

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

Date	November 29, 2023	
Time	1:00	
Panel Members	Present Jeff Lyness (Chair) Noorullah Hussain Zada Boris Karn Maria Landry Beverly Sandalack Brendan Stevenson	Distribution Kathy Oberg (Co-chair) Rick Gendron Rasool Ghodoosi Dehnavi Ryan Martinson Raphael Neurohr Katherine Robinson
Advisor	Jihad Bitar, Urban Designer	
Application number	DP2022-07470	
Municipal address	1201 NA'A Drive SW	
Community	Medicine Hill	
Project description	Multi-Residential	
Review	1st	
File Manager	Quadri Adebayo	
Urban Design	Sonny Tomic	
Applicant	FAAS	

*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 Urban Design.

Summary

The Panel appreciates the inherent challenges posed by the site and context, including the orientation and configuration of the parcel, the direct adjacency to a commercial development with a back-of-house edge and the site's significant grade differentials. However, as presented, the proposed project does not meet the expectations of the Panel for a contextually sensitive, legible and slope adaptive development. The Applicant noted that there is additional information included in the Development Permit package that was not included the package provided to UDRP. This additional information, inclusive of appropriate grading plans and site sections noting the transitions of both grade and proposed buildings would have been beneficial for the Panel. As this information was omitted from the materials, the Panel's commentary on this front is speculative only.

The Panel appreciates the Applicant's intent to provide greater density with a variety of housing options and resident amenities on the parcel, however the key site and building design challenges noted by the Panel have resulted in a recommendation for further review. The key themes of the Panel's comments and feedback are summarized below:

- Amenity areas are not purposefully designed or programmed.
- Site design lacks pedestrian connectivity and legibility, both north to south and east to west.
- Grade is not sufficiently acknowledged in the design as presented.

Please refer the Urban Design Elements section below for more detailed commentary.

Applicant Response

December 13, 2023

Urban Design Element	
Place Recognize and enhance the unique and emerging identity of a place by responding to surrounding context, local policy, and community objectives through the contribution of innovative architecture and public realm.	
Site	Does the site planning show innovation in addressing site constraints and challenges?
	Does the design respect existing topography, landscape, and archaeology?
	Does the site design accommodate people of all abilities?
Architecture	Is the project visually interesting and unique?
	Does the architecture respond to landmark and gateway opportunities presented by the site?
	Does the design reflect any distinctive social, cultural or historical aspects of the site and community?
Public Realm	Does the project contribute to the creation of a high quality, connected public realm?
UDRP Commentary	<p>The site planning of the development is interpreted as a direct result of the curvilinear shape and dimension of the site. The grade could have a substantial impact on how the site could be developed with the density noted, through stacked units that take advantage of multiple entrance points as an example.</p> <p>In addition, the building massing could incorporate stepping to accentuate the visual impact of the grade along the main circulation spine. The buildings should not simply be exact replicas of one another with only minor color changes. A subtle variation in building height in response to changing grade expressed in the facades could be a benefit to the proposed design and help reduce the uniformity of the street wall as currently presented.</p> <p>The Panel appreciates the effort made to engage with the Indigenous cultural history of the site. The use of and reference to engagement outcomes with the First Nations should be more considered and purposeful if they are in fact drivers of the project.</p> <p>The landscape design appears more decorative and primarily composed on non-native species, in contrast to the aspirations noted by the Applicant. This contributes to the design as presented is missing a sense of arrival / place as no entry features or design elements are noted at either entrance to the site.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>We have provided an Urban Design Supplement Package attached to the DR2 re-submission and in response to UDRP comments. We've incorporated a page that speaks to the slope adaptive design and City of Calgary Slope Adaptive guidelines.</p> <p><u>Key Slope Adaptive Design Strategies</u></p> <p>Site Grading/Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No grades exceed 33% across the site - Minimized retaining wall locations and heights to 0.5m (+/-) <p>Architectural Grading/Form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building Type 1 – these buildings contain suites. The main floor geodetics were carefully selected to ensure that the suites will have ample natural light, and walkout patios to the south - Building Type 2 – in locations where the grade shifts, the building massing is broken up and stepped with the frame amplifying this stepping - Building Type 3 are located in the comparatively flatter portion of the site <p>The engagement outcomes with the indigenous parties were primarily around landscape features and plantings and were not a key driver for the architecture nor a focus of interest during these conversations. We have responded to what we heard by updating our plantings and incorporation of interpretive panels in the central amenity area.</p> <p>The plantings has been purposefully selected for the various open spaces on site; with areas for food production for the residents in the central amenity space, desired plantings identified through indigenous engagement in the reflection area, and native plantings along the environmental reserve.</p>

Scale <i>Ensure appropriate transitions between building masses and adjacent places and spaces; define street and open space edges and bring human scale through articulation, materials, details and landscaping.</i>	
Site	Does the arrangement of buildings and spaces on the site address street edges well?
	Is the scale and placement of buildings and structures appropriate for the street and public space size and type?
	Are large service and surface parking areas modulated and screened by structures and landscaping?
Architecture	Are design strategies employed to reduce the impact of building height and bulk?
	Are street walls well defined and of appropriate height to street width and type?
	Are human scaled elements and details included to enhance street character?
Public Realm	Are public spaces well edged and framed by structures and/or landscaping?
	Does the design include detail which will enhance street character and encourage use of the public realm?
UDRP Commentary	<p>However, as presented, the development can be interpreted as simply overlaying a typology from a flat site onto one with significant grade without understanding the actual impact of the grade. The Panel is concerned that the elevations and visuals presented may not be accurate reflections of the grade impact and the required building design accommodations.</p> <p>The definition of the street wall interface along the building frontages is unresolved and would benefit from some additional depth. This could either be accomplished by moving the buildings to reduce the landscape buffer at the rear of the site (buffer was noted by the Applicant as the rationale for the building placement) or moving the sidewalk from across the drive aisle to the townhome frontage (again undetermined if achievable given the lack of grading info).</p>
Applicant Response	<p>Please see applicant response to the comments in the 'Place' section regarding slope adaptive design.</p> <p>The complexity of the site including the set location of the road, steep grades, and desires of multiple collaborators including the Paskapoo Slopes Preservation Society to protect the ER with a large setback has taken precedent; we are unable to shift the buildings further south.</p> <p>We have reviewed pedestrian connectivity across the site to connect Building #1 to #5 and provided an additional crossing between Buildings #4 and #5 to ensure enhanced connectivity.</p>
Amenity <i>Ensure that public sidewalks and gathering spaces are generously proportioned, comfortable, safe, fully accessible, and framed by permeable facades which allow for activation throughout the year.</i>	
Site	Are equitable, inviting access and varied movement options provided for all ages and abilities?
	Does the design work with sun orientation and seasonal climate variation?
	Does the site plan safely accommodate all travel modes?
	Are service and utility requirements located appropriately to lessen visual impact?
Architecture	Does the building(s) meet or exceed expectations for universal access design?
	Does the architecture create a pleasant street edge which feels safe to users?
Public Realm	Does the public realm design prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over vehicle access?
	Is the public realm visually interesting, comfortable, and safe during all seasons?
	Are the public spaces designed for people of all abilities and ages?
	Do the public spaces meet or exceed expectations for universal access design?
UDRP Commentary	The amenity spaces hit all the programming targets but are unsuccessful given the lack of purposeful integration, curation and communication. Too many programs are proposed in a small space, leading to compromise across every element. Suggest the programming of the primary amenity area be simplified to allow for more functional spaces (ie: expansion of the playground through the removal of the community garden given its likely use, programming and maintenance challenges). Similarly, an orchard with fruit-bearing trees will present a management / maintenance challenge and is unlikely to be well used by residents. Suggest eliminating to create more space for the more usable elements of the proposed amenity program.

	<p>There are concerns with the connectivity between the buildings on the south side and the amenity space. Residents would likely be crossing at various points along the roadway, where vehicles will be backing in and out of parking stalls. Enhancements could be made to the roadway to create a more multi-modal environment. These could include horizontal deflection to reduce vehicle speeds, tactile road surface treatment, speed humps, etc.</p> <p>The reflection area located in an isolated corner of the site is a major CPTED concern given its lack of visibility, dense planting and edge conditions. Suggest reallocation of this space or a redesign of the program to resolve CPTED issues.</p> <p>Care should be given to provide plantings that are resilient, low maintenance and reflective of the broader goals of the project to meaningfully integrate feedback from Indigenous groups.</p> <p>Shadow studies, although a requirement of the submission, were missing, and the applicant is strongly encouraged to consider sun exposure in the design of the public spaces.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>The developer and design team have purposefully chosen and incorporated a mix of programming in the central amenity space to bring all demographics together to create a vibrant outdoor hub. These amenities were chosen for popularity within rental communities. In addition, the community gardens, orchard and fruit bearing bushes are considered to be highly valued, added in response to indigenous engagement and address food security issues. The project team respects the input but has chosen to keep this programmed hub intact in one central space. We have added areas for interpretive panels with the graphics/text displays to be created in collaboration with the indigenous community.</p> <p>The reflection area is strategically located with a view to the surrounding area and adjacency to the ER. We have updated our site lighting plan to incorporate greater lighting in the reflection garden and to limit CPTED issues.</p> <p>The plantings has been purposefully selected for the various open spaces on site; with areas for food production for the residents in the central amenity space, desired plantings identified through indigenous engagement in the reflection area, and native plantings along the environmental reserve.</p> <p>Shadow studies have been included in the urban design supplement package attached with DR2 resubmission.</p>
Legibility Create logical, permeable networks of streets and pathways that connect within and between neighbourhoods and public places; design well-defined community and building entrances with distinctive, memorable attributes.	
Site	<p>Does the project provide a permeable, fine-grained and functional urban structure of blocks and streets?</p> <p>Does the project provide legible, accessible, continuous walking and cycling connections within the site that connect to adjacent systems and destinations?</p> <p>Does the proposed network consider future expansion into surrounding areas?</p> <p>Are large parking areas designed with clear, safe, direct pedestrian connections?</p>
Architecture	Are buildings designed with clearly marked and differentiated entries to facilitate wayfinding?
Public Realm	Are the public routes and spaces configured to facilitate easy and safe navigation with clear paths and appropriately placed wayfinding elements?
UDRP Commentary	<p>There appear to be significant grade changes in multiple directions along the site. The buildings do not reflect or respond to the grade on the site. The strategy employed by the applicant for the material and minor changes in the buildings is not necessarily a challenge. However, the buildings need to reflect the grade of the site. Any retaining walls (along with their heights) should also be shown on the plans as they will impact the overall design.</p> <p>The function, use and program of the buffer space between the townhome units and the MR / ER is unclear. Given a lack of grading information, the Panel is cannot comment if an opportunity exists to shift the proposed townhome buildings closer to the property line to create the opportunity for a sidewalk along the private drive aisle, which would be a significant benefit to the legibility and connectivity of the site.</p>

	<p>The Panel acknowledges that the site design of the commercial site turns it's back on the subject site with a 'back-of-house' edge. Given that embracing this edge is difficult, the proposed site design may benefit from a more substantive and densely planted landscape buffer.</p> <p>Connections to the commercial site are inconsistent across plans. While a connection is functionally important for residents, three may be too many — consolidating pedestrian access to the commercial site into one central access point may provide a better user experience, greater site legibility and more soft landscaping area.</p> <p>No pedestrian crossings are noted across the internal private drive aisle / road. Explore opportunities to integrate crossings at key locations / desire lines, including the potential to use raised crossings for traffic calming.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>Please see applicant response to the comments in the 'Place' section regarding slope adaptive design.</p> <p>The complexity of the site including the set location of the road, steep grades, and desires of multiple collaborators including the Paskapoo Slopes Preservation Society to protect the ER with a large setback has taken precedent; we are unable to shift the buildings further south.</p> <p>We cannot consolidate connections along the north property line as they are required for firefighting access.</p>
Vibrancy Ensure that new developments are configured and designed to animate streets and public spaces with varied sizes and types of grade-oriented uses.	
Site	<p>Will the building placement and orientation together with the arrangement and variety of uses activate the adjacent streets and public spaces?</p> <p>Will the project contribute to creating greater economic, employment and/or residential diversity in the neighbourhood?</p>
Architecture	<p>Does the building articulation, materials and details contribute to the vibrancy of the streets and public spaces?</p> <p>Is there a variety of residential and/or commercial unit types and sizes?</p>
Public Realm	Do outdoor spaces provide varied experiences and accommodate people with diverse abilities?
UDRP Commentary	<p>The Panel appreciates the mix of scale and product typologies noted, including townhomes, villas and garden suites / flats.</p> <p>During the Applicant's presentation it was understood that there would be some non-market housing incorporated which is commendable, but the Panel strongly advises that this should not be limited to lower suites of Phase 1 and 2, which are mostly considered the less desirable and least accessible from the proposed amenity areas. The Panel recommends a mixed-market approach that spreads and integrates the proposed affordable units across multiple phases (not just Phase 1 and Phase 2) to accommodate a broad spectrum of future residents across the entire site, and ideally closer to the proposed amenity spaces.</p> <p>The intention to provide subtle changes in the architectural palette is understood and acknowledged. The Panel suggests that a reduction in the number of colour palettes may provide more impact and cohesiveness.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>The non-market housing options are proposed to be suites in Buildings #1 to #4. The grading in this particular location provides an opportunity for split-level entrances that provide the non-market suites with ample lighting and a walkout condition to the south backyard/buffer space. If we were to integrate these suites in Buildings #5 to #12; they would be buried basement units. Our proposed location for these suites are preferred.</p> <p>We have added a sidewalk connecting Building #1 to #5 and provided a pedestrian crossing to the amenity space to enhance connectivity.</p>

	We have amended the material and colour palettes to 4 more distinct palettes. These four distinct palettes applied across the three building types as well as the stepping of some townhouses provide for abundant variation.
Resilience Ensure that projects provide opportunities, through their site layout, spatial configuration, materials, and sustainable design features for responsible operation and continuous adaptation to change over time.	
Site	Is the project designed to respond to change (economic, social, demographic or other) over time?
	Does the plan meet/exceed climate resilience/sustainable design expectations?
	Are active travel modes prioritized, and active lifestyle choices encouraged?
Architecture	Does the building show indication of sustainable design practices and materials?
	Is a range of uses accommodated; does the design anticipate future change?
	Is the building designed to endure over time with reasonable maintenance?
Public Realm	Are public spaces adaptable for multiple uses over short and medium term?
	Does the public realm design respond to climate resilience / sustainability expectations?
UDRP Commentary	The Applicant noted energy efficient building design. The Panel also acknowledges that energy efficiency targets / goals are part of the intended CMHC financing conditions being sought by the client. The Panel suggests the intended energy efficiency targets be explicitly stated in quantifiable metrics, along with a clarification of whether the proposed strategy applies to the entire development or only those phases that have an affordable / below-market component.
Applicant Response	All buildings will be 25 to 27% lower in energy consumption and GHG emissions than the 2017 National Energy Code for Buildings (NECB) requirements