

MINUTES
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL MEETING
Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
Via MS Teams
June 2, 2021, at 3:00 pm

Chair: Keith Davidoff

Present: Greg Gillespie, Illarion Gallant, Erica Sangster, and Janine Wigmore

Regrets: Jacy Lee, Megan Walker, Nicholas Standeven (recused)

Staff: Lauren Mattiussi, Planner, Current Planning; and Tara Da Silva, Senior Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

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

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by M. Walker and Seconded by J. Lee: "That the Minutes of the Advisory Design Panel meeting held on May 19, 2021, be adopted."

CARRIED

1641 and 1647 McRae Avenue, 3226 Shelbourne Street

Application by 1647 McRae Developments Ltd (Nicholas Standeven)
A rezoning and development permit application to construct a six-storey, 87 unit residential apartment building.

Legal Description: Lot 3, Block 6, Section 34, Victoria District, Plan 1228
Lot 4, Block 6, Section 34, Victoria District, Plan 1228
Lot 13, Block 6, Section 34, Victoria District, Plan 1228

Planning File: DPR00793
Planner: Lauren Mattiussi, Planner

Comments from the Planner:

- This site falls into the Hillside Centre, where the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan (SVAP) policy designates the site for four-storey residential development.
- The SVAP contains policy to consider changes to use and height designations where projects advance the plan's overall objectives and provide significant community contributions.
- Variances are proposed for parking, visitor parking, loading, class 1 and class 2 bicycle spaces.
- This proposal received a non-recommendation from the Panel at the December 2, 2020,

ADP meeting. ADP identified several concerns with the building design; Planning is asking whether the revised drawings have satisfied the following concerns:

- Lack of privacy
- Lack of greenspace
- Design of café and outdoor spaces
- General scale and massing of the development

Comments from applicant /owner:

N. Standeven, Principal, Abstract Developments Ltd., Applicant; David McGrath and Xeniya Vins, IWA Architects; Bianca Bodley, Landscape Architect, Biophilia design collective Ltd.; presented to the Panel:

- The comments received at the December 2020 meeting were taken to heart, and measures have been taken to address those concerns.
- The applicant has worked in earnest to resolve technical issues, to further refine building articulation and expression, especially on the Shelbourne Street frontage.
- The revision to the proposal has reduced the building length, refined the lobby articulation to improve the entry, reduced the visual mass, increased the setback to the southern neighbour, improved the interface to the western neighbour, shifted the ramp and added continuous landscape buffer.
- The community garden area is removed, and the plaza area is expanded for additional café seating.
- Per Saanich's Engineering Department, the inset parking bay was removed on McRae Street, resulting in an increased boulevard landscape.
- The corner homes were reprogrammed to shift the primary living space away from the neighbours.
- The parkade layout was refined, the bike parking was clarified, and more parking spaces were added.
- The project goals include building new homes, adding a more diverse range of housing options, especially in the SVAP, contributing to the SVAP streetscape and improving the public realm.
- The saw-tooth pattern of building heights at the intersection of Shelbourne and McRae brings variation and openness to the streetscape.
- The Hillside Centre serves as a gateway to the Valley and offers an opportunity to create landmark buildings.
- The building height is within the streetscape character.
- From where the road right of way ends to the building is 11 m., substantial public and private setback creates a comfortable, successful realm for the public.
- The westerly edge has a continuous landscape buffer with varied landscape plantings, trees and privacy fencing.
- Along both property lines, there is six feet of privacy screening.
- On the south side of the site, the setback has been moved back and some larger trees have been incorporated to mitigate the windows of the upper floors.
- The ramp has been pulled back to allow for a six-foot good neighbour fence, a strip of landscaping to accommodate ground-floor privacy and upper-level views from windows.
- The raised separation of the townhouses with the large terraced areas creates a private entrance and blurs the line between public and private spaces.
- The parkade has 70 parking spaces over two levels; 66 residential and four visitor. A Modo vehicle with memberships for residents will also be provided.
- One hundred seventeen long-term bike parking stalls are located on the P1 level in a secure room with e-bike charging opportunities.
- Separate storage lockers are available for every unit.

- Breaking down the massing of the building was important. A few architectural elements were used such as the floating boxes, richer materials, and the choice in colour palette. From a height perspective, the light colour of the building materials draws less attention to the top two floors.
- The light materiality emphasizes the centre element and brings attention to the lobby.
- On the north elevation there is a three foot buffer from the ramp down to the single family home.
- The ground-oriented units have large terraced areas with trees and landscaped delineation of those spaces.
- The overall landscaping plan is to incorporate native and pollinator plants.
- The landscaping changes since the last iteration has increased privacy for neighbours to the south and west.
- The enlarged corner units have large planters and the meandering pathway has been reconfigured.
- The café space has been enlarged to provide generous seating and two additional boulevard trees.
- One protected tree will be removed, however, twelve new trees will be planted.

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

- The project provides many different types of homes with various conditions. There are single-level ground floor homes that have access to the interior corridor. The units also come in a range of different unit sizes. The corner units are two-bedroom homes.
- One thing COVID has shown is that working from home is an effective way of doing business. Where possible, there is a provision of office space and an allowance of more programming within the unit itself. Much thought has gone into modernizing the interior layouts.
- This application was submitted before the adoption of Saanich's EV policy; however, we will be roughing in for the conduit. It was anticipated that there would be a need for bike charging, so electrical receptacles will be installed in the bike parking area.
- There are quite a few existing site constraints, such as the Silver Maple tree and the bike station, along the Shelbourne frontage, resulting in a bit of a piecemeal effect for the new bike lane.
- All units will have in-suite laundry.
- The setback on Shelbourne Street is a bit of a hybrid responsibility-wise. Saanich will give direct, and we will scribe and construct the design. Saanich will then take over the care of the area.
- This project proposes one accessible parking space in the parkade level across from the elevator.

Comments from the Panel:

- The improvements that have been made are significant and effective.
- The setbacks are respectful to current and future neighbours.
- The distinction of separation between the sidewalk on Shelbourne Street and the ground-oriented units is very attractive. A similar treatment could be considered for the main entrance.
- The patio expansion provides much better use of the outdoor commercial space. The lobby is spectacular and sets the tone for the building.
- Through the design of the floating boxes and lighter colours, the stepped-back effect has been created. This speaks to the creativity of the project and the richness of the materials.
- The privacy level on Shelbourne is great, provides intimacy for those units.

- There is a concern about the Silver Maple tree surviving the construction. Consideration could be given to the boulevard being made into a solar reservoir; cells are needed under the sidewalk.

MOVED by G. Gillespie and Seconded by I. Gallant: “That it be recommended that the design to construct a six-storey, 87 unit residential apartment building at 1641 and 1647 McRae Avenue and 3226 Shelbourne Street be approved as presented.”

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 4:14 pm.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY