

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 110 – June 29, 2023

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, June 29, 2023. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec (Acting Chair)
Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects
Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc
Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio
John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited
Henry Burstyn, IBI Group (Conflict with 1st Item)
Margaret Briegmann, BA Group (Conflict with 2nd item)
Sharon Sterling, WSP / MMM Group Limited
Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle-conflict

Absent

Megan Torza, DTAH
Ute Maya-Giambattista, Fotenn Planning and Design
Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects
Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)
Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

STAFF

Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Manager, Urban Design and Cultural Heritage
Aimee Pugao, Senior Planner, Parks and Infrastructure Planning
Celene Mariano, Project Manager, Parks and Infrastructure Planning
Cory Gray, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Carol Birch, Planner, Development Planning
Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design, Development Planning

Shirin Rohani, Urban Design, Development Planning

Alex Yang, Urban Design, Development Planning

Anna Rosen, Project Manager, VMC Program

Andrea Shotlander, Project Manager, VMC Program

Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design Development Planning

Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 am with Alfredo Landaeta in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for May 25, 2023, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

Atelier Park, Master Plan

2160 - 2180 Highway 7, 1st Review

Architect: Raymond Lee, Arcadis Professional Services

Landscape: Neno Kovacevic, Arcadis Professional Services

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- Please provide your input on the big moves and the site's structure and distributions of uses, considering the existing and future planned urban infrastructures.
- Please comment on the built-form diversity and transition to the low-rise context to the north and south of Highway 7. Is the development successful in the transition between the city's employment lands and a shift in the character of the area?
- Please comment on the master plan's proposed phasing and how to best deliver the open space and road network at each phase

Overview

- **Presentation** Panel thanked the applicant for the comprehensive graphics and elaborate presentation. The built-form inspiration was questioned by Panel, and it was noted that the inspiration should be more in keeping with the visions and principles of the proposed community with respect to inclusivity.
- **Adjacencies and Context**–Panel requested that the applicant emphasize the larger master planning and block plan study and be cognizant of its importance and how it can provide a broader perspective on what may or may not happen in the future. The block plan study can assist in identifying the challenges of the site and would plant the seed for future transitions, a combination of uses and effective and optimized connections within a multi-use community.
- **Built Form Diversity and Massing Articulation**–Panel noted that the proposed built form does not acknowledge the site conditions, the pedestrian experience at the ground level, and adversely impacts the microclimate of the central open space. Panel encouraged the applicant to continue studying and exploring the massing of buildings and improve the pedestrian experience at grade. They also cautioned the applicant to consider the potential shadow impact on the central open space and the unpleasant environment at the peripheries of the site. Panel recommended varying the podium heights to create a more defined edge for the open space and add more interest to the skyline view.
- **Phasing and Placemaking** – Panel voiced concerns about the current phasing plan. Noting that the proposed phasing would result in scattered construction and an unfinished and incomplete community. Panel emphasized that the central open space should mature more quickly to ensure the earlier phases of development are more livable in the interim phases.

Comments

Adjacencies and Context

- Panel questioned the block pattern and the road alignments and their appropriateness for a residential context. They noted that a residential, mixed-

use community needs a finer grain circulation network and block pattern rather than the traditional industrial blocks that dominate the surrounding context.

- The importance of the larger block plan was emphasized by the Panel, and the applicant was advised to use the overall block plan study to their benefit to ensure proper adjacencies are considered based on the realities of the existing and the planned context.
- The notion of connectivity and pedestrian circulation was brought up. Panel raised concern regarding the conflict of pedestrian and vehicular movements on the overall master plan. Further, they advised the applicant to refine the pedestrian circulation and provide more clarity on the street cross sections and multi-modal movement within both the central open space and along the periphery of the site, and to be cognizant of the destinations and the shortest paths of travel. Panel also noted that the development is inward-looking, and the pedestrian experience along the peripheries should be further considered.

Built-Form and Massing

- Panel expressed concern regarding the microclimate of the internal open space and its inadequate sun exposure. The applicant was advised to consider introducing height and massing variations for the podiums and the towers to provide additional sunlight into the internal POPS and create a defined open space and a more diverse skyline.

Site Plan, Organization and Ground Floor Uses

- Panel acknowledged the complexity and the challenges of the site and the intention of protecting the internal open space from the incompatible uses surrounding the site; however, the applicant was encouraged to address the developments interface with the neighbouring properties and address the challenges along the peripheries, with introducing engaging land uses and pedestrian amenities.
- Panel encouraged the applicant to be cognizant of the adjacencies of the open space in its context and noted that the development is a residential island within a sea of industrial lands; hence treatment of its edges is critical. Panel noted that the proposed uses in the open space are not carrying the weight they should. The POPS is surrounded by private amenities and feels uninviting and private. Panel advised providing more animating uses along the edges of the POPS and introducing some retail into the space by wrapping around the use at the corners.

Phasing

- Panel raised concerns with the proposed phasing plan and found it to be scattered, which may cause the development to feel unfinished and incomplete as a community. It was noted that the east-west road could provide a better physical and visual distance between the early phases of the development and the future phases. Panel found that starting the early phases along Highway 7

and south of the east-west road would support a more livable environment in the interim conditions.

- Regarding the phasing of the open space and amenity area, panel emphasized that delivering the open space as a whole and as a finished usable space is very important since the existing amenities in the neighbourhood are not easily accessible. It was noted that cutting the POPS in half for the first phase is not acceptable.

City of Vaughan – Promenade Centre Public Realm Framework and Urban Design Guidelines

Key Stakeholders: Caitlin Schultz, Brook McIlroy Inc.
Anne McIlroy, Brook McIlroy Inc.

Review: 1st Review

Introduction

City staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- Does the design framework appropriately respond to the hierarchy of blocks, parks/open space, streets and paths network?
- Do the proposed public realm guidelines successfully respond to the design framework with regards to transitions, adjacent uses, and interfaces?
- Do the proposed built form guidelines provide sufficient flexibility to encourage a varied and context-responsive built form? Do they pose any buildability concerns?
- Considering the uncertainty of development timing and phasing, how can the design guidelines ensure the best possible public realm and urban design conditions across different development scenarios?

Comments

General

- Panel thanked the consultant for the overall presentation, and acknowledged that the application is well-rounded, and creates an aspiration for the promenade mall.
- Panel suggested avoiding being too descriptive on guideline prescriptions and simplifying the language to allow it to be treated as a guide rather than a formula, which allows more flexibility and is not being treated as a by-law.
- Panel pointed out that the park design should utilize the potential advantages of grade changes and slopes in the design process.

Street Cross-Section

- Panel acknowledged that the low street cross-section had set a good example and suggested considering a similar approach for the high street and creating a vision for it to describe what the street will look like.
- Panel commented on the cross-section of the retail edge and stated that it is challenging to accommodate all the street elements, such as drop-off, pick-up, layby parking, and the bike lane. Therefore, they suggested an approach to focus only on vehicle drop-off and pick-up without having a dedicated bike lane, as the nature of the street being narrowed would slow down the traffic in comparison with the dedicated bike lane.
- From an accessibility point of view, Panel suggested adding some flexibility for the pick-up and drop-off area, particularly for the road immediately adjacent to the mall and when transitioning to the below-grade parking.
- Panel suggested the applicant consider how the bicycle traffic feeds into the mobility hub and recommended combining cycling and vehicular traffic and providing a shared lane on the street where close to the mall, and separating it into a dedicated bike lane where further away from the hub.
- Considering everything will be below grade eventually, Panel suggested having more descriptions of bicycle infrastructure access to the retail lobbies, and how it ties into the high street design.
- Panel suggested expanding the pedestrian zone from 2.1 m to 2.5 m wide, which allows opportunities for landscape in places where busy and needed.

Street Section and Setback

- In review of the street sections and that the proposed setbacks specifically depend on the type of uses. Panel expressed concerns that in the future, the different setbacks may set constraints when converting one use to another, and therefore suggest using more general setbacks to help future proof the development.
- Panel commented that the high street setback from the street edge seem small and that dimensions should be taken from the back of the tree instead of from the face of the curb to the building face to ensure there is enough space for the healthy tree growth and canopy.

Parking

- Panel expressed concerns that parking could be a potential issue when developing the edge, and suggested adding descriptions with respect to the structured parking, and particularly how it worked at grade. For example, it is possible to improve the streetscape by using active uses and high-quality elevations for the architecture.
- Panel recommended establishing clear requirements for the minimum parking, and to clearly identify strategies for how the parking will function with the mall in the guidelines. Further clarification on how the surface parking will transition in future is needed to ensure that the mall can continue to operate during the interim.

- As all the blocks will be sold off to the developers and there will be no parking left for the mall, which could make the mall not viable. Panel suggested having a discussion with the owners to allow a certain amount of parking associated with the mall to maintain its viability.

Interim Condition

- Panel stated the importance of the interim process because the mall redevelopment will take place over several phases. Having a clear interim process identified in the policies will help ensure that the applicants understand what is involved and how to achieve the desired end goal.
- Panel emphasized that the mall is still a major amenity as part of the community. Therefore, it is important to ensure the flexibility of the mall can still be functional within the framework and during the interim while development takes place.
- Panel suggested adding a clear definition of the parking requirements regarding the reduction of mall uses and recommended creating a positive and more transparent interface for the redevelopment of the mall edges.
- Panel stated that the mall is naturally a closed box with a few entrances and not open to the street frontage. They highlighted the challenge of dealing with the mall interface and creating a quality space for the interim condition and how to incentivize the mall to open outwards to the street. Opening the mall to the street and how it relates to the adjacent context should be described more in the document to make a more robust implementation.
- Further to the above, Panel listed an example of the Eaton Centre, and explained that it started completely closed to the street and killed the retail in the area, but later it introduced a strong change on Yonge Street and eventually involved a very active street frontage which increased the street value.

Phasing

- Panel asked for a phasing plan to be part of the development process and ensure the development of the parcels can fit into the phasing strategy. They suggested providing a phasing plan for interim uses, which flashed out with more details such as the construction process, staging, access to the construction pad and screening.
- Further to the above, Panel gave some examples, such as adding descriptions that the phasing plan is required for each application and demonstrating how the interim spaces or uses around potential development sites are contributing to the public realm strategy. Additionally, describing the transformation from a retail experience to a mixed-use community experience.
- Panel advised drawing inspiration from successful interim phasing strategies implemented in other malls, specifically citing Don Mills Mall and Yorkdale Mall as precedents. They also suggested including a schedule or appendix that showcases the examples of developments along the mall edges, as well as within the broader context.

Road Hierarchy

- Panel emphasized the importance of the road hierarchy and clearly identifying which roads can remain private and which one would expect to become public over time. As the development proceeds, providing more prescriptive and flexibility in the guideline is necessary.
- Panel addressed that the low street will be harder to achieve because of the amount of loading and servicing, and there is a significant grade difference from the north end. Therefore, Panel suggested re-evaluating the bicycle lane on that street by taking the high volume of loading and grade change into account.
- Panel suggested introducing principles for the high street to ensure there is a minimum percentage of frontages to be commercial. This is based on past experience which shows that some developments ended up with no active uses along similar streets with mostly structured parking.
- Panel commented that the hardest part of achieving a complete street is the continuous vegetation on the street and adequately dealing with subsurface utilities. Therefore, they suggested setting up priority for the street over making other decisions to line up with the trees.

END OF MINUTES