

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 119 – September 26, 2024

The Design Review Panel (“Panel”) met virtually on Thursday, September 26, 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)

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc

Megan Torza, DTAH

Sharon Sterling, WSP Canada Inc.

Absent

Ute Maya-Giambattista, O2 Planning + Design Inc.

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle

Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

John Tassiopoulos, WSP Canada Inc.

STAFF

Cory Gray, Manager, Parks & Strategic Initiatives, VMC Program

Shahzad Davoudi-Strike, Manager of Urban Design and Culture Heritage, Development Planning

Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development Planning

Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design, Development Planning

Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development Planning

Shirin Rohani, Urban Designer, Development Planning

Ashwani Kumar, Urban Designer, VMC Program

Julia Crane, Landscape Architect, Policy Planning & Special Programs

Kemi Apanisile, Senior Planner, Development Planning

Temí Fashina, Development Engineering Review Coordinator, Policy Planning & Special Programs

Aimee Pugao, Acting Manager, Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development

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

N/A

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for September 26, 2024 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

3790 Highway 7

High-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 1st Review

Planner: KLM Planning

Designer: BDP Quadrangle

Landscape Architect: NAK Design Strategies

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. How successful is the masterplan in relation to the principles and vision of the Secondary Plan; specifically, in balancing intensification and creating an inclusive, well-connected and well-serviced community?
2. How successful is the proposed road network, open space system, massing, and scale?

Overview

- **Presentation:** Panel thanked the applicant for a strong package for the initial submission. Meanwhile, Panel recommended reinforcing the rationale by showing this development as part of a block plan in the context of the Secondary Plan area, which could help reshape an improved strategy for the overall structure, traffic circulation, architecture and public realm.

- **Road network:** Panel expressed concerns about the east-west road, especially the breakdown of public and private. It was noted that it is essential to relate it to the Weston 7 Secondary Plan and study the overall road network from a block plan level, focusing on how to connect this development with the surrounding community.

Additionally, Panel commented on the streetscape on road-facing facades and suggested minimizing the car spaces to provide a more active engaging presence, particularly on Tower C, to create a believable and successful retail component.

Panel highlighted the importance of creating a strong pedestrian connection to the surrounding public transit. Therefore, conducting further study on the green area and its connectivity, particularly in the area around Tower C is necessary.

- **Open spaces and edges:** Panel emphasized the importance of the block plan and how it impacts the structure of this development. Particularly when taking the north public park into consideration, proposing a park exposed to Highway 7 may not necessarily be perceived as an asset.

Additionally, the programming of this park should emphasize its role as a community hub within a larger network, serving as an activity attractor while creating meaningful connections in various directions. This approach will enhance the overall sense of integration with the block plan.

Panel noted the importance of aligning the proposed pedestrian circulation in the open spaces with natural desire lines. Since people tend to take the shortest routes to their destinations, designing circulation paths that follow these patterns will encourage movement and enhance the active use of the open spaces.

- **Architecture and ground floor use:** Panel expressed concern about the disconnection between the towers and the podiums. The towers get most of the attention with elegant design in terms of articulation and materials, however, the podiums are left without much consideration. Therefore, a stronger connection between the towers and podiums is recommended in terms of visual connection, materiality, and specific attention should be given to the podium facades that face the park to ensure they are interesting and engaging.

Further to the above, Panel suggested starting with adjustments to the podium massing to address wind issues, as this would not only strengthen the

architectural connection but also help with creating a more inviting open space and enhancing the outdoor activity environment.

Panel questioned the inward-focused approach to retail and amenity spaces, noting that it only addresses the density within this development. There is a missing opportunity here to adopt a broader community approach and maximize the uses of the central park to create a shopping anchor for a much bigger context.

Comments

Road Network and Circulation

- Panel questioned the east-west road that was proposed to the north side of the subject site and particularly the private portion of that road. It was noted that it needs to align with the City's Secondary Plan vision to ensure that a successful transportation plan can be achieved.
- Panel suggested implementing an active transportation network on both sides of the public road, particularly on the north side to ensure it connects to the future northern development and accommodate people to get down to Highway 7 without using Weston Road.
- Given the limited access to both Weston Road and Highway 7, the two main proposed access points are Right-In, Right-Out. Addressing transit constraints is especially crucial in the design of Phase One. Panel suggested a deeper understanding of the neighbouring property and its road network. Incorporating temporary access and facilitating east-west movement could improve vehicular circulation.
- Panel questioned the loading and servicing location for Building C as it sacrificed a lot of outdoor amenity space and compromised the public realm on the street edge that should be treated as a public street. The ring road that services Building A and B helped provide servicing consolidation, and Panel suggested continuing the servicing for Building C through this lane, so that the north edge of Building C can be effectively used for a more pedestrian-scaled public realm.

Site Organization

- In general, the context is critical for the site design, and Panel strongly recommended expanding the plan to include the adjacent neighbouring developments, allowing the site design to be reviewed holistically at the block scale. This approach aims to prevent individual developers from independently developing their own portions at different times, which could result in a fragmented and disjointed public realm.
- Further to the above, creating a contextual map would help determine an appropriate height and density that aligns and complements the context. Given

the gateway location of the subject site, considering the skyline will also help this development integrate better with other developments.

- The Panel specifically mentioned the abutting gas station and recommended taking that into the overall design consideration. Because the future redevelopment of the gas station could have potential access to Weston Road and Highway 7 which would in turn help to shape this site structure and improve the road network.
- Given that more people currently rely on shared transportation modes, the Pick-Up/Drop-Off (PUDO) area has become more important. In Building C, the combined location of the loading and PUDO area creates conflicts. Panel suggested separating them and relocating the servicing and loading to the lane, which allows the lane to consolidate all the servicing. This would free up the east-west road for more active frontage and improved pedestrian engagement.

Park and Public Realm

- The Weston 7 Secondary Plan identified a bigger community park in the area, but the concept proposed a smaller neighbourhood park with less programming. Panel questioned how this park would align with the Secondary Plan vision and suggested reconsidering its size and particularly the programming.
- Additionally, Panel recognized the challenges posed by the park's size and location due to the property division. However, this split will complicate the connectivity and programming between the parks in two adjacent properties. How to ensure the proposed programming complements those planned for the northern property should be further investigated.
- The Panel emphasized the need for better alignment between the public desire lines and the proposed pedestrian circulation. People would want to get to public transit through the shortest path. Designing a pedestrian circulation by adjusting the hard and softscape in response to the public desire lines is essential to creating a successful public realm.
- Panel criticized the design of the public realm for its internal focus rather than contributing to the larger context. To improve this, the plan should consider creating urban edges and focus on street relationships rather than buffering from the street.
- Further to the above, Panel recommended using context photos of northern and eastern frontages as of today to help get the pedestrian realm and ground floor design right, as it provides references to balance temporary uses with the vision of new development.
- Panel questioned the edge interface treatment along the adjacent gas station as it is currently treated as a buffer as opposed to considering potential future connections and promoting permeability. Particularly for the mews south of Tower C, where a lot of raised planters form like obstacles that prevent connectivity.

Ground Floor Uses

- Given the location of the subject site is so close to the major intersection within the Weston 7 Secondary Plan, the ground floor uses should be much more activated to accommodate not only the density of this development but also consider contributing to the future surrounding development as it evolves. Instead of using only townhouse units at grade, Panel encouraged exploring the podium design by using larger retail, community, daycare or other engaging activities to activate the ground floor uses to support a broader community.
- A lack of activated outdoor amenity space was pointed out with a suggestion to reconsider the retail positioning and functionality. Further recommendations include podium articulation, retail patio incorporation and enhancing connectivity to strengthen the overall public realm.
- Panel appreciated the design of central space with community facilities around it, recognizing it as a positive path forward. To further enhance this, strengthening the connection between indoor and outdoor space is essential. Panel also suggested incorporating distinct amenity accessible to all residents to foster greater community engagement.
- Further to the above, Panel cited a precedent of condo development on King East, where amenities are shared amongst three buildings. This shared use creates a nexus of community at the center of the site, which allows individuals from the three buildings to have more opportunities to communicate with each other when passing through the central public realm.
- Panel suggested strengthening the park activity as the focal point of the community. To achieve this, they recommended adjusting more active uses towards the centre park and moving the back-of-house uses to the perimeter streets, therefore sacrificing the perimeter to allow more opportunities to lean into the park.

Architecture

- Panel appraised the elegant design of the towers to allow each to have their own personality but within the same family. However, the podium was left without careful consideration which looked like completely un-related pieces stitched together. In addition to using material or massing articulation to better incorporate the podium into the tower, Panel also suggested lowering the podium height which also reduced the shadow impact on the public realm.
- Given the lace is the inspiration for the tower design, and the architectural appearance leans into the fabric metaphor, like denim it has a “warp” and “weft” that can be seen and felt. Panel recommend extending this visual interest to the podium, even with very different articulation or massing, the continuity of this visual interest could bring comfort and scale to the pedestrian.

Microclimate and Sustainability

- The wind study shows a lot of uncomfortable areas in the public realm, particularly for the POPS and north edge of the site. Panel recommended resolving this through podium massing adjustment at this early stage as it is more effective. Additionally, creating a more comfortable wind condition for the public realm could allow the POPS design to be more engaging with the potential of seating and hang-out space.

- Panel appreciated the sustainable design ideas around geothermal, balconies and solar heat gain, and encouraged the applicant to continue doing the exploration and detailing them in the final designs.

END OF MINUTES