



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

August 13, 2025

**HYBRID 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); Julie Brown; Kavita Srinivasan; Katie McEvoy (HAPL-ADP Cross-Appointee); Priscilla Samuel; Joseph Gowid; Mark Hornell; Kristina Zalite

OTHERS PRESENT: N/A
PANEL MEMBERS

ABSENT: Tamara Bonnemaïson (Present as applicant attendee per below); Nicholas Standeven

STAFF PRESENT: Caner Oktem – Senior Planner - Urban Design
Matt Kuziak – Planner
Kamryn Allen – Recording Secretary

APPLICANT ATTENDEES: **Application No. 00288 for 824/826 Alston Street, 210/212 and 220/222 Langford Street**

Selena Kwok (Architect AIBC, Low Hammond Rowe Architects), Tamara Bonnemaïson (Landscape Architect BCSLA, MDI Landscape Architects), Kari Jacques (M'akola Development Services), Holly Pridie (M'akola Development Services)

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 June 25, 2025

Moved By: M. Showers
Seconded By: M. Hornell

That the Minutes from the meeting held June 25, 2025 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Approval of Agenda

That the August 13, 2025 Advisory Design Panel Agenda be approved as circulated.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Applications

A) Development Permit with Variances Application No. 00288 for 824/826 Alston Street, 210/212 and 220/222 Langford Street

Matt Kuziak Development Services Planner provided an overview of the application.

Holly Pridie and Selena Kwok provided a presentation of the project and Tamara spoke to the landscaping design.

J.Gowid joined at 12:05

Questions looking for feedback:

- Useable outdoor space?
- Concerns of efficient outdoor space for residents?
- Transition to smaller scale buildings on the south where there is 3-meter setback from one of the buildings?

The Panel asked the following questions of clarification:

- Is there another Way to access the underground parkade? Perhaps off of Alston?
 - Originally, the surface parking was accessed through Alston, but we changed this due to potential future use of the space for a park. We were encouraged not to use the Alston entry point, which led us to place the access on the higher side along Langford.
- Could the deck be pushed further?
 - It could be because we have enough head room, but I guess it would just be a question of cost, but it can.
- What is the City's rationale that explains why they cannot use Alston for an access point?
 - [Staff comment] This was developed in coordination with the Transportation team. At a high level, there are potential changes planned for the right-of-way along Alston. Under the new OCP, Alston Street has been identified as a key north-south connector, with priority given to creating linear parkways in the city. As highlighted in the applicant team's presentation, Alston is being considered as a potential route for a linear parkway segment, which would function as a greenway-style transportation corridor. This would place greater emphasis on walking and cycling rather than vehicle access.
- Are any of the other grade-level areas, besides the courtyard, usable?

- On-site, we do not have usable gathering spaces other than the courtyard. We have chosen to include private patios and rain gardens in between, though we could add some public benches along the boulevard. There may also be potential to create small gathering spots in select areas.
- Regarding the structure at the back near the southern property line, is that a smoking shelter? Is it an operational requirement, and why is it located in that spot?
 - Considering the operational realities, areas where people gather often become areas where people smoke. The building itself will be smoke-free, and many tenants who do smoke have children, so we felt this was a natural spot for them to watch their kids as well. There aren't really any other open spaces not directly associated with a unit. The area is sunken and sits one story below the adjacent property.
- Why are there no balconies on the upper levels?
 - There is a shared balcony on the sixth floor, but the decision to opt out of private balconies was driven by factors such as construction schedule, cost, meeting the Energy Step Code, and reducing fire risk. Additionally, based on M'akola's operational experience, private balconies have presented some issues in the past.
- Regarding the deck on level 6, its size and layout seem a bit spread out and not very usable. Have you considered redesigning it into a more rectangular space?
 - We wanted the wrap-around deck so it could be visible from inside and offer views from all angles and heights. However, widening it would create more structural challenges since it's cantilevered at the sixth floor. The decision was to instead provide a large outdoor amenity space on level one, where all the windows can be opened to connect directly to the outdoor area.
- Looking at sheet A503, the street elevation and perspectives, it seems that units on one side might feel a sense of ownership over the deck, and a few units may lack privacy without a vegetation buffer wrapping around. Has there been any discussion about adding a shade structure? Based on the shade studies, the space appears quite exposed for most of the year except winter, so incorporating more shade could make it more comfortable and usable for residents.
 - The area could benefit from more shade than currently shown. In our 3D renderings, I do not think we accurately conveyed the intention of this planter. The planter should be taller, what we are trying to show is that the playhouses are part of the screening for the unit that is fully exposed to the play deck. There should absolutely be planting to screen the vertical deck, providing both separation and shade, more like a solid play wall integrated with the planting design.
- Will the developer be providing the furniture? Will there be furniture on the shared deck as well? Having a cohesive, matching design would look great.
 - We have not discussed this yet.

- Regarding the longevity of the plants, I noticed that the offsite turf is to be seeded. Is there a plan to fence it off to prevent people from walking on it while it establishes? I am curious about how this will be managed long-term.
 - We do not have those specifications yet, but the boulevard will be designed to meet the City of Victoria's requirements. We will be following their standards to ensure compliance.
- I noticed there is a bike room in the underground parking, but there are also three bike racks near the entrance on Langford Street, under the overhang. I am wondering if this is the best location for these racks, or if they could be relocated to the landscaped area. Also, are there any engineering or technical requirements dictating the bike rack location?
 - The bike rack provides six spots, and the decision to place it beside the entrance was to take advantage of the overhang. Space is limited due to ramp access and the rain gardens, so this location was a trade-off. We could potentially move the racks closer to the sidewalk to avoid the ramp but having them under the canopy offers rain protection while preserving valuable landscape space. Regarding the PMT, this location was chosen in consultation with the electrical engineer and BC Hydro. The electrical room is in this area, so the PMT must be nearby to serve all units. This is the currently approved BC Hydro location.
- Have you thought about having screening for the PMT?
 - No, I do not believe we are allowed to have screening.
- Applicant is recommended to explore if screening can be provided around the sides, if possible.
- Are there any minimum requirements for the outdoor space? Are there any guidelines that we should be aware of?
 - [Staff comment] Yes, we could reference the exact wording from the OCP, but essentially there are specific guidelines to ensure it is well-designed and appropriately scaled for the anticipated number of residents.
- There is no specific area requirement it's left to the designers to interpret. Is that correct?
 - [Staff comment] Yes, that is correct.
- Regarding building massing and how it overlooks surrounding buildings, are there any conflicts with sightlines? I am particularly curious about the level 6 deck and whether it has any direct visual impact on neighboring properties.
 - The level 6 deck faces Alston and Langford Streets, overlooking the residential buildings and houses below. There are no other decks directly facing ours.
- I am curious about the height transition to the surrounding area. While this specific site has no heritage concerns, a block over there are several heritage buildings that are only 1-2 stories tall. This building would be significantly taller than anything nearby, can you speak to that?

- We aimed to make the six-story building feel interactive with the lower levels by including patios and elements that create a residential atmosphere, along with a large canopy along the Alston and Langford sides.
- Any consideration of having a roof garden, to add to the open space and greenery for residents?
 - Currently, there is no room to include a rooftop design within the BC Housing units. It is primarily a building envelope issue, maintaining a rooftop garden is not allowed because it would require addressing existing structural and access concerns, which can be costly.
 - [Staff comment] The south and west façades, which include the smaller wings and the vertical white street-facing surfaces, are influenced by setback considerations. The decision not to set the building back is primarily an engineering and transportation matter, recommended to the applicant. At a high level, there are potential future changes planned for the Alston right-of-way.
 - We can definitely explore incorporating some of the red panels into the design especially on the white wall on the South side of the building. It's certainly something worth considering.

Panel members discussed:

- Usable outdoor space could be increased by reclaiming some of the area currently taken by the ramp, if possible.
- I like the suggestion to incorporate that and adding benches on-site or along the boulevard could give residents another outdoor space. I also have a thought about the roof deck: after looking at the dimensions, once chairs are added, it does not seem very usable. I wonder if it might be feasible and not too costly to shift the interior amenity space over by one-bedroom units, converting the top-floor three-bedroom unit into a two-bedroom. That way, the freed-up space could be recaptured as outdoor amenity space.
- I want to emphasize the importance of recapturing some of the ramp space. Given the focus on family housing with four-bedroom units, maximizing outdoor space for children is crucial. It seems essential to reclaim more of that area, as the current outdoor space feels very limited for the number of units proposed.
- I like the idea of breaking up the wall closest to the property line to make it feel less harsh, without requiring substantial changes to the design. Maintaining the current layout also helps preserve the number of units, which is important for an affordable housing project.
- I walked around the area yesterday, and regarding the transition concerns raised by staff, it does not seem particularly acute to me. Directly to the west, there is the existing four-story Indigenous housing project, and Aryze has a project on the other side of Catherine Street. I do not think the proposed redevelopment poses a significant concern.
- I agree, I think they have done a great job minimizing the number of windows facing south. I also like the inclusion of that hallway window, it is a small detail, but it is often overlooked in projects like this.
- Privacy fence is added, which is great.

Motion: That the Advisory Design Panel recommend to Council that Development Permit Application No. 00288 for 824/826 Alston Street, 210/212 and 220/222 Langford Street be approved with the following changes:

- The applicant considers capturing the airspace over the ramp and adding it to the courtyard to the degree possible.
- The applicant considers the configuration of the upper deck on the 6th floor, specifically increasing the width to improve usability.

Moved By: M. Showers

Seconded By: M. Hornell

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Adjournment

The August 13th, 2025, Advisory Design Panel meeting was adjourned at 1:16 p.m.