

MINUTES
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL

Held electronically via MS Teams
Wednesday February 5, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

Chair: Greg Gillespie

Present: Matthew Jarvis, Xeniya Vins, Kimberly Simpson, Jacy Lee, Brian Fraser, Chris Gower

Guests: Selena Kwok, Jackson Low, Trevor D’Orazio, Low Hammond Rowe Architects, Blair Echlin, Denford Construction, Adam Cooper, Bryn Walmsley, Kristy Irvine, Abstract Developments Inc., Greg Voute, Architect, Cara MacDonald, Landscape Architect, Chris Denford, Berwick Retirement Communities, and Christopher Windjack, Landscape Architect

Staff: Fiona Titley, Planner, Gina Lyons, Senior Planner, Carl Purvis, Manager of Current Planning, Eric Joyal, Planner, Colton Whittaker, Committee Clerk, and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The Committee Clerk called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

MOVED by C. Gower and Seconded by B. Fraser: “That Greg Gillespie be elected as Chair of the Advisory Design Panel for 2025.”

CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by C. Gower and Seconded by K. Simpson: “That the Minutes of the Advisory Design Panel meeting held on November 20, 2024, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by J. Lee and Seconded by C. Gower: “That the Minutes of the Advisory Design Panel meeting held on December 4, 2024, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

4211 COMMERCE CIRCLE

Development Permit Application to construct a 3-storey mixed use building (office and warehouse storage).

Applicant: Low Hammond Rowe Architects (Selena Kwok/Jackson Low)
Planning File: DPR01055
Planning Staff: Fiona Titley, 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 waste management site is fully enclosed within the building, ensuring a seamless integration with the overall design and minimizing visual and environmental impacts.
- Landscape lighting is strategically positioned through a combination of streetlights and other lights surrounding the building, enhancing safety and visibility while complementing the architectural composition.
- The adjacent sloping driveway contributes to a significant grade change on the west side of the building, requiring careful consideration of grading transitions and retaining elements to maintain site accessibility.
- Climbing vines will introduce vertical greenery along the west façade, softening the building's massing and creating a dynamic visual texture over time.
- A substantial amount of landscaping and sculpted mounding extends from the base of the stepping wall up to the fence line, reinforcing a natural buffer.
- The parkade extends to the easement line, requiring careful coordination with site boundaries and access points.
- There are limited opportunities for stormwater management on the lower level.
- The elevator connects all three levels of the building including parking, warehouse, and office.
- The north property line runs along the underground parking ramp, with no proposed landscaping along the north property line.
- The majority of the fence along the east side will be visually softened by extensive landscaping in the foreground, reducing its prominence within the overall site composition.
- A steel fence has been selected instead of a typical chain-link fence to enhance durability, security, and visual cohesion with the architectural language of the development.
- The majority of parking is accommodated underground, providing ample capacity for both staff and guests.
- Warehouse parking is designated exclusively for vehicle storage and access, with no use for material storage.
- Pedestrians can internally open the gate and ascend the ramp from the parkade.
- Two dedicated exit points from the office areas provide safe egress for people on foot.

The following was noted during Panel discussion:

- This project balances utilitarian industrial function with thoughtful design elements, though some walls appear visually dominant.
- The design exceeds the standard expectations for industrial buildings, incorporating a high level of detail and materiality.
- Extensive landscaping and intentional visual expression contribute to a more engaging and site-sensitive development.
- The atrium is a well-considered space that fosters a bright and inviting environment.
- The landscape design is thoughtfully executed, with coloured paving and berming

- contributing to a softened interface between the built form and its surroundings.
- The interplay of glazing with metal, wood, and architectural concrete creates a dynamic façade with strong material contrast and visual depth.
- The tiered landscaping approach is successfully integrated, enhancing the building's relationship with the site topography.
- The entrance is welcoming, with the flared staircase contributing to a sense of grandeur on arrival.
- The sculptural form and material selections introduce a high level of sophistication and elegance within an industrial context.
- The landscaping strategy goes beyond functional requirements, incorporating a thoughtful mix of native and ornamental plantings.
- The inclusion of end-of-trip facilities, such as showers, is a well-appreciated feature.
- Consideration should be given to lowering fences and guards where possible to reduce visual barriers, allowing the landscape and architectural elements to take prominence.
- The proposed variances, overall design, and parking allocation are supportable.
- Coordinating the fence color with the tones of the building could create a more cohesive and unified aesthetic.
- The potential addition of a pedestrian-only gate should be carefully assessed for its impact on egress.

C. Purvis left the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

MOVED by C. Gower and Seconded by J. Lee: "That it be recommended that the design to construct a 3-storey mixed use building (office and warehouse storage) at 4211 Commerce Circle be approved subject to considerations of:

- **Softening the visual impact of the retaining walls and fencing."**

The following discussion ensued:

- The design team is commended for their thoughtful and well-executed approach to the project.

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

S. Kwok, J. Low, T. D'Orazio, C. MacDonald, B. Echlin, and C. Denford left the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

801/811/821 MCKENZIE AVENUE

This item is a Rezoning and Development Permit application for an 8-storey residential building with 125 residential units and underground parking.

Applicant: Abstract Developments Inc.
Planning File: DPR00941/REZ00709
Planning Staff: 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:

- Bedrooms are defined according to the BC Building Code, which requires them to have a closet.

- All new residential buildings must comply with the adaptable housing requirements outlined in the BC Building Code.
- The architectural character has been refined to reflect a West Coast contemporary aesthetic, balancing modern simplicity with a strong residential feel.
- A key design challenge was preserving the existing Garry Oak trees and integrating the surrounding area into a passive amenity space featuring seating and a walking path. To support long-term ecological health, additional smaller Garry Oaks will be planted.
- The site's significant grade variations posed several design challenges, requiring innovative solutions for accessibility and integration with the natural landscape.
- The parking entrance is optimally placed, aligning with the existing site grade for efficient vehicular access.
- Level access to the bike room enhances its functionality as a key resident amenity.
- Ground-floor units along McKenzie Avenue feature private patios with raised planters, reinforcing a strong connection between the building and the streetscape.
- The landscape design prioritizes native and adaptive plant species, with an emphasis on supporting pollinators and bird habitat creation.
- An exterior staircase provides direct access from the first-floor residential units to the Garry Oak garden area, maintaining the building's classification as six storeys.
- An additional accessible entrance with a ramp ensures barrier-free access for all residents.
- Elevator access is provided to the bike room.
- The oversized lobby includes seating and a proposed fireplace, serving as a communal gathering space, though there are no designated traditional amenity areas.
- There is a visual connection between the lobby and the Garry Oak garden area through extensive glazing, but no direct physical access.
- The sidewalk is designed as a cantilevered structure off an existing retaining wall to protect tree root zones. One tree within the Garry Oak garden area is slated for removal.
- Stormwater management features are integrated into the site design, with a designated collection area along the south property line between the building and the neighboring townhouse complex.
- The underground parking level interfaces directly with the Garry Oak garden area.
- Kitchen millwork typically includes a dropped ceiling to accommodate ventilation, limiting the feasibility of introducing clerestory windows for additional daylighting in interior-facing bedrooms.
- The southern property line features three-tiered landscape areas, with the first tier dedicated primarily to stormwater management, supplemented by some planting.
- A retaining wall along the southern property line is implemented as a strategy to visually reduce the perceived height of the building.
- The southern setback is calculated based on the exposed parkade wall rather than the primary building mass, in accordance with submitted plans.
- Some recent plan modifications were not included in the panel's review, and decisions are being made based on the originally submitted materials.
- Council approved additional building height, but design measures have been taken to ensure the building remains classified as a six-storey wood-frame structure.
- A transition to a taller, tower-style building would likely face significant community opposition, in addition to the financial implications of switching from wood-frame to another construction type.
- The design team has ensured that all retaining walls and height classifications align with fire safety codes.
- Consideration is being given to improving egress from patios. These were initially intended for maintenance access, but resident privacy remains a key priority, requiring a balance between accessibility and private outdoor space.
- This iteration of the project has incorporated previous feedback from the Advisory Design Panel (ADP) and Council.

- Visitor parking stalls are designed to accommodate deliveries, drop-off services, and short-term parking needs.
- Waste services are being coordinated with Green For Living (GFL), ensuring a small waste collection vehicle can frequently access designated garbage areas.
- The team is actively working on finalizing waste and recycling container sizes to optimize space efficiency.
- There is ongoing consideration of reducing the size of the garbage room to reallocate space for a designated loading area outside the parkade to accommodate larger vehicles that cannot access the underground parking area.

M. MacDonald left the meeting at 2:34 p.m.

The following was noted during Panel discussion:

- The preservation of the Garry Oak trees was identified as an important consideration, and the applicant has demonstrated a thoughtful approach to integrating these natural features into the design.
- While the setbacks remain as defined, the panel recognizes the need to support increased density along this corridor.
- The tiered retaining wall approach provides a visually appealing and functional transition, offering some relief to the overall massing of the building.
- The project presents a strong unit mix with flexible living options and well-integrated pedestrian pathways.
- The inclusion of at-grade bike parking is a positive addition that supports active transportation.
- The building exhibits a well-defined sense of entry, enhanced by a thoughtful variation of materials that contribute to its overall architectural expression.
- The overall composition, including the flow, rhythm, and curved elements, helps to soften the perceived mass of the building and create a more inviting form.
- Due to the significant grade difference, the interface between the building and the Garry Oak garden area is somewhat disconnected and could be further refined.
- Providing an interior space that directly connects to the Garry Oak garden area would enhance usability and strengthen the relationship between the building and the landscape.
- Consideration should be given to allowing public access to the Garry Oak garden area, potentially integrating it as a shared community space.
- The treatment of the south property line could be improved through additional plantings to soften the visual impact of the walls and enhance privacy for ground-level units. The introduction of a pathway along this edge could serve to strengthen the sense of community while maintaining fire access requirements.
- The selection of plant species should prioritize native varieties to support local biodiversity and ecological resilience.
- A more deliberate approach to providing access to the Garry Oak garden area would enhance its functionality and integration with the residential spaces.
- The accessible path leading to the main entry could be more generous in width and better integrated into the primary circulation routes rather than positioned off to the side.
- Strategies to introduce natural daylight into inboard bedrooms should be explored to enhance livability and interior comfort.
- The architectural design exhibits a high level of detail, and the use of recessed volumes effectively mitigates the overall scale of the building.
- The articulation of the curved balconies successfully distinguishes the massing elements and contributes to the overall visual interest of the façade.
- The addition of a bay window in the lobby, overlooking the Garry Oak garden area, could enhance the spatial and visual relationship between the interior and exterior spaces. The potential inclusion of an exterior stair connecting the lobby to the garden would further

- improve accessibility and engagement with the landscape.
- A residential building of this scale would benefit from a dedicated amenity space to support the needs of its occupants.
- The northwest corner of the building presents an opportunity to be further accentuated, potentially serving as a gateway element that enhances the architectural presence along the street.
- The introduction of additional glazing on the western-facing corner units could take advantage of sunset views and improve interior daylighting.
- The articulation of the balcony design could be further refined to better emphasize and anchor the building's corner expression.
- The substantial roof overhangs contribute to a sense of top-heaviness in the building's overall composition and could be reconsidered to achieve a more balanced proportion.

MOVED by C. Gower and Seconded by K. Simpson: "That it be recommended that the design for an 8-storey residential building with 125 residential units and underground parking at 801/811/821 McKenzie Avenue be approved subject to considerations of:

- **Improved access in relationship of the northwest corner landscaping to the building;**
- **Improved landscape screening to soften the interface and overlook along the south and east property lines; and**
- **Accentuate amenity capacity of the lobby or consideration of improved indoor amenity space."**

The following discussion ensued:

- The inclusion of well-designed interior and exterior amenity spaces is crucial for enhancing the overall quality of life and fostering a sense of community.

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

On a motion from J. Lee, the meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

CHAIR, Greg Gillespie

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY