

May 30, 1996

SUBJECT: OAKHERST REZONING

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT this report be received for information.

BACKGROUND

The City Planning Department has received a rezoning application for the site bounded by Oak Street, 58th Avenue, Laurel Street, and 59th Avenue. This site was previously occupied by a private hospital and the developer seeks approval for the construction of 64 apartment condominium units, 58 townhouses, and the conversion of an existing Heritage Building, into 6 dwelling units for a total of 128 units. (See also Map 1). Two apartment condominiums face onto Oak Street and they are each 4 storeys in height. The townhouses are in 2 storey buildings, plus basement and the Heritage Building has 3 floors, plus a basement. For a full description of the project (see Appendix 1). Council has referred the rezoning to a public hearing scheduled for June 27.

The site is immediately across from the Marpole Community Centre.

CONTEXT

The City Planning Department has been working on the formulation of a community benefit strategy for the Oakridge/Langara area, for which Council recently adopted a new policy plan. The new policy plan encourages the rezoning of some of the sites in the area. The draft benefit strategy contemplates that some additional park space be added in the area and that development cost levies, and community amenity contributions be collected. About half of these contributions are to be devoted to the acquisition of additional park space and a small portion is earmarked for the development of existing parks in the area. The balance of funds are to be used for replacement housing, affordable housing, childcare services, and walking improvements.

Given the proximity of the Oakherst site to Oak Park, the benefits strategy contemplates collecting community amenity contributions, and a development cost levy from this site, instead of taking land.

Two issues have arisen with regard to this rezoning, which may impact the Park Board mandate. The first issue involves the use of community amenity contribution funds for the restoration of what will eventually be a private residence. The notion of applying CAC's first evolved when the use of the building was to be a public use.

Staff did evaluate the potential of the building as a satellite to the Marpole Community Centre, but concluded that given operating inefficiencies, this would not be a wise investment.

Public visibility of the heritage building from 59th Avenue, a greenway

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and an acknowledged local pedestrian corridor, is very limited; this severely limits the merits of the proposed allocation of CAC's. The use of CAC's for the heritage restoration of private buildings sets a significant precedent for the City to fund private developers for this purpose. There is currently no Council or Board policy to this effect and in some ways it amounts to a grant.

The second issue involves the width and configuration of a proposed view corridor, which also houses a number of significant trees, described by some as heritage. The developer proposes to maintain as open space, a swath of land between the heritage building and 59th Avenue (see Map 1). The land slopes down towards 59th Avenue and the view cone from 59th Avenue is 58 feet wide. The relocation or removal of 1 or 2 townhouse units would increase this width to 80 feet and 100 feet respectively.

The City Planning Department is advocating the 80 feet option. Some in the community have argued that the space should become a node of interest along the 59th Avenue Greenway or become a public park. The Greenway node would provide a point of interest with some seating and a much better viewpoint of the heritage house.

At present, the proposed open space is to be simply a part of the development, protected only by the requested zoning. Alternatives to this option include a covenant, a public right-of-way, or dedication as a permanent park.

A covenant, to be registered on title would ensure that the trees cannot be removed by the owner without good reason. Alternatively, a public right-of-way could be instituted ensuring tree preservation and public access. In these two methods, open space would be secured, yet the Board would not be faced with the operating cost of an additional park.

If a public right-of-way is to be instituted, the question is: should it connect 57th and 59th Avenue, a mini-greenway going by a taxpayer improved heritage residence or should it extend only about 150' north of 59th Avenue? Given the location of nearby Churchill School, City planners are concerned about a 57th/59th connection through the development site.

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City Council has referred this report for public hearing on June 27th. The Board will likely hear delegations on this subject. (See also Appendix II).

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Prepared by:  
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PR:hw

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