

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 124 – July 30, 2026

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, July 30, 2026. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Arcadis (Chair)
Paul Kulig, Architect and Urban Designer (Vice-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
Sharon Sterling, WSP Canada Group Ltd.
Ute Maya Giambattista, O2 Planning and Design Inc.
John Tassiopoulos, Williams & Stewart Associates Limited
Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Absent

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle
Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

STAFF

Gaston Soucy, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Cory Gray, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Senior Manager Urban Design/ Cultural Heritage, Development Planning
Musa Deo, Manager, Development Engineering
Chrisa Assimopoulos, Project Manager, VMC Program
Anna Rosen, Project Manager, VMC Program
Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design Development Planning
Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development
Ashwani Kumar, Urban Designer, VMC Program
Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Claudia Kovalev, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Julia Crane, Landscape Architect, VMC Program
Natalie Wong, Senior Development Planner, VMC Program
Planning

David Harding, Senior Planner, Development Planning
Nicholas Trajkovski, Planner, VMC Program
Muzhi Lee, Planning Technician, Policy Planning and Special Programs
Temi Fashina, Development Engineering Review Coordinator, Development Engineering
James Norris, Development Engineering Lead, Development Engineering
Dana Khademi, Stormwater Engineer, Development Engineering
Noon Ferdous, Transportation Project Manager, Development Engineering
Francesca Verre, Administrative Assistant to the Director, Policy Planning and Special Programs
Lucy D'Acunto, Administrative Coordinator, Development Planning

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 am with Alfredo Landaeta in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg + Studio

3. DESIGN REVIEW

**Block A8 (101 Edgeley Blvd)
Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC)
Mid-Rise Office Development, 1st Review**

Owner:	SmartCenters
Architect:	Hariri Pontarini Architects
Landscape Architect:	gh3*

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- **Public Realm and Site Integration:**
 - How well does the proposed design respond to the overall vision and design for the block and to the park across the street?
 - How can pick-up and drop-off be better integrated in the overall site design?
 - Is the proposed at-grade program effective in activating the public and pedestrian realm?
- **Architectural Massing and Placemaking:**
 - Does the building massing and overall expression align well with the placemaking objectives for a mixed-use development in the Station

Precinct, and adjacent to a major park, as envisioned in the VMC Secondary Plan and supporting policy documents?

Overview

- **Presentation:** The Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive presentation and strongly supported the introduction of office uses within the VMC. Members noted that office development is critical to creating a balanced mixed-use downtown and commended the applicant for pursuing employment uses within the Art Walk Block. The Panel generally supported the ambition of the Art Walk concept, including the east-west pedestrian spine, north-south mews connection, active at-grade uses, and the broader objective of creating a highly connected pedestrian environment. Comments provided relate not only to the Block A8 but to the overall organization and hierarchy of the Art Walk block.
- **Site Circulation:** Panel members questioned the location and necessity of the PUDO, noting that it interrupts an important pedestrian connection within the block and may undermine the intended relationship between the development and the future North Urban Park. Additional study of loading, servicing, pedestrian movements, cycling facilities and long-term operational functionality was encouraged through the Panel's comments.
- **Open Space Design and Activation:** The Panel expressed concern that the cumulative amount of open space proposed throughout the block may dilute activity and reduce the effectiveness of individual spaces. Members encouraged a review of the public realm hierarchy at the block scale and the role of key organizing spaces, and suggested concentrating activity within fewer, stronger destinations. The north courtyard was identified as an area requiring further study with concerns raised regarding its northern orientation, limited visibility, blank wall conditions, retail potential, and overall ability to function as a successful public destination.
- **Architectural Massing and Placemaking:** The architecture of the podium received positive feedback for its materiality, detailing, scale, and contribution to the pedestrian experience. Conversely, several Panel members felt the office tower lacked a distinctive identity and represented a missed opportunity to create a landmark office building adjacent to a major park. The Panel encouraged exploration of a more sophisticated façade articulation including solar shading as part of the architectural response to better reflect the building's prominent location in the VMC.

Comments

Public Realm and Block Plan Coordination

- The overall landscape approach was viewed positively and described as restrained, elegant, and appropriate for an office environment. The Panel emphasized on the importance on extending this landscape language throughout the broader block while maintaining continuity with adjacent developments and allowing Block A8 to establish its own identity.
- Further to the above, members encouraged further refinement of landscape transitions between the subdued character of the office building and that of the neighbouring residential buildings, to ensure a seamless pedestrian experience between the blocks; identify the common landscape elements between sites, how those common elements create a framework and then note what is unique to each of the blocks and how each block develops its own character within this master plan.
- The proposed raised planters within the mews were viewed as successful as they create the opportunity for seating and children's play integrations. In addition to that, open planted areas could be incorporated to create interest, activation and balance.
- The Panel supported the overall vision for a porous and pedestrian-oriented block structure connected by the Art Walk and north-south mews, however cautioned on too much porosity that may dilute the pedestrian experience. The Panel spoke to the need to evaluate the level of urbanity and intensity of pedestrian use on this block and the VMC when designing the on-site pedestrian realm. It was suggested that the design team prioritizes specific spaces on creating that porosity and establish a hierarchy of outdoor spaces evaluating them at block level instead of site level.
- Further to the above, concerns were raised relating to the multiple open spaces proposed on site, which the initial diagrams may suggest have different characters however on the drawings they are rendered in a very similar way, and include 70% hardscape and limited softscape. The Panel suggested that the design team revisits the block-scale public realm and re-establishes that greater vision to then finetune the individual spaces proposed on the site.
- As part of the block-scale review, the intersection of the Art Walk and north-south mews should be reviewed. It was identified, by the Panel as a primary public space and an organizing element for the entire block which currently is being treated as secondary compared to other open space areas on site. It was acknowledged that this block-level review might not

require changes to this site but it is essential in establishing a consistent vision at block and site level.

- The Panel discussed the option of creating more private and semi-private spaces on the block and moving some of the public spaces to the periphery, further enhancing the differentiation between public, semi-private/ public and private amenity spaces with some of the future courtyards becoming smaller, more intimate and much greener.
- Looking specifically at this site, the Panel questioned whether the north courtyard would attract sufficient activity due to its northern exposure, limited visibility from the park, blank wall conditions, and relatively restricted retail frontage. It was suggested that if the PUDO and loading area were shifted so that pedestrians are forced to walk from the north to access the lobby then some activation could be secured for that space.
- Further to the above, regarding the design of the north courtyard, the Panel noted that it looks stronger in plan view than functionally since the paved areas between the planters are narrow, there is no seating provided nor any programming is suggested for the space. As such members of the Panel questioned the functionality of that space in the way that it is designed and encouraged the design team to reduce the fragmented planting strips, creating larger landscape groupings, appropriately distanced to allow for seating to be incorporated in the shade, support passive programming, gathering and informal use.
- Regarding the front plaza, the Panel noted that it is an anchoring element for the site, as many people will be moving through it to reach the park; however currently it is underwhelming. As the retail tenants develop, the particularities of the retail, whether it includes spill out or patio spaces, should be allowed to carve out and considered in the design decisions for the front plaza.
- Further to the above, the decision on the feature at the central, brown-hatched area of the front plaza, may it be public art, a water feature or something else, should be reviewed in relation to the pedestrian movement around it, as well as the movement through the retail-related elements of the plaza, through the building, the bike parking or beyond.
- Despite the plaza facing the park, the design of it should consider the conditions of major arterials and incorporate screenings to mitigate the noise and create a comfortable and pleasant environment for the future users.
- The Panel spoke to the importance of public art, as a placemaking strategy; moving beyond placeholder images; the design team should make public art an integral element of the design.

Onsite Circulation and Network Connections

- The Panel noted that the connections to the parking lot, the underground parking, the transit and the active transportation facilities are well-established.
- Panel members questioned whether a dedicated PUDO is required within the block, noting that curbside activity on surrounding streets is a common condition in urban environments that should be explored in coordination with the City.
- Concerns were raised regarding the location of the PUDO within the north-south mews and the extent to which it introduces multiple vehicular activities on that edge interrupting an important pedestrian connection through the site and to the North Urban Park. It was suggested that Edgeley Boulevard be further investigated as a potential alternative location for the PUDO as it is expected to be a less busy and prominent street compared to Apple Mill Rd.
- In response to the PUDO being central to serving the overall community, the Panel questioned the impact of the proposed six spaces over the anticipated office users, residents, ride-sharing services, food delivery activity, and visitors and noted that they may not be sufficient to accommodate the range of anticipated office users, ride-share services, food delivery activity and visitors.
- The Panel encouraged additional study of pedestrian conflicts, vehicle operations, loading movements, and long-term functionality in relation to the PUDO and how it affects the access to the mews, the loading patterns and pedestrian public network.
- Regarding the PUDO's currently proposed location, the Panel stressed the importance of safety measures for the mews through landscape design, and through a clear separation between vehicular and pedestrian activity. It was also noted that a strong weather-protected pedestrian connection between the PUDO and the office lobby would be necessary.
- The Panel, addressing both the City and the applicant mentioned that future planning exercises should consider greater use of on-street parking and curbside loading zones rather than introducing these functions into key public realm spaces.
- With regards to the bicycle parking, the Panel expressed concern on the number of bicycle parking spaces and the missing on-site end-of-trip facilities (shower and changing facilities) and encouraged the design team to confirm that the number of bike parking spots are sufficient and explore

the possibility of conveniently locating end-of-trip facilities in the building through the detailed design process.

Retail Activation and Ground Floor Programming

- The Panel supported the extensive retail frontage provided along the perimeter streets.
- The Panel questioned whether the size and location of the office lobby unnecessarily interrupt retail continuity along the park frontage. Members suggested exploring whether portions of the lobby could be shifted east to create a more continuous retail edge facing the park and supporting activation throughout the day and evening.
- Attention should be given to ensuring retail spaces at the rear remain visible, accessible, and economically viable. Additionally, from the perspective of circulation and access especially during the winter, the retail at the back would benefit from more direct access and connectivity; the Panel suggested that the design team works with circulation, building design and glazing to create shortcuts for greater connectivity.

Architectural Expression and Building Design

- The massing and podium expression with the “glass-box” design of the office on top and the massing break-down at the corner was generally supported, with the Panel drawing a parallel between the proposal and heritage building integrations to new development. The brick material palette, vertical articulation, human scale, and quality of detailing, support an attractive public realm and an engaging pedestrian experience.
- Overall, the Panel encouraged the applicant to consider how the office component of the building could contribute to a unique architectural identity comparable to the ambition demonstrated in the public realm, podium design, and the building’s prominent location. Also, members of the Panel spoke to the tendency towards uniformity and encouraged the design team to look for opportunities to incorporate more variety around the perimeter of the building and the site.
- Further on the office component, the Panel noted that the proposal represents a missed opportunity to develop a distinctive architectural expression for a landmark office building fronting the North Urban Park. With a focus on solar gain, glare and occupant comfort, members cautioned that the extensive glazing may result in a generic south-facing façade taken over by blinds being closed throughout the day. The Panel encouraged the design team to investigate more sophisticated design strategies, integrating solar shading, to strengthen the building’s design

and respond successful to its very special location in the VMC, axially relating to the park pedestrian bridge and the views to the park.

- Large blank wall conditions associated with loading and servicing functions were identified and would require attention. Specifically, along the diagonal mews, at the north courtyard and along the north-south mews, while the accompanying landscape treatments and pedestrian connections were viewed positively, the Panel noted that these spaces are framed by long and tall blank façades, which remain visually dominant despite the proposed brick articulation. Public art, murals lighting, material variation, landscape integration, and other activation measures were recommended.
- Regarding the retail space at the northwest corner, the Panel noted that there is an opportunity to increase the critical mass of that building, to solidify its presence as a retail block. Also, adding more retail around the proposed public spaces, will lead to more intimate open spaces that would be perceived as more full and well-used.
- Further to the above, the Panel suggested the design team look at the layout of the retail spaces, identifying where the back-of-house would be and incorporating façade treatments and materials that can support those uses, instead of being faced with the iterations that each retailer chooses in the future. Similarly, on the south façade, where retail space above the ground floor is proposed, considering the need of future signage, a solid materiality might be more fitting to allow for a potential signage area.
- The Panel spoke to the lighting as a critical component to ensure the outdoor spaces are well-used and successful. Currently based on the renderings there are areas that appear dark, more in depth exploration was recommended to ensure the spaces would be inviting.
- Lastly the Panel encouraged the design team to view the ceiling of the breezeway as a façade, and work in further refining its articulation, as it will be a very prominent piece, that can contribute to the wayfinding and branding of the building and the block being experienced from the exterior and the interior of the building.

END OF MINUTES

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 124 – July 30, 2026

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, July 30, 2026. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec (Chair)
Paul Kulig, Architect and Urban Designer (Vice-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
Sharon Sterling, WSP Canada Group Ltd.
Ute Maya Giambattista, O2 Planning and Design Inc.
John Tassiopoulos, Williams & Stewart Associates Limited
Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Absent

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle
Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

STAFF

Gaston Soucy, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Cory Gray, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Senior Manager Urban Design/ Cultural Heritage, Development Planning
Musa Deo, Manager, Development Engineering
Chrisa Assimopoulos, Project Manager, VMC Program
Anna Rosen, Project Manager, VMC Program
Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design Development Planning
Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development
Ashwani Kumar, Urban Designer, VMC Program
Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Claudia Kovalev, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Julia Crane, Landscape Architect, VMC Program
Natalie Wong, Senior Development Planner, VMC Program
Planning

David Harding, Senior Planner, Development Planning
Nicholas Trajkovski, Planner, VMC Program
Muzhi Lee, Planning Technician, Policy Planning and Special Programs
Temi Fashina, Development Engineering Review Coordinator, Development Engineering
James Norris, Development Engineering Lead, Development Engineering
Dana Khademi, Stormwater Engineer, Development Engineering
Noon Ferdous, Transportation Project Manager, Development Engineering
Francesca Verre, Administrative Assistant to the Director, Policy Planning and Special Programs
Lucy D'Acunto, Administrative Coordinator, Development Planning

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 am with Alfredo Landaeta in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg + Studio

3. DESIGN REVIEW

Podium School Feasibility Study

City-Wide Study, 1st Review

Owner:	City of Vaughan
Architect:	CS&P Architects
Landscape Architect:	Janet Rosenberg & Studio Inc.
Planning Consultant:	Bousfields Inc.

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- **Site Integration:** Given the school's location within high-density mixed-use urban centres, are there additional site planning, connectivity, servicing, access, or edge-condition strategies that should be considered to better integrate the school with its surrounding neighbourhood while maintaining a safe and functional educational environment?
- **Architectural Expression, Public Realm and Placemaking:** How can the school site, building and landscape design contribute to a vibrant and welcoming pedestrian environment, establish a distinct civic identity within

the different intensification areas of Vaughan while ensuring an appropriate level of safety, security, and operational functionality?

- **Massing and Building Organization:** Recognizing that four storeys represents the maximum height acceptable to the School Boards, are there additional massing, building organization, or open-space considerations that could improve the relationship of the school to the surrounding urban context and enhance the quality, functionality, and usability of the outdoor learning and recreation spaces?

Overview

- **Presentation:** The Panel thanked the consultant team and City Staff for undertaking a comprehensive and forward-thinking study addressing one of the most significant challenges in high-density urban communities: how to successfully deliver schools within intensification areas. Members noted that the study has value beyond the VMC and may serve as an important precedent for other municipalities facing similar growth pressures. The Panel supported the overall direction of the study and commended the extensive consultation undertaken with school boards, developers, and municipal stakeholders.
- **Governance, Funding and Delivery:** The Panel noted that the greatest challenges associated with podium schools are not architectural but institutional. Existing school board standards, provincial funding models, land ownership structures, and implementation processes were repeatedly identified as significant barriers to delivery. Members encouraged the study to continue identifying these barriers and exploring governance, partnership, and implementation frameworks that can support urban school development.
- **Phasing and Implementation:** Significant discussion focused on how schools can be successfully delivered within large-scale urban developments that may be constructed over many years and through multiple phases. The Panel encouraged further examination of implementation models that can operate independently from future development phases and minimize conflicts between active schools and ongoing construction activity.
- **Transportation and Operations:** The Panel supported prioritizing active transportation, transit access, and walkability as the foundation of urban school planning. Members emphasized that successful school operations rely as much on the surrounding transportation network, road design, transit connections, and active transportation infrastructure as on the school site itself. While acknowledging operational requirements associated with schools and childcare facilities, the Panel encouraged the

study to avoid replicating suburban transportation models and instead focus on urban mobility, curbside management, and integrated transportation networks.

- **School Identity and Community Building:** Members spoke extensively about the importance of schools functioning as visible civic institutions and community anchors within mixed-use developments. Discussion focused on how schools can maintain a distinct identity within larger developments through architecture, public realm design, wayfinding, signage, public art, and recognizable entrances. The Panel also emphasized the importance of shared-use facilities and community access opportunities that reinforce the role of schools as neighbourhood destinations and centres of community life.
- **Site Selection and Urban Context:** The Panel emphasized the importance of locating schools within a broader network of parks, transit, public spaces, active transportation routes, and community facilities. Members encouraged the study to further develop locational criteria that support schools as integrated components of complete communities.

Comments

Governance, Funding and Land Ownership

- The Panel recognized that the study addresses a challenge facing many intensifying municipalities and supported the City's proactive effort to establish a framework before specific development applications are advanced. Members viewed the study as an important step toward bridging the gap between conventional school delivery models and the realities of high-density urban development.
- Several members observed that many of the barriers associated with podium schools are not fundamentally design issues but rather institutional challenges related to funding, governance, land ownership, implementation processes, and approval structures. Throughout the discussion, members stressed that successful implementation will depend as much on policy and governance solutions as on physical design.
- The Panel discussed how current school board expectations regarding site size, field space, parking supply, and operational requirements are largely based on greenfield development patterns. Members noted that these standards were developed for suburban conditions where large school sites are more readily available and may not align with the realities of intensification areas such as the VMC. The Panel encouraged continued exploration of how school delivery models can evolve to respond to urban

conditions rather than simply attempting to compress conventional schools onto smaller sites.

- Considerable discussion focused on provincial funding structures. Several members noted that many of the implementation barriers identified throughout the study ultimately stem from funding formulas that were developed around a fundamentally different development model. The Panel suggested that future versions of the study clearly identify where implementation challenges originate from existing provincial frameworks, articulate the consequences of maintaining the status quo in intensification areas and engaging the Province on that front.
- Members discussed how land ownership significantly affects the feasibility of podium school projects. It was observed that many successful precedents occur where school boards or public agencies already control the land prior to redevelopment. By contrast, where land remains in private ownership, school boards are often required to negotiate solutions within a development framework established by other parties, creating additional complexity and uncertainty.
- The Panel noted that podium schools require a fundamentally different relationship between developers and school boards than is typically found in conventional development projects. Members acknowledged that both parties often enter discussions with different objectives, financial realities, and implementation timelines, making successful collaboration particularly challenging.
- Several members discussed the importance of establishing stronger governance frameworks related to ownership, maintenance, operations, security, cost-sharing, and long-term management responsibilities. The Panel emphasized that governance must be treated as a critical component of project success rather than a secondary consideration to be resolved after design is complete.
- The Panel generally supported continued exploration of partnership models, governance structures, and delivery mechanisms that can provide greater certainty for municipalities, school boards, and development partners pursuing future projects.

Phasing, Construction and Delivery

- The Panel identified phasing as one of the most significant implementation challenges associated with podium schools. Members noted that contemporary development projects are increasingly delivered through multiple phases and are often subject to changing economic conditions, evolving market demands, and shifting development schedules. As a

result, assumptions regarding simultaneous build-out of large development blocks may not always be realistic.

- The Panel further suggested that the study explicitly state that while schools may be physically integrated within mixed-use developments, they should remain operationally independent from residential uses, including servicing, loading, access, and building operations. Members noted that this approach may improve flexibility, reduce implementation risk, and better reflect current market conditions. Further to this, regarding the podium itself, the Panel suggested that it is explicitly stated in the study that the school should separate from the residential podium in the different schemes and ensure school delivery is not constrained by residential phasing or changing market conditions.
- The Panel expressed concern regarding situations where schools may become operational while adjacent portions of a development remain under construction. Concerns included student safety, noise, dust, air quality, supervision, and the overall educational environment. Members encouraged the study to further investigate how ongoing construction activity may affect school operations and what mitigation measures could be employed.
- It was noted that uncertainty regarding adjacent development timing presents a particular challenge for school boards, as facilities may need to operate for years alongside construction sites beyond their control. The Panel supported continued examination of phasing strategies that minimize these conflicts.
- Members also discussed the challenge of aligning development timelines with school board and Ministerial funding timelines. The Panel acknowledged that development projects often proceed at a pace that differs significantly from educational infrastructure delivery and that successful implementation will require better coordination between these processes.
- The Consultant team noted that the Ministry of Education funding and timelines continue to be based on greenfield school delivery models reinforcing the need for continued engagement with the Province. The team further noted that the development phasing is often driven by financing and construction constraints. While, for example, underground parking may be phased, the school and adjacent development components may need to be delivered concurrently in order to remain financially viable.
- The concept of future-proofing was discussed throughout the review. Members supported approaches that allow schools to adapt over time as population levels, transportation patterns, enrolment demands, and

neighbourhood conditions evolve. The Consultant team noted that the report would consider how catchment areas, transportation needs, and school operations change as communities mature. While bussing may be required during the early stages of development, walking, cycling, and transit are expected to play a larger role as neighbourhoods build out. It was also noted that transportation needs vary between school boards, with some boards, particularly the French-language boards, serving larger catchment areas and requiring greater reliance on bussing and vehicular access.

- Regarding podium school heights, the Panel noted a strategy that may allow for the school to occupy up a podium of 6-7 storeys, where the cellular spaces are at the lower levels and the large span spaces such as the theater and the gym, have been set above. Allowing for the team and future teams working on a podium school to explore creative solutions to allow for greater integration.

Transportation, Access and School Operations

- The Panel strongly supported the study's emphasis on walking, cycling, transit use, and active transportation. Members agreed that successful urban schools should be planned around these transportation modes rather than relying on automobile-oriented approaches commonly associated with suburban development.
- Several members emphasized that successful school operations depend not only on the site itself but also on the quality of the surrounding public realm and transportation network. Road and boulevard design, safe road widths, safe crossings, sidewalks, cycling infrastructure, transit connections, wayfinding systems, and other active transportation facilities were identified as critical supporting elements. Members encouraged the study to place greater emphasis on off-site transportation planning and network connectivity, noting that parents and caregivers are more likely to support walking and cycling when safe, convenient, and continuous infrastructure is provided throughout surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Considerable discussion focused on school pick-up and drop-off conditions. Members acknowledged the challenges associated with morning and afternoon peak periods, particularly where school activity overlaps with residential commuter traffic and other daily transportation patterns.
- Despite these operational challenges, several members cautioned against introducing extensive suburban-style drop-off infrastructure into urban environments. The Panel generally supported solutions that emphasize curbside management, on-street activity, transit access, and active transportation rather than large dedicated vehicular facilities, while

acknowledging that special provisions for school pick-up/drop-off and bus operations may be required in certain locations.

- Members highlighted the importance of transit accessibility, particularly for secondary schools and school boards serving larger catchment areas. Appropriate transit connections, school bus operations, and integration with broader public transportation networks were identified as critical considerations.
- The Panel noted that transportation requirements may change over time as communities mature. Members encouraged future planning to consider both the initial years of school operation, when bussing may be required, and long-term conditions where walking, cycling, and local transit use may become the predominant transportation modes.

Parking, Childcare and Shared Facilities

- Members supported further examination of shared parking models and noted that podium school developments create opportunities for more efficient parking arrangements than conventional school sites. Shared use between schools, childcare facilities, teachers, and other building users was identified as a potentially valuable strategy.
- Discussion focused specifically on childcare operations, which were viewed as having different requirements than elementary or secondary schools. Members noted that childcare facilities typically involve longer dwell times, stroller use, caregiver accompaniment, and different daily operating schedules. These characteristics were viewed as warranting separate consideration within the study with Panel members suggesting that sharing the underground facility with the teachers might be a favourable solution specifically for the childcare pick-up and drop-off.
- The Panel supported maintaining physical separation between childcare drop-off operations, school bus activity, residential access points, and primary pedestrian corridors. Members noted that these functions operate differently and, if combined too closely may create operational and safety concerns.
- Several members highlighted opportunities to reduce overall parking requirements through coordinated operations and shared-use arrangements, particularly where childcare, school and staff uses operate on different schedules.

School Identity, Visibility and Civic Presence

- The Panel noted that schools should remain clearly recognizable civic institutions within mixed-use developments and not become visually subordinate to surrounding residential or commercial uses. Members

expressed concern that some podium school precedents become overly integrated with surrounding development and lose the sense of identity typically associated with schools. Future schools should clearly communicate their educational function and civic importance within the community.

- Members emphasized that school identity extends beyond building architecture and can be reinforced through public art, special paving treatments, landscape design, gateway features, signage, streetscape elements, and wayfinding. The Consultant team agreed that these elements, together with recognizable entrances and openings, can support stronger identity without prescribing a specific architectural language.
- The Panel explored opportunities for architectural expression, public art, colour, playful design features, façade articulation, and material variation that could help reinforce a school's identity without prescribing a particular design language. Members generally supported creating greater visibility while maintaining flexibility for future design teams.
- Several members suggested that school identity can contribute to public awareness and safety. By clearly communicating the presence of a school, design interventions may help create greater awareness among motorists, pedestrians, transit users, and visitors that children are present within the surrounding environment.
- Further to the above, the Consultant team noted that priority has been placed on distinct and recognizable entrances. As per the Panel's comment recent school development examples have been polite in how they express their identity but that is gradually starting to change, and that change is noted around entrances and openings; the Consultant team though agreed that playfulness can be integrated without dictating specific architectural designs through the study. The ability for students, families, visitors, and community users to easily identify and access school facilities within larger mixed-use developments was viewed as a critical component of successful design.
- The Panel encouraged the study to reference a broader range of precedents demonstrating how strong civic identity can be achieved within urban environments while still remaining sensitive to surrounding context.

Community Integration and Shared Use

- The Panel strongly supported the concept of schools functioning as community anchors and noted that schools serve functions far beyond education. Members observed that schools often become some of the most heavily used civic facilities within urban neighbourhoods and can contribute

significantly to recreation, culture, community programming, social interaction, and neighbourhood identity.

- Several members highlighted examples where school facilities successfully support substantial community use beyond regular school hours. Theatre spaces, gymnasiums, gathering areas, recreational facilities, and multipurpose spaces were all identified as important resources that can strengthen surrounding communities.
- Discussion focused on the broader social benefits of providing schools within neighbourhoods rather than relying on bussing students to facilities located elsewhere. Members noted that local schools contribute to stronger relationships between families, educators, children, and community organizations while supporting a stronger sense of neighbourhood identity.
- The Panel observed that podium schools may play an especially important role in high-density communities where opportunities for standalone civic infrastructure are more limited. Schools were viewed as essential components of complete communities and important contributors to long-term neighbourhood stability and vitality.
- Members emphasized that successful shared-use arrangements depend on governance structures and operational agreements as much as physical design. While community access to facilities such as theatres, gyms and gathering spaces was strongly supported, clear delineation of responsibilities, operational boundaries, maintenance obligations, and security requirements will be necessary to support meaningful shared use.

Site Selection, Urban Context and Future Adaptability

- The Panel encouraged the study to expand its discussion regarding locational criteria for future podium schools within the City's policy and guideline framework. Members noted that school planning should be considered as part of a broader ecosystem of public infrastructure and suggested that guidance related to parks, community facilities, transit access, active transportation networks, neighbourhood amenities, walking catchments, and public space networks would strengthen future planning efforts.
- Discussion also focused on the relationship between schools and parks. The Consultant team acknowledged that urban schools will not always be able to accommodate every recreational function on-site and so locational criteria for the school include public parks and community infrastructure as those can complement the educational facilities. The Panel also discussed the challenges associated with internal courtyard play spaces within mixed-use podiums, noting that ground-floor servicing and loading requirements may limit the viability of these spaces. In certain situations, raising play

spaces above grade may provide greater flexibility and improved access to sunlight.

- Members generally supported the study's emphasis on flexibility and adaptability, noting that transportation demand, operational needs, enrolment levels, and community expectations will continue to evolve as urban communities mature. The Panel encouraged the study to establish frameworks that can adapt over time while remaining clear enough to guide future implementation decisions.
- The Panel discussed the sustainability benefits associated with integrating schools within mixed-use developments. Members noted that compact built form, reduced building envelope area, and the potential sharing of energy systems may improve overall building performance and encouraged consideration of sustainability and energy efficiency within the final report.

END OF MINUTES