

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 117 – April 25, 2024

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, April 25, 2024. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec (Chair)

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle

Sharon Sterling, WSP / MMM Group Limited

Megan Torza, DTAH

Absent

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

STAFF

Gaston Soucy, Senior Manager, VMC Program

Cory Gray, Senior Manager, VMC Program

Matthew Peverini, Senior Planner, VMC Program

Natalie Wong, Senior Planner, VMC Program

Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development Planning

Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design Development Planning

Shirin Rohani, Urban Designer, Development Planning

Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Andrea Shotlander, Project Manager, VMC Program
Ashwani Kumar, Urban Designer, VMC Program
Julia Crane, Landscape Architect, VMC Program
Nicholas Trajkovski, Planner, VMC Program
Michelle Perrone, Planner, VMC Program
Jillian Britto, Transportation Project Manager, VMC Program
Lucy D'Acunto, Administrative Coordinator, Development Planning

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am with Alfredo Landaeta in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

None.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for March 28, 2024 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

201 Millway

Vaughan Metropolitan Centre

High-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 1st Review

Planner: KBFranklin Planning

Designer: Weston Consulting

Landscape Architect: Studio TLA

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- Are the proposed massing, site plan, ground floor plan uses and landscape design strategies adequately responding to the policy and context envisioned in the current VMC Secondary Plan, the forthcoming VMC Secondary Plan update and other VMC Guidelines and documents in creating the desired built-form balance and pedestrian scale to deliver a successful public realm in a downtown setting?

- Does the proposed building massing contribute to providing a clear and strong definition of the public realm and an appropriate transition to the adjacent employment lands to the north and Station Precinct lands to the south?
- Is the internal private road network fragmenting the site to the point of compromising the at-grade, pedestrian-oriented vision, functionality and proposed active uses?

Overview

- **Presentation:** The Panel commended the applicant for coming in with an early submission knowing that the application is in Expansion area B of the VMC Secondary Plan (VMCSP) boundary, which is pending Council endorsement.
- **Site Connectivity and Circulation:** The Panel raised concerns about conflicts between road access and the open space strategy, particularly with the N-S driveway disrupting pedestrian connectivity. It was noted that an east-west public road along the entirety of the northern site boundary would improve site connectivity, strengthen the pedestrian realm, and support the development functions. Enhanced pedestrian and cyclist connectivity to transit was also advocated.
- **Site Organization, Building Massing and Orientation:** Recommendations were made to reconsider the building massing and orientation to effectively frame the public streets and ensure compatibility with the surrounding developments. Emphasis was placed on establishing a strong building line along the street frontage and respecting the development vision for the larger area. The Panel advised tapering the proposed building heights to provide an appropriate transition to the neighbouring properties north of the VMC.
- **Architectural Design, Proposed Uses and Placemaking:** The Panel expressed concerns about the relationship between the proposed buildings and their respective uses and the feasibility of implementing the project as proposed given the complexity of the program. The applicant was directed to consider the compatibility of the proposed built form, uses and loading/servicing requirements to ensure they can be properly accommodated. The applicant was encouraged to explore non-residential uses in ways that enhance the development's appeal, support the VMC Policy documents and create a destination within the area.
- **Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS):** Reservations were expressed about the validity of the proposed POPS, with a suggestion to redesign and consolidate spaces to minimize pedestrian-vehicular conflicts and enhance the pedestrian realm. The Panel urged the applicant to organize the POPS by establishing a clear hierarchy of public spaces – distinguishing from public, semi-public and private zones – to create a more functional open space network.
- **Sustainability:** The Panel highlighted the need to consider the proposed development's carbon footprint and suggested to incorporate sustainability measures to improve pedestrian comfort in the public spaces.

Comments

Site Organization, Building Massing and Orientation

- The Panel suggested re-evaluating the building massing and orientation to create a stronger at-grade pedestrian experience defining the public streets with a strong podium building line. The applicant was advised to scale down the massing to ensure compatibility of the proposed built form with the surrounding developments. As such, the proposed building heights should respect the intent of the VMCSPP vision and provide appropriate transitions to the existing employment areas to the north.
- The Panel observed that the subject property location, at the corner of Jane Street and Portage Parkway, presents an opportunity to create a statement building, which can be achieved through the unique shaping of the building. The Panel would prefer a distinctive design through creative massing and architectural treatment as opposed to relying on building height.
- The Panel expressed concern about the proposed deep building podiums and the inefficient units produced as a result. Slimming the podium massing will allow for more feasible floor plates and better sun exposure into the interior spaces. The applicant was encouraged to consider the serviceability, use and functionality of the podium floor plates to better inform the design.

Site Connectivity and Circulation

- The Panel recommended revising the east-west driveway to an east-west local public road that connects from Millway Ave. to Jane Street as noted in the VMCSPP Update as this would significantly improve the site connectivity and alleviate some of the current site accessibility challenges.
- Various concerns were raised regarding conflicts between the proposed road network particularly the N-S Driveway that bisects and disrupts pedestrian connectivity across the proposed open spaces. It was noted that the north end of the property lacked a pedestrian focused approach and presented various safety concerns.
- The Panel acknowledged that while some pick-up and drop-off (PUDO) activities might happen along Millway Avenue, these areas should be accommodated along the east-west local road, catering to the different proposed uses, and given the size and scale of the proposed development.
- The Panel advocated for reinforcing a connection for pedestrians and cyclists to transit.

Architectural Design, Building Uses and Placemaking

- The Panel advised engaging a certified architect to better evaluate the feasibility of the proposed development and formulate a cohesive vision that aligns with VMCSPP Policy documents. Additionally, the Panel emphasized the need for credible plans and layouts to ensure the proposed uses are viable. A market feasibility study was recommended to explore a wider range of non-residential programs. While acknowledging the proposal's preliminary state, the Panel highlighted the importance of architectural design in creating a sense of place and identity for the development.

- The Panel expressed skepticism about the viability of the proposed non-residential uses, their relationship across the site and the surrounding vicinity. For example, the hotel building does not currently occupy the most prominent corner of the site and would benefit from a stronger street presence at the corner. Additionally, there is a conflicting relationship between the proposed linear POPS along the northern site boundary and the grocery store's back-of-the-house servicing and loading/unloading activities.

Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

- The Panel voiced significant concerns about the viability of the three proposed POPS and their non-conformance with POPS criteria defined in the VMC Policy documents. Panel members noted the lack of hierarchy, public exposure and poor pedestrian comfort and microclimate conditions especially for POPS-2 and the north linear POPS (identified as a Landscape Strip). POPS-2 was identified as a remnant open space with limited sun exposure.
- The Panel members encourage the applicant to rethink the POPS strategy to satisfy POPS criteria and prioritize the pedestrian experience. The Panel stressed the importance of considering human scale and enhancing pedestrian comfort in public spaces, noting that the development proposal will benefit from a clearer distinction between public and private open spaces.

Sustainability

- The Panel noted that while the development is in its early design stages, there is significant opportunity to enhance the sustainability approach and offset its carbon footprint. The subject location is within close proximity to the existing transit system and would strongly benefit from this connection being reinforced and further supported. The development should incorporate additional sustainable features and principles into the building design and overall plan.

END OF MINUTES