



CITY OF VICTORIA

Heritage Advisory Panel MEETING MINUTES

DECEMBER 9, 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.

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT: Nathalie Picard, Ben Clinton-Baker, Veronika (Nikki) Strong-Boag, Valerie Lindholm, Liberty Brears, Katie McEvoy, Alissa Wrean (Chair), Rosemary Sleigh, Steve Barber, Jana Stefan

ABSENT: N/A

STAFF PRESENT: Kristal Stevenot – Senior Heritage Planner
Laura Saretsky – Heritage Planner
Kamryn Allen – Administrative Assistant

APPLICANT ATTENDEES: **Rezoning Application No. 00867 for 900 & 912 Vancouver Street, 911 Quadra Street, and 930 & 990 Burdett Avenue**
Paul Rigby (Principal Architect of record, Faulkner Browns), Aidan Carruthers (Associate Designer, Faulkner Browns), Katie Cummer (Principal, Cummer Heritage Consulting), Brendon Neilson (Executive Director, Anglican Diocese), Kaeley Wiseman (Principal, Wiser Projects), Sarah Murry (Project Coordinator, Wiser Projects)

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 December 9, 2025 agenda be approved as presented.

Moved By: K. McEvoy

Seconded By : N. Picard

Carried Unanimously

3. READING OF MINUTES

Minutes from the meeting held November 18, 2025

Moved By: N. Strong-Boag

Seconded By: S. Barber

That the minutes from the meeting held November 18, 2025, be approved.

Carried Unanimously

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

- Small typo on page 2 under business arising from the minutes. It said new proposed residential towers on the side of the Roundhouse that should be on the site with a T.

5. Announcements

- None

6. Applications

Rezoning Application No. 00867 for 900 & 912 Vancouver Street, 911 Quadra Street, and 930 & 990 Burdett Avenue.

Kristal Stevenot provided a brief introduction to the Panel with a presentation.

Applicant team provided an overview of the project and provided a presentation.

Showed the location of the proposed building footprints, building heights and site planning, the fit of the proposed building heights with the existing and anticipated future context of the site, how the proposal meets the standards and guidelines, the phasing of construction and conservation, and anything else we'd like to bring up.

Jana Stefan joined the meeting at 12:30

The Panel asked the following questions of clarification:

- Will a Heritage Revitalization Agreement be used to secure restoration of heritage buildings in exchange for rezoning?
 - Yes. Details are still being finalized with management, but an agreement is anticipated.
- What evidence supports public pedestrian use through the site, given the presence of a school and residential buildings?
 - The intent is to encourage movement in all directions, with the primary public route being Cathedral Walk, connecting Pioneer Square to Burdett. Ground-floor activation through commercial uses or expanded diocesan programming is planned to encourage public use. Key activity is focused at the intersection of east-west and north-south routes. A publicly accessible playground is proposed south of Memorial Hall. The Yarrow Chapel (at the end of Memorial Mews) may be reprogrammed as an event space, café, or social enterprise to further activate the area.
- How will Cathedral Walk and Memorial Mews function at street level, particularly regarding scale and shadowing?
 - These spaces are designed for pedestrians, not vehicles, though limited vehicle access will be provided for accessibility and emergency use. Pathways are intentionally narrower than typical streets to create a more intimate, contemplative environment. Ground-floor activation, natural surveillance, and appropriate lighting are planned. Some shadowing is expected given the urban context, but spaces are intended to feel safe, human-scaled, and calm. Faster movement

routes are located around the site perimeter; internal routes prioritize experience over efficiency.

- Concern was raised that narrow paths may feel confining and that intimacy could be achieved through landscaping instead.
 - The intent is not extreme narrowness, but avoiding oversized, vehicle-oriented dimensions. The design aims to prioritize people over cars.
- Decision behind the 12 and 18 story towers, why are towers exceeding area design guidelines proposed?
 - The decision was influenced by several factors, including the need to achieve sufficient development volume for economic viability and alignment with the Official Community Plan and emerging OCP, which emphasize perimeter blocks of four to six storeys. While this scale was considered appropriate, the site was also seen as having the capacity to accommodate additional housing. Concentrating density into smaller tower footprints was preferred over distributing uniform mid-rise buildings across the site, as this approach allows for improved access to light, reduced street-level massing, and more comfortable public spaces. Overall, a combination of lower-rise buildings and taller elements was favoured rather than a consistent mid-rise form throughout the site.
- The proximity of tall buildings to the small Yarrow Chapel may diminish its heritage value.
 - The Chapel's significance lies in its immediate, close-up experience rather than distant views. A landscaped courtyard and public plaza are proposed to preserve its prominence at pedestrian scale. The 18-storey tower is not directly adjacent; an 8-storey building sits closer. Landscape design and spatial relationships are considered more important than absolute building height.
- Clarification requested on partial demolition and reconfiguration of Memorial Hall.
 - A portion at the end of Memorial Hall may be removed to allow a new building connection. This area contains less functional spaces (gym, change rooms, non-compliant stairs). The intent is to create a meaningful connection to the school and a new community space. Detailed design will be addressed at the Development Permit stage. The proposal refers to the end portion of Memorial Hall, where a limited amount of the building may be removed to allow for a new building addition. From a heritage perspective, the precinct was originally envisioned to allow Memorial Hall to connect to the cathedral in the future, and this end of the building was intentionally left to accommodate such a connection. The proposal includes introducing a new community space at the base of the building, which would benefit from a functional connection to the adjacent school. The area proposed for removal currently contains spaces that are less viable for long-term use, including a small gym, change rooms, and stairways that do not meet current code requirements. This approach allows for a meaningful connection to be created while functionally replacing these spaces and accommodating the required building footprint within the master plan. The decision reflects a balance of heritage, functional, and planning considerations, with detailed design to be addressed at the Development Permit stage. The overall principle is to allow flexibility to modify this portion of Memorial Hall so it can be more effectively integrated into the precinct in a new and meaningful way.
- Can the entry from Vancouver Street be widened or stepped back for more light?

- While opportunities exist, the current approach aims for a calm, deliberate urban scale. Daylight will be present at certain times, and further refinement may occur during detailed design.
- Clarification requested on affordability commitments.
 - Affordable housing is not part of the amenity package for this rezoning. The amenities are seismic upgrades and rehabilitation of three heritage buildings. Housing tenure and affordability will be determined later, following rezoning, through business planning with partners.
- How flexible is the proposed four-quadrant phasing?
 - While the current submission shows a 2–3–4 sequence following the initial cathedral-adjacent phase, phasing is flexible. Parcels can proceed independently as conditions allow.
- Is rezoning necessary to fund seismic upgrades and protect the cathedral?
 - Yes. Annual maintenance costs are significant, and full seismic upgrades are estimated at \$30–50 million. The redevelopment enables long-term preservation of the cathedral and other heritage assets.
- Why do some views show mechanical elements visible above the cathedral roofline?
 - Views provided are illustrative, not verified. Some visibility of upper elements may occur at certain distances, but representations are based on best available information and not precise to the millimetre.
- One concern raised was the risk identified in Katie Cummer’s conservation plan regarding potential earthquake damage to the cathedral. It was noted that, regardless of discussions about sightlines, the loss of the cathedral in a major seismic event would be devastating, if necessary, upgrades are not completed. Clarification was sought on whether the proposed zoning and its economic viability are directly dependent on enabling the seismic upgrades required to ensure the long-term structural stability and survival of the cathedral.

Jana Joined at 1:25pm

Panel Discussion

- It’s difficult to know where to begin, as this proposal represents a sweeping transformation of what is currently a quiet, almost pastoral landscape along Burdett Avenue into a streetscape dominated by large-scale high-rise buildings. There is little acknowledgment of the broader context, including the presence of Mount Saint Angela, a modest but highly significant heritage building directly across the street. In my view, the proposed height and density are excessive and have not been justified. There has been no financial analysis presented to demonstrate the actual costs of seismic upgrades or how those costs necessitate the scale being proposed. Without that justification, I cannot support the proposal. If anything, greater density should be shifted toward the eastern end of the site, particularly along Vancouver Street, given that the intimate scale around Yarrow Chapel has already been compromised. The proposal overwhelms what I consider to be a cohesive cultural landscape. Heritage analysis has not adequately addressed the site as an enclave of interconnected buildings. The proposed relocation of the deanery, with no clear commitment as to where or how, represents another significant sacrifice. Overall, too much is being lost without sufficient justification, and I have serious concerns about how density has been distributed across the site. The courtyard surrounding Yarrow Chapel, while not

formally designated, is a critical part of its character and scale and has effectively been erased. For these reasons, I do not support the proposal.

- One point I was hoping staff could clarify relates to the status of the Deanery. According to the BC Register of Historic Places, it appears to be designated under Bylaw 176. That designation may have been repealed by a subsequent bylaw, and I assume this has been reviewed given the number of submissions, but it would be helpful to confirm, as it has implications for relocation. More broadly, a key character-defining element of the heritage buildings on this site, even those that are only registered, is their relationship to one another. Introducing large high-rise buildings between them disrupts that relationship and relocating one of the buildings would sever it almost entirely. While I understand the argument that the proposed heights are required for financial viability, there has been little evidence provided to support that claim. The proposal significantly exceeds existing guidelines and does not follow the intended transition of height down toward residential neighbourhoods such as Fairfield. From certain viewpoints, the tallest buildings are placed directly adjacent to low-rise residential areas. Additionally, without a heritage revitalization agreement, the proposed phasing offers no guarantee of restoration or reinvestment in the heritage assets. That is deeply concerning, and for those reasons, I am also inclined not to support the proposal.
- I recognize that this project has been in development for some time and that earlier proposals included even greater height for the tower behind the cathedral (Building B1). Considerable work appears to have been done over the past year or more to refine where height and density are located on the site. I wonder whether there is an opportunity to support certain elements of the master plan but not the entirety of it. In particular, the proposed height of B1, aside from the elevator shaft, may be supportable. My concern is that if there is no clear support for maintaining that height specifically at B1, there could be pressure in future proposals to shift height elsewhere on the site, closer to or behind the cathedral. If partial support is possible, it may be worth recognizing the careful effort that has gone into limiting height in that specific location.
- I appreciate the heritage context along the street, particularly the fact that buildings of this era were constructed close to the sidewalk, something that would not be permitted today. Overshadowing that condition with a tower would significantly diminish the streetscape character. While I agree that height should generally be tucked behind the cathedral, consideration should also be given to the Memorial Hall. This is a challenging balance, but one that warrants further discussion.
- One aspect of the application that I appreciated was the proposed addition within the cathedral precinct itself. The height felt appropriate, the gabled form was well considered, and the design read as both complementary and clearly contemporary. Several of the lower-scale buildings work well. The primary concern lies with the large towers that fragment the site and disrupt sightlines, particularly from Courtney Street. Although the 18-storey tower has been reduced from earlier versions, it remains a substantial intervention that detracts from the site's landmark qualities.
- There was considerable discussion around the proposed north-south pathway. Based on the drawings, it appears that both vehicles and pedestrians may be accommodated, and I would strongly encourage measures to further reduce vehicular presence and prioritize pedestrian use. While concerns were raised about proximity to the school and potential users, my initial thought is that students would benefit greatly from this route.

Providing a quiet, safe pedestrian connection behind the cathedral, rather than along busy Quadra Street, would be a significant improvement. The broader pedestrianization and network of connecting paths are among the most compelling aspects of the proposal and evoke the experience of approaching historic cathedrals through pedestrian-oriented spaces, which can be quite special. That said, I continue to struggle with the scale of the towers. The seismic vulnerability of the cathedral is a very real concern, and the example cited in Katie's report, such as the New Zealand cathedral, underscores that risk. If density is being justified as a means to fund conservation, then a heritage revitalization agreement that clearly prioritizes seismic upgrades should be central to the proposal. While taller buildings in the broader area may be likely over time, it remains critical that development on this site preserves opportunities for meaningful pedestrian engagement with the cathedral. That relationship matters.

- Finally, I would note that it is not inevitable that this site will be surrounded by taller buildings. The City has the authority to regulate height and density, and policy decisions shape outcomes. Old Town is a clear example of how scale and character can be protected through deliberate planning. This site warrants similar consideration. It is also important to recognize that some seismic upgrading has already been completed at Christ Church Cathedral, including reinforcement of the brick vaults above the main nave with a cementitious coating, supported in part by the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust. I do support aspects of the overall site planning, which reflect thoughtful work. However, I maintain that the proposed height and density are excessive and that the City should require a detailed financial analysis to justify the scale being proposed.

Motion: That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend to Council that Rezoning Application No. 00867 for 930 Burdett Avenue does not sufficiently meet the applicable design guidelines and policies and should be declined, and that the key areas that should be revised include:

- The excessive height and density and the lack of a detailed financial proforma.
- The proposed scale of the high-rise residential buildings significantly impacts on the heritage character of the existing heritage buildings.
- Any building behind the cathedral should not be visible from Courtney Street, including mechanical penthouse to ensure the view terminus is protected and that the cathedral retains its prominence.
- The panel is supportive of the detailed site planning, particularly the focus on pedestrian experience when walking.

Moved By: S. Barber

Seconded By: N. Strong-Boag

N. Picard, **Obstain**

Carried

7. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By: S. Barber

Seconded By: V. Lindholm

That the Heritage Advisory Design Panel meeting of December 9, 2025 be adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

Carried Unanimously