

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 122 – November 28th, 2024

The Design Review Panel (“Panel”) met virtually on Thursday, November 28th, 2024. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc

John Tassiopoulos, Williams & Stewart Associates Limited

Absent

Megan Torza, DTAH

Paul Kulig, Perkins+Will

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Ute Maya-Giambattista, O2 Planning + Design Inc.

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

STAFF

Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning and Special Programs

Gaston Soucy, Senior Manager, VMC Program

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

Shahzad Davoudi-Strike, Senior Manager, Development and Parks Planning

Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Policy Planning & Special Programs

Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design, Development and Parks Planning

Shirin Rohani, Urban Designer, Development and Parks Planning

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Designer, Development and Parks Planning

Alex Yang, Urban Designer, Development and Parks Planning
Aimee Pugao, Acting Manager, Parks and Open Space 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
Dana Khademi, Stormwater Engineer, VMC Program

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 November 28, 2024 were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

City of Vaughan POPS Guidelines & Standards

Planner: gladki planning associates

Landscape Architect: DTAH

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Do the base requirements include everything we should cover?
2. Do you foresee any challenges with the Points Based Approach during design?
3. On your experience with any developments that have active features in POPS or stratified parks?
4. Now that all POPS will have active features, what do you use as the major design or implementation challenges?

Overview

- **Presentation:** Panel thanked the consultant for the thorough presentation and appreciated the ambitious approach. They noted that it established a strong framework and language while reinforcing the City's public realm and open space vision through the credit system.
- **Future Proofing:** Panel suggested providing incentives that could be negotiated with the owner, proposing a formula that allows larger POPS to share maintenance costs with the City. This approach would prevent full reliance on condo associations, which may become unsustainable over time. Panel also noted that residents in buildings with larger POPS could face significantly higher condo fees compared to those with smaller ones.
- **Hierarchy System:** Panel recommended creating measures to ensure a well-integrated open space system with diverse scales and uses that cater to various needs while avoiding redundancy and duplicated functions.
- **Legal Template:** Panel suggested implementing a robust legal framework to guide the process, particularly in the phases following the condo association's takeover. Given that maintenance costs could become a significant financial burden, clear guidelines and long-term strategies are essential to ensure the sustainability and upkeep of these spaces over time.

Comments

Vision & Principles

- Panel recommended more consideration of environmental factors, including resiliency, and climate adaptation. Incorporating climate mitigation strategies into landscape design, such as bioswales and water retention features to address the climate crisis.
- Panel recognized the effort to introduce activity-driven design into the spaces, enhancing their meaning, narrative, and programming in a way that resonates with the local community and complements existing amenities.
- Panel recommended including public safety as a sub-point, emphasizing the importance of visibility and natural surveillance ('eyes on the space') to ensure that people of all ages and genders feel comfortable and welcomed.
- Panel inquired about budget considerations and their impact on deliverable quality. It emphasized that cost allocation—determining who pays for what—will influence the design. Panel recommended coordinating with City staff to clarify cost responsibilities and ensure the design meets the intended quality standards.

POPS Hierarchy

- Panel highlighted the distinction between POPS and public parks in terms of programming and use. It noted that POPS, often irregularly shaped, provide an opportunity to create a dynamic interface between buildings and the city. Unlike the more uniform layout of public parks with defined uses, POPS may consider other potential like passive uses. However, City staff confirmed that if requesting Parkland credit for the POPS, it has to be designed to the satisfaction of the City.
- Panel inquired about the mid-block connection in the VMC and whether it could be credited. City staff confirmed that in the VMC, the mews are considered part of the transportation network rather than the parkland system. As a result, it is not credible and will not be considered a POPS.
- Further to the above, Panel expressed concerns about the transition spaces such as mews and mid-block connections that should not be considered as a POPS. Conversely, if they are not able to receive credit, there would be no incentive to create them, potentially resulting in their complete loss. Given their importance in the design, Panel recommended a more flexible approach, such as awarding bonus points when considering parkland credit.

Uses and activity

- In terms of space activation, Panel suggested avoiding a single-focus design, as it may make the space feel limited to one purpose. They emphasized that the best public spaces are diverse and inclusive, supporting a mix of activities, populations, and natural elements.
- Panel suggested implementing a flexible point system for guiding POPS active uses, allowing for adaptability to evolving community needs rather than relying on a fixed or overly prescriptive list.
- Regarding active uses, Panel recommended using a broader term, such as 'other appropriate active spaces,' rather than specifying retail or food services. This approach would help prevent these uses from being placed deep within the building and instead encourage their integration with the POPS interface.
- Panel emphasized the difference between a public park and a POPS, noting that public parks are typically more rectangular and subject to specific restrictions, whereas POPS offer greater flexibility in design and experience. Panel questioned why a different shape of POPS with similar public benefit—such as one surrounded by restaurant patios that create a public atmosphere—should not receive credit simply because it does not conform to a traditional rectangular shape with typical sports program within it.
- Panel recommended greater flexibility in defining POPS by establishing a specific threshold or minimum requirement, such as 500 square meters or 10 percent of a site. Passive spaces have value, and not all areas need to be active spaces. To prevent the loss of significant parkland through this approach, allowing more

flexibility could encourage creativity and foster greater community engagement. Additionally, greater flexibility can also ensure a variety of spaces with different qualities and scales, contributing to rich and dynamic environments. POPS should complement other spaces rather than serve as a replacement.

END OF MINUTES