

MINUTES
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL
Held electronically via MS Teams
Wednesday October 16, 2024 at 1:00 pm.

Chair: Greg Gillespie

Present: Stephen Deglow, Matthew Jarvis, Will Kryzmowski, Jacy Lee and Kimberly Simpson

Regrets: Brad Forth

Guests: Carl-Jann Rupp, Adam Fawkes and Cody Johnston, HCMA Architecture & Design; Abbie MacPherson and Rob Fowles, Capital Regional District

Staff: Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning; Janet Racz, Manager, Real Estate Services; Bob Lapham, Strategic Advisor - Housing Supply; Amber Walker, Acting Manager of Current Planning and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

3950 CEDAR HILL ROAD

Application by HCMA Architecture & Design

To construct a mixed-use development with a replacement library and up to 210 Affordable Housing Units and underground parking.

Legal Description: Lot 2, Section 41 & 57, Victoria District, Plan 28058

Planning File: DPR01073

Planning Staff: Amber Walker, Senior Planner

Comments from the Director of Planning and the Acting Manager of Current Planning:

- Recently, Council adopted measures to support the rapid deployment of non-market housing. A component of these is the delegation of approval of Development Permits to the Director of Planning (or designate) for non-market housing projects as defined in the Zoning Bylaw.
- The delegated permit process will be used for this project. Under this approach, Staff can still refer projects to the Advisory Design Panel (ADP) for input and a recommendation; which will be considered as part of the Director's review and decision on whether to approve the project.
- In June 2024, Council approved an application to rezone this lot from P-1 (Assembly Zone) to CD-8NM (Mixed Institutional – Library/Affordable Rental Housing Zone) to construct a mixed institutional project up to 18-storeys in height with a new library and up to 210 units of Affordable Rental Housing. Maximizing non-market opportunities and the new library were priorities.
- The applicant has submitted preliminary concept plans to the District, the presentation slide-deck was provided to ADP in place of these plans; the design team has advanced their concept from the initial plan set and designed the presentation slides to facilitate the discussion on key project elements including project objectives and site constraints.

Comments from the applicant:

- This unique application is a partnership between the District of Saanich (property owner) and the Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC), who have taken the role of leading the development, as well as operating the future affordable housing units.
- Other stakeholders include the Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL); and BC Housing who is providing funding for the rental housing units through the Community Housing Fund.
- The proposed mixed-use development will provide a vibrant district library branch for residents while delivering 210 affordable non-market rental units.
- A variety of unit types and sizes will support the needs of the region.
- The site is identified in a primary growth area in the updated Official Community Plan (OCP); as well as being within the University Centre, identified as Saanich's primary growth area.
- A site specific zone was approved during the rezoning process, no variances are needed.
- Step Code 3 sustainability will be met, as per the 2024 *Building Code* guidelines. The project timeline has been expedited to ensure upcoming changes to the *Building Code* do not effect the viability of the project and leverage available funding programs.
- The Nellie McClung Library is the busiest of the GVPL branches. This proposal has taken into consideration the GVPL Regional Service Master Plan and the Regional Service Delivery Plan.
- The library will be a flexible community hub, as well as destination for visitors. The proposal is a community amenity, supporting collaboration and connections with shared spaces.
- The affordable rental housing will also contribute to the well being of the community by offering family oriented units and an amenity area/green space above the library.
- University Heights is nearby, this area has many amenities and can support densification.
- Site restraints include limited green space opportunities, as well as a significant slope.
- No parking will be permitted on McKenzie Avenue or Cedar Hill Road. All vehicular access will be via Garnet Road, including short term parking, parkade access and a library loading bay.
- A large tree on Cedar Hill Road will be retained.
- Short term street level bike parking will be provided at each library entrance.
- The library will form the base of the project, with two floors of space. A podium above the library, with an outdoor courtyard will be the centre of the residential offerings. The side facing McKenzie Avenue will be a large tower, up to 18 storeys. Cedar Hill Road will feature four townhomes, and along Garnet Road will be another residential building up to 9 storeys.
- Two and a half levels of parking below the building will grant entry to each building. Residents will drive past the library parking stalls to a secure gated parking area. Each building will be accessible from the parking level, as well as an elevator to the library.
- Residents can access the tower from a ground level entrance on McKenzie Avenue; the Garnet Road residents will also have a street level access.
- Interior design of the library is still underway to ensure it meets the needs of the GVPL.
- An outdoor reading area for the library has been incorporated.
- Three storey townhouses above the library will reduce circulation between the two towers.
- While the building design and materials have not yet been finalized, the proposed materials will likely be greyscale cementitious panels or metal with natural tone accents.
- Varied color tones will help identify the different parts of the development. The emphasis is that this is a library first, with residential above by differentiating and articulating the materials.
- Planting will maximize the limited available space on the ground level. A large existing Garry Oak on Cedar Hill Road will be retained; it may be possible to preserve the maple trees along this street frontage as well.
- Sun exposure will be maximized in the plaza, which is located above the library between the residential offerings. Plantings and a play feature will allow for a communal space for all residents. Built in benches, furnishings and a communal dining area will enhance this space.

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

- A single tower on the podium would require a significantly larger footprint to fit the same number of units. Two buildings on the podium are less imposing than one large one.
- Topographical challenges prevent the inclusion of a public amenity space on the corner of

- Cedar Hill Road and McKenzie Avenue. Elevation variations have dictated the positioning.
- The covered library entrance is situated beneath the upper podium levels, providing a sheltered access point. There is uncertainty if the entrance will match the current design.
- Integrating the loading dock with the parkade presents some challenges.
- There is a potential for conflict regarding resident bicycle parking, as access to the bike storage rooms is via a shared drive aisle. Alternative solutions are not readily apparent.
- There is no amenity space on the rooftop of either tower, primarily due to operational considerations and the nature of the building. While integrating rooftop amenities would be desirable, the current existing amenity spaces are located at the podium courtyard level.
- Previous design iterations featured greater articulation for the townhouse units. The current approach emphasizes a more subdued expression, prioritizing a sculptural volumetric massing that reinforces the library's prominence. Increasing individuality at the podium level enhances the residential character, which is not the desired focus.
- Stormwater will be harvested for landscape irrigation as part of the design strategy.
- A garbage and recycling area will be centralized in a dedicated garbage room that will serve both the library and the residential units.
- Providing a balcony for each unit is not a priority, as it would considerably elevate costs.
- The first level of parking will be primarily allocated for library patrons, providing access via stairs or an elevator to both the library and mezzanine. Residents will drive past these spaces, through a gate leading to the secure lower parking area and elevators to the residential areas.
- The height variation between the north and south buildings significantly impacts the overall massing. The massing of the north tower adheres to the OCP's limit of 18 storeys for this area.
- The south tower is more accurately described as a building rather than a traditional tower. There are limited massing alternatives, with the courtyard benefiting from maximum available sunlight. The unit count of 210 is fixed, as this number is tied to secured funding commitments.
- Any tower placement adjustments would compromise sunlight exposure in the central space.
- Access to the townhomes will be via the central courtyard.
- Bike parking will primarily be located under a covered overhang outside of the library, however there will be allocated bike parking at each entrance, in addition to secure bike parking rooms.
- Changes are taking place daily in order to ensure this application meets deadlines and remains a feasible project. Several factors contribute to tight deadlines for submission.
- Each residential building will have approximately six visitor parking spaces. There will also be 20 surface covered spaces for library visitors, and six library staff stalls. Differentiating the parking areas for each building while ensuring the areas are safe and secure is important.
- Cargo bike parking stalls will be provided for each part of the development.
- Storage options are still being considered; equitable access is important. The floorplans are not finalized, there is a potential the accessible units may have in suite storage.
- Inclusion of 210 units is paramount, optimizing space within the footprint of the buildings to meet aspect ratios and *Building Code* requirements is ongoing. BC Housing guidelines to ensure livability are quite prescriptive in order to receive the requested funding.
- Engaging the panel for feedback during the conceptual phase allows for more constructive revisions, facilitating the incorporation of changes at an earlier stage of the design process.

The Director of Planning noted the following:

- As this application has been delegated to the Director of Planning for consideration, any motion passed by the Panel will be taken into consideration by Planning Staff rather than Council.

The following was noted during Panel discussion:

- Conceptually, this proposal is viable; however, the current lack of refinement presents challenges that hinder the ability to provide detailed feedback and specific recommendations.
- The podium courtyard would benefit from a reorganization of its layout. By repositioning the circulation pathways toward the center, it may be possible to consolidate planting zones and expand the tree canopy. Introducing larger, leafy trees in this space would help mitigate the

- "fishbowl" effect caused by the surrounding windows above, enhancing both privacy and environmental quality. Consolidating the planting areas also could help streamline circulation.
- Reducing the height of planting walls, while maximizing soil volume, would be advantageous for both plant health and spatial efficiency.
 - Institutional entrances should be strategically positioned to offer clear visual access to the layby, engage the corner, and remain open and inviting to the public realm.
 - The bike parking arrangement could create conflict with vehicle circulation.
 - The materiality exhibits a high contrast, sharing materials across all buildings could help unify the volumes, reinforcing and enhancing the multi-volumetric expression.
 - Introduction of an amenity space, such as a rooftop terrace, at the highest level could offer elevated views, providing an attractive and unique outdoor experience for the affordable units.
 - While balconies may not be feasible for all units, incorporating Juliet balconies that allow full opening to the exterior could significantly enhance the connection to the outdoors, offering improved ventilation and a sense of openness.
 - The design offers thoughtful articulation for side views, enhancing visual interest and depth.
 - This location is well-suited for the proposed density, and the building is appropriately scaled.
 - Maximizing the height is a positive aspect, but providing greenspace remains a key challenge.
 - The corner of Cedar Hill Road and McKenzie Avenue is a busy intersection, the sense of entry is lacking in this area. A small coffee shop or communal gathering area would be ideal.

MOVED by M. Jarvis and Seconded by K. Simpson: "That it be recommended that the design to construct a mixed-use development with a replacement library and up to 210 affordable housing units and underground parking be approved subject to the following considerations:

- **Reconsideration of the courtyard space to maximize usable space;**
- **Providing Juliet balconies to units without full balconies;**
- **More celebrated library entrance to provide social programming; and**
- **Consideration of a rooftop amenity space."**

CARRIED

On a motion from J. Lee, the meeting adjourned at 3:22 p.m.

CHAIR, Greg Gillespie

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY