



Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association

September 10, 2020

Planning Department
District of Saanich

RE: Rezoning and development permit application for 3839 Quadra (DPR00753;
REZ00638)

Dear Saanich Planning,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Abstract Development's proposal to rezone three RS-6 zoned single-family dwelling lots into a new site-specific zone, and a Development Permit, to construct a 6-storey, 77-unit strata-titled building at the above address.

Consultation:

Abstract hosted open houses in October 2018 and January 2019 prior to their first submission. QCHCA attended both sessions and wrote to Planning on March 13, 2019 to share issues and concerns raised by the neighbourhood. We were contacted again by Abstract on July 24 of this year, advising us of their resubmission and asking us to help them promote two web-based information sessions on August 5, which we did. The information sessions did not allow for live questions or discussion; they were a presentation of the resubmitted proposal. If people had questions, they were to email Abstract and Abstract would respond. We asked for but were not cc'd by Abstract on any follow-up questions and answers from attendees so are unaware of any additional viewpoints that might have been raised and of Abstract's responses. Several of our Board members found the log-in process for the sessions complicated, resulting in two of them missing all or substantial portions of the presentation and we think some neighbours might have experienced the same difficulties. Abstract did do a good job of communicating their vision and plans widely but the neighbourhood hasn't felt that their wishes, concerns and suggestions were heard or acted upon.

Neighbourhood context:

The area where the proposed development is to be built is a mature part of Saanich comprised of mostly single-family dwellings with some four-storey, older multi-family units with mature trees and good setbacks from Quadra. Palmer bounds the location on its north side and is a narrow street without sidewalks heavily used by cyclists and

pedestrians, including children, going to and from Playfair Park and beyond. Playfair Park lies to the east of the proposed site. There are no commercial buildings in the immediate vicinity.

Site and building design:

Policy 4.1 in the current Quadra LAP is to “Protect and maintain the character of Quadra by maintaining single family dwellings as the principal housing form outside of the Quadra-McKenzie Development Permit Area.” The proposed development is not inside this DP area. Further, the LAP suggests “Predominantly single-family dwellings with some appropriately located and well designed, higher density housing that respects the character of the neighbourhood and the scale of surrounding developments. Apartments are located near commercial nodes, not sprawled along major roads.”

Although there are four multi-family dwellings in the immediate vicinity, all are four storeys and have lower Floor Space Ratios (FSRs):

- The Charleston at 3880 Quadra has 29 units on 3342 square meters
- Uptown Rise at 3800 Quadra has 31 units on 3084 square meters
- Glenora at 1106 Glenora has 28 units on 3378 square meters
- 3905 Quadra has 39 units on 3624 square meters

By comparison, the Abstract proposal is for 77 units on 2191 square meters. Even if it were a four-storey building with the same number of units per floor as the current submission, it would still be much denser at 52 units on the same 2191 square meters.

Adding to concerns is the topography of the site which slopes significantly upward from its frontage on Quadra. This would have the effect of making the building seem even taller than its proposed six storeys. Further, the style of the building does nothing to soften the impact of the proposed height as its higher storeys are not stepped back from those below.

Neighbours have expressed concern about the shadows cast by the building and the resultant lack of sunlight not only for themselves but for the trees and other vegetation to the north and east of the site, including two “venerable” redwoods and a huge copper beech adjoining the development. Their loss, as objects of beauty and places of refuge for bird and animal life, would be irreversible in our lifetimes.

Density:

The proposed density is a major concern – a proposed 77 units replacing what were three single-family homes, an addition of 74 living units on the same square footage of land. A six-storey building would be in contravention of the OCP and Quadra Local Area Plan which limits multi-family buildings to four storeys in this location. Even if the OCP and LAP did provide for a greater height, this location at the intersection of Quadra and Palmer does not lend itself to anywhere near the proposed density. We also have significant concerns about the potential impacts of such an increase in density and the resultant traffic and safety issues.

Traffic and safety:

With respect to traffic and safety, access and egress to the proposed development would be on Palmer Road which is narrow, without sidewalks, and heavily used by pedestrians, including many young children, going to and from Playfair Park and beyond. Quadra Street, at the point where it intersects with Palmer, provides poor sight lines and only has a pedestrian-initiated traffic signal. We believe the potential number of vehicle trips into and out of the development represents a serious safety risk for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

In addition, we are very concerned at the limited number of resident and visitor parking spaces proposed for the development. Palmer Road is already parking-challenged and there is no parking along Quadra. We do not believe the parking variance requested is supportable. Residents are understandably worried about the possibility of another 77 families (and a similar or more probably greater number of vehicles) compounding the pedestrian safety and traffic issues.

Environmental:

The landscape drawings indicate removal or potential removal of all trees currently on the site. Even with a two-to-one replacement ratio for new trees to be planted, the effect would be to diminish rather than contribute to our urban forest. It would also have a significant negative impact on this portion of the wildlife corridor that runs from Cedar Hill Park, through Playfair to Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary. Of particular concern is the mature Garry Oak, estimated to be 150-plus years old and home to Cooper's Hawks, Northern Flickers and more.

Community contribution:

We strongly believe a more significant CAC is required. In Planning's report to Council with respect to the Wesbild proposal, per unit breakdowns of total amenity contributions were given for a number of recent multi-unit developments in the vicinity and \$1000 per unit is well below even the lowest figure provided. Abstract has suggested that one MODO car and parking space should be considered as part of the value of the CAC 'package' offered but we see it as a perk for the condo purchaser rather than an amenity for neighbours. We would hope that, ultimately, the CAC would be much more reflective of projects of similar scale and make a solid contribution to the health and wellbeing of the immediate community.

When we wrote in March 2019 re this proposal, we listed as major issues and concerns density, height, neighbourhood scale and character and parking/traffic/safety issues. Reviewing Abstract's resubmission against the original one, the minor changes do nothing to address the concerns raised. Additionally, the fact that our LAP updating process did not proceed as planned has added to the neighbourhood's displeasure about a six-storey proposal that is deemed to be overly densified. A four-storey development might be more acceptable to the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan Haddon
President, QCHCA