careful in how we characterize it.
- The landscape could include more ‘edible’ plants.

- Bioswales can actually be architectural with concrete bowls that capture water and come to life when it rains, maybe a more urban architectural approach would help to set off the streetscape.
- The project would have benefited from a presentation by the landscape architect.

Siting:

- Overall massing of the project can work on lane and street, but space in between is too meagre.
- There is support for reducing the front yard setback in this context. Greater space in the courtyard will give opportunity to create meaningful landscape buffers and private outdoor space for occupants.

Sustainability:

- There should be a requirement for a higher standard of sustainability when you increase density. Consider using standards like the Green Housing Guidelines. Require provisions for pre-ducting for future solar panels and utilize thicker insulation. Consider climate change and energy efficiency for the project.
- There is an element of 'green washing' to what is being proposed. The sustainability components should be a future saving for the homeowner.
- There can be an element to accommodate rainwater etc. but relying on the landscape for sustainability is not going to cut it. Use rainwater harvesting.

Materials:

- Quality of finishes is not extraordinary; this is a precedent-setter and the finishes need to be done right.
- Hardi panel feels like a more commercial material than residential.

Resolution:

It was Moved and Seconded:

THAT Design Review Committee has reviewed the OCP amendment and rezoning application for three single-family lots to permit duplexes and coach houses at 2031, 2047, 2063 Esquimalt Avenue, and supports the overall infill concept at this location, and is happy to see this initiative moving forward.

The Committee also recognizes that, in general, this type of site could achieve higher density.

The recommendations specifically related to the application include a RESUBMISSION of the project that addresses the following concerns:

1. consider reducing or varying the front yard setback to allow for more meaningful and liveable outdoor spaces;
2. consider variations in style, character or colour for the Esquimalt Street façades;
3. scale and massing of the coach houses is too similar to the front (duplex) units; consider reduced scale and massing, perhaps with one bedroom units or an open living plan;
4. a higher standard of sustainability should be required for developments where density increase is proposed; in particular, consider stronger energy efficient measures;
5. consider the relationship of the scale and massing of the coach houses to the properties across the lane;
6. the landscape lacks cohesion, clarity of vision and concept, needs clearly defined outdoor spaces and reconsider the number and layout of pathways;
7. consider landscaping adjacent to the lane;
8. develop a 'community lane' concept in collaboration with the District of West Vancouver;
9. In order to evaluate 'fit', future submissions should include contextual cross sections through the adjacent properties, lane and streets.

CARRIED

5. REPORTS/REFERRALS.

5.1 STAFF REPORT HOUSING PILOT PROGRAM.

Colette Parsons distributed a report on the Housing Pilot Program.

Stephen Mikicich advised that from the work on the Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing came a lot of community interest in secondary housing types. One of the recommendations to council was the legalization of secondary suites, which staff is working on.

There was also interest in alternative housing types and with that the notion of a pilot program to test out alternate housing. The staff report lays out a draft pilot project program. Staff is working with the Housing Pilot Program Working Group to clarify the intent of the program and establish the selection criteria for pilot projects. The intent is to issue a call for expressions of interest in October, develop a short list of submissions, and invite short-listed candidates to submit detailed proposals. It is anticipated that 2-3 pilot projects will be undertaken in 2010.

Staff envisions the Design Review Committee having a role in the pilot project program. Once projects are selected, the Committee will have the opportunity to help frame the process and the considerations for review. Pilot projects will require a development application (OCP amendment,

rezoning, and development permit), and the projects will come back to the DRC for a formal design review.

The Committee questioned staff on the pilot project and supported the direction.

5.2 WETMORE MOTORS SITE

Colette Parsons provided an update on the Wetmore Motors Site. From the 3 proposals that were reviewed by the Design Review Committee, Council has selected the Pacific Arbour Scheme. The site requires rezoning. The project will be going through the rezoning process including public meetings. She anticipates the project coming back to the Committee in 2010.

5.3 OLD HORSESHOE BAY FIRE HALL SITE

The fire hall was rebuilt on a new site and opened in 2005. After community consultation Council decided to sell the property as 3 single family lots. The site rezoned from Public Use to a Comprehensive Development Zone and as a condition of sale added that the Green Building requirement have to be met and design guidelines set our parameters and expectations in terms of form and character. The single family dwellings will be coming to the Committee for review.

Colette distributed the Green Building Requirements and the Design Guidelines to the Committee for information and asked the Committee to e-mail back any comments.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Design Review Committee is scheduled for Thursday, October 15, 2009.

7. ADJOURNMENT.

It was Moved and Seconded:

THAT the Design Review Committee meeting be adjourned. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

CARRIED



Erik Lees, CHAIR



Colette Parsons, STAFF LIAISON

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