

# **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

## **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

### **Meeting 89 – March 25, 2021**

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The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, March 25, 2021. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

#### **PANEL MEMBERS**

##### **Present**

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Sheldon Levitt, Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc.

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

##### **Absent**

Guela Solow-Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

##### **STAFF**

Christina Bruce, Director, VMC

Amy Roots, Senior Manager, VMC

Jennifer Cappola-Logullo, Manager, VMC

Gerardo Paez Alonso, Manager, VMC

Gaston Soucy, VMC Urban Design

Jessica Kwan, Senior Planner, VMC

Dana Khademi, Engineer, VMC

Danny Woo, Engineer, VMC  
Cory Gray, Project Manager, VMC  
Rob Bayley, Urban Design  
Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Urban Design  
Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design  
Shirley Marsh, Urban Design  
Nancy Tuckett, Development Planning  
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**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES**

Meeting minutes for February 25, 2021, were approved.

**4. DESIGN REVIEW**

**72 Steeles Ave. West, 7040 & 7054 Yonge St. - Humbold**

Architect: Kirkor Architects and Planners

Landscape Architect: LandArtDesign Landscape Architects Inc.

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

**Introduction**

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- In response to the broader context and the overall vision of the Secondary Plan, what aspects of the proposal need to be investigated and revised to ensure that a comprehensive, well connected and pedestrian friendly neighborhood is supported?
- At the urban block scale including the neighboring proposal, what are the opportunities for improvement of the site organization and ground floor layout to enhance the urban interfaces and achieve high quality amenity space for all residents?

## Overview

- **Overall Presentation** - Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive and thorough package and presentation and acknowledged the challenges of the context at this time
- **Site Context and Relationship to Secondary Plan** –Panel emphasized the vision of the open space and the street network in the Secondary Plan and spoke to the expectation of the project to reflect the ambition of the Secondary Plan specifically, the expectation of a linear park to be established along Royal Palm extending through to this site and connecting to a truly public space at the end of Royal Palm and Powell road. Even if the open space needs to be a POPS, from an ownership perspective, it should be positioned and designed in such a way that is truly public in perception.

Panel also noted the intention of the Secondary Plan for transitions to the North and advised the applicant to take that intention into consideration as they continue to refine their plan

- **Relationship to the Gupta Group development** - A comprehensive block plan needs to be established between this project and Gupta development that considers not only public space synergies but also synergies with respect to vehicular movement, loading functions, entry and the whole front and back of the house relationship to establish a long term successful public realm.
- **Microclimate relationships within the open space** - Once the location of the open spaces has been established, the applicant needs to ensure that all of the microclimate realities, including both solar and wind, support the success of those open spaces and not hinder their use.
- **Hierarchy of space and circulation** – Aside from the front and back of house relationship, issues with regards to the number of vehicular accesses and the need for prioritization of pedestrian access, movement, and use, were raised by the Panel as well as the need for clear desire line recognition for pedestrians and cyclists to the subway station.
- **Architecture** – The Panel questioned the positioning of buildings at the north-west corner as well as the height and character of the podium that is connecting those two buildings in particular; the connected podium is obstructing visual and physical movement through the block.

The future of retail and amenity spaces was also raised. The applicant is to ensure that retail frontages are focused in the best areas possible to support vibrancy of open space and public realm. And for amenity space, whether they should be on the roof or at the ground floor the applicant should be cognisant and thoughtful about the proposed location. The Panel asked for more information around those spaces regarding their location and their relationship to the public realm at grade.

## Comments

### General

- Panel acknowledged the challenges present on site however noted the need for clarity of connections between this project, the Gupta Group development and the future surrounding context, in order to create a hierarchy of streets and open spaces and to define the location of loading and servicing areas.
- Panel also noted that the Secondary Plan provides a clear vision on the typology of open spaces and streets that the City needs. In this site that is expressed through a linear park along Royal Palm Dr. anchored by two public parks on each end which is not presented in this submission. Panel invited the applicant to extract as much as possible from the clear messaging of the Secondary Plan on the intended function of open spaces and streets

### Overall Site Organization, Uses and Context

- Panel noted the need for clarity in the configuration and character of public streets and the public park, pedestrian and bike connections as well as the proposed private amenity areas.
- A hierarchy of streets and urban structure needs to be established as well as public pedestrian connections through the site and private secondary open space
- Coordination of public and private structure of streets and open spaces with the private service areas is necessary between this development, the Gupta Group development and future context
- Panel noted the disruption in connection to the green space to the south of Royal Palm Dr. caused by the location of the North tower. Noted also the clear intention set in the Secondary Plan and the opportunity to create a linear park that connects to the park to the West.
- Desire lines for pedestrians and cyclists to the subway station through the site need to be enforced.

### Architecture, Built Form and Massing

- Panel agreed on a revision of the tower placement to respond to the context established by the Gupta Group development. Considering that the “L” shape proposed by the Gupta Group development is the only viable option for the neighboring site, this development should reconsider the placement of the primary frontages and retail spaces and establish a more successful relationship compared to the back-to-front relationship currently created.
- The podiums don't have a podium quality as they are too tall and blend into the towers. A revision in height, articulation and materiality can help reinforce the pedestrian character of the streets and walkways around the podiums.
- Panel suggested the separation at the grade, second and third floor, if not the podium in its entirety, to create a significant west facing POPS connecting to the linear park as envisioned in the Secondary Plan. Further to that the reconfiguration of the ground floor of Buildings B1 and B2 should be explored for the retail to be relocated to frame the larger POPS and the amenity spaces

### Mews and Services

- Panel raised the issue of the character of the mews being primarily vehicular and service oriented with the pedestrian connections been treated as secondary. The character of the mews needs to change to be purely pedestrian. Similarly, the character of the streets should shift to be more pedestrian oriented in order to achieve more successful connections to the park, the playground and the inner courtyard of the Gupta development.
- Panel suggested flipping the Building C parking ramp to provide access from the North road directing the traffic away from the mews and then engaging the Gupta development for a more coordinated approach to servicing for a more pleasing pedestrian and cyclist-oriented environment

### Hierarchy of open space and circulation

- Panel noted that developments of such a scale would benefit from a public park however the project brings forward very aspirational open spaces which are all private.
- The public character of the park needs to be enhanced either through more gracious connections to public streets or through relocation of the proposed park to an area with direct exposure to a public street network.
- Panel suggested the relocation of the park to the north-west corner followed by a transitional secondary open space to link to the POPS in the Gupta development creating a diagonal connection with the main park.
- Panel noted the design and uses of the open space need to consider the needs of the expanding community and respond to them successfully

### Microclimate

- Panel noted that the microclimate conditions for the proposed park are not going to be favorable, as it will be shadowed all year. In coordination with the comments above, Panel suggested relocation of the park, the open spaces and the amenity in order to achieve better solar and wind conditions. Two suggestions were:
  - concentrating all buildings in Site B, on the east side of Site and eliminating the road between Site B and Site C, keeping only the north road as service and parking access freeing the west side for open spaces, amenity and parks offering those spaces a better solar orientation
  - Considering the potential adverse wind conditions at the north-west corner of Block B, bring the park to the north-east corner.

## Central Park, Block 1 - SmartCentres

Landscape: Claude Cormier + Associés Inc.

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

### Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Is the overall site organization appropriate, especially regarding: a) the existing context to the east, and b) the future park block to the west?
2. Is the design and programming of the park sufficiently inclusive?
3. Does the design of the park, including its organization and program, meet the intent of the existing placemaking guidelines?

### Overview

- **Overall Presentation** – The Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive package and presentation
- **Site Organization** – The general organization of the plan, with its simple shapes and clean geometry, demonstrates a balance of art and classic landscape architecture with seamless practicality
- **Inclusivity I** – Consider how the park can engage communities of all ages and types, including families, children, and the elderly, with a looseness of programming and an interpretive layer
- **Inclusivity II** – All park users should be able to move through and access its various spaces and facilities, including the bridge
- **Connectivity** – Consider how park circulation routes interface with the broader context and the open space network and how the park relates to the surrounding streetscape
- **Microclimate** – Consider how solar conditions might impact planting or programming

### Comments

#### General

- The Panel commended the applicant on a comprehensive package and clear presentation with compelling graphics
- Consider a community committee to provide input into park operations
- The City should strive to advance Central Park, Block 2 as soon as possible

#### Site Organization

- The plan is well organized, combining classic landscape architecture with art and whimsy, without losing its practicality

- The Panel commended the simple shapes and clean geometry, and the balance between defined and flexible spaces
- The contrast in design with South Urban Park was a positive and will help with placemaking and character formation within the downtown
- The plan could use more messiness or wildness, including places for kids to get dirty
- Consider loosening symmetry due to microclimate, possibly through expressions of planting or organization of program
- Consider the interaction of the strong geometry with the park's edge conditions. Should park users be able to escape the geometry?

### Inclusivity

- The Panel suggested four questions around inclusivity: do people feel welcome; is their culture welcome; is programming reflective of their needs; and does any group feel excluded. The design is performing well on the first three questions but failing on the last.
- The bridge was a source of conflict: the Panel loved the hills and the viewpoint from the bridge, and found it a powerful part of the park, but felt that it was excluding certain groups, and should be accessible to all.
- The Panel noted that this is a park master plan and any constraints were developed by the plan and can be resolved or changed. Excluding certain groups from defined park elements (the bridge, for example) should not be accepted
- Consider adjusting the grades of the hills to allow for access to a shallower bridge

### Connectivity

- Consider how park circulation routes interface with the broader context and the open space network. Connections at intersections are a given, but how will it tie into the secondary network of mews, POPS, and other open spaces?
- While the hills provide an interesting vantage point and changing visuals with open and closed perspectives as park users move around them, the long frontage of the hills facing the sidewalk feels like the back of the park. Consider pockets of seating or other elements to activate these edges

### Program

- Program is well balanced over all three blocks (the subject site and two future blocks) of the park, but Block 1 may receive pressure due to high demand until future blocks come online
- The Panel is not in favour of overly programming parks
- The piglet play structure is fun and whimsical and will become a recognizable landmark
- Consider programs to keep children and families engaged

- Consider an interpretive element or layer, possibly around trees, to drive engagement
- Consider retail popups for food and beverage sales to enliven the space, especially at the edges
- Consider moveable chairs or other elements that may let park users make their own space.