

MINUTES
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL MEETING
Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
February 3, 2021, at 3:00 pm

Chair: Keith Davidoff

Present: Illarion Gallant, Greg Gillespie, Colin Harper, Jacy Lee, Megan Walker

Regrets: Erica Sangster; Nicholas Standeven

Staff: Chuck Bell, Current Planning; and Tara Da Silva, Senior Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:00. p.m.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by I. Gallant and Seconded by G. Gillespie: “That the Minutes of the Advisory Design Panel meeting held on January 6, 2021, be adopted.”

CARRIED

630 Gorge Road West

Application by 630 Gorge Road Developments Ltd (Abstract Developments Ltd.). Development permit and rezoning application to rezone from the RA-1 (Apartment) Zone to a site-specific zone to construct a 26-unit, five building townhouse project.

Legal Description: Lot 12, Section 20, Victoria District, Plan 801, Except those parts in Plan 86 BL, 36RW, and 22086

Planning File: DPR00787; REZ00659

Planner: Chuck Bell, Planner

Comments from the Planner:

- This application is to rezone two parcels from the RA-1 (Apartment) Zone; a site-specific zone has been requested, the Planning staff have determined that it can be accommodated under the RT-5 (Attached Housing) Zone with variances.
- The proposed land use is supportable. The site is located in what the Official Community Plan (OCP) would consider a neighbourhood, which supports single-family dwellings, duplexes, townhouses, low-rise residential, and mixed-use.
- Under the RT-5 Zone, variances would be requested for the following:
- As a side note, under most attached housing zones, it requires building separation, and that is not to be confused with the typical spatial separation in the building code for fire safety. This is for livability.
- Each of these blocks has variances for building separation.
 - The separation between living room windows, worst-case scenario between block A and B, a 15-metre distance is required; a 6.7-metre distance is proposed.

- The separation between other habitable windows, worst-case scenario between block A and B, a 12-metre distance is required; a 6.4-metre distance is proposed.
- Setback to a street, 7.5 metres is required; 3.71 metres is proposed.
- Interior side yard setback in the east side, 7.5 metres is required; 2.71 metres is proposed.
- Interior side yard setback on the west side, 7.5 metres is required; 2.92 metres is proposed.
- Height variance, worst-case is building D, 7.5 metres is the maximum; 9.95 metres is being proposed.
- Parking variances are requested. Fifty-two spaces are required; 39 are proposed. Eight visitor spaces are required; five visitor spaces are proposed. One accessible parking space required; no accessibility parking is proposed.

Comments from applicant /owner:

B. Smith, Manager of Development, Abstract Developments; Eddie Williams, Architect, Steller Architectural Consulting, Bianca Bodley, Landscape Architect, Biophilia Design Collective; presented to the Panel:

- This site is on a road with many transportation opportunities and is a 20-minute walk from the Tillicum Major Centre.
- The property was acquired in 2017. The building was built in 1963 and has reached the end of its life.
- The current zone is RA-1 (Apartment), up to four storeys.
- The Tillicum Local Area Plan allows for multi-family residential, mixed housing types that reflect the neighbourhood's character.
- This proposal contains blocks of townhouses running north on the property: 5 in the first four blocks and six in the last block.
- Vehicle access is off of Gorge Road. Parking consists of 1 and 2 car garages, 39 parking stalls for a parking ratio of 1:1.5. On-site bicycle parking and EV charging are available.
- The design is seaside Nantucket inspired with neutral colours, suited to a traditional neighbourhood.
- The front entrances have walkways, patios and gates.
- Buildings are clad with light/medium grey cement, board shingles, board and batten siding, black vinyl windows and patio doors, black fibreglass shingle roofing and charcoal standing seam, metal canopy roofs over the doorways.
- Projected elements at the upper floors add character.
- Architectural detailing includes small square cupolas, wooden knee brackets, gable end dormers, patios and decks, wood fences and gates. The "X" pattern on the cupolas and railings is a subtle nod to a nautical feel with the proximity to the Gorge waterway.
- The rooflines and forms are designed to minimize the visual massing of the buildings. The shed roofs and dormers act together to nestle the upper floors into the main gabled roofing and give the upper floors a half-storey appearance.
- Step 3 of the BC energy code is achieved. Installation of EV charging stations in all townhouses will be provided.
- Interior spaces have an open floor plan with nine-foot ceilings.
- The landscape concept is that of a seaside home with the movement of grasses and an oceanfront setting.
- On block A, the fenced patios are surrounded by seaside meadow plantings. Block B, the front gardens have brownstone-like stoops; Blocks C and D have pedestrian mews, and there is a communal picnic area, covered arbours and front gardens. Block E features private back gardens, cedar decks, an evergreen hedge and is more family-focused.

- A four-foot-wide picket fence runs parallel with the drive aisle. The hardscape is predominately permeable paving with concrete borders to indicate the drive aisle and private driveways.
- A generously planted rain garden is planted in the front of the property.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Applicant stated:

- The end kitchen style with traditional access to the patio is the style that received the most positive feedback. This allows for the most usable space and circulation within the townhouse.
- The treatment for the end of each drive-aisle is very similar to the perimeter, fencing and landscaping.
- One of the biggest challenges is vehicle access between buildings A and B as there is a retaining wall. One side provides vehicle access, and the other provides pedestrian access.
- Due to the changing nature of the grade, the building has been recessed into the site. There is a retaining wall along the western property line.

Comments from the Panel:

- The proposal of larger family units with two and three bedrooms is welcome; this type of development helps supply missing middle housing.
- The colour palette is quite muted.
- Very little green space.
- The communal space is somewhat hidden and not in an ideal location.
- There is a lack of pedestrian access throughout the site.
- Appreciate the gestures towards communal connection spaces, such as the seating nooks.
- The streetscape experience works well, as does the use of pavers for texture and permeable quality.
- There will be large root mass lost on the western property line.
- The hedge is relatively low on the northern property line; a fence is needed there for privacy.
- There are too much massing and site coverage on this lot. It is vehicle oriented space dominating the ground claim.
- The density feels very heavy, dark and hard. The leftover space is doing little to create liveability.
- This type of layout loses the character and ground playing connection townhouses can have.
- The wall of garages is not appealing.
- This proposal does not fit in with the character of the neighbourhood.
- Concerns expressed about visitor parking as there is very little street parking.
- The sense of entry to some buildings is better than others; some are poor. Building E greets residents with garage doors and blank walls; the buildings are pretty close together. This site is packed.
- Very minimal contribution to the urban forest, consideration should be given to planting more trees.
- This type of architecture is well articulated and well designed.
- There are a lot of hard edges.

MOVED by C. Harper and Seconded by I. Gallant: “That it be recommended that the design to construct a 26 unit townhouse project at 630 Gorge Road be approved subject to consideration of:

1. A revised colour palette
2. Improved pedestrian experience and safety; and
3. An increase of sense of entry and landscaping at Building E.”

DEFEATED
With K. Davidoff, I. Gallant and M. Walker **OPPOSED**

MOVED by M. Walker and Seconded by I. Gallant: “That it be recommended that the design to construct a 26 unit townhouse project at 630 Gorge Road be postponed to a future meeting to allow for consideration of:

1. A revised colour palette
2. Improved pedestrian experience and safety; and
3. An increase of sense of entry and landscaping at Building E;
4. Re-evaluation of visitor parking; and
5. A reduction in density.

CARRIED

3579 and 3561 Quadra Street

Application by Tattersall Holdings Ltd. (Nicholas Standeven). Application to rezone from RS-6 (Single Family Dwelling) Zone to a site-specific zone to construct 11 townhouses and convert an existing heritage house to seven rental units.

Legal Description:

Planning File: DPR00791; REZ00664
Planner: Chuck Bell, Planner

Comments from the Planner:

The Planner provided an overview of the proposal as follows:

- The Planning Department determined the RM-6 Zone can accommodate both the proposed townhouses and the apartment use.
- This zone’s maximum FSR of 1.2 would accommodate the FSR 1.09 proposed.
- While Planning staff could support some level of residential development, Planning has informed the applicant that this application is not supported in its current form.
- This application has gone before the Saanich Heritage Foundation as the existing house is noted as a heritage house and was not supported by the Heritage Foundation as the proposal does not follow the character-defining elements defined in the Statement of Significance prepared by Edwards Heritage Consulting. As defined in that statement, the two key definitions were the building location on Quadra Street, building siting on the lot, setback from the road with landscaping in the front.
- For the RM-6 Zone, a plan check revealed the following variances would be required:
 - Lot coverage: a maximum of 35% is permitted; 45.9% is being proposed.
 - Setback abutting a street: 7.5 m is required; 2.56 m is being proposed.
 - Rear yard setback: 10.5 m is required; 1.865 m is being proposed.

- Interior side yard setback: 7.5 m is required; 1.635 m on the north and 1.73 on the south are being proposed.
- Building height: a maximum of 7.5 m is permitted for attached housing; buildings 1, 2 and 3 all exceed the maximum at 11.5 m, 11.39 m, and 11.47 m, respectively.
- Parking: 33 spaces are required; 24 are proposed.
- Visitor parking: Six of the 33 are required to be visitor parking; no visitor parking is proposed.
- Disabled parking: 1 parking space is required; none is proposed.

Comments from applicant / owner:

Nicholas Standeven, Senior Development Manager, Abstract Developments Ltd; Joseph Kardum, Principal Architect, koka architecture + design inc.; James Partlow, Principal Landscape Architect, Lombard North Group; presented to the committee and highlighted:

- Site is located is within walking distance of quite a few retail amenities and substantial park spaces.
- In the immediate vicinity is a mix of multi-family and single-family residential homes and commercial building typologies.
- The Official Community Plan (OCP) designates the site within the “Four Corners Village,” which supports land uses and building types of up to four-storey residential and mixed-use.
- The site is currently occupied by a single-family lot and a registered heritage home.
- Quadra Street is a major transit corridor, and Saanich has plans to improve this corridor as a commuter bike route dramatically.
- A range of different housing options have been considered; missing middle housing in the form of townhomes is the best fit. Missing middle housing is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types, compatible in scale with detached single-family dwellings that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living.
- Highfield is the existing 1911 Heritage home. This proposal looks to celebrate and preserve the registered building. Neighbours feel it is worth retaining.
- The proposal builds on and ensures the heritage building contributes to the sense of place and community identity.
- Retrofitting will significantly improve energy efficiency and is a more sustainable form of development.
- Saanich has requested a public realm dedication along the western edge. Approximately 1.5 m will be given to the District of Saanich to meet the Quadra corridor's long-term objectives.
- A new, wider sidewalk, a separated bike lane and an outer boulevard will be introduced.
- The main entrance is on Quadra Street.
- The proposal includes eleven new townhouses and the retention of the rental units in the existing heritage dwelling.
- Each townhome will include three bedrooms, and the rental will consist of seven suites with one and two-bedroom options.
- Five townhouses will have double car garages. The rest will have a single-car garage, and an additional eight parking stalls on-site will be provided for residents and visitor use, representing a 1.3 parking ratio.
- The buildings are in a pinwheel organization, wrapping and framing the heritage structure.
- A revised drawing is being presented that reflects an initial attempt at a location for an accessible parking space.

- On the landscape, there are eight parking spaces; five will be dedicated to visitor parking and three to the existing rental dwelling.
- The landscape interfaced to Quadra Street is with lawn boulevard, street trees, enhanced sidewalk and additional trees and landscaping at the building face. Well landscaped and pleasant pedestrian experience along Quadra Street.
- Permeable paving at the site entrance and on-site parking areas contributes to stormwater management and provides visual interest to the interior courtyard areas.
- Single entry to the courtyard allows its use as a spontaneous play area for the family units' children.
- The rear of the site is left open for the residents as a potential garden space or more landscaping.
- The site's perimeter is secured with a solid board and lattice fence providing separation and screening for the adjoining residents.
- The parking in the rear of the property is screened with larger conifer trees.
- Agreements will need to be made with the adjoining properties regarding any trees that the development may impact.
- Small ornamental trees will be used along the boulevard, conifer trees in the rear of the site, multi-stemmed trees around and directly in front of the townhouses.
- The new sidewalk dedication will separate pedestrians from vehicles and increase the safety of its users.
- The three-storey townhome plan is designed to maximize liveability for families with three-bedroom units with a den, storage room and a garage.
- The second level of the townhouse is the home's primary living realm, with a generous balcony facing the courtyard, matching the floor level's width.
- The third level focuses on the private sleeping areas with three bedrooms and two full washrooms, suitable for a family of four or five.
- There are many units within the Highfield residence; this proposal's goal is to improve some of the units' liveability and modify some of the entryways.
- The landscape strip physically and visually buffers the townhomes from Quadra Street, the sidewalk and the bicycle lane.
- Each townhome's entry point is raised to add comfort for residents by creating a secure buffer from the street within the public realm.
- An arbour is situated at the south property line as a gateway marker to the townhouse entries at the rear of the property.
- The arts and crafts design cue is borrowed from Highfield's design without mimicking the Heritage building.
- Durable, warmly textured materials are used throughout, comprised of warm white and taupe cement board shingle siding, charcoal asphalt composite shingles and charcoal standing seam, metal roof panels.
- The new sidewalk dedication will separate pedestrians from vehicles and increase the safety of users.
- The townhomes will be ground-oriented and will have front yards and individual access from the new sidewalk, providing more housing diversity and neighbourhood character.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Applicant stated:

- Saanich staff will support only one vehicle crossing; the single driveway is viewed as a benefit by Saanich.
- There are seven units in the Heritage structure; six are permitted. The seventh was later added and a request to retain it has been submitted.

- Visitor and disabled parking have been incorporated into our presentation; however, Engineering/Planning has yet to confirm that the spaces meet the technical requirements.
- The previous owner created the existing easement on the northeast corner of the site.
- There will not be garbage and recycle collection area outside of Unit 7. Garbage totes will be stored within garages. The space near Unit 7 is reserved for an electrical closet and Canada Post mailboxes.
- The taupe and white cement paneling will be on alternating townhouse units.
- The design details regarding the bike lane and boulevard have not been completely defined yet. A small hardscaped buffer strip between the bike lane and sidewalk is what is anticipated.
- The street tree types for the boulevard are predetermined by Saanich. Part of the determination is where the utility lines are located. On the property, the small trees will be akin to dogwood and star magnolia, and depending on the final configuration, small leaf hedges that provide separation like a Portuguese Laurel or Hicks yew, will be planted in the spaces between the townhouse patios and sidewalks.
- It is unknown how many parking spots are currently available for the Highfield rentals.
- The garbage and recycling receptacles for Highfield are kept under the deck.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Planner stated:

- The northeast corner of the site has an existing easement.

Comments from the Panel:

- Appreciate the effort to work around the existing building and recognition is given that there could have been other forms of development on this site.
- The entrance between units 2 and 3 contains hard edges with the sidewalk and the wall. Consideration should be given to landscaping along the edge of the building.
- The architecture, for a traditional arts and crafts style building, is well executed. The unit plans are functional and well oriented.
- The addition of family-sized homes and missing middle housing is ideal in an amenity-rich area.
- Pleased about the addition of rentals and how thoughtfully the existing Heritage building has been incorporated into the development.
- There are small setbacks around the site and can see how the applicant has attempted to balance that with the streetscape and pedestrian experiences.
- Appreciate the addition of the disabled and visitor parking spaces.
- The Heritage house existing floorplans are odd, improvements and proposed changes are welcomed.
- More colour carryover from Highfield was expected, basically only some of the colour vocabulary is transferred to the townhouses.
- There could be a larger yard area if the landscaping around Unit 11 was reconfigured.
- Some of the plant options listed are invasive or have prickles and should be avoided.
- Larger conifer trees are questionable as some are too large. Multi-stem trees take up a lot of space and may not be the best choice.
- There are many positives in this project, the arbour, the walkway, the streetscape on Quadra Street, the grade separation that gives the sense of buffer, the ground entrance, and the overall pinwheel design.
- This is a scenario of limited landscape softening against all of the various edges and how it feels from the neighbour's perspective.

- This is no street parking in this neighbourhood, there is concern about the provision of sufficient parking.
- The proposal is a creative design given the compact site.

MOTION:

MOVED by G. Gillespie and Seconded by C. Harper: “That it be recommended that application to construct 11 townhouses and convert an existing heritage house to seven rental units at 3579 and 3561 Quadra Street be approved subject to consideration of:

- 1. Hard and soft landscape improvements as suggested by the panel; and**
- 2. Sufficient visitor parking.”**

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 5:16 pm.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY