

CITY OF VAUGHAN

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Meeting 114 – January 25, 2024

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, January 25, 2024. The meeting was recorded and will be posted on the City of Vaughan website.

PANEL MEMBERS

Present

Alfredo Landaeta, Forrec (Chair)

Michael Rietta, Giannone Petricone Associates Architects

Guela Solow Ruda, Petroff Partnership Architects

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.

Megan Torza, DTAH

Henry Burstyn, IBI Group

Absent

Wayne Swanton, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

John Tassiopoulos, WSP / MMM Group Limited

Margaret Briegmann, BA Group

Sharon Sterling, WSP / MMM Group Limited

STAFF

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

Cory Gray, Senior Manager, VMC Program

Armine Hassakourians, Program Manager, Yonge/ Steeles

Michael Tranquada, Senior Urban Designer, Development Planning

Aimee Pugao, Senior Planner, Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development

Shirley Marsh, Project Manager, Urban Design Development Planning

Chrisa Assimopoulos, Urban Design, Development Planning

Alex Yang, Urban Design, Development Planning
Andrea Shotlander, Project Manager, VMC Program
Anna Rosen, Project Manager, Parks Development (VMC)
Julia Crane, Landscape Architect, VMC Program
Nicholas Trajkovski, Planner, VMC Program
Alyssa Pangilinan, Planning Technician, VMC Program
Lucy D'Acunto, Administrative Coordinator, Development Planning

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

Henry Burstyn, conflict with the 1st item on the agenda.

3. ADOPTION/CORRECTION OF MINUTES

Meeting minutes for November 30, 2023, were approved.

4. DESIGN REVIEW

Yonge & Steeles Development Inc.
7028 Yonge St. & 2 Steeles Ave
High-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 2nd Review
Architect: Arcadis Architects (Canada) Inc.
Planner: Malone Given Parsons

Introduction

City Staff sought Panel's advice on the following:

- 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 relate to:
 1. Phasing and overall coordination
 2. Sustainability
 3. Active, safe and accessible sites
- How efficient is the proposed phasing of the property?
- Has the project managed to create active, engaging frontages along the surrounding public streets, the mid-block connection, the open spaces and the parks?

Overview

- **Presentation:** Panel thanked the applicant for a comprehensive presentation, and acknowledged the complexity and constraints of this project, and appreciated the progression observed and revisions responded to from the initial round of comments.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** The TTC connection should be recognized as a main public link that serves a broader area and population. Panel disagreed with the current proposal approach that almost treats this connection as a private access and suggested revising the layout to better coordinate with the surrounding context, allowing a more seamless pedestrian flow in and out of this site, and aligning better with the public nature of the TTC connection.
- **Landscape:** Panel emphasized the pedestrian flow that runs diagonally from the northeast POPS to the centre courtyard connecting to the TTC station at the intersection of Yonge and Steels. However, the proposed landscape expression visually focuses on the plan graphic and does not align with the actual pedestrian flow.
- Given the close relationship with the surrounding developments, Panel encouraged the design teams to work together more collectively on the landscape design to ensure consistency from one project to another.
- **Ground Floor Uses:** Panel recommended enhancing the lobby space by re-organizing the ground floor uses to expose it to the outside. Ensuring public visibility and maximizing sun exposure for the lobby area were emphasized as key considerations for improvement.
- **Courtyard Engagement:** Panel expressed concerns about the courtyard that does not engage well with the adjacent building ground floor uses due to disconnection between the interior and exterior. Eliminating some of the corridors to allow direct connections between the courtyard and active ground floor uses is recommended.
- **Phasing:** Panel questioned the phasing of the northwest POPS to phase 2. Noting potential challenges for pedestrian circulation and the public realm strategy in phase 1, due to the absence of outdoor engagement for ground floor uses in phase 1.
- **Architectural Materiality:** Panel commented on the retail façade along Yonge Street that needs to be more engaging and powerful, as it currently appears to be an afterthought. Additional effort should be implemented to ensure a strong and visually appealing façade. One of the concerns of having a large tenant is that they will only have one single entry point, and the rest of the façade will lack animation.

Comments

Site Organization

- Panel highlighted the importance of the relationship of the surrounding context and strongly recommended further coordination with the neighbours to ensure a successful development. From a site plan perspective, demonstrating how all the surrounding developments, including the site plan and landscape plan, collaboratively fit together is essential to achieve design excellence.
- Considering the TTC station generates a large amount of pedestrian flow, this identity should be recognized by the site organization. The site plan proposed two distinctive interior and exterior connections that conflicted with each other. The interior connection used a continuous corridor to connect everything, but at the same time, it prevented people from accessing the exterior courtyard.
- Further to the above, Panel suggested doubling down on the open space connection as it is the key element in this plan. Meanwhile, eliminating the long corridors to ensure a more active engagement between central POPS with lobbies and other uses. Overall, the ground-floor organization needs to be revisited to strengthen the connection to the TTC station, and to encourage people to engage with the outdoor space to create a successful public realm.

Lobby locations

- Panel commented on the poor way-finding strategy for the residential lobby, particularly from a ground-floor organization perspective. For instance, the lobby at the southeast corner that accesses Steeles Ave goes through a long corridor, and the entrance to Steeles Ave is not as well-defined as the rest of the others.
- In addition to the lobby entrance issues, Panel suggested putting extra thought towards accessibility, such as wheelchair pick-up, which also helps with solving ground-floor issues. For example, pickup locations for people coming from either the underground parking or the TTC station may contribute to defining a better location for the lobby entrance.
- Panel recommended increasing the percentage of lobby exposure to natural daylight. Noting that the southeast tower lobby is buried inside and surrounded by garbage and bicycle storage. The lack of daylight provision is against people's best interest for an optimum design.
- Further to the above, improving the public visibility of the building lobbies is another key element to ensure design excellence. Noting that the office lobby is hidden from public view, Panel suggested moving it further east to front Yonge Street.
- Further to the above, Panel suggested providing a hierarchy to the drawing by clarifying vehicular spaces and pedestrian spaces. It helps to understand how the public uses the building on a daily basis, which in turn could assist in designing a better ground floor layout for the residential lobby, particularly for the southeast tower.

Road and Accessibility

- Panel expressed concerns that the east-west road along the north boundary is too tight to accommodate loading and access needs. Considering the northern neighbour will also have their main entrance off this road, it would put a heavy traffic demand on this access. Therefore, having a secondary entrance for the residential tower off this access is recommended.
- Panel highlighted the importance of creating a continuous pedestrian connection to the northwest open space in order to make the overall pedestrian circulation more successful. This important connection is currently discontinued by the east-west service lane in the middle.
- Further to the above, in response to the substantial pedestrian traffic from the TTC subway station, Panel recommended a redesign of this service lane, aiming to create a more pedestrian-friendly public realm, such as a Woonerf, for improved accessibility and urban experience.
- Panel suggested organizing the underground ramps and loading to avoid having every phase on its own. From a functional perspective, the amount of traffic using the ramp and loading is not significant. It might be feasible to share the ramp and loading between phases, and less ramp and loading could provide more opportunities for site plan improvements.
- In addition, Panel suggested consolidating the loading and ramp where possible. More specifically, regarding the southwest tower, consider moving the residential lobby to the corner and consolidating the loading and ramp. Therefore, potentially liberate the northern edge for a better pedestrian realm opportunity that connects to the centre courtyard.
- Panel expressed concern about the adequacy of the hotel layby drop-off on the southwest corner, citing that only two available spots, and shared with residential uses are insufficient. To address this issue, Panel recommended implementing a dedicated drop-off area for the Hotel.
- Regarding the road curb and bollard details, Panel was concerned that people could drive into the POPS based on practical experience, and therefore suggested using a barrier curb or bollard to protect the public. Meanwhile, Panel referred to precedents that have similar programs, such as the Four Seasons at 18 Yorkville, to demonstrate how to retrofit the series of bollards into the road curbs.

Phasing

- Panel noted that the current phasing plan is high-level and lacks the necessary detail, particularly in addressing the complexity of the edge conditions. Thereby suggesting showing more details that focus on the elements that impact the quality of the public realm.
- Panel disagreed with placing the northwest POPS in the second phase. The absence of outdoor space will cause the adjacent phase 1 building and the ground floor uses function improperly due to the lack of public engagement.

Landscape

- In General, Panel highlighted a lack of coordination with neighbours and emphasized the need for more details in the landscape vision. Therefore, Panel recommended for the City to request a comprehensive and coordinated landscape plan during the SPA process to work through the details. Use one of the details as an example: the vent shafts that straddle the curbs should be reconsidered to avoid ruining the ambition of making a safe and successful public realm.
- Panel disagreed with the utilization of the term 'POPS' as these spaces lack direct public access and do not align with its understanding of publicly accessible private spaces. Using precise terminology, such as 'outdoor spaces', would help clarify the design intention.
- Panel acknowledged that the landscape graphic is solid and has a strong graphic feel. However, it is also confusing since the permeate and flows of the paving could only be perceivable from the bird's eye view but not by the public at the pedestrian level. In light of this, revising the curve graphic to create a more profound orientation to anchor the public space and pedestrian flow is encouraged.
- In addition, Panel emphasized the diagonal desire line that draws individuals towards the TTC station, and noted that the landscape island in the centre courtyard was bound to the ribbon of the plan graphic but failed to align with the actual pedestrian flow. As a result, it is recommended to adjust the courtyard design to better respond to the primary pedestrian desire line, aiming to enhance the overall success of the public realm.
- Panel questioned the northwest outdoor space to be the primary one in the current design, noting a lack of clear definition and proper integration with the surrounding building. The current configuration gives the impression of leftover space beside the driveway. Therefore, it is suggested to use the centre courtyard instead to serve as the primary open space, emphasizing its potential to function as a key anchor from a landscape design perspective.
- Further to the above, to further enhance the central open space, Panel strongly recommended eliminating the long corridor within the building that connects all the uses but also isolates them from the centre courtyard. This adjustment aims to establish more direct public access. Consequently, the central courtyard could serve as a profound entrance to the lobby, enhancing the overall appeal and accessibility.

Streetscape and Frontages

- Panel encouraged the applicant to include a comprehensive site plan in the next package that illustrates as much detail as available and includes the ground floor uses for the adjacent developments. For instance, there is a significant loading frontage adjacent to the residential lobby entrance on the southwest building, which could be improved by merging the site plan with the neighbour and working together.

- To achieve the optimum design, there are many streetscape and frontage conditions that could be improved, such as the loading relationship to the POPS, and the pedestrian route diagonal through the site from the northwest to the southeast.
- Panel commented that the north elevations for both buildings are undesirable due to a significant portion of frontages occupied by the loading accesses, ramps and other utility rooms. For improvement, Panel suggested minimizing the loading areas on public frontages, consolidating the loading and waste collection, and incorporating them below grade if possible in order to free more frontage for active ground floor uses.
- Panel emphasized the need for a more thoughtful approach to create a vibrant retail experience from an elevation perspective. The rendered high-glazed appearance raised concerns about potentially retrofitting with branding. Therefore, eliminating some of the glazing to create a proper space for signage is recommended. Panel suggested exploring various materials such as brick, precast, or aluminum spandrel panels as reference for achieving an optimal and aesthetically pleasing retail façade.

Sustainability

- Given the fact that this package does not include enough content for a sustainability approach. The panel encouraged the applicant to include them in the next package and suggested considering the building envelope, natural sunlight, shadow impact and the building performance.
- Panel commented on the tower's materiality, expressed concern that incorporating strip balconies throughout the façade with extensive glazing could pose challenges for the mechanical systems and significantly hinder the overall sustainability of the project.

Humboldt Properties - Yonge & Steeles
7040/ 7054 Yonge St. & 72 Steeles Ave
High-Rise Mixed-Use Development, 2nd Review

Architect: Kirkor Architects and Planners

Planner: Macaulay Shiomi Howson Ltd.

Introduction

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Overview

- **Presentation:** The Panel thanked the applicant for an informative presentation package; however, noted that it lacked clarity in some areas. Incorporating simpler diagrams that express the key ideas around the configuration of the different levels and the proposed programming would be useful. Also, there is a level of detail missing as it relates to the ground floor façade articulation; how different elements such as, awnings, shading devices and signage are being incorporated in the overall design, and how they may be perceived from the public realm. In general, Panel noted that grade-related facades will need to be treated in a way to enforce a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- **Overall Site Configuration and Coordination:** Panel commended the applicant for coordinating their design with their immediate neighbour to the east and encouraged them to continue looking at the intricacies of the plan comprehensively to treat the whole block as one. Panel also noted that further coordination is necessary with the neighbouring projects to the west and the overall Master Plan for the area. Lastly, it was noted, that the new road alignment and park distribution is more successful compared to the first DRP presentation.
- **Connectivity:** Further to the above, Panel noted the need for a consistent and coherent design over the integration of pedestrian flows between this site and the neighbouring site to the east to create a seamless public environment that transitions efficiently from one development to the next. The open space system and the pedestrian connectivity to and from the TTC to the park system will need to be reinforced to create a safe and enjoyable pedestrian focused environment.

- **Active Frontages:** Panel noted that frontages on the woonerf, the POPS, the park and in general the pedestrian open spaces will need to be enhanced to be more noble and active. Elements put forward from Panel that can help in this direction are:
 - Rationalize and consolidate access to loading and parking areas.
 - Maximize the pedestrian realm.
 - Prioritize the retail/ residential frontages and lobbies on the private roads.
 - Work through the materiality of the grade-related frontages incorporating rich, human-scale materials at grade.
 - Maximize green space and tree planting within the streetscape.
- Panel also mentioned that though the location of the lobbies was not a concern, how those interact with the open spaces and how they contribute to the pedestrian connectivity may need to be further reviewed for them to fully contribute to an engaging public edge and an efficient circulation.
- There were some concerns raised by Panel about the viability of the retail. Though retail uses can successfully activate frontages, a design strategy planning for other potential alternative active uses to be hosted in those spaces should be put in place to ensure that in the case where retail fails the uses replacing it will provide the same degree of activation and will create the same community experience.
- **Architectural Expression:** Panel commented on the integration of the towers with podiums and how that can be enhanced by looking in more detail at the interface between the podiums and the towers. Panel also noted that the buildings require high-quality ground floor facades in support of the woonerf, the POPS, the public street edges, and the pedestrian connection between the TTC to the future park system to the west.
- **Microclimate:** Due to the proposed density, the open spaces will be in shade for long periods of time as such creating and maintaining a lush landscape at grade will be a challenge. Open spaces will also be impacted by wind; measures should be put in place for a successful wind mitigation without impeding pedestrian circulation. Overall, Panel noted that the design should consider microclimate conditions on site and provide measures that will allow the creation of a comfortable and enjoyable environment.

Comments

Phasing and Overall Coordination

- Panel commended the applicant for attempting a more comprehensive understanding of the entire block, however, it was noted that a comprehensive Landscape Master Plan representing the experience at grade was missing, along with clear diagrams of the proposed programming/ Panel was unsure to what level this critical coordination between these two properties had been achieved.

- The applicant was encouraged to continue collaborating with their neighbours through this stage of design and to continue treating the entirety of the block as one coherent block. Panel noted that this block should be designed as a gateway block to the whole community to the north and the west coordinating and managing the pedestrian flows from the TTC to the future linear park system.
- In terms of phasing, Panel noted that this project can be phased in a way so that the loading and parking ramps are rationalized, consolidated and coordinated for all buildings below grade.
- Panel raised concerns on how the phasing might impact the viability of the retail proposed internally to the site. Considering that there will be a significant amount of time between Phase 1 and Phase 2, the current condition of the lot for Building C, may impact the viability of the proposed retail space.

Site Configuration and Coordination

- Panel acknowledged the efforts of coordination between this site and neighbouring site to the east resulting in a more efficient road network configuration with shared laneways and perimeter streets. Specifically, realignment of Building B and the accompanying north-south street with the incorporated bend, are strong revisions resulting in effectively framing the open spaces and successfully managing the site.
- Greater coordination with the neighbour to the west was deemed necessary by Panel. It was suggested that a shared service lane is introduced between Building A and the development to the west to host loading, access, and servicing for both sites. The townhouse units can then be proposed on the east side of Building A framing and facing the POPS resulting in a much more desirable condition for all three sites.
- Panel mentioned that the design of the woonerf can be better coordinated between the two developments in this block, to establish a consistent width, that would allow for uniformity of trees and other streetscape elements establishing stronger connections between the different buildings within this whole block.
- The location of the park was perceived as positive from the Panel, as it has a more public character and it is better coordinated with the overall master plan which would allow it to double in size at full build-out of the area.

Pedestrian Circulation and Connectivity

- Panel acknowledged the applicant's effort to strengthen the pedestrian character of the east-west road by framing it with active uses.
- The importance of the Gupta development as it relates to pedestrian flows, is becoming more apparent now as the site plan evolves. Panel noted that there is a transversal pedestrian route from the future subway, through the POPS on the Gupta project, to this site and beyond to the future park, that needs to be further defined. Currently two of the residential lobbies are on this route which is a strong move but needs to be further emphasized.
- The north-south green corridor starting from the linear amenity at the south-west corner of the site linking up to the park is another critical connection that Panel

would like to see revised to be more generous incorporating a pedestrian boulevard while managing the transition to the private yards.

- Further to the above, with the introduction of retail uses internal to the site, the relationship with the Gupta development needs to be even stronger to make this new node successful, safe, and well-used.
- Panel spoke to reducing curb cuts throughout the development with the further consolidation and coordination of loading, servicing, and underground parking access.
- Further to the above, the south edge of Building B is critical to establishing the pedestrian character of the woonerf. Panel suggested that the loading/servicing uses proposed off the woonerf be relocated and consolidated with those off the north-south road. This would allow for more control over the south frontage and potentially a larger sidewalk that will be necessary to ensure pedestrian safety as the woonerf is expected to have significant traffic as per the proposed density.
- Delineate the pedestrian versus vehicular circulation carefully and intentionally, incorporating curbs where necessary to avoid having to retrofit bollards in the design to manage the vehicular flows and at grade parking.

Active Frontages and Architectural Expression

- Panel noted that there are still conflicting visions over how portions of the perimeter streets are going to function, for example in Building A the loading is placed across from a lobby on the Gupta property and vice versa the lobby of Building C is facing the loading on the north edge of the Gupta development. Coordinating, adjusting, and relocating uses will be beneficial in establishing a coherent character through the block.
- Further to the above, the north portion of the north-south road could have a more residential feel since the applicant has the most control over this portion of the road. Also, Panel noted that though the east end of the woonerf is framed by lobbies on both sides, the loading area of Building B disrupts that frontage; consolidate the loading/servicing in one central core off the north-south road.
- Panel noted that more detailed elevations need to be produced for the ground floor frontages for the buildings to establish their unique identity. For example, in Building A, what is the treatment of the retail lobby on Steeles versus that of the internal residential lobby and how do the two interact and convey the front and back of that building. The applicant was encouraged, to zoom in and get more tectonic on their design explorations, through detailed ground floor elevation drawings of a greater scale, to understand how these elevations relate to the expression of the woonerf and how this pedestrian environment can be created.
- The architectural articulation and expression of the podiums should respond to the road width they are fronting on, Yonge St. and Steeles Ave have a very different scale and provide a different context compared to the roads internal to the site. As such Panel noted that internal to site the building needs to respond appropriately to that change in scale and respond with a more intimate expression either through materiality or articulation as it would be overwhelming to bring the scale of the Yonge/Steeles frontage into the site.
- Further to the above, the relationship between the podium and the tower needs to be refined, taking advantage of the opportunity to provide a different texture

and treatment closer and around the ground floor to enhance that residential/ pedestrian character.

- Specifically for Building A, Panel noted that the architectural expression on Steeles Ave. through that one storey element can be made stronger. Panel suggested that the one storey element is integrated in the podium to better respond to the width of Steeles Ave.
- With regards to the proposed retail units, Panel mentioned that the unified and singular architectural expression should be established for all units, and their design should be at greater detail to coordinate canopies, signage, patios, and other such elements for the related spill-out spaces.
- Also, the architectural expression of the residential units, needs to be more fine grain strongly representing their residential character through materiality and façade articulation.
- Overall Panel noted that materiality needs to be defined at greater detail with rich, human-scale materials proposed at grade instead of the same treatment being extended from the towers to the base of the buildings or precast being heavily used.
- Further to the above, Panel noted that though it is commendable that the shafts have been incorporated in the building design and have a vertical orientation the design of those facades should ensure that those elements are coordinated with servicing and access to avoid having a profusion of venting shafts after loading and parking access points as that would impact the public character of those frontages.
- Panel questioned the viability of the retail internal to the site but also along Yonge St. and encouraged the applicant to design those spaces as spaces that can host alternative active uses, that can still support and enhance the open space and the character of the community overall.
- Panel also, noted that the tops of the buildings can be further enhanced with grander architectural gestures to mark the City's skyline.

Landscape and Streetscape

- Maximize green space and tree planting on site taking advantage of every opportunity and carving out space to create planters and planting beds, such as but not limited to, along Royal Palm, along Steeles Ave as well as at the north edge of the north-south road past the curb cut, that has no trees.
- Panel noted that the design of the park will need to be reviewed in greater detail and in relation to the perimeter landscape. Currently patios are shown along the park edges, but it is unclear what their relationship is with the park, what is the landscape treatment proposed, whether there is any grade differentiation etc. As such Panel mentioned that frontages along the park, should be treated as secondary front entrances with a porch instead of back yards with a patio to provide the park with the active frontage it demands.
- Further to above, enhance the pedestrian boulevard along the park increasing it in width or pairing it with a walkway on the public side within the park. Panel noted that this boulevard should not be underestimated as a destination since it is the main access point to the park, and it will host supportive uses such a bike parking; as such it should be treated as a key public face.

- Panel identified the south-west corner of the park as a major gateway to the park that should be designed with more intention and consideration; currently it is a left-over space and instead it needs to be designed in coordination with the future western extension of the park and assume the role of the gateway.
- A consistent and unified landscape approach and tree planting strategy should be established between the two projects over the woonerf design, to achieve a consistent treatment throughout the entire length and width of the shared woonerf.
- Further to the above, Panel mentioned that understanding how the paving will work between the two sites and especially over the woonerf, is critical in knitting the two properties together.
- Panel identified the possibility of accessing the park through the public amenity west of Building A and encouraged the applicant to explore that connection in greater detail, to clearly define the pedestrian circulation through this space, and to determine the treatment of that space to create a strong link between Steeles Ave and the park. Attention though should be paid to the interface with the site to the west as there may be back-of-house uses lined up across from it. In this case protective and mitigation measures will need to be put in place to manage noise, fumes, screening, and transition. Also, the relationship with the residential units fronting onto that space should be looked at in greater detail for the appropriate transitions to be put in place.
- Panel noted that one of the shafts, at the north-west corner of Building A, is disrupting the east-west pedestrian path of travel and should be moved south and be better incorporated in landscape design to minimize its impact on the streetscape and the pedestrian circulation.
- Panel noted that the woonerf is expected to have a significant amount of traffic due to the proposed density, as such the proposed sidewalks should be expanded to effectively serve pedestrians; currently they are too narrow for the expected use.

Microclimate

- Panel noted concerns about the microclimate conditions, specifically relating to wind impact. The wind report identifies uncomfortable conditions for most of the year, along the east-west woonerf. Considering that this connection plays a critical role to the pedestrian circulation through the site to and from the subway, and that all proposed mitigation measures are ground mounted elements, Panel strongly encouraged the applicant to explore other wind mitigation strategies at grade that do not impede on the pedestrian movement allowing for the woonerf to be fully traversable.
- Panel noted that the open spaces are going to be in shade for long periods of the day which will make the maintenance of a lush landscape environment challenging. The design therefore should take the microclimate conditions into account to create a pleasant, comfortable pedestrian focused space.

END OF MINUTES