

**MINUTES**  
**ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL**  
Held electronically via MS Teams  
Wednesday July 17, 2024, 1:04 pm.

Chair: Greg Gillespie

Present: Stephen Deglow, Brad Forth, Matthew Jarvis and Jacy Lee

Regrets: Will Kryzmowski, Chris Gower and Kimberly Simpson

Guests: Niall Patiel, Mike Geric Construction; Peter Johannknecht and Markus Pirker, Cascadia Architects

Staff: Eric Joyal (1:41 p.m.) and Fiona Titley, Planners and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

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**CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by S. Deglow and Seconded by J. Lee: "That the Minutes of the Advisory Design Panel meeting held on June 5, 2024, be adopted."**

**CARRIED**

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B. Forth declared a conflict of interest at 1:07 p.m. and excused himself from the panel as he is part of the design team for the project at 2625 Arbutus Road.

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**2625 Arbutus Road**

Application by Mike Geric Construction Ltd.

To construct a mixed-residential-and-institutional apartment and three townhouse buildings.

**Legal Description:** Lot A, Section 44, Victoria District Plan 12516

**Planning File:** DPR01061 REZ00756

**Planning Staff:** Eric Joyal, Planner

**Comments from the Planner:**

- The application is to rezone from the P-1 (Assembly) Zone to a site-specific zone to construct a mixed-residential and institutional apartment and three townhouse buildings.
- A Development Permit for form and character is requested.
- The site is a former church building, which is now being used as an independent school.
- The Official Community Plan (OCP) identifies this site as institutional lands, with up to four-storey forms. The OCP notes preference for keeping institutional uses here.
  
- As the proposal is primarily residential, there will be a requirement to provide additional community benefits. The applicant is proposing to provide public access right-of-way through

- the site, as it is an important pedestrian connection.
- The four-storey apartment building has 24 units, and the three townhouse buildings have 19 three-bedroom units, and seven one-bedroom basement walk-out units.
  - The institutional portion of the apartment building is over 300 square metres.
  - Parking variances will be required for visitor parking and likely for institutional use, which is as-of-yet undecided. Residential parking is entirely underground.
  - The applicant has provided ample bicycle parking, storage lockers, as well as apartment-elevator access below grade.
  - Planning is seeking comment on the site design, considering any impacts to adjacent properties, as this is a sensitive area.
  - Comments on liveability, relationship to the street and path, and the design and benefit of the public pathway, are also requested.

**Comments from the applicant:**

- This site is on the northern fringe of the Cadboro Bay area. Cadboro-Gyro Park and Cadboro Bay Village are located to the south, with the Queenswood Estates to the north. There are plentiful parks, greenspaces and a network of trails in this area.
- Currently, this is a large, flat site with one building and a large concrete parking lot.
- The OCP indicates this site has great potential for institutional mixed use, bringing diversity to the neighbourhood which currently is predominantly single-family homes.
- This project will create contextual and sensitive neighbourhood infill, aiming to create appropriate homes for those with a variety of needs and budgets.
- The site will be an amenity for future residents and the neighbourhood. There will be bountiful plantings, new trees and a space that is improved from the current concrete parking lot.
- Pedestrian focused access via the creation of a meandering public pathway through the centre of the site connecting Arbutus Road to Cherilee Crescent will provide an amenity area and improve active transportation connectivity in the area.
- The application was thoughtfully designed based on targets and objectives identified in Housing Needs Report, the Cadboro Bay Local Area Plan (LAP), the Development Permit Area (DPA) Guidelines and the mixed-use institutional designation in OCP.
- Currently, the project features a four storey at-grade mixed-use institutional and apartment building, along with two and three storey townhouses, for a total of 50 dwellings. The current proposal evolved following town-hall meetings and one-on-one meetings with the community.
- Some of the townhomes are 3 storey family homes, others are two-level accessible units with a walk out basement suite, with a private elevator from the parkade level.
- Excavation for the parkade is a small footprint of the lot, this means that mature landscaping can be planted around the site as trees will have plenty of soil.
- The institutional portion of the building is placed on Arbutus to allow for easy access.
- A variety of unit types range from single bedroom walk in units on the lower floor of the town homes, to large penthouse style units on the top floor of the apartment building. Three-bedroom townhomes will provide homes for families; this diversity is needed in Cadboro Bay.
- The driveway has been angled to reduce the impact of car headlights on the neighboring homes while exiting the parkade. A hedge and planters will further reduce potential impacts.
- Setback requirements have been adhered to, allowing for maximum greenspace and privacy for surrounding homes. The height of the apartment is compliant with the OCP.
- The institutional use area will have a defined entrance area and lobby for guests.
- Accessibility considerations have been made for all units, including aging in place.
- The initial application was for a three-storey apartment building, the fourth floor was added as a recent revision, these units will be large penthouses stepped back from the lower units.
- Downsizing in this community is difficult given a lack of options. B1 and B2 townhome styles are identical aside from the inclusion of a separate basement suite in the B2 units.
- Materiality is classy and contemporary. Materials will age graciously and last for decades.
- Brick will be used throughout, including an accent brick wall highlighting a mature tree.
- A pathway will meander through the site, with gathering places and benches to enjoy.

- Four large street trees will be planted along Arbutus Road, which soften the lot frontage.
- A rain garden will create an interesting textural grassy feeling.
- The walkway and parkade ramp have evolved based on feedback from the neighbourhood.
- The front door of the townhomes will have a path and gate, which connect to the trail.
- Scalloped edging will separate garden beds from areas of sod and textured grasses.
- A woonerf path approach has been taken to allow cohesive use for pedestrian and cyclists.
- Large trees will be planted in the front and the back, landscape planter boxes will be used for areas over the parkade. B1 will have large trees out front as they have sufficient soil available.
- An open space green on Cherilee Crescent will feature artwork or a sculpture with benches to allow neighbours to gather and enjoy the outdoors, as well as a second rain garden.
- An existing hedge will be removed and replaced with a new hedge to ensure privacy.
- Wooden arbors will create a welcoming sense of entry from the path for townhome units.
- The boulevard will also be landscaped to improve the streetscape.
- An emphasis has been placed on connectivity and placemaking. Plaques will be erected around the site about historical and pre settler information.
- As per District policy, contributions will be made to the Saanich Affordable Housing Fund.
- A potential community amenity may include expanding the bike lane from the property to Aspen Place, as well as installation of much needed mid-block crosswalk.

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

- The project may be built using a phased approach, which is indicated on the plans. To ensure a cohesive design, efficient building process and project feasibility, it is better to plan both phases and gain all necessary approvals ahead of time.
- The basement suites are slightly below grade, the stepped approach and fenestration of large doors and windows will allow for maximum daylight within the basement suites.
- A vestibule from the parkade will provide access to the basement suite units with steps down, or a staircase to the upper townhome portion. All units will also be accessible from the ground level; many will have a small private patio. The soft tiered approach for lower units will take advantage of sunlight; floor to ceiling windows will allow for more light.
- Groundwater levels prevent the building from being lowered. Raising the units further would create difficulty with the connection to the pathway. The height has been meticulously planned.
- Efforts are underway to identify the evident needs in the neighborhood to determine the best potential use of the institutional space.
- The Zoning Bylaw will limit potential uses for mixed-use institutional spaces, likely categorizing them under designations such as public assembly, or daycare for adults or children.
- Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles will be followed as the trail will provide public access through the site. There will be many eyes on the trail, with lighting throughout. Each unit will have a gate and a private pathway, preventing unwelcome visitors.
- The canopy on the main entrance of the A1 building will create an interesting gateway.
- Texture will prohibit the trail from being used like a highway, keeping all users safe.
- Heavy landscaping along the pathways, hedging, fencing, and maintaining some large existing trees will provide privacy screening for the units.
- Adhering to the required setbacks is admirable as a variance would effect the neighbours more.
- Building the fence as high as allowable would maximize privacy for adjoining lots.
- A pathway will connect the rear yard of the townhome. These exterior corridors will be kept separate from the main public path. The materiality will differentiate the use. While this application is not a gated community, it is important to ensure that the homes are safe.
- There is access to temporarily park a moving truck in front of the apartment building. The walkway will have bollards that can be removed when necessary.
- Parking for the institutional use is limited to the at grade parking spaces for practicality. The lower parkade area is only for residential use.
- Visitor parking for the residential units will be in the at grade institutional lot.
- Additional consideration will be given to the fact that carrying items in from Arbutus Road to the units near Cherilee Crescent may be difficult. This may be possible to address in future.

- Access to the units from parkade is via a vestibule that would split to basement suite or go upstairs. The basement suites will be completely separate with locking exterior style doors.
- Space between the townhomes is designed to encourage neighbours gathering informally.
- The patios are slightly elevated above the walkway. The setback is greater than what is required for most townhomes facing a street.
- The need for an additional access door to the washroom for the penthouses units may be necessary as currently the only way to access the washroom is to go through a bedroom.

**Panel discussion ensued with the following comments:**

- The proposal has a great design and use of space. The varied heights makes this breathable vertically and horizontally. The variety of unit types, building styles and open spaces are great.
- The new central public pathway will connect the community in a meaningful way.
- The landscape plan is commendable, many new trees and bushes will make this an attractive area. The benches and greenspaces throughout are favorable, and the trellis adds an interesting touch, enhancing the area's character.
- Ground level livability and outdoor living space stand out as a great asset for residents.
- The units appear functional. The spacious bedroom and ensuite design featuring the master suite occupying the entire top level in townhome styles B2 and B3 is impressive.
- The basement suite units are appealing, despite less-than-optimal sunlight conditions.
- Form and character of the proposal are impressive. Offering a range of unit types, from small basement suites to larger luxurious penthouse units, is commendable, particularly for this area.
- The massing is attractive, and both the site and facade are aesthetically pleasing.
- Ensuring the property's usability is essential for tenants.
- The lower-level walk out basement suite is practical. The terraced landscaping ensures optimal sunlight penetration into the unit, highlighting the applicant's foresight in this regard.
- Currently the plans show one set of risers from the surface level accessible stall to the institutional space, this should be a ramp going to the lobby to ensure accessibility throughout.
- The west coast style is varied, materials are dynamic. The variety is spot on.

**MOVED by J. Lee and Seconded by S. Deglow: "That it be recommended that the design to construct a mixed-residential-and-institutional apartment and three townhouse buildings at 2625 Arbutus Road, be approved as presented."**

Discussion ensued with the following comment:

- Comments about minor improvements have been noted by the application team.

**The Motion was then PUT and CARRIED**

On a motion from J. Lee, the meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

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CHAIR, Greg Gillespie

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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COMMITTEE SECRETARY