

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 84 – September 24, 2020

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

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Absent

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

John Tassiopoulos, WSP Canada Group Ltd

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Shahzad Davoudi-Strike, Urban Design

Shirin Rohani, Urban Design

Misha Bereznyak, Urban Design

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design

Shirley Marsh, 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 was declared among the present Panel members.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for July 30, 2020, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

8188 Yonge Street – Constantine and Trulife

Architect: Z01

Review: 2nd Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

How successful is the new proposal:

- In its response to the neighbouring low-rise residential context, on Uplands Avenue and Helen Street?
- In terms of site organization, massing and architectural expression?
- In creating an urban and fine-grained street wall along Yonge Street?

Overview

Overall

- Panel thanked the applicant for the compelling presentation, provided detailed drawings, and responses to the previous DRP comments in 2016.

Building Typologies

- Panel appreciated the proposed massing and block structure and found it very dynamic and very responsive to the context; however, it recommended not adhering to the symmetry of the design at the expense of the functionality of the internal layout.

Landscape and Grading

- The grading of the POPS and the mid-block connection should respect the neighbouring properties. At the proposed concept, the south-west corner of the POPS is roughly one meter higher than the residential property to the west.
- Panel found the entrance to the POPS from Yonge street very inviting; however, the northern entrance on Upland Avenue feels more like a private entrance and not inviting.
- The ambition and the different design ideas proposed for the POPS seems too large for the relatively small space. Panel expressed skepticism regarding the functionality and contribution of ornamental metal panels.
- Panel advised to review/refine the arrival and termination points of the midblock connection into the POPS.
- Panel advised looking into the possibility of consolidating the private amenity spaces at the ground level, on one side of the mid-block connection.

Architecture

- Panel advised the applicant to simplify the design, both in architecture and in the use of materials and be mindful of future value engineering.
- The practicality and functionality of the ground floor were questioned, with regards to moving, loading and circulation for the south portion of the building.
- The ground floor units along Helen Avenue were considered too small for having two entrances. Ensure the street entrances are not compromised and consider how it would impact the street frontage.
- Retail presence along Yonge street was questioned. The façade does not advertise as a retail façade. The retail canopies need to be included as part of the street wall along the Yonge street and into the midblock connection. Panel recommended reducing or removing the integrated symmetrical design in favour of a unique retail frontage.
- The architectural language of the archway is foreign to the rest of the development; Panel recommended the architect to draw from the existing language for the design of the entrance feature.

Comments

Overall

- Panel commended the comprehensive approach to the site and the improvements in the project from the last Panel meeting and appreciated the effort and detail put in the presentation and the clear communication of the scheme and the changes from the last iteration.
- Panel felt that the project was full of ideas, almost to an overwhelming degree, and that it may be made more successful by focusing on a couple of very strong ideas and creating a stronger hierarchy of ideas.

Contextual Fit of the Building

- The building fits well into the surrounding context, and the built-form transition to the lower-scale residential generally works well and will feel more natural as more development takes place in the area.
- Panel applauded the general massing of the project and its ambition for creating connectivity and permeability.

Podium and Towers Composition

- The 7-storey podium between the tower may be too tall to create the desired relation to grade; a 5-storey would be preferable, and the lost density may be regained in an 11th storey.
- The building may be too small for two towers, as the scheme creates issues in the higher levels; perhaps the building could be simplified and treated as a large podium, eliminating the opening in the middle.
- Alternatively, Panel suggested looking at giving more emphasis to the gap, e.g. by indenting that area.

General Site Design

- The site plan is suffering from the symmetry: the private amenity spaces are split unnecessarily, as spaces both are rather small. The applicant should consider shifting the mid-block connection north to consolidate them; this will also allow it to terminate at the POPS, which now is a little offset, and will help rationalize the ground floor activities.
- Panel suggested that there may be too many different site elements and recommended identifying the most important ones to bullet-proof the design so that it can withstand future value-engineering and eliminate concerns about the future cost of maintenance.

Mid-Block Connection

- The entrance to the mid-block connection is a very inviting opening on Yonge Street, but the entrance from Uplands Avenue feels like a private garden, and it is not inviting.
- It's not clear how the mid-block will provide value, considering it connects to a low-density area.
- To support permeability, there should be a clear narrative about why people would use the mid-block connection – as a shortcut, for leisure, shopping etc. – to provide meaning and drive the design. At 80 m, the connection is long, but it could work if it is framed and supported by programming.
- Panel felt that the big gesture that starts at the arch and the grand promenade does not end in a significant manner. There needs to be an arrival place in the courtyard where you know you have transitioned from the more public space near Yonge Street, and further differentiation from the residents' amenity spaces.
- The area within the courtyard feels too wide and open, in contrast to the transition from Yonge Street.
- The termination of the connection from Yonge Street at the POPS should be resolved to properly 'catch the energy' from Yonge Street.

POPS

- The POPS, with the meandering paths and lack of sitting spaces, is currently not designed to encourage staying.
- There should be a more natural integration of the POPS with the east-west connection.
- The POPS has the potential to be very successful and serve both the public and the residents of the project but should be designed to allow passive enjoyment and sitting.
- The scale of the POPS does not afford the idea of a forest with meandering paths, and the interface with the neighbour does not address potential privacy issues.

Metal Elements

- Panel had doubts about the necessity of the metal screens throughout the site. In the passage, the elements are counterproductive since that area should be an integral part of Yonge Street.
- Panel raised a concern about the potential of the metal elements to create glare issues.

Servicing

- Vehicular movements may not work well as they seem to be in conflict with people walking
- Some functional issues seem not to be resolved yet, e.g. getting from the moving bay to the south tower.
- Three lobbies are necessary, but it is not clear that access for deliveries and drop-offs works or that the one parking spot for deliveries is enough. Consider making use of the indoor-outdoor connection to make the need to cross the site (e.g. to pick up a pizza delivery) a feature instead of using internal corridors.

Grading

- The rationale for the proposed grade difference at the west edge is not clear, since there is no underground parking and it only creates an unnecessary ramp from Yonge to the rear. Removing the grade difference will also make the private amenity spaces more functional and clear.
- Panel raised a concern regarding the grading condition at the west edge of the site that it was not accurately represented and could result in overland flooding.

Architectural Expression

- The massing of the building is very dynamic and responsive to the context. However, the envelope expression, in materiality and colour, does not support the massing or allow it to be expressed to the full extent. Panel encouraged the applicant to approach the architectural expression with a more holistic view and to edit out and tone down some of the elements while maintaining the important parts.
- Panel suggested a few specific approaches to simplifying the building:
 - Consider eliminating some of the schemes;

- Examine if the additional materiality of the balconies soffits is needed;
- Eliminate some of the heavier stone and open up the amenity spaces with curtain wall;
- Use the architectural language shown in the evocative view of the terraces from above or the language of the west elevation as a guide for the language larger portions of the building.
- Panel suggested looking at lightening the building as it was perceived as quite dark.
- The breakdown to architectural schemes A, B, C good and strong move, but can be mixed and matched more between the north and south buildings.
- The material palette is clear and consistent but does not work with the entry arch element, which introduces foreign material and form that are not echoed elsewhere in the site.

Retail

- Panel appreciated the effort to create a strong retail frontage but was concerned that the architectural elements do not advertise it as such, lacking projecting wall signs that are seen in all directions. Architectural integration may be prioritized too much over the prominence of retail, and the overall architecture of the building may be too strong and should not be brought down to the retail level.
- Panel suggested that the retail canopies should be integrated into the street wall.
- The spill-over of the retail into the area and the arch are good. There are similar existing examples that work well, even in narrower and longer conditions.

General Concerns

- The small size of the units at the ground level facing the streets may not work with two entrances, and it is important to ensure that direct entries from the street are not compromised. If they cannot work with two entrances, the units should retain direct street access.
- Panel raised a concern that the typical 9' ceiling height will not be enough to accommodate the transfers required at the terraces.