

MINUTES
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL MEETING
Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
Via MS Teams
July 21, 2021, at 3:02 pm

A/Chair: Greg Gillespie

Present: Illarion Gallant (3:22), Colin Harper, Jacy Lee, and Erica Sangster

Regrets: Keith Davidoff, Nicholas Standeven, Megan Walker and Janine Wigmore

Staff: Gina Lyons, Senior Planner; Chuck Bell, Planner; and Tara Da Silva, Senior Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The A/Chair called the meeting to order at 3:02. p.m.

4595 Elk Lake Drive (and 4595 Viewmont Avenue)

Application by the District of Saanich (Chief Michael Burgess)
A rezoning and development variance permit to construct a new fire station. Variances are requested.

Legal Description:

Lot 5, Section 8A, Lake District, Plan 6056 Except That Part in Plan 2395 RW and Plan 770RW

Parcel A (Being a Consolidation of Lots 1, 2 and 3, See FB86476), Section 9, Lake District, Plan 29935, Except Part in Plan VIP83669

Planning File: DVP00449/REZ00663/SUB00871

Planner: Gina Lyons, Senior Planner

Comments from the Planner:

- This site is located in the Royal Oak neighbourhood, outside of the Royal Oak Major “Centre”. The Royal Oak Local Area Plan (LAP) designates the site for Institutional and Urban Single-family uses.
- The application proposes a fire hall use across the two subject properties and the termination of Viewmont Avenue.
- Variances are proposed for:
 - Height, to allow for the training tower, which is centrally located on the site; and
 - Exterior side yard setback
- Planning is seeking general comments from the Panel on the site and landscape design.

Comments from applicant /owner:

Adam Fawkes, Senior Associate, HCMA; Jason Bennett, Senior Landscape Architect, Associated Engineering; Alec Page, Project Manager, Core Project Management; Chief Michael Burgess and Deputy Chief Dan Wood, Fire Department; District of Saanich, Stacy McGhee, Program Manager, Strategic Facilities Planning, Department of Engineering, District of Saanich; presented to the Panel:

- The redevelopment of Fire Hall #2 was identified in the Strategic Priorities Master Plan in 2018, and Council adopted the business case in May 2019.
- The existing Fire Hall #2 is not able to meet the demands required for the residents of Saanich as it doesn't meet the changing needs of Saanich residents. It is a seismically unfit building, 45% of the fire department equipment is improperly stored, only has the capacity for a single crew and two apparatuses, the traffic pattern is insufficient, and the surrounding traffic volume has increased.
- The future fire station will have three additional tandem bays to store additional apparatus and has the capacity for two crews and two or more apparatuses. It will be seismically updated, contain a community meeting space, the traffic pattern will be reorganized, the training centre expanded, and the building will meet the District's GHG emission management and path to net zero.
- Emergency response elements are taken into consideration during site planning. Benefits include improved emergency response time by exiting onto Royal Oak Drive, placement of the driveway apron midway between the two intersections, relocation and compression of transit stops and compressed, optimizing the training yard size for practical use, minimizing tree loss, maintaining the landscape, and maintaining landscape buffers on all sides.
- The turning radii of returning trucks at the south end of the property dictates the southern limit of the apparatus bay. The building setback on the north end of the property and the apron depth dictates the northern boundary.
- The new fire hall is functional, durable and has a public presence.
- The building will be certified LEED Gold, Net Zero Carbon with a target of Net Zero Energy while maximizing wood usage.
- The design provides a balance between being a prominent public building, yet the public only enters when necessary or invited. There is a mix of open and closed spaces while having the public in close proximity.
- The structure has a durable exterior while revealing the wood structure and trucks within the building. The roof area is maximized for solar energy generation.
- The floor plan for level one contains the lobby, community meeting room, transit washrooms, suppression crew areas, apparatus bays, training facilities, support spaces and the hose/training tower.
- Level two has the suppression crew sleep and fitness areas, apparatus bays, storage and mechanical rooms.
- Although Viewmont Avenue is closed, the pedestrian pathway will remain but will be rerouted and enhanced to three metres width.
- There is public bike parking near the front entrance and a space for public art at the corner of the intersection.
- The materiality consists of dark textured brick, metal cladding, exposed concrete, wood soffits, galvanized steel grating, and double and triple glazed windows.
- The tree protection and removal plan was a lengthy, well-thought-out process. Ninety-seven of the 153 trees have to be removed; however, an additional 62 trees will be replaced. The intention is to replant at a 3:1 ratio; the remainder of the trees will be planted within the community by Saanich Parks.

- All of the existing trees will be supplemented with additional planting. There will be enhanced planting around the building entry, transit stop, and substantial planting around the training facility to soften and screen the view.
- Additional decorative paving will be added near the transit stop to add an urban design aspect.
- Throughout the site, rain gardens are dispersed to manage stormwater.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Applicant stated:

- Perhaps there is an opportunity to articulate differing paving patterns between the sidewalk and the apron.
- There is a windy path for transit drivers to use to access the transit washrooms.
- The desired path from the corner for pedestrians is deliberate; there will be a sign near the sidewalk and a landscape feature.
- The community room does not have a mandated program; it will be on the Saanich roster of available spaces for staff and the public. It will be able to accommodate between 15-25 people in non-Covid times.
- It is anticipated that this new fire hall will be able to service Saanich for many decades. An additional four-person crew will not be needed for another 10-15 years. This building is designed to last a minimum of 80 years.
- The shape of the roof is an iconic symbol form, contrasting the angle of the fins.
- The roof tilts near the training tower; by sloping the roof, the roof edge is minimized on all sides.
- The transit washroom will be locked and accessed only by transit staff.
- The textured concrete wall on the east side of the property, next to the pathway, is 2.5 m high. There will be plantings of layering heights and vines growing on the wall to create a green screen.
- The building construction will be completed in phases. The north half of the existing building will be demolished while keeping the vehicle bays in place and functional until the new building is built.
- The roof, second-floor flooring and indoor beams will be timber. Earlier this year, Saanich submitted an innovative wood project and was successful in obtaining additional funding specifically to look at creative ways to use cross-laminated timber (CLT) in post-seismic fire halls.
- The mass timber will be exposed where possible; drywall will cover some ductwork and plumbing. The intention is to maximize the amount of CLT visibility.
- The apparatus will always head north onto Royal Oak Drive. Staff and visitors will be coming and going from Elk Lake Drive.
- Watt Consulting is reviewing onsite parking. A traffic impact assessment is not required as part of this application; however, a parking study is on file.
- The Engineering Department is working with colleagues in the Sustainability Division to maximize EV stations through grant rebate programs for all visitor and the four staff parking spaces. Planning is in place to be fully wired for Class 3 EV for firetrucks in the future.
- There was considerable discussion and study with the fire department regarding how the training yard functions and how the yard can function amongst the trees. The arborist assessed the trees on the site and deemed them the most important trees to keep; there is also a right of way through the site that must be considered.

Comments from the Panel:

- The building design and material palette create a language for the project and bring all of the elements together in one cohesive place with a strong identity.
- Great job of siting the building and driving a unique architecture.

- This design has a strong presence.
- The environmental goals are commendable.
- The site is dominated by soft landscaping and soft concrete; the public art is commendable.
- Consideration could be given to breaking up some of the parking in the back area to retain some of the large trees.

MOVED by I. Gallant and Seconded by E. Sangster: “That it be recommended that the design to construct a new fire station at 4595 Elk Lake Drive and 4595 Viewmont Avenue be approved as presented.”

CARRIED

630 Gorge Road West

Application by 630 Gorge Road Developments Ltd. (Ben Smith)

A rezoning and development permit amendment application to construct a 26-unit, five building townhouse project.

Legal Description:

Lot 12, Section 20, Victoria District, Plan 801, Except Those Parts in Plans 86 BL, 36 RW, and 22086

Planning File: DPR00787/REZ00659

Planner: Chuck Bell, Planner

Comments from the Planner:

- This application came before the Panel in February 2021. The Advisory Design Panel requested that consideration be postponed to a future meeting to allow the applicant to consider the following:
 - A revised colour palette;
 - Improved pedestrian experience and safety;
 - An increase of sense of entry and landscaping at Building E;
 - Re-evaluation of visitor parking; and
 - A reduction in density.

Comments from applicant /owner:

Nicholas Standeven, Vice President of Development; Ben Smith, Development Manager; Kelsey Waller, Assistant (Jr.) Development Manager; Abstract Developments; Eddie Williams, Principal, Steller Architectural Consulting, Bianca Bodley, Landscape Architect, Biophilia Design Collective; presented to the Panel:

- In the intervening months, the comments and application have been reviewed. An accessible visitor parking space has been accommodated, a revision to the unit mix to respond to Saanich’s Housing Needs Report and other revisions that dovetail in with this submission.
- This area is a neighbourhood that has been developed; all growth will be through infill. The predominant form of housing is single-family residences with a small pattern of apartments.

- The Local Area Plan (LAP) speaks to the homes' form and character as pitched roofs preferred, variations in rooflines, and more traditional forms of architecture and expression.
- The existing site has an apartment building, which has come to its end of life, and large parking lots.
- The proposal plans for five rows of townhomes for a total of 26 homes, all rotated to limit the amount of building face to the adjacent neighbours.
- The in-building garage limits the surface parking area required.
- Each of the buildings is treated similarly, yet different, fashion, with easy but traditional details. Additional opportunities for plantings have been looked for thoroughly.
- Building A's highlights are design elements such as cross bracing, knee bracing, cupolas, shingles, and board and batten siding. The proposal still contains a fairly neutral colour palette but with varied, rich textured materiality.
- Building entries have been given a sense of individuality by colour scheme.
- Building B presents as a two-story building and has better private outdoor space.
- Building C is set into the slope and also presents as a two-storey building.
- Building D has paired entries with feature elements.
- Building E has recessed entries at the ground plane.
- This iteration proposes coloured doors at the entryways. The material richness and texture will provide a strong contrast. The colours of the doors will complement the ornamental grasses.
- The townhomes are interlock style with storage space. Nearly all of the homes have outdoor spaces.
- The entry condition of Building A right off the sidewalk act as a slightly elevated front stoop. Ornamental and native grasses frame entries that connect directly to the sidewalk along Gorge Road West.
- A subtle change in surface texture will help provide the visual distinction for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Building B's units have front entry stoops with private gates that connect directly to the main living level, and the area is screened with shrubs. There is a small planting bed at the end of each driveway aisle to grow vines to soften the strata lane end conditions.
- Buildings C & D open into courtyard mews to allow informal play and allow neighbours to chat. The front entry stoops have private gates and are screened with shrubs to provide personal outdoor space. An accessible parking space has been added at the end of Building D.
- The privacy buffer has been increased for Building E with a six-foot-high solid green wall with maple trees punctuating the views. Residents have an at-grade walkout. Building E is nestled into the topography.

In response to questions from the Panel, the Applicant stated:

- The beds along the south wall will be approximately two feet long and contain tall grasses.
- Other deck layouts are being explored, with the intention being that each unit will have some outdoor space on the south side.
- One of the most significant changes is tweaking Building D's location to allow an accessible parking space on site.
- With some careful, playful details, a wood privacy fence will act as privacy screening in between units behind Building E.
- Each building block will have a unique colour complementing seaside grasses, blues and greens appropriate to the Gorge Waterway.

Comments from the Panel:

- The planting in between the building and the driveway on the south side is more robust and denser.
- The efficiency of plug and play is understood; however, consideration could be given to having the upper decks of all units on the south side of the buildings. Perhaps for Buildings A and D, their main floors could be shifted, so their main floor deck faces south.
- A lot of care was taken to introduce increased landscaping and a very appealing design.
- The community space between Buildings C and D is a good effort, but probably only those buildings' residents will use that area. Consideration could be given to see that kind of outdoor amenity extended throughout the site.

MOVED by C. Harper and Seconded by I. Gallant: "That it be recommended that the design to construct a 26 unit, five building townhouse project at 630 Gorge Road West be approved as presented."

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 5:32 pm.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY