

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

Date	September 30, 2020	
Time	1:00	
Panel Members	Present Chad Russill (Chair) Terry Klassen Colin Friesen Michael Sydenham Ben Bailey	Distribution Chris Hardwicke (Co-Chair) Gary Mundy Beverly Sandalack Ryan Agrey Jack Vanstone Noorullah Hussain Zada Jeff Lyness Glen Pardoe
Advisor	David Down, Chief Urban Designer	
Application number	DP2020-5899	
Municipal address	526 4 Av SW	
Community	Downtown Commercial Core	
Project description	New: Dwelling Unit, Office, Retail and Consumer Service	
Review	first	
File Manager	Derek Pomreinke	
City Wide Urban Design	Dawn Clarke	
Applicant	S2 Architecture	

*Based on the applicant's response to the Panel's comments, the Chief Urban Designer will determine if further review will include the Panel or be completed internally only by City Wide Urban Design.

Summary

The building under review, titled '4th Avenue Tower', is a 30 storey residential tower on a two storey lobby and retail podium which includes a Plus 15 link accommodated at the north façade. It is located at the west side of the north edge of the downtown core just south of the developing Eau Claire residential area. It meets the basic planning objectives of various Calgary downtown plans and is an adequate urban design solution for this site but could be improved to provide a stronger urban presence with more defined architectural character. The Panel's position is the project needs further refinement to achieve the goals of good quality urban design.

The goal of the design is stated to be 'deliberately simple'. In this regard the project is perhaps too successful the result being that the building has little to say about contemporary design or culture. The panel noted the following items that could benefit from more design development:

1. The lot to the east could benefit from an extension of the retail space from the building. This could be considered as a temporary measure before future assembly and if/when development happens to the east. This would serve to enliven the streetscape to a greater degree than the proposed surface parking lot. One other, albeit somewhat of a lesser consideration from the urban edge, is noted below that would achieve a greater outcome than the current proposal.
2. The south facing elevation on the corner does take advantage of the available southern exposure. The flat planes of glass at ground level and the repetitive nature of the tower elevations offer little in terms of fine-grain character. A more articulate form for the tower and a stronger architectural statement at the corner of the podium would generate a presence that would enhance the urban environment and wayfinding in this part of the core.
3. The inclusion of the Plus 15 at the edge of the core in a primarily residential building is of questionable value. Unless this connects the downtown center to some meaningful destination beyond the building or is skillfully integrated with the ground plane, this Plus 15 will attract pedestrian traffic away from the at-grade realm and achieve a less desirable outcome in the opinion of the Panel.

Applicant Response

2021 January 27

1. **“The lot to the east could benefit from an extension of the retail space from the building. This could be considered as a temporary measure before future assembly and if/when development happens to the east. This would serve to enliven the streetscape to a greater degree than the proposed surface parking lot. One other, albeit somewhat of a lesser consideration from the urban edge, is noted below that would achieve a greater outcome than the current proposal.”**
 - a) The east and west lots are to be subdivided to create two separate parcels. Each of these parcels are to have different ownership. This application is for the residential tower on the west side of the site. The east site is to be left undeveloped for future development. The east parcel plus the adjacent landowner (Caesar’s restaurant) provides enough land area to develop a mid-block Phase Two development. The dimension of the east parcel of land plus the Caesar’s restaurant site is 40.280 meters, our proposed west tower is 39.24 meters in width. S2 has also designed a residential tower in East Village (INK) which is on a 30.5 meter-wide, mid-block lot which was approved and built. This addresses the concern that a future tower has the necessary space to be developed in the future. Please refer to revised DP1.00.
 - b) The proposed “pocket” parking lot will provide a multi-purpose amenity for existing businesses in a part of the City with few at-grade parking options.
 - c) In response to the UDRP’s comments the Design Team have removed parking spaces, thereby pushing the parking further north to align with the exterior south façade of the building and increasing the public realm at grade and further developed a feature decorative screen along the southern edge of the parking lot to conceal the cars beyond and provide a unique urban respite with seating and landscaping along 4th Avenue complementing the proposed treatment in front of the proposed new residential tower. Please refer to revised DP1.00.
 - d) The construction of a low-rise retail extension on a different owner’s property is not considered a temporary solution, we feel the development of a well screened surface lot which has the opportunity to act as a multi-use space is more appropriate for the remaining lands today.
2. **“The south facing elevation on the corner does take advantage of the available southern exposure. The flat planes of glass at ground level and the repetitive nature of the tower elevations offer little in terms of fine-grain character. A more articulate form for the tower and a stronger architectural statement at the corner of the podium would generate a presence that would enhance the urban environment and wayfinding in this part of the core.”**
 - a) The south and west facing elevations have been revisited to provide a stronger architectural statement at the corner and greater fine-grained detail has been incorporated into the podium level, addressing wayfinding aspects of the project. Please refer to revised DP4.00, DP4.01 and coloured elevations DP4.00A and DP4.01A.
 - b) Two canopies have been added to the elevations on both 4th Avenue S.W. and 5th Street S.W. The first canopy is at the second level above the residential entry which projects beyond the ten-meter-high exposed exterior columns and wraps around the corner of the building to the west identifying the residential entry. This canopy will define the residential entrance and lobby from both the west and south. Thin LED lights have been added to the soffit of the canopy and are to

be extended into the building to create a strong residential entry both inside and out. The second canopy is located above the retail spaces at approximately ten feet in height and extends from the retail units east to the property line. This canopy projects off the building four feet and will have feature lights in the soffit to give a human scale to the outdoor patio areas. Having the two canopies at different heights introduces a more human scale to the façade and creates a differentiation between the residential and retail uses along the 4th Avenue SW frontage. Please refer to revised DP4.00 and DP4.00A.

- c) The base of the building has been increased in height to +/-700 mm (2.3 ft) to allow for a durable material and ground the building, the material is to be the same material as is represented on the east and west podium level. By increasing the height of the base this will address any potential maintenance issues around the base. Please refer to revised DP4.00 and DP4.00A.
- d) The entrance to the residential use at the corner has now incorporated an arch below the lower canopy with the underside of the arch at ten feet in height which allows the opportunity to add both surface mounted entry lights on either side of the entry and the project name and address above the doors, this arch is to be the same material as the base. At each of the retail entrances there have been columns introduced on either side of the entry doors to highlight where the respective entrances are, the materials on the columns are to be the same as the base. Please refer to revised DP4.00 and DP4.00A.
- e) The tower has been purposefully designed to keep the simplicity of the tower form. The main feature of the tower are the walls on the east side which are a patterned composite panel system which will add textural character to the building and this treatment is continued from the top of the podium to the roof to tie the podium to the tower element above and will act to also screen the mechanical equipment of the roof. Please refer to revised DP4.01 and DP4.01A.

3. “The inclusion of the Plus 15 at the edge of the core in a primarily residential building is of questionable value. Unless this connects the downtown center to some meaningful destination beyond the building or is skillfully integrated with the ground plane, this Plus 15 will attract pedestrian traffic away from the at-grade realm and achieve a less desirable outcome in the opinion of the Panel.”

- a) The Plus 15 system in downtown Calgary is in place and this project is respecting the guidelines to allow for the continuity of this system. Presently, La Caille has an approved Development Permit for a 52-storey, mixed-use development for the entire site which does connect to the existing Plus 15 system.
- b) The intent of development in downtown Calgary is to respect the Plus 15 network and allow for future connectivity; at this time it is unknown what the next destination will be.
- c) Being a Winter City, Calgarians utilize the Plus 15 system throughout the year, more so in the winter months. However, we do understand that the Plus 15 will attract pedestrian traffic away from the at-grade realm. Access to the Plus 15 system is provided along 5th Street SW. Please refer to revised DP2.03 and DP4.00.

Urban Design Element	
<p>Creativity <i>Encourage innovation; model best practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall project approach as it relates to original ideas or innovation 	
UDRP Commentary	The building is overtly simple to a fault in form and is not considered a strong urban design solution. The Panel recommends an increased focus to create character and identity by adding variety to the tower elevations and more articulation to the ground level glazing. The three prominent south-facing columns represent basic minimalism – a more innovative design response to framing the entrance is encouraged.
Applicant Response	The Design Team have reviewed the podium level façade articulation and introduced canopies above the residential and retail entrances and added more fine-grain detail to the base. Description of the changes is addressed above in the response to Question 2. Please refer to revised DP4.00.
<p>Context <i>Optimize built form with respect to mass and spacing of buildings, placement on site, response to adjacent uses, heights and densities</i></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	Generally, the massing and size are appropriate in this context and the ground level does respond to the south exposure. The missing element is observed to be smaller scale articulation. There is currently a missed opportunity to enhance the corner treatment. Potential solution may include smart wayfinding attributes that reinforce placemaking qualities.
Applicant Response	The Design Team have reviewed the design based on the comment above and have reworked the lower podium level to introduce both fine-grain details as well as addressing the corner and assisting with the wayfinding aspect of identifying the residential front door and defining it differently than the retail entrances. Further detail is provided in the response to Question 2 above. Please refer to revised DP4.00 and DP4.00A.
<p>Human Scale <i>Defines street edges, ensures height and mass respect context; pay attention to scale</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massing contribution to public realm at grade 	
UDRP Commentary	Overall massing is appropriate, and the landscaping approach has clarity but the fine-grain detail is missing. In the reviewed design, there is a noticeable lack in small scale articulation for the building, which does not sufficiently address human scale.
Applicant Response	The Design Team have reviewed the massing and the contribution to the public realm at grade, as such, canopies at various heights have been introduced along with additional detail at the podium level. Please refer to the response to Question 2 above for a more detailed breakdown of what has been introduced. Please refer to revised DP4.00 and DP4.00A. The landscape palette is intended as simple with a modular language tying into the building interface. At a broader scale, a pattern of wide charcoal color concrete bands running north-south at regular intervals set the rhythm of the public realm experience. The charcoal bands are also used as organizing elements for the boulevard trees and planting bed delineating the transition from public to private. Additionally, finer charcoal bands running east-west adds a finer grain of pattern as a user moves from south to north, approaching the building from public realm to private realm. The planting beds further add a layer of fine-grain through the introduction of layered planting with low evergreen shrubs along the edge of the sidewalk, with a layer of taller grasses behind. A 200mm (6 inch) curb has been introduced around each of the planting beds to provide greater definition to the planting beds. Please refer to revised DP-L1.
<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	The surface parking area should be reviewed further. Commentary to extend commercial frontage at-grade and along 4 th Avenue would significantly improve the urban edge. Another consideration discussed by the Panel is the potential for integration of the parking, plaza and laneway into multiuse space with a south side gateway connection and temporary placemaking, to enhance this area.

Applicant Response	The surface parking on the new east parcel has been reduced in size whereby stalls have been removed and a visual screen has been introduced to separate the surface parking from the public realm along 4th Avenue. The screen is in line with the building façade which allows for the public realm space defined on the west site to continue to the east. A south pedestrian access point has been provided against the building allowing access from the Avenue frontage plaza space to the surface parking multiuse space. Please refer to revised DP1.00 and DP6.01.
<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	+15 not supported in this location, as it significantly detracts from the Urban Realm environment at-grade.
Applicant Response	The Design Team have reviewed the Plus 15 location and feel that it responds to the connectivity of the Plus 15 system. We understand that it potentially detracts from the Urban Realm but does address the provision of the connectivity to the Plus 15 system. Access to the Plus 15 system is directly off the sidewalk along 5th Street SW and will be signed appropriately. Please refer to revised DP1.00 and DP4.00.
<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>Building design as reviewed is relatively sterile. While it is noted as integrating a high degree of glazing, there is little articulation and animation of the façade. Fine grain details at the podium are recommended by the Panel.</p> <p>Improved rendering quality for a project of this stature is recommended. This would provide a more accurate representation of the project and therefore a more informed Panel commentary. Some technical aspects of the ability for the 'highly articulated metal panels' to provide as much relief in the built condition as shown in the renderings is identified as being an area of concern.</p>
Applicant Response	The Design Team have reviewed the podium level glazing articulation and introduced various elements to create a more human scale at grade for the public realm. Please refer to the response to Question 2 above. Please refer to revised DP4.00 and coloured elevation DP4.00A, and appended images and material board.
<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	Accessibility seems to meet requirements
Applicant Response	
<p>Diversity <i>Promote designs accommodating a broad range of users and uses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail street variety, at-grade areas, transparency into spaces • Corner treatments and project porosity 	
UDRP Commentary	Retail allows for a variety of uses and provides transparency into the space, however corner character and fine grain details are missing.
Applicant Response	The Design Team have reviewed the at grade uses which include the entry to the residential tower as well retail uses fronting onto 4th Avenue. Canopies, lighting, definition of entries has been incorporated into the design. The corner treatment has been continued around the corner from 4 th Avenue S.W. to 5th Street S.W. Please refer to the response to Question 2 above for more detailed information. Please refer to revised DP4.00, DP4.00A, DP-L1 and DPE1.1.
<p>Flexibility <i>Develop planning and building concepts which allow adaptation to future uses, new technologies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project approach relating to market and/or context changes 	
UDRP Commentary	While the Panel appreciates the flexibility aspect of a simple design, areas such as the rooftop amenity are noted as being 'just pavers' and provide little guidance regarding actual use. In the current format, the rooftop space should not be considered as amenity space. This area would benefit greatly from integrated planters, built-in greenery, and features that promote physical use of the space.

	Applicant to further review the 'Outdoor Amenity' on level 3 along the northside of the building. This location presents three private patio areas immediately adjacent to a thin strip of outdoor amenity, thus creating an awkward interface with one another. Providing larger private balconies and eliminating the outdoor amenity in this area appears one solution, that may be worth exploring, to reduce potential conflict.
Applicant Response	The Design Team have reviewed the Outdoor Amenity space on level 4 (formerly level 3, per DP package). The modified design responds to comments regarding how the space is to be laid out and utilized. A trellis structure has been added directly outside the doors from the building. Under this trellis will be movable furniture and barbeques for resident use, as well as built-in planters to help define the space. There is to be a screen added which separates the Outdoor Amenity space on the east side from the units facing north. There is to be no public access to the rooftop space directly in front of the private patio areas of the units facing north. Please refer to revised DP2.06, DP-L2 and DPE1.2.
<p>Safety <i>Achieve a sense of comfort and create places that provide security at all times</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and security • Night time design 	
UDRP Commentary	Ground level and parking areas have adequate sight lines and surveillance. No significant concerns are identified in the presented package.
Applicant Response	The new landscape 'pockets' are to have a raised 200 mm (8 inch) curb around them to articulate wayfinding, increase soil volume for plants and frame the landscaped walking space. The building has also been refined to add greater fine-grain detail as well as addressing wayfinding concerns. Please refer to the response to Question 2 above which outlines the further refined details being incorporated. Please refer to revised DP1.00, DP-L1 and DPE1.1.
<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	See Context regarding comments on wayfinding. Applicant might consider a slightly raised curb under street tree canopy to balance and frame the landscaped walking space along 4th avenue & 5th streets.
Applicant Response	
<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	No meaningful sustainability aspects were discussed as part of the presentation.
Applicant Response	Low-maintenance, drought-tolerant shrubs and decorative grasses are proposed in the planters to ensure viability and sustainability of the proposed planting palette from a maintenance and environmental perspective. Please refer to revised DP-L1.
<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	Applicant to review podium materiality, as critical area to enhance project materiality in relationship with the at-grade areas. Landscaping requires adequate planting and soil depth. Soil cell technology should be considered to improve the health of the urban tree canopy
Applicant Response	<p>The Design Team have reviewed the materiality and maintenance aspects of the base of the building. The glazing has been raised up 700 mm (2.3 ft) to allow for proper maintenance and durability for the project. This base is continued along the west face of the resident lobby on 5th Street S.W. as well as along the south façade by the resident entry and the retail uses fronting onto 4th Avenue S.W. The materials to be used are the same as the materials on the podium walls on the west and east elevations. Please refer to the response to Question 2 above for a more detailed description on modifications. Please refer to revised DP1.00.</p> <p>Adequate planting depth and soil volume has been provided in keeping with best industry practices and City of Calgary requirements for planting over the parkade, to ensure long term viability of the plants. Please refer to DP-L2.</p>