

# **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

## **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

### **Meeting 93 – July 29, 2021**

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The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, July 29, 2021. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

#### **PANEL MEMBERS**

##### **Present**

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

##### **Absent**

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

##### **STAFF**

Shahzad Davoudi-Strike, Urban Design

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design

Shirin Rohani, Urban Design

Shaimaa Tantawy, Urban Design

Shirley Marsh, Urban Design

Chris Cosentino, Development Planning

Margaret Holyday, Development Planning

Nancy Tuckett, Development Planning

Marta Roias, Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management

Michelle Moretti, Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability

Michelle Samson, Economic Development

**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**

Paul Kulig declared a conflict of interest on the Yonge Steeles Corridor Urban Design and Streetscape Study

**3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES**

Meeting minutes for June 24, 2021, were approved.

**4. DESIGN REVIEW**

**7540 Weston Rd – Sky Property Group Inc.**

Planning Consultant: Brutto Consulting

Architect: KIRKOR Architects

Review: 1<sup>st</sup> Review

**Introduction**

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- How successfully has the project responded to the principles and the vision of the emerging Secondary plan, and the public road network contemplated therein?
- Considering the Site is at the edge of the Weston7 Secondary plan, what improvements can be made to the site organization to make it viable in the short-term while creating opportunities for an integrated successful site within the Secondary Plan in the long term?

## Overview

- **Overall Presentation** – Panel appreciated the presentation and recognized the challenges present; however, encouraged the applicant to revisit their analysis and better integrate the vision and principles of the Secondary Plan

The presentation focused more on the current condition when it is imperative to respond to the future context as that is contemplated through the Weston 7 Secondary Plan

- **Site Context and the Pedestrian Realm** – Panel encouraged the applicant to demonstrate a stronger relationship to the emerging Secondary Plan and the vision for the area regarding the proposed vehicular network, streetscape and public realm, open space and microclimate conditions

Streetscape design along Weston, Rowntree Dairy and Wings Roads should be enhanced to better reflect the vision and goals of the Secondary Plan and support the density proposed through this project

Establish a more meaningful pedestrian-oriented north-south midblock connection

bury as much of the parking underground to allow for a better site organization and massing distribution

- **Hierarchy of Space and Circulation** – Panel suggested for the servicing to be moved away from the midblock connection to enable that space to flourish as a pedestrian thoroughfare

Take advantage of the north edge of the site to create a shared access with the future development and set the tone through site, ground floor and streetscape design for a pedestrian friendly east-west connection

- **Architecture** – The length of the podium does not allow for the creation of a comfortable streetscape and pedestrian environment along Rowntree Dairy Road and the Panel suggested that it be divided in two. Such a strategy will allow for a differentiation in character between the two podiums, the two towers and the streetscape to reflect the uses to be hosted therein. the east side of the project may have a more retail character compared to the west that may be more residential

Though there are adverse wind conditions on site, those can be mitigated through incorporating more creative and interesting elements compared to roll-up doors

Revise the north elevation to create an active, pedestrian-oriented façade towards the future neighborhood to the north

## Comments

### General

- Panel focused on the relationship to the neighboring property to the north, the circulation within and through the site, the treatment and animation of the

pedestrian realm and the microclimatic conditions and how all these elements tie into the emerging Weston 7 Secondary Plan

- Panel encouraged the applicant to revisit their contextual analysis to speak more in depth to the immediate area of the site and better integrate the principles and vision of the emerging Secondary Plan regarding urbanity, circulation networks, streetscape and public realm conditions
- The applicant should coordinate with the neighbor to the north to achieve a more successful transition between the two properties in the context of the Secondary Plan
- Plans showing the future context and how the project fits within that should be provided. Currently the analysis is based on the existing context; however, the project is not responding successfully to either current nor future conditions

#### Overall Site Organization and Context

- Site and landscape design should contribute towards a safe, well-connected and green community with a strong urban character that can support the increase in density proposed. The applicant should deliver amenities in the public realm that is supportive of the level of urbanity that is proposed. For example, but not limited to, the sidewalks being expanded from 1.5m to support the expected use generated from the proposed residential towers
- Concerns were raised by the Panel on how the north edge of the site will integrate with the future context, as contemplated by the Secondary plan, in terms of vehicular and pedestrian access, transitions and microclimate. The Secondary Plan contemplates a residential community to the north while no particular vision has been set out to the south. As such, this project should create stronger connections to the north knitting into the future residential community
- The project is internally facing with a very suburban vehicular-oriented character, including lobbies facing drop-off areas disconnected from transit and the visitor parking located away from key destination points. The custom paving treatment provided for the vehicular routes is not matched on the pedestrian paths of travel where a concrete sidewalk and sod is proposed and boulevards are occupied by surface utilities. Furthermore, the condition created on Winges Road is a back yard condition and not an active frontage. The applicant should reverse this condition to be true to the urban design principles around urbanity and city building. Connect lobbies directly to transit, provide breezeways for pedestrians and not vehicles, accommodate parking in lay-bys along the streets and overall create a site and streetscape condition that supports the proposed density
- Further to the above, locate all or most of the parking underground to allow for better design at the ground floor level, either through engaging the north street connection or providing back-to-back courtyards with shaped terraces providing articulation and interest
- Rethink the ground floor layout to create more viable retail, to relocate amenity areas so they are not facing the parking and to move the ramp away from the perimeter, so it is not disrupting the pedestrian circulation

### Architecture, Built Form and Massing

- Panel questioned the scale of the proposed development compared to what the Secondary Plan is contemplating for this quadrant
- Panel commented on the character of the building and, while there is a distinction between the uses hosted at grade on the east side compared to the west, noted that the change in use is not reflected the overall character. Break up the project in two buildings and attribute the appropriate character to each; support that character through the design of the urban interface with the public realm, the design of thresholds and entrances, the architectural treatment and materiality to create a different experience on the east compared to the west. The placement and heights of the towers can also vary responding to the intended character to break up the symmetry and create interest
- Further to the above, revise the length of the podium as it is overwhelming to the public realm. Moving the parking underground will allow for the podium to be broken in two volumes and for a more flexible massing distribution to be achieved
- For the midblock connection to read as public and to generously give back and relate to the public realm, it should be designed and treated to be more inviting and pedestrian oriented

### Hierarchy of open space and circulation

- Further to the comments above relating to coordinating with the neighbor to the north:
  - Establishing the limits of a public road to north will create different conditions within the site since one part of that edge will be public in nature and another will need to be dedicated to servicing. Architectural design will need to support these two characters as well
  - Continuity to the north should be ensured for the midblock connection provided off Rowntree Dairy Road
- Open hardscaped spaces provided for the retail component of the project should differ from the ones provided for the residential, it's size and treatment to successfully serve the needs of retail
- Establish the mews purely as a pedestrian connection and not as a vehicular drop-off. Expand it in width and enhance it in treatment to bring out its public character, especially for the residential component where a sense of arrival will need to be created at both ends of that access. Lastly, landscape and architectural elements should be incorporated to mitigate the wind
- The treatment of the boulevards around the site should be enhanced to achieve a more urban character

### Microclimate

- Microclimate is an integral part of developing the project and should be better managed through design incorporating elements that fit and complement the overall proposal. Currently the response to adverse winds seems like an afterthought and the garage doors proposed are out of scale having a negative effect on the streetscape

- Though shadowing may not have an impact on the existing industrial properties to the north, future residential development is contemplated in the Secondary Plan and that should be considered in the design process

## **Yonge Steeles Corridor Urban Design and Streetscape Study**

Architect: Perkins+Will

Review: 1<sup>st</sup> Review

### **Introduction**

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- Considering the many uncertain issues, how can we best build flexibility into our design guidelines to accommodate different development scenarios?
- Acknowledging that the Secondary Plan amendments are beyond the scope of this study, how can the design framework contribute to the appropriate hierarchy and balance of blocks, parks/open space and street network?
- What is the appropriate Streetscape Level of Service for Yonge Street?
- What is your preferred option for the extension of Royal Palm Drive?

### **Overview**

- **Overall Presentation** – Panel commented on the very thorough presentation and acknowledged the challenges present due to the multiple jurisdictions in the area, the appeals, and the unknown plans of Agencies external to the City
- **Progress of the Study** – Panel commented on the balanced coordination that needs to be established between all entities, public and private, involved in the area to achieve consistency on both sides of the street and effective transitions to the areas beyond the Secondary Plan. A wholistic review of the area, treating it as a mega block, can help in that direction
- **Focus of the Study** – The Panel noted that the Study should be expanded to include the ground floor condition beyond the public realm in more detail, making the project more specific and less generic, exploring the transitions between the public and private realm, looking at potential necessary connections between the two such as connections to transit and refining the integration of bike lanes

The limits of the study to the west and the north should also be explored to ensure that a successful transition is achieved to the existing neighborhoods

A possible future condition along Royal Palm Gate where the deep back yards are severed and redeveloped should be accounted for in the Study as the depth of those back yards allows for such a plan to materialize. That would allow for an active, more urban frontage on the north side of Royal Palm Gate

The Study should include sustainability measures, especially on stormwater management, as it is an element that can affect the overall streetscape design - especially considering that treed boulevards are contemplated, utility problems may occur if accurate planning of stormwater management has not taken place.

- **Connectivity and Circulation** – Panel commented on the placement and integration of the bike lanes to the overall scheme, noting that their long run continuity will need to be ensured for them to be a meaningful and safe addition. The Study should also provide clear direction in the cases where the bike lanes will need to be disrupted

Differentiate cycle lanes in terms of placement and character based on the context they are established in and the expected level of use and speed to ensure overall safety. For example, cycle tracks in higher traffic areas that may be mostly used by people commuting to work may need to be physically separate from pedestrian pathways and openings, either through a landscape strip or through placement

Though there is no immediate station facility in Vaughan, the south-east corner lies within the impact radius of the station and, as such, the public realm design should be calibrated to respond to the excess amount of people that will be passing through that area, as well as support the uses to be introduced on the private lands to serve those people.

From recent experience on other projects a 2.1m sidewalk on local streets is requested in order for 3 people to be accommodated and should be considered in the proposed options

- **Landscape Design** – Panel commented on the intent to provide a double row of trees and noted that the option of offsetting rows with tighter planting schemes may allow for more trees to be planted and ensure growth

Streetscape design and articulation will need to be consistent along Yonge Street and coordination with the Region will be necessary

Deeper setbacks or openings, such as a POPS, can be explored to allow for opportunities for landscaping

The 1.7m width proposed for the planter beds is too tight to allow for trees to grow considering the salt used for the streets and the adverse impact of urban conditions

- **Options Presented in the Study** – Panel commented on the very different characters to be present along Royal Palm Gate with the back yards meeting the POPS. Panel suggested a more European approach of low mixed-use densities hosting commercial and residential uses be explored as an option additional to the ones presented for the north side of that street. That could give a different character to the whole Royal Palm Gate, while at the same time offer a smoother transition between the more urban condition on the south side and the single-family backyards on the north

From a sustainability perspective, the Option A presented would be the most favorable as it offers flexibility in design and ensures access

Panel noted that Option B presented for local streets may be the one with the greatest amount of flexibility and therefore potential; however, there is the risk of

the lay-by lanes being expanded due to need which might compromise the overall design as developments start coming in. A balance should be achieved through design between tree planting and parking, factoring in the future needs and use of lay-by and pick-up/ drop-off for this option to be successful. A variation to this option could have lay-by proposed on one side of the street instead of both, with the other side accommodating a greater number of trees

**END OF MINUTES**