

**TO:** CITY MANAGER

1997 MARCH 17

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**SUBJECT:** SITE PLANNING FOR A PROPOSED FIVE UNIT BUILDING  
AT 5538 CHAFFEY AVENUE  
(REZONING APPLICATION #67/96)

**PURPOSE:** To inform Council regarding a request to remove trees from a development site to accommodate a new building.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** this report be received for the information of Council.

**R E P O R T**

**1.0 BACKGROUND:**

On 1997 February 03, Council received an initial report regarding Rezoning Reference #67/97 and authorized staff to work with the applicant toward the preparation of a suitable plan of development. The purpose of the application is to construct a five-unit residence for the owner, the Burnaby Association for the Mentally Handicapped, to replace an old existing group home on the site. Staff have been working with the Society and with their architect to develop a plan which accommodates the Association's needs and fits into the existing neighbourhood as well as possible.

At present this lot is developed with an older home located towards the rear of the site and has a number of trees which are located around the perimeter of the site. Many of the trees are not suitable for long term retention due to their condition. There are, however, two large landmark cedars near the south side of the site along the Sardis Street flank of the property which were identified as being significant in the previous report to Council. These two trees are approximately 50 to 60 feet tall and shade the centre of the lot. The owner is concerned that their retention would reduce the livability of the new building due to their location and the nature of the cedar branches which form a dense canopy. The applicant for the rezoning, Mr. Anthony Boni, has made a request on behalf of the owner, to appear as a delegation to this Council Meeting. The architect has prepared two sets of preliminary drawings, one which preserves the trees but is not favoured by the applicant and a second option which removes the trees.

## 2.0 DISCUSSION:

The issue under discussion relates to the retention of large scale, landmark trees on a relatively small development site.

### 2.1 Condition of trees:

There are two Western Red Cedars which were probably planted 40 to 50 years ago. They are approximately fourteen feet apart and are twelve and eighteen feet from the south property line (the lot is 77 ft. by 124 ft.). The trees are approximately thirty-four inches in diameter. The trees have grown in a large open front yard/side yard area and are quite vigorous. They were topped at some point but have recovered well. On the south side some of the side branches were trimmed away from the power lines. In general the trees are symmetrical in shape and appear healthy, although the arborist has indicated that the trees lean toward the north.

### 2.2 Request by the owner to remove the trees:

The owner has sent a letter requesting permission to remove the two trees to allow for greater flexibility in the redevelopment of the site. The points raised are summarized as follows:

- ▶ Appearance - retention of the trees would make it necessary to utilize a portion of the front yard area for parking to accommodate up to four spaces which would create a non-typical front yard appearance and would reduce the compatibility of the building with the other homes along Chaffey Street. The space for the backyard would be reduced (but still within bylaw minimums) which would provide less private space for residents of the site.
- ▶ Distinctiveness of the building - the owner indicates that the building and the siting should be as "typical" as possible to help the residents feel a good "fit" with the rest of the neighbourhood.
- ▶ Quality of life/light - people with handicaps often spend more time at home and size of the trees will reduce the amount of natural light that will reach the windows of the building.
- ▶ Interaction between tenants - it is considered desirable to have one common entry to the building and a central common outdoor gathering area which is more difficult to design if the trees are retained.
- ▶ Maintenance of the building would be increased due to the necessity to clean up the debris that falls from the trees.

### 3.0 DISCUSSION:

This applicant has requested that this site be rezoned from R5 to CD based upon the RM1 zone guidelines. It has been common practice to review the tree surveys that are normally prepared when Comprehensive Development rezoning applications are submitted. This procedure was followed in this case and a site visit was made to discuss the trees on the lot with an arborist that was hired by the applicant. While there are a number of trees on this lot, staff agree that the condition of most of the trees did not warrant their retention due to their condition. Most of the trees were badly pruned over the years and one fairly large hemlock was considered potentially too unstable to be retained. The two cedars were identified as key trees on the site.

In typical rezoning projects, it would be usual that staff would ask that the architect try to design the project around trees of this quality depending, of course, on the feasibility of achieving a reasonable building design. While the points raised by the owner are noted, the retention of natural vegetation such as these landmark trees can also be seen as a site benefit and an opportunity to create a unique environmentally sensitive solution.

If this site were to have been redeveloped under the existing R5 zoning, the new bylaw would require the retention of trees that are more than five feet from the proposed building. These trees do, however, sit within the R5 building envelope area and could be removed if a large new single or two family home were to be constructed.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION:

While it is acknowledged that the retention of the two trees affects the siting and design of the proposed building, the quality and size of the landmark trees warrant consideration of their retention. Strong reasons are evident on both sides.

However, in order to allow more light into the site, one suggestion would be to "lift" the canopy of the trees, by removing the lower limbs of the trees to allow greater penetration of natural light under the trees to the building face and to provide useable open space beneath the trees.

Therefore, on balance, unless otherwise directed by Council, it is proposed that the rezoning applicant continue to be requested to pursue a project design which retains the subject two trees.



D.G. Stenson, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

BR/gk  
cc: Landscape Inspector

