



COMMITTEE CHAIR MEMORANDUM

Date:	Mar 20, 2021	
To:	Mayor and Council	
From:	Roger Wheelock, Chair, Design Review Committee	
CC:	Rachel Dumas, Bill Brown	
File no.	0540-20 APC Design Review	
Subject:	COTW Presentation, Mar 08, 2021	

- Thank-you to Committee of the Whole for the invitation to appear.
- This will be my last report, as I “age out” after six years on the Committee; five as Chair. It has been both a pleasure and an honour to represent the Township on this Committee. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

PAST YEAR

- Bill Brown advises that Design Review met seven times in this Covid year, and evaluated twenty applications.
 - Development Permit Applications
 - Rezoning Applications
 - ‘Design’ Applications
 - One was an industrial application on Viewfield - a brewery
 - The proposed Public Safety building
- Also, at Council’s request, we reviewed and commented on:
 - the Climate Emergency Action Plan
 - the ‘DADU’ (Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit) Proposal

ISSUES

A. LANDSCAPES (and ENVIRONMENT)

- committee often receives, as part of the application, Landscape Plans which are incomplete, inaccurate, or impractical.

- this is **not** a reflection on staff: such applications often require very specialised knowledge and experience. The lack is often combined with insufficient knowledge on the part of the applicants themselves.
- with very large projects (the landscape part of the Japanese Pavilion project on the Gorge, as an example), committee is sometimes faced with trying to cobble together hasty ‘fixes’; or for suggestions to include in our ‘Recommendation to Council’. Either that, or committee faces recommending rejection of the entire application!
- sometimes, there is simply a lack of clarity. In the ‘Green Building Check List’, one of the points says, “There will be no net loss of trees”, to which the answer by the applicant was “Yes”. (Yes there will; or yes there won’t?)

IMPLICATIONS (SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNCIL)

- 1) **INADEQUATE LANDSCAPE PLANS.** Suggest Development Services be authorised to sub-contract a qualified individual to review the Landscape portion of Planning Submissions for major, large-scale projects before appearing at Design Review. This should help avoid the last-minute scramble at the Committee stage; and ensure longer-term viability and health of the plantscapes of major projects in the Township.
- 2) **URBAN FOREST.** One project (two properties) saw removal of 65 trees (none notable). Project was entirely within guidelines! How to offset such net losses? A challenge for the Township?
- 3) **DADU.** Still more potential pressure on the natural environment by reducing trees (mostly ornamental trees in side and rear lots). How to offset further loss?

B. DEVELOPMENT (Building Plans)

- **Accessibility .** It is not always clear whether ease of accessibility has been considered - or included - internally within the building; or externally within the landscape, or from the street access.
- **Neighbourhood.** Some applications only provide outline drawings of the footprint of immediate neighbouring buildings or residences, not photos.

- Infill. With the new initiative for granny, or laneway, suites (DADU - Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit), there is the possibility of what is described as “Box or Shed” development. The document merely states “Design elements encouraged”. “Encouraged” is far too vague to prevent poorly planned, unattractive development; particularly when up to 1500 township properties may be eligible!

IMPLICATIONS (SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNCIL)

- 1) **ACCESSIBILITY.** Suggest that Development Permit Applications add a section on Accessibility, under a heading: “Materials Which Must Be Submitted”. Perhaps a comment: “Brief Description of Accessibility Attributes of Building/Landscape Design”, or some such.
- 2) **PLANNING DOCUMENTS.** Suggest that Applications require (mandatory) photographs - not ‘footprint’ drawings - of neighbouring properties on three sides, and from across street. Will be easier to understand possible neighbourhood impact.
- 3) **DADU. (Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit)**
 - Esquimalt has a real strength in its vernacular architecture, especially its ‘small house’ architecture.
 - Simply “encouraging design” will not achieve any community goal, and would permit unsympathetic and unattractive development to spring up.
 - Suggest Council consider a Los Angeles-like initiative, for their own ADU’s (Accessory Dwelling Units). For example:
 - perhaps through an RFP, architects are asked to submit designs for laneway houses. A juried competition? This will help to ensure (not just “encourage”) desirable design.
 - pre-approved architectural designs can then be chosen by applicants. This speeds the approval process to almost ‘over-the-counter’ acceptance. (Presumably, architects receive a fee for each design accepted?)
 - all other applications would simply go through the regular approval process (including evaluation by Design Review).

DRC MEMBERS (There was not sufficient time during the presentation, but I would like to acknowledge their contributions here)

- Ally Dewji. Vice-chair. Director of Development, Dockside Green (also will 'age out' in June 2021)
- Two registered architects:
 - Graeme Verhulst, Wayside Architects
 - Xeniya Vins, WA Architects (new to committee)
- Two landscape architects
 - Bev Windjack, LADR
 - Elizabeth Balderston, Lead LA, Biophilia Design Collective (new)
- Tim Cottrell, retired. 30 years econ dev't & planning. Accessibility issues.
- Const. Greg Shaw, non-voting (ex officio), Community Resource Officer, Esquimalt Division.

Finally, many thanks and huge appreciation to Bill Brown and the entire crew of Development Services, whose expertise and knowledge are infinitely helpful.

Respectfully submitted.

Roger Wheelock
Chair, Design Review Committee
Township of Esquimalt