

# **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

## **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

### **Meeting 121 – October 31, 2024**

---

The Design Review Panel (“Panel”) met virtually on Thursday, October 31, 2024. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

#### **PANEL MEMBERS**

##### **Present**

Paul Kulig, Perkins+Will (Chair – acting in the absence of Alfredo Landaeta)

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle

Sharon Sterling, WSP Canada Inc.

Ute Maya-Giambattista, O2 Planning + Design Inc.

Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc

John Tassiopoulos, Williams & Stewart Associates Limited

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

##### **Absent**

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Megan Torza, DTAH

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

##### **STAFF**

Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning and Special Programs

Gaston Soucy, Senior Manager, VMC Program

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

Musa Deo, Manager, Development Engineering, VMC Program

Matthew Peverini, Senior Development Planner, VMC Program

Monica Wu, Senior Development Planner, VMC Program

Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design, Development Planning

Shirin Rohani, Urban Designer, Development Planning  
Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Designer, Development Planning  
Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development Planning  
Andrea Shotlander, Project Manager, Urban Design, VMC Program  
Anna Rosen, Project Manager, Parks Development, VMC Program  
Ashwani Kumar, Urban Designer, VMC Program  
Nicholas Trajkovski, Planner, VMC Program  
Michelle Perrone, Planner, VMC Program  
Dana Khademi, Stormwater Engineer, VMC Program  
James Norris, Development Engineering Lead, VMC Program  
Jillian Britto, Transportation Project Manager, VMC Program  
Temi Fashina, Development Engineering Review Coordinator, VMC Program  
Lucy D'Acunto, Administrative Coordinator, Development Planning

**The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am with Paul Kulig 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 September 26, 2024 were approved.

**4. DESIGN REVIEW**

**2951-2957 Highway 7 (Phase 1) – 1834371 Ontario Inc.**

**Vaughan Metropolitan Centre**

**High-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 2<sup>nd</sup> Review**

Architect & Planner: Arcadis

Landscape Architect: Landart Design

## Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Has the architectural design for Phase 1 development successfully addressed the Panel's previous comments regarding:
  - Refining building massing to create a more pedestrian-friendly and human-scaled environment;
  - Shifting from a vehicle-centric site plan towards a more pedestrian- and cyclist-oriented public realm;
  - Enhancing public spaces with compatible at-grade uses to improve activation; and,
  - Consolidating loading and service areas to reduce vehicular space and strengthen indoor-outdoor connectivity.
2. Are the architectural design, materiality and overall expression achieving the placemaking objectives for a mixed-use development in the Station Precinct as envisioned in the VMC Secondary Plan and supporting policy documents, while also balancing sustainability goals?

## Overview

- **Presentation:** The Panel thanked the applicant for a well-prepared presentation and commended their ambition to create a mixed-use development that blends residential, retail, and green spaces within an urban environment. However, the Panel urged a re-evaluation of the site organization, encouraging the applicant to shift away from suburban, car-centric strategies in favor of a layout that better supports pedestrian access, active public spaces, and connectivity to the broader community.
- **Building Identity and Context:** The Panel highlighted the need for a unified design that creates a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment and aligns with the project's high-density, mixed-use, urban aspirations. By shifting retail toward sunnier locations and emphasizing connections with the surrounding community, the project could foster a more inviting, pedestrian-friendly character that strengthens its urban identity. A contextual plan showing how the site fits within the area's broader development would help ensure that the project complements its surroundings and reflects a consistent urban identity.
- **Site Organization and Balance of Uses:** Reservations were expressed about the site's car-centric layout, recommending a rebalancing of uses to reduce vehicle prioritization and emphasize pedestrian and amenity spaces. The Panel suggested that the outdoor amenity space should be more accessible and integrated with building entrances. Reducing surface parking and consolidating vehicular access would allow for a more cohesive, community-oriented design.

- **Pedestrian Prioritization and Public Realm Activation:** The Panel advised improving pedestrian and cyclist routes to connect with transit facilities and future parks, with clear wayfinding and accessible entryways. Removing some surface parking would improve the quality of the outdoor amenity space which has the potential to become the “heart of the community”. The Panel emphasized the need for sufficient bicycle parking to encourage active transportation.
- **Detailed Site and Design Considerations:** The Panel recommended addressing specific design elements at this stage to create a comfortable, pedestrian-friendly experience. This includes optimizing lobby access, minimizing clutter from vent shafts, and organizing ground-level elements for accessibility and visual appeal. Referencing similar high-density projects could provide guidance for achieving a cohesive design that maximizes green space without compromising functionality.

## Comments

### Building Identity and Context

- The Panel noted that the proposal exhibits an ambitious mixed-use program, aiming to incorporate retail, residential, and outdoor amenity spaces within a dense urban setting. However, the current organization leans heavily on suburban, car-centric principles, which conflict with the desired urban character and connection to the surrounding context.
- The Panel suggested relocating or adding additional retail connectivity to areas with better sun exposure and closer integration with the outdoor amenity space to encourage pedestrian activity. By rethinking retail spaces and strengthening pedestrian connections, the project could establish a more cohesive identity that aligns with the evolving urban context of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre.
- Further integration between the building’s identity and its surroundings was recommended to avoid “orphaning” the outdoor amenity space. The Panel advised to focus on pedestrian engagement where community-serving retail and amenity areas could be reimagined for better integration with the streetscape.

### Site Organization and Balance of Uses

- The Panel emphasized that the current site organization prioritizes vehicle circulation over pedestrian access, which leads to fragmented public and green spaces that feel secondary within the layout. The applicant was encouraged to explore a more compact, less vehicle-dependent circulation strategy that consolidates vehicle access, potentially placing parking and services underground.
- At-grade parking and service areas surrounding the outdoor amenity space limit its usability as a community space. The Panel recommended rethinking the layout to integrate the outdoor amenity space seamlessly with building entrances and

pedestrian pathways, creating a cohesive space where people can gather without interference from vehicular traffic.

- The Panel stressed that optimizing the site for pedestrian-friendly circulation would create a safer, more welcoming atmosphere while supporting a balanced mix of uses. Adjusting lobby entrances, relocating garbage and service operations to lower levels, and minimizing surface parking could significantly enhance the site organization.
- The Panel advised reconsidering the Pick-up and Drop-off (PU DO) strategy, noting that the current perpendicular parking provision would be insufficient for a development of this scale and might create conflicts. Additional short-term parking areas should be supported to better serve retail and residential needs. The applicant was encouraged to collaborate with the City on aspects like on-street parking, to support retail spaces and minimize the need for on-site surface parking.

### Pedestrian Prioritization and Public Realm Activation

- The current layout does not adequately support a continuous pedestrian flow or clearly defines entry points. Sidewalks are frequently interrupted by vehicular movement and loading zones, which reduces pedestrian safety. The Panel highlighted the importance of prioritizing pedestrian access, connectivity, and safety, especially given the site's proximity to transit facilities.
- The Panel encouraged the applicant to enhance pedestrian and cyclist connectivity, creating clearer, safer routes to transit and community amenities.
- To activate the public realm, the Panel suggested reimagining the site as a pedestrian-focused environment, with better-defined routes, inviting entrances, and well-connected open spaces.
- The applicant was encouraged to adopt a more intuitive pedestrian circulation strategy that would guide users through active, engaging spaces toward the central outdoor amenity area, creating a focal point for community interaction.

### Detailed Site and Design Considerations

- The Panel noted a lack of detailing and design development in the proposal, given the advanced stage of the Development Approval application.
- Several recommendations were made to improve specific design elements such as vent shaft placement, materiality, paving treatments, canopy treatments, and driveway configurations to enhance visual appeal and functional quality.
- Vent shafts and other infrastructural elements need to be strategically placed and screened to avoid cluttering open spaces. The Panel emphasized the importance of resolving these elements in the current stage of design, not later.
- Various concerns were raised regarding conflicts between service functions, including loading and garbage collection, and pedestrian movement. The proposal would benefit from freeing up the valuable ground-floor space for pedestrian and community uses.

- Expanding and relocating bicycle parking closer to entrances would also support sustainable travel options.
- The Panel encouraged the applicant to reference established similar urban precedents (18 Yorkville Avenue, Toronto) that effectively balance public space and reduce clutter at ground level, creating a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented environment.

**END OF MINUTES**