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UPLANDS BATTLE

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Owners put Pink House on the market

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Upper-crust infighting in Uplands proved too much for the would-be renovator of the "Pink House" on Beach Drive.

Owner Peter Gustavson has put the Pink House up for sale after a protracted, albeit successful, fight to get his neighbours to agree to a new design.

"The development process took a lot longer than we anticipated and took a lot our enthusiasm out of it," said Gustavson, who owns the Custom House Currency Exchange.

The Pink House, a 1959 bungalow at 2985 Beach Dr., achieved its local name with its unique colour scheme. Everything — from the siding, to the brickwork and the pillars at the end of the driveway — is Mary-Kay pink.

But when Gustavson bought it last summer for about \$1.8 million, he and his wife never intended to live in such a home. Instead, they hired an architect to build them their dream home, a Tudor-style house.

But while their building application and design were well within the building and zoning regulations of Oak Bay, the home ran afoul of a little-known Uplands wrinkle.

Uplands, a neighbourhood of Oak Bay where the value of homes runs into the millions, enjoys the protection of a special act of the B.C. legislature. This act gives residents the right to hold up a building permit, for whatever reason they choose.

In Gustavson's case, neighbours objected because they didn't like the size. They didn't like the position of the house. They didn't like the height. And they especially didn't like the way it would cut off their view of the ocean when they looked out from certain angles from their own properties.

In the end, a compromise was reached, but Gustavson said by then he and his wife didn't have much heart left.

So they have opted instead for a home just a few blocks away on Tarn Place. It has cost them \$3.1 million, but requires little renovation. The Pink House is for sale for \$1.95 million.

Gustavson admitted that is more than the \$1.8 million he paid for it, but he said he has invested a certain amount during the time he owned it.

Besides, "everything is negotiable."