MINUTES
ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL
Held virtually via MS Teams
December 03, 2025 at 1:00 PM

ROLL CALL

In Attendance:	Greg Gillespie (Chair), Brian Fraser, Justin Gammon, Chris Gower, Matthew Jarvis, Jacy Lee, Sean Partlow, Carl-Jan Rupp
Guests:	Alannah Rodgers, UVic; Mike Wilson, UVic; Ana Maria Llanos, Diamond Schmitt Architects; Matthew Beall, Diamond Schmitt Architects; Joelle Sept; PWL Landscape Architects
Regrets:	Kimberly Simpson, Xeniya Vins
Staff:	Amber Walker, Senior Planner; Preet Chaggar, Senior Committee Clerk

COMMITTEE BUSINESS ITEMS

3800 FINNERTY ROAD
Applicant: University of Victoria (Alannah Rodgers)
Project Description: Development Variance Permit to allow for the construction of a new 510 bed student housing project (240 units) in a proposed 17-storey high-rise and seven storey podium. Variances for height and parking are required under the site's existing P-1U (University Zone).
Planning File: DVP00545
Planning Staff: Amber Walker, Senior Planner

Planning provided an overview of the proposal, followed by a presentation from the applicants.

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

- Primary indoor amenity spaces include a multipurpose room, community lounge, and community kitchen. All are located on the ground floor and oriented toward the public realm and Campus Greenway to support social connection and community building.
- Ground-floor amenities are intended to serve both residents of the building and the broader University of Victoria (UVic) housing precinct.
- Bookable study rooms are provided on Levels 2–7 for graduate students, offering spaces for small group study and gathering.
- Limited upper-level amenity space is provided due to the building's demographic focus on older students.
- A rooftop amenity space was not pursued because of operational constraints, safety considerations, and limited available rooftop area.
- UVic's Resident Services team, comprising more than 100 staff, provides educational and social programming, including floor-based Community Leaders who support resident well-being.
- The building is designed for upper-year undergraduate and graduate students, who prioritize privacy, quiet study environments, and independent living.
- The project provides 510 beds, consisting of four-bedroom apartment-style units for upper-year undergraduate students in the tower and private, self-contained studio suites for graduate students within the podium.
- Student surveys and consultations indicate the intended population values privacy and quiet study time, which informed the overall design approach.
- Quad units support social interaction among roommates who often have established friendships, while graduate studio units support focused academic work and independence.
- The design intentionally differs from first-year residence models, which typically include extensive floor-level amenity spaces; this building is not intended to serve a first-year cohort.

- Quad units include two washrooms, a full kitchen, dining area, and living space. Accessible versions include larger bedroom and washroom footprints.
- Studio units are fully self-contained, with accessible studio options also provided.
- Unit layouts balance several design factors, including window size, daylight access, architectural expression, and Step Code performance requirements.
- Common kitchen and living areas include large windows approximately five feet wide, extending from sill to ceiling for maximum daylight.
- Bedrooms and living spaces are fitted with larger windows than those used in past residence projects, addressing student feedback.
- “Mirrored” and “pinwheel” suite configurations create carved corners that enhance natural light penetration throughout the units.
- The overall window-to-wall ratio is shaped by planning decisions and BC Energy Step Code Level 4 requirements.
- All units include operable vents and continuous fresh-air supply delivered through HRV systems.
- The podium-and-tower configuration reflects the functional separation of undergraduate and graduate populations.
- Massing variations help reduce visual bulk and improve campus integration.
- Mechanical equipment is fully screened at both the tower and podium levels, ensuring a clean and unified roofline.
- The terracotta cladding incorporates subtle shifts in the panels that create light and shadow variation across the facade.
- Parapet details, terracotta edges, and shadow lines will continue to be refined as the design is developed.
- The proposal retains 34 trees, with 15 to be removed, including six bylaw-protected trees requiring 12 replacement trees under the 2:1 ratio.
- Rain gardens, infiltration areas, and a detention tank manage stormwater through on-site collection and infiltration.
- Massing offsets are used to reduce perceived volume and support an appropriate campus presence.
- Colour strategy coordinates light terracotta on mid-rise areas with complementary tones on tower elements.
- The Campus Greenway is extended through the site to improve pedestrian connectivity.
- Outdoor spaces include plazas, seating areas, canopy plantings, and social gathering spaces.
- Parking is managed campus-wide, with over 4,700 stalls and an 85% peak occupancy rate, as confirmed through the campus-wide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) study reflecting use by students, staff, and visitors.
- UVic continues to advance sustainable transportation initiatives, with 54% of campus commuters using modes other than a private vehicle.
- Community event parking typically occurs during off-peak hours, when additional capacity is available.
- Underground parking was not pursued due to sufficient existing supply, but UVic may consider long-term parking investments in future phases if demand increases.
- Sustainable transportation features include 128 secure indoor bicycle stalls, 52 short-term bicycle stalls, access to two on-campus car-share providers, and proximity to the campus transit exchange.
- All students have access to the Universal Bus Pass (U-Pass), further supporting non-vehicle commuting.
- A green roof was not pursued due to long-term maintenance considerations identified by the University.
- Key sustainability measures include an all-electric building system, efficient window-to-wall ratios, and meeting Step Code Level 4. UVic’s operations team is involved to ensure the building performs efficiently and reliably over the long term.

Planning staff noted the following:

- This is an institutionally zoned project and does not require a Development Permit. As such, the Development Permit Area guidelines do not formally apply to this project.
- Development Variance Permits are not required to be referred to the ADP; however, due to the scale of the project, staff deemed it appropriate to seek ADP feedback (with the applicant's support). This feedback will be incorporated into the report to Council.
- While the District's high-rise residential design guidelines were referenced, certain components such as floor plate criteria are less applicable given the project's institutional building form.
- The institutional nature of the proposal places it outside standard high-rise residential guidelines; however, broader design principles, including massing, step-backs, and public realm integration, remain relevant considerations.

The Panel noted the following during discussion:

- Parking analysis was supported, noting that current campus utilization (85%) and high non-vehicle mode share (54%) justify the reduced supply.
- Adding 510 on-campus beds was seen to further lower commuter demand.
- No concerns were raised regarding the variance, and members encouraged continued monitoring and potential exploration of underground parking in future phases.
- The proposed height was considered appropriate for the building's location at the campus periphery.
- Panel acknowledged the applicant's clear rationale for how the massing relates to the Greenway, adjacent newer residences, and future campus development
- Shadow impacts were considered minimal.
- The external expression was described as institutional rather than residential.
- The architecture was characterized as austere, institutional, or lacking warmth and residential character.
- Key concerns included the low window-to-wall ratio and limited natural light, repetitive cladding with minimal volumetric articulation, and a reliance on surface treatments rather than massing shifts to create visual interest.
- Subtle adjustments, such as small plane shifts or improved detailing, were encouraged to enhance visual interest without changing the overall intent.
- Terracotta and brick materials were positively received as warm, high-quality, campus-appropriate elements.
- Given the tower's future visibility as the tallest structure on campus, members encouraged additional attention to its visual prominence.
- Concerns were raised about limited daylight in quad-style units, as single-window living rooms leave interior areas far from natural light despite the functional pinwheel layout.
- Suggested improvements included adding windows where feasible, exploring Juliet-style or other operable openings, and enhancing daylight strategies.
- Strong support was expressed for the ground-level amenity spaces and their interface with the Campus Greenway.
- The lack of mid and upper level amenity spaces was viewed as a missed opportunity to support social connection and "communities within the building."
- Suggested enhancements included adding small upper-floor lounges or study areas and exploring the podium roof as an additional social space, with safety addressed through full-height, non-climbable windscreens.
- The Panel noted that well-distributed and accessible student spaces play a significant role in supporting residential well-being.
- The project was viewed as functionally strong and well aligned with campus goals.
- Identified issues were considered opportunities for refinement rather than reasons for substantial redesign.

MOVED by J. Gammon and Seconded by C. Gower: "That it be recommended that the design to construct a new student housing project in a proposed 17-storey high-rise with a seven-storey podium at 3800 Finnerty Road be approved subject to considerations of:

- **Increased natural light into the residential spaces**
- **Additional amenity space within the tower.**
- **Softening or increased visual interest of the project."**

RESULT: Carried 8 TO 0
IN FAVOUR: Fraser, Gammon, Gower, Gillespie, Jarvis, Lee, Partlow, Rupp
OPPOSED: None

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by B. Fraser and Seconded by M. Jarvis: "That the meeting be adjourned at 3:11 p.m."

RESULT: Carried 8 TO 0
IN FAVOUR: Fraser, Gammon, Gower, Gillespie, Jarvis, Lee, Partlow, Rupp
OPPOSED: None

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

SENIOR COMMITTEE CLERK