



ROCKLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 5276, Station B, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4

Winter 2011 Newsletter

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Please share a copy of the RNA Newsletter with a neighbour.

COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

by Geoff Young

In my last article I noted that there has been some concern in the neighbourhood about two houses nearing the end of construction on Despard. Concerns were raised that the two houses were built on a single lot under the guise of a duplex, that they seem to be taller and closer together than typical houses on the street, and that they also have roof decks, made possible by flat roofs, that overlook neighbours' back yards in a way that would not have been expected in the past. The back yards of the houses have been built up above the natural ground level.

I was surprised to find that our zoning bylaw did not have provisions requiring duplexes to be truly attached, since this issue has arisen in other areas of the city in the past. New technologies and new styles that have made roof decks more popular and practical are a more recent issue. Similarly, it appears that new blasting technologies and lower costs for moving large quantities of fill have made it more attractive to change the natural contour of the lot much more dramatically than was possible in the past. All taken together, the planning department has some work in front of it to develop a new zoning that will address these issues

As a first step, on December 16 Council instructed staff to bring forward to public hearing changes that would reduce the permitted height in the R1-A (single family) zone from

the current 11 metres down to 7.6 metres, typical of the rest of the City. The new zoning (if adopted) will create a new Development Permit area in Rockland and establish design guidelines that would apply to new attached and semi-attached dwellings. However, the proposed zoning is unlikely to address all of the issues of concern.

When I became aware that another house on Despard (1597) was to be demolished to make way for a new larger dwelling I became concerned that further unsympathetic developments would occur before the new zoning went through all the required processes. I therefore suggested that it would be prudent to have new duplex (attached and semi-attached) dwelling developments in Rockland brought to the attention of council if they were likely to be in conflict with the proposed zoning. My colleagues agreed and this provision was adopted by council on January 27.

The re-zoning process and the Development Approval process are clumsy and long drawn-out, and also can be very uncertain, depending as they do on the views of the council members of the day and the eloquence of the developer and the speakers at the public hearing. I believe it is far preferable for the zoning to be written in a way that carefully specifies what may and may not be built. That way neighbours, developers and prospective purchasers are all certain about the way that the neighbourhood might change. I hope that we can eventually arrive at this situation in Rockland.

Please contact me at geoffyoung@shaw.ca with any comments or questions.

Editor's note: See page 2 for photographs of Despard Avenue houses.



1597 Despard, 2001. Hallmark Society Archives photo.



1535 Despard, 2001. Now demolished for new construction. Hallmark Society Archives photo.



1597 Despard - new building under construction. John Edwards photo.



New construction, south side. Helen Edwards Photo.



Existing housing on south side. Helen Edwards Photo.



Construction is chewing up the roadside with tire tracks all along both sides of the road. Helen Edwards photo.

MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE ROCKLAND WOODLAND GARDEN by Anthony Sebastian



I was curious to know how long I have been involved in some way in helping in the Woodland Garden. I asked Janet Simpson when the Rockland Neighbourhood Association had first leased the city lot on the corner of Joan Crescent and Craigdarroch Road. She e-mailed me: In 1996. That's when we explored options for garden development. Don Hamilton was one of the leaders in getting it started. The decision was to restore the Garry oak habitat on the site. On April 5th, 1998, under Dave Clark's leadership, a work party of neighbours cleared away large amounts of invasive

trees, shrubs, and vines. I can show you photos – you may be in them if you remember doing initial clearing.

I came to Victoria in August 1996. Sometime between 1996-1998 I started to help get rid of the English ivy that covered much of the upper area of the garden. I recall “peeling off sheets” of ivy that completely covered the beautiful stone bank we now see along the stairway. Our attack on the English ivy was a complete success.

We then attacked the beautiful (but non-native and very invasive) bluebells, and replaced them with even more beautiful Camas. Quite a few Camas bulbs had actually survived years of dormancy below the ivy, and once exposed, began to bloom! Dave Clark did a lot of work spreading our Camas patch. The pesky bluebells, however, are not going away easily.

I remember when some truckloads of good loam soil were brought into the upper half of the garden. Maybe that was in 1998 when there was a working party to carry the soil up into the garden and spread it out. Next a number of native bushes, such as Mock orange, Flowering red currant, Indian plum, and Oceanspray, were planted. These are for the most part doing very well but will need some pruning if they are not to grow to enormous heights or widths.

In this upper garden, Woodland strawberries, Nootka roses, a Saskatoon bush, Columbine, Yarrow, Fawn lilies, Shooting stars, and even Chocolate lilies are good to see. The stone stairway was repaired and a new steel railing was installed. The garden spots on either side are inviting: Sword ferns, Oregon grape, Licorice ferns.

At the top of the stairs (and also on the west end) glass-covered paintings of most of the plants in the garden identify them by name and color.

The Lower West Half of the Garden

This area, which takes in about half of the entire garden, is still mostly covered with precious Snowberry bushes. Paths have been created through these bushes to open viewing areas, to connect with the upper area, and to allow for entrances from the west end. Some of the Snowberry bushes have been removed to give space for other plants, such as hundreds of Camas and Fawn lilies, tall Goldenrod, and Western buttercup. One such area is now the home for five native rhododendrons (*Macrophyum*). These are still small and require tender, loving care during their “baby” years, but they will bring color. There is room for more native plants, which would enhance the area with color and variety. There is a tall Yew tree that was brought into the

garden as an adult. It is struggling in its old age; however, a healthy young one is growing up.

Along the west end street, the prize is an *Arbutus* tree. After years of special “babying,” it has become a robust “teenager.” This west area has lots of afternoon and summer evening sun. It needs more plants and flowers. It needs a flower-loving gardener.

Janet Ellen Simpson has had the responsibility of overseeing and caring for the Woodland Garden for many years. She is totally dedicated to this task despite her many other jobs. She knows her native plants (even some of their Latin names) and she also knows where to find new ones. She needs the help of others who love plants and working with them.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT **by Helen Edwards**

The featured speaker, Deb Day, Director of Planning and Development, City of Victoria, outlined her topics as: how heritage buildings can be protected, planning in the City of Victoria and how to conserve heritage. The City recognizes the value of heritage at the community and city level and are currently updating the Official Community Plan. This will include policies to support heritage conservation. The key concepts include physical, cultural, historical places, heritage value and community values are taken into account. Heritage Sustainability is contained in a Community Planning discussion paper. A Draft will be ready in 2011 for public consultation. Victoria has adopted a Thematic Framework Concept that brings the framework in the OCP. She asked if there are there gaps in what we have valued as heritage? In the past, there was an emphasis on built heritage but we now include associations with people and events. The heritage register does not include examples of diverse history. The City needs guidelines to present heritage to the community.

In Rockland, some sites have heritage status either register or designated and heritage is valued in this neighbourhood.

The Planning Department is involved in the identification of heritage value through heritage register, protection of heritage through designation, financial support for heritage through grants, and educational programs for the general public. The Local Government Act provides for heritage register. All rezoning, variances, demolition permits and building permits are reviewed by the Heritage Planner. Designation is achieved by a hearing process and a by-law. It involves an application by owner and volunteer research

conducted by Victoria Heritage Foundation. Exterior alteration are regulated through heritage alteration permit and the building is protected from demolition – permit must go to Council. With a Heritage Alteration Permit, minor alterations are approved by staff, while major alterations need a Council decision. The Heritage Advisory Committee provides guidance to Council. If variances are required, the heritage application permit must go through a full public hearing. For some owners going through the process is helpful as they can learn of better ways to do the work

The City is working toward having heritage houses live on and function today and staff make judgments based on the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada. The House grants program managed through Victoria Heritage Foundation. They are for designated heritage houses and pay 25% of cost of exterior repairs or restoration. Eligible costs include roof, foundation, storm windows, painting with a maximum of \$20,000 per house over a 10-year period. This Old House series was researched by volunteers and they have also written a series of walking tours and present heritage homeowners workshops. There is also a new website for the Victoria Heritage Foundation with more information.

Heritage planning is important in the City of Victoria: celebrating our history, engaging our community, building our future.

Deb Day then answered questions from the audience.

Invited guests present were: Geoff Young – Councillor for City of Victoria, Ralston Alexander – Victoria Police Board, Greg Wiltshire – Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Mike Russell – Community Relations Officer, and Heather Jaeb – Craigdarroch Castle

President Janet Simpson introduced the directors present. She noted the passing of Jean Gubby who was elected at the last AGM and passed away last year. She also thanked volunteers including Don Hamilton (website), Heather Grampp (new arrivals), Helen Edwards (newsletter and taking minutes tonight), Jane Wheatley (membership table) and Bob June (refreshments). Janet thanked Government House for hosting our soirée (and noted we have been invited back again) and the Friends of the Government House Gardens for the use of their meeting space. She noted that there are enough houses in Rockland for four walking tours – Rockland is a jewel for the entire region so we must be vigilant. Changes are coming but we must do the best for Rockland. Two-headed monsters joined by a trellis are an issue. There has been some success on this issue as new by-laws are being written. The City is listening to us.

Garden suites are being proposed for the back yard of homes. They can be 2-storeys in height and 600 square feet and can be placed 2 feet from adjacent property lines. On a slope these could appear to be much higher. We have already exceeded our regional growth strategy and more densification will spoil the area. Daycare: These can be used for profit. Any home can be converted. There is no community consultation and no rezoning. Such a facility does not belong in the heart of an established neighbourhood. The public must be consulted.

The Board has prepared letters on these issues for members to sign. These will be forwarded to the City of Victoria.

Members' concerns included tour buses on St. Charles, rats at the duck ponds, and deer. It was suggested that the RNA meet more than once a year. Lloyd Olilla thanked to Janet Simpson and the past board for their work. Bob June reminded members that Directors' meetings are open to all members. Bring your ideas to the executive for action. We need to balance input and concerns. Check the website for current issues – all minutes are posted there. Meetings are the second Wednesday of every month at the Gardeners Cottage at 1401 Rockland.

Bill Brooks used a tarp to illustrate the potential size of a garden suite and asked members to please consider their neighbours if you are considering a garden suite. It will affect at least two neighbours. Geoff Young advised that each garden suite application will require rezoning so there will be public input.

We need to make sure everybody knows about RNA. Let us know if there are new people in your area and we can contact them.

LAND USE COMMITTEE REPORT

by Bill Brooks

The Land Use Committee had a very busy year in 2010 dealing with City of Victoria bylaw changes, OCP meetings, several local zoning changes and too many development situations that, if continued unabated, will dramatically change the look and feel of Rockland.

The 2010 LUC believes that the historic character of Rockland, like the Historic Downtown, is one of the defining features of Victoria that draws visitors from around the world. One has only to count the increased number of tourist buses along Rockland and Moss Streets to know that the tourist industry values our street vistas.

We know that there will pressure to increase density in the area and feel that the only way that the character of the area will be retained is through a Development Permit system. While this is not part of the new zoning changes, our committee will continue to work for neighbourhood participation in any new construction.

Specific developments that the LUC became involved with in 2010 included:

- New construction at 1535, 1537 Despard
- Conversion at 1238 Richardson
- Re-zoning application at 1004 – 1022 Pemberton

As well we prepared and submitted comments and recommendations with respect to:

- Revised zoning bylaws and regulations
- Garden suite policy
- Impact on neighbours and green-scape of new developments in the area
- Daycare policy

Our official responses are available on the Rockland website.

On an ongoing basis we anticipate that there will be more development applications which will cause neighbourhood concern. We will continue to pressure the city to implement a development permit system for all development in the Rockland area as per the 1987 Rockland Plan which was adapted by council.

In closing; Rockland is the history of Victoria that is worth preserving. Each one of us must get involved and do our part if we want to preserve its unique flavour and historical charm for future generations to enjoy.

RESTORATION OF ROCKLAND MANSION COMPLETE

by Helen Edwards

Many in Rockland will remember the evening of June 23, 2008 when roof of the historic Rockland mansion at 1015 Moss Street was consumed by flames. The owner committed to restoring the building but it has been a long and costly process. In order to comply with current building code, it was necessary to raise the entire building and pour a new concrete foundation, rock foundations no longer adequate to support a residence of this size.

The home was designed by Percy Leonard James and his brother Douglas for Dr. James Douglas Helmcken. Built

in the Tudor Revival style with American shingle style elements in 1912 during the height of Victoria's building boom, it has remained a landmark since its construction. Despite being divided into suites in 1937, it had retained its extensive Edwardian landscaping and presented a welcome green space on a busy residential street.

Now, almost three years later, the project is finally finished and the residence will again be occupied.

We present a photographic documentation of the work - look in amazement.



Fire damage, reframing. Photos courtesy Steven Chin.



New roof framing. Steven Chin photo.



Rear of house during restoration. Steven Chin photo.



House lifted for new foundation. Steven Chin photo.



Building restored and being occupied after almost 3 years. Helen Edwards photo.

RNA BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 2011-2012

President: Janet Simpson
Vice President: Bob June
Secretary: David Clark
Treasurer: Vacant
Directors: Bill Brooks
 John Caldwell
 John Edwards
 David Hambleton
 Jane Wheatley

RNA Email Server List

Would you like to hear more about events in Rockland?
 Please join the neighbours list through the RNA website
 at www.rockland.bc.ca.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The Rockland Neighbourhood Association Newsletter is published four times a year. It is distributed electronically to all members. Submissions from members on issues of interest are always accepted and photos are particularly welcome.

Deadlines for the upcoming issues are:

Spring 2011 - April 15, 2011
 Summer 2011 - July 15, 2011
 Autumn 2011 - October 15, 2011
 Winter 2012 - February 15, 2012

All submissions should be sent to Communication Chair
 John Edwards - jcsedwards@gmail.com.