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April 18, 2019 – **UPDATED AUGUST 9, 2019 (The update on height is noted at bottom of first page)**

Regarding: Recommendation from Design Review Committee on our 937 Colville proposal

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are writing to respond and provide context to the recommendations made by the Design Review Committee on February 13, 2019, regarding our six, two-bedroom-unit townhouse proposed for 937 Colville Rd., as we believe this proposal is in line with the Official Community Plan and will be a good fit for the neighbourhood.

I've addressed the main recommendation – to design a townhouse consistent with the RM-3 Zone – off the top and then outlined in a table on the second page with how we've adjusted our proposal to address the other comments that the committee made during the meeting.

RM-3 zone

The main recommendation we received from the committee is to design a townhouse that is more "consistent with the RM-3 zone, specifically for lot coverage and height."

This recommendation took us a bit by surprise, as the RM-3 bylaw is very restrictive and from our knowledge has not been used for any townhouse development in the last 35 years. If we were to use it at 937 Colville, we'd only be able to add around 180 square feet of lot coverage to the existing house and garage, which would mean neither this nor any townhouse project could be built at this site.

In fact, from our scan, the last and perhaps only time the RM-3 zone was used in Esquimalt was for the 3.5 acre, 1985-built, CRD-operated Firgrove property at 741 Lampson, which has one townhouse unit for every 5,000 square feet of land.

Our proposal, on the other hand, is very much consistent with the townhouse proposals that have been approved in Esquimalt in the last 30 years.

It has a smaller or similar floor area ratio (without the attic storage) and similar lot coverage to the 15-unit M'akola-owned townhouse at 735 Admirals; the four-unit 2001-built townhouse at 733 Sea Terrace; the 2008-built six-unit townhouse at 1105 Esquimalt; the 2011-built four-unit townhouse at 617 Admirals; the 2015-built 10-unit townhouse at 1060 Tillicum; my 2017-built four-unit townhouse at 519 Foster; the newly built 12 unit townhouse at 618 Lampson; the 5-unit townhouse that's under construction at 1052 Tillicum, as well as my planned development for 939 Colville and 825 Lampson.

[UPDATE August 9, 2019:] And after a revision made in late July where we lowered the building by almost a half metre, this development is now close to the same height as most of these developments.

I believe that the committee's recommendation may have come in part from a street scape representation that we used, which did not accurately capture the look and feel of our proposed development – mainly because it did not include landscaping or show our future 10-unit townhouse next door. With the revised streetscape (attached), you can see how the height falls from three storeys on the corner, to the proposed 2.5 storeys at 937 Colville, to the 2-storey Buddhist temple next door.

Without repeating everything in my original application letter – the proposed building is designed to mimic the houses in the surrounding community and will look quite a bit like a converted larger home, with two-bedroom units that we believe will fit well with the mix of housing in the Lampson and Colville area.

Design Review Committee – other comments/recommendations

The committee also provided a few other thoughts and considerations for the proposal we submitted to them for review, which we've mostly agreed with and adjusted our proposal as shown below:

| Comment/Recommendation | Response |
|---|---|
| The front of the building has too many stairs. | Agree: The original proposal included two sets of stairs up to the landing at the front of the building. We've revised the proposal to include only one, shorter set of stairs and replaced the second set with a magnolia and a cedar and are framing the building with three laurels. In addition, we're proposing a planter with an evergreen hedge in front of the remaining set of stairs. These changes will soften the site, provide some natural beauty and help shade the sidewalk. |
| Landscape maintenance needs to access east side of building | Agree: We originally included too much foliage on the east side of the building, which would have made it a challenge for a groundskeeper to maintain. We removed a small amount of plantings and added stepping stones from the north and south side of the building for maintenance. |
| Rear retaining wall/fence was too large (and stark) | Agree: The original streetscape didn't include landscaping nor anything to mask the retaining wall and fence at the rear of the property. This starkness added to the perception of a too large building. We've shown trees along the drive, and trees & vines along the back wall, which will eliminate the wall from view and considerably soften the parking area. |
| Parking spaces are too small | We've discussed this with Esquimalt planning and in order to achieve as much greenery as possible, we're making the visitor space a large-vehicle space: 2.9 metres wide, 5.5 metres long. This will allow access for a moving truck or other delivery vehicles. The remaining spaces will be 2.4 meters wide by 4.5 metres long, which is the minimum size for multifamily parking – both promoting lower carbon footprint vehicles and allowing us to plant trees along the rear property line. |
| The parking area could be softened with a pergola | Agree: We appreciated this suggestion. However, in discussion with planning, a pergola would make it challenging to maneuver back there and reduce the size of the common area. To achieve a similar look, we've gone with vines and trees along the back wall to soften the area. |
| Grading at the east side of the property may not work | Agree: We had originally proposed the raingarden to run right along the edge of our property line which would have been a challenge to retain. We've made it smaller and pulled it off of the property line by nearly two metres, giving us plenty of space to grade out towards next door. |

We are quite excited about this proposal, as it will bring a unique and needed type of housing to the neighbourhood. We believe that the emphasis on alternative modes of transportation and the connection to the community that can be created by this type of close-to-the-curb design will encourage socially (and physically) healthier communities – a policy that Esquimalt has formally begun to explore through a BC Healthy Communities' grant.

We believe our proposal could be one of the first of many housing developments that advances this happy and healthy city goal.

Again, I want to thank you for the time you've taken to read this letter and to consider this proposal. As always, I am available at any time on my cell (250-413-7121) or by email (ryanjabs@lapishomes.com) if you would like to discuss any of this.

Take care,



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"If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places." - Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces

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Streetscape for the proposed 6-unit townhouse at 937 Colville [UPDATED AUGUST 9, 2019]

