

3. Rezoning and Heritage Designation: 6825 West Boulevard

Date Received	Time Created	Position	Content	Name	Organization	Contact Info	Neighbourhood	Attachment
06/25/2020	13:16	Oppose	I am dismayed that this application has reached a public hearing. The developer bought the property in 2017 with every intention of applying for a rezoning. It is a clear encroachment of multiple home units on (to date) single family lots in quiet residential neighbourhoods. This approval would be a precedent and lead to other similar requests along this stretch of West Boulevard. There are considerable rezoning applications to increase density on West Boulevard between 49th Avenue and 41st Avenue. This development is particularly dense with parking spaces for 15 cars and multiple living units in a single family neighbourhood zone all under the guise of heritage preservation. It is understandable to allow this type of development along Marine Drive but to allow it in a neighbourhood with single family homes opens up to a potential numerous similar developments. I oppose this encroachment into single family neighbourhoods.	Patrick von Hahn		"s. 22(1) Personal and	Kerrisdale	No web attachments.

Wong, Tamarra

From: s. 22(1) s. 22(1) Personal and
Sent: Person Confidential
Thursday, June 25, 2020 2:21 PM
To: Public Hearing
Subject: [EXT] Comments Re Proposed Development at 6825 West Boulevard

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To Vancouver City Council:

As a longtime resident who will be adversely impacted by the proposed development in the backyard of **6825 West Boulevard**, I and my neighbors emphatically feel that this project should NOT be allowed to proceed.

Here are some of my thoughts:

Why is it necessary to give this developer a blank cheque to negatively and significantly impact our block and build anything he wants in exchange for preserving a large old house that has questionable architectural value? It would be a far more valuable act of heritage preservation to safeguard historic lot sizes in our neighborhood.

In no way does it seem reasonable to me to trade the preservation of one old house for the integrity and privacy of the backyards in our block.

After allowing the subdivisions of **2016 W. 51st Ave.** in the 1960's, and **2007 and 2049 W. 53rd** in the 1970's, the city apparently allowed no more subdivisions to occur in the block bounded by W. Blvd and Arbutus St., and W. 51st and W. 53rd Avenues. Though the two subdivisions effected in the 1970's were subject to backyard easements being taken by the city for a future lane, the city abandoned this effort in subsequent redevelopment. This was followed by the rebuilding of many homes, firmly establishing that this block would continue to preserve its single family home status and lot sizes -- without back alleys that would facilitate further development. So, though farmland that occupied this block was subdivided into large exurban land parcels in the early 1900's, and then divided again, after about 1972 this ceased to occur. This established a basis for preserving lots that have remained unchanged now for 48 to 70 years.

When Anneliese Hunger (**2061 W. 53rd Ave.**) applied to the city in 2014 to be allowed to purchase a few feet of land from her neighbor (**2075 W. 53rd Ave.**) so that their two properties could be divided into three 40' lots, ready for development, city planners turned her down, saying at a public hearing that the city's intent was to maintain existing lot sizes in the block.

Mrs. Hunger subsequently sold her property in 2015, and it is currently being developed into a single family house.

If the proposal for a zoning change for **6825 W. Blvd** goes through, it will be nothing more than carte blanche to build more expensive housing for well-to-do, probably absentee, owners. This will not be affordable housing. This will not benefit anyone except the owner/builder. This will not help to preserve the historic

character of our neighborhood, which is in the property size and use, and the unusual meeting of properties created by the lack of back lanes, rather than in the buildings themselves.

We do not want historic preservation at any cost. It is not worth giving up the integrity of our block to save a derelict house that has questionable historic value.

6825 W. Boulevard has been rented out for several years now to various groups of people, demonstrating to everyone in the block what the noise level will be like if nine families occupy a property that formerly only housed one. Not only will there be nine homes in this space, there will also be 15 parking spots and an access road running along its southern perimeter. The perimeter is perpendicular to six backyards on W. 53rd Ave., with only the narrow buffer of **6875 W. Blvd** separating it from the development. This will be an unreasonable and unwelcome intrusion into what is presently a meeting of all our backyards. Obviously, a developer cannot understand our block, and cannot be expected to do more than pay lip service to any impact his project will have on the residents. His job is to exploit and profit from his purchase. As a consequence, we are now being threatened by the creation of a development in the centre of the block that will impact all our properties adversely.

However, it is the City's job to give us consideration. As well as new housing which was purchased in good faith in a neighborhood where there was no threat of subdivision or multiple homes on single properties, there are older houses and long-term residents who would be negatively affected by this intrusive development. It is the City's job to not join in this exploitation, but to protect us against it. Since the 1980's half the houses in this unique and bucolic block have been renovated or redeveloped at great cost, with the assumption that the current zoning would remain intact. No one who resides here in good faith wants a township in their backyard.

In no way does it seem reasonable to myself or my neighbors to trade the preservation of an old house for the integrity, privacy and value of our properties.

It would be less unreasonable to ONLY allow the developer to renovate the old house, convert it to a duplex and build another dwelling where the garage is currently located.

This project was originally the brainchild of Michael Townsend, a speculator who purchased **6825 W. Blvd** from the Oliver family (who had owned the property since the 1950's or 60's) for about \$4M several years ago. He let the property sit empty and become derelict for several years while he pushed the city to allow a zoning change so that he could maximize his profit. He finally sold it for double what he paid for it to the development company, Formwerks, which then took this idea further, drew up plans and submitted them to the city. It is clear that this is just a profit-making exercise by two speculators.

Kerrisdale will not benefit from this. Our block will not benefit from this. Our children will not benefit from this. Vancouverites in need of housing will not benefit from this. City Hall needs to stop selling us down the river in exchange for short term gain.

It is not likely that there will be enough neighbor comments on this proposed zoning change to adequately reflect what this will mean to residents of this block. The two properties immediately behind **6825 W. Blvd** are **6812 Arbutus**, which empty and for sale (currently being flipped for more than double what the longtime owner sold it for a few years ago), and **6836 Arbutus** which is also empty.

Out of the 27 houses in the block, there are 10 houses that appear empty and 2 which are active construction sites. It seems doubtful that any of these property owners will get involved in commenting on the proposed change.

The neighboring property at **6875 W. Blvd** is owned by another speculator, Peter Campa, a businessman who owns several properties in the area and will no doubt move forward with development plans of his own if Formwerks' proposal is approved. Another large property on the boulevard, **6775 W. Blvd**, was recently sold by the sister of Michael Townsend (the investor who flipped **6825 W. Blvd**) and is probably being held by the new owner with an eye to redevelopment. [Michael Townsend's father, Ken Townsend, was responsible for the triple subdivision of **2016 W. 51st Ave.** in the 1960's -- long considered an eyesore by the residents of the block.] So there are definitely speculators waiting in the wings for an opportunity to capitalize on a go-ahead for Formwerks' mini-village.

Another point to consider is that any new houses in the backyard of **6825 W. Blvd** will be exempt from the Empty Home Tax as they will 1. be hidden, and 2. most likely have a useful No Rentals strata restriction.

Here are some excerpts from my email to the city dated August 31, 2017. Some of this will be redundant.

HISTORIC CHARACTER OF BLOCK

If the proposal for a zoning change for 6825 W. Blvd goes through, it will be nothing more than carte blanche to build more expensive housing for wealthy absentee foreigners. This will not be affordable housing. This will not benefit anyone except the owner/builder. This will not help to preserve the historic character of our neighborhood, which is in the property size and the meeting of our properties, resulting from the absence of back lanes that creates a park in the centre of the block, rather than in the buildings themselves.

CITY PRESERVING LOT SIZE

Why is it necessary to give this developer no-holds-barred to build anything he wants in exchange for preserving a large old house that has questionable historic or architectural value? It would be a far more valuable act of heritage preservation to safeguard historic lot sizes in our neighborhood.

In no way does it seem reasonable to me to trade the preservation of this old house for the integrity and privacy of the backyards in our block.

After allowing the subdivisions of 2016 W. 51st Ave. [adding 2008 and 2050 W. 51st] and 2007 W. 53rd [2015 W. 53rd] in the 1960's, and 2049 W. 53rd [2055 W. 53rd] in 1972, the city apparently allowed no more subdivisions to occur in the block bounded by W. Blvd and Arbutus St., and W. 51st and W. 53rd Avenues. This was followed by the rebuilding of many homes, firmly establishing that this block would continue to preserve its single family home status and lot sizes -- without back alleys that would facilitate further development. Though the last two subdivisions were subject to backyard easements being taken by the city for a future lane, the city abandoned this effort. So, though farmland that occupied this block was subdivided into large exurban land parcels in the early 1900's, and then divided again, after 1972 this ceased to occur. This established a basis for preserving lots for single family homes that have remained unchanged for 45 to 70 years.

EXAMPLE OF CITY MAINTAINING LOT SIZE IN 2015

When homeowner Anneliese Hunger (2061 W. 53rd Ave.) applied to the city in 2014 to be allowed to purchase a few feet of land from her neighbor (2075 W. 53rd Ave.) so that their two properties could be divided into three 40'

lots, ready for development of modest homes, city planners turned her down, saying at a public hearing that the city's intent was to maintain existing lot sizes in the block.

Mrs. Hunger subsequently sold her property in 2015, and it is currently being developed into a large single family house.

ELEVATION

While this proposed development will be invisible from W. Boulevard (which has almost no pedestrians, only a modest amount of traffic and no houses facing it), it will certainly create chaos in the interior of the block -- visible to almost every home on Arbutus and on W. 53rd. This will be exacerbated by the elevation of the lot, which is uphill from every house on those two streets. The land elevation of 6825 W. Blvd at the street is 187'. The street elevation of the house that it backs onto at 6812 Arbutus is 36'. A very conservative guess might be that the maximum building height of 41' would become 50' or 60', equivalent to having a 5 or 6 storey buildings in the centre of the block. Visually, this will be unavoidable and offensive.

NOISE

This house has been rented out for several years to groups of people, demonstrating to everyone in the block what the noise level will be like if nine families occupy a property that formerly only housed one. Not only will there be nine homes in this space, there will also be 15 parking spots and an access road running along its southern perimeter. This access road will be perpendicular to six backyards on W. 53rd Ave., with only the narrow buffer of 6875 W. Blvd separating it from these homes. This will be an unreasonable and unwelcome violation of what is presently a quiet, park-like confluence of all our backyards. Obviously this developer cannot understand our block, and cannot be expected to do more than pay lip service to any negative impact his project will have on the residents. His job is to exploit and profit from this property; as a consequence we are now being threatened by the creation of a development in the centre of the block.

CITY'S OBLIGATION TO US

However, it is the City's job to give us consideration; as well as new housing which was purchased in good faith in a neighborhood where there was no threat of subdivision or multiple homes on single properties, there are older houses and long-term residents who would be negatively affected by this unprecedented and inappropriate development. It is the City's job to not join in this exploitation, but to protect us against it. Since the 1980's, half the houses in this unique and bucolic block have been renovated or redeveloped at great cost, with the assumption that the current zoning would remain intact. No one who resides here in good faith wants a 'city' in their backyard.

In no way does it seem reasonable to myself or my neighbors to trade the preservation of one old house for the beauty, integrity and privacy of our own backyards.

WHAT WE THINK IS REASONABLE

It would be less wildly unreasonable for the developer to convert the old house to a duplex, and build another dwelling where the garage is currently located, creating three homes where there had previously been one, and nothing more.

If not allowing this development to proceed means demolishing the old house, so be it -- we would rather preserve the sanctity of our backyards.

BACKSTORY OF DEVELOPING THIS PROPERTY

This project was the brainchild of Michael Townsend, a speculator who purchased 6825 W. Blvd from the Oliver family (who had owned the property since the 1950's or 60's) for about 4M several years ago. He let the property sit empty and become derelict while he pushed the city to allow a zoning change so that he could make a maximum profit from it. He finally sold it to a development company (Formwerks) for 8M, which then took this idea further and drew up plans and submitted them to the city.

It is clear that this is just exploitative money grab by two speculators.

WHY THERE MAY NOT BE MUCH RESPONSE

It is not likely that there will be enough neighbor comments on this proposed zoning change to adequately reflect what this will mean to residents of this block. The two properties immediately behind 6825 W. Blvd are 6812 Arbutus, which is for sale (currently being flipped for more than double what the owners paid for it a couple of years ago), and 6836 Arbutus, which is under construction.

*Out of the 27 houses in the block, there are about 10 houses that appear empty (including 4 houses for sale, 3 additional houses that appear unoccupied, and 3 construction sites). *This may be out of date* Formwerks has employed strategic timing; it seems doubtful that any of these property owners will get involved in commenting on the proposed change.*

Additionally, one of the larger houses on the boulevard, 6775 W. Blvd (recently on the market), belongs to the sister of the investor who originally bought 6825 W. Blvd and flipped it; the neighboring property at 6875 W. Blvd is owned by another investor, Peter Campa, who is probably preparing to sell this rental house and is waiting to see what will happen next.

VACANT HOUSE TAX

Another point to consider is that any new houses in the backyard of 6825 W. Blvd will be exempt from the vacant house tax as they will be hidden, and most likely will be benefited by a helpful No Rentals strata restriction.

INTENT OF INFILL HOUSING + HISTORIC PRESERVATION

We want the city to remember that they represented the intent of infill housing and zoning changes as a means to provide Vancouverites with needed affordable housing, not to gift wealthy outsiders with investment opportunities. This means not being unjustifiably generous to developers building expensive homes. The city also has to stop enacting policies that work against the interest of its citizens and that allow predatory developers to strike self-serving bargains with city hall and profit at our expense.

No - we do not want a pricey compound invading all our backyards so a developer can make a pile of money.

Historic preservation is meant to curb developers, not provide a loophole to enhance their opportunism and enable their greed.

CONCLUSION

We do not want historic preservation at any cost. It is not worth giving up the integrity of our block to save a single old house that may have some historic value, but no value at all compared to the value of the single-family history of our block.

Kerrisdale will not benefit from this. Our block will not benefit from this. Our children will not benefit from this. Vancouverites in need of affordable housing will not benefit from this. City hall needs to stop selling us down the river in exchange for short term gain.

**Please do not change the zoning for 6825 West Boulevard.
Please do not allow Formwerks to proceed with this project.**

Submitted by

S. Vischer

s. 22(1) Personal and
Confidential