

CITY OF VAUGHAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

AGENDA: MEETING 123 – February 27, 2025

Virtual Meeting

9:00 am

Pre-Meeting

Committee Members

9:15 am

Call to Order

Chair's Review of Agenda

Disclosure of Interest

Confirmation of Minutes of November 26, 2024 Meeting

9:30 am

7540 Jane Street - 2748355 Canada Inc.

Vaughan Metropolitan Centre

High-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 1st Review

Presentations:

Stephen Albanese, Arcadis

Caroline Richard, Sweeeny&Co Architects

Nick Onody, O2 Design

10:40 am

Adjournment

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 123 – February 27, 2025

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, February 27, 2025. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec (Chair)
Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects
Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects
Megan Torza, DTAH
Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.
Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg + Studio
Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.
Sharon Sterling, WSP Canada Group Ltd.

Absent

Paul Kulig, Perkins+Will (Vice-Chair)
Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle
Ute Maya Giambattista, O2 Planning and Design Inc.
John Tassiopoulos, Williams & Stewart Associates Limited
Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

STAFF

Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning and Special Programs
Gaston Soucy, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Cory Gray, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Musa Deo, Manager, Development Engineering, VMC Program
Matthew Peverini, Senior Development Planner, VMC Program
Monica Wu, Senior Development Planner, VMC Program
Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development Planning
Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design Development Planning
Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Andrea Shotlander, Project Manager, VMC Program
Ashwani Kumar, Urban Designer, VMC Program
Julia Crane, Landscape Architect, VMC Program
Nicholas Trajkovski, Planner, VMC Program
Muzaib Riaz, Development Planner, VMC Program
Michelle Perrone, Planner, VMC Program
Jillian Britto, Transportation Project Manager, VMC Program
Temi Fashina, Development Engineering Review Coordinator, VMC Program

Lucy D'Acunto, Administrative Coordinator, Development Planning
Chris Ainsworth, Councillor, Ward 4

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am with Alfredo Landaeta in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Ute Maya Giambattista, O2 Planning and Design Inc.
Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for November 28, 2024, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

7540 Jane Street

Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC)

High-Rise Residential Development, 1st Review

Planner: Arcadis

Designer: Sweeny&Co Architects

Landscape Architect: O2 Planning + Design

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- **Public Realm and Site Integration:** How well does the proposed design respond to and engage with key site features: South Urban Park, Public Square, intersection of Jane Street and Interchange Way, and the Black Creek Renewal area to the east. Is the proposed at-grade program effective in activating the public realm in the absence of retail uses?
- **Architectural Expression and Placemaking:** Do the architectural design, materiality, sustainability, and overall expression align well with the placemaking objectives for a residential development in the South Precinct, as envisioned in the VMC Secondary Plan and supporting policy documents? How can the proposal further strengthen indoor-outdoor connectivity and enhance the pedestrian experience?
- **Massing:** Do the proposed variation in tower heights and building arrangement create a well-balanced and distinguished skyline within the high-density downtown context? Given the minimum podium height requirement of 3 storeys, does the

proposed 2-storey podium sufficiently define the street edge and support an appropriate scale for the pedestrian experience?

Overview

- **Presentation:** The Panel thanked the applicant for a thorough presentation and commended the wholesome submission package. The applicant was encouraged to further refine the proposal with a focus on site circulation, ground-floor programming, and architectural expression to ensure a more successful integration into the evolving urban context of VMC.
- **Site Organization and Circulation:** The Panel emphasized the importance of integrating the development with its surroundings while ensuring efficient circulation. Concerns were raised about pedestrian-vehicular conflicts, with recommendations to prioritize pedestrian movement. Strengthening connections between key public spaces and integrating cycling infrastructure along Jane Street were also highlighted as priorities.
- **Ground Floor Activation:** The Panel stressed the need for a more engaging and interactive ground floor to enhance the public realm. Oversized residential lobbies and inactive frontages were identified as areas for improvement. Suggestions included reducing lobby sizes, activating key corners, and designing flexible ground-floor uses that can adapt over time.
- **Public Square:** The Panel emphasized the Public Square as a key opportunity for placemaking and stressed the need for enhanced street-level activation through thoughtful programming to better serve the broader community. It was noted that the ground-floor uses of the adjacent buildings should interact with the Public Square to enhance the vibrancy of the public realm.
- **Massing Strategy and Architectural Expression:** A more refined massing approach and stronger architectural expression were encouraged to improve the development's relationship with its context. The current tower configuration was seen as overwhelming, with recommendations to redistribute heights. Enhancing façade articulation and refining Tower C's west elevation to better interact with the Public Square were also key considerations.

Comments

Site Organization and Circulation

- The Panel emphasized the significance of this “privileged” site, highlighting its four prominent frontages and key adjacencies. Ensuring a strong relationship between the proposed development and these defining site characteristics was considered critical to the project's success.
- The effort to minimize driveways and consolidate loading access was acknowledged but concerns were raised regarding the overall circulation efficiency. The Panel noted potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, particularly along the north driveway fronting the South Urban Park and the north-

south middle driveway. To minimize these conflicts and prioritize pedestrian experience over vehicle use, the Panel recommended exploring alternative pedestrian walkways or wider sidewalks to provide clearly defined circulation routes that are comfortable in scale. Additionally, the Panel suggested to introduce a tabletop crossing between the Public Square and South Urban Park to enhance safety and walkability.

- The need for seamless connections between the Public Square, the South Urban Park and the Millway Linear Park was highlighted, not only in terms of physical connectivity but also in terms of programming to ensure a well-integrated public realm.
- The Panel underscored the importance of integrating cycling infrastructure along Jane Street in collaboration with the City and Region. Establishing a continuous and connected bicycle network, particularly in relation to Black Creek and the nearby transit hub, was identified as a key opportunity to improve multimodal connectivity and better integrate the development with its surrounding context.

Ground Floor Activation:

- At-grade activation was identified as a critical factor in ensuring the long-term success of the development. The current strategy of incorporating residential frontages along the Public Square was acknowledged, but there were concerns that these frontages may not provide sufficient interaction. It was recommended that alternative frontage treatments, specifically designed to enhance engagement and respond to the unique character of the public square, be explored. The applicant was also encouraged to explore the permeability between the Public Square and proposed building uses.
- The Panel noted that residential lobbies, particularly in Buildings A and B, appeared oversized and recommended revisiting their distribution to improve space efficiency. The Panel further suggested breaking down the lobby spaces into smaller, more engaging areas that could accommodate future amenities. The indoor and outdoor amenity spaces in Building A, located at the northeast corner, were flagged as inefficient and isolated, requiring stronger integration with the overall site.
- The provision of large residential lobbies along important streets with only one or two points of access, was seen as an underutilization of opportunities to activate the public realm. The forecourts to the lobbies were also identified as potential activation zones, where seating and other public-facing elements could be incorporated to create a more inviting streetscape.
- The Panel emphasized the importance of "future-proofing" the project by designing flexible ground-floor spaces that could adapt to changing market conditions and advised the design team to explore allocating space proactively for temporary amenities, community uses, or retail during early phases.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of active programming of ground-floor uses fronting the South Urban Park and along Jane Street. These are key frontages and require enhanced animation and pedestrian engagement.

- Applicant was encouraged to further improve the site corners to better serve the surrounding context and activate the public realm. The corner of Jane Street and Interchange was highlighted as a key location that requires special attention. The Panel encouraged the design team to explore both architectural and programmatic interventions to reinforce the prominence of this corner.

Public Square

- The Panel identified the Public Square as a significant opportunity for placemaking and recommended that its programming be carefully considered to ensure it serves the broader community.
- The Panel suggested that integrating more family-sized units with direct access to the Public Square could enhance vibrancy, borrowing from European precedents where permeable, family-sized, townhouse-style units contribute to street-level activation.
- Noting the imposing scale of Tower C, the Panel expressed concerns regarding the relationship between the Public Square and the proposed building. To address this, the Panel recommended refining the architectural facade of Tower C to establish a more engaging relationship and reinforce the Public Square as a vibrant and inviting public space.

Massing Strategy and Architectural Expression

- The Panel advocated for a stronger architectural response at the three key site corners (SW, SE, NE) and along all property edges to establish a distinct building character and enhance integration with the surrounding context.
- The current massing strategy, particularly the three towers with only 25 meters of separation, was viewed as overwhelming. The Panel recommended redistributing building heights, potentially by taking a "short, middle, tall" approach while increasing the podium heights, to allow for better sunlight penetration, mitigate the density impact and create a more dynamic skyline.
- The materiality at ground level was appreciated for its role in establishing a pedestrian-friendly scale and reinforcing a residential character. However, the Panel commented that the architectural identity of the towers needed further refinement. While the tower tops are beginning to develop a distinct identity, the middle portions lack character and could benefit from stronger articulation. The Panel encouraged exploring variations in the tower facades, such as introducing sliding planes similar to those found on the north and south facades, to break down the perceived massing along the east and west elevations.
- The west facade of Tower C was specifically criticized for coming straight to the ground without sufficient articulation, overwhelming the Public Square. The Panel recommended refining the massing strategy to improve this elevation to make it a more prominent and defining feature of the public realm by better addressing the pedestrian scale.

END OF MINUTES