

**MINUTES
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL**

Held electronically via MS Teams
Wednesday December 4, 2024 at 1:03 pm.

Chair: Greg Gillespie

Present: Stephen Deglow, Chris Gower, Will Kryzmowski, Jacy Lee, Kareem Negm, Carl-Kimberly Simpson (1:09 p.m.) and Jan Rupp

Regrets: Brad Forth

Guests: Dean Strongitharm, Strongitharm Consulting Ltd.; Mike Barros and Erica Sangster, Dau Studio; John Papaloukas, Owner

Staff: Christine Rickards, Planner and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by J. Lee and Seconded by W. Kryzmowski: “That the Minutes of the Advisory Design Panel meeting held on November 6, 2024, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

4512 WEST SAANICH ROAD

A 12-storey mixed use development with 80 residential units.

Applicant: Dean Strongitharm, Strongitharm Consulting Ltd.
Planning File: DPR00971 and REZ00717
Planning Staff: Christine Rickards, Planner on behalf of Gina Lyons, Senior Planner

Planning provided an overview of the proposal, followed by a presentation from the applicants (PowerPoint on file).

The applicant noted the following in response to questions from the Panel:

- The shared amenity spaces feature a main floor deck on the west-facing side, directly connected to the lobby area. This space is versatile and can accommodate events or gatherings for residents, as a combination of the lobby and the deck or as standalone areas.
- While the design excludes amenity spaces on the roof or upper floors, it offers generous private outdoor spaces for residents, including the meandering pathway and mature trees.
- The possibility of locating the amenity space on Level 2 was considered; however, it would overlook the neighboring property, raising privacy concerns.
- The Commercial Retail Unit (CRU) has been designed with the concept of a restaurant in mind, given the presence of the existing restaurant on site. However, its current design remains flexible to support a variety of public uses beyond just a restaurant.
- A planning request suggested incorporating multiple entrances to allow for the potential future division of the CRU space. Both entrances have been designed to be fully accessible, ensuring ease of access for all users.
- There has recently been interest from an existing restaurant owner in potentially relocating their business in this future space; however, there is no guarantee that this will come to fruition.

- A plan has been developed to allow for a potential dividing wall and the inclusion of both entrances; however, at this stage, only one entrance is illustrated on the current plans.
- The garden area will include public amenity benches, which can be accessed from street level, or from within the building. The secure bike room on P1 will provide access to the pathway on the east side. Additionally, the stairs descending from the main floor residential amenity space on the west side will also serve as an access point.
- Reconfiguring the parking area to establish an exit from P1 to the west-side pathway is not feasible due to the presence of the mechanical room and other technical constraints.
- The gravel pathway will have some limitations to ensure the protection of the existing trees. Gravel will be used instead of concrete, as a paved walkway would pose risks to the trees.
- The garbage and recycling area is located adjacent to the driveway at the P1 level. This designated staging area allows bins to be rolled out for pickup by the waste collection truck.
- The one-story parkade wall will not be a fully exposed 4-meter-high structure. Instead, it will feature a cast texture finish with select doors and windows incorporated into the design. A high-placed window will provide natural lighting to the garbage and recycling area. The design intent is to use strategic landscaping to act as a visual buffer, softening the wall's appearance and integrating it into the surrounding environment.
- An extensive root zone investigation was conducted with the involvement of both a Saanich arborist and a private arborist. This comprehensive analysis thoroughly examined the root zone conditions and informed a raised driveway design with limited alternatives to minimize disturbance to the surrounding tree roots. More sensitive root areas are located to the left and right of the driveway, which may require the incorporation of steps or a ramp on the sidewalks flanking either side of the driveway to maintain accessibility while protecting the root systems.
- The plan is to create a commemorative or small memorial plaza along the West Saanich Road frontage to honor the historic Saanich Hall. Various alternatives have been explored; however, unfortunately, the historic building cannot be maintained on the site.
- The memorial will include a storytelling component highlighting the history of the second Saanich City Hall as well as the pre-colonization history of the area. A small plaza, located next to the residential entrance, will feature informational elements to educate visitors and residents about this historical context.
- When referencing a heritage building in the context of a new design, the approach can focus on either architectural form or materiality. Currently, the focus is on developing a material palette that harmonizes with the natural setting derived from the site itself rather than directly replicating the architectural style of the previous heritage structure.
- Native plantings are being strategically integrated throughout the site to create a cohesive and contextually sensitive landscape. These plantings aim to enhance the natural ecology, support local biodiversity, and establish a strong connection between the built environment and the surrounding natural context.
- The renderings show greenery on the upper balconies that are not detailed in the landscaping plans; they represent conceptual opportunities for resident-driven planting. The balconies are deeply recessed, offering generous space for planters and potted greenery. This design makes it feasible for residents to use these patios as functional, outdoor living areas.
- A green roof is proposed over the residential entrance, creating additional green space and enhancing aesthetic appeal. On Level 1, built-in planters overlook Shawnee Road, which may include Flowering Dogwood trees. These will integrate natural elements into the entry experience while connecting with the surrounding landscape.
- The site is notably constrained and presents design challenges, requiring creative strategies to maximize functionality and connectivity.
- Proper venting for the mechanical room is required. Transforming the utilitarian space is challenging as options like glazing are limited due to the nature of the room and the location. Service requirements constrain the possible locations, making integration more complex.
- The area is being transformed with the goals of the Official Community Plan (OCP), focusing on the natural elements of the Royal Oak neighborhood. A color palette of warm greys, browns, and earthy tones creates a grounded, organic aesthetic. Horizontal lines dominate

the façade, with light and dark contrasts reflecting tree bark textures and shadows.

- The design minimizes the use of large glass expanses, prioritizing the integration of the surrounding landscape. This approach aligns with the urban identity of Royal Oak, distinguishing it from the character of downtown.
- The P1 bike room is not located at the building's frontage, instead accessible via a gravel pathway. The design maintains a light touch in the area between the trees and the building, preserving the natural landscape.
- The northern access at P1 would be ideal; however, the existing grade is one meter higher, making it difficult to transition to the north.
- Bikes can be parked under the canopy in the bike parking area located near the main entry.
- The design intent for the tower's form involves a variation in color from bottom to top. The fluted profile will be cast in textured natural-colored concrete. The main body of the tower will feature a tone similar to the concrete but slightly warmer, creating a subtle contrast that complements the dark bronze paneling and window frames.
- The building is positioned towards the West Saanich Road side to preserve the existing trees along Shawnee Road. A hardscaped interface is incorporated along the streetscape, with a portion of the ground floor being inset to provide barrier-free entry. Smaller planters have been added throughout to introduce softness and texture where feasible.
- Short-term parking on West Saanich was necessary due to site constraints on other frontages.
- This building form does not have any adverse impact on the potential future development of adjacent parcels. The amenity patio space is stepped back and does not face the adjacent lot, ensuring privacy and minimizing impact.
- The building footprint design follows the arborist's recommendations precisely regarding what can be done with the trees and root systems. The canopies have been modeled to determine which limbs need pruning. The position cannot be shifted unless the trees are removed.
- There is potential to add more greenery or additional shrubs along West Saanich Road to enhance the landscape.
- The solid façade is broken down with natural lighting, and the use of half-solid balconies helps to break the vertical scale. The solid elements can be interrupted with lighter materials to create contrast. There is consideration of removing horizontal bands, the recessed stacks of balconies would be emphasized by interrupting the horizontal lines.

The following was noted during Panel discussion:

- The unit mix is interesting, and the site geometry works well with the angled building and sawtooth design to the north. This creates a strong sense of articulation and visual interest.
- The shadow study compares the current conditions with the proposed design, highlighting the impact of the new development on shadow patterns.
- Bike access at grade is not ideal, but it is functional. The design includes parking for both cargo bikes and street bikes.
- On-street parking is well-situated, and the prominent residential amenity space is easily accessible. A staircase from the amenity space provides direct access to the rear landscaping. These thoughtful details enhance the overall design.
- The animation along Viewmont Avenue is satisfactory, and the addition of outdoor CRU space enhances the overall design.
- The park-like setting around the London plane trees, with naturalized green space and benches, is highly successful in creating a welcoming and functional environment.
- The creative stormwater management approach is a positive feature, integrating sustainable practices into the design. The project adheres to the Design Guidelines.
- The design demonstrates strong attention to detail, and seems to be carefully considered.
- The well-integrated plan is commendable, this moderate height is preferable in this area.
- A lighter treatment for the balcony guards would enhance the overall aesthetic.

- The massing of the building's north-south bulk requires attention to break up its scale. Strategies such as the sawtooth design and offsetting the building around the elevator core offer opportunities to refine the design and reduce visual bulk.
- The lack of programmed common amenity space is not ideal. It is unclear what the amenity spaces are and how residents will use them or how the spaces will interact with each other. These details need to be defined for a better understanding of the overall design.
- The park-like nature of the London plane trees area offers a passive common amenity, but there is a need for space where people can meet and gather. Picnic tables, as opposed to just benches, would better facilitate gatherings and encourage social interaction.
- The corner of Viewmont Avenue and Shawnee Road has significant potential, particularly the intersection of West Saanich and Viewmont. While there are grade challenges, addressing this corner is crucial for the success of the overall design.
- Additional trees along the frontage would be ideal, providing opportunities to replant an urban forest canopy in the right-of-way. This would enhance the streetscape and sustainability.
- Improving the visibility and design of the entries is necessary to enhance the user experience.
- The frontage requires more architectural detailing to create a more engaging street presence.
- A more varied color palette on the balconies would help soften the relationship between the different elements of the project, as the current design feels somewhat standoffish.
- This development will be an important pedestrian realm one day.

MOVED by W. Kryzmowski and Seconded by K. Negm: "That it be recommended that the design to construct a 12-storey mixed use development with 80 residential units at 4512 West Saanich Road be approved with consideration of:

- **Improved shelter space along the public realm**
- **Closer pedestrian space building entrances**
- **Improved visual access along street frontage**
- **Improved programming and activation of the interior and outdoor amenity spaces**
- **Improved façade articulation with regard to corner balconies, vertical breaks and glazing."**

The following was noted during panel discussion:

- A canopy along the street front of West Saanich Road would enhance the pedestrian experience, providing shelter and adding visual interest to the streetscape.
- The interface with the public realm could be improved to create a more seamless and engaging connection between the building and its surroundings.
- The articulation of the massing and façade should be designed to soften the project's interface, taking into account both immediate context and future developments in the area.
- Improving both the indoor and outdoor common amenity spaces would enhance the overall functionality and appeal, fostering better social interaction and connectivity among residents.

CARRIED

On a motion from J. Lee, the meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m.

CHAIR, Greg Gillespie

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY