



**CITY OF VICTORIA
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL MEETING MINUTES
May 28, 2025**

**HYBIRD MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS & Xwsepsum Nations ROOM
1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE**

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT: Marc Showers (Chair); Tamara Bonnemaison; Julie Brown; Kavita Srinivasan; Nicholas Standeven; and Kristina Zalite; Mark Hornell; Priscilla Samuel

OTHERS PRESENT:

PANEL MEMBERS Katie McEvoy (HAPL-ADP Cross-Appointee) (virtual)

ABSENT:

Joseph Gowid

STAFF PRESENT: Charlotte Wain – Manager - Neighbourhood Development Planning
Miko Betanzo – Senior Planner, Urban Design
Joaquin Karakas – Senior Urban Designer
Lauren Klose – Manager - Community Planning
Chloe Tunis, Senior Planner
Kamryn Allen – Recording Secretary

**APPLICANT
ATTENDEES:**

Gregory Eeman (Intern Architect AIBC), Jermy Beintema (Continuum Architecture), Duane Ensing (Landscape Solutions), Lance Steele (Continuum Architecture), Wil Wiens (Continuum Architecture)

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

Panel Members and staff provided introductions.

2. Minutes

Minutes from the meeting held February 26, 2025

Moved By: M. Showers

Seconded By: N. Standeven

That the Minutes from the meeting held February 26, 2025 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved By: M. Showers

Seconded By: N. Standeven

That the May 28, 2025 Advisory Design Panel Agenda be approved as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Applications

A) Development Permit with variance Application No.00277 for 2900 Douglas Street

Chloe Tunis, Senior Planner, provided an overview of the application and highlighted the areas that staff are seeking input on including:

- the application of building materials, including the extensive use of glazing and the approach to signage at the Douglas Street elevation
- the relationship of the building to the street, with particular focus of the pedestrian experience and the approach to landscaping interventions at the corner of Douglas Street and Burnside Road East
- Any other aspects of the proposal on which the ADP chooses to comment.

Chloe Tunis and Gregory Eeman presented an overview of Design and Duane Ensing presented the Landscape elements. The application detailing the rationale for the proposal.

The Panel asked the following questions of clarification:

- Overhangs are present above the entryway, atrium, and bench areas, but they appear to be quite high. It's unclear if they'll offer adequate rain protection, particularly during wind-driven or sideways rain.
 - Yes, the primary reason the building has been raised to Level 2 is to allow vehicle access at the rear. You're right that the effectiveness of the shelter will depend on wind conditions. However, the entry points will still be relatively well-protected due to the three surrounding walls. We're also exploring the option of adding a light glazed canopy above the entry doors for additional coverage.
- Clarification on the use of glazing and building materials, as well as how the building relates to the street frontage and how landscaping will be approached at the corner?
- Overhangs – Noted that most of the plantings are located beneath the overhangs. Question raised about whether consideration has been given to how these plants will thrive, particularly as they may dry out over the winter months. It has historically been challenging to maintain healthy plant growth in such sheltered conditions.
- Rainwater management – We can see the inclusion of rain gardens in the front, but we're curious about whether their sizing has been fully considered. The current rain garden appears small relative to the surrounding catchment area. Has there been any

consideration of expanding it to help ensure the plantings under the overhangs receive adequate water?

- We do have an irrigation system in place. You're right that rainwater reaches the gardens during the winter months, but since plant growth is minimal during that season, water needs are lower and should be sufficiently met. Regarding stormwater management, there will be underground storage beneath the parking area, in addition to the rain garden, which will handle some—but not all—of the site's runoff. Extending rain gardens around the entire building isn't feasible, as it would be both challenging to implement and aesthetically unappealing. The road dedication impacted our original design; it was introduced later in the process and required revisions that affected our layout.
- Curious if there has been any discussion about adding a bench along Burnside. Also, regarding the termination of the accessible ramp, while the 8.3% slope is much preferred over the maximum 12%, it's unclear why a curb letdown wasn't included where it joins the driveway. Given that this is a vehicle entrance, there may be potential conflicts between vehicle access and accessibility requirements.
 - Yes, our intention was to maintain the slope as minimal as possible, but we can certainly look into adjusting it to allow more breathing room for the ramp. We're also open to considering a bench along Burnside, though we'd need to assess the potential impacts before making a decision.
- Describe the process to determine your finished floor level for L1?
- Yes, there are three entrances to the building—Douglas, Burnside, and the rear parking area—all designed with minimal slopes. Maintaining these slopes was challenging due to the site's constraints, being bordered by two highways. We had limited flexibility in selecting the finished floor elevation, which influenced the height at the Burnside entrance. As a result, we introduced a few steps at the rear. Ultimately, we chose to raise the building rather than sink it, as it offered a better overall outcome. The need to accommodate truck access at the back played a key role in shaping the design and in minimizing the commercial footprint.
- Around the parameter of the surface parking can you describe the enclosure intended for that.
 - Yes, due to the location, the overhang can present challenges—particularly at night, as it tends to be used for shelter. To address this, we've proposed an enclosed gate that can be closed at night to prevent these issues, while still maintaining an open appearance during the day. The design includes a black-painted aluminum fence.
- Is there a reason landscape was chosen at that corner of Douglas and Burnside where the sculpture is, rather than gathering aspects?
 - Really based on the location, while seating near the bus stop was an option, it would significantly reduce space available for rainwater management. Additionally, foot traffic in this area is relatively low compared to vehicular traffic.
- Clarify is the chair sculpture meant to be used? Is there a reason why its not accessible?
- No, it isn't currently designed for use. We haven't finalized the design yet, as we're still trying to balance it with maintaining adequate space for the rainwater management system.
- Have you looked at signage for the street level? In terms of pedestrian?

- The signage is visible from both the north and south, which we felt was a reasonable compromise. However, we acknowledge that it may not be as visible at pedestrian level. To address this, we are considering adding a second level of signage.
- Have you evaluated the building's energy performance? Additionally, have you considered how much heat the glazed areas might accumulate?
 - We have not yet, they will be tripled glazed but upon BP approval we will look into this further.
- What was the logic to the position of the building?
 - While the residential area is nearby, we are mindful of the existing trees and slower traffic zones. Nonetheless, we opted for a bold design approach. There is also more open space along Burnside. Additionally, the planned planting of numerous new street trees will provide substantial shading to the façade.

The public portion of the meeting closed at 12:44pm

Panel members discussed the following:

- **Elevation:**
The applicant's rationale for the signage is effective, it addresses visibility for those traveling south on Douglas Street at speed. The glazed showrooms and elevated elements contribute to the signage's impact. However, there may be a lack of smaller-scale signage, which could be addressed through additional elements or landscaping. Further refinement is recommended at the triangular point where the sculpture is located. Attention to pedestrian scale is especially important here, as the area transitions from a car-dominated environment to a more pedestrian-friendly one. Opportunity to treat the soffit there on the North side with some more engaging elements such as lighting.
- **Building materials:**
While there are no specific concerns related to Douglas Street, the balance in relation to the bus stop is important. Including a bench on the Burnside side is essential, as it presents a more visible and welcoming area. The current overhang may not provide sufficient weather protection, as it would need to extend over the sidewalk to be effective. A more durable hardscape solution may be better suited in this location
- They could do more with the corner space, enough space for rain water management or provide access for the chair sculpture.
- **Glazing:**
 - How will bird strikes be mitigated? Birds may attempt to fly through the clear glazing. There are glass surface treatments available that maintain visibility into the building while also providing visual cues to prevent collisions.
 - The sharp angle of the design is quite dramatic and set at a large scale, but the chair sculpture appears undersized, almost normal sized, which feels out of proportion. Artistically, it would benefit from being scaled more appropriately to suit the space. There's also some concern about the lack of glazing in this area, which could result in it becoming inactive, similar to the underutilized water feature across the street. Additionally, the rain garden element, if not properly maintained, risks accumulating debris and being misused.
 - The offsite boulevard landscaping is well-executed; however, the onsite landscaping presents challenges. There doesn't appear to be sufficient space under the building overhang to successfully integrate planting, and as a result, it's unlikely to thrive.

Notably, there isn't a single tree included in the design, which suggests a lack of effort to comply with the City of Victoria's Tree Bylaw. Meeting this bylaw is important not just for compliance, but to ensure long-term urban livability, especially as we look ahead 30 years to a city potentially facing increased heat. The claim of having "no room" is not an adequate justification.

- They are providing 8 offsite trees but nothing onsite.
- In section, the varying frontages, the ramp, and its relationship to both the vehicle space and the sidewalk could be handled more thoughtfully. This transition presents an opportunity to enhance the design, potentially through the integration of pedestrian wayfinding elements or lighting features to create a more intentional and engaging experience.
- The ramp needs to be relooked at to make sure there is sufficient access.
- Visibility is not great for the ramp.
- There is an accessible path from the parking area to the Burnside side of the site. Eliminating the additional ramp could simplify circulation and improve overall accessibility.
- By code, every entrance must be accessible. I would like to see a dedicated ramp at the main entrance to ensure accessibility, clearly separated from any vehicle access for safety and clarity.

Moved By: M. Showers

Seconded By: J. Brown

Motion: That the Advisory Panel recommend to Council that Development Permit with Variances Application No.00277 be approved with the following changes:

- Adding pedestrian scale signage along both street sides.
- Balance the public seating along the Burnside Street.
- Give consideration to adding some glazed canopy above the entries on Burnside and Douglas.
- Reconsider the design approach at the corner of Burnside Road and Douglas Street, to provide clarity on the design at the ground plane.
- Provide visual cues to the intersecting corner of the glazing to mitigate bird strikes.
- Resolution for the pedestrian accessible ramp and potential conflict with vehicle access

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

B) Proposed Updated General Urban Design Guidelines (Development Permit Area)

Joaquin Karakas, Senior Planner, provided an overview of the Guidelines and highlighted the areas that staff are seeking feedback on the proposed updated GUD Guidelines

The Panel asked the following questions of clarification:

- Can you go over how applications are proposed to ADP?
 - The City will be pre- zoned to allow up to 4-storey buildings, and up to 6-storey residential buildings in certain areas. As a result, it is anticipated that these types of developments will be delegated to staff for approval.

- There are no strict rules for what proceeds to ADP, it largely depends on the scale and complexity of the project. Generally, developments that align with the Missing Middle framework are not expected to come to ADP. However, as projects increase in scale, there are ongoing internal discussions about whether certain multi-family developments should be reviewed. Ultimately, the decision hinges on the project's size and level of complexity.
 - The objective is to deliver new housing quickly. Skipping the ADP review for projects that comply with the new guidelines would certainly reduce the overall application timeline.
- If this project moves forward and you need to determine which design guidelines apply, would these serve as the general guidelines? Would the process then involve conducting a zoning check followed by applying these specific guidelines?
 - Yes, the process should be straightforward—first identifying the applicable zoning, then circulating the BPA guidelines accordingly.
- It sounds like we're moving toward a model where the entire city will be covered by these guidelines. When structuring them around building quality, there is a risk of repetition, especially since commercial buildings will have different interface conditions. The guidelines are designed to provide appropriate guidance tailored to these varying needs.
- Yes, that is the case.
- Is it possible to have specific areas within the guidelines that allow for uniqueness, or are there still elements that need to remain consistent to meet the overall policy objectives?
 - Certainly, there are heritage guidelines that apply to areas like Fernwood Village, so specific heritage requirements remain in place. The guidelines also include general recommendations to thoughtfully incorporate inclusive strategies when developing appropriate responses. A significant part of the guidance focuses on responding to natural features, as the city is actively adopting environmental BPA policies.
- Our proposed rezoning and development policy specifically addresses areas that do not have a heritage designation.
- What if someone came in with a proposal for Hillside mall?
 - That's a good question. One of the roles of the guidelines will be to guide development on sites undergoing rezoning, but the primary reference will be the rezoning application and zoning policy.
- Is this specifically for more residential buildings?
 - Yes, we have specific guidelines for the Downtown area, and we are also developing public realm guidelines for the town centers to ensure a slightly higher quality and a unique character.
- That's helpful to know, and the guideline document was very precise. However, there may be some nuances in how it was interpreted.
- We recently reviewed a very unique building, so incorporating some nuance and flexibility into the guidelines, whether related to parkade blocks or dimensional standards, would be very helpful given the number of distinctive sites.
 - The guidelines were not originally written with that specific situation in mind, but you're right. We understand the trade-offs on a site-by-site basis and recognize that not every goal will be met 100%. The guidelines aim to provide clarity in balancing

these trade-offs. That's an excellent point regarding their application—these are not a checklist, but rather a set of guiding principles and supports.

- Sounds like a granular approach compared to a general approach, what is lost in doing that?
 - Not sure if we would categorize it as going broad or not. Good guidelines need to be broad enough to anticipate issues, like what's shown **on** page 16 of the Mercit guidelines. Ultimately, it's about providing a support tool that helps make design decisions clear and well-rationalized.
- Trying to understand the policy within the new OCP, there are design objectives related to skylight sculpting that have implications for specific projects. I'm wondering if the City has a set of key guidelines it is aiming to implement—perhaps including broader concepts like cross-town connections or other major strategic moves. So far, I haven't seen anything in the OCP materials that directly addresses these broader ideas.
 - At that level, much of this is covered within the development and rezoning policy.
- For example, with roadways, at some point there will need to be better road connections from Bay Street to the hospital, which is a major regional response center. What happens then? This represents a significant piece of work. I'm wondering if the GUD addresses this, or if the OCP is considering these kinds of issues?
 - Absolutely, there is a focus on cohesive corridors captured at the high-level OCP, which helps identify priorities. The guidelines are designed to respond to different contexts—for example, mobility. We are currently undertaking a comprehensive update to our street classification bylaw, creating opportunities to embrace public streets as key community amenities. This directly ties into the guidelines when defining pedestrian spaces.
- The perimeter block form seems to be a major focus. I would imagine that the zoning setbacks are also being updated to support this approach.
 - It's really about the orientation of primary views to open up, and there has been a lack of clarity in Victoria over the years on this issue. This has made it difficult for neighbors to develop similar projects. The guidelines focus on maximizing multiple objectives, including density and ecology. Hopefully, the zoning and guidelines together will support perimeter block development and help embrace this pattern moving forward.
- External factors that have emerged over the years, such as seismic standards and the Step Code, which often limit the number of openings, how are these considerations integrated into the design guidelines? Have they been factored in?
 - The BC Building Code calls for a simpler, more articulated approach, and there is a certain beauty to those buildings that the guidelines embrace. Some consideration is given to property and storey setbacks. While mitigation of scale isn't fully addressed yet, we should focus on designing larger buildings thoughtfully. The guidelines promote a simpler, pure, and timeless design aesthetic, encouraging the use of high-quality, local materials.
- There is guidance addressing sidewalks and public pathways, ensuring accessible connections from public routes to buildings, especially for multi-family developments. There are also recommendations that main building entrances be wide enough to accommodate people with accessibility needs.
- Is there a way to streamline the process of receiving information and responses to achieve better and faster results, while ensuring that people effectively consider the various aspects within the guidelines?

- This diagram highlights four key topics, each supported by clear guidance. These guidelines have been carefully distilled to include only the essential information needed. They are just one of many regulatory tools we use—our toolkit is quite extensive, with around 70 bylaws, tree bylaws, and multiple layers of policy. We recognize that the guidelines will be one of several resources used during project reviews. We are mindful of the trade-offs involved when trying to meet various objectives and strive to approach reviews with that understanding to provide greater certainty. Council has prioritized the corporate plan's housing approach, so some directives come directly from council while others are policy driven. Because of this, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, which makes it challenging to standardize how the guidelines are prioritized.
- Has council committed the cash to re do the Zoning Bylaw?
 - We've already completed this process. We reduced the zoning categories from over 500 to just 4, excluding the Downtown area. These include Residential Zones and Town Center Zones. The goal is to have a single Residential Zone that allows for Missing Middle housing options through a density bonus structure, effectively replacing hundreds of R-1 zones.
- Does any of that work provide clarity for street frontages.
 - The intent is to bring forward those items that require a public hearing, such as the OCP and the new zoning bylaw, which follows the 2018 zoning bylaw format, as well as our ACC bylaw, which is part of the new legislation. In the fall, the Site Servicing bylaw—which does not require a public hearing—is expected to be introduced. Of course, this will be at the discretion of Council. Parking is separate.
- Does It require a public hearing
- Yes, because It would require an amendment to the Zoning bylaw.
- Are neighboring municipalities following suit?
 - I certainly hope so. As part of the region, our city borders are shared, and we're always learning from one another. I've noticed some ambitious initiatives taking place in Saanich that are quite inspiring.
- Where the province is asking municipality to update zoning to match OCP, its clear the City of Victoria is going above and beyond.
- Is there any thought how amalgamating with Saanich would effect these changes?
- We have not been involved in any of these conversations, so I do not have an answer.

The public portion of the meeting closed at 2:04pm.

5. Adjournment

The May 28, 2025, Advisory Design Panel meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.