

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 85 – October 29, 2020

The Design Review Panel was held online on Thursday, October 29, 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.

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

John Tassiopoulos, WSP Canada Group Ltd

Absent

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Amy Roots, VMC Urban Design

Gaston Soucy, VMC Urban Design

Natalie Wong, VMC Development Planning

Eugene Fera, Development Planning

Chris Cosentino, Development Planning

Carol Birch, Development Planning

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 conflict of interest for items 1 and 3.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for September 24, 2020, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

7800 Jane Street, Vaughan Metropolitan Centre

Architect: Quadrangle Architects

Landscape Architect: The MBTW Group

Review: 2nd Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How successful is the overall building program and design in responding to, and integrating with, the surrounding context?
2. How effective is the proposed public realm in relation to the building's ground floor intended uses, and in aligning with the VMC Secondary Plan and the VMC Streetscape and Open Space Plan policies and recommendations?

Overview

- **Overall Presentation** – Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive presentation that addressed and responded to previous DRP comments.

- **Site Organization and Context** – Panel noted that the programming, design and location of the proposed building frontages offer good animation potential throughout the block which will help serve the surrounding context in a positive manner.
- **Streetscape** – Panel appreciated an overall landscape strategy that provides a great deal of amenity and beauty to the streetscapes that surround the building but emphasized that more greening along Highway 7 and at residential entrances would improve the quality of the public realm.
- **Architecture** – Panel recognized the efforts to improve the design of the proposed breezeway through the inclusion of more suitable active uses along its frontages and the incorporation of the serpentine design element as a wind mitigation strategy. However, Panel still expressed concerns regarding the design, and had the following recommendations:
 - Additional strategies such as massaging the façades and/or articulation of the flanking walls should be studied to contribute in minimizing potentially adverse wind tunneling impacts along the breezeway.
 - Carefully study the signage and identity strategy as this will be crucial to the success of the breezeway. Consider incorporating this into the wind mitigation design strategy.
 - Consider flexibility in the design. The proposed serpentine option might not be flexible enough to accommodate simple changes in the future to the potential distribution and programming of the ground floor spaces.
- **Programming and Uses** – Panel recommended allowing for the overall ground floor design to be as flexible as possible to accommodate other programs and uses in the event that retail viability does not work as originally intended. e.g. workshare spaces.
- **Public Art** – Panel noted that there is an opportunity for the incorporation of public art to take advantage of the iconic nature of the site, particularly at the corner of Jane Street and Highway 7.

Comments

Site Organization

- Good approach on the dual scale of the project, in recognizing the importance of the site, anchoring the corner and creating a grand, iconic gateway while addressing a more intimate human scale at the public realm level.
- The approach to look at options and strategies in response to the flood plain issue is smart, as it allows for the project to evolve and move forward in a viable manner.
- The dramatic grade change at the corner of Jane Street and Highway 7 presents challenges but also opportunities. Look for examples of projects with similar conditions that improve the human scale and fine grain nature of the space by providing more intimate seating, planting and other elements that allow for a better transition in scale and invite for people to use the space for something more than just passing by. e.g. steps that transform into seating, more benches around planters.

- The potential to continue the midblock pedestrian connection west to the Millway Avenue subway access is very promising and should be represented as a recommendation in the context plan.
- The location of the main office and residential lobby entrances is good as they create points of interest that activate the corners.
- The undulating façade along the parkade west wall is creating an interesting articulation that softens its presence on the future north-south local road.
- The design approach of adding townhouse frontages and residential lobby entrances along the future north-south local road, as well as creating a pedestrian friendly boulevard that includes trees and planters, is very positive as it does not read as a service road.
- Concentrating the service, loading and parking ramp access areas to the central core of the buildings is a good move that allows for a better public realm. But these areas seem tight and might not function as well in practice.

Landscape

- The overall landscape approach throughout the site shows a high-level ambition and thoughtfulness - particularly along the Apple Mill Road boulevard and at the rooftop terrace.
- The rooftop amenity terrace resolution is very rich and includes a significant amount of planting which is good. The programming and inclusion of outdoor workstation areas is thoughtful, especially during these times when outdoor space is becoming so valuable.
- The landscape design along Highway 7 could be greener to reinforce the strategy of a threshold to Edgeley Pond and Park. Study the inclusion of additional planting and trees even if through multi-level, raised planters, if underground slabs and/or the flood plain issues represent obstacles.
- Pending resolution of the flood plain issue, Option 2, which assumes that the flood plain problems are resolved, is a more favourable option as it allows for a better relationship between the building's ground floor and the adjacent public realm. Nevertheless, and in the context of both options, use a similar lens to create equal opportunities for pedestrians when it comes to design and the amount of seating.

Architecture

- The overall design successfully unifies and incorporates a variety of massing forms, materials and articulations with free flow elements that adapt successfully into the landscape.
- The residential lobbies could benefit from the incorporation of canopies that help strengthen the human scale, protect people from the elements and create stronger gestures that accentuate each building's point of entrance.
- The breezeway is an important move that brings permeability to the site. It needs to be inviting, while successfully functioning at a human scale and through all the seasons. Explore opportunities to adapt the space through the year, including possibilities for enclosure during the winter months.

- The articulation of the façade wrapping down onto the breezeway works well in signaling where the entrance is, but it might have a counter effect by amplifying the wind and generating a wind tunnel.
- The design of the breezeway interiors does not seem to provide enough wind mitigation. Adding more articulation and breaks to the edges might help to alleviate the wind tunnel effect.
- The proposed serpentine design element inside the breezeway works well from an aesthetic point of view but does not seem to allow for flexibility when it comes to the use of the space.
- The inclusion of more retail and other active uses along the breezeway is a positive move that will help animate the space. However, it is a challenging space that will require more thought when it comes to the design and scale of the entrances, signage and wind mitigation strategies. Consider making the entrances taller and incorporating signage to their design to give them a stronger presence in the space.
- Consider incorporating CPTED principles when designing the breezeway elements to ensure that new problems are not created as existing ones are solved. e.g. hiding points when proposing entrances, signage and wind mitigation strategies.
- Consider deleting the east side of the parking aisle through the parkade above to create a nudge that allows light to flow all the way from the rooftop amenity to the breezeway.

Public Art

- There is an excellent opportunity to incorporate a public art element at the corner of Jane Street and Highway 7 that helps the project transition to an at-grade, pedestrian scale that invites people to stay in, and enjoy the space.

7818 Dufferin Street – Enirox Group

Architect: WZMH Architects
 Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Does the site organization and proposed built form fits well within its immediate context and the greater context of the neighborhood?
2. How successful is the proposed public realm along the streets and interior to the site?

Overview

Site Organization and Contextual Fit

- With regards to the contextual fit, there was support for the design analysis at the macro level with respect to built form height progression from North to South, but

at the micro level the design is inconsistent with the big picture; the townhouse element along Dufferin St does not fit into that idea. Vehicular access and traffic were another concern for the townhouses. Panel unanimously questioned the appropriateness of them.

- Panel also remarked that the way development has addressed the corner of Dufferin and Centre is weak and a stronger presence is needed.
- The podium heights in particular don't support the notion of a vibrant, comfortable setting; the massing is too bulky to allow for a pleasant environment, not only within the center of the block, but more importantly, around the edges.
- Panel questioned the architectural character of the podium and asked for a more compatible architectural language between the podium and tower element.

Public Realm

- There is too much investment in the courtyard and not enough given to the edges of the site; the edges on Dufferin and Centre need to be more urban, more transparent, and more accessible to the pedestrians along the public rights-of-way. The edges to the West and the North need to be given more energy and investment so that they are actual places in and of themselves.
- The diagonal connection should be either reconsidered or modified to ensure that it connects to a significant place and not a drop-off.
- Explore the hydro corridor as a potential future amenity that has a positive influence on the site, in terms of the treatment of the roadway and the screening elements themselves.
- Reconsider how the drop-off is located and related to the location of lobbies in the property. A discrete turn-around may not be required, as long as the drop-off areas are visible and within reasonable walking distances from the lobbies.

Comments

General

- There is clarity in the presentation materials. Panel applauded the good intentions and the good analysis of the greater context, but there is difficulty reconciling these with the reality of the context and the proposed design.

Comprehensive Approach

- The site and the adjacent properties are all designed individually. This approach doesn't follow the design guidelines for the corner, which envision a mid-block pedestrian connection. A more comprehensive block development, and coordination with the neighbours to the north is vitally important; in addition to vehicular connection to the site there should also be pedestrian connections to the courtyard(s) to the north.

Massing and Built Form

- The general massing arrangement is good. The west side of the site is the appropriate place for the greatest height, but Panel expressed concern about the

shadow impact on the courtyard and request the massing be redesigned to minimize this impact.

- The north bar building facing the site to the north will create an unfavourable condition due to its height. Reduce the height or find other means to improve the condition.
- On the south-east corner, while the shape is interesting, the sharp angles may be problematic with the views from window to window; a 90-degree connection would be preferable.
- At the south-east corner, Panel recommended to drop the height to 3 storeys and do terracing up to 6 storeys to open up the space at the pinch point.
- The building is complex, and a lot of the GFA is not good area. Could be improved by being simpler.
- The 12-storey podium on the south building is problematic. The move from 12 storeys to 25 storeys does not favour the tower. The 12 storey is too high for the podium and should be lowered; a 6-storey podium would work better and provide more sun in the courtyard.
- Revisit the proportions between the built form and the open space; a lower podium will allow to simplify the building with fewer step-backs.

Vehicular Access and Servicing

- The residential drop-off creates a lot of circuitous movement within site, is hard to find, and too removed from the lobbies and density. It is better to integrate drop-offs through lay-by parking spaces on the north and west roads
- If visitor parking for retail is underground, the access to the ramp is inconvenient and far too removed from it.
- Explore integrating services to reduce the frontage dedicated to servicing on the west service driveway.
- A traffic circle type treatment at north-west corner could allow for a turn-around and take the drop-off outside the outdoor amenity space. The ramp doesn't need to be close to the drop-off. The pick-up and drop-off could take place on the driveway and allow to strengthen the pedestrian treatment at edge of site.

General Site Organization

- While Panel appreciated the intent of the open space, they felt that it not well defined and is too big. It will be a high expense for the condominium to maintain it. The open space should be less in size but more meaningful in programming.
- The hockey stick part may provide an interesting opportunity to create a linear park. It's not clear why the diagonal is in the same direction as the site to the north; it would have been better to mirror the direction of the plans and have both diagonals connecting to that linear park. The tower is next to three hydro towers, and mirroring the plan will also provide more spacing from the hydro corridor.

Streets/Driveways at the North and West Edges of the Site

- Panel appreciated the thoughtfulness about Centre and Dufferin Streets as urban boulevards; however, there is lack of hierarchy and clear role for the new local

streets, and they feel more like back-of-house areas. Some of the landscaped space could be applied to these other streets, to create boulevards on the secondary streets.

- The design ignores the north street between the sites which is the most important east-west connection through the site. The design creates a canyon effect; the buildings should be at least 10 m from the property line to create a place that doesn't feel like a back alley both for the experience at-grade and the residents overlooking from their windows. It should have a pedestrian feel, with boulevard trees and with grade-related units rather than a blank wall. The whole building can be shifted southward closer to Centre Street to achieve that.
- The articulation of the two 'L's is challenging; maybe the north 'L' can be moved east towards Dufferin Street to make the west street a better place and allow for a boulevard. On the west street, street parking should be on the other side with a pedestrian connection along that edge and ground floor units should have a proper interface with separation from the street.

Interface with the Hydro Corridor

- The reality of the hydro corridor is worse than what is conveyed in the presentation. The corridor and Highway 407 are not well integrated into the city, and they should be visually and acoustically concealed but there is potential for future improvements of Hydro corridor and applicant should explore future connections.

Interface with Centre Street and Dufferin Street

- The open corner should be strengthened with a direct connection from the BRT station into the POPS and retail wrap around, the landscape treatment should also emphasize this particular connection. The retail should be concentrated at the square to reinforce it with activity.
- The viability of the retail on the site should be considered carefully. Hopefully, Centre street will be more viable with the introduction of the BRT but it is hard to imagine a pedestrian flow towards the Hydro corridor and the freeway, the retail on Centre Street may not be functional.
- Dufferin Street is not planned to change and feels like a highway; the viability of the retail on this street should also be considered with the understanding of these realities. This would also impact the appropriate landscape treatment.
- For the major streets, the landscape treatment is mostly huge swathes of lawn; instead of a permeable treatment to make the space less separating. While the retail won't be able to rely on pedestrian traffic, it would still be better to have more meaningful planting instead of a buffer.
- The gateway landmark piece works at the macro scale, but at micro level one expects a mass and instead there is a void. This is made even more significant as the podium facades facing the street are less appealing than the upper portions. The void, in combination with the enormity of the intersection, does not make an urban or inviting place; it is not supported by the retail, and there is danger of having empty retail or poor-quality shops.

The Courtyard Area

- While the diagonal connection is a big gesture, its promise is unfulfilled as it arrives at a drop-off area. Panel proposed a few possible approaches to resolve this: break the linear path to allow it to arrive at a significant place and create a more playful path, and/or relocate the proposed art piece at the end of the diagonal path.
- Panel suggested the applicant to identify if the courtyard is a public place or a private space as suggested by ground related uses.
- To make the courtyard lively, the at-grade units facing the courtyard should have direct access to it. Passive programming such as flexible seating areas for individuals and small groups is missing from the courtyard.
- The connection between the open space to the courtyard should be more urban, even if not necessarily fully paved.
- As the outdoor amenity area has good access to the late afternoon sun, the applicant should consider locating café-type retail in that area.
- Wind impact should be mitigated to ensure the courtyard is useable all year round.

The Townhouse Component

- Panel reiterated the importance of coordination with the neighbour to resolve the problems associated with this piece of land.
- The townhouse component does not fit the applicant's analysis, which shows increasing height and density when approaching south to Centre Street, as the townhouses are a tiny element adjacent to the large mid-rise block. The townhouse piece also doesn't work from a transportation perspective since the traffic to/from Dufferin Street will make the units inaccessible.

Architectural Expression

- The connection between the podium and tower is unsuccessful and feels like two different projects. There needs to be an interface and a sense of familiarity between the parts. The different languages don't relate to each other, and the podium doesn't act as a base.

7082 Islington Avenue - Phase 2 (Tower 3 &4) – Primont

Architect: Quadrangle

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How successful is the phase 2 proposal in its spatial relationship with the phase 1 development, the approved townhouses and the existing church?

2. Does the phase 2 proposal create a strong relationship to the overall public realm on Islington Avenue and the open space network interior to the site supporting more pedestrian movement and street life?

Overview

Spatial relationship to Phase one:

- Panel generally supported the overall design approach. However, they questioned the location and connectivity of amenity space to the lobby. Panel emphasized the importance of having a clear overall outdoor open space hierarchy between the amenity spaces in phase 1 and phase 2 and how they will be understood by residents within the overall development.
- Explore the relationship between the lower entry lobby and the area facing the church by introducing a two storey (additional) lobby or a landscaped pedestrian access into the site; to define that frontage and the character of the space next to the church.
- Explore the potential to combine the loading and the ramps in phase 2 with the phase 1 or relocate them to minimize the vehicular circulation in favour of public realm.

Public Realm

- The most significant amenity on this site is the ravine landscape to the west and south, and it's important to eliminate as many barriers between the residents' front door and that landscape amenity.
- The applicant should maximize the ravine's edge landscape by reducing the pavement within the roundabout and improving the relationship between the building frontages onto the walkway at the southern edge of the property. The walkway itself should be safe at all times through the principles of CPTED.
- The ramp to the underground parking should be relocated/combined to reduce the driveway and increase public open space.
- It's important to optimize and maximize the animated frontages of the site and to use the grade change to hide the elements that don't contribute to a lively building edge.

Comments

General

- Understanding the project requires more cross sections, especially at the interface with the church. The package could have benefited from a comprehensive plan between both phases, showing a composite view of the architecture and the landscape.
- While this is not in the scope of this phase, it would be desirable if there was a density exchange made with the townhouses to the south to open-up a view to the ravine.

- There is an opportunity to integrate the two courtyards and make them more cohesive.

Tower Separation

- The small separation of tower 4 from the south property line is problematic. The south wing of the base building should be moved north to achieve minimum 12.5 m tower separation from the property line.
- The zoning bylaw framework has towers 3 and 4 with a right-angle relationship. There is a question whether the increased dimension between the towers is more valuable than having clear long views to the north, it might be better to have a tighter corner relationship in favour of a better view.

Relationship with the Church

- There is ambiguity about what happens around the church. Currently, the area doesn't function as an outdoor space with the framing and the programming. Explore how the amenity space facing the church can connect to the lobby and to the ravine pathway and how it can create a public place.

The Trail

- The edge against the trail has a lot of opportunity, but the building is too close to the trail. The design should focus on this edge as an important frontage.
- Explore a secondary pathway providing access from the area behind the church to the ravine pathway
- Safety is critical on the trail next to the blank wall of the ramp.
- Clarify how the slope works: if it is level or if there is a retaining wall condition along the pathway.

The Courtyard

- The loading and underground ramp overwhelm the courtyard. Applicant should look to integrate them between the two project phases - two ramps for four towers are not needed. The only service area that should be separate for this phase is space for moving and deliveries.
- The drop-off is too generous, there is an opportunity to gain useable area south of the building by reducing parking spaces and relocating or consolidating elements of vehicular circulation; decreasing the amount of pavement while maintaining maneuverability.
- If the median is required it should be extended to the first entrance; if not, there is additional potential for reducing pavement.
- The landscaped space south of the courtyard could make a nice lookout point; There are no interior uses that are related to this space, but there is an opportunity to use it in a more active way.
- There should be more thinking about the landscape pattern within the overall site.

Amenity Spaces and Lobbies

- Create a story for the amenity spaces at the different levels, as they connect the public and private areas.
- Consider having the main entrance from the area facing the church to make the lobby more significant with a centralized two-storey lobby relating back to the lower portion . An additional stair could connect to a modest secondary pedestrian lobby on the corner.
- There is opportunity to extend the outdoor amenity area on the 4th level to the south to get closer to ravine and the woodlot.