



Sidney Community Association  
PO Box 20095, Sidney BC, V8L 5C9

January 12, 2017

Dear Mayor Price and Council,

The Board of the Sidney Community Association wishes you a happy and productive new year. I was honoured to be the first speaker in Council Public Participation Period in 2018. It was our plan to provide you with a written copy of what I said January 8 and I regret that this has been delayed for a few days.

The recent increase in applications for development in our downtown was a topic of discussion at our Board meeting January 7. We have some concerns about the process by which these developments are being approved. Staff and council are fully complying with Bylaw 1380, passed in March 2017, but now that there is some experience with these procedures, it is clear that the public information and participation aspects do not serve the community as well as they could, especially where there is no rezoning or OCP amendment application. Our members care deeply about the town and have a keen interest in the look and feel of new buildings being proposed for the downtown. We believe that many more Sidney residents feel the same way. We acknowledge and applaud the recent council motion to advertise Development Variation applications with an increase in the number of storeys, which is not required in the current the bylaw, but is one positive response to this problem.

Let's look at two examples:

**2526 Bevan Avenue**, the old Co-op gas station site. This 4 storey building received final approval Monday evening January 8<sup>th</sup>. Because it needed only development variance permits, no notice to anyone more than 75 meters away was required. The notice to neighbours within 75 meters was issued December 19. No notice was posted on the property itself. We are not criticizing the building or the developer and **not** accusing the town of failing to follow the bylaw. We are saying this is a very important corner in a key location in our downtown and Sidney residents are probably quite interested, but how many residents have any idea what this building looks like?

Our recommendations for all multi-storey developments in the downtown are:

- Hold a public meeting or require the developer to hold a public meeting to introduce the building to the community, with pictures;
- Notify the community when the development will be presented to Committee of the Whole;
- Expand the 75 meter radius;
- Put the "public notice" that went to residents within 75 metres on the town website's Public Notices page. The main page for Sidney.ca has a prominent link to Public Notices, but before January 8, public notices about development proposals were not on the Public Notices page, so they were not very public at all.
- Include all multi-storey buildings in the downtown in the new procedure for advertising, not just those seeking a variation in the number of storeys;

- Show pictures of the building to the community, or require the developer to do so.

After Jan 8<sup>th</sup>, two Notices of New Applications for development appeared on the Town's Public Notices page. We welcome this quick correction of the earlier oversight and hope that public notices related to development applications will appear consistently on that page from now on. Most residents don't visit the Town website regularly, but the information should be easy to find when people do land on the home page.

By contrast, **9830 to 9844 Third Street**, the Star Cinema and Good Fortune restaurant site is of even greater interest and importance to the community than 2526 Bevan. If the developer had not applied for a zoning amendment, it would be handled the same way as 2526 Bevan and Sidney residents would hear very little about it. Because of the zoning amendment application, the procedures require far more public information and engagement.

- There is already a notice on the property.
- If passersby read it, the notice invites the public to attend the January 15 presentation at Committee of the Whole to ask questions and provide initial feedback. The ten minute time limit is not mentioned.
- Unfortunately, the required notice does not include a picture of the building, though it does refer to the website.
- The later Public Hearing, if it goes ahead, will be advertised.

We recommend, at some point in the process, that the developer will advertise a public information meeting where people can ask questions and engage in a discussion about the building before the Public Hearing.

Our Board shares the concern expressed by David Calveley January 8<sup>th</sup> that the Streetscape Report has not yet come to Council. It does in fact contain guidelines for private property, in terms of facades, glazing and other design elements. Development proposals should be evaluated based on approved Downtown Streetscape Guidelines.

The Board of the Sidney Community Association hopes you will consider these suggestions in the context of wanting to provide good communication with the community as our downtown is redeveloped.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the actions you are already taking.

Jocelyn Gifford, President  
Sidney Community Association