



City of Hamilton Design Review Panel Meeting Summary – April 11th 2019

Meeting Summary

The Design Review Panel met on **Thursday, April 11th 2019**, in Meeting Room 264, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 71 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario.

Panel Members Present:

Colin Berman, Brook McIlroy
Vincent Colizza, Vincent Colizza Architects, *Chair*
Robert Freedman, Freedman Urban Solutions
Ute Maya-Giambattista, Fotenn Planning + Design
Mario Patitucci, Adesso Design Inc.
Tim Smith, Urban Strategies Inc.
Jackie VanderVelde, Land Art Design Landscape Architects Inc.
James Webb, Webb Planning Inc.

Staff Present:

Jason Thorne, General Manager
Steve Robichaud, Director and Chief Planner
Shannon McKie, Senior Project Manager, Urban Team
Melanie Schneider, Planner II, Suburban Team
Mark Kehler, Planner II, Urban Team

Others Present:

Presentation #1 Mixed use Development 310 Francis Avenue	Jeff Paikin , New Horizon Development Group Przemyslaw Myszkowski , KNYMH Inc. Sarah Knoll , GSP Group Inc. Brian Roth , GSP Group Inc. Steve Pongracz , Lanhack Consultants Inc. Marc Begin , KNYMH Inc. Wayne Harrison , KNYMH Inc.
Presentation #2 Mixed use Development 804 – 816 King Street West	Michael Spaziani , Michael Spaziani Architect Inc. Matt Johnston , UrbanSolutions Amber Lindsay , UrbanSolutions Charles Wah , Gateway Group

Presentation #3 Mixed use Development 1160 Main Street East	Rick Lintack , Lintack Architects Inc. Ian Koerssen , Lintack Architects Inc. Mario Patitucci , Adesso Design Inc. Spencer Skidmore , AJ Clarke & Associates Ltd. Sarit Chandaria , Tibro Developments Ltd. Savan Chandaria , Tibro Developments Ltd.
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Regrets:

Yasin Visram, Perkins + Will Canada (Panel Member)

Confirmation of Minutes:

Minutes were confirmed.

Declaration of Interest:

Mario Patitucci, Adesso Design Inc. for 1160 Main Street East, Panel Member did not participate in the discussion.

Schedule:

Start Time	Address	Type of Application	Applicant/ Agent	Development Planner
2:45 p.m.	Mixed use Development 310 Francis Avenue	Site Plan DA 19-020	Owner: NHDG (Waterfront) Inc. Agent and Presentation: GSP Group	Melanie Schneider, Planner II
4:00 p.m.	Mixed use Development 804 – 816 King Street West	Official Plan Amendment & Zoning By-law Amendment UHOPA 19-004 & ZAC 19-009	Owner: Gateway Development Group Inc. Agent and Presentation: UrbanSolutions Planning & Land Development Consultants Inc.	Mark Kehler, Planner II
5:00 p.m.	Mixed use Development 1160 Main Street East	Site Plan DA 19-043	Owner: Main Street East Ltd. Agent and Presentation: Lintack Architects Incorporated	Mark Kehler, Planner II

Summary of Comments:

Note: The Design Review Panel is strictly an advisory body and makes recommendations to Planning Division staff. These comments should be reviewed in conjunction with all comments received by commenting agencies and should be discussed with Planning Division staff prior to resubmission.

1. 310 Francis Avenue

Development Proposal Overview

The applicant is proposing a mixed use development consisting of three towers that are 48, 54, and 59 storeys in height, with a shared four storey podium. The proposal contains 1,836 dwelling units and 400 m² (4,306 ft²) of commercial space. A total of 2,438 parking stall are proposed, including 20 barrier-free spaces for the residential component of the site. Seven parking spaces are proposed for the commercial component. The proposed development will be constructed in three separate phases. Phase 1 consists of the 59 storey tower with 670 dwelling units and a large portion of the amenity area. Phase 2 consists of the 54 storey tower with 615 dwelling units and the remaining balance of the amenity area. Phase 3 consists of the 48 storey tower with 551 dwelling units as well as the five storey dwelling units on top of the parking podium. Portions of the parking podium will be completed in conjunction with the towers they are proposed to support. Two levels of underground parking are also proposed.

In order to facilitate the proposal, Site Plan Control application (File No. DA-19-020) was submitted December 20, 2018 and deemed complete on December 21, 2018. Staff consider the proposal to be transformational with the potential to significantly impact the physical environment functionally and aesthetically. Therefore, the proposal has been referred to the Design Review Panel as part of the review process for the Site Plan Control application.

The subject property is approximately 2.061 ha (5.09 ac) in size and located on the south-western corner of Green Road and Frances Avenue. The property is in the former City of Stoney Creek.

3 Key Questions to the Panel from Planning Staff

1. What is the relationship of the proposal with the height, massing and scale of nearby residential buildings?
2. Does the proposal complement and animate existing surroundings through building design and placement as well as through placement of pedestrian amenities?
3. Does the proposal integrate conveniently located public transit and cycling infrastructure with existing and new development?

Panel Comments and Recommendations

a) Introduction

- The panel provides some insight on the zoning and notes that permissions for this site were granted at a time when tower-in-the-park developments were the predominant form for major residential development. These tower-in-the park buildings, while often large and monolithic, were tempered by the fact that they were typically surrounded by large areas of open green space. The generous setbacks and large expanses of lawn prevented the towers from overwhelming their surroundings and allowed them to fit in with lower scale residential neighbourhoods. This proposal, however, is responding to the context as if it were in the middle of a dense urban core and has nothing to do with the actual context. The scale of the towers would not seem out of place in downtown Toronto. The scale of the base building is an unusual mix of urban and mixed use street walls combined with large expanses of a blank-wall parking garage, neither of which appear to relate to anything around it (existing or proposed).

b) Overview and Response to Context (Questions 1, 2 & 3)

- There is no Secondary Plan for the area, or detailed guidance on how the site should develop, resulting in a mixed use site with no height or density limits. The panel notes this is an unfortunate scenario that limits the ability to use site plan control to achieve an appropriate development.
- A development that goes to such extremes in terms of height and density to capitalize on the amenities afforded by the waterfront location, with dramatic and negative impacts, should contribute something positive to the area.
- The buildings are way out of scale with the surrounding area, twice the height they should be. The scale does not respond to the car-oriented, suburban context, where there is no public transit. Additionally, the towers do not have regard for the Urban Hamilton Official Plan policies regarding compatibility and shadow impacts. An image in the submission package with a view from across the lake shows that the buildings would dominate the skyline and detract from views of the escarpment.
- The panel notes that the most difficult challenge is the above grade parking, as it is currently consolidated into a massive podium creating large and imposing walls. The podium is out of character with the existing neighbourhood, creating the sense of a fortress, whereas the development should open itself up to the community. The panel recommends breaking the site and podium up into smaller blocks, with one or more streets and/or driveways to help to break up the mass of the podium, make the development more porous and increase active uses at grade.

- Another major issue is the lack of public open space at grade as an amenity for residents and potentially for the broader community. The panel recommends moving some amenities to the ground floor, at grade. There should be open space between the building and the waterfront and a portion of open space adjacent to the woodlot. Boulevards should be much wider than proposed and incorporate wide sidewalks, street trees and cycling facilities.
- The panel notes that the site is within a suburban area with no current access to public transit.

c) Built Form and Character (Question 1 & 2)

- The panel notes the severe shadow impacts on the development to the north of the site and recommends pulling the towers closer to the QEW, while relocating the amenity area more appropriately. At a minimum, the panel suggests shifting the middle tower to the back of the site.
- While not applicable in this area, the City of Hamilton Tall Building Guidelines should be reviewed, and the floorplate sizes reduced to meet the guidelines, as more slender towers would reduce the shadow impacts and decrease the silhouettes when looking across the lake. Floorplates should not be larger than 750 m² (as a best practice) as three massive towers can appear elegant at that size.
- The towers should be located at the three corners of the triangular site to permit more breathing room, achieve more appropriate tower separation distances and improve the views between the buildings.
- The design of the podium is too busy and out of scale with the neighbourhood. As there are not enough uses to cover the walls, the panel recommends looking into adding some retail. The height of the base/podium should be reduced by placing more of the parking underground.
- The balconies are a dominant element of the design; the panel recommends recessing all or most of the balconies to give the towers a cleaner, more elegant look.
- The panel notes that the grade-related residential units are a successful component of the proposal.

d) Site Layout and Circulation (Question 2 & 3)

- Currently, the proposal has very little sense of place. The above-grade parking garage podium creates a massive superblock that will not be inviting for the future tower residents or the existing community. An alternative option would be to divide the development block into two (or even three) separate blocks with interior roads and a central open space (a public square or park). In addition, the internal streets could be lined on both sides with retail and other public uses. Breaking down the superblock into

smaller pieces would also help with the phasing of the development. This scenario would provide many benefits to the future residents and existing community.

- The panel reiterates the importance of at grade open space and recommends reducing the size of the podium to permit more open space and a connection through the site.
- The panel recommends exploring the opportunity to add more retail, extending it to the south to mirror the adjacent development.
- There are some concerns with the ground level treatment along Francis Avenue and the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles due to the four curb cuts. Cyclists and pedestrians, and those trying to access the multi-use trails, will have issues. Four curb cuts are unacceptable, the panel recommends consolidating the driveway entrances and creating a central courtyard feature or private street through the site with driveways linking to parking areas. A service entrance should be sensitively located to not interfere with pedestrian circulation.
- The panel notes that safety and security within such a massive parking structure will need to be addressed.

e) Streetscape and the Pedestrian Realm (Question 2 & 3)

- Generally, low-rise housing forms along internal streets would help the development relate better to the larger community. Along with reducing the presence of pick-up and drop-off areas along Francis Avenue as noted above, the panel also recommends adding townhouse units at grade to help activate the public realm.

f) Landscape Strategy (Question 2)

- Although there are some nice landscape elements on the podium, the panel recommends more ground related open space, noting it is a key component missing in the design. There are concerns with the proposed amenity areas, although the geothermal is appreciated, the wind study shows many areas of the amenity terrace is not suitable for sitting, thus creating a largely uncomfortable environment. The wind study also used an height of 1.8 m (average male height) but this does not address the impacts to women and children.
- One panel member noted the need for a substantial dog park as typically 25% of units would contain dogs.

g) Sustainability

- The panel encourages the applicant to go for LEED gold if possible. The panel notes that sustainability practices change over time and encourages the applicants to think about the future of the site, e.g., what happens when there may not be a need for so much parking?

Summary

The panel thanks the applicant and design team for a thorough submission package and presentation with abundant information regarding the proposal. The key recommendations include breaking up the podium, adding ground level open space, activating the ground level and slimming the towers. Responding to these key recommendations will help the proposal achieve a more comfortable scale. The panel encourages the applicant to work within the mass and density permissions but to make a greater effort to reduce the negative impacts to the surrounding neighbourhood. These will be landmark buildings within the region, and the site at the ground level should function as a landmark to the community. Given the scale of the development, there should be a greater contribution to the existing neighbourhood.

2. 804 – 816 King Street West

Development Proposal Overview

The applicant is proposing to construct a six storey (19.6 m) mixed use commercial / residential building with 403.45 m² of commercial space at grade, 30 residential dwelling units and 13 vehicle parking spaces.

The subject lands are located within a Design Priority Area (Primary Corridor) and review by the Design Review Panel is required in conjunction with Official Plan Amendment application (UHOPA-19-004) and Zoning By-law Amendment application (ZAC-19-009).

The subject property is located at the northeast corner of King Street West and Paradise Road North and currently contains two one storey commercial buildings and a surface parking lot. The subject lands are located in the Westdale Neighbourhood on King Street West, a Primary Corridor.

Key Questions to the Panel from Planning Staff

1. Does the proposal consider transition in height and density to adjacent residential buildings?
2. Is the proposal compatible with adjacent land uses including matters such as shadowing, overlook, noise, lighting, traffic and other nuisance effects?

3. What is the relationship of the proposal to the existing neighbourhood character? Does it maintain, and where possible, enhance and build upon desirable established patterns, built form and landscapes?

Panel Comments and Recommendations

a) Overview and Response to Context (Questions 1, 2 & 3)

- The panel acknowledges that the site is amongst many that will redevelop in the near future as it is close to the LRT corridor. The panel notes that the City of Hamilton’s Corridor Planning Principles and Design Guidelines requiring a 45-degree angular plane may be overly restrictive when applied to relatively shallow sites like this one, preventing appropriate intensification. One panel member pointed out that the City of Toronto has mid-rise guidelines for shallow lots, where the 45-degree angular plane is measured starting 11 m above grade along rear lot lines.
- Several panel members are pleased with the building mass and inclusion of setbacks and step-backs that help to achieve a good transition to the surrounding properties.

b) Built Form and Character (Question 1, 2 & 3)

- The majority of the panel members are comfortable with the ultimate six storey height along King Street and six storey height at the rear as the design includes step-backs that have been carefully implemented to reduce negative impacts to the existing community. Some panel members struggle with the proposed height and have concerns with the precedent it would set, since an alternative mid-rise angular plane strategy was used (a strategy similar to the City of Toronto) to achieve the built form, a more permissive strategy than the City of Hamilton currently allows. One panel member notes that the site would more comfortably accommodate a five storey building with mechanical penthouse.
- The mechanical penthouse creates the illusion of a seventh storey and visually increases the mass of the building. The panel recommends moving the amenity space to the ground floor and shrinking the mechanical penthouse to reduce the mass visually and reduce the shadow impacts on adjacent properties.
- The panel recommends slightly increasing the height of the first storey to better accommodate retail uses and to achieve a better public realm presence. As the retail opportunities are explored, the panel recommends the option to open the corner of the building to create public space, adding some articulation through hard and soft landscaping. As the site is on a very busy corridor, the retail will help with traffic calming and contribute to a more vibrant streetscape and public realm.

- The majority of the panel members recommend removing the two storey portico at the rear of the site as it interrupts the transition to the surrounding properties and may be intrusive to the neighbours. Some panel members recommend keeping it, as it adds interest and helps with the gradual stepping down to the neighbourhood while reducing the impact of the surface level parking area from the public realm. One panel member notes that change in height from the ultimate six storey building to the two storey portico is quite drastic and could better integrate into the existing network of step-backs, perhaps even adding some building mass to create an “L” shaped building. The panel agrees that it should not incorporate outdoor amenity space if kept and/or redesigned.
- The panel notes that the building is handsome and the simplicity of the material palette is quite successful; however, some panel members recommend continuing the balconies and materiality from the fifth floor to the upper floors for more consistency.
- Some panel members recommend a slight redesign to the rooftop, making an effort to shift the amenity area closer to the street, to reduce the overlook on adjacent properties.
- The balconies at the back of the building could be intrusive, the panel recommends removing them to reduce the overlook to the neighbours.

c) Site Layout and Circulation

- The panel recommends making the entrance for the residential component of the building more distinct from the commercial entrances.
- The panel recommends exploring the opportunity to remove the dedicated right turn lane on King Street and reduce the overall road width if possible. Additionally, there is a conflict with the bi-directional bike lanes and it would be beneficial to try and improve the cycling and pedestrian circulation on and around the site.
- Cycling is a critically important component of the project; there should be a focus on cycling amenities at grade including visitor bike parking and a bike repair room.
- One panel member notes that the parking may be underestimated and that it may put additional pressure on the neighbourhood.

d) Streetscape and the Pedestrian Realm

- The panel notes that there will be a lot of pedestrian traffic and that the streetscape is a very important component of the proposal. Eliminating the right-turn lane would allow for more street trees to help create a more comfortable public realm and add some green buffers.

e) Landscape Strategy

- The panel notes that the 1.5 m wide landscape strip along the north boundary may be insufficient due to the minimal soil volumes and lack of sun in that location. Trees will likely not survive there.
- The panel recommends completing an arborist report for the site, making an effort to preserve the existing trees.

Summary

The panel applauds the design rationale and efforts to create a good transition to the surrounding properties. The panel also appreciates the thorough submission package and detailed presentation. The site is a gateway into the village, moving from the highway onto a local collector road with a more pedestrian oriented environment, and the proposal should reflect this as indicated in the comments provided above.

3. 1160 Main Street East

Development Proposal Overview

The applicant is proposing to construct a seven storey mixed use commercial / residential building with 303.5 m² of commercial space at grade, 75 dwelling units and 24 vehicle parking spaces.

The subject lands are located within a Design Priority Area (Primary Corridor) and review by the Design Review Panel is required in conjunction with Site Plan Control application (DA-19-043).

The subject property is on the south side of Main Street East mid-block between Balmoral Avenue South and Grosvenor Avenue South and currently contains a one storey commercial buildings and a surface parking lot. The subject lands are located in the Delta Neighbourhood, two blocks east of Gage Park.

Key Questions to the Panel from Planning Staff

1. Does the proposal promote quality design consistent with the locale and surrounding environment?
2. Are the service and loading areas buffered to reduce the visual and noise impacts, particularly when located adjacent to residential areas? Do the buffering methods include berms, tree and shrub plantings, noise walls, fences and/or the use of quality construction materials and methods?
3. What is the relationship of the proposal with the height, massing and scale of nearby residential buildings?

Panel Comments and Recommendations

a) Overview and Response to Context (Questions 1, 2 & 3)

- The panel notes that some effort has gone into achieving an appropriate transition to the neighbourhood; however, the mass is a too large and needs some refining to better address the neighbouring properties. Overall, the site is too tight for the building mass proposed due to the negative impacts to the neighbours, lack of buffers and proximity to the front property line.
- The panel notes that the proposal is trying to follow the City of Hamilton’s policies which permit no side setbacks to encourage a continuous street wall along Main Street E; however, the site is unusual in that it is flanked on both sides by the rear lots of adjacent houses and apartment. The panel finds this problematic as providing no rear or side setbacks does not allow for the proposal to properly transition to the surrounding neighbourhood.

b) Built Form and Character (Question 1 & 3)

- The panel recommends including a 2.0 - 3.0 m setback along the side and rear property lines to respond to the existing condition. The panel notes that a separation of less than 2.0 m from the proposed building to an existing building is not ideal and needs to be improved, the edge abutting the neighbours needs some work to help protect the privacy of the existing residents.
- In addition to the setbacks, the panel recommends step-backs on each side of the building to provide a more appropriate transition to the neighbouring properties on Main Street, which are unlikely to redevelop to greater heights. Although there are no strict regulations for step-backs, the existing residences will be facing a wall and the proposal should better respond to the adjacent properties, giving them more space. The panel notes that the building’s circulation elements (elevator and stairs) could remain where they are; however, all storeys above the third should include side step-backs. The top floor should step-back from the street by at least 3.0 m to allow the building to visually appear as a six storey brick structure from Main Street.
- Generally, the materiality and balcony treatments are appropriate, but the panel feels that four cornice lines may be too many and the horizontal and vertical banding is excessive, suggesting a more simplified approach.
- The panel recommends improving the parking area using interesting colours and textures so that it does not feel like the back of a building.

c) Site Layout and Circulation (Question 2)

- As noted above, a landscape strip of 2.0 – 3.0 m is needed along the side and rear lot lines to accommodate adequate soil volumes to ensure healthy tree growth to help buffer the adjacent properties and to help screen the garbage/loading area.
- The panel notes that access to the site would ideally be from a side street.
- The amount of bike parking should be increased, with some included at grade and some in the basement.
- The panel recommends protecting the columns by adding curbing.
- The panel recommends moving the loading area behind the service door to reduce the width of the driveway area under the building.

d) Streetscape and the Pedestrian Realm

- As there will be an LRT stop close by, it is a good location for commercial and the panel recommends including more space for pedestrians along the Main Street frontage as it is a busy road. The panel notes that the 2.0 m sidewalk is acceptable but recommends adding an additional 0.5 m setback (to achieve a total of 1.0 m in addition to the sidewalk). This would create a more comfortable pedestrian environment and the extra space could accommodate a covered patio.

e) Landscape Strategy (Question 2)

- The panel recommends continuing the unit paving across the driveway to brighten up the area. A fun design treatment spanning the sides and ceiling of the driveway portal to enliven the space is also recommended. This can be something that makes a passerby smile rather than ignore it.

Summary

In general, the location is ideal for a mid-rise building and the panel notes that some good thinking has gone into the proposal, although some work is needed to better respond to the neighbouring properties. Providing buffers, refining the massing and improving the public realm are key recommendations. To support commercial development and a vibrant public realm, a more generous streetscape condition is needed.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.