

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 88 – February 25, 2021

The Design Review Panel was held online on Thursday, January 28, 2021, over Microsoft Teams Virtual Platform.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

John Tassiopoulos, WSP Canada Group Ltd

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Absent

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Christina Bruce, VMC Program

Amy Roots, Development Planning, VMC Program

Jennifer Cappola-Logullo, Development Engineering, VMC Program

Gerardo Paez Alonso, Parks, VMC Program

Gaston Soucy, Urban Design, VMC Program

Natalie Wong, Development Planning, VMC Program

Musa Deo, Transportation, VMC Program
Alex Lee, Development Engineering, VMC Program
Cory Gray, Parks, VMC Program
Shahrzad 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

Sheldon Levitt declared a conflict of interest with item 2 of the Agenda.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for January 28, 2021, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

Block E2 – SmartCentres

Architect: Hariri Pontarini Architects
Landscape Architect: MHBC Landscape Architecture
Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Is the overall site organization, including land use distribution, circulation, loading and servicing access appropriate in relation to the character of the public realm and mews?
2. Of the options presented, what would be an ideal use for the space at the north-east corner of the site, east of the mews?
3. How successful is the design of the podium in addressing the context, massing, and public realm interface?

Overview

- **Overall Presentation** - Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive and thorough package and presentation.
- **Site Organization and Context** - The podium massing, ground floor uses, and site design seem to be driven more by the privately-owned publicly accessible space (POPs) than by the urban park and surrounding context which should not be the case. The podium massing, ground floor uses, and site design should be revised to address the surrounding context as a primary consideration before addressing the POPs.
- **Open Space** - The proposed character, program and location of the POPs should be reconsidered as either an extension of the urban park to the north or a more intimate courtyard with greener features and programming that juxtaposes that of the larger park to the north.
- **Architecture** - The project has a grand scale with nicely sculpted towers and good materiality but is missing a middle ground of refinement that connects the towers to the podium at a pedestrian scale. The podium and ground floor designs should be revisited as these will help to better inform the correct scale, use and organization of that middle ground which will in turn contribute to the domestic character and humanity that a residential project like this should have.

The podium size should be taller to provide better containment, define and improve the overall edge conditions of the surrounding context.

- **Mews and Servicing** - Either consolidate access and relocate most of the servicing below grade to help improve the pedestrian character of the mews or make the mews function more as a service-oriented area with less pedestrian amenities and connections.
- **North-east Notch** - Whether it becomes an open space, commercial or residential use, the north-east notch design needs to feel intentional and have a unique purpose and character that seamlessly integrate its design with the development to the east.

Comments

General

- Panel commended the applicant on a thorough presentation and well presented package which allows for detailed comments to be made on the project's merits and items of concern.
- Panel recommended adding more concept sketches in future presentations as these would help to better explain the thought process.

Overall Site Organization, Uses and Context

- Panel recognized that the required ground floor uses, spaces and programs are provided, but felt their distribution is creating problems with the quality and relationships between them and the surrounding context. For example, the wind row planting that were presented suggests that the northwest corner might not be the best place to put the open space.

- Panel commented that the proposed trellis structure is creating a boundary that suggests a private open space. This perception is enhanced by the grade change and resulting steps which contribute to a sense of dislocation and segregation between the public right-of-way and the POPs.
- The mid-block connection might represent a good opportunity to break up the proposed open space into two different spaces with distinct characters. Panel recommended studying the possibility of separating the north and the south buildings as this would help with transitions between a taller podium at Highway 7 and the New Park Place frontage. This could help generate a more interesting open space design with a stronger differentiation and identity between the north and the south.
- With the understanding that the demand for more parks and open spaces is increasing with current development trends in the VMC, Panel believes that the size and character of the proposed POPs might not be the most suitable for this location and a softer, park-like, greener space that better connects with the residents should be explored at this site. Other alternatives to study include creating a more intimate space by flipping the buildings so that the space is contained as a courtyard connected with the mews and the proposal to the east; or relocating it so that it faces the park to the north where it should get good sun in the summer and early shoulder season afternoons and provide year round support to potential park activities that might spill onto New Park Place.
- Panel noted that the proposed POPs is not intimate, feels bland and seems to be depending on the success of the surrounding retail space. It should be designed to be active and successful based on its own merits rather than relying on adjacent uses which should only be complementary.
- The proposed POPs could benefit from an L-shaped form that wraps around the north-west corner and runs along New Park Place all the way to the north-east notch. This strategy would also promote a strong retail use along that edge.
- Panel questioned the appropriate size, extent, location, and accessibility of the retail units as they seem to be mostly removed from the street. This could improve by narrowing the open space and widening the podium to give a stronger street presence to the retail units. Similarly, the ground floor should be designed so that it has a finer physical grain that translates to a more extensive and diverse list of uses that is more intimate than the proposed large retail spaces.
- Panel also mentioned the importance of having “eyes on the street” throughout the public realm and other open spaces as this will contribute to the desired domestic and intimate quality that future residents expect.

Architecture, Built Form and Massing

- Panel agreed that the project has a rich and variable combination of grain and materiality that successfully combine the terracotta cladding system with the white frit pattern on the glass balconies.
- The location and staggering of the towers work well to allow for sun penetration and clear views throughout.

- The detailing and refinement at the top and bottom of the towers was well received by Panel, particularly the feathering gesture at the top of the towers and how it is mirrored towards the base.
- Panel mentioned that the fritted glass allows for creative opportunities that should go beyond applying it equally as wallpaper throughout and recommended that it could be used to help with each façade's orientation to control solar gain. This would contribute to a more energy efficient tower and more visual variety.
- Panel commented that the project is unsuccessfully attempting to frame both a very large right-of-way along Highway 7 and a wide park to the north with a very limited amount of street frontage. Panel recommended adding more podium frontage along the edges both vertically and horizontally to match the neighbour to the east as this would be beneficial to effectively frame these vast contextual voids and allow for residential units to face and animate the streets and open spaces.

Mews and Services

- There is a clear idea of where the front and back in this project are and that the mews is the back where service activities should occur. With that in mind, it might not make sense to have the location of the two residential tower entrances and the pedestrian mid-block connection along the mews. Consider relocating the residential entrances so that they face the other streets and eliminating the mid-block pedestrian connection altogether from the service-oriented mews.
- Servicing could be consolidated at the south building to allow for at grade residential units to appear along the north side of the mews. The additional required service functions could happen at the parking level underground.

North-East Notch

- Panel observed that the mews and the north-east notch have the potential to be great intimate and special places if designed carefully and with attention to detail.
- The preliminary proposals at the north-east notch make sense as either an infill building with zero lot line setbacks or as an open space. Either way, this would require careful coordination with the neighbour to the east as this prominent corner should not feel like two separate developments.
- Regardless of the resulting height and design, there should be a limiting distance agreement to allow the east neighbour to have openings above.
- Any proposed residential or non-residential uses in this property would need to be carefully looked at as there does not seem to be room for parking, servicing, or loading.
- If the design ends up being an open space, it should have a public access easement and a specific program that complements the park to the north.

7700 Bathurst Street Phase 1, The Torgan Group and CentreCourt

Architect: Kirkor Architects and Planners
Landscape Architect: LandArtDesing Landscape Architects Inc.
Review: 1st Review

Introduction

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2. Of the options presented, what would be an ideal use for the space at the north-east corner of the site, east of the mews?
3. How successful is the design of the podium in addressing the context, massing and public realm interface?

Overview

- **Overall Presentation:** Panel thanked the applicant for a thorough and thought-provoking presentation, appreciating the challenges and the chronology impacting the design
- **Site Organization and Context:** Existing and future context should be considered in the siting of the towers as to not preclude the on-going Secondary Plan, to create better connectivity between the development and the Mall, and to establish comfortable and safe pedestrian connections and effective vehicular circulation.
- **North-south road:** It is imperative to understand the location and character of the north-south road in order to determine the arrangement of the built and open space environment, the grading and the overall orientation of the project.
- **Open space:** A hierarchy of open spaces should be established promoting publicly accessible open spaces programmed in response to what is needed in the area. Prioritize the investment in the open space based on the pedestrian desire line (s).
- **Architecture:** Form, architectural expression and materiality should respond to future and existing context, in order to contribute to a vibrant, urban environment.

Comments

General

- A better integration, consolidation and future planning of all phases should be considered
- The siting has considered best practices and the alignment of the buildings is sensible in its framing Centre street and one of the main entrances of the Promenade Mall
- The north-south street should be incorporated in the park design to establish a coordinated and continuous streetscape and landscape design

Overall Site Organization

- The vehicular organization of the overall masterplan may fundamentally change when the opportunity in the North-South connection is considered through the site. Integrating the north-south road into the design may create continuity of open spaces, a stronger relationship between the POPS and the park by hosting some of the services and parking
- Surface parking should be treated in a more urban manner, either as lay-by or moved below grade to allow for greater surface area to be dedicated to active uses
- Continuity of pedestrian experience through the overall site should be established as well as a well-connected and convenient vehicular network that provides easy access to parking, retail, and residential entrances

Relation to Existing and Future Context

- Considering that the Secondary Plan hasn't been finalized yet and as such the context might change. The proposed retail should better relate to the existing and future context of the Promenade Centre.
- The siting and shape of the towers should consider the future context and allow for the space required for the north-south road
- A more holistic design perspective is required to better relate to the future character of the street network and thus create an urban environment; every piece of this development make sense on its own but not as a whole, as a whole it creates a more suburban character

Landscape Design

- Establish a hierarchy of landscaped spaces and prioritize the location of publicly accessible and actively programmed areas where they have the most opportunity to attract the public, such as the north-west corner
- Edit the programming of the open spaces to avoid vast open spaces that are not well-used and possibly not contributing positively to the rest of the development
- Considering that the north-south road will be cutting through the park, attention to streetscape design is necessary to create continuity between the future west and east part of park, through visual cues and materiality.
- Currently the park offers some relief, however it lacks connectivity. It would be beneficial for some of the landscape elements to pull through the pavement and for active uses to be more present on the ground floor relating to the park
- The park can be transformed to a more active park hosting programs necessary to serve the neighborhood

Relationship to the street

- Explore whether a stricter selection of publicly accessible open spaces can benefit the condition created along the public street frontages. An attempt has been made to celebrate the corner while maintaining a public frontage on North Promenade, this will potentially lead to a conflict with the frontages onto POPS. Stricter selection of public access may allow private open spaces to flourish
- De Serra is a very successful pedestrian boulevard and the project is successfully responding to its mass with retail however amenity could better frame that street and create more of a placeholding, active, sheltered area
- The condition on Center St. has been upgraded; however, proposing units on Center St. might not be successful

Architectural Expression

- The Phase1 block plays a gateway role within the overall site and Promenade redevelopment as such the buildings at the north-west corner of the block should command that gateway
- A more consistent holistic approach to massing and materiality is necessary to allow for the development to read as one concise project
- Examine the relationship between the tower and the podiums and review the form and shaping of the towers. Though the rectangular shaping is evident in the surrounding context however the symmetry of the square may be softer plus varying from the rectangular shape can create interest along Centre St.
- Explore expanding the podiums to offer more active frontages along the two sides by hosting waste storage and servicing inside so they wouldn't impact the relationship of the podium and the open space as much.
- Architectural expression of the podiums can be softer, borrowing elements from the proposed commercial building
- Allow the Architecture to be influenced by the solar orientation. The language of balconies and fins should be very purposeful relating to the orientation of each facade
- Transparency should be enhanced to ensure comfortable and safe pedestrian connectivity along the active frontages and especially where the change in grade is negotiated between the street and the POPS