

WHAT IS A DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA (DPA) – FORM & CHARACTER AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Background

Over the past 6 months our neighbourhood community group called the QB GOODNEIGHBOURS has repeatedly raised our concerns to the Town about the development plans slated for the now-empty land located at 532 Memorial Avenue in Qualicum Beach.

Our historic 150-year-old neighbourhood comprised primarily of single-family homes could be forever transformed away from our heritage character if the Town does not take firmer control over the Developer's plans for this land.

In our opinion, the current proposed development does not comply with the Town's Official Community Plan (OCP). We do not believe that a 300-foot long, 50-foot tall building running East to West on the top of Hoylake Road is in keeping with the Town's 'form and character' and the 'village feel' that the OCP is meant to safeguard.

This article explores an important aspect of the OCP – the designation of Development Permit Areas which are meant to safeguard our community's Form & Character.

Question 1: Development Permit Areas – What Are They and Why Do They Matter?

Did you know that within the Town's 2025 Official Community Plan (OCP), the 532 Memorial Avenue property is designated as a Development Permit Area (DPA) to preserve Form & Character?

And what exactly is a DPA? Does this designation even matter?

These were questions we started asking as we read through the OCP and the Zoning Bylaw No. 900.

This short article is a summary of our brief research into the topic.

Appended at the end of this article is the Letter we sent to Town Council on 532 Memorial's DPA status in July 2026 ahead of an Advisory Planning Committee (APC) meeting. Our Letter was not circulated to the APC since the APC does not take direct feedback from the public. However, we understand that our letter was circulated to Town Council.

Question 2: What is a Development Permit Area (DPA)?

Per the BC Government website (link below), DPAs are locations identified by a local municipality that “***need special treatment for certain purposes including*** [a] the protection of development from hazards, ***[b] establishing objectives for form and character in specified circumstances***, or [c] revitalization of a commercial use area.”

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/planning-land-use/land-use-regulation/development-permit-areas>

Question 3: Why does a DPA designation for Form & Character actually matter?

A property owner must adhere to DPA requirements when submitting plans to develop the property.

A Form & Character DPA is meant to protect the community’s “***sense of place***” and ensure that developments “compliment the small-town village character and ambience of the Town”. Please refer to **Section 2.7.3** of the Qualicum Beach OCP page 63 (link below).

https://qualicumbeach.com/preview/?file_path=Reading%20Room/Town%20Plans/Official%20Community%20Plan/2025%20OCP%20Review/2025%20Official%20Community%20Plan%20OCP%20-%20Adopted/2025%20Official%20Community%20Plan%20OCP%20Epdf#page=63

Since 532 Memorial is designated as a DPA for Form & Character within the OCP, we understand that any development proposal would need to adhere to the Zoning Bylaw No. 900 Part 5 (**Interim Design Guidelines**). You can view these Guidelines by clicking on the link below.

[https://qualicumbeach.com/preview/?file_path=Bylaws/Zoning%20Bylaw%2C%20Bylaw%20No.%20900%2C%202024/Zoning%20Bylaw%2C%20Bylaw%20No.%20900%2C%202024%20\(Combined%20Version\).pdf#page=187](https://qualicumbeach.com/preview/?file_path=Bylaws/Zoning%20Bylaw%2C%20Bylaw%20No.%20900%2C%202024/Zoning%20Bylaw%2C%20Bylaw%20No.%20900%2C%202024%20(Combined%20Version).pdf#page=187)

These Design Guidelines have very clear requirements for developers across design elements such as:

- **Neighbourhood Context** – covers (a) site integration and architectural harmony and (b) preservation of natural features
- **Building Form & Elements** – covers (a) height (maximum 3 storeys allowed for new multi-unit housing), (b) scale & massing (which “should tie into the overall neighbourhood form & character) and (c) design & proportionality
- **Site & Landscaping** – covers (a) parking, (b) site access and (c) landscape design & aesthetic

Question 4: Has the 532 Memorial Ave project plan taken these Interim Design Guidelines into account?

This is a question we ask of Town Council in our July 2026 Letter. The OCP has requirement to complete an *OCP Consistency Worksheet* and we have asked to see this for 532 Memorial Avenue. **To date, our Letter has gone unanswered.**

Since 532 Memorial Ave is zoned as C9 Commercial and does not have a Residential zoning code, it is possible that this property may not need to strictly adhere to the Interim Design Guidelines. This is because the Interim Design Guidelines appear to focus on residential developments (see Section 3.4.c of Zoning Bylaw pg 43).

But 532 Memorial is still nonetheless designated as a DPA Form & Character and it is situated in a high-visibility location at the north entrance to our lovely Town. ***We feel that an enlightened project design would take this into account and honour the spirit and letter of what the DPA Form & Character is meant to achieve.***

Question 5: How many DPAs for Form & Character are there in Qualicum Beach's OCP?

Per **Section 2.7.3** of the OCP (pages 63-71), there are **15 property areas** designated as DPAs preserving Form & Character.

Aside from the two properties along Memorial Ave (DPA Codes C6 and C7), which are the subject of our Letter to Town Council, we highlight below other areas located near residential neighbourhoods that are also designated as DPAs for Form & Character:

- College Road (C5)
- Crescent Road East (C8)
- Berwick Road (C9)
- Eaglecrest area (RFC2)

Is your neighbourhood near a DPA for Form & Character? If yes, you may want to further investigate more closely the development plans for these parcels of land.

Question 6: So, what next?

This article aims to highlight that the OCP does an admirable job of outlining a vision for how Qualicum Beach can maintain our small-town village charm as the community grows and develops.

The OCP does this by designating several key areas as ***Form & Character DPAs***. This designation does place requirements on developers to adhere to certain design elements that safeguard our community's "sense of place."

Even if under Provincial Bill 44 the importance of Form & Character DPAs may be diluted, these DPAs still exist and we believe they still have the force of a Bylaw requirement.

We encourage you to read up about your own neighbourhood and advocate your view directly to Town Council by writing to **qbtown@qualicumbeach.com**. You can also share your opinions with the Qualicum Beach Residents' Association by writing to **qbra100@gmail.com**.

We sincerely hope that the Town will get back to our community group with answers to these important questions.

We deserve to know and understand the intentions for the 532 Memorial Avenue property. Not responding to citizen concerns that are raised professionally and respectfully indicates a rupture in our democratic process. The Civic Election this fall is a perfect opportunity for us to challenge Candidates on how well they understand and respect our right of inquiry as law-abiding taxpayers.

Our business community will also want answers – it is Qualicum Beach's small-town charm of a seaside village that draws tourists year after year. Development projects that prioritize densification over all other considerations may end up killing the goose that lays the commercial egg for this Town.

QB Good Neighbours Group
03 August 2026

LETTER SENT TO TOWN COUNCIL IN JULY 2026

From: **qbgoodneighbours**<qbgoodneighbours@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, Jul 7, 2026 at 10:29 AM

Subject: Advisory Planning Commission (APC) Meeting 8 Jul 2026 re 532 Memorial Ave

To: <qbtown@qualicumbeach.com>, <mayor@qualicumbeach.com>, qbcouncil <qbcouncil@qualicumbeach.com>, Luke Sales <lsales@qualicumbeach.com>

Cc: qbgoodneighbours <qbgoodneighbours@gmail.com>

Dear Qualicum Beach Advisory Planning Commission, His Worship Mayor Westbrook, Qualicum Beach Town Council, and Director of Planning, Mr Luke Sales:

Ahead of the **Advisory Planning Commission (APC) meeting on 8 Jul 2026**, we would like to provide our community views on the **DRAFT Minutes of the 7 Jan 2026 Meeting** relating to the APC's discussion on 532 Memorial Avenue. Please refer to Agenda Item 2 of the proposed 8 July 2026 Meeting Agenda.

Our community group, **Qualicum Beach Good Neighbours**, represents the residents who live within the immediate vicinity of 532 Memorial Avenue. One of our members separately sent an email to you last week regarding the 532 Memorial Ave Project with our observations on the APC's deliberations of the Project during the 7 Jan 2026 meeting as reflected in the DRAFT minutes.

We are writing to further supplement this email with the following analysis & observations with respect to the **Form & Character (F&C) Development Permit Area (DPA)** element of the 532 Memorial Ave site.

We wish to take this opportunity to highlight that, per our reading of the 2025 Official Community Plan (OCP), the 532 Memorial property and the adjacent St Mark's Church property are **both formally designated in the OCP as DPAs to preserve Form & Character**. As extracted from pages 51, 63 and 66 of the OCP [**bold underline** added for emphasis]:

- **DPA C6: 532 Memorial Avenue** --> "this commercial/multi-family residential site is prominently located on Memorial Avenue, a major arterial road linking the waterfront to the uptown area. [This property has a] **heritage history**, located on the corner of Memorial Avenue and Crescent Road East."

- **DPA C7: St Mark's Anglican Church** --> this area "includes a property with Heritage Designation located on Memorial Avenue. The building on this property is St Mark's Anglican Church. Built in 1926, **both the quality and design of the building exemplify the village character** which has long been an objective of the uptown area of Qualicum Beach to the south. The building is a **predominant landmark** and acts as a gateway to the uptown area."

We wish to highlight to the APC that these two plots are **both cornerstone properties** that are designated as F&C DPAs for a very important reason — these plots are situated in a highly prominent position along a major gateway into Qualicum Beach; and therefore, the buildings constructed on these properties should reflect the small-town charm and historic, heritage character of Qualicum Beach.

We also wish to highlight that per our understanding, any development proposals for 532 Memorial (as a F&C DPA) must adhere to the **Interim Residential Design Guidelines under Part 5 of the Zoning Bylaw 900**.

As it is the APC's duty to review how development proposals for 532 Memorial meet the Form & Character requirements under the DPA, we believe the APC must think very carefully on core elements outlined in the Interim Residential Design Guidelines (please refer to pages 188-202 of Bylaw No. 900), namely:

(a) whether proposals meet the “**neighbourhood context: site integration/congruency and architectural harmony**” and “**building form & elements: continuity & harmony**” tests, to blend in with existing community surroundings/fabric; and

(b) whether building massing ties in with the “**building form & elements: form & character of the neighbourhood**”

As concerned residents, we wish to express our view that **the current proposal for 532 Memorial looks highly incongruent** with the beautiful, Tudor-style St Mark's Church building immediately across the road — a building which is officially recognised as a “historic property” by the Canadian Register of Historic Places and holds an Official Heritage Designation under the BC Local Government Act.

A well-designed development project should aim to integrate its architectural style & massing with the adjacent Tudor-style St Mark's Church. In our view, this would be in alignment with Zoning Bylaw 900 Section 5 requirements, both in letter and in spirit.

Lastly, as per **Schedule 9 of the OCP**, there is an **OCP Consistency Worksheet (Worksheet)** that is to be completed when assessing development projects. Please see attached extract from the OCP. We presume that a Worksheet that was completed for the 532 Memorial Avenue project and we respectfully request to see the output of the Worksheet analysis since we are unable to find this in any of the minutes or materials made public on the APC's (and Town Council's) deliberations on the proposed 532 Memorial project.

We thank you for taking our above analysis and observations into consideration in your 8 July 2026 meeting, and we look forward to continued constructive engagement on the development plans for 532 Memorial Avenue.

With best regards,
QB Good Neighbours Group

Email: qbgoodneighbours@gmail.com

Website: www.qbgoodneighbours.com

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APPENDIX - SAMPLE OCP CONSISTENCY WORKSHEET

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Schedule 2.9

Sample Official Community Plan (OCP) Consistency Worksheet

This OCP Consistency Worksheet provides criteria to assess whether or not a development proposal is consistent with the Official Community Plan. Land use consistency is a prerequisite, and consistency with OCP goals should be assessed as supporting criteria.

A. Prerequisite: Adherence to Land Use Designation

To be consistent with the OCP, a proposal should align with the intent of the land use designation under which the property is located, should generally work towards the objectives and policies of that land use designation.

	Consistent	N/A	Not Consistent
Land Use Compliance Does the proposal generally adhere to the intent, objectives, and policies of the existing land use designation?	☐	☐	☐

B. Adherence to OCP Goals

To be consistent with the OCP, a proposal should be generally consistent with the OCP Goals detailed in section 1.2 of the OCP.

	Consistent	N/A	Not Consistent
1. Complete, Compact Community Land Use Encourage carefully managed growth through land use that enhances the natural ecology, local economy, and vibrancy of community life at a scale that is suited to the Qualicum Beach village character.	☐	☐	☐
2. Low-impact Transportation Continue building a safe, walkable community where residents and visitors have access to amenities through a comprehensive network of transportation routes that support alternatives to the automobile, including alternatives for people with mobility issues that may not be able to walk or cycle.	☐	☐	☐
3. Community Health Foster the health and well-being of people that live, work, play, and invest in the Town. Value residents and welcome all others in a spirit of inclusion, promoting and supporting demographic diversity, and continuing to promote parks and trails that support healthy lifestyles. Provide residents with access to social, cultural, and healthcare services as well as access to participation in community life, arts, and culture.	☐	☐	☐

TOWN OF QUALICUM BEACH
Sample OCP Consistency Worksheet – 2025 Official Community Plan: Schedule 2.9

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B. Adherence to OCP Goals

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	Consistent	N/A	Not Consistent
4. Sustainable Food Systems Support a prosperous local food system through high quality restaurants, year-round access to farm-fresh produce, economic prosperity, hands-on experience through community gardens and backyard gardening, and preservation of existing ALR and agricultural land.	☐	☐	☐
5. Progressive Infrastructure Provide efficient, effective infrastructure for energy, water, waste water & stormwater, and solid waste that advances the Town's sustainability goals and minimize the consumption of natural resources.	☐	☐	☐
6. Economic Prosperity Pursue economic opportunities based on sustainable growth and development that meet the needs of the community. Emphasize local business, with sustainable tourism activities as a fundamental part of the local economy.	☐	☐	☐
7. Healthy Landscapes Preserve and protect our natural environment including ecosystems that support both people and wildlife, while maintaining a high quality of urban and rural life.	☐	☐	☐
8. Green Buildings Promote green building and energy conservation, including practices such as energy efficiency, solar orientation, renewable and zero/low emission energy systems, water efficiency, wastewater and stormwater reuse, healthy and non-toxic materials, and habitat-supportive and water-wise landscape design.	☐	☐	☐
9. Sense of Place Recognize local Indigenous Peoples heritage. Value education, arts, culture, and community service as a part of daily life. Nurture small-town village character and ambience from the compact village centre to the dynamic, natural beauty of the Qualicum Beach waterfront.	☐	☐	☐
10. Diversity of Housing Promote housing that meets the needs of the Town now and in the future across a variety of housing tenures, types, and sizes. Prioritize housing initiatives that support young adults and families, workers, older seniors, or persons with a disability.	☐	☐	☐

TOWN OF QUALICUM BEACH
Sample OCP Consistency Worksheet – 2025 Official Community Plan: Schedule 2.9