

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 87 – January 28, 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

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

John Tassiopoulos, WSP Canada Group Ltd

Absent

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

STAFF

Rob Bayley, Urban Design

TO ADD planners

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

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for November 26, 2020, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

9291 Jane Street – Solmar Development

Architect: Graziani & Corazza Architects

Landscape Architect: Strybos Barron King

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Does the site organization, and proposed massing successfully interacts with the exiting community to the south, and the natural heritage to the east.
2. How successful is the proposal in its response to the CNR tracks to the north?
3. How should the built form interface engage the public realm along Jane Street?

Overview

Panel asked the applicant to focus on the following issues:

- The site organization is feasible, but there is a need to better respond to site constraints.
- The vehicular circulation on the site is excessive and can be substantially reduced.
- The connection to valley lands should be improved.
- Explore ways to utilize the south vehicular access to eliminate the unnecessary duplication of driveways.
- Interconnectivity for pedestrians should be improved; share amenity spaces and access to valley lands.
- The outdoor amenity area should be not only sunny but also protected from adverse winds.
- Revisit the rigid symmetry and the typical double-loaded corridor to better respond to the site conditions.
- On Jane street, provide an active frontage and consider the pedestrian and cyclist experience along the street.
- Investigate the site and context more with sections.

Comments

General

- The presentation package is informative and concise, and it deals with the main issues.
- The presentation did not cover the broader contextual analysis, and it's not clear how the site organization was responding to the context.
- There is lack of understanding how the development fits within the City and functions like part of a neighbourhood, in terms of connections to transit and destinations accessed via Jane street.
- Podium facades would benefit from additional articulation.

Overall Site Organization

- Orientating the base buildings to the private driveway to the north instead of the existing private street to the south is not ideal. Still, it is an acceptable approach as it achieves sun penetration to the amenity area and protects it from the noise from the railway yard.
- The design is relentlessly symmetrical, but site analysis should lead to more concrete reactions to Jane street and the naturalized area.

Relation to Existing Development to the South

- Panel considered it was an unfortunate oversight that a shared vehicular access with the condo corporation to the south was not secured at the time of the previous development.

- There should be more consideration about the relationship with the development to the south and avoiding the situation of turning the back to it.

Site Vehicular Circulation

- The area allocated to servicing could be substantially reduced while improving the site organization. Minimize the double vehicular driveways to a single driveway and provide a minimal loop or bulb for a turn-around and reduce the surface visitor parking to approximately 5 spaces.

Naturalized Area

- Servicing takes over the natural area. Mirror what is being proposed in phase 2 regarding servicing and provide a service hub in the middle; this will free the east side for a meaningful amenity space facing the conservation land.
- Reducing the vehicular loop would also improve the connection to the naturalized area.
- The preservation area is a huge opportunity: treat the retention pond as an amenity and provide a trail connection to the south to connect to the ravine system.
- Consider adding a sidewalk at the south property line along the existing private condo road and using ravine planting and experience in its landscape design.

Relation to Jane Street

- Make sure there are clear pedestrian and bike routes from Jane street into the site. The experience of pedestrian and cyclist arrival from Jane Street should be further explored. While a sidewalk is provided, the arrival feels very car-oriented.
- Consider the pedestrian desire line to Jane street: could the outdoor amenity spaces act as forecourts for residents to walk through to the street?
- The internal amenity area on Jane Street will not provide animation to the street. Since retail will likely not succeed in the current conditions, Panel recommended developing flexible 2-storey spaces on Jane Street, that in the long-term could adapt to live-work, retail or other uses.
- The west tower and base building should be aligned to Jane Street.
- The west lobby could benefit pedestrian access and perception by being located on the north-west corner right at the entrance. It would also shorten the circuitous pedestrian path to the elevators.

Architectural Response to the noise issues

- Explore a more elongated tower floor plate and consider an eccentric core to minimize the number of units with strong exposure to the noise;
- In the podium, consider approaches such as split-level or double-height through-units where more sensitive uses such as bedrooms are not exposed to the noise.

Outdoor Amenity Area

- The amenity area is predicated on seating, but wind studies reveal that it may not be supportive of passive uses. Architectural and landscape elements should be employed to mitigate the wind impact.

- The amenity spaces are very large, almost like small parks, but treated almost like buffer areas; they could benefit from a more holistic approach and flexible amenities.

Vaughan Mills Centre Public Realm and Streetscape Plan Study – City of Vaughan

Landscape Architect: DTAH

Review: 2nd Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. What do you think about the Public realm Framework and draft streetscape recommendations to date? What do you think about the Public realm Framework and draft streetscape recommendations to date?
2. Are there additional streetscape opportunities or strategies to consider?
3. Have you any advice regarding public realm implementation and maintenance strategies from your own experience that you have found effective in a similar context?

Overview

- The package and presentation are comprehensive and clear.
- Consider what is the spark that makes the place stand out.
- Consider how the plan can be used to inform development in the area.
- Consider the layers and details proposed by the Panel to consider adding to the plan.
- Ensure that things are implementable and phased.
- Prioritize elements – consider what is critical and will be done even if, for example, the budget was reduced. Identify these critical elements and focus on them; it will help with the clarity and implementing the vision over a 50 years plan, while the other items will sort themselves out.
- Consider operations – winter maintenance, stormwater and daylighting. Use designs that can be maintained as simply as possible.
- How the streetscape interfaces with development in terms of lay-bys, driveways? Collaboration between Transportation and the development industry will allow servicing to occur on the street instead of unnecessarily fully internalizing it.
- Learn from what's been done in Highway 7 in terms of cycling and planting.

Comments

Package and Presentation

- Panel commended the package and presentation. The report is well thought out in terms of streets; it is believable and understandable.
- The proposed framework is flexible yet strong.
- Showing the mid-block connections through Vaughan Mills is beneficial for future consideration, even if it is long-term thinking.
- The street sections showing streetscape with utilities are very useful to understand how it works.

General Comments

- Panel commended the strong vision and ambition.
- Where are the unique quality 'places/destinations? This area must be a special place; think of the attributes of social events/containers of places like The Highline, Jardin du Luxembourg, Tuileries Garden etc.
- It would be helpful to understand the relation of the proposal to the Secondary Plan.
- It should be considered if there should be room for general design guidelines.
- The pedestrian bridge over Highway 401 will be an iconic element and gateway, and it would be beneficial to provide specifications as part of the plan.
- Panel urged the City to consider water balance in the design.

High-Level Organization

- Consider the hierarchy of roads in terms of public art potential and intuitive wayfinding.
- The parks seem to be evenly distributed and more or less of the same size. Adding a layer of programming will make them more understandable.
- Consider the hierarchy of POPS and their different roles to help guide future development.

POPS

- The role of the POPS and their qualities should be considered in the plan.
- Panel proposed creating demonstration plans for how POPS could respond to the public realm.

Streetscape

- The plan could show the expectations for setbacks on development parcels to achieve its streetscape goals.
- On Jane street, consider "borrow" soil volume from adjacent properties through landscape setbacks.

- On Jane Street, consider salt and salt spray and the impact on where the first line of trees should be.
- Consider adding an additional street typology for local roads adjacent to parks; they can have a distinctive feel. Consider the idea that parks start at the curb and not at the end of the right-of-way.
- Consider the layer of landscape-level lighting.
- Consider how the curb works with water movement and snow clearing.
- Identify connections between the cycling lane and sidewalk.

Public Engagement

- It's important to communicate to the stakeholders and the public in general what the timeline for the project is and its incremental nature; it should be clear that it's a vision that starts now, not "recommendations".

Initial Implementation and Creating Awareness

- Start identifying key catalyst projects, e.g. green crossings of the highway, bike network, that can be implemented early on. This would start bringing awareness and putting things on the ground.
- The key is to set up 'small/quick wins' to indicate action and direction to all stakeholders within the long-term frameworks.
- Consider events that will bring the plan and area to public awareness.

Implementation

- Phasing will be very important.
- Engage the local landowners in the implementation.
- Engineering should be engaged early on to ensure that the vision is implementable.
- Introduce model examples of the public realm before or with initial development sites to demonstrate commitment and intent right from the get-go. Ensure integration of proven public and private design approaches. Consider the implementation in examples such as Regent Park or Canary District.
- Continuous review and feedback are needed during implementation as new and different ideas will likely be suggested by various stakeholders.