

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting 79 – February 27, 2020

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday, January 30, 2020 in Committee Room 243, City Hall, 2141 Major MacKenzie Drive, Vaughan

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

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

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Absent

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

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

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

Christina Bruce, VMC Director

Amy Roots, VMC Urban Design

Gerardo Paez Alonso, VMC Parks Initiative

Jessica Kwan, VMC Planning

Cory Gray, VMC Parks Development
Carmella Marrelli, Development Planning
Mary Caputo, Development Planning
Frank Marzo, Policy 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 9:00 am with Paul Kulig in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Margaret Briegmann declared a conflict of interests via email.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting Minutes for January 30, 2020 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

400 and 7 Masterplan – Smart Centres REIT

Architects: Weston Williamson + Partners

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Please comment on the master plan's road network, block structure, parks and POPS distribution, building typologies and it's potential to create a successful vibrant urban environment setting precedents for future development within the forthcoming West 7 Secondary Plan?
2. Please comment on the built form interface along Highway 400 and Avenue 7 and opportunities for pedestrian permeability into the overall development from Avenue 7

Overview

Secondary Plan

- Panel thanked the applicant for the compelling presentation, quality of diagrams, sketches, and continued efforts in city building. They encouraged the applicant to fully engage with the Secondary Plan process collaborating with the City and stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive plan is developed for the entire area.

Building Typologies

- Panel acknowledges that there is a clarity in block structure of the master plan but asked the applicant to explore more diverse typologies in addition to tower in the park and tower on podium.
- The tower in the park idea is clear but it needs to be proven. Panel acknowledged the applicant's aspiration to create a positive edge along Highway 400, however recommended to re-examine the typology based on the findings of the noise study and if needed potentially flip the two typologies to ensure noise is fully mitigated within the site.
- For the edge along Highway 400, Panel was skeptical about the realities of the site. Panel used Highway 427 intersection with East and West Mall roads as an example and asked the applicant to consider the challenges of programming the open space along that edge, the required chain link fence and the MTO trench.
- Panel suggested a different approach can be a harder podium edge along Highway 400 using the 14m MTO setback to bury the parking. This allows the applicant to drop the heights on the more interior blocks transferring the density onto the blocks adjacent to Highway 400 where it has less impact on the proposed community.

Open Space Typologies and At-grade Experience

- Panel told the applicant to be courageous in their approach and noted that there is enough critical mass to create a self-sustaining neighbourhood with community supported uses such as daycare, places of worship, local library, etc. to activate the public realm during daytime
- In evaluating the size and programming of the park/open space, Panel referred to local residential intensification projects such as the Esplanade, Queens Quay west of Spadina and suburban intensification projects such as Markham Centre.
- Ensure there is a hierarchy of open space typologies; courtyards, streets and parks can create a network while each plays a different roll.
- Panel expressed skepticism over elevated publicly accessible courtyards and recommended to further study and test the typology to ensure its success as public realm.
- Re-evaluate the size of the courtyards in relation to the massing and height of the towers to ensure an appropriate proportion is achieved and residential units' access to sun light and privacy is not impacted, Panel felt that the courtyards are too small for the proposed massing.
- Panel appreciated the design departure from traditional suburban "lollypop" drop off areas in favour of a more urban access and servicing.

Comments

Site Organization, Building Typology

- Panel asked the applicant to further study the vertical challenges of the grade to better understand the transition and accessibility within the master plan.
- How to create an active public realm in the absence of retail was the question that Panel posed to the applicant, it is more than clear glazing, condo gym, or multi-purpose rooms that are empty most of the time. Panel really encouraged the applicant to explore other community-based uses to activate the street.
- While Panel appreciated the proposed character of the main spine as green street, they questioned the character of the Northview boulevard with proposed storage rooms. Northview Boulevard should be treated as the main address for the project with the proposed park facing it, strengthening the sense of arrival and servicing the entire precinct.
- Panel stressed the importance of phasing analysis for the success of the master plan. It is essential to set the stage with the right development block(s) and infrastructure at the early phases to ensure long term success.
- As the design is refined, the interfaces between buildings in Block A, B, J and I should be resolved, and the heights may need to be reduced to 6 to 8 storey mid-rise to create a balance between open space and massing in those blocks.

Open Space and Public Realm

- Panel questioned the porosity along Highway 400 and called the environment “undesirable”. However, if the MTO requirement for setbacks are revised, the edge provides opportunities for dog walk, skateboard park and other programs that are not noise sensitive.
- Panel questioned the size of the proposed park for 4000 units and called it insufficient by most parkland dedication calculations. They called for a hierarchy of open spaces with potentially another more intimate park on the south west corner of the site.
- Panel cautioned about the microclimate conditions of the proposed parks to ensure they receive ample sunlight. Also, to achieve the noise criterion of 55dB in the park the applicant may have to shift the park further west.
- For the tower in the park typology, Panel stressed the importance of properly designing the spaces in-between to avoid the failure of garden cities.
- Panel suggested to strengthen the character of the small pockets of open space at the intersections and along the main spine incorporating public arts and creating a sequence of events that helps activate the public realm.

Sustainability

- Panel appreciated the intention for District Energy and asked the applicant to seriously explore the option with its neighbours. Also, to consider other sustainable approaches such as passive house in building design, sustainable building materials and landscape approaches.