MINUTES OF THE ADVISORY DESIGN PANEL MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY MAY 22, 2019 AT 12:00 P.M.

1. THE CHAIR CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 12:05 P.M.

Present:	Sorin Birliga, Pamela Madoff, Jason Niles, Marilyn Palmer, Jessi-Anne Reeves, Carl-Jan Rupp, Karen Sander, Stefan Schulson (Chair)
Absent:	Elizabeth Balderston; Roger Tinney
Staff Present:	Miko Betanzo – Senior Planner, Urban Design Joaquin Karakas – Senior Urban Designer Marc Cittone – Senior Planner Katie Lauriston – Secretary

2. MINUTES

Minutes from the Meeting held April 24, 2019

Motion:

It was moved by Stefan Schulson, seconded by Sorin Birliga, that the minutes from the meeting held April 24, 2019 be adopted.

Carried Unanimously

3. APPLICATIONS

3.1 Draft Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan and Draft Development Permit Guidelines

Marc Cittone and Joaquin Karakas provided the Panel with a brief introduction of the Draft Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan and Draft Development Permit Guidelines and the areas that Council is seeking advice on, including the following:

- key revisions to the draft Plan, particularly for the areas of:
  - northwest Fairfield.
  - Cook Street Village
  - Fairfield Plaza
  - traditional residential areas

The Panel asked the following questions:

- why are increased setbacks and greater separation between buildings for northwest Fairfield included in design guidelines rather than zoning?
  - design guidelines allow for flexibility and responsiveness at individual sites, whereas stricter zoning requirements could limit developments' ability to respond to unique conditions

- what is the difference between the neighbourhood plan and the design guidelines, and how do they inform the zoning bylaws?
    - sometimes design guidelines are written into zoning bylaws
    - design guidelines can also be a tool to guide zoning bylaws, helping fine tune and negotiate zoning to ensure that it fits within the City's policies
- what is envisioned on Meares Street between Quadra and Vancouver Streets?
    - these are two areas where the allowable density would be reduced, recognizing that this area is well built out
- have staff considered conducting a 3-D analysis of these plans, to provide a visual for what is proposed? This may help residents and Council to grasp the character of the areas if developed to the envisioned densities
    - massing studies in context and technical testing of the design guidelines and policies have been undertaken
    - the risk is that these visual representations, which include many assumptions, can be interpreted as proposals
- is there a regional growth study that can be applied?
    - a land economics analysis was conducted, and capacity assessments have been conducted for the Official Community Plan
- what other mechanisms have been considered to ensure liveability, open spaces and views?
    - the Cook Street guidelines speak specifically to ensuring natural daylight, building orientation and diverse forms of development with greater exterior exposure
    - similarly, encouraging using building surfaces as amenity spaces is discussed; e.g. rooftop amenity spaces
- has animating Pioneer Square been considered?
    - this is a heritage-designated site whose management plan speaks to more passive enjoyment of the space; however, there are some items that have not yet been implemented such as benches
    - the square also functions as the living room for adjacent residents
- would seasonal animation of Pioneer Square be considered?
    - this can be looked into
- why not enlarge the Cathedral Hill precinct further towards Fort Street, to include the other north side of Meares Street?
    - Fort Street has its own development permit area; however, these boundaries can be further examined
- what is the future vision for Vancouver Street?
    - policies in the plan broadly envision buildings up to six storeys (although not every site could achieve these heights), the retention and gradual replacement of rental buildings and retention of street trees and front yards
    - maintaining the boulevard is important to the character of Vancouver Street
    - All Ages and Abilities infrastructure premised on reducing traffic volumes to provide access and allow shared vehicle and bicycle circulation
    - additional pedestrian space with modified curved curbs
    - the addition of a significant number of new trees and where possible, the addition of landscaping in the centre median
- what role does the private realm play in Vancouver Street's design?
    - more important than building setbacks is their interface with the street: buildings' entryways, activation and the presence of semiprivate spaces

- is the existing Fairfield plaza, currently designated as a Large Urban Village, proposed to be a Small Urban Village?
    - yes, a small urban village that would allow for bonus density (similar to Oak Bay village)
    - this density and height are logically achieved at this location given its adjacency to a BC Transit frequent transit route
- what is lost by shifting from a Large to a Small Urban Village?
    - the potential for up to six storeys and a density of up to 2.5:1 FSR
- has the City considered underground utilities rather than overhead connections?
    - BC Hydro offers incentives for developers building power lines underground; however, these lines can be much more costly
- will the Panel see a finalized version of the Guidelines before they go to Council?
    - Council has referred the draft plan and guidelines for the Panel's review, and the Panel's comments will be submitted to Council as part of the public comment
    - further engagement will be completed, including an open house and online surveys.

The Panel discussed:

- the importance of regulating density and height to ensure liveability and to serve the best interests of the City
- need to enforce zoning regulations for a clear, consistent vision for the City
- the need for clearly established priorities; density as a response to the current housing crisis may not be a good future-oriented policy
- increasing the height to 6 storeys at the northwest corner of Vancouver and Quadra Streets seems to conflict with policy to retain existing rental buildings
- the need for Council to avoid the potential for incentivizing the demolition of existing rental housing
- the need for a clear vision for the character of Vancouver Street all the way to Beacon Hill park
- desire for a finer level of detail for the Rockland greenway
- the goals of adding density and retaining heritage buildings seem at odds for the block around Meares and Vancouver Streets
- achieving higher density while retaining heritage buildings is not possible unless only the façade is retained
- the need for a simplification of design guidelines, with very few guidelines that apply only to particular areas
- the shortcoming of minimum setback requirements in ensuring sufficient distance between buildings, and the need to enforce setback requirements
- the need to balance regulations with encouraging creativity and innovation
- the need to incentivize or require the retention of heritage houses (stronger language than included on p.82 of the draft plan)
- the need to consider not only the supply but also the affordability of new housing
- the need for policies that encourage the retention of existing housing stock
- the need for accessibility in all design
- desire to bring in more stakeholders and further integrate the neighbourhood planning process with partners and peer networks
- the importance of looking to the long term and holding close a vision of Victoria that residents desire.

Motion:

It was moved by Pamela Madoff, seconded by Jason Niles, that the Advisory Design Panel's comments be included for Council's consideration.

Carried Unanimously

4. ADJOURNMENT

The Advisory Design Panel meeting of May 22, 2019 was adjourned at 1:15pm.

Stefan Schulson, Chair