

**MINUTES**  
**ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL**  
Held electronically via MS Teams  
Wednesday August 7, 2024 at 1:01 pm.

Chair: Greg Gillespie

Present: Brad Forth, Matthew Jarvis, Will Kryzmowski, Jacy Lee and Kimberly Simpson

Regrets: Stephen Deglow

Guests: Alan Lowe, and Noor Alshaihkli of Alan Lowe Architect Inc; James Partlow, Lombard North Group

Staff: Gina Lyons, Senior Planner and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

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**CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by J. Lee and Seconded by W. Kryzmowski: “That the Minutes of the Advisory Design Panel meeting held on July 17, 2024, be adopted.”**

**CARRIED**

**3921, 3925 AND 3933 QUADRA STREET**

Application by Alan Lowe Architect

Rezoning and Development Permit application to construct a six-storey residential apartment building. Variances are requested.

**Legal Description:** Lots 1, 2 and 3, Section 32, Victoria District, Plan 3876

**Planning File:** DPR00903 REZ00704

**Planning Staff:** Gina Lyons, Senior Planner

**Comments from the Planner:**

- This is a Rezoning and Development Permit application to construct a 6 storey residential building with 74 units located at the intersection of Quadra Street and St. Peters Road.
- Vehicle access is proposed off of St. Peters Road with both below grade and surface parking.
- The primary residential entry is proposed to be off St. Peters Road.
- The site is located within the district’s primary growth area and on an identified Primary Corridor.
- The site is within the Quadra Local Area Plan (LAP) and Quadra McKenzie Study area. The Official Community Plan allows for consideration of mid-rise residential, up to 6 storeys.
- Planning is seeking general comments from the panel on the form and character, site planning and landscape design of the proposed development.

**Comments from the applicant:**

- The six-storey application will feature a four-storey front facing Quadra Street, with two additional two storeys stepped back and less visible from the road.
- The surrounding area includes a medical building, childcare centre, and both single family and multi-family homes.

- The large Garry Oak tree on Quadra Street will be retained.
- There is a driveway to the adjacent lot very close to the property line, with a fence dividing the properties. The fence will be replaced as part of the development.
- A new sidewalk will be installed on one side of the Garry Oak tree, and a bike lane on the other.
- The boulevard between the sidewalk and bike lane will offer ample space for the existing tree, as well as for three new sizable deciduous boulevard trees to be planted.
- St. Peters Road currently lacks sidewalks, so adding a new sidewalk along the property will be a valuable improvement for the neighborhood.
- A sewer Right of Way (RoW) runs across the corner of the lot, from St. Peter Road to the adjacent lot. The RoW, mandatory setbacks from the RoW, the slope of the property and the retention of the Garry Oak tree make building on this lot challenging.
- The site has a pronounced slope from north to south. To better integrate with the neighborhood character on St. Peters Road, the development will use a stepped building design.
- The ground-level townhouse units on St. Peters Road will include a mezzanine within each unit.
- A pad-mounted transformer (PMT) will be set away from the corner to minimize visual impact.
- Entrance to building and parking will be off of St. Peters Road. Colors will break up the massing.
- On the southside, the building recedes, with a greater mass concentrated in the center.
- Surface parking spaces will accommodate deliveries and visitors.
- The fifth floor will be set back from the street frontages, the sixth floor will be set back further.
- Areas finished in white will use composite aluminum, while other colors will be made of hardy board material. The railings will be aluminum with clear glass.
- Ground floor units on Quadra Street and St. Peters Road will feature exterior doors leading to a small patio with a townhouse-style yard, with screening between individual units
- Along the south property line, the parkade is close to the boundary, which restricts the soil area for tree growth. As a result, six smaller trees are proposed for this location.
- A half-meter variance is requested for the front lot line, mainly to accommodate the corner of the building due to the lot's shape. A similar half-meter variance is also requested for the rear lot line for the same reason. Additionally, the exterior lot line on Quadra Street is approximately 1.5 meters more than required.

**In response to questions and comments from the Panel, the applicant noted:**

- The main entrance will include a ramp providing access to elevators for units above. The private patios on St. Peters Road will be level. While the Quadra Street frontage will offer some level access, reaching certain units may be challenging due to grade changes.
- Most ground floor units are universally accessible, though some may require additional mechanisms to navigate the stairs in the hallway.
- The rear stairwell will offer access to the lawn at the back corner for all residents. This rear lawn will provide a space for children living in the large corner unit to play outdoors.
- Landscaping will be designed to provide privacy for all ground floor units.
- The BC Building Code allows a room without a window to be classified as a bedroom if it includes a sprinkler system and ventilation. While these rooms have been designated as bedrooms under this code, Saanich's policy and bedroom calculations differ from this.
- The corridor from the mezzanine bedrooms allows for access to the exterior of the building.
- There will be an approximately 3 metre retaining wall between the parkade and the neighbour.
- The pathway around the area above the parkade entrance will be accessible via stairs. Currently, the common outdoor space is not wheelchair accessible. Providing wheelchair access would be complex, requiring either the installation of a lift or a redesign of the area.
- The rain garden is strategically placed to ensure optimal treatment of water runoff.
- Maximizing living areas and usable space on the ground floor presents a challenge for providing bike parking near the entrance. Centralizing the bike parking area may lead to the loss of a unit.
- The lobby is long and narrow. It could be more spacious and functional; however the design focuses on giving as much of the ground floor space to residential units as possible.
- The visitor parking spaces could be made smaller if necessary.
- Reworking the front lobby to include a space for mail boxes may be necessary.

**In response to questions and comments from the Panel, the Senior Planner noted:**

- Planning does not consider rooms without windows to be bedrooms. Planning has created their own determination of what the unit mix type is, which differs from that of the applicant.
- This area is part of the Quadra McKenzie Study and is identified as a primary corridor. This designation would allow for higher density on the surrounding lots.

**Panel discussion ensued with the following comments:**

- The submission of this application to the Advisory Design Panel appears premature. Many elements require further consideration, especially regarding the coordination of the drawings.
- While some aspects of the drawings have been updated in certain areas, others have not been revised accordingly. Ensuring consistency across all drawings is crucial.
- Concerns have been raised regarding the numerous sets of stairs in the ground floor hallway of the building. This design raises significant issues as it impairs universal accessibility.
- The project is generally well-detailed, but further clarification is needed regarding the use of specific areas, such as the space above the parkade entrance. Leaving this area undecided for future residents could result in its full potential being underutilized. A universally accessible outdoor kitchen area or playground would be ideal for this location.
- Providing additional information and details about seating options such as benches should be included. Aspects such as bike racks and trellises would also enhance the outdoor spaces.
- Access to the back lawn area should be available to all residents, but the current plans do not clearly outline how this will be achieved. Plan changes may be needed to enhance this aspect.
- The landscaping on the boulevard is rich, this application will look good from the street.
- The public realm, which is crucial, does not meet expectations in fulfilling its role.
- Transitional spaces are essential for fostering community, and common areas play a central role in this. This application lacks cohesive transitional spaces, which will impede the sense of community. The Saanich Development Permit Area Guidelines should be reviewed.
- Centralizing bike parking and better integrating active transportation facilities for families by including bike parking at-grade would improve overall functionality.
- The outdoor common spaces lack comprehensive planning, particularly in the connection to the building's main circulation areas.
- A few of the ground floor units appear to be excessively large. Using some of this space to improve the lobby would improve the application.
- Well-coordinated and clear site plans are essential. Providing more detailed information on proposed grades and the area above the parkade would be highly beneficial.
- The three-meter-tall parkade wall adjacent to the neighbor poses some concerns. The plans should clearly detail the landscaped areas, elevations, and specifics of the rain garden and its surroundings to help panel members better visualize the proposal.
- Universal accessibility to all common outdoor areas is necessary.
- The proposed location of the accessible stalls is quite far from the elevator, which is not ideal.
- Many units are missing entry closets, which are essential for storage. More storage is needed.
- The ground floor patio and exterior access doors appear to be well thought out.
- The first impression of the building is of life and vibrancy, the banding is nice.
- There is a lack of materiality, using hardy board planks from the ground up is not ideal.
- The sense of entry from St. Peters Road could be improved by using more inviting features.
- The daylight will be limited in unit 13, as it is tucked in a heavily treed corner.
- Setbacks and the small variance request are appropriate for this site.
- Stepping the retaining wall away from the neighboring home would be valuable.
- A dead-end corridor exists with only one exit for the mezzanine level of town house units, this is not in compliance with the *BC Building Code* and poses a risk in the event of an emergency.
- Units are well designed but very compact, with extremely limited storage options.

**MOVED by J. Lee and Seconded by W. Krzymowski: “That it be recommended that the design to construct a 74 unit, 6 storey residential apartment building at 3921, 3925 and 3933 Quadra Street, be postponed to a future meeting to allow consideration of :-**

- **Universal accessibility and programming of the lobby area and hallways;**
- **Universal accessibility and programming details of the exterior amenity space**
- **Façade design and materiality to address building expression, massing and volume**
- **Softening of the retaining wall interface along the east property line.**

Panel discussion ensued with the following comment:

- Access to the mailboxes and bike storage is crucial.
- The lobby should serve as a transitional space, providing a pause between the exterior of the building and the entry to a unit.
- The massing is well-executed for the lower levels and the variance requests are appropriate.
- The expression of the massing begins to break down toward the top of the building. The architectural volumes could be more clearly articulated by reconsidering the façade design and materiality to redefine the language used to express each feature.
- The language of a building traditionally transitions from a base-middle-top, which fits city context. This proposal loses this understanding as your eyes move around the building. The elevated material causes the massing to break down at the top.
- In board rooms should not be counted as bedrooms, as per Saanich policy.
- Ensuring universal accessibility to all areas of the site is essential.
- More information is needed for the outdoor common space above the parkade. This should include proposed materials, elevations and design plans.
- Smaller car stalls or a terrace to soften the edge for the retaining wall would be favorable.

**The Motion was then PUT and CARRIED**

On a motion from B. Forth, the meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

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CHAIR, Greg Gillespie

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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COMMITTEE SECRETARY