



CITY OF VICTORIA

Heritage Advisory Panel MEETING MINUTES

June 10th, 2025 at 12:00 p.m.

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

Meeting conducted electronically via Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT: Nathalie Picard
Steve Barber (Acting Chair)
Ben Clinton-Baker
Liberty Brears
Veronika (Niki) Strong-Boag
Valerie Lindholm

ABSENT: Katie McEvoy
Alissa Wrean
Rosemary Sleight

STAFF: Kristal Stevenot – Senior Heritage Planner
Laura Saretsky – Heritage Planner
Kamryn Allen – Planning Secretary

**APPLICANT
ATTENDEES:** N/A

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m.

The Chair extended a welcome to Panel members and presenters

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

That the June 10th, 2025 agenda be approved as presented.

Moved By L. Brears
Seconded By V. Lindholm

Carried Unanimously

3. READING OF MINUTES

Minutes from the meeting held May 13th , 2025

Moved By B. Clinton-Baker

Seconded By V. Lindholm

That the minutes from the meeting held May 13th, 2025, be approved.

Carried Unanimously

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

- Last meeting discussed how to track what happens to applications after they come to HAPL. Staff have reviewed the Panel's Terms of Reference and scope, and it is not within the Panel's scope to receive updates. However, we can support panel members in using and setting up subscriptions for the Development Tracker, which is the most effective tool for accessing the latest updates on specific properties.

5. Announcements

- None

6. Residential Heritage Conservation Area Guidelines

Staff provided a brief introduction to the Panel with a presentation.

The Panel asked the following questions of clarification and made the following comments:

- On page 2, there is a beautiful historic black-and-white image. Consider whether it might benefit from a caption for added context or clarity.
- On page 3, noticed that some of the scene-setting photos in the statements of significance focus primarily on the street rather than the surrounding architecture. While I understand the intent is to highlight the street context, it might be helpful to include a bit more of the buildings, particularly in the case of the Avalon and Huntington, so the architectural character of the houses is also conveyed. As well on Page 4 and 6.
- On page 9, under the Heritage Value section, there's a small typo in the second-to-last sentence of the paragraph. It currently reads, "the area displays the evolution of the single detached home from an exclusive high-end commodity," but I believe it should say "community" instead of "commodity."
 - I actually did not write this Statement of Significance so I will look into it.
- Page 11, the image does not have a caption again.
 - That's because we don't have one for that one but I will try to find more information.
- On page 16, under section 3.71 in the additional guidelines for Lewis Street, there appears to be a small typo. The sentence reads "locate new buildings no more than six metres from the front property line, but I believe it should say "no less than six metres" to align with the intended meaning.

- The intent was to avoid placing new buildings too far back, as that would erode the established rhythm of buildings closely aligned with the street. The goal is to preserve that original streetscape character as intended by the guideline.
- Page 26, minor typo, it says “pf” instead of “of”.
- On page 33, regarding the Muirhead House, the caption seems a bit unclear. I had understood that the architect was Thomas Hooper, but the caption reads “1904 Richard Hamilton,” and I wasn’t sure who that refers to. Perhaps I missed something, but if the intention was to name the architect, it might be worth clarifying, especially if it is indeed Thomas Hooper.
 - Yes, I assume that could be the photographer so I will look into this.
- The City and Hallmark archives contain many available photographs, so I’m unsure why images from Alabama are being used in a document focused on Victoria. It would be more appropriate to ensure that all photographs are accurately captioned. Typically, the architect should be listed first, followed by the photographer. I’d also be happy to assist with sourcing or applying proper references if needed.
 - All of those photos from other places are examples of new builds that would be a good fit. However, if you have any historic photos from these areas or know of relevant new build examples, we’d love to have them.
- The photos currently highlight more pavement than architecture. It would be much more effective to capture closer, more focused images of the specific areas to better convey the significance of these historic conservation elements.
- I also noticed that some of the “examples” referenced in the guidelines emphasize the importance of respecting setbacks. However, several of these examples appear to have minimal setbacks and don’t align with the existing setback patterns in the conservation areas. While Lewis Street is somewhat of an exception, this seems to be a significant issue in the other areas.

Nathalie joined at 12:21

- I have serious reservations about some of the examples presented as “good examples,” particularly on page 12, the lower left and upper right images don’t seem appropriate. This raises fundamental concerns about the underlying premise, especially since the City’s draft OCP proposes significantly increasing allowable height and density in these areas.
- In my motion, I included a request for Council to review several examples of infill developments that have been considered successful in both Rockland and Fairfield.
 - We would need to look at the Local Government Act, to see whether or not the motion can be done.
- Increasing height and density in historic neighborhoods primarily impacts the community through adjacent new developments. Specifically, if setbacks are not properly addressed, new buildings could quickly overwhelm the historic context. Therefore, I suggest the motion include a requirement for a minimum setback to maintain an appropriate separation between new developments and historic sites.
- The 11-meter setback could be reconsidered relative to building scale, for lower structures, a shorter setback might be appropriate, while taller buildings would

require a larger setback. Essentially, the setback could be based on a proportional ratio to the building's height.

- Wondering why there is not a specific requirement for wood windows on existing buildings?
 - We can include that, noting that if it's a character-defining element, any alterations require heritage permission—and all of the areas have wood windows in the Statement of Significance, but we'll also clarify wood windows in the guidelines.
- Not entirely convinced that set back requirements should always apply between new construction and existing heritage buildings, as there are cases where new additions are attached to the original structure and designed in a sympathetic manner.
- We tend to think of neighborhoods as more than just physical spaces or visuals—they are about how people live and experience them. It's important to preserve the history of these neighborhoods from that perspective. I want to note this because I realize my viewpoint might differ from others on the committee. When I read the Statements of Significance, I consider how neighborhoods support residents, especially those who work downtown or nearby and want to live close to their jobs. Increasing density supports this heritage value by allowing families to live and work within the same community. While new builds can initially seem out of place because they are new, in 20 years—once landscaping has matured and the buildings have weathered—they become part of the neighborhood fabric. This increased density can create more affordable housing options, attract a diverse range of families, and ultimately help sustain the long-term history of the area. A good example of this is the new build on Belton , which will provide six units and allow six families to live there, supporting both heritage and community goals.
- I strongly disagree with you but thank you for your views.
- I would ask staff to investigate the legality of allowing this, and if it's not currently possible, I would advocate petitioning the province to enable it. Given that the draft OCP proposes significant increases in density citywide, I believe it's a reasonable request to seek an exemption for these Heritage Conservation Areas.
- I sympathize with Nathalie's comment about the importance of considering the people who live in these neighborhoods. Historically, many different types of residents have lived in these areas, and protecting heritage components shouldn't prevent people from being able to live downtown. However, with recent legislation, new developments tend to be more expensive and often don't accommodate families. Therefore, we need to balance both accessibility and heritage preservation. Looking at older cities and neighborhoods, many support buildings around four stories, not twelve. For example, James Bay has seen its character impacted by approvals for high-rise apartments, which hasn't always been positive.
- Intangible qualities also apply to low-rise buildings in historic neighborhoods, where space, lower density, and the absence of overcrowding contribute to the area's character. These intangibles are difficult to quantify, as they include heritage trees and landscape features. Preserving our residential heritage is important because of these intangible aspects that enhance quality of life.

While I support appropriately located high-rises, it's important to remember that taller buildings with many apartments don't necessarily equate to greater affordability.

- Victoria is experiencing growth and rising prominence, and it remains a very special place, we want to ensure it stays that way.
- It's unfair to frame this conversation as being about high-rises. The type of density being discussed is reasonable for residential neighborhoods, with examples of walk-up buildings that fit the streetscape. While new developments led by the market can often be unaffordable to many community members, I'm not sure if the OCP addresses this. The intangible qualities I'm referring to involve the people on the street and the sense of neighborhood that is valued in these heritage areas, a calm, walkable environment that contributes to the community's character.
- As the City grows, we want to preserve its unique character while also ensuring that people—including young families and seniors, can live throughout all neighborhoods, not just in areas zoned for high-rises.
- Are there any plans to make these available to the broader community, so the history of these beautiful neighborhoods can be shared publicly?
 - Yes, this document will be publicly available on our website. While it is primarily a development-focused document, as part of the OCP there is a recommendation that Council direct staff to consider interpretation and intangible heritage, which could include outreach activities. The VHF already offers many walking tours and similar programs, and we hope Council will direct us to expand these efforts.
- Regarding legality, years ago a provincial law banned tobacco advertising on store exteriors, but the City requested an exemption for signage, which the province granted. So, even if something isn't currently legal at the provincial level, that doesn't mean we can't advocate to oppose or change it.

Motion: That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommends that, whereas the existing Heritage Conservation Areas in Victoria represent unique examples of significant late nineteenth and early twentieth century historic residential architecture, the proposed density and height limits in the new Draft Official Community Plan constitute a major impact on their modestly scaled streetscapes. The Heritage Advisory Panel recommends they be exempted from these proposed changes. Victoria has many successful examples of higher density infill projects on the sites of existing heritage homes, allowing for more housing sympathetic to the historic character of the neighborhood. The Heritage Advisory Panel encourages City Council to examine these examples carefully, and to consider the exemption of residential Heritage Conservation Areas from the proposed Official Community Plan, density and height limits.

Examples include the following:

- 222 Mary Street (Vic West)
- 944 St. Charles Street (Rockland)
- 1770 Rockland Avenue (Rockland)
- 906 Pemberton Avenue (Rockland)
- 1139 Burdett Street (Fairfield)
- 1263 Richardson Street (Fairfield)

Moved By L. Brears
Seconded By D. Smiles & V. Lindholm

Carried, Opposed: N. Picard

Motion: Recommend that Council direct staff to research recent cases of accommodating 6-storey or greater developments adjacent to Heritage buildings to determine best practice of separation distances. The proposed setbacks should be either standard or set at a minimum to create a separation distance between new 6-storey developments and an adjacent Heritage building.

Moved By L. Brears
Seconded By V. Lindholm

Carried Unanimously

7. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By B. Clinton-Baker
Seconded By D. Smiles

That the Heritage Advisory Design Panel meeting of June 10th, 2025 be adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

Carried Unanimously