

February 4, 2021.

Cornerstone Shopping Centre Development Permit Application- Design Analysis.

Project Description

The Cornerstone Shopping Centre will create a much-needed service and shopping focal point for this newly developing Cornerstone neighbourhood in North East Calgary. The project highlights include:

- Approximately 143,100 SF of commercial and retail space;
- Food Store (Building D) at 50,000 SF;
- Drug Store (Building B) at 17,000 SF;
- Nine single storey retail buildings (Buildings A, C, ,E, F, G, and H, J, L, M) totalling 64,100 SF;
- Two single storey retail buildings with drive-thru' s (Buildings K and I totalling 12,000 SF);
- The project includes 624 parking spaces at grade, which equates to a parking ration of 4.4 spaces per 1000 SF of area. The 4.4 spaces per 1000 SF of floor area is the minimum parking required, as mandated by the anchor tenants, based on their needs.

Design Principles

The project is designed to be a high-quality retail shopping centre, incorporating a modern design vocabulary, strong pedestrian connectivity, extensive landscaping with several large outdoor plazas, and a distinctive main street as the focal point for the project. The design incorporates the key components of the Cornerstone Area Structure Plan (ASP) including:

- Main Street, with street (dual) fronting stores, two south facing public plazas, wide sidewalks, angled parking, feature coloured LED lighting, and street trees and site furniture.
- Surface parking areas are all internal, and are screened by buildings from external streets;
- Pedestrian permeability is incorporated into the project, by means of a clear circulation route that will provide a safe route of travel for pedestrians, based upon a sensible grid system. This includes links within the site between buildings, and links to the exterior sidewalks adjacent to the site. This includes north-south connections at the building edges, a well-defined east-west connection through the parking field, and several connections around the site to the external sidewalks. Pedestrian design is intended to provide safe, easy and convenient movements by foot to support a "park once" philosophy. The pedestrian network has incorporated current and future bus stops into its design.
- Street activating uses, including stores and potential restaurants that can open onto corner plaza spaces, and internal plazas. Buildings B, C, D and L open on to park space, or patio areas. Buildings A, F, J, M have extensive patio or open space incorporated into feature plazas at the south-west, south-east and north- west corners of the project.

We note that day to day reality that visitors to the site will overwhelmingly be arriving by vehicle means that in all buildings, we provide an opportunity for an entrance facing the parking areas. Other than the dual frontage buildings along Main Street (buildings G and H), it is impractical for tenants to provide dual entrances, so all other buildings have their entrances facing the parking areas.

- High quality finishes and design for building facades that face adjacent streets, to avoid a 'back of house' impression, and to provide a consistent aesthetic on all 4 sides of the buildings.

Building Architecture

The design of the buildings is a rhythm of materiality and form, to create a distinctive and unified building design for the centre. The overall approach is modern, with flat roofs and rectilinear forms, combined with quality materials to create a design that will resist appearing 'dated'.

The key design elements include:

- sleek brick entrance features, that create a signature design feature for the project. A charcoal colour brick, and an orange-coloured brick are used to interplay between the different brick forms
- Prefinished profiled metal cladding is used along upper portions of the buildings in a horizontal orientation. to provide a contemporary and durable look. The design utilizes both a light and dark grey colour.
- Cementitious panels, designed with a subtle pattern of sizes, creates an interesting treatment that is both durable and contemporary.
- Overall, contemporary colour tones, leaning towards a modern appearance.
- High quality, durable materials, that will not deteriorate or require significant maintenance, while being resistant to major weather events.
- The proposed Food Store uses materials that are consistent with the overall shopping centre design, with a distinctive colour to highlight the entrance and to identify the store brand.

The buildings are quite consistent with each other in design. The decision to utilize this approach was made with the deliberate idea that this is a unified group of buildings, rather than a 'mix' of different storefronts. When the buildings are viewed together there is considerable variety in the appearance of the project, within a consistent vocabulary. This neutral approach to architecture will allow each tenant to have a unique identity supported by the overall design of the centre. Rooftop mechanical equipment has been carefully placed on buildings, setback from roof edge to be screened by parapets, avoiding the need for roof top RTU screening.

Loading and Waste Facilities

Loading and waste facilities have been provided to meet the practical needs of the retail uses. For larger tenants, waste rooms are incorporated into the buildings, and in multi-tenant buildings the waste areas are typically adjacent to the loading areas to facilitate pick up. In some instances, waste and loading are shared between two buildings, such as between E and F, J and K and between L and M. This approach reduces the amount of loading and waste areas, which generally detract from the appearance of the project. Where waste areas are outside of the buildings, they are located within enclosures (no roof) that screen and secure the waste and recycling areas from view.

Drive Thru Designs

There are two drive thru' s located on the site. In each instance, we have taken steps to minimize the impact of the drive thru on the adjacent streets, providing substantial landscape screening, which will reduce glare from headlights, and soften the appearance of the drive thru.

Plazas and Gathering Spaces

The proposal includes a number of large outdoor open spaces that will provide amenity and respite for visitors to the site. The main areas are:

- Plaza and patios at the south west corner. This feature plaza incorporates seating and landscaping and creates a gathering space for future high pedestrian activity from adjacent educational uses.
- Plaza at the south east corner. This high-profile location at one of the two main street linkages to the site will create a strong 'front door' for the project, incorporating a hard and softscape, some seating, and a freestanding sign.
- Plazas at High Street. Located on the south side of buildings G and H, these plazas provide additional permeability between High Street and the parking areas, facilitating pedestrian movement. It also provides an area of respite, with hard and soft landscaping and seating areas. We note the loading areas at the rear will be designed to blend into the site and will be managed to minimize use during regular hours.
- Plaza at north west corner. This open space provides permeability to the site, and will be a more natural landscape, and allow views into and out of the site.
- Plaza between Food Store and building C provides a location for some soft and hard landscape, with a seating area for respite.

Landscape Design

- The key drivers for the landscape design were twofold: a) emphasize/enhance the major corners of the site, and b) stormwater management.
- With the South corners of the site abutting Country Hills Boulevard, a focus was placed on these areas with a goal of making them as visually and physically inviting as possible. The main approach was to allow for generous walks leading directly into the site from the corners, with ample seating for shoppers, and giving a large part of the space over to planted areas. The green spaces are planted with native aspen trees and grasses, as an absorbent area to receive stormwater from the bordering hardscape – in concept, returning these spaces to their pre-developed states.
- A focus on stormwater management on site drove an innovative design approach within the two large parking lots, with a vertical layering of main pedestrian walks from north to south, with stormwater capacity below. The design allows for a maximized capture of water volume, while maintaining the ability of pedestrians to connect across the site. These 'boardwalk bioswales' also serve as interesting visual features, highlighting the innovative low-impact-development approach of the landscape design.

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