

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting 78 – January 30, 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

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Ute Maya-Giambattista, Fotenn Planning and Design.

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Absent

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

STAFF

Jason Schmidt-Shoukri, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

Amy Roots, VMC Urban Design

Jennifer Cappola-Logullo, VMC Development Engineering

Gerardo Paez Alonso, VMC Parks Initiative

Nancy Tuckett, Development Planning

Gaston Soucy, VMC Urban Design
Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Urban Design
Jessica Kwan, VMC Planning
Cory Gray, VMC Parks Development
Shirin Rohani, Urban Design
Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design
Shirley March, Urban Design

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am with Megan Torza in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Peter Turner declared a conflict of interest with the Vaughan City Square

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting Minutes for November 28, 2019 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

Weston and Major Mackenzie - SmartCentres

Architecture: IBI Group and Kasian Architects

Landscape: MEP Design

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How successful is the site organization, massing, and the ground floor layout in establishing a pedestrian oriented environment in line with the Site-Specific policies of the VOP 2010 for Northeast Quadrant of Major Mackenzie Drive and Weston Road?

Overview

Site Organization

- Panel requested the applicant to return to the Official Plan (OP) policies and find ways to bolster the intent of the policies.
- Rebalance the vehicular circulation needs with other modes of transportation to realize the pedestrian promenade envisioned in the area specific OP policies.
- La Passeggiata should bring people to places and connect destinations, its character needs to be better defined.
- Define the character of the development on Major Mackenzie Drive.
- Panel applauded the porosity of the development along the south boundary but pointed to the lack of porosity on the north recommending to break the building to allow for connections to pedestrian walkways to the north of the site.

Massing

- Panel recommended break the massing of the Revera development to allow for porosity to the north.
- Panel made a real plea to the applicant to take microclimate conditions seriously. While 60% of the site is open space if it is too windy it will be unused and uninhabitable.
- The development has a lot of glass walls facing south and west which makes the rooms uncomfortable without shade, Panel asked the architect to revisit the façade (solid vs glass ratio) from microclimate perspective.

Ground Floor Layout

- Panel asked the applicant to address pedestrian continuity from piazza to the adjacent site to the east and from north of the site to Major Mackenzie Drive.
- Panel appreciated the promise of the intergenerational play and share and asked the applicant to further break the barriers through programming and design.
- Panel referred to the fact the most indoor amenities are not well used and recommend revising some of the amenities to units and offer different amenity programs shared between buildings.
- Panel questioned the viability of retail at the corner, and whether the café will thrive, Panel recommended looking at other activating uses such as fitness centre or daycare.

Site Organization, Architecture

- Panel asked the applicant to keep the spirit of the OP intent with a pedestrian diagonal connection to the urban square. In the current design outside of the public square, the pedestrian notion disappears in a driveway.
- Panel suggested that instead of the curved central road, applicant can take design idea from Las Ramblas Boulevard in Barcelona, with a circular drop-off

promenade in the middle, flipping the buildings to have entrances opening on to the promenade.

- Propose more units at the ground floor to strengthen the notion of the internal street and clarify the character of the external streets.
- While the north-south orientation of the towers works best for sun penetration, introducing 1 or 2 storey podiums can create the notion of the promenade edge.
- In the Revera development, 175m is a long wall, Panel referred to it as a “big institutional wall of older people”. The applicant should explore breaking this wall and using the push and pull to break the massing visually.
- In the Revera development, there is need for a drop off closer to the core of the buildings.
- Panel asked the applicant to recognize the site as a complete community with seniors to the north and young families to the south and better Integrate the bigger pieces;
 - through an all-season landscape strategy that blurs the generational boundaries, integrates seniors into daily life and creates mingle spaces.
 - Through a revised ground floor layout that ties indoor amenities to the shared outdoor amenities to create a dialogue.
- Panel asked that the loading and underground ramp to be decoupled to improve the pedestrian east-west connection called La Passeggiata.
- Panel commented on the future development of Sandy Farm, and the need for a mid-block connection from Farooq Boulevard through the site.
- Panel commented on the lack of urban edge along Major Mackenzie Drive and asked the applicant to revisit that edge to explore the opportunity to create a public edge.
- The central private street does not have the qualities of the precedent images. Panel asked the applicant to better strategize the edges of the promenade and ensure that all the programming can be carried to the next site.
- Consolidate the vehicular drop offs in the site.

Landscape

- Panel acknowledged that the landscape strategy is doing the heavy lifting for the vision, but also noted that the vision is contradictory to the City’s vision that required maximizing the ground floor to create an intimate pedestrian setting.
- Panel asked for more integration of the two developments through the landscape strategy
- Pay attention to the scale of the proposed typologies within the site; the Passeggiata and the Piazza. Use the same approach for the central space introducing different nodes with different sizes that can accommodate multi generational programs.
- Propose an open green area that can accommodate different activities.

- Playground is really small and should be expanded to get more sun opportunities.
- The space between buildings E and F needs to be more flexible, creating opportunities for people to come out.
- Bike circulation should be further explored, with the multiuse pathway and transit line on Major Mackenzie Drive there are desire lines for bike accessibility.
- Panel questioned lack of street trees on the two private streets.
- Panel expressed concern about the ownership and maintenance of the open space in order to maintain the quality.

Vaughan City Square, 7551 & 7601 Jane Street

Architecture: Turner Fleischer Architects
 Landscape: Studio tla
 Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How effective is the overall site organization and massing in incorporating the Neighbourhood Precinct character envisioned in the VMC Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines?
2. How successfully does the proposed development interface with the public realm, particularly the proposed Public Square and Black Creek corridor?

Overview

- **Overall Presentation** - Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive package and presentation.
- **Precinct Character** – The project is not achieving the Neighbourhood Precinct character envisioned in the VMC Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines. Review the vision, policies, and design principles outlined in these documents in order to incorporate them into the overall design.
- **Site Organization** – The general design of the master plan is logical but requires fine-tuning in order to better achieve the desired public realm porosity and spatial hierarchies envisioned for a project of this scale and within a Neighbourhood Precinct.
- **Architectural Expression** – In order to better achieve a neighbourhood scale, explore breaking the massing and continuity of the street wall with more grain and variety, and introducing more diversity in the facades.

Comments

Site Organization

- Panel agreed that the location and scale of this project creates a unique opportunity to produce something very special within the VMC.
- The master plan presents a hierarchy of open spaces including POPS, amenity spaces and a public square. Fine-tuning is required to reinforce connections between these spaces and to give it a stronger neighbourhood character.
- This is a very large development for which the order of the phasing merits looking into the size and hierarchy of its public open spaces. Make sure that there are adequate allocated areas for POPS, parks and other public amenity spaces throughout the development stages and don't rely on private outdoor amenity spaces as substitutes to these important functions.
- Re-evaluate the proposal based on the City's vision for neighbourhoods outlined in the policy and placemaking framework documents. Is there enough variety, character, porosity, mid-block connections, fine grain of expression, etc.? A neighbourhood is one characterized by variety, character, diversity and fine grain experiences.
- Reconsider the ground floor programming and uses around the site and public square. Look into having less amenity spaces facing the public realm and creating civic and neighbourhood programming that will, in turn, inform the design of the podiums.
- The pedestrian connections at an urban scale need to be looked at carefully as they are currently going through service areas and are not leading to an appropriate terminus point. Look at what's happening around King Street West in Toronto where some service alleys have become woonerfs that seamlessly serve both vehicles and pedestrians.
- The neighbouring condominium corporation to the west of Phase 1 is causing less than optimal urban design conditions. Look at potential solutions such as:
 - Create a holistic design that includes the neighbouring site. This would not only better inform the design strategy for Phase 1 but also setup a base that could influence how the adjacent property eventually develops.
 - Create a series of site-specific Urban Design Guidelines that addresses built form and frontages along the Black Creek linear promenade and its surroundings.
 - Have conversations regarding a joint design strategy that could generate preliminary ideas that benefit both developments.
 - Reach an agreement that allows the neighbour to get access to their property through the Phase 1 internal driveway. This would also allow for the main park to have a clean pedestrian connection along its southern boundary instead of a driveway.

- The hotel block currently has a less than desirable interior courtyard. Treat it as a solid block that will allow for a centralization of the parking/services within and articulate the periphery to address the public realm. This would also help address the hotel's presence at street level which is currently unclear.
- Consider improving and increasing the number of connections to the Black Creek corridor throughout the entire site.

Architecture

- Although the proposal is on a privileged location that could act as the VMC's south gateway, it currently has a uniform and austere appearance that could be softened and improved through better architectural expression, variety and design that gives it more prominence within the VMC. Other than reaching 58 storeys, nothing in the project shows itself as gateway.
- The northern-most building could connect better with the larger, overall context and serve as a focal viewpoint from the south-west quadrant urban park.
- The Phase 1 building has an open space along its west façade that seems tight against the neighbouring condominium corporation building. Consider slimming down the podiums to generate a larger sized, more open exterior amenity space.
- Provide more porosity and variety by physically breaking the podiums apart at a pedestrian level and not just separating the towers above.
- Explore the idea of extending the presence of the lobbies to the surrounding streets by creating direct accesses from the pedestrian boulevards. The courtyard accesses should be secondary.
- Create a diversity of streetscapes and building forms, and explore at different setback from Maplecrete Road.

Sustainability

- Be mindful of the risks and challenges from western winds coming through the site. Analyze the areas of concern as identified in the Wind Study Report and provide protective solutions through creative design and programming.
- Panel looks forward to seeing storm water management strategies integrated into the project, as there is a great opportunity for a demonstrative public square with storm water management initiatives.