

April 15, 2012

To: Oak Crest Drive Neighbourhood Residents

We have filed an application to rezone 1535 Oak Crest Dr. from R6 (single family) to RD1 (duplex). The R6 Single Family Zone permits a residence of up to 3,800 sq. ft. with a legal secondary suite of up to approximately 1,000 sq. ft. or shared accommodation having two kitchens. The RD1 Duplex zone allows two legal suites and a larger footprint but has more stringent requirements for building setbacks from the property lines, fire and life safety provisions, and site servicing. It also permits two property titles on the site, each subject to the property tax assessment.

We are a mixed generation family of 6 – grandparents, parents, and kids. We purchased this property because we value the location in Saanich and the character of the neighbourhood and the street in particular. We hope to build this shared home and put down roots there, with the plan that at first the grandparents will be available to help raise young children, and later the parents will be available to help grandparents ‘age-in-place’. In keeping with this vision we propose to build an environmentally-friendly, energy-efficient ‘Passive House’ structure. The Passive House is an internationally recognized and certified building approach that, through quality of construction and efficient use of space, virtually eliminates the energy required for home heating.

Our goal is to construct this energy efficient home with two suites: one for family use, the other designed as a level-entry accessible suite for a couple (the grandparents). To achieve that goal, 3,900 sq. ft. is required - 100 sq. ft. larger than permitted under the existing R6 zoning. 200 sq. ft. of that area is attributable to the additional exterior wall insulation required to achieve our energy efficiency goals. It is possible to build the size of living space we are seeking under existing zoning, but we cannot achieve our energy efficiency goals. Duplex zoning also permits a more functional interior floor plan plus separate ownership and separate financing of the units while providing affordable housing.

Our residence has been architecturally designed to fit in with surrounding properties in scale & character. Visually it presents as a single-family home in keeping with the neighbouring houses. The proposed siting, orientation and form of the residence make future expansion unlikely due to setback requirements, easements and the economics of altering this building.

The proposed rezoning will not result in an increase in building occupancy or traffic compared to what is allowable under the current zone. Neither does it alter the scale and appearance of the proposed design. Rezoning is being sought specifically to permit a better allocation of internal space between the units, and to assist with independent financing by each family. In the event one of us sells a unit in the future, duplex zoning increases the likelihood of both suites remaining occupied by owners rather than rented to tenants as a secondary suite.

In speaking with Saanich planning staff, we were assured unbridled development in the neighbourhood is not allowed – they have a vision of the type of development desired in each area – and that this proposal will not limit their control over future development. They are better able to explain the processes they have in place to deal future rezoning applications, but it is our understanding that one approval does not create a precedent opening the door to speculative development. To the extent our home is a precedent at all, we hope it is an example of what is desired in the community.

Thanks for your consideration and for participating in the neighbourhood survey. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Camosun Community Association, the District of Saanich or us directly. Rob Bernhardt is our contact for the application. He can be reached by email at rob.c.bernhardt@gmail.com or by phone at 250-893-2514.

Yours truly,

Rob, Susan, Mark & Julie Bernhardt