

# Urban Design Review Panel Comments

<b>Date</b>	November 15, 2023	
<b>Time</b>	3:00	
<b>Panel Members</b>	<b>Present</b> Kathy Oberg (chair) Rick Gendron Rasool Ghodoosi Dehnavi Ryan Martinson Raphael Neurohr	<b>Distribution</b> Jeff Lyness (Co-chair) Boris Karn Noorullah Hussain Zada Maria Landry Katherine Robinson Beverly Sandalack Brendan Stevenson
<b>Advisor</b>	Dawn Clark, Urban Designer	
<b>Application number</b>	DP2023-06646	
<b>Municipal address</b>	1878 NA'A Drive SW	
<b>Community</b>	Medicine Hill	
<b>Project description</b>	New: Multi-Residential Development (1 Building)	
<b>Review</b>	First	
<b>File Manager</b>	Quadri Adebayo	
<b>Urban Design</b>	Sonny Tomic	
<b>Applicant</b>	Casola-Koppe Architects	

\*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 site design reads as a standard multifamily building form awkwardly inserted into an oval shaped site. The Panel recognizes that the parcel shape is not standard thus there is an opportunity to create a unique product to address the site. The challenging site grades and the decision to locate the main floor / level 1 one storey below the roadway significantly diminishes any opportunities to create a vibrant urban edge along Na'a Drive.

The design provides for no usable ground floor outdoor amenity space for residents; especially frustrating since the building has a flat roof with opportunities to include a rooftop amenity space that could have great city views. The interior amenity space, in addition to being located one storey below Na'a Drive, does not provide opportunity for residents to connect with the outdoor spaces on the site.

The height of the building in combination with the dark colours of the exterior cladding presents a visually massive and imposing structure at street level. The step back of the sixth floor level does not have the intended effect of reducing the building's mass since it is not evident from the street.

The Policy specifies this project is fronting on a Residential Main Street with a focus on pedestrians and cyclists – the panel is concerned that the individual doors are minor in nature and likely cannot have direct access to the pathway. Thus the policy is not being followed.

Extensive efforts need to be made to provide appropriate amenity space, reduce the mass (through form and colour) and create a pedestrian edge that is comfortable and welcoming.

## Applicant Response

(January 31, 2024)

### PLACE

The site grades present a significant challenge and disconnects the building from the site presenting an awkward transition from Na'a Drive to the unit entries. Situating the main floor below the street grade is an unfortunate consequence and provides a significantly diminished street edge. The proposed landscape design serves to silo the site from the surrounding greenspaces. The landscape strategy to naturalize the soft landscape areas on the site is commendable, and the Applicant is encouraged to explore a plant material palette and bioengineering strategy that is more congruous with the site context; Amur Maples are not native to the area.

Landscaping along Na'a drive is intended to provide more privacy for the grade-oriented units, and enhance the street edge with elements such as the wood slat feature and layered landscaping. The strategy to naturalize the north has been revised with the increase in Aspen groupings and incorporation of Wolf Willow, Prickly Rose, and native grass in order to provide a seamless blend into the natural surroundings.

### SITE

The building presents as a visually massive structure, compounded by the dark colours of the finish materials. The design strategy to step the sixth floor back does not have the intended impact of reducing the building's visual mass; this step back is not visually significant from the street level. The gateway elements that flank the ground floor unit entries are good wayfinding elements, however the entry placements one storey below street grade is awkward. The building reads as a very large façade for pedestrians, the Applicant is encouraged to explore solutions to break up the building faces either by articulation of elevation elements or colour. Further, the bookends of the building are prominent and exposed and deserve further articulation. This could be achieved by introducing more windows and wrapping balconies around corners.

The colour pallet has been revised to be brighter and warmer in tone, and more articulation has been added to all sides of the building, most notably on the South façade where choices have been made that better frame the at-grade entries, and tune into a more pedestrian-friendly scale.

### AMENITY

The site provides no usable ground floor amenity spaces for the residents due to the excessive sloping of the grades. The design program does not provide any rooftop amenity space, despite the building having a flat roof design. From a purely functional aspect, there is no maintenance access to the amenity space on the north of the site, which will significantly impact future site maintenance activities to the building façade and the adjacent landscape. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to provide usable and functional amenity space on the site, the rooftop being an obvious option. The interior amenity space does not connect to the outdoor space; the Applicant is encouraged to explore opportunities that relocate the proposed amenity space within the building providing opportunity that allows the space to interact with the outdoor space.

The Level 1 amenity space has been maintained for residents, and a rooftop amenity space has been added on the West side of the roof. This rooftop amenity will provide residents with views of the mountains and the Paskapoo slopes. Maintenance access to the North end of the site has been achieved from the East side of the building.

## LEGIBILITY

The location of the main entry at the west end of the building is incompatible with the secondary entry at the east end of the building. The visual cues such as the staircase and amount of hardscape area at the secondary entry give it more visual importance, and it consequently reads as the main entry to the building. The Applicant is encouraged to explore opportunities to switch the entry classifications. Additionally, the current secondary entry is closer to transit, which further strengthens the opportunity to transform this entry to the main access point.

Consider relocating the interior amenity space into what is now the waste and recycling room. This would activate the adjacent entry and provide grade level activity to the general public. Further, a Molok waste and recycling system may be very effective in this location.

The primary entrance (West) has been revised to be more prominent than the secondary entrance to the East. The primary entrance utilizes a bright blue, opposed to the more subdued white that can be found at the secondary entrance. The change in material for the entrances also places them apart from the rest of the building, as they are to be clad in metal panel. Signage will also aid in differentiating the two entrances. Please refer to the lighting schedule and renderings to visualize how the architectural accent lighting will be used to highlight the primary entrance. The primary entrance is labeled as such due to its proximity to the elevators for ease of access to the upper units.

## VIBRANCY

The disconnect from Na'a Drive reduces any vibrancy that an animated building frontage might provide. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to explore design elements that might contribute to vibrancy at the street edge. The dark colours of the building in combination with the massing significantly impacts any vibrancy that might be afforded to the public spaces. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to review and revise the colour palette of the building exterior. The disconnect from the ground floor outdoor spaces in combination with the excessively sloped site grades provides no experience for residents to interact with the landscaped spaces on the site. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to review and revise the site grades to create usable outdoor spaces and look for opportunities to connect the ground floor units with the outdoor space. The placement of the main floor units below grade disconnects the building from the street edge and provides no vibrancy to the street.

The colour pallet has been revised to be brighter and warmer in tone, and more articulation has been added to all sides of the building, most notably on the South façade where choices have been made that better frame the at-grade entries, and tune into a more pedestrian-friendly scale. Pedestrian-scaled views have been added to sheet DP5.3.

## RESILIENCE

The Applicant's presentation materials and verbal presentation did not discuss resiliency. Please include resilient elements in your resubmission.

A slope adaptive design strategy was employed to minimize the disruption to the existing site. The development's proximity to Canada Olympic Park, Calgary Climbing Centre, the Bow River and its associated pathways, the Trans-Canada highway allowing access to the Rocky Mountains, and the existing regional pathways, will encourage residents to pursue active lifestyles. The newly connected Ring Road provides residents with unprecedented connectivity for this area to the rest of the City. Proximity to the Calgary Farmer's Market provides residents with sustainable and local grocery options.

Some sustainable design choices in the development include indoor and outdoor amenity spaces, which ensures that residents have access to these amenity spaces throughout the seasons.

<b>Urban Design Element</b>	
<b>Place</b> 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	The site grades present a significant challenge and disconnects the building from the site presenting an awkward transition from Na'a Drive to the unit entries. Situating the main floor below the street grade is an unfortunate consequence and provides a significantly diminished street edge. The proposed landscape design serves to silo the site from the surrounding greenspaces. The landscape strategy to naturalize the soft landscape areas on the site is commendable, and the Applicant is encouraged to explore a plant material palette and bioengineering strategy that is more congruous with the site context; Amur Maples are not native to the area.
Applicant Response	Landscaping along Na'a drive is intended to provide more privacy for the grade-oriented units, and enhance the street edge with elements such as the wood slat feature and layered landscaping. The strategy to naturalize the north has been revised with the increase in Aspen groupings and incorporation of Wolf Willow, Prickly Rose, and native grass in order to provide a seamless blend into the natural surroundings.
<b>Scale</b> 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.	
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	The building presents as a visually massive structure, compounded by the dark colours of the finish materials. The design strategy to step the sixth floor back does not have the intended impact of reducing the building's visual mass; this step back is not visually significant from the street level. The gateway elements that flank the ground floor unit entries are good wayfinding elements, however the entry placements one storey below street grade is awkward. The building reads as a very large façade for pedestrians, the Applicant is encouraged to explore solutions to break up the building faces either by articulation of elevation elements or colour. Further, the bookends of the building are prominent and exposed and deserve further articulation. This could be achieved by introducing more windows and wrapping balconies around corners.
Applicant Response	The colour pallet has been revised to be brighter and warmer in tone, and more articulation has been added to all sides of the building, most notably on the South façade where choices have been made that better frame the at-grade entries, and tune into a more pedestrian-friendly scale.
<b>Amenity</b> 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.	
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 site provides no usable ground floor amenity spaces for the residents due to the excessive sloping of the grades. The design program does not provide any rooftop amenity space, despite the building having a flat roof design. From a purely functional aspect, there is no maintenance access to the amenity space on the north of the site, which will significantly impact future site maintenance activities to the building façade and the adjacent landscape. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to provide usable and functional amenity space on the site, the rooftop being an obvious option. The interior amenity space does not connect to the outdoor space; the Applicant is encouraged to explore opportunities that relocate the proposed amenity space within the building providing opportunity that allows the space to interact with the outdoor space.
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<b>Legibility</b> 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	Does the project provide a permeable, fine-grained and functional urban structure of blocks and streets?
	Does the project provide legible, accessible, continuous walking and cycling connections within the site that connect to adjacent systems and destinations?
	Does the proposed network consider future expansion into surrounding areas?
	Are large parking areas designed with clear, safe, direct pedestrian connections?
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	The location of the main entry at the west end of the building is incompatible with the secondary entry at the east end of the building. The visual cues such as the staircase and amount of hardscape area at the secondary entry give it more visual importance, and it consequently reads as the main entry to the building. The Applicant is encouraged to explore opportunities to switch the entry classifications. Additionally, the current secondary entry is closer to transit, which further strengthens the opportunity to transform this entry to the main access point.  Consider relocating the interior amenity space into what is now the waste and recycling room. This would activate the adjacent entry and provide grade level activity to the general public. Further, a Molok waste and recycling system may be very effective in this location.
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<b>Vibrancy</b> Ensure that new developments are configured and designed to animate streets and public spaces with varied sizes and types of grade-oriented uses.	

Site	Will the building placement and orientation together with the arrangement and variety of uses activate the adjacent streets and public spaces?
	Will the project contribute to creating greater economic, employment and/or residential diversity in the neighbourhood?
Architecture	Does the building articulation, materials and details contribute to the vibrancy of the streets and public spaces?
	Is there a variety of residential and/or commercial unit types and sizes?
Public Realm	Do outdoor spaces provide varied experiences and accommodate people with diverse abilities?
UDRP Commentary	The disconnect from Na'a Drive reduces any vibrancy that an animated building frontage might provide. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to explore design elements that might contribute to vibrancy at the street edge. The dark colours of the building in combination with the massing significantly impacts any vibrancy that might be afforded to the public spaces. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to review and revise the colour palette of the building exterior. The disconnect from the ground floor outdoor spaces in combination with the excessively sloped site grades provides no experience for residents to interact with the landscaped spaces on the site. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to review and revise the site grades to create usable outdoor spaces and look for opportunities to connect the ground floor units with the outdoor space. The placement of the main floor units below grade disconnects the building from the street edge and provides no vibrancy to the street.
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<b>Resilience</b> 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's presentation materials and verbal presentation did not discuss resiliency. Please include resilient elements in your resubmission.
Applicant Response	A slope adaptive design strategy was employed to minimize the disruption to the existing site. The development's proximity to Canada Olympic Park, Calgary Climbing Centre, the Bow River and its associated pathways, the Trans-Canada highway allowing access to the Rocky Mountains, and the existing regional pathways, will encourage residents to pursue active lifestyles. The newly connected Ring Road provides residents with unprecedented connectivity for this area to the rest of the City. Proximity to the Calgary Farmer's Market provides residents with sustainable and local grocery options. Some sustainable design choices in the development include indoor and outdoor amenity spaces, which ensures that residents have access to these amenity spaces throughout the seasons.