

# **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

## **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

### **Minutes of Meeting**

#### **Meeting 72 – April 25, 2019**

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The Design Review Panel met on Thursday, March 28, 2019 in Committee Room 242 & 243, City Hall, 141 Major MacKenzie Drive, Vaughan

#### **PANEL MEMBERS**

##### **Present**

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

##### **Absent**

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Antonio Gómez-Palacio, DIALOG

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Alfredo Landaeta, FORREC

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

##### **STAFF**

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Shahzad Davoudi-Strike, Urban Design

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design

Misha Bereznyak, Urban Design

Gilda Giovane, Urban Design

Mary Caputo, Development Planning

Clement Messere, Development Planning

Nancy Tuckett, Development Planning

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 March 28, 2019 were approved.

**4. DESIGN REVIEW**

**1. Promenade Shopping Centre Revitalization - Phase 1, Promenade Limited Partnership, High-Rise Mixed-Use Development**

Architecture: WZMH Architects  
Landscape Architect: Schollen & Company  
Review: 2<sup>nd</sup> Review

**Introduction**

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How successful is the updated Phase 1 design in addressing the first-round of DRP comments relating to the following?
  - Providing a functioning pedestrian and cycling circulation network for Phase 1
  - Creating a sense of arrival from each side of the development, specifically at the south and on the east
  - Ensuring a successful Phase 1 that allows the Master Plan vision (Secondary Plan) to integrate along the retail street with the future phases of development
2. Is the proposal successful in creating an engaging pedestrian experience?
3. How successful is the proposed Phase 1 in their approach to sustainability for the architectural expression of the buildings and streetscape design?

**Overview**

Panel expressed the exciting opportunity this development will provide for Vaughan, specifically Phase 1, in creating a great urban street into the future and note the following:

- The Phase 1 works will affect the Promenade Mall Secondary Plan and future phases of development. Panel acknowledged the shifting economy and shifting retail market, however they stressed the importance of having clear rational goals that can coherently align with the Secondary Plan.
- Panel emphasized the importance of timeline for the phasing of next steps and the opportunity to complete the 'Highstreet' and connect it to Centre Street.
- Determine a clear hierarchy for pedestrian and vehicle circulation for Phase 1 and future phases to be established with the Secondary Plan.
- Phase 1 needs a stronger presence for landscape to create a sense of place.
- Review sustainability goals for Phase 1 and incorporate them into the details of the project.

## **Comments**

### Masterplan and Phasing

- Panel questioned the certainty of the retail strategy and the demolition of key components of the mall, however sympathized with the proponent for wanting to create something in the foreseeable future in the void that the Sears has left.
- Panel questioned eliminating the possibility of a street through the current mall as a future phase developed through the secondary plan.
- Panel encouraged the proponent to study site sections along the 'Highstreet' to examine how future developments will work with Phase 1 in the vertical context at the changing elevation across the site.

### Site Organization and Landscape

- Panel stressed the importance of connecting to existing community facilities like the park, library and transit terminal through strong circulation links from the new public realm. Also, consider circulation after mall hours.
- Panel noted that there are large shaded areas on the 'Highstreet'.
- A pedestrian hierarchy between the plaza, 'Highstreet', and main interior retail corridor needs to be established through a circulation diagram and kept relevant for each phase of work (i.e. how people access the mall from the west side and how does the plaza facilitate a connection all the way to the Bathurst Street curb).
- The level and quality of materials needs to complement each area of public realm.
- The landscape component of Phase 1 needs to take priority over parking and Panel recommends that the landscape consultant take the lead in this dialogue.
- Panel questioned proponent's response to previous comments about a 'Highstreet' and explore what encourages people to walk the 'Highstreet' when they could be at concourse level.

## Massing and Architecture

- Panel acknowledged the urgency of the proponent to move forward but cautioned to avoid the project from being developed as a series of placeholders and conventional techniques.
- Focus on the mall frontages to ensure a positive experience on the 'Highstreet' and to avoid the multiple narrow corridors exiting on to the 'Highstreet'.
- 'Highstreet' sectional width is similar to Queen Street West that has successful granular retail opportunities. Look for opportunities to provide variety at a scale smaller than large retail uses.
- Consider providing an incubator space. It maybe a financial loss but it is a space that can be used for the community.
- Panel recommended exploring a greater understanding of retail in future regarding a finer grain retail 'Highstreet'.
- More thoughtful consideration for the architecture of the podium, tower and retail components is required to ensure differentiation.
- Rendered glass elevations do not promote a sustainable development. The towers need to be more than window wall with a twist. The highlighted sustainable items need to be developed and incorporated into the details of the design and not just a list of aspirations.

## **2. 4-24 Lansdowne Avenue, Avalee (Vaughan) Inc., Mid-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 1<sup>st</sup> Review**

Architecture: Diamond Schmitt Architects  
Landscape Architect: GSP Group  
Planning: MHBC Planning  
Review: 1<sup>st</sup> Review

### **Introduction**

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Please comment on the quality of the public realm including the mid-block connection.
2. Please comment on the overall massing and architectural expression of the development.

### **Overview**

- Panel questioned the viability of the proposed north-south mid-block connection considering its narrow width, limited access to sunlight and its dependence on the adjacent property's land contribution. Panel recommended to either consider shifting the building to the east, or improving the east-west connection which has more potential.

- Panel considered the bulk of the building to be excessive for the site and that a reduction in its bulk will allow it to fit better in its context, especially in relation to the short separation distance from the west property line.
- Panel stressed that the building should not encroach into the rear angular plane and that vertical circulation in the building can be resolved without protruding into it.
- The massing, materiality and scale of the third level contribute to an unfriendly design and suggest a commercial use rather than a residential use; the design should be adjusted to be more attractive and fit better with the overall design of the building and its residential context.
- Panel questioned the function and location of ground floor uses in relation to the existing and future context and felt that a more nuanced approach is required in the design of the ground floor plan.
- The 'hat' at the top of the building is inconsistent with the expression of the rest of the building and adds unnecessary complexity.

## Comments

### Site Organization and Landscape

- The proposed north-south mid-block connection will not create an inviting public space as it will be in shade most of the time and might be subject to adverse wind conditions. To improve the space, Panel suggested widening the gap between the buildings and to using 3D modelling to ensure that enough sunlight penetrates the space.
- In its current configuration, the proposed north-south connection will not be able to support the growth of trees until the site to the west is redeveloped. Since there is currently no plan for the redevelopment of that property, the design of the mid-block connection has to provide that opportunity by itself.
- Panel suggested to consider creating a focal point at the intersection of the east-west and north-south mid-block connections.
- Panel questioned the necessity for the north-south mid-block connection, considering the dimension of the block and the fact that the connection does not link to any streets or crossings to the south or north. Instead, Panel recommended focusing on the east-west connection since it corresponds to a more substantial desire line, and the required angular plane allows for better light penetration into this connection.
- However, Panel noted that to create a usable east-west public space requires resolving the conflict with traffic on the service lane and adding active uses to the north side of the ground level instead of only having service uses.
- Panel recommended extending the upgraded pavement into the laneway and the drop-off area.
- Panel questioned the viability of the public and semi-public uses in the ground level: the context may not support street retail, and the indoor and outdoor amenity areas

are not likely to be well-used considering the large size of the units. Panel suggested that the applicant should further explore the ground floor uses in the existing context.

- Given the location of the site and the size of the units, Panel questioned the necessity for a drop-off area and the justification for using the public right-of-way at the expense of boulevard trees to create the drop-off area.

### Massing and Architecture

- Panel commended the ambition of the materiality and design details but considered the design too rigid and suggested softening the appearance by incorporating other materials, e.g. the wood used in the balconies, and/or breaking the symmetry.
- Panel thought that the podium design should be better articulated, and that a separate podium might not be necessary for a mid-rise building.
- Panel questioned the 45-degree rotation of the elements on the ground level as they counterproductively screen the public uses of the building.
- Panel questioned the 'hat' on the building and called it unnecessary considering that the building already has a complex design; Panel thought that as a contextual mid-rise building, it is better to downplay the mechanical penthouse rather than to emphasize it.
- Containing the building mass within the 45-degree angular plane can be achieved and is often done in similar projects. Panel asked the applicant to try to stay within the 45-degree plane.
- Panel was concerned about insufficient setback from the west property line: a future redevelopment of the property to the west with similar setback would create a facing distance between windows of only 14 m while at least 20 m should be provided.
- Panel was concerned that the floor height of the retail space (a little over 3 m) was not enough for retail uses to function. Panel stressed the importance of flexibility of the commercial space since the best use for the space may change as the area is being redeveloped.
- Panel was worried that the protrusion and the articulation of the third level made the ground-related portion of the building crude and unwelcoming and thought it can be made more attractive and friendly.