

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

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Date	September 2, 2020	
Time	2:00	
Panel Members	Present Chad Russill (Chair) Terry Klassen Ben Bailey Colin Friesen Jeff Lyness Michael Sydenham	Distribution Chris Hardwicke (Co-Chair) Gary Mundy Beverly Sandalack Ryan Agrey Jack Vanstone Glen Pardoe Noorullah Hussain Zada
Advisor	David Down, Chief Urban Designer	
Application number	DP2020-4959	
Municipal address	4225 26 Av NE	
Community	Rundle	
Project description	New: Multi-Residential Development (5 buildings)	
Review	First	
File Manager	Madeleine Krizan	
City Wide Urban Design	Lothar Wiwjorra	
Applicant	5468796	

Summary

The proposed Multi-Residential Development, as presented, is a series of 5 buildings configured in a meandering off-set grid pattern at a higher density relative to its surroundings. The Panel recognizes unit density with required landscaping and parking for this affordable housing project needs to strike a fine balance between economy and scale. The Panel found the design approach effective in how it breaks down the massing on site--described by the applicant as a tapestry or quilt, with different functions relating to one another as the buildings wrap around open spaces and at the same time define semi-private courtyards for community gathering. Although the Panel feels the application demonstrates strong urban design merit with the potential for a distinctive development, there are areas for refinement, with the understanding the status of project is at initial review.

As the design progresses, The Panel recommends the applicant refine/resolve the following aspects summarized below and as reinforced in the categorized elements that follow:

- **Strengthened Street Edges:** an experientially important component of this development will be in how it connects with the surrounding community. Landscape interface and the ground plane public realm-private realm relationship will be key to a strong integrated development.

APPLICANT RESPONSE: **ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED**. The landscape design works with the building screens to strengthen the street edge and provide an integrated development that enhances the surrounding community. [Please refer to 'L1.1 Landscape Plan']

- **Higher Brighter Breezeways:** as currently shown, breezeways are generous in width but not so generous in height, limiting natural light penetrating these areas. As illustrated, the continuation of the landscaped ground plane is not sustainable where there will be limited access to sunlight and no natural rainfall. Applicant to review truck manoeuvring limitations as part of exercise.

APPLICANT RESPONSE: **ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED**. Please see further explanation in the applicant response section below.

- **Larger Windows:** as illustrated, windows appear small relative to building mass, which may negatively impact the amount of natural light entering a dwelling unit. While some larger openings exist, the Panel recommends the applicant review these sizes to address exterior aesthetic concerns as well as for internal resident benefit.

APPLICANT RESPONSE: **ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED**. The window sizes throughout the development have been increased.

Applicant Response

(30 April, 2021)

Urban Design Element	
Creativity <i>Encourage innovation, model best practices</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall project approach as it relates to original ideas or innovation 	
UDRP Commentary	The applicant has proposed an innovative modular, scalable approach to the ground plane that helps in defining flexible shared space parking. Configuring buildings to define courtyards with ground-level patios and balconies in a mixed income housing setting is a social framework adaptable to the demands of the future.
Applicant Response	ACKNOWLEDGED

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09/02/2020

<p>Context Optimize built form with respect to mass and spacing of buildings, placement on site, response to adjacent uses, heights and densities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massing relationship to context, distribution on site, and orientation to street edges • Shade impact on public realm and adjacent sites 	
UDRP Commentary	While the proposed application intuitively feels contextually appropriate, there is a perceived missed opportunity to narrate a stronger relationship to context, transit, parks, and schools.
Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>The revised massing and roof lines of the proposed development take direct inspiration from the neighbourhood context. The site is surrounded to the North, East and West by single family homes or detached duplexes with pitched roofs. The variety of height and slope in these roofs directed the development of new roof line. The asymmetrical roofs follow the pattern on unit-demising walls within the building and create a 'village' of attached buildings that provides a modern interpretation of the contextual architectural language.</p> <p>Further colour changes of the same material help break down the length of the building, creating a perception of smaller buildings combined to create the development. The vertical metal cladding is available in variable widths. The width of the cladding will be varied at each 'attached house' to add visual interest and texture to the building.</p> <p>The pedestrian entries and connections to the transit stops, park, school and sidewalks have been strengthened through visually distinct thresholds. Screens are used to create privacy, delineation, and guardrails at the patios, while balconies have been extended in front of the common decks to demarcate entries. The screens open up fully between 1 and 1.5 stories and are spaced appropriately according to use and related level of privacy. These techniques and the overall design are used to create clear views and connections into and out of these neighbourhood amenities.</p>
<p>Human Scale Defines street edges, ensures height and mass respect context; pay attention to scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massing contribution to public realm at grade 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>A strengthened street edge would improve the livable scale connection to the surrounding community. Two questions that the Panel presents to the applicant on this subject include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does the massing and breezeway scale relationship contribute at street level? - How do the street-facing and courtyard facing ground-level patios relate to their corresponding shared spaces?

Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>The revised building massing contributes to the street level human scale through several building elements: roof lines, recessed private patios, cladding and colour, and building screen. The asymmetrical pitched roof lines enhance the street level experience. The pitched roofs create movement as a pedestrian walks along the public sidewalk or internal pathways. They also break down the building massing to smaller modules that compose the larger 'village'. While the overall building height is greater than the adjacent single family homes, the rhythm and visual variety provided by the roofs will create an extension of the existing visual experience of the surrounding neighbourhood.</p> <p>The building steps back at the ground floor, thus creating covered private patios along the building edge. With three exceptions, all ground floor units are accessed directly from these covered patios which connect to the courtyards or public sidewalk. The entry through the front private patio is carefully designed and considered to increase pedestrian activity, focal points, and general activity at the street level. This will help maintain the activity and rhythm present in the adjacent street composed of detached single family homes. As well, the recessed patios break down the building massing height by providing human scale spaces alongside the pedestrian realm.</p> <p>The private patios are defined by two elements: a privacy screen and change in cladding. All the recessed portions of the building, such as balconies and ground floor patios, are demarcated through the use of coloured cladding. While the main portions of the buildings will be monochromatic these areas of intensified activity are highlighted through a cladding change. As well, an architectural screen that mimics the angular roof line adds a level of privacy to the patios while providing movement and visual interest to the buildings. The private patios, both along the sidewalk and courtyards, will help activate the adjacent public realms and provide a 'front yard' experience for the tenants.</p> <p>The angular openings in the screen that frame the entry paths are exaggerated at the breezeway to add visual hierarchy and provide better views, as well as adding light to these connections in order to welcome the community to use the public courtyards. The breezeway roof/common deck above are also angular in plan to increase the height of ground floor paths, and create opportunities for interaction between pedestrians at the ground floor and individuals on the common decks.</p>
	<p>Integration <i>The conjunction of land-use, built form, landscaping and public realm design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking entrances and at-grade parking areas are concealed • Weather protection at entrances and solar exposure for outdoor public areas • Winter city response
UDRP Commentary	<p>At this early stage, the applicant has thoughtfully narrated modular space planning. The next logical step places the onus is on the applicant to take it to a more refined concept with finer grain, placemaking details resolved for a successful outcome.</p> <p>The programmatic elements of residential units, parking, and landscape unify the project in their complementary functions. These three components should further prove how effective the integration is through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - building envelope refinement and, - effective landscape design that cultivates an ecology of natural play and urban agriculture.

Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>The revised building massing, cladding selection, and architectural screen as described in the response to 'context' and 'human scale' comments show progress in the design and further finer-grain design development. This will continue into the construction documents and building permit stage.</p> <p>The landscape design is informed by the modular site space planning. The landscape design has been developed further to clearly show planting, play, seating, and walking areas. The modularity of the site tapestry provides a unique opportunity to create pockets that can create a multitude of varied experiences. While sod has been minimized throughout the site to provide a sustainable and easily maintained development, areas of natural play are provided with a few pockets of sod to encourage kid-friendly spaces. The majority of the planting material are fruit-bearing species. This along with a couple pockets of garden boxes will provide educational and urban agriculture opportunities. Seating in the form of benches, picnic tables [including barrier free options] are scattered throughout to create a variety of outdoor 'rooms'. The planting and landscape design along the street edge of the building maintain the modular language and is used to add visual interest, rhythm, variety and to soften any risers needed for entry patios. The landscape design will be further refined as the project moves to construction documents and building permit phase. [Please refer to the drawing L1.1 Landscape]</p>
<p>Connectivity <i>Achieve visual and functional connections between buildings and places; ensure connection to existing and future networks.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian first design, walkability, pathways through site • Connections to LRT stations, regional pathways, and cycle paths • Pedestrian pathway materials extend across driveways and lanes 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>While the site plan appears to demonstrate good onsite active modes of connectivity, the visual and functional connections to LRT, regional pathway and related cycling and walking networks including neighbourhood amenities could be addressed more holistically. The Panel submits that additional refinement will only further the observed successes, in an even more meaningful manner.</p>

Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>The revised design has a total of four breezeways. The original two breezeways remain in their original location with two new ones introduced at the southwest and southeast ends of the buildings. The original breezeways are composed of an interior bridge that continues the internal corridor and provides access to the exterior common deck at the second floor. The common deck has been pulled back from the building on one side, creating an angular deck/roof over the breezeway. The result is a breezeway entry that provides connection between the public path and activity at the common deck. This also increases the open-to-above section portion of the breezeway, bringing in more natural light and adding to the safety of the spaces. The screen in front of the Northwest breezeway [beside the bus stop] has an exaggerated angular entry to clearly identify this as a main access point and encourage activation and use of the interior public courtyards.</p> <p>The two new breezeways visually finish and anchor the buildings where the removed townhouses used to define the exterior entry path. The south-facing exposure of these breezeways will naturally provide increased lighting and visibility in and out of the breezeways. A common deck at the second level extends from the south face of the building and spans over the pedestrian path. The common deck/ breezeway roof sits atop a secure bike enclosure, defining the entry path. These bike enclosures will be built from the same material as the building screen and will allow natural light to flood into the breezeway path and clear views in and through the breezeway.</p> <p>Site lighting will be integrated to ensure the breezeways are appropriately lit after sunset and before sunrise.</p> <p>The landscape paving design and planting pattern in the breezeways will add visual interest. As well, the cladding of the breezeway walls [standard monochromatic vs. colour] will be carefully considered to add texture and finer-grain detail. Art may be explored as a possible method to contribute to the overall entry threshold experience.</p>
<p>Animation <i>Incorporate active uses; pay attention to details; add colour, wit and fun</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building form contributes to an active pedestrian realm • Residential units provided at-grade • Elevations are interesting and enhance the streetscape 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>Breezeway activation is a dynamic public realm opportunity. The placemaking potential deserves a creative design response in how it curates the threshold experience into the semi-private courtyard with its ground-level patios and upper balconies.</p> <p>The breezeway could be higher and brighter, flooding the frame with natural, reflected light. The walls could be operable to a diversity of activating uses and open into occupiable space or be a gallery of cultural artworks that welcome the surrounding community. Applicant is encouraged to explore these and other opportunities to contribute to an active, safe, and vitalizing public realm.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED.</p>
<p>Accessibility <i>Ensure clear and simple access for all types of users</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier free design • Entry definition, legibility, and natural wayfinding 	

UDRP Commentary	The applicant is encouraged to connect the principles and taxonomies presented into improved entry definition, legibility, and natural wayfinding. One example discussed during the presentation includes the use of cultural art expressions to help support natural wayfinding.
Applicant Response	ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED. The revised building design uses colour changes of the building cladding to help identify sections of the building. The architectural screens clearly define entry locations and can provide opportunities for number/signage locations. As well, landscape landmarks, such as playgrounds, community gardens, and bike enclosures create recognizable elements in the site and building design that can enhance wayfinding.
Diversity <i>Promote designs accommodating a broad range of users and uses</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail street variety, at-grade areas, transparency into spaces Corner treatments and project porosity 	
UDRP Commentary	Active street edges, porous breezeways, and transparent courtyards (one for natural play and one for community gardening) create three distinct settings for diversity of users and uses. The Panel recognizes the applicant, in further design development will have the opportunity to promote a broad range of users and uses.
Applicant Response	ACKNOWLEDGED. This has been further refined through the attached landscape plan [Refer to L1.1 Landscape Plan]. Further refinement will continue as the project moves on to construction document and building permit phases.
Flexibility <i>Develop planning and building concepts which allow adaptation to future uses, new technologies</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project approach relating to market and/or context changes 	
UDRP Commentary	The site module taxonomy provided precedent imagery options for flexible parking space that could potentially be repurposed to bicycle parking, scalable social events, play, gardening, and related. This is anticipated to be a successful response to flexibility aspects.
Applicant Response	ACKNOWLEDGED.
Safety <i>Achieve a sense of comfort and create places that provide security at all times</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety and security Nighttime design 	
UDRP Commentary	Scale and access to natural light for building residents are concerns identified by the Panel due to safety and mental health implications. Increasing the size and number of windows would improve natural light and contribute to more eyes on the street, the parking areas, and courtyard surroundings. A higher outdoor ceiling in the breezeway(s) would increase the volume of the space and improve natural lighting. The Panel feels these are opportunities to improve safety and security. The Panel understands this is an early review and as such lighting details were not provided.

Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>The window sizes throughout the building have been increased. As well, units that do not have have a private patio or balcony have a <i>Juliette</i> balcony to provide access to fresh air in the summer and views and light year-round. This will increase occupant comfort while adding more 'eyes on the street'. Lighting is provided as down lighting off the face of the building. However, a sensitive lighting strategy of light standards at the parking areas and light bollards through the courtyards will be developed as the design of the project progresses in order to provide appropriate lighting throughout the site. Careful consideration to the level of lighting will be given to ensure light pollution does not negatively affect ground floor units or neighbouring properties.</p>
<p>Orientation <i>Provide clear and consistent directional clues for urban navigation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance natural views and vistas 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>Further to the Accessibility discussion above, the Panel feels the functional and ambient qualities of the affordable housing setting can be optimized by further enhancing natural views and vistas, creating distinctive 'outdoor rooms', and clear, legible natural wayfinding.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>This has been addressed through further refinement of the landscape design. [Please refer to L1.1 Landscape Plan]</p>
<p>Sustainability <i>Be aware of lifecycle costs; incorporate sustainable practices and materials</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site/solar orientation and passive heating/cooling Material selection and sustainable products 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The applicant described building configuration and massing to optimize sun angles into the courtyards. There was no further discussion on sustainability except for natural play and community gardening opportunities. Panel expressed some concern that the higher 'tower' forms cast additional shadow on the courtyard areas, reducing the natural light at certain times of the day and without a functional component to justify the design move.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>In the proposed revised design the townhouse buildings south of the courtyard have been removed. This has allowed for an extension of the landscape area and increased access to direct southern sunlight. The building protects the courtyards from the North, West and East winds. Together, wind blocking and southern exposure will improve access to sunlight and solar heat in winter.</p>
<p>Durability <i>Incorporate long-lasting materials and details that will provide a legacy rather than a liability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of low maintenance materials and/or sustainable products Project detailed to avoid maintenance issues 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>The Panel agrees with generally durable materials as selected for building exterior. The landscape plan was not developed with material selections for the Panel's review. The Panel emphasizes the need for a nature-based landscape plan that is robust and resilient. Landscape integrity needs to support and sustain the social ecology and the biophysical attributes of the outdoor rooms of this community. The Panel agrees that the approach to the landscape asset, its design development, and its maintenance implications will be fundamental to its legacy.</p>

Applicant Response	<p>ACKNOWLEDGED + ADDRESSED.</p> <p>The landscape design has been developed to provide a site that has low water needs and is low maintenance to ensure longevity in its design and use. Site materials and furnishings are also selected to withstand every day use and provide a long lasting outdoor amenity for years to come. The planting materials are carefully selected to provide urban agriculture opportunities, support local flora and fauna, and remain as a key part of the building legacy with minimal maintenance.</p>
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