

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 118 – June 27, 2024

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, June 27, 2024. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Megan Torza, DTAH (Chair)

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle

Sharon Sterling, WSP / MMM Group Limited

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Absent

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will

Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

STAFF

Nancy Tuckett, Director of Development Planning

Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Manager of Urban Design & Cultural Heritage, Development Planning

Mary Caputo, Senior Manager of Development Planning

Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development Planning

Letizia D'Addario, Senior Planner, Development Planning

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Shirin Rohani, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development Planning
Shirley Marsh, Project Manager Urban Design, Development Planning
Cory Gray, Senior Manager, VMC Program
Andrea Shotlander, Project Manager, VMC Program
Ashwani Kumar, Urban Designer, VMC Program
Anna Rosen, Parks Development, VMC Program
Monica Wu, Senior Planner, VMC Program
Nicholas Trajkovski, Planner, VMC Program
Lucy D'Acunto, Administrative Coordinator, Development Planning

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 am with Megan Torza in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

None noted

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for April 25, 2024, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

3812 Major MacKenzie Dr. West

High-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 1st Review.

Planner: Blackthorn Development Corp.

Planner: SGL Planning and Design Inc.

Designer: Graziani and Corazza Architects

Landscape Architect: SGL Planning and Design Inc.

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- How successful are the proposed streetscape conditions and the interfaces between the building edges and the outdoor amenity spaces. How can the pedestrian realm be enhanced in the interim and the ultimate?
- How successful is the proposed sustainability strategy and how can it be enhanced?

Overview

- **Master Plan:** Panel requested that the Master Plan be effectively developed as a complete and thorough document. They questioned specific decisions of the Master Plan and encouraged the applicant to revisit the Master Plan prior to engaging in work related to Phase 1. More specifically working out the details in the key areas identified in need of refinement to bring out the quality, character and value, before moving ahead with the first phase of the development. Effectively developing the Master Plan will allow the clear delineation of phasing and more detailed design decisions necessary for the individual phases. Detailed Phase 1 design will be informed by and will reinforce decisions made at the Master Plan stage.
- **Presentation:** Panel recognized that the project is early in its progression and all the aspects of the design will need to be defined in greater detail. The applicant was asked to find and build layers of character and placemaking on the property at a Master Plan level of design. Panel specifically spoke to the following key elements:
- **Landscape Character:** Panel identified the open space network as a character building and placemaking device and encouraged the applicant to lead with landscape and explore how the robust, highly porous, interconnected network of landscapes on the property can create a network of spaces with different character. This would be reinforced and emphasized through the details of paving, planting, scale, topography, amenity, giving the opportunity to future residents to find their own place within those open spaces. Lastly, the flanking ground floor uses should be incorporated in the design to further emphasize the different characters and atmospheres to be developed at each part of the plan.
- **Streetscape Character:** Panel asked for more information on the scale, the material quality, and the relationship between the streetscape, the public realm and the ground floor uses. It was requested that the proponent create cross sections at the pedestrian scale to investigate the relationship between the streetscape and the flanking ground floor uses, and to ensure

that privacy for private uses and clarity of the limits between public and private landscape is achieved while pedestrian porosity is maintained.

- **Sustainable Design:** The constraints of the sustainable design mandate can be used as tools to create character. Panel considered the sustainability ambitions in the presented package as generic and strongly encouraged the applicant to create a more robust sustainability strategy to establish diverse spaces in terms of character and atmosphere and to educate residents on sustainability around water, biodiversity, wellness and more. Stormwater management and architectural design were identified as key elements to sustainability. A robust stormwater management strategy should be established on site and should be expressed at the surface of the site through landscape design. Similarly, for architecture, Panel noted that the 3D models contemplated a great amount of glazing, and the design of the elevations is not based on their orientation to the sun. Panel believed that overall, the architecture should better respond to its place in the world and meet sustainability ambitions to reduce energy consumption and in general to improve quality of life. This would contribute to the creation of a much more interesting and thought-provoking place.
- **Programming:** Consider the different programming that will take place in the proposed open space areas and ensure that this is reflected in the design of those spaces. Design should capture the permanent programming that is accommodated throughout the year but also the opportunities for temporary programming such as markets.
- **Ground floor uses:** Ground floor uses are critical to the establishment and maintenance of character of spaces. Panel encouraged the applicant to go through a detailed design exercise, looking at layer by layer how the different elements correspond with each other; frontages to road network, pedestrian network, lobbies and pedestrian desire lines, and transit facilities etc. Analyze each layer and scrutinize the relationship between the layers to resolve discrepancies and conflicts between them, such as the location of service areas, the active frontages, the lobby locations and the pedestrian circulation. Ensure that the decisions made at each layer reinforces the character of the site.

Comments

Site Organization

- Panel noted that the proposed phasing is confusing, as it is too expansive in terms of number of phases, does not provide a firm commitment as to when the public park will be provided and does not clarify the staging areas and the interim access points to the site.
- Panel questioned the road network and delivery as it relates to phasing. It is still unclear at what extent “New Road A” will be delivered at Phase 1 and as such Panel encouraged the applicant to provide the full extent of that road from Major Mackenzie to Farooq Blvd. This will allow for strong connectivity north-south but also to the east, not only for vehicles but also for pedestrians and cyclists. Also, for access to and from the site, if “New Road A” does not connect to Farooq Blvd. the only full-moves access would be at the west end of Sandwell, negatively impacting the existing townhouses.
- Panel noted that there are some strong decisions made that promote connectivity and aim to build a sense of place, specifically:
 - The diagonal pedestrian gesture through the site and the pedestrian connectivity it promotes.
 - The pick-up and drop-off areas and the pedestrian crossings as depicted on the Landscape Plan that contribute to the pedestrian circulation on the site.
 - There is a strong relationship between the urban square and the scale of the buildings framing it with the public streets.
 - Retail is proposed to frame the public streets and create active frontages.

However, Panel noted, that though there are some great materials put forth, the logical progression and rationale between key design decisions is not clear, and the project seems to be lacking in character.

- Further to the above, there is a strong opportunity to present the diagonal gesture as the spine of the project and then identify character areas around it organizing further the fronts of the buildings, the service areas, the lobbies, etc.
- Panel noted that there is a lost opportunity to establish a strong relationship between the uses of the buildings and the landscape. Some key examples of that, would be:
 - The service areas being spread through the site and framing urban open spaces.

- The lobbies not relating to one another, to street frontages, and the adjacent spill-out spaces.
- The daycare attempting to relate to the park but that relationship being interrupted by the private street and similarly not relating to the interior of the block because of the drop-off location.
- The retail edges not establishing connections through the landscape design to the urban square. They are noted as uses on the drawings, but that relationship is not reflected on the plans.
- Panel suggested establishing zones at the ground floor for specific supportive activities, to free up space for other uses. For example, the service areas now being spread throughout the site, can be consolidated in a specific zone, taking up a portion of the ground floor. That gesture will enhance the pedestrian quality of the woonerf, will free up areas of the site that are key to pedestrian connectivity such as the corners of the urban square, and allow for active pedestrian uses, such as lobbies or retail units, to expand.
- Panel noted that lobbies facing internally enhances connectivity through the woonerf and the pick-up and drop-off locations, however, where it is possible, lobbies should also connect to the outward streets bringing pedestrians from transit facilities into the site from all sides. Especially at Phase 1 when the road network will not be fully established, the lobby connection to “New Road A” will be necessary to serve the site, for pedestrian circulation and fire access.
- Regarding the daycare, Panel noted that it has the potential to activate the internal space if a stronger relationship to the piazza was established.
- Panel found the retail units uniform and generic in terms of layout and location and questioned whether they will be successful. A reevaluation of their size, and location would not only help in their success but will also activate the site. For example, if retail uses expanded internally to frame a portion of the woonerf, especially where greater pedestrian activity is expected, the woonerf would be more effectively engaged establishing the character of a mini commercial boulevard.
- Panel noted that coordination is required between the underground parking ramps and the loading and servicing areas. Currently the design requires for a truck to back out, which in some cases creates unsafe conditions for vehicles using the ramp. Considering also that this takes place on the woonerf, conflicts with pedestrian traffic will need to be resolved as well.
- Similarly, there are expected conflicts between the daycare pick-up/drop-off and the facilities serving the building, as the loop does not seem big enough to accommodate all expected cars visiting the daycare; a more detailed design approach is necessary to resolve the issue.

Streetscape

- Panel noted the need for a clear coordination between establishing a pedestrian and cyclist network and phasing. There are six phases in total and so in the interim when a portion of the woonerf and public/ private roads are not built, it is important to determine how people connect east-west, to the bus stops or cycling facilities.
- Panel noted that streetscapes are not well-defined or well-developed; specifically:
 - For the “New Road A” a street section would be required to clearly identify the different elements of that ROW; whether an MUP is provided or a sidewalk, whether cycling facilities contemplated and where etc.
 - Focus on the separation of the different streetscape elements, for example, the space separating the public sidewalk and the walk-ups. Those spaces should be designed as spaces of comfort accommodating additional vegetation and becoming “softer”. This will also allow the project to reach some high-level sustainability goals.
 - Relating to the woonerf design, Panel noted that the intersection of the eastern part of the woonerf and the private driveway will need to be designed in greater detail.
- All the servicing and access of all buildings on the site is to be accommodated through the ring road intended to be a woonerf. For the woonerf to be successful, it should be designed to represent its shared character and create a balance between pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular traffic, focusing on safe and effective pedestrian navigation through this space. In general, Panel noted that the woonerf is a good idea, but cross sections will need to be generated to establish the shared character of the space and ensure that pedestrian and cyclist can safely connect to the mid-block connections and the surrounding streets.
- The woonerf and the private “L” shaped driveway, proposed along the south and east edge of the park, serve the same purpose and the same loads and responsibility in terms of circulation and servicing, as such those two elements should not be treated differently and the woonerf treatment should be expanded to the driveway as well. Lastly, the entrance points of the driveway, should be designed to promote pedestrian connectivity along Farooq and the “New Road A”, with continuous sidewalks across the driveway entrances and paving treatment that is not indicative of a crosswalk but that is similar with the pedestrian connections provided through the woonerf.

Landscape Design

- Panel acknowledged the strong intentions built in the plan but noted that it is lacking in detail in various aspects, creating ambiguity on the character of the space.
- The arrangement of the open spaces and the interconnectivity envisioned is very interesting, however, the programming and activation of those open spaces would need to be coordinated with the proposed phasing. As it is communicated through the phasing plan, residents will be occupying the site prior to the creation of the bigger open spaces. If a portion of the park is built at Phase 1 then it can accommodate some programming for the first residents of this development. If not, then the internal spaces would need to be programmed appropriately to serve the different groups inhabiting the site.
- Panel noted that the park is now separated from the community due to the private driveway around it and encouraged the applicant to explore ways to establish that relationship.
- Similarly, it was noted that the urban square and the urban piazza are disconnected due to the woonerf, and it was suggested that an alternate design of two branches ending before the urban square is explored.
- The landscape design is still hardscape dominated, uniform, and the programming is passive. Panel encouraged the applicant to think intentionally about the programming of those spaces and to focus their efforts on establishing key programming zones while allowing for other areas to be more flexible and establish themselves more organically.
- Further to above, the character of the internal piazza should be defined more clearly, as a space to serve this community, reflecting the residential uses surrounding it. The design of this space should not be the same as an urban piazza but more at the intersection between an urban plaza and park with more an open green that is framed by urban elements. This central open green space can offer more flexible programming, allowing for spontaneous play areas for example.
- Key design decisions would need to be reevaluated in terms of feasibility and character for example:
 - There are mature trees depicted in restricted pits in the urban plaza and smaller trees depicted in raised open planters, where someone would be expecting the opposite.
 - There is a food production area proposed within the internal piazza which is at the harshest space possible as the piazza is heavily landscaped.
 - The piazza it is the central internal open space, inward oriented, framed by residential units, but it is treated mainly with hardscape

elements reaching up to the private front yards of the units creating a harsh environment.

- Panel questioned whether the urban plaza would be successful as a public gathering space due to the high-volume of traffic. The option to maintain pedestrian access, but space narrower by flanking it with additional exterior program or landscape elements should be explored.

Sustainability

- Panel noted that the presented sustainability goals are generic and “boilerplate” and noted that deliberate and creative sustainable design is necessary for this project to go beyond minimum standards. Specifically, Panel spoke to:
 - Carbon; The proposed open spaces are heavily hardscaped and as such carbon intensive. Incorporating more vegetation would be a first step in the reduction of the carbon footprint of this development.
 - Water; Water collected on site can be used for passive irrigation.
 - Biodiversity; Greater biodiversity can be incorporated into the design for the planting strategy.
 - Wellness; Wellness, active living and fitness should be incorporated and supported through the facilities proposed onsite; a key example to this is the bike parking rate which currently is not meeting minimum requirements and would need to be increased to meet community needs. Community spaces should be contemplated and with programs and uses phased in appropriately to effectively serve residents at all phases.
 - Tree Planting; The project is currently underachieving in tree planting and considering that all planting will need to be on slab open planters, establishing larger open green spaces can help in bringing more tree planting on site.
 - Architecture; The architecture should better respond to its place in the world and meet the sustainability ambitions to reduce energy consumption and in general to improve quality of life. Also, elevation design and materiality should respond effectively to the sun orientation of each façade.

END OF MINUTES

