



**CITY OF VICTORIA
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL MEETING MINUTES**

JUNE 25, 2025

**HYBRID MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS & XWSEPSUM NATION 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); Julie Brown; Kavita Srinivasan; Nicholas Standeven; and Kristina Zalite; Mark Hornell; Joseph Gowid; Katie McEvoy (HAPL-ADP Cross-Appointee)

ABSENT: Tamara Bonnemaïson
Priscilla Samuel

STAFF PRESENT: Miko Betanzo – Senior Planner, Urban Design
Caner Oktem – Senior Planner, Urban Design
Kamryn Allen – Recording Secretary

APPLICANT ATTENDEES: David Jawl (Jawl Residential), Peter Johannknecht (Architect AIBC - Cascadia Architects), Travis Lee (Trieagle), Gregory Damant (Architect AIBC - Cascadia Architects), Christian Foyd (Designer – BoForm), Scott Murdoch (Registered Landscape Architect, MDI Landscape Architects)

1. Call to Order

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

Panel Members and staff provided introductions.

2. Minutes

Minutes from the meeting held May 28, 2025

Moved By: M. Showers

Seconded By: J. Brown

That the Minutes from the meeting held May 28, 2025 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved By: M. Showers

Seconded By: K. Zalite

That the June 25, 2025 Advisory Design Panel Agenda be approved as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Applications

A) ADP Stipend

Alicia Ferguson, Office Coordinator - Planning, provided a brief overview of the stipend payment for Panel Members as approved by Council in January 2025.

B) Development Permit Application No.000645 concurrent with Rezoning Application No. 00880 for 741 Fisgard Street.

Miko Betanzo, Senior Planner – Urban Design, provided an overview of the Application.

David Jawl provided a verbal overview of the project and Peter Johannknecht provided a detailed presentation.

It was noted that revised plans were received April 16, 2025, and they were distributed to Panel members during the meeting to inform of updates to the proposal aligning with the presentation by the Applicants.

The Panel asked the following questions of clarification:

- Revisions to the proposal along the podium on Blanshard Street, the illustration shows what appears to be large concrete walls with a perforated screen at the corner.
 - The advantage of shifting this project to residential use was the ability to design a significantly slimmer tower with much larger setbacks, particularly on the south side, than what the original zoning permitted. As a result, we've exceeded the existing zoning requirements and substantially improved the conditions for the southern frontage.
- Regarding the proposed at-grade through-block connection, would its completion be contingent on development of the adjacent parcel, or is it intended to be delivered as part of this project?
- There is currently an existing connection in place, and this proposal assumes the continuation of the existing right-of-way through the neighboring properties. While future development to the south could further enhance it, the connection does already exist, though it's not well-known and could be improved. It is not dependent on development of adjacent parcels; rather, it would be completed as part of this project, providing pedestrian access through to Cormorant Street. This approach goes beyond current zoning and significantly improves the southern interface. Is the proposed at-grade through-block connection dependent on the development of an adjacent parcel, or will it be completed as part of this project with a direct connection through to

Cormorant Street?

- There is currently an existing connection; however, it could certainly be improved. While the corridor is walkable, it is not as inviting or visible as it could be, and many people are unaware of its presence. Through our community consultation, we heard that residents of nearby Cormorant Street developments have concerns about the walkway's current condition, noting it feels unsafe due to lack of lighting and activation. This project aims to bring positive change and enhance the space.
- The connection currently crosses the neighboring lot; however, the adjacent property, Denby Place, does not have direct access. Currently, the path of travel involves walking over a concrete structure, which is intended to connect in the future. We will need to link it to the existing access point as part of the project.
- Regarding the podium above level 2, are there any guidelines concerning patios located directly on the property line? I ask because if the building to the south is redeveloped similarly, it could result in patios facing each other.
 - The policy allows the ground floor to extend to the property line, but anything above must have an 8-meter setback. Patios should not directly face other patios, which helps keep balconies appropriately spaced. We have encountered numerous conflicts related to this issue across various developments in the city.
- Is there a landscaping screen to stop people from using it right to the property line
 - No, guardrails are not required on the balconies at floors 2 and 3, as their are Juliet balconies. The building to the south is a straight structure that recently underwent a full membrane and cladding replacement. In short, there are no restrictions preventing patios from extending to the property line. We have made efforts to activate the space as much as possible. Additionally, to enhance livability on levels 2 and 3 in the downtown core, we [the developer] encouraged Peter, Greg, and Chris to design what we consider a very high-quality, but also costly, podium. This podium acts as a buffer from the street, helping create the most livable, attractive units with ample daylight. To improve the desirability of the least favorable units, we provided as much of a setback to the south as a compromise for the patios. There are four new patios (eight in total) that will overlook the neighboring property. These large patios will likely be furnished with planters and personalized features to make them feel like individual homes. If residents have concerns about privacy or the ability to personalize their patios, they are free to address those issues accordingly.
- The sun study was covered in the presentation. How does the reduced setback affect the sunlight reaching those units? Additionally, with the Blanshard Street area having only a 1-foot setback, how does this impact the balance between setback and privacy? Are there any lighting concerns related to this?
 - Yes, we have carefully reviewed the sun study. This is urban living at a busy intersection, but the site is centrally located with most units facing south onto Blanshard. Some shading of the podium is occurring, which is almost unavoidable in a downtown core with tall buildings. However, the tower's placement closer to Fisgard results in less shading due to increased spacing.
- If a future development mirrors this one, I noticed the patios are quite deep. I'm curious about how much sunlight the level 2 patios will receive given their depth.
 - The reality is that these levels probably receive limited sunlight, which motivated the design team to include outdoor spaces to compensate for that.
- I feel like the outdoor space is going to be quite dark?

- Yes, we agree and are not disputing that. The Denby Place building to the south has an unbroken façade and will fully shade the lower half-dozen floors of our building. We recognize that the southwest and south-facing units will experience significant shading from the Denby building, which we are compensating for with outdoor spaces. We believe these units remain livable, with the outdoor areas serving as a reasonable compromise. Regarding massing, we acknowledge that shading is an impact. To address this, we incorporated 'Sky Gardens', understanding that east-facing units will not receive evening sun. The design allows residents to access upper-level Sky Gardens, which provide outdoor space with optimal sun exposure based on climate conditions. These Sky Gardens greatly enhance livability, and level 4 is part of this overall strategy as well.
- There is only a roof deck on level two with no cover, right?
 - Correct.
- Returning to the Sky Garden and amenity space on level 4, all residents, except those in the studios, will have access to these common green spaces. This is quite groundbreaking for Victoria, providing healthy living environments for everyone, whether they live in a studio or a penthouse.
- Sky Garden 4, have you thought about moving this to Fisgard Street? Because it is an upper floor, the residents can enjoy the harbor view and more sun from Fisgard?
 - We distributed six Sky Gardens throughout the building, including one with a harbour view and others offering various city views, ensuring visual balance. Your point about prioritizing the high-value views is spot on, and I agree. Not everyone feels comfortable accessing the top Sky Garden; many prefer the amenity space or podium, which this design accommodates with accessible ramps. Overall, it is a more inclusive approach to outdoor living.
- Lack of the use of brick: There is brick used on Blanshard. What was the rationale to not use brick at the podium level?
 - Regarding materiality, while we appreciate brick for its grounded feel, combining a floating podium over the glass CRU with brick is quite challenging. We aimed for a scale that suits a modern building. Additionally, brick is not ideal for seismic requirements, which influenced our decision. Ultimately, we wanted a contemporary design that is clearly visible and engaging at the pedestrian level.
- In 10 to 40 years, how will the Sky Gardens and planted areas perform? I understand the large amenity space will do well, but I heard you mention there is glazing, are these essentially indoor gardens? I see it is just a guardrail. I ask because I have observed in the past that plants positioned right next to glazing can get scorched by the sun, especially if sunlight does not reach past the overhang. How is this being addressed?
 - We have carefully selected the plant palette to be very site-specific, considering sun and shade conditions. For planters fully shaded underneath, we will need to provide watering even during winter months, as the plants cannot simply be left to dry out. Ongoing collaboration with nurseries to fine-tune the plant selection will be essential.

Kavita Srinivasan left at 1:08pm

Panel members discussed:

- The first couple of floors face a blank wall; however, compared to the proposed office building, this design offers much better livability for the units.

- This design responds well to the existing structure to the south and creates a positive precedent for future developments to follow, enhancing opportunities for daylight. The setback, which is roughly the depth of one unit, is worthwhile and contributes to a successful elevation.
- The scale of the podium proposed here is more dynamic than the six-storey podium planned across the street. It will create a more pedestrian-friendly environment
- The setbacks are appropriate, but concerns remain about the usability of private patios extending all the way to the property line. Would like to see measures put in place to allow for some flexibility and reduce potential issues in the future.
- Consideration of a communal courtyard.
- If there as a development to the south they would need a 5-meter setback from the units as well?
 - Yes, they would likely do the same as shown here, bringing a patio right up to the property line. The challenge is having two decks facing each other, which might require a built-in landscaped wall or vegetative strip for separation. The same requirements would apply to the adjacent parcel. We've seen situations where neighbors install screens for shading, which can sometimes lead to conflicts.
- Security would be an issue. They should consider what options they have to provide something in that area if there going to take the patio right to the property line.
- The street wall facing Blanshard should be parallel to the street. Our main concern with towers is maintaining a 10-meter clearance around them, except at the front, which is typically set back 3 meters to achieve an overall 20-meter building setback. However, since this side faces a road, it is less of a concern here. That's why you see the building brought closer to the road, whereas following our guidelines would suggest bringing it closer to the west.
- Interesting corner lot site placement with Blanshard Street as the side yard.
- They will get more usable space if they pull the building closer to the intersection.
- I like how the podium aligns parallel to the road and functions well. It's a bit cheeky that it transgresses the property line at the corner peak, but this only affects the geometry and not usable space. I also see several improvements in the lounge area. Overall, this is a much stronger public gesture.
- It is challenging to place a residential tower next to a potential office building but consolidating the outdoor space into these four Sky Gardens is a clever way to address that. You've effectively utilized the available space in a unique and efficient way to accommodate a residential tower.
- Appreciation for the simple slim design.
- Consideration of moving away from private balconies for taller buildings.
- The Sky Gardens are an interesting feature; however, knowing many people who rent new, modern apartments, shared spaces tend to be infrequently used. Without balconies, there is concern these areas may remain unused for long periods.
- Compared to the previous approved office building this is a much more elegant building to the city's street and design. This martials it at a more elegant manner.
- In terms of the OCP the only variance here is 7.6
 - The OCP outlines a vision for this area with a mix of commercial and residential uses at a 6 FSR. It also acknowledges the existing underlying zoning. Since this site was already rezoned to 7.6 FSR, no additional density bonus applies beyond delivering an art contribution and a mid-block walkway. As long as the application aligns with these conditions, it can achieve that density. The OCP's caveat is that

the proposal must fit the context and meet the guidelines. If it balances these considerations, it can proceed without requiring an OCP amendment.

- It seems like an effort to introduce more residential character to the south blank wall, but I understand they're proposing a vertical green wall. Is that live plant material? I'm generally not a fan of vertical green walls, as they haven't proven very successful over time. A well-executed mural by an artist might be a better option.
 - The ground floor will feature architectural concrete, topped by metal slat tiles with a patterned design to avoid a uniform color. The north elevation facing Fisgard Street is not highly visible, so I do not anticipate it becoming an eyesore. While we have extensive experience with murals, the intention here is to have a fenced, anti-graffiti treated wall. Unfortunately, we've been unable to prevent graffiti on the existing First Nations artwork in that area, which is now fully covered. For that reason, I would not support adding a mural here.
- The ground floor use is important, and having two uses on the Blanshard side is a significant improvement compared to just one.
- Appreciation for the concept of pop-up food vendors. Lease rates should be structured to encourage this activity. It would be great to see this implemented.
- There seems to be a trend that when building heights increase around specific heritage properties—such as those in Old Town and Chinatown heritage conservation areas—height variances are often approved in those zones. This can result in the heritage buildings being dwarfed, causing their scale and massing to be compromised in order to blend with the taller surroundings. Concerns were raised about this project's height potentially impacting the heritage character.
- The implications of underground parking are significant, as sites dating back to before 1846 risk being destroyed without proper documentation. Heritage professionals strongly encourage having a comprehensive plan for any ground-altering work beyond what is already permitted.
- The applicant may want to reconsider the cargo bike parking, as it appears to be difficult to access.

Moved By: N. Standeven

Seconded By: M. Showers

Motion: That the Advisory Design Panel recommend to Council that Rezoning Application No. 00880 and Development Permit Application with Variances No. 000645 for 741 Fisgard Street be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The public portion of the meeting closed at 1:42pm.

5. Adjournment

The June 25, 2025, Advisory Design Panel meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m.