

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 114 – March 28, 2024

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, March 28, 2024. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec (Chair)

Megan Torza, DTAH

Ute Maya-Giambattista, SGL Planning & Design Inc.

Peter Turner, Turner Fleischer Architects Inc

Harim Labuschagne, BDP Quadrangle

Paul Kulig, Perkins + Will (Vice Chair)

Fung Lee, PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group (Conflict with 1st item)

Absent

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

Sharon Sterling, WSP / MMM Group Limited

STAFF

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

Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development Planning

Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design Development Planning

Shirin Rohani, Urban Design, Development Planning

Armine Hassakourians, Project Manager, Policy Planning & Special Programs

Alex Yang, Urban Design, Development Planning

Andrea Shotlander, Project Manager, VMC Program

Christina Bruce, Director, Project Manager, Policy Planning & Special Programs

Christina Ciccone, Senior Planner, Policy Planning & Special Programs

Nancy Tuckett, Director, Development Planning

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 am with Alfredo Landaeta in the Chair.

1. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA

APPROVED unanimously by present members.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Sharon Sterling, conflict with the 1st item on the agenda

Margaret Briegmann, conflict with the 1st item on the agenda

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

The meeting minutes for March 28, 2024, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

LIVEON Yonge
7080 Yonge Street
High-Rise Mixed Use Development, 1st Review
Architect: Kirkor Architects
Planner: Weston Consulting
Landscape: Studio tla

Introduction

1. Is the project responding effectively to the principles, goals and vision of the Yonge & Steeles Secondary Plan and the Yonge & Steeles Urban Design and Streetscape Plan as those related to:
 - a. Sustainability
 - b. Active, safe and accessible sites
2. How successful is the project in creating active, engaging frontages along the surrounding public streets and the park?

Overview

- **Presentation:** Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive presentation, the detailed package, and good quality renderings.
- **Massing and Built Form:** The panel appreciated the site's challenging geometry and acknowledged that most of the massing was determined through

hearing settlements. However, panel advised the applicant to improve the massing's readability by further simplifying the built form and creating more expressive volumes.

- **Ground Floor and Edge Conditions:** There was a unanimous concern regarding the porte-cochere, the six parking spaces, and the juxtaposition of the non-compatible uses proposed in the area. Panel noted other opportunities to improve the space, such as optimizing the ground floor and reorganizing the service uses, relocating the indoor and outdoor amenity spaces to upper floors, and allocating the freed-up space for a better-integrated parking and loading space and further separation between the vehicular circulation with pedestrians and the public realm.
- **Land use and Public Interface:** Panel expressed concern about the inadequacy and undesirability of the outdoor amenity space. The applicant was encouraged to relocate the amenity spaces to the upper floors with better access and connections to the residential units. Furthermore, this move will create space on the ground floor for other critical uses. Panel questioned the size and presence of the lobbies and other pedestrian entrances along the main façade and the feasibility and functionality of the proposed retail along the south-western frontage of the building, specifically during the interim phases of the secondary plan's development.
- **Sustainability:** The applicant was encouraged to look into the sustainability performances as an integral part of the building design, infrastructure, and material choice and set a high standard in sustainable design by going above and beyond the minimum required standards and what can be achieved due to the site's location and its proximity to amenities and infrastructures.
- **Overall:** The panel complimented the design team on their effort to achieve a functional site within a tight and constrained site while dealing with the complexities of the interim and ultimate conditions.

Comments

General Massing and Built form

- It was acknowledged that massing was mostly determined as part of OLT settlements. The site's narrow geometry made controlling the edges of the property very difficult. Panel noted that a lack of dialogue between the site and the neighbouring properties to the north dictates a blank wall along the northern property boundary. The applicant was advised to be cognizant of that condition and adjust the design accordingly.
- Panel also pointed out that the architectural move that signifies the expression of a corner condition along Yonge Street and the eastern portion of the building is interrupted by the rectangular volume of the commercial spaces fronting Yonge and also by another different expression, the colonnades, which both compete against the intent of having a lower but bolder tower volume along Yonge and a taller tower further in the back. The panel advised simplifying the moves further to have a more pronounced volumetric expression.

Ground Floor Organization and Interfaces

- Panel unanimously criticized the porte-cochere and the pedestrian experience in that space and noted that having a garbage pickup external to the building and beside the lobby entrance creates a very harsh condition. Panel recommended internalizing all the back-of-the-house services to create a clear separation between the incompatible uses. Furthermore, some panel members questioned the prominent parking and loading access location and suggested that the western edge of the building might be a better location for vehicular access, which should be explored. There was a consensus among the members that the number of pick-up and drop-off spots should be reduced or eliminated completely in favour of a more pronounced pedestrian environment. Panel emphasized the fact that these types of accommodations for vehicular drop-off have no place within a densification area in close proximity to transit infrastructure with a big focus on pedestrian circulation.
- The size of the residential lobbies along the future Royal Palm Drive was criticized. Panel found the porte-cochere, which serves as loading and servicing access and a few pick-up and drop-off spaces, became the dominant focal point and overshadowed the importance of other uses. Panel advised reducing the size of the porte-cochere and increasing the presence of pedestrian entrances along the Royal Palm Drive to establish a residential prominent entrance.
- Panel questioned the viability of the commercial unit along the park, specifically in the interim conditions. Furthermore, Panel noted that the commercial units proposed along Royal Palm Drive are extremely shallow, which creates challenging conditions for accommodating the back-of-the-house services of the individual units, causing active facades to be blocked off. The applicant was advised to rearrange the ground floor by relocating the amenity spaces elsewhere and considering deeper commercial units that can house the required services and the back of the house needs on the north side of the units and away from the public frontages.
- The location, size, and microclimate of the indoor and outdoor amenity spaces and their access and functionality in the proposed location were questioned. Panel advised relocating the amenity spaces to the upper floor to achieve better quality amenity spaces and reshuffling the services on the ground floor to achieve functionality for the other proposed ground floor uses.

Architectural Expressions and Elevation

- Panel expressed concern regarding some of the architectural features, such as the proposed colonnade along the southern façade, being ornamental and tacked on to the building façade. They noted the risk of these features being value-engineered and eliminated at the final stages, leaving the building with a façade relying only on colour variations for architectural expression. Panel expressed that the façade elements and architectural features should preferably be an integral part of the building structure to ensure an articulated and vibrant façade can be achieved.
- Furthermore, the prominence and visibility of the community space entrance along the public realm was questioned and a revision in the location of the entrance and its expression was recommended.
- Additionally, panel noted that the efforts invested in the architectural expression of the porte-cochere are more suitable elsewhere as the proposed breezeway

houses back-of-the-house services such as garbage pick up, loading and the parking ramp and recommended celebrating other uses such as the residential lobbies, and the community entrance instead.

- The proposed colonnade and its functionality were questioned due to its ornamental character and its limited separation from the main façade. These noted qualities limited its performance as a usable space and could potentially have an adverse impact on pedestrian circulation and the visibility of the retail behind it.

Sustainability and Landscape

- The panel noted that many of the development's achieved sustainability points are within the categories tied to the site's location and proximity to the public transit, which does not require additional design efforts. Panel encouraged the applicant to achieve more by showing leadership and setting benchmarks for other developments in the area. Panel specifically pointed to the areas of particular improvements, such as increasing EVSE (electric vehicle supply equipment), protected spots, and rough-ins from 10 percent to a higher percentage to meet the demands and objectives of the future.
- Panel pointed to the importance of allocating car-share spaces in the parking garage, considering the development's proximity to future high-order transit, which indicates reduced demand for car ownership.
- Furthermore, it was noted that the sustainability points achieved in the infrastructure and building section are related to the landscape features, light pollution and bird-friendly design, all mandatory requirements enforced by law in most municipalities, including Vaughan. Panel encouraged demonstrating further efforts in reducing the building's embodied carbon and enhancing its performance associated with the building design that is currently missing from the list of proposed achievements.
- The sliver of land dedicated to outdoor amenity spaces could feel claustrophobic and constrained from a pedestrian safety and comfort perspective. Panel advised on integrating the space as an extension to the interior amenity area to achieve better function.
- The view terminus of the proposed breezeway, which houses the garbage pick-up area and access to the parking ramp was questioned, and panel advised on additional design features such as screens to enhance the pedestrian experience and the view terminus of the breezeway.

Nova Condos
10069 Weston Road
Mid-Rise Residential Development, 1st Review
Architect: Turner Fleischer Architects
Planner: Humphries Planning Group
Landscape: Site/C Landscape Architecture Inc.

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- How successful is the built-form transition to the surrounding context?
- How successful are the architecture and landscape interfaces in addressing the Weston Road and the surrounding context?
- How can the design improve in terms of sustainability and accessibility?

Overview

- **Presentation:** Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive presentation and appreciated all the efforts in preparing great graphics, and a clear and thorough presentation.
- **Massing:** Panel expressed concerns about the massing for the long building and commented on the current unsuccessful technique that is used in breaking the long façade by only creating several big chunks with multiple materials.

Panel questioned the necessity of the bridge as it strengthened the large massing appearance by setting up a datum line and unifying everything together in a strong way. Therefore, panel suggested removing the bridge and introducing some variations in height to add more articulations and make it look like multiple buildings.

- **Coordination and Pedestrian route:** Panel highly recommended coordinating with the southern development to negotiate a shared access point out of the private laneway to the south. It would provide an opportunity to consolidate vehicular routes, increase outdoor amenity areas, and significantly improve pedestrian circulation.

Panel strongly urged coordination with the southern development to create a seamless pedestrian connection, to allow people not only from this development but also from the surrounding context to access Major Mackenzie Dr in a direct way.

- **Ground Floor Layout:** Panel criticized the lobby layout for the lack of public street opening and completely focused on the internal drop-off area. This deviates from the principle of creating a pedestrian-oriented space.

Panel disagreed with the location of amenity space for the lack of public exposure and pedestrian access. The design looks like an afterthought because it is located between the underground ramp and garbage loading, while the most appropriate space that has access and public visibility is designed for surface parking instead.

- **Landscape:** Panel expressed concerns about the overuse of raised planters everywhere which creates lots of unnecessary walls and negatively impacts the public realm. While maintaining a robust soil for healthy planting is important, Panel recommended maximizing the flush condition wherever possible.
- **Grading:** Panel questioned the grading strategy that caused unpleasant at-grade conditions for some units. And therefore, suggested disconnecting the two buildings to have a flexible strategy to negotiate the grading conditions between inside and outside in an elegant way.

Comments

General Massing and Scale

- Panel expressed concerns regarding the overall large massing, particularly the bridge visually extending the building length and accentuating the overall appearance. Therefore, Panel suggested further breaking the visual appearance by removing the bridge, using a larger setback, and using different building heights to add more articulation. Furthermore, continue to explore façade articulation strategy to differentiate the two buildings.
- Panel highlighted the townhouse condition to the north of the site and recommended using a 2 to 3-storey podium with the upper storey further setback to recognize this scale across the street. This would be more successful in achieving a pedestrian-scaled streetscape.

Site Organization and Coordination

- Panel highlighted the redundancy of the double driveway condition to the south edge, arguing that it represents a missed opportunity for more efficient site planning, including the shared access point, better vehicular circulation, viable outdoor amenity space, and pedestrian connection.
- Panel emphasized that from a forward-thinking perspective, the presence of double driveway condition offers nothing but speaks to the inability to coordinate. Drawing upon examples from Yonge and Steeles, where multiple landowners effectively collaborated to create shared driveways and entrances in a much higher-density setting. The successful coordination between five or six partners suggests that addressing coordination challenges within this much

smaller development is not insurmountable, but rather a matter of strategic urban design.

- Panel expressed disagreement with the current layout of the building's rear site, where dominated by surface parking and vehicular movement but lacks public realm for pedestrian movement. Panel recommended moving as many cars as possible to the underground parking to create more areas for a meaningful outdoor amenity space.
- Further to the above, Panel commented that the proposed little outdoor amenity space was not viable because it is surrounded by the laneway, underground ramp, and garbage loading. Panel suggested consolidating the garbage and loading zone and relocating the amenity space.

Pedestrian Circulation

- Panel highlighted the opportunity to create a seamless north-south pedestrian connection that aligns with the intuitive user desire lines towards Major Mackenzie Dr. This connection not only enhances accessibility for this development but also strengthens the permeability of the broader context.
- Further to the above, it is imperative to note that the pedestrian connection does not necessitate the perfect alignment of the breezeway with the southern development. It is more important to create a meaningful and viable public realm to foster a seamless connection. To achieve this, Panel advocated for the reduction of surface parking to facilitate a more generous and inviting amenity area that seamlessly integrates with the desired north-south pedestrian circulation.

Ground Floor Layout and Grading

- Panel suggested improving the ground floor plan by accurately describing the grade relationship with the floor plan as well as the landscape plan. The current landscape plan indicates 8 risers of grade difference while the overall site is drawn flat, and the rendering did not accurately reflect these grade changes.
- Panel noted a grading concern for some ground-floor units, as their level is significantly lower than the natural grade. Consequently, this results in an undesirable condition for the upper-floor balconies within reach of the street, diminishing their appeal and aesthetic value.
- Panel questioned the lobby design from both layout and grading perspectives. The current design is car-oriented and only opens to the pick-up/drop-off area, also it is sunken down below grade. This design not only causes drainage issues but also lacks public visibility from the street. To address this, creating an opening to the public street for the lobby is necessary.
- Panel commented on the townhouse unit design being restricted by the grading. The townhouse units run hundreds of metres long and are connected to a central corridor that is controlled a constant elevation making it difficult to integrate with the variations in the exterior grading.

- Further to the above, Panel suggested breaking down the central corridor connection to allow the townhouse units on different levels and to integrate better with the exterior grading. Additionally, make up the grade difference by using a higher second or third floor to maintain a constant datum. This design would allow a consistent grade condition at the porch level, enhancing accessibility and usability.

Architectural

- Panel criticized the bridge design as it is not necessarily needed from a floor plan perspective but significantly impacts the overall massing and the reading of the built form from the street. To improve the overall massing, Panel suggested removing the bridge and designing the massing as two separate buildings.
- Further to the above, the space between the two separated buildings could be designed into a landscaped courtyard and extended with meaningful outdoor amenity space to allow a bigger and more viable pedestrian realm that aligns with the pedestrian desire line and promotes connectivity.
- Panel suggested further breaking up the massing of the building by recognizing the building corner with glass material, which helps articulate the building in a positive way.
- Panel disagreed with the balcony design, citing concerns that it makes the façade busier than it needs to be, especially given the substantial scale of the building. As a remedy, an inset balcony design could mitigate this visual clutter.

Landscape

- Panel expressed concerns about the fragmented nature of the current landscape design, resulting in underutilized and visually unappealing scattered spaces. The current design looks like an afterthought and should be improved by cohesive planning and integration with the overall development.
- Further to the above, Panel highlighted the undesired condition that the surface parking and asphalt driveway occupied the majority of the building's rear side. A deduction of surface parking in exchange for a better pedestrian environment is highly recommended.
- Panel suggested providing a more generous setback from Weston Rd. This aligns with the Secondary Plan and helps the residential units to have a better streetscape and effectively mitigate the noise from the arterial road.
- Panel disagreed with the proposed amenity spaces due to the small size and the location between the underground ramp and loading. To create a meaningful amenity space, Panel suggested relocating it to the west side and along Weston Road. This will not only address the above-mentioned noise issue, but also create an accessible outdoor space away from the loading and ramp.
- Panel identified the raised planters along the south edge as creating a barrier, and turning its back to the surrounding context. Therefore, Panel encouraged minimizing vertical elements and prioritizing flush surfaces, particularly along the pedestrian desire line.

END OF MINUTES