

P.O. Box 1749 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3A5 Canada

# Item No. 10.2.1 Halifax and West Community Council September 19, 2019

SUBJECT:	Case 22171: Appeal of Variance Refusal – 3681 Memorial Drive, Halifax
DATE:	September 5, 2019
	Steve Higgins, Manager, Current Planning
SUBMITTED BY:	-Original Signed-
TO:	Chair and Members of Halifax and West Community Council

### <u>ORIGIN</u>

Appeal of the Development Officer's decision to refuse a variance.

#### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Charter; Part VIII, Planning and Development

- s. 250, a development officer may grant variances in specified land use by-law or development agreement requirements but under 250(3) a variance may not be granted if:
  (a) the variance violates the intent of the development agreement or land use by-law;
  (b) the difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area;
  - (c) the difficulty experienced results from an intentional disregard for the requirements of the development agreement or land use by-law.
- s. 251, regarding variance requirements for notice, appeals and associated timeframes.
- s. 252, regarding requirements for appeal decisions and provisions for variance notice cost recovery.

#### RECOMMENDATION

In accordance with Administrative Order One, the following motion shall be placed on the floor:

#### That the appeal be allowed.

Community Council approval of the appeal will result in approval of the variance.

Community Council denial of the appeal will result in refusal of the variance.

Staff recommend that Halifax and West Community Council deny the appeal.

### BACKGROUND

A variance request has been submitted for 3681 Memorial Drive in Halifax to permit an addition to the front of an existing single unit dwelling as shown on Map 2. To facilitate this project, a variance has been requested to relax the required front yard setback from a required minimum of 15 feet to 8 feet. All other requirements of the Land Use Bylaw are met.

The purpose of this addition is to create additional living space in the dwelling. The property slopes upwards from the sidewalk and the grade at the front of the dwelling is proposed to be altered to allow direct, atgrade access from the driveway into the current basement level (Attachment A). Retaining walls are proposed to be erected along the sides of the property and landscaped steps are proposed along the side of the dwelling.

#### Site Details:

#### Zoning

The property is located in the R-2 (General Residential) Zone of the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-Law (LUB). The relevant requirements of the LUB and the related variance request is as identified below:

	Zone Requirement	Variance Requested
Minimum Front Yard	15 feet	8 feet

For the reasons detailed in the Discussion section of this report, the Development Officer has refused the requested variance (Attachment B) and the applicant subsequently appealed the refusal (Attachment C). Property owners within the notifications area (Map 1) have been notified of the appeal of the refusal and the matter is now before Halifax and West Community Council for decision.

#### **Process for Hearing an Appeal**

Administrative Order Number One, the *Procedures of the Council Administrative Order* requires that Council, in hearing any appeal, place a motion to "allow the appeal" on the floor, even if the motion is in opposition to the staff recommendation. The recommendation section of this report contains the required wording of the appeal motion as well as a staff recommendation.

For the reasons outlined in this report, staff recommend that Community Council deny the appeal and uphold the decision of the Development Officer to refuse the request for variances.

#### DISCUSSION

#### **Development Officer's Assessment of Variance Request:**

In hearing a variance appeal, Council may make any decision that the Development Officer could have made, meaning their decision is limited to the criteria provided in the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*.

The *Charter* sets out the following criteria by which the Development Officer may <u>not</u> grant variances to requirements of the Land Use By-law:

*"250(3) A variance may not be granted if:* 

- (a) the variance violates the intent of the development agreement or land use by-law;
- (b) the difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area;
- (c) the difficulty experienced results from an intentional disregard for the requirements of the development agreement or land use by-law."

To be approved, any proposed variance must not conflict with any of the criteria. The Development Officer's assessment of the proposal relative to each criterion is as follows:

#### 1. Does the proposed variance violate the intent of the land use by-law?

Building setbacks in the by-law help to ensure that structures maintain adequate separation from adjacent structures, streets and property lines for access, safety and aesthetics.

The relaxation of front yard setback from 15 feet to 8 feet is a significant reduction in the required separation from the streetline. As proposed, the bulk of the addition would be in the form of a cantilevered structure projecting an additional 10 feet from the existing front building wall. The nature of the addition would impact the sightline along Memorial Drive and would be inconsistent with the established conditions inherent in the surrounding development. It is the Development Officer's opinion that this proposal violates the intent of the Land Use By-Law.

#### 2. Is the difficulty experienced general to properties in the area?

In evaluating variance requests, staff must determine if general application of the by-law creates a specific difficulty or hardship that is not broadly present in the area. If these circumstances exist, then consideration can be given to the requested variance. If the difficulty is general to properties in the area, then the variance should be refused.

Conditions on the property in question do not result in difficulties or challenges that are not broadly present in the area. Lot configurations, sizes and topographical conditions for detached housing are highly consistent in the area and the front building line is also well established and uniform in in the vicinity.

The existing dwelling meets all requirements of the R-2 Zone, including the required front yard setback. The abutting dwellings along the same side of the street are setback at similar distance to the existing dwelling at approximately 18 feet to the front property line and 24.5 feet to the curb (Attachment D).

It is the Development Officer's opinion that the difficulty experienced in this case is general to properties in the area and the variance request was subsequently refused.

# 3. Is the difficulty experienced the result of an intentional disregard for the requirements of the land use by-law?

In reviewing a proposal for intentional disregard for the requirements of the Land Use By-law, there must be evidence that the applicant had knowledge of the requirements of the By-law relative to their proposal and then took deliberate action which was contrary to those requirements.

That is not the case in this request. The applicant has applied for a variance in good faith prior to commencing any work on the property. Intentional disregard of By-law requirements was not a consideration in this variance request.

#### Appellant's Submission:

While the criteria of the *HRM Charter* limits Council to making any decision that the Development Officer could have made, the appellants have raised certain points in their letters of appeal (Attachment C) for

Council's consideration. These points are summarized and staff's comments on each are provided in the following table:

Appellant's Appeal Comments	Staff Response
"As the property line is recessed 6'7" from the sidewalk – meaning we don't actually own a substantial part of our front yard – the renovated house would still be about 15 feet from the sidewalk"	It is common that street boundary lines would extend beyond the sidewalk for maintenance and /or future sidewalk purposes. The measurement of the front yard is taken from the property boundary. The location of the front property line proximate to the location of the sidewalk is common to all properties within the neighbourhood.
The elevation of the property means that accessing the entryways can be daunting-especially in winter.	The elevation of the property relative to the driveway and the street is a common condition along this block of Memorial Drive. The existing design of the house is similar to adjacent homes.
The distance from the entryway to the sidewalk makes it a very unfriendly house. The proposed design would put us in a more cordial relation to the street.	The elevation of the property relative to the driveway and the street is a common condition along this block of Memorial Drive. The existing design of the house is similar to adjacent homes.

#### Conclusion:

Staff have reviewed all the relevant information in this variance proposal. As a result of that review, the variance request was refused as it was determined that the proposal conflicts with the statutory criteria provided by the *Charter*. The matter is now before Council to hear the appeal and render a decision.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications related to this variance. The administration of the variance proposal can be carried out within the approved 2019-2020 budget with existing resources.

#### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendation contained within this report.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement, as described by the Community Engagement Strategy, is not applicable to this process. The procedure for public notification is mandated by the *HRM Charter*.

Where a variance **refusal is appealed**, a hearing is held by Council to provide the opportunity for the applicant, all assessed owners within 100 metres of the variance and anyone who can demonstrate that they are specifically affected by the matter, to speak.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications.

# ALTERNATIVES

As noted throughout this report, Administrative Order One requires that Community Council consideration of this item must be in contact of a motion to allow the appeal. Council's options are limited to denial or approval of that motion.

- 1. Denial of the appeal motion would result in the denial of the variance. The would uphold the Development Officer's decision and this is staff's recommended alternative.
- 2. Approval of the appeal motion would result in the approval of the variance. This would overturn the decision of the Development Officer.

#### ATTACHMENTS

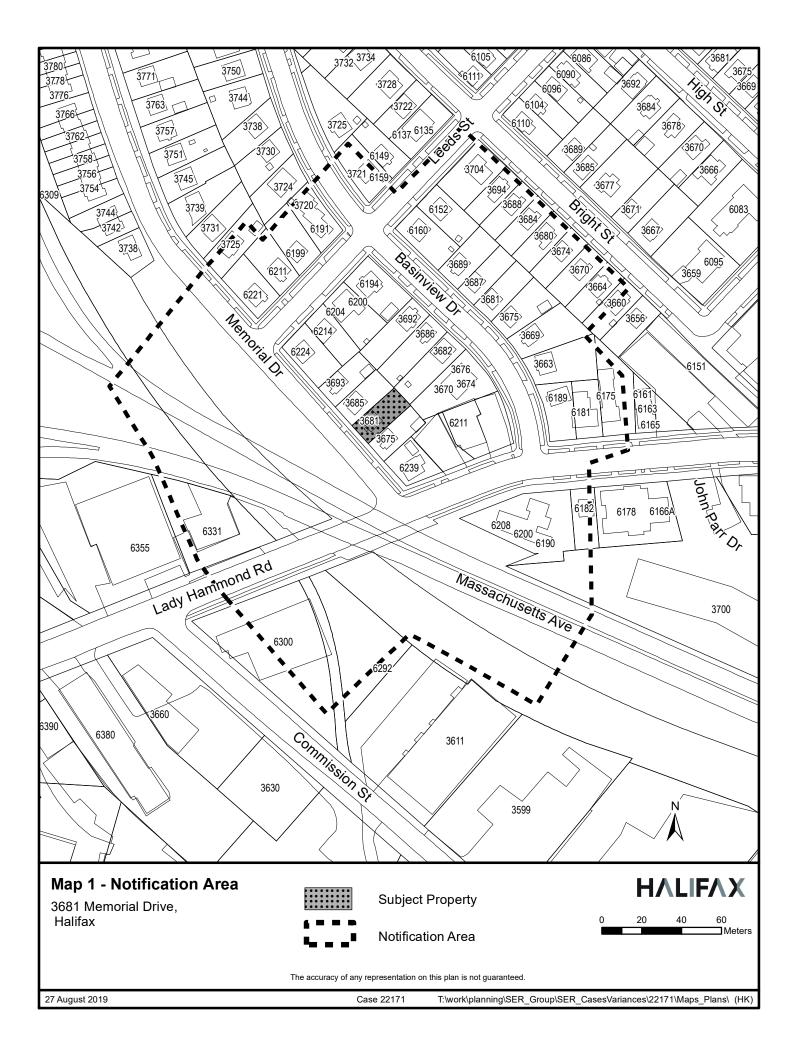
Map 1:	Notification Area
Map 2:	Site Plan
Attachment A:	Building Elevations
Attachment B:	Variance Refusal Letter
Attachment C:	Letter of Appeal from Applicant
Attachment D:	Site Photo

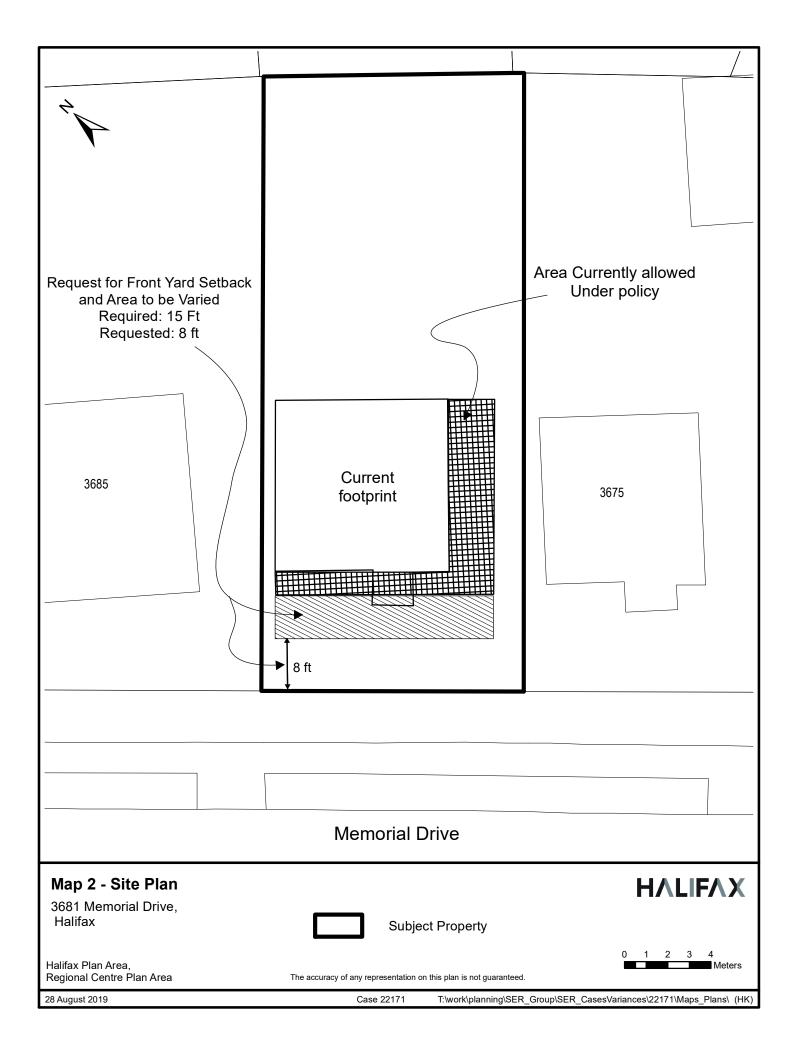
A copy of this report can be obtained online at <u>halifax.ca</u> or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by:	Ruth Treasure, Planner 1, 902.490.7455	
	Trevor Creaser, Development Officer   Principal Planner, 902.490.4416	

#### -Original Signed-

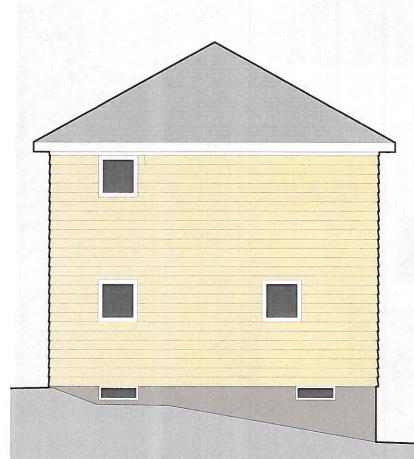
Report Approved by: Erin MacIntyre, Manager, Land Development & Subdivision, 902.490.1210







Existing Front View



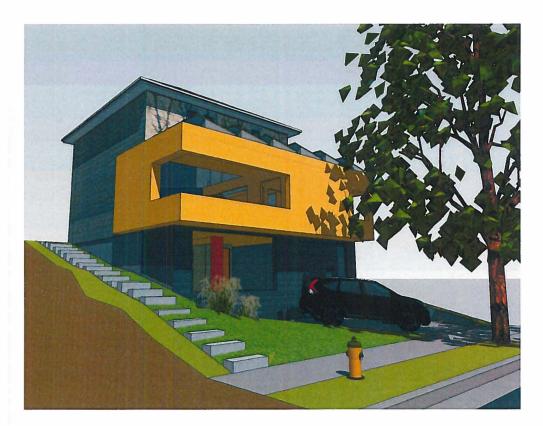
Existing North (side) Elevation



Proposed Front View



Proposed South (side) Elevation



Proposed Front View



May 21, 2019

3552 Veith Street Halifax, NS B3K 3H2

Dear

# RE: VARIANCE APPLICTION 22171: 3681 MEMORIAL DRIVE, HALIFAX NS. PID: 00019703

This will advise that I have refused your request for a variance from the requirements of the Halifax Peninsula Land Use Bylaw as follows:

Location: 3681 Memorial Drive, Halifax NS. PID: 00019703 Project Proposal: Request to vary front yard setback for addition to a single family dwelling

LUB Regulation	Requirement	Proposed
Minimum Front Yard Setback	15 feet	8 feet

Section 250(3) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter states that a variance may not be granted if:

- (a) the variance violates the intent of the land use bylaw;
- (b) the difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area; or
- (c) the difficulty experienced results from the intentional disregard for the requirements of the land use bylaw.

It is the opinion of the Development Officer that this variance application does not merit approval because:

- (a) the variance violates the intent of the land use bylaw;
- (b) the difficulty experienced is general to properties in the area;

Pursuant to Section 251 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter you have the right to appeal the decision of the Development Officer to the Municipal Council. The appeal must be in writing, stating the grounds of the appeal, and be directed to:

Municipal Clerk Halifax Regional Municipality Development Services - Western Region P.O. Box 1749 Halifax, NS B3J 3A5 clerks@halifax.ca

Your appeal must be filed on or before May 31, 2019.



Halifax Regional Municipality PO Box 1749, Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada B3J 3A5



If filing an appeal, be advised that your submission and appeal documents will form part of the public record, and will be posted on-line at www.halifax.ca. If you feel that information you consider to be personal is necessary for your appeal, please attach that as a separate document, clearly marked "PERSONAL". It will be provided to the committee and/or council members and staff, and will form part of the public record, but it will not be posted on-line. You will be contacted if there are any concerns.

If you have any questions or require clarification of any of the above, please contact Ruth Treasure at 902-490-7455.

Sincerely,

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Trevor Creaser, Principal Planner / Development Officer Halifax Regional Municipality

Kevin Arjoon, Municipal Clerk CC. Councillor Lindell Smith

HALIFAX REGIONAL

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MUNICIPAL CLERK

MUNICIPALITY .

3681 Memorial Dr. Halifax, NS B3K 5A3

31 May 2019

Kevin Arjoon Municipal Clerk Halifax Regional Municipality

Dear Mr. Arjoon,

Please accept this letter and accompanying documents as our appeal to council of the decisioned mentioned in the May 21, 2019 letter from Planner Trevor Creaser regarding variance application 22171. We are attaching that letter of decision, a letter sent by email to members of council, the architect's drawings, and some neighbourhood photos for context. We are comfortable making all the submitted information public. We hope council will consider the aesthetic and practical reasons why this variance would be in the best interests of both us and our neighbours, and is reasonable.

The variance - specifically, a reduction of the front yard setback - would enable a significant renovation of our home at 3681 Memorial Dr. After living in the home as a family for 11 years, with inadequate entryways accessed by significant exterior stairs, we propose to extend the house at the basement and first floor levels. This extension would allow some new living space including a second bathroom, south-west facing windows and solar panels on an extended 1st floor roof, and - all importantly for the function of the home - a basement level entry with no stairs.

These changes require a variance as we would extend forward 10 feet, meaning the construction would end eight feet from the property line, instead of 15 feet as normally required. As the property line is recessed 6'7" from the sidewalk - meaning we don't actually own a substantial part of our front yard - the renovated house would still be about 15 feet from the sidewalk and the excavated, permeable driveway would be adequate for a vehicle to be parked fully on our property, and at a right angle to the street (as required).

We appreciate that this is a significant variance. However, we hope council will consider it on its merits and in the context of our location. As you may appreciate from the photo of our home, the elevation of the property means that accessing the entryways can be daunting - especially in the winter. Also, the distance from the entryway to the sidewalk makes it a very unfriendly house. The proposed design would put us in more cordial relation to the street.

As we walk down Memorial Drive, on Leeds St. and Basinview, we see quite a bit of variation in terms of setbacks (please see some photos for illustration). It isn't at all remarkable until one is

our position of contemplating the rules and the limitation they seem to place on us. We could extend back with little constraint from the municipality, but we truly value our backyard, where our children play and we have several different garden beds and a rhubarb patch. Extending to the back would not allow us to get more south-west sunlight into the house, and it would not address the crucial entry issue. (We currently use the side entry, accessed via 8 exterior stairs. One enters on a 4ft x 4ft landing which is at the top of an interior set of stairs from the basement and at the bottom of more stairs to the first floor, with no room for footwear except on the stairs themselves.) The front yard, however, is extensive and completely unused.

Our small block of Memorial, between Lady Hammond and Leeds, is an unusual one: we're really on the verge of an industrial zone, with the view from our living room window currently being of a bright billboard and a chain link fence. There are no neighbours across the street. Many cars zip by on their way to Leeds St. and the NSCC-IT campus. While planning is important for establishing the fabric of a neighbourhood, we honestly don't feel like we're quite in a neighbourhood. Certainly, the proposed design would be an improvement to the appearance of our house and our little block.

If our appeal is unsuccessful, we will likely move. We'd be sad to leave the garden that we've developed over the past 10 years. I can't quite imagine how future owners might make the house work better, as the entry issue will be vexing for anyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm renards



May 21, 2019

3552 Veith Street Halifax, NS B3K 3H2

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halifax.ca

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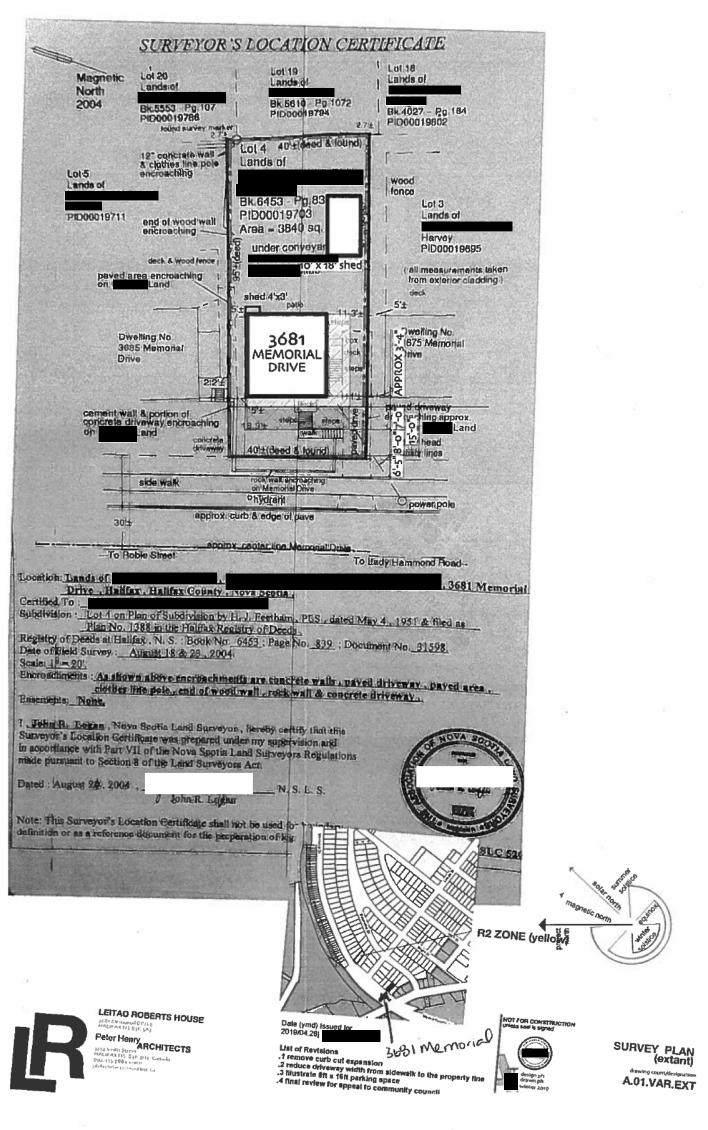
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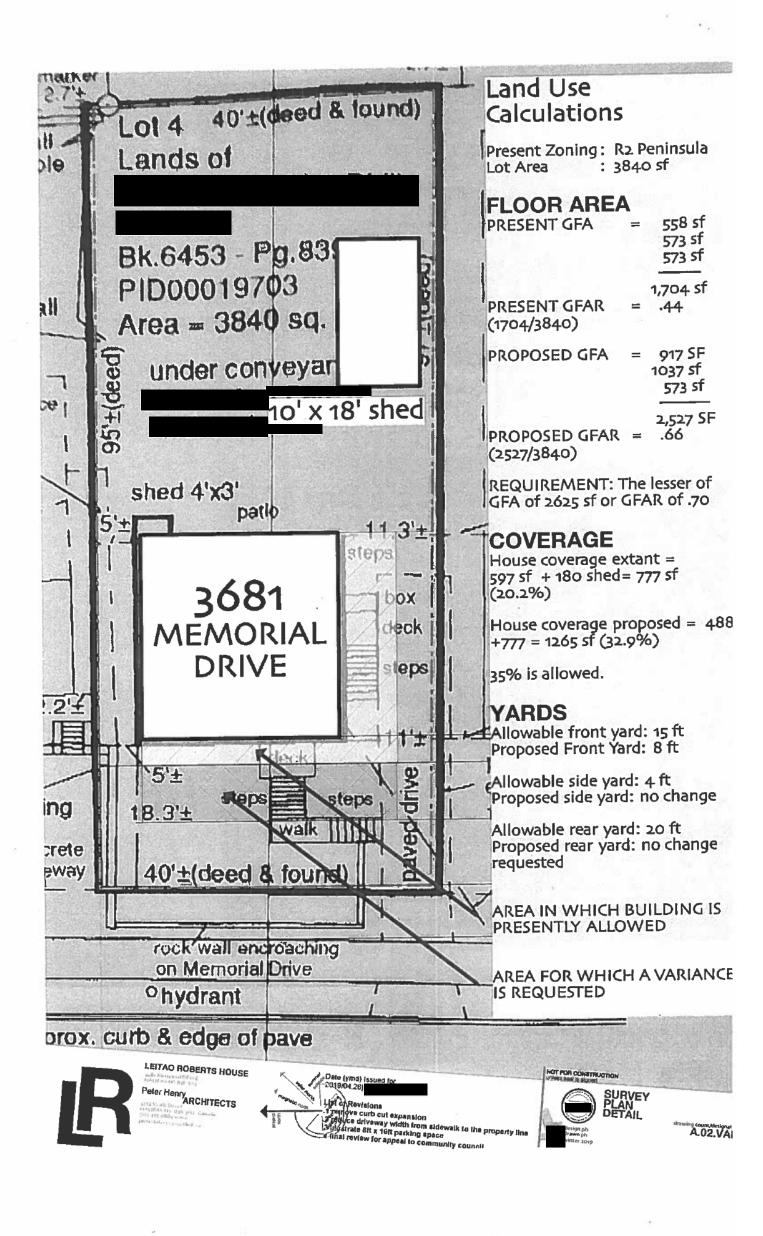
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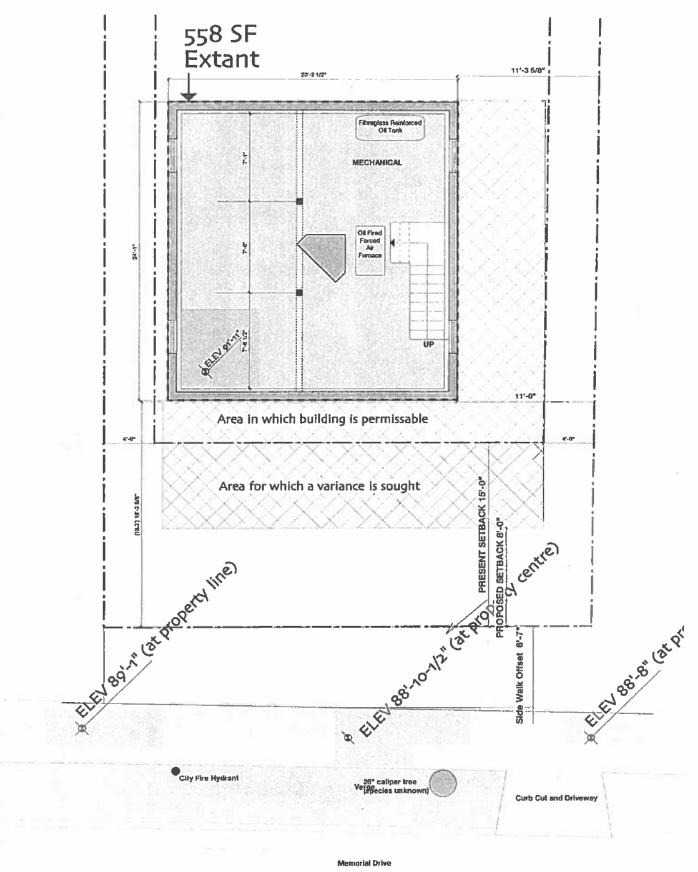
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Trevor Čreaser, Principal Planner / Development Officer Halifax Regional Municipality

cc. Kevin Arjoon, Municipal Clerk Councillor Lindell Smith



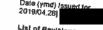






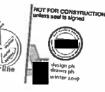


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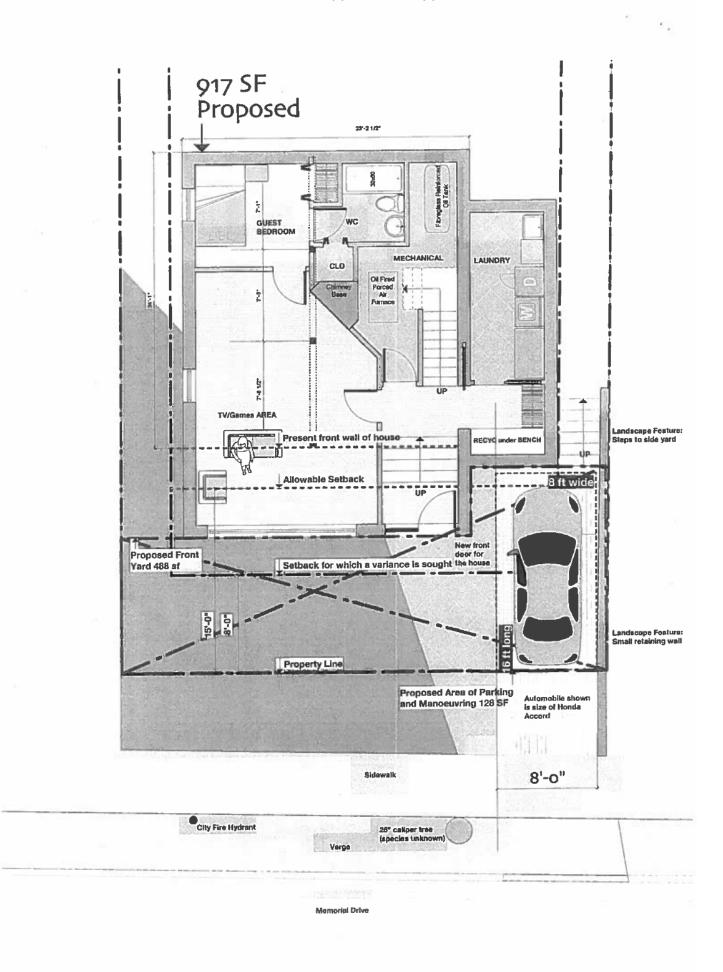


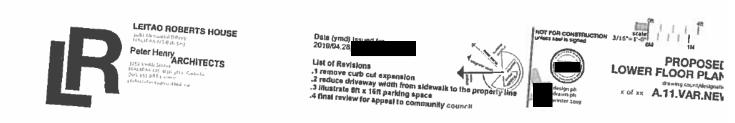


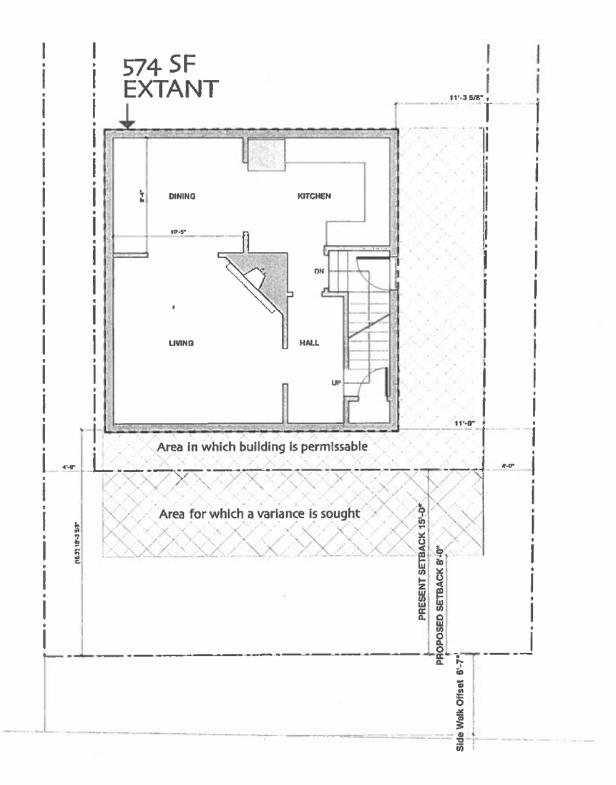
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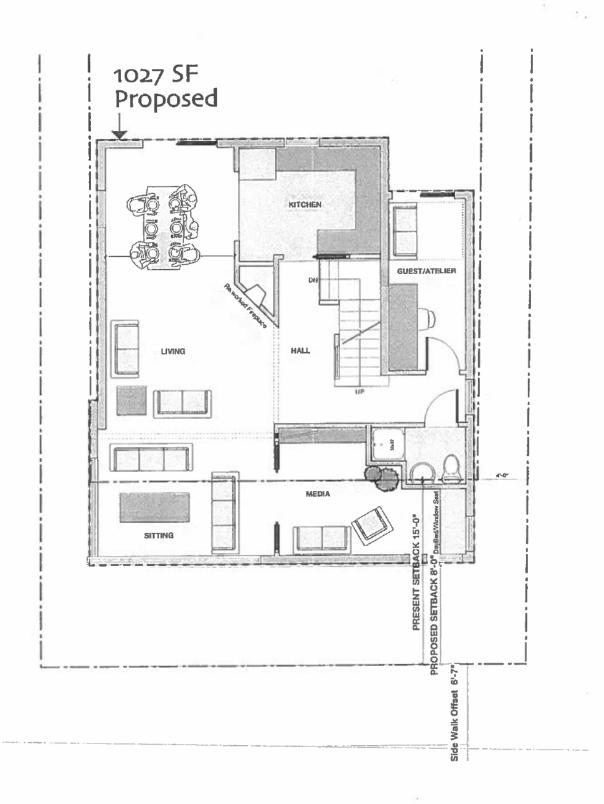


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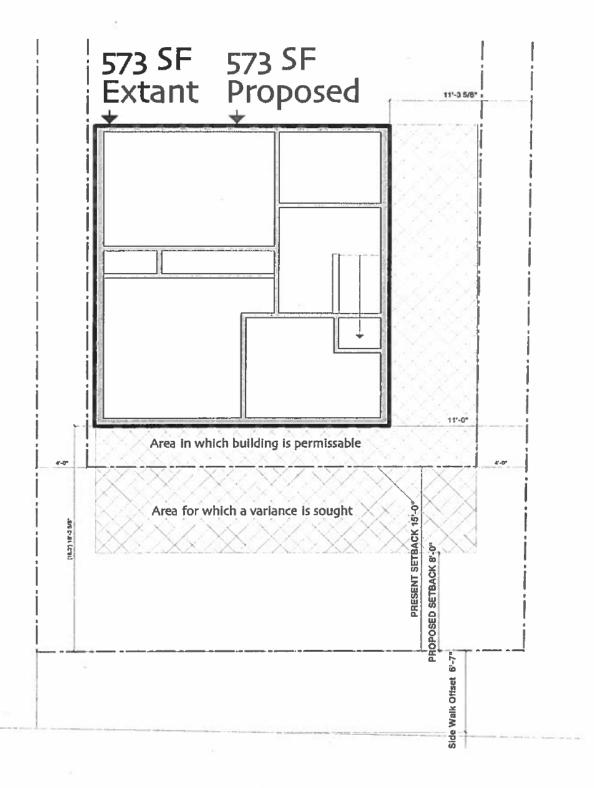
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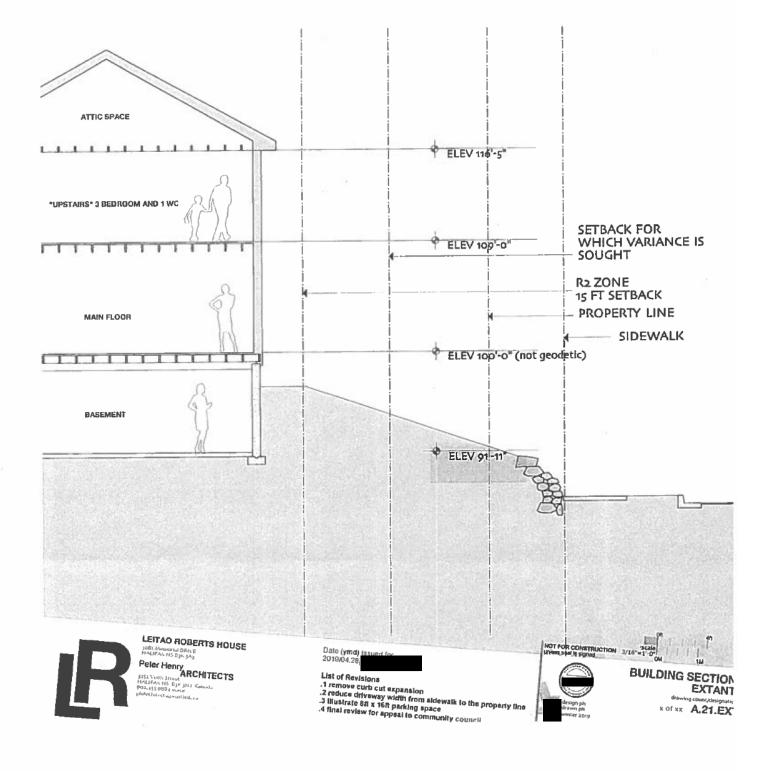


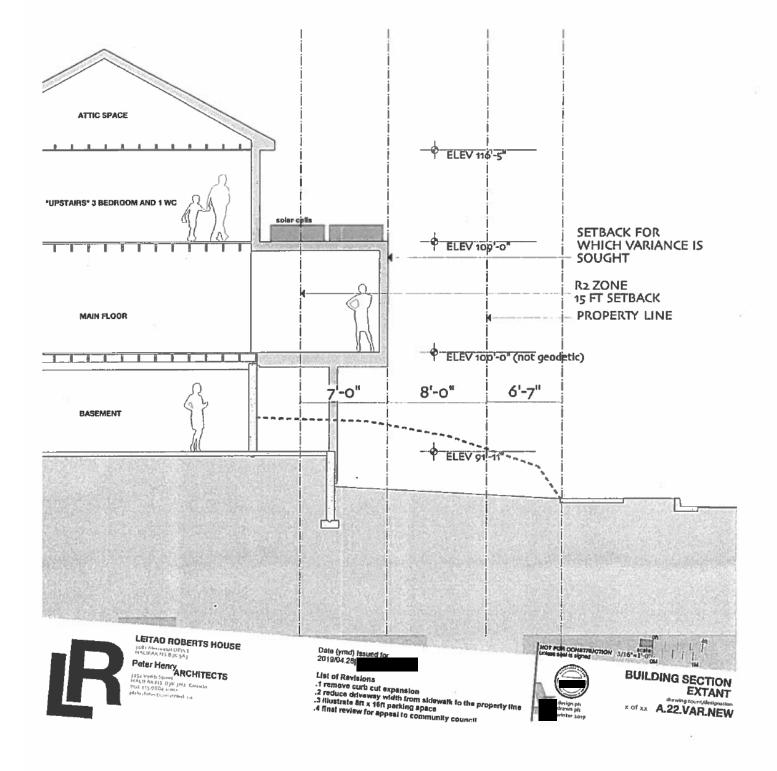
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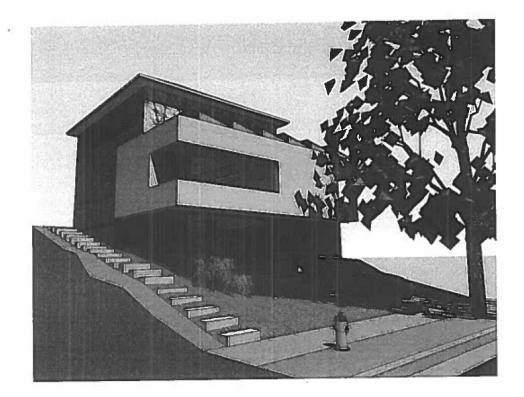


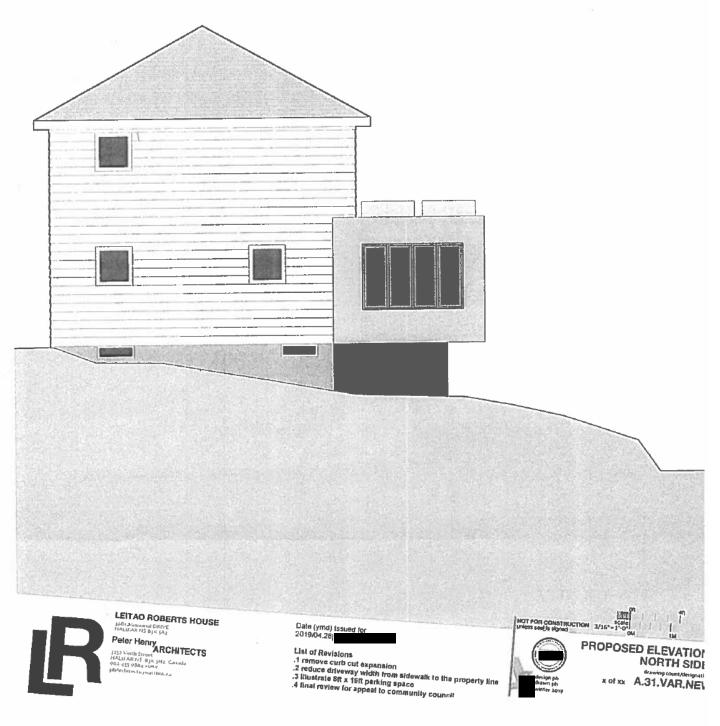
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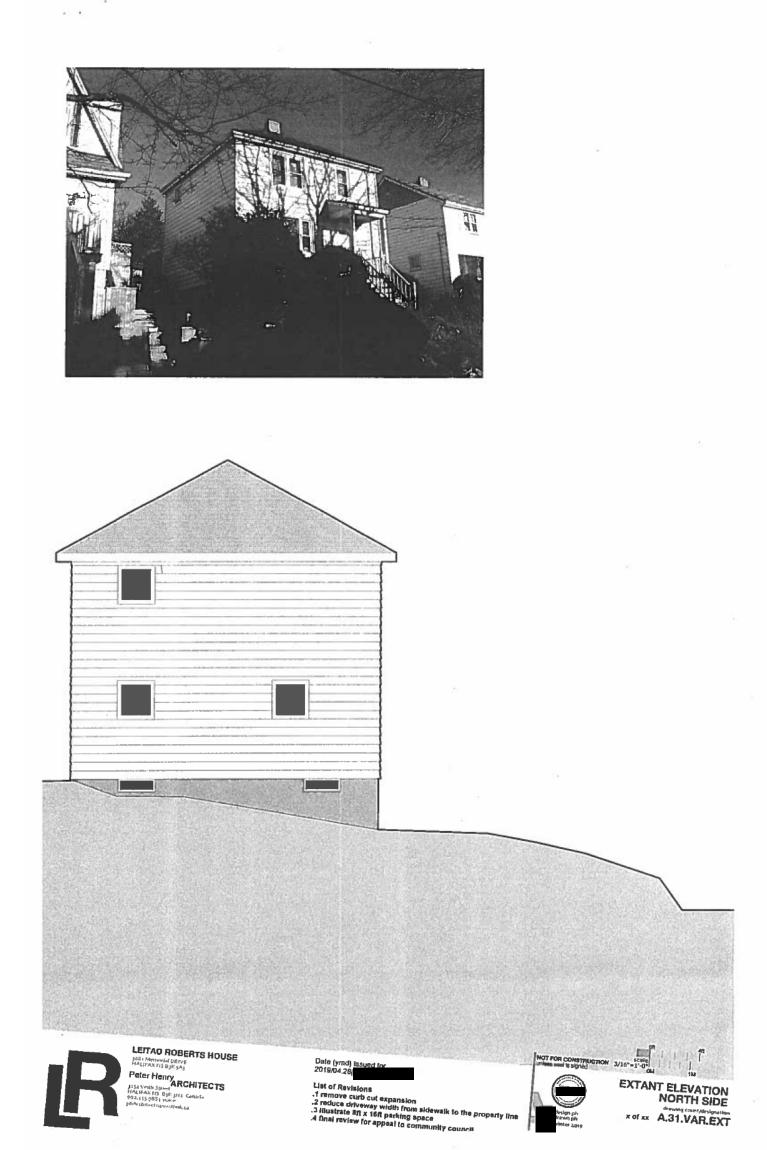


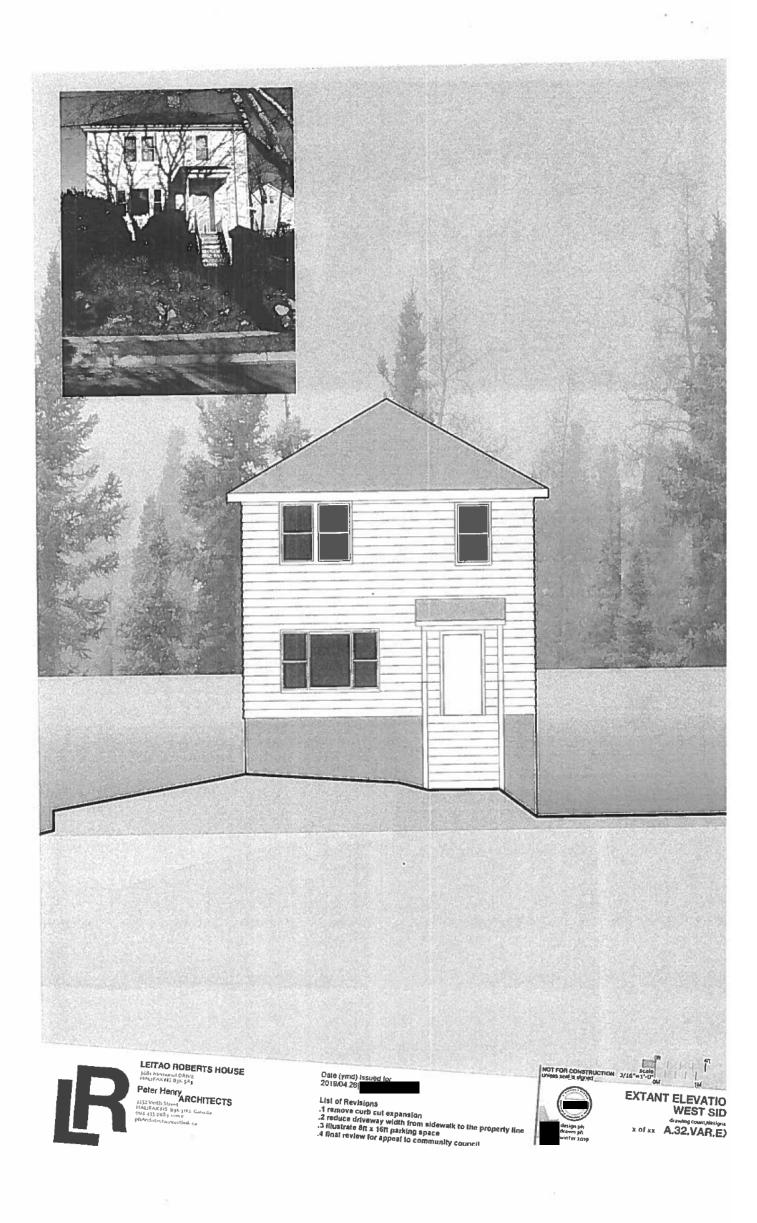


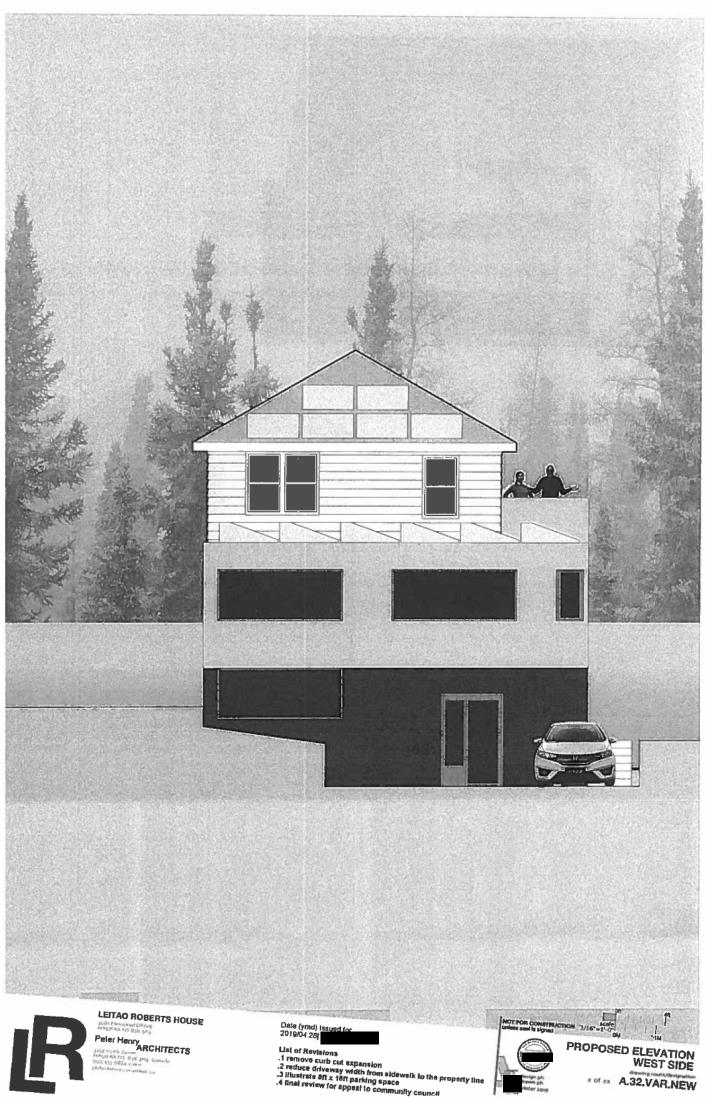
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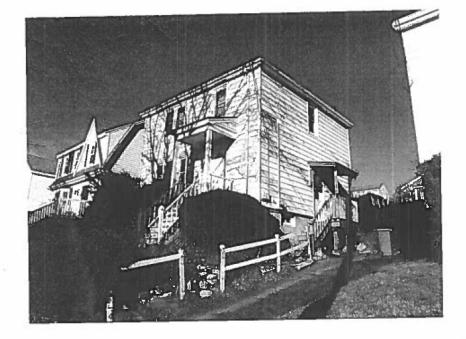














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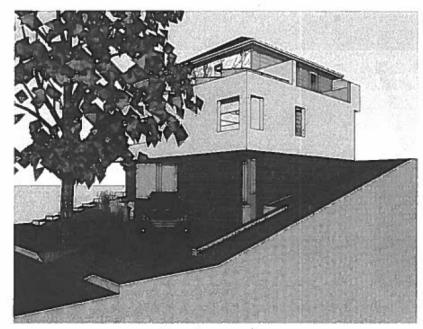
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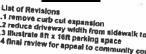


front yard proposed not exactly as illustrated



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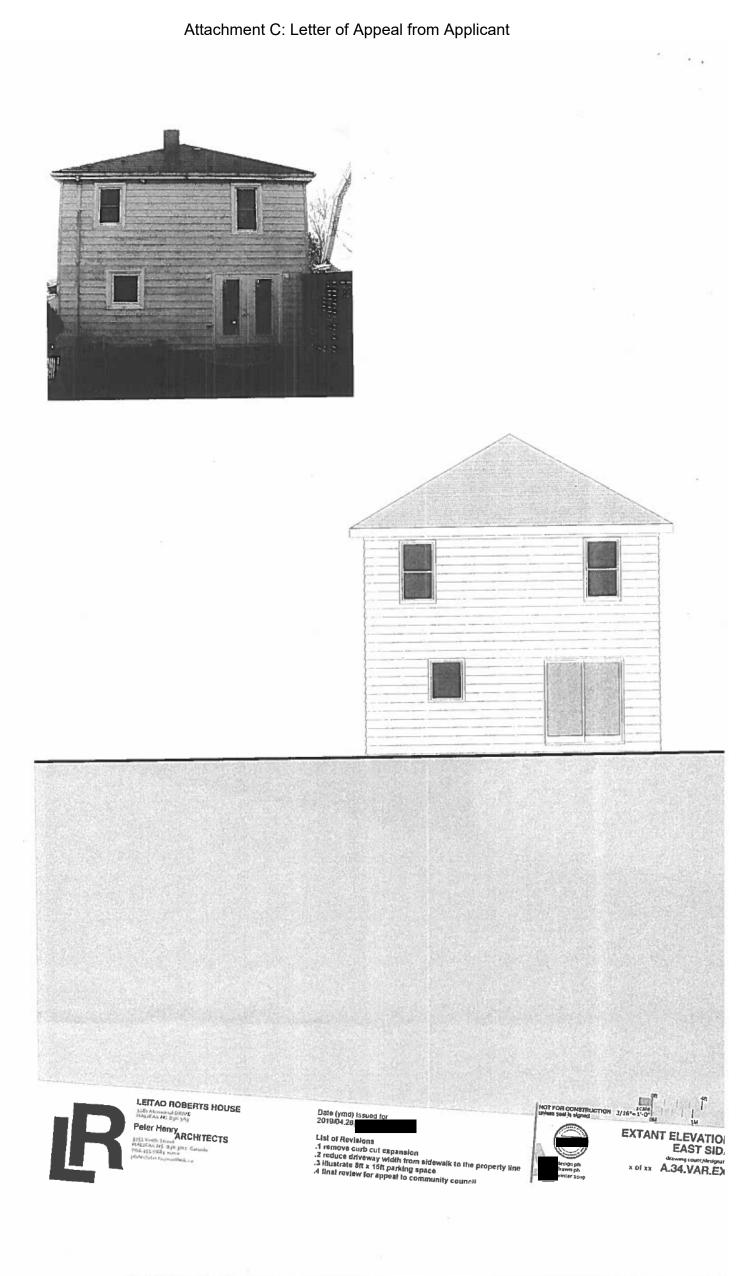
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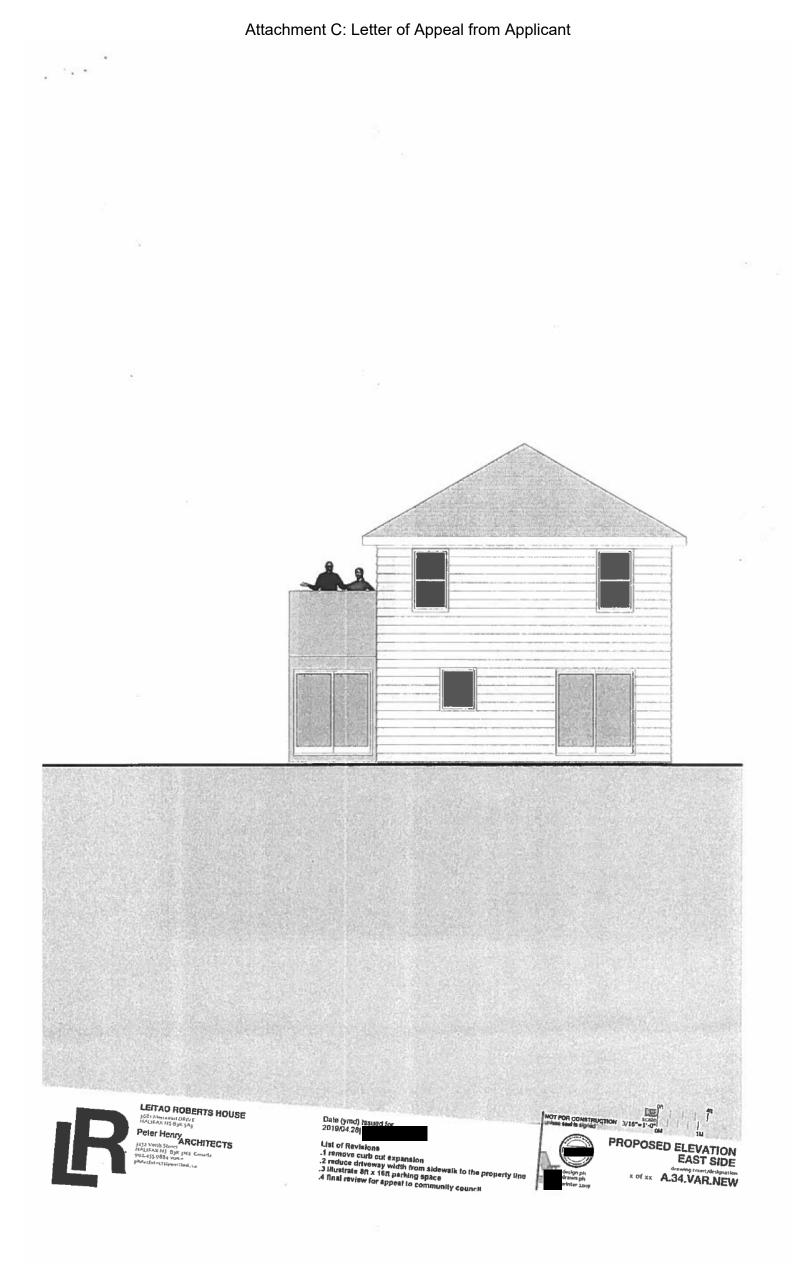




PROPOSED ELEVATION SOUTH SIDE x of xx A.33.VAR.NEW

3/16"=1-m









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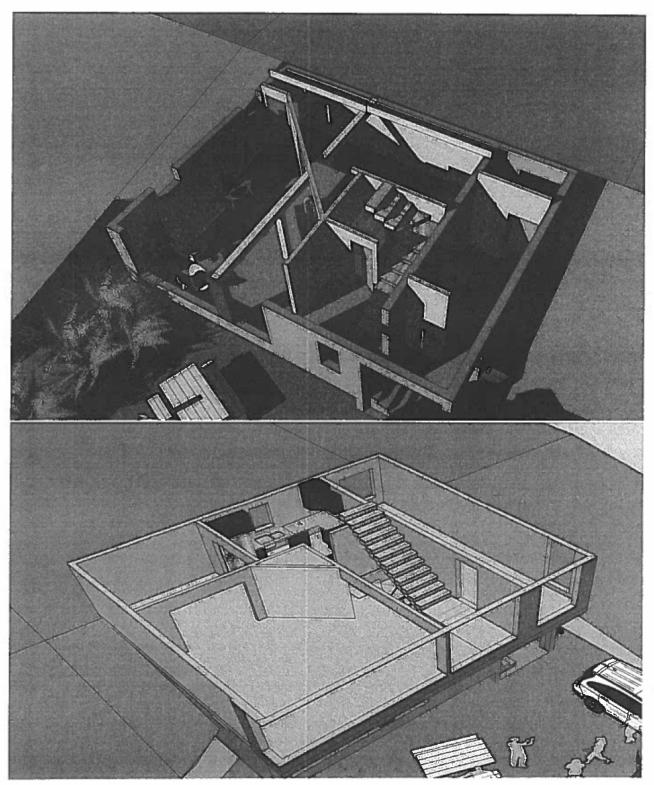
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front yard proposed not exactly as illustrated



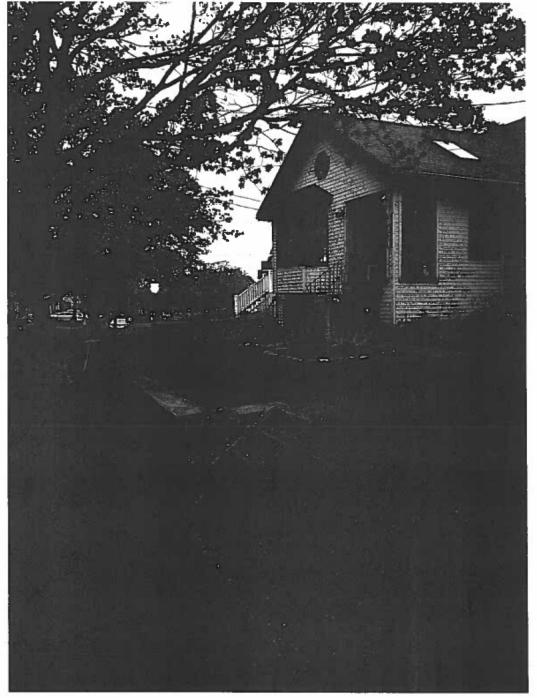
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Here are examples of variations that we are similar to our variance request with lesser setback

Fig. 1 - Memorial Dr.



Fig. 2 - Memorial Dr.



Fig. 3 - Basinview Leeds

Attachment C: Letter of Appeal from Applicant

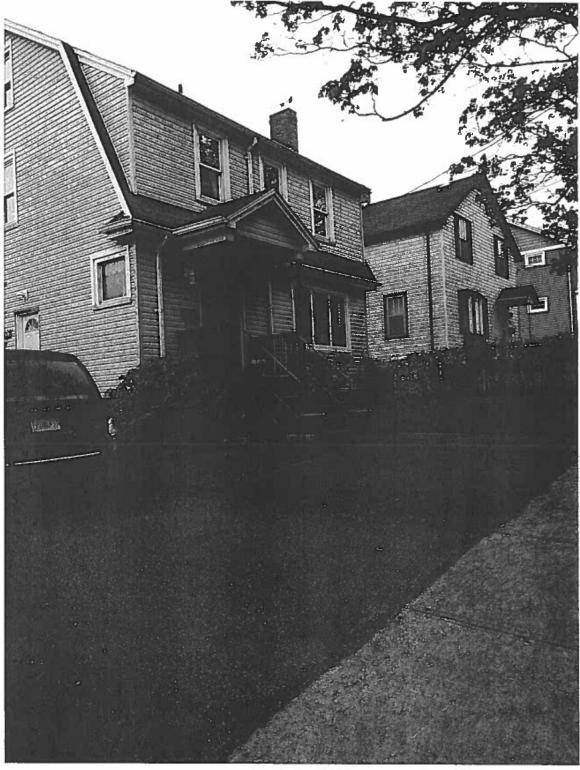


Fig. 4 - Leeds

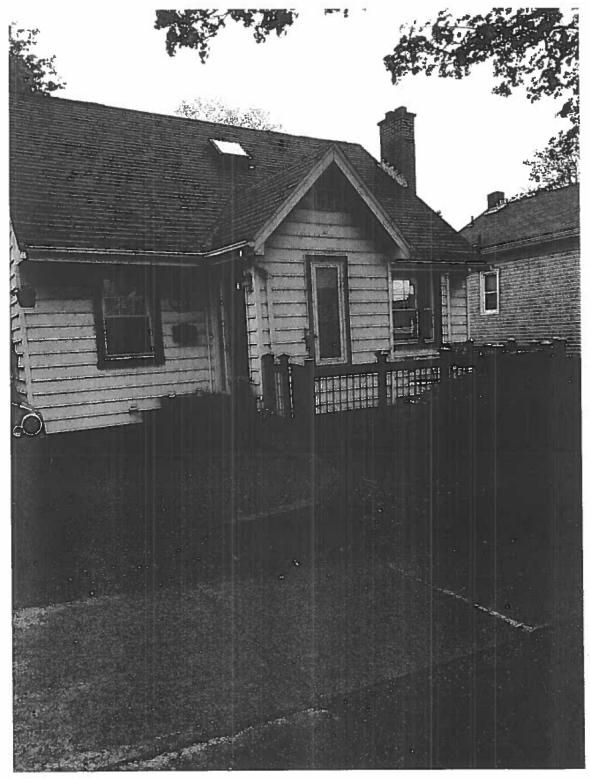


Fig. 5 - Leeds