

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting 80 – April 30, 2020

The Design Review Panel was held online on Thursday, April 30, 2020 over Microsoft Teams Virtual Platform.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

John Tassiopoulos, WSP Canada Group Ltd

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Absent

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Amy Roots, Urban Design

Nancy Tuckett, Development Planning

Carmela Marrelli, Development Planning

Eugene Fera, Development Planning

Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Urban Design

Shirin Rohani, Urban Design

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design

Shirley March, Urban Design

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

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

No conflict of Interest

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting Minutes for February 27, 2020 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

700 Centre Street– Thornhill, Smart Centres REIT

Architects: Sweeny & Co Architects /WSP / MHBC

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Please evaluate the proposal's success in responding to its context and outlaying a strong site organization that responds to the big moves envisioned in the VOP for this area.
2. Please comment on the overall massing, podium structure and the ground floor layout in response to the urban public realm and the pedestrian oriented environment that is envisioned as the character of the ultimate development of the Thornhill Town Center.

Overview

Master Planning

- Panel encouraged the applicant to fully take advantage of the single land ownership to develop a comprehensive master plan for the entire area that envisions a pedestrian oriented community both in the interim and ultimate phases. The plan should expand on the success of the existing commercial uses

and invest on the ground floor synergies between the parcels to support the future expansion.

- Panel felt that the relationship of the building with the context was not clear and the edge conditions needed to be further studied.
- At the Master Plan level, Panel asked the applicant to be consistent with respect to pedestrian, retail and active frontage connectivity to the context.
- Panel questioned the proposed density of the site and its impact on the design.

Building Typologies

- While Panel was sympathetic to the affordability intent of the project, but questioned the above-grade parking as an appropriate solution considering the cost associated with the technical challenges of construction.
- Panel acknowledged the simplicity and clarity of form and the logical podium scale and asked the applicant to adhere to the required separation distances between the podium and the neighbouring properties, specially the properties to the north and east.
- Panel was concerned about the impact of the above-grade parking on the overall context and expressed that if this typology gets replicated in the Master Plan, it will damage the public realm. Panel advised the applicant to prioritize supporting active frontages by burying the parking.
- Panel stated that having the highest buildings of the area on an interior lot is not optimal for the Master Plan.

Open Space Typologies and At-grade Experience

- Panel told the applicant to be mindful of landscape connectivity and encouraged the applicant to take advantage of the other existing resources adjacent to the site and encouraged the applicant to put additional effort to ensure connections to the boarder context.
- The applicant was advised to provide a mid-block connection, incorporating the grade, connecting to the pathway north of the site.
- Panel encouraged a transportation and parking strategy that prioritizes active frontages and underground parking to activate the ground floor wherever possible
- Panel requested additional effort to be made for landscape connectivity, and encouraged engaging resources adjacent to the site

Comments

Site Organization, Building Typology

- The relationship of the building to the context is unclear, the only edge of the building that is defined and detailed is the southern edge. Panel advised the applicant to study all edges of the building in the context of the neighboring lots and address the required separation distances.

- Unsuitability of the above-ground parking in the context and in relation to the neighbors was echoed by all members, and it was advised that having residential units on the street would be beneficial in the overall context.
- Panel acknowledged that introducing retail at ground floor as an extension of retail in the context is an appropriate approach but asked for a retail study to provide better connection to retails on Disera Drive and to create future retail spines south to Center street.

Architecture

- Panel pointed out to the misalignment between the elevations and plans in the expression of the residential units and the entrance experience for the residents.
- The applicant was encouraged to investigate smaller scale entrances for the residence and introducing multiple entrances for the two towers, to give each tower a different identity.
- On the other hand, some panel members expressed that the consolidated entrance on the ground floor was more efficient and provided livelihood to the public street by giving more space to retail.
- Wrapping the parkade on east and west with residential units and moving some of the parking underground will improve the podium's relation to the context
- Panel mentioned that the challenges created by the above-ground parking structure were the result of too much density on site. Panel advised the applicant to revise the programs and reduce the density to alleviate some of these challenges.

Public Realm

- Panel questioned the lack of pedestrian connections in the context plan including no sidewalk connection to Disera Drive.
- The parkade is visible from the north and east. Panel was concerned of its impacts on existing residential units and the future development on the east.
- Moving the parking underground was suggested to alleviate the difficult hard edge conditions and also create a better pedestrian experience both internally and externally.
- The layout of the ground floor has missed any opportunities for a better treatment of the east edge.
- Panel advised the proposal to provide a termination point for the roads and transform them to something that is more than a driveway.
- The viability of the retail at grade was questioned and Panel encouraged the applicant to consider the ground floor experience if retail becomes unfeasible.
- Applicant was encouraged to take advantage of the existing mid-block connection to the north and to pay attention to the pedestrian conditions on secondary frontages.
- Panel applauded the robust streetscape on Disera Drive and advised to be mindful of paving patterns and AODA requirements.

- Panel advised the applicant to address the microclimate conditions in all amenity terraces.

5217-5225 Highway 07

Architecture: KFA Architects + Planners Inc.

Landscape:

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How can the site organization be improved to create a successful at grade pedestrian experience along Regional road 7 and permeability through the site?
2. Please comment on the compatibility of the overall massing with the existing and future context and how to improve the transition to the adjacent low-rise neighborhood

Overview

Master Planning, Site Organization, and Context

- Panel expressed that the proposal does not prove itself to be context aware in massing, adjacencies, and pedestrian and vehicular connectivity. Panel was not convinced the proposal was appropriate and advised collaboration with the neighboring properties or assembly of parcels to find a suitable solution that resolves some of the major concerns.
- Panel acknowledged that the site is very challenging to plan both in the existing and the future context and the proposed Master Plan is very unlikely to happen.
- Panel was concerned about the back of house uses and their relation to the future phases of development. Panel expressed how landscape can contribute to the buffers and transitions to stable residential neighborhood in the block and advised the applicant to investigate open space provisions at the block plan level.
- Pedestrian connectivity is a major concern, what currently exists for the residents is not adequate. Panel advised the applicant to improve the pedestrian experience and emphasized that the pedestrian connectivity should be secured for in both existing and future scenarios.

Massing and Ground Floor Layout

- The massing transition, from the built form perspective, to the west, east and south needs to be demonstrated according to urban design guidelines. Panel did not find these transitions to be suitable.
- Panel encouraged lobby's presence along the highway 7 at the corner to create a more civic presence on highway 7.
- Ground floor units' marketability and desirability were a concern for the panel members due to their harsh frontage.

Comments

Master Planning, Site Organization and Building Typology

- At the Master Plan stage, the most probable outcome would be the north-south connection on the east and possibly to Kipling Avenue on the west. Panel advised to analyze the project based on the existing situation and expressed that the proposal is too dense and too complex for the existing site that is too narrow. The applicant should look into acquiring the property to the west or east if considering this density.
- If the existing condition is the ultimate situation, the applicant should consider lower density and massing and a more sensible approach to ground floor layout.
- The shadow impact on the neighbours to the east is very pronounced and is a major concern. Investigating the point tower typology was encouraged just to minimize the shadow impact on the neighbors.
- The applicant was advised to investigate the road and pedestrian network both for the existing and future conditions.
- In the Master Plan proposal, it was expressed that Makenzie Drive as a public road cannot be connected to a private driveway, and it needs to keep its connection to Highway 7.
- The applicant was encouraged to revise the Master Plan to better address the public and private roads.

Open Space and Pedestrian Experience

- Panel questioned lack of outdoor amenity, and the location of the indoor amenity facing Highway 7.
- Panel suggested continuing the sidewalk from highway 7 south to Hawman Avenue to provide both pedestrian and bike connection.
- The interim road that connects to Hawman Avenue should be relocated to the east to create a better termination point for the proposed street.
- It was mentioned that the 2.1m wide sidewalk can not provide any privacy mitigation for the at grade residential units facing it.
- The eastern edge was considered challenging for planting and the applicant was advised to propose more creative planting solution for the interim situation.
- Panel acknowledged and appreciated considering the microclimate of Highway 7 and proposed relocating the lobby closed to Highway 7 at the corner to reduce the travel distance to public transit.
- Proposed right-in/right-out with the pork-chop design is considered most challenging for pedestrians. The applicant was advised to look into that whole frontage through the lens of pedestrian connectivity and coordinate his effort with the neighbor to the west.
- Applicant was also advised to redesign the southern part of the project to improve pedestrian connectivity providing better connection through the site to Kipling Avenue and Hawman Avenue.

Architecture

- Panel encouraged better terracing and setbacks from the property edges to mitigate the impact on low rise residential and the property to the west
- Panel expressed concern for the ground floor units in terms of privacy and the impact of surface parking. The applicant was advised to eliminate the surface parking and include landscaping.
- Panel questioned the feasibility of the building's western edge due to its proximity to the gas station and code requirements.
- The AODA parking spaces were considered too far away from the lobby.
- Units on the third and fourth floors without any setbacks from Highway 7 were considered undesirable.

Sustainability

- Panel advised to be mindful of the north western winds and provide better pedestrian condition through architectural mitigation and reducing the travel distance between the building and public transit stop.