

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting 81 – May 28, 2020

The Design Review Panel was held online on Thursday, May 28, 2020 over Microsoft Teams Virtual Platform.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice-Chair)

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

John Tassiopoulos, WSP Canada Group Ltd

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Absent

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Amy Roots, VMC Urban Design

Nancy Tuckett, Development Planning

Mary Caputo, Development Planning

David Marcucci, Policy Planning

Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Urban Design

Shirin Rohani, Urban Design

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design

Shirley Marsh, Urban Design

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

Sheldon Levitt disclosed conflict of interest with item two on the Agenda.

Margaret Briegmann disclosed conflict of interest with both items on the Agenda.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting Minutes for April 30, 2020 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

180 Steeles Avenue West – Mizrahi Developments

Architects: Core Architects

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Please comment on the massing and scale of each development in relation to each other, to the existing commercial uses, the established neighbourhood to the north and the future intensification vision of Yonge and Steels Corridor Secondary plan.
2. Please comment on the ground floor layout and the circulation network of each development and their potential to establish a cohesive, connected and successful urban public realm.

Overview

Presentation

- Panel commended the applicant for the comprehensive presentation package.

Site Organization and Coordination with the Adjacent Properties

- Panel felt that the plan is not well-coordinated with the adjacent properties to the east and west and that the success of the development depends on the connection of the roads and open spaces between the different development.
- Panel strongly encouraged the applicant to coordinate the development with the adjacent owners. In particular, Panel stressed that the success of the east-west road depends on its continuity across the different development sites.
- Panel suggested exploring the option to create a shared north-south road with 100 Steeles Avenue West as it would free up space at the ground level and create opportunities to consolidate resources and improve the built-form.
- Panel urged the applicant to reconsider the location of the back-of-house uses fronting onto major public spaces, particularly at the north-west corner of the site where future park has been identified in Secondary Plan.
- While Panel acknowledged the limitations of the site, it urged the applicant to organize the site to optimize the micro-climate conditions in the open spaces.

Open Space and the Public Realm

- Considering the density of the development, the amount of open space is insufficient, and what exists is disconnected. Opportunities should be sought to provide more open space and to consolidate and connect open spaces.
- Panel noted it was important to provide a variety of experiences, for example, a quiet mews parallel to Steeles Avenue. The pedestrian experience on the secondary east-west streets should be different from the pedestrian experience on Steeles Avenue.
- Panel thought that the experience along the north-south road street could be improved by creating variations in the built form, using the lobbies to create focal points, reconsidering the distribution of retail, and improving the delineation between the retail and residential parts.
- Panel considered that more community activation was needed to bring life to the middle of the site.

Comments

Site Organization and Coordination with Adjacent Properties

- There must be complete coordination, in the form of a block plan, with the properties to the east and west. The coordination should inform the distribution of the built form and open spaces.
- A major priority for the coordination is to connect the east-west road between the sites, as its success depends on this continuity.

- There will be benefits for having the north-south road shared between the two developments at the boundaries of the site; more area at the ground level could be dedicated to community activities and playgrounds, and the central north-south spine could be reconfigured as a pedestrian mews.
- The central north-south street does not have to continue all the way to the north and can terminate at the east-west road to create a more useable public realm and provide a softer transition between the retail and the residential uses.
- Panel encouraged the applicant to consolidate the loading and parking access functions to minimize the area they occupy at-grade and provide more opportunities for useable open spaces.
- The shadow study shows that virtually all the open spaces, including the POPS, are in shadow all day except at noon. Even for the retail experience, this may not be enough. The applicant should seek to optimize sun exposure within the limitations.
- Panel commended the clarity of hierarchy and relationship between the functional road B and the frontage of road A.
- Panel was concerned that without proper coordination, the east and west edges of the site might become a mismatch of service areas creating problematic edge conditions, when there is great potential if the design is coordinated.

Massing and Architecture

- Panel felt that the proposal does not provide a variety of experiences and that the overall simplicity is missing a hierarchy of scale and interest.
- The applicant should create a variety of smaller-scale experiences within the large-scale architectural framework.
- The podiums of buildings 1 and 2 are very long creating a very homogeneous distribution of retail. They could benefit from more breaks and changes; building articulation in the lobby areas is one of the possible means to achieve more variation.
- The lobbies in building 1 and 2 should either be combined into one lobby or be broken into two completely separate lobbies.
- Considering potential long-term changes to the future of retail, consider how the retail spaces may be reconfigured if there is not enough demand.
- The configuration of retail spaces should include patio spaces for the restaurants.

Open Space and the Public Realm

- Panel felt that the development is lacking useable/programmable open space relative to the proposed density. Panel suggested reconfiguring/removing the townhouses at the north edge along Royal Palm Drive, and changing the courtyard turn-arounds, which occupy too much precious area to be used for only servicing, to open spaces for the developments.
- By coordinating the design with neighbouring properties, there is potential to expand and combine the POPS spaces with POPS on the adjacent properties.
- The POPS act more as private open spaces than publicly accessible spaces and need to be reconfigured to have public frontages.

- Open spaces at the ground level need to have community-oriented functions to be activated.
- The north-west corner is adjacent to one of the parks in the Secondary Plan, but it contains back-of-house uses. The program should be re-examined; replacing services with active uses more suitable as a frontage to park.
- Since the proposed roads are private, they provide more freedom to work with the edges to contribute to the retail experience, and the applicant should make better use of this opportunity.

100 Steeles Avenue West – Westdale Properties & Dream Development

Architects: Quadrangle Architects

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Please comment on the massing and scale of each development in relation to each other, to the existing commercial uses, the established neighbourhood to the north and the future intensification vision of Yonge and Steeles Corridor Secondary plan.
2. Please comment on the ground floor layout and the circulation network of each development and their potential to establish a cohesive, connected and successful urban public realm.

Overview

Site Organization and Coordination with the Adjacent Properties

- Panel emphasized that it was critical that the applicant coordinate the design with the neighbours to the east and west and consider the whole corridor in their thinking. The coordinated approach should be applied to overall streets and block patterns, and to the optimization of services to avoid redundant or repeating elements.
- Panel encouraged the applicant to reconsider the extensive use of turn-around facilities and instead make use of the streets with lay-by areas. Where turn-around facilities cannot be avoided, cover them with useable amenity space.
- Panel suggested that the location of the service areas should be reconsidered to reduce the occurrence of opaque frontages, especially where they are facing the neighbours' property frontages.

Massing and Architecture

- The relationship between towers could be improved by staggering; this reorganization should be considered in the context of a block plan.

- Panel felt that the podiums are too tall relative to the proposed right-of-way width and should be lowered for a more comfortable space.
- The commercial block's lack of design is problematic, Panel stressed that consideration must be provided for its design framework to provide context for the entire development.
- The façade treatments require more articulation and differentiation.

Open Spaces and the Public Realm

- Panel expressed that there is little open space for the density proposed.
- Panel suggested consolidating open spaces to create fewer larger open spaces to maximize the potential for sun exposure and connect them across the blocks.

Comments

Site Organization and Coordination with Adjacent Properties

- There is a critical need for coordination with future developments in the adjacent properties, especially with 180 Steeles Avenue West. The most critical aspects to be coordinated include the east-west service road, which must be integrated with the adjacent properties, and the width, programming and design of the POPS on the north side.
- As part of the coordination with 180 Steeles Ave West, a shared road should be considered at the joint property line.
- The current organization of the services sacrifices open space for servicing; the north turn-around spaces could be eliminated while keeping the service function; the residential drop-off for the south-east block could be moved to the main north-south street as lay-by spaces; the turn-around space could then be minimized or covered with a useable roof above. Alternatively, shared underground servicing between the buildings could help tighten the road network and free-up valuable space at-grade.
- While the adjacent properties may redevelop in near future, consideration should be given to their existing condition specifically the interface with the church to the east, which is facing the proposed service uses on the site.
- Panel suggested to consider curving the north-south road towards west after entering the site to provide a shared right-of-way with the neighbour and create an opportunity for a more substantial public realm on both sites.

Massing and Architecture

- While they are apart 25m, Towers 1 and 2 are very close to each other when considering their heights. More offset would improve this condition.
- Exploring the built form of the commercial block will provide a better understanding of the development as a whole. As part of this exploration, there must be consideration of the west edge of the commercial block, which is shown with a party-wall on the property line.
- More conceptual 3d massing studies are needed to show the overall impact of the development on the site.

- The 6-storey podium of the north blocks seems high for transitioning to the park; 3-4 storeys would be more appropriate to acknowledge the residential character.
- Architectural articulation is required to reduce the perceived volume and bulk of the buildings.
- While the architectural language of the building is completely different, there is insufficient response to local conditions on the ground such as the POPS edge.
- The frontages towards the future north street are not resolved as frontages to a local street.
- On the south block, a more substantial transition is required between the retail and residential uses at-grade.

Open Space and Public Realm

- There is little open space in the development considering the proposed density. One approach is to expand and enhance the POPS at the north of the site along the future boulevard.