

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting 69 – January 31, 2019

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday, January 31, 2019 in Committee Room 249, City Hall, 141 Major MacKenzie Drive, Vaughan

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Alfredo Landaeta, AL-UD

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Absent

Antonio Gómez-Palacio, DIALOG

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Amy Roots, Urban Design

Stephen Lue, Development Planning

Gilda Giovane, Urban Design

Gaston Soucy, Urban Design

Misha Bereznyak, Urban Design

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design

Nancy Tuckett, Development Planning

Gerardo Paez Alonso, Parks Development
Jennifer Cappola Logullo, Development Engineering
Samar Saadi Nejad, Development Engineering - Transportation
Musa Deo, Development Engineering - Transportation

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am with Megan Torza in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest by any of the panel members.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting Minutes for November 29, 2018 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

1. VMC East Block-Phase 1

Architecture: Diamond Schmitt Architects
Landscape Architect: Claude Cormier + Associés
Review: 2nd Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How well has the revised concept addressed the first round of comments related to phasing, microclimate (sun, shadow and wind), building massing and expression?

Overview

The Panel appreciated the overall evolution and improvements to the design, complimented the applicant on a very thorough and comprehensive package, and summarized their comments into the following categories:

- **Site Organization and Landscape** – Panel asked the applicant to carefully analyze the ground floor functionality throughout the site and its relationship with the public realm. Panel commented that it is vital to protect the investment of the Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Space (POPS) and make sure that it is not jeopardized

by the programming, design and built-form of the surrounding buildings, including Phase 2.

- **Massing and Architecture** – Panel recommended further studying the materiality of the podium and its relationship to other elements, including the bridges and towers to ensure a more seamless visual blending of the components. Panel suggested looking at the precedents carefully to distill the basics from the examples provided without being literal.
- **Shadow and Wind** – Panel looks forward to seeing the design development of shadow impact and wind mitigation design strategies as Phase 2 moves forward and urged the applicant to carefully consider the impacts that this will have in the microclimate that's being created within the public realm and exterior amenity spaces.
- **Sustainable Design** – Panel advised of the importance of integrating sustainable design strategies into the proposal. The tower design should incorporate architecture that goes above and beyond the minimum sustainable design standards, and includes long-term technologies that increase insulation values, reduce thermal bridging, etc.

Comments

Site Organization and Landscape

- Panel commended the applicant on a well-organized site plan and appreciated the manner in which vehicles are controlled, and site servicing is resolved.
- The previous comments from the first DRP presentation regarding the impact of the Phase 2 massing on Phase 1 were reiterated. Panel urged the applicant to start looking at Phase 2 with more detail in order to determine the potential effects on the Phase 1 open space design, shadow impacts and ground floor programming.
- Panel continued to express concern with the proposed massing on Phase 2 with respect to the impact that it would have on the POPS and the larger Open Space design in terms of microclimate, shadow and sense of enclosure.
- The central courtyard is the heart of the project and how everything works around it will be key to the success of the project. Currently the design has not clearly defined the POPS as a community-oriented space, nor as a fully public space that includes retail and public activities. A decision on the usage and programming strategy must be made to guarantee the success of the space. Consider looking at the holistic picture of both Phase 1 and 2 under the lens of performance standards rather than the lens of a master plan to help clarify how the ground floor should function.
 - If the POPS is designed as a community-oriented space, more private activity engagement would be necessary. For example, ground floor units should have direct access to the POPS and rooftop amenities could be expanded or relocated at grade to have a strong interface with the POPS. The podium's exterior rooftop amenity spaces could then become private terraces for individual units.

- There's continued concern for the lack of provision to access the proposed residential ground floor units from grade. The design rationale and business case for not having these units open to the POPS are not clear and should be clarified.
- If the POPS is designed as a fully publically accessible space, then the ground floor units' uses could be rethought to support an active urban edge condition around the courtyard.
- The ground floor of the rental building could function differently than the ground floor of the other two buildings.
- The enclosed off-leash dog area is working against the courtyard's open concept design. It was suggested that this area should be part of the open green space, or an adult fitness area that better integrates with the POPS. Off-leash dog activities could happen at Edgeley Pond and Park to the east.
- Consider a longer tabletop along the new east-west street that visually expands the length of the POPS and establishes a better connection with the future Phase 2 development.
- Phase 2's future courtyard could echo Phase 1's in shape, creating a large quadrangle that expands both phases in the ultimate condition. The north could have a more community-oriented character and the south a more public, commercial character. A perspective view from Phase 1 looking south to Phase 2 would showcase the grandeur of this space.
- The current POPS design is very rigid in its form. Perhaps a less formal design would allow for the space to be more flexible in use and allow for people to walk around and use the space as they please.
- It was suggested that the building setbacks around the peripheral roads could be minimized in order to transfer that additional area to the interior courtyard space.
- The design of the two corner plazas to the north-east and north-west could be fine-tuned. The north-east entrance garden feels like a 'pass through' space while the north-west entrance plaza has a more 'sit and stay' quality. It was suggested that perhaps these spaces could be tighter and smaller in scale to give them more character through a sense of containment.
- While the public realm's general circulation and desire-line paths look good, the circulation to the development's south-east corner could be improved by widening the boulevard and adding more greenery to enhance the connection towards Edgeley Pond and Park.
- Bicycle parking will need to be considered at the POPS. Although it has been proposed along the surrounding boulevards, people will bring, and lock, their bikes in the POPS.
- Although the tree planting strategy is compelling, the City might not accept groups of similar tree species in large numbers. It was recommended that a comprehensive street planting strategy, that captures the larger vision for streetscapes in the quadrant, be developed to help advance discussions with Parks and Forestry.

Massing and Architecture

- Panel agreed that the overall design and expression of the podium improved considerably but determined that the interpretation of the precedents was taken too literally. Previous comments referred more to finding the right balance of materials, craftsmanship and detail within the overall composition.
- The connection point where the towers meet the podiums needs to be addressed as they are currently too disconnected from one another creating an awkward condition. Consider looking at extending the podium's materiality to the towers to create a unique and common character for the entire development.
- The bridges connecting the podiums could benefit from more design expression by using other materials that, while maintaining their lightness, reinforce their physical presence and create a stronger visual connection with the rest of the development. The bridge designs could also be enhanced to potentially contribute to the wind mitigation strategies at ground level.
- Although it is understandable for the ground floor retail to be heavily glazed, the ground floor feels disconnected from the rest of the podium. Consider adding more solid features, such as brick, to visually ground and connect the podium while providing more texture at the pedestrian level even if just as a gesture.
- The podium mid sections are looking too heavy. Study exploring options to make the façade lighter and more diverse without compromising the quality and textures that the design is starting to achieve.
- There is an excellent opportunity to create double-height spaces at the podium's top levels where the mansard roofs are located. Consider 2 storey residential units and/or double-height amenity spaces.
- The mansard roof components of the podium need more work. The curvature needs to integrate better with the rest of the design, especially at the corners. Consider adding balconies that open towards the POPS to animate the frontages.
- The facade along Portage Parkway needs work as there are too many elements and design moves happening at the same time. There is also a lack of permeability and fine grain at the pedestrian level that needs to be addressed. It was recommended that the language of the tower that has been successfully transferred to the podium come all the way down to the ground to simplify the form. Consider the use of green walls to soften the blank walls in some locations.
- The panel commented that, echoing to the podium's more environmentally conscious design approach, the applicant should consider a more efficient way to design the towers using up-to-date information on climate and sustainability. It was suggested that the tower designs should incorporate more sustainable solutions that include the reduction of the use of balconies that create thermal bridges and of window wall systems. The utility of balconies above the 30th floor was also questioned.
- The best value for balconies would be at the podium level, especially around the courtyard and open spaces.

2. Daniels Baif Thornhill Inc. – Beverly Glen Blvd. High-Rise, Mixed- Use

Architecture: Kirkor Architects
Landscape Architect: Land Art Design
Review: 2nd Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Please comment on the distribution of at-grade program uses, overall circulation and potential for successful public realm design.
2. Please comment on the vision for the architectural expression of the buildings in creating a sustainable, animated and engaging development.

Overview

Panel highlighted the following issues:

- At the ground floor, the transitions between program uses, frontages and buildings on east and west need to be refined. Amenity and lobby spaces should better relate to each other. Residential, retail and green spaces feel orphaned, they need stronger connection in effort to make one cohesive development.
- A single drop-off at the courtyard is encouraged to provide a better residential frontage that is more pleasant.
- The floorplate for the north-east tower is above the control limit. Refinement is required to reduce the floorplate to the 850 m² threshold and ensure limited shadow impact on the east low-rise community area.
- Exciting precedents are suggested for innovative expression for the architecture and elevations but further development of the facades is required.
- Landscape inspiration and branding for the site could continue to connect to landscaped green corridor on the west.

Comments

Site Layout

- Panel noted that although the parking ramp and garbage loading spaces are located outside the internal circulation of the site, the courtyard is still dominated by car traffic. Examine the function of the internal courtyard as it feels like a “back alley” and consider eliminating one leg of vehicle traffic to provide a true courtyard space to serve residents in a meaningful way.
- Panel encouraged the applicant to look at the lobby organization to align entries for pedestrian connection from the west buildings to Bathurst Street and the larger community as an important mid-block connection.
- Panel felt that the amenity space is not well located at the corner and provides passive observation instead of a potentially active corner opportunity. Explore alternative locations for amenity on the second floor of building A or consolidating

the gym and pool at the north-west corner into a strong amenity space facing in/out of the courtyard to provide activation to the back of the development.

- Grouping amenity along west side of development will enhance the feeling of safety with more eyes on the landscaped green corridor.
- The proposed retail area is not taking advantage of the corner location for visibility and pedestrian traffic. An active retail use like a café could be envisioned at the corner with more active uses along Beverly Glen Blvd.
- Panel cautions against increasing the north-east tower footprint as it increases the shadow impacts on the east low-rise community area.
- South building A could be more sculpted to give a bit more daylight into courtyard.
- The co-work office space is an interesting proposed use that could potentially be located on the second floor.

Architecture

- Panel recognized the ambitious 50/50 window to wall ratio and the intent to break away from the conventional window wall towers. Also, the precedents for the architectural expression are very attractive, but perhaps too simplified in the applicant's proposal. Panel suggested to break away from the pattern of solid and glass and propose some areas of glass.
- Panel is concerned with how the north-east tower lands at the street with minimal articulation of at-grade retail. The tower seems heavy when it lands at the street level and the pedestrian experience is compromised.
- The datum height for the retail appears too low and could either be increased to 5-6m or the canopy could be emphasized.

Landscape

- Panel was concerned that the courtyard is a missed marketing and financial opportunity to consolidate experience for residents, pedestrians and children.
- Panel encouraged the applicant to explore the transitions for the west landscaped green corridor at the access from Beverly Glen and the neighbours to the north as a broader connection and potential linear pedestrianized link.
- The Jackson Pollock approach brands the site and provides interesting opportunity for topography and seating. Panel questioned the placement of patterns and suggested integration with wayfinding strategy to indicate entrances and pedestrian moments on the site in a logical way.