

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

Date	March 20, 2024	
Time	2:00	
Panel Members	Present Jeff Lyness (Co-chair) Rasool Ghodoosi Dehnavi Noorullah Hussain Zada Boris Karn Maria Landry Brendan Stevenson	Distribution Kathy Oberg (chair) Rick Gendron Ryan Martinson Raphael Neurohr Katherine Robinson Beverly Sandalack
Advisor	David Down, Chief Urban Designer	
Application number	PE2024-00203	
Municipal address	305, 329 Belmont Av SW	
Community	Belmont	
Project description	New: Fieldhouse and Library	
Review	First	
File Manager	Nancy Sanborn	
Urban Design	Sonny Tomic	
Applicant	GEC 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 Urban Design.

Summary

The Panel acknowledges the challenges of planning for multiple / phased program needs and appreciates the level of detail provided at this early stage. The Panel commends the comprehensive planning approach taken to realize a functional Phase 1 that also sets a strong framework for future phases to integrate seamlessly both across the site and with the proposed building / program. The Panel is supportive of the direction of the proposal as presented and encourages the Applicant team to maintain a commitment to architectural quality and user experience, with a specific focus on circulation and the publicly visible and accessible entry point / library component of the program.

To support future phases of project design, the Panel offers its comments and suggestions regarding the configuration and sequence of pedestrian / vehicle circulation and key building edges:

- The raised east / west pedestrian connection between Phase 1 and the comprehensive site is appreciated. The Panel encourages further study of drop-off / pick-up logistics, vehicle desire lines, and the potential to shift the raised pedestrian spine north to reduce pedestrian / vehicle conflicts. A shift north may also better align with the ultimate location of the primary building entrance following the Phase 2 retrofit. A similar raised treatment could be integrated into the north / south pedestrian connection that bisects the parking lot.
- A more generously sized outdoor arrival area at the primary entrance may benefit end user experience.
- The Applicant team should explore opportunities to take advantage of site size and grades to create gradually sloping "gentle accessibility" experience for pedestrians headed to the bus stop at 210 AV SW.
- The retention / reintroduction of glazing for the fieldhouse component would help break up the long linear mass and introduce visual interest for passersby. If architectural fins are retained, the Panel suggests additional exploration of how they can be used to provide more animation to the south façade of the building.

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	The Panel commends the comprehensive planning approach taken to realize a functional Phase 1 that also sets a strong framework for future phases to integrate seamlessly both across the site and with the proposed building / program. The program needs of the Library and Fieldhouse are understood and have been accommodated in an elegant way, with future accommodation for additional program to the north via Phase 2. The Library component represents the greatest opportunity for visual impact and should be prominent in the design of the building.
Applicant Response	The library's primary book collection band is accentuated by a glazed two storey space. This language is extended into the building's main lobby with the intension of continuing to expand north as main gathering space for the future recreation centre addition. The library component is brought back down to the human scale by adding a lower, solid band at the building's front and mixing materials with more texture.
Scale 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	Given the surrounding context and building program needs, the proposed scale is appropriate. The use of existing site grades to mitigate the scale impact of the Fieldhouse is noted.
Applicant Response	Noted. There is an approximately 3-metre grade drop from 210 Avenue SW and the western boundary into the site. This helps mitigate the height of the building for surrounding residents.
Amenity 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 key program elements of the proposed building represent new and in-demand public amenities that will be accessible to all Calgarians. The Library component is accessible to all users without the need to "pay-to-play" and presents an opportunity to be a celebrated component of the building's architectural expression.
Applicant Response	A generous pedestrian promenade and raised walkways guide visitors from their vehicles safely through the parking lot, to the building's main outdoor gathering space and entry.

	<p>Passenger loading stalls are located immediately adjacent to the building's front door and sidewalks are provided from the existing bus stop on 210th avenue via a sloped walkway to the facility. The Library has fenced outdoor amenity space that is landscaped with outdoor furniture on its south side allowing patrons to enjoy the library's offerings in an alternate setting.</p>
<p>Legibility <i>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.</i></p>	
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	<p>The raised east / west pedestrian connection between Phase 1 and the comprehensive site is appreciated, both for its traffic calming and pedestrian circulation function. The Applicant is encouraged to further explore drop-off / pick-up logistics, vehicle desire lines, and the potential to shift the raised pedestrian spine north to reduce pedestrian / vehicle conflicts. A shift north may also better align with the ultimate location of the primary building entrance following the Phase 2 retrofit. A similar raised treatment could be integrated into the north / south pedestrian connection that bisects the parking lot.</p> <p>The landscape approach for the east / west spine could consider the relocation of planting to the edges of the spine to focus pedestrian activity to the centre and provide a buffer to the parking areas.</p> <p>The Applicant team should explore opportunities to take advantage of site size and grades to create gradually sloping "gentle accessibility" experience for pedestrians headed to the bus stop at 210 AV SW. A more direct staircase route could also be considered to provide multiple route options.</p> <p>The Library component as a visible "lantern" to draw interest from multiple site edges should be further developed / explored through upcoming phases of design.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>The E/W promenade was pushed north to reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and to better accommodate the primary building entrance location when the future optimized rec centre is built. As a result of these changes, the entry canopy was extended North to align with the new promenade location, and secondary building signage was added to help identify the primary entrance of the project and improve wayfinding.</p> <p>The pedestrian path connecting the facility to the bus stop on 210 Avenue SW was revised to accommodate a gentle slope, ranging from 2.2% to 5%.</p>
<p>Vibrancy <i>Ensure that new developments are configured and designed to animate streets and public spaces with varied sizes and types of grade-oriented uses.</i></p>	
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	<p>A more generously sized outdoor arrival area / plaza at the primary entrance may benefit end user experience and allow for more opportunities for impromptu interactions between those arriving and leaving the facility. The inclusion of a Learning Commons outdoor space as part of the Library program is supported and represents an opportunity for both passive and active programming.</p>

	The retention / reintroduction of glazing for the fieldhouse component would help break up the long linear mass of the Fieldhouse and introduce visual interest for passersby. If architectural fins are retained, the Panel suggests additional exploration of how they can be used to provide more animation to the south façade of the building.
Applicant Response	<p>In order to accommodate the full build out of the 2022 Master Plan, maintain the proposed number of parking stalls, and keeping in mind budgetary sensitivities, the project is limited to its existing development boundary. There is opportunity to expand the entry plaza at a later date when the future optimized rec center is conceived.</p> <p>Due to budgetary constraints and user preferences, adding glazing into the fieldhouse is not a viable option to consider for the project. However, locations for murals on the south façade of the building were added to animate the south side, break up the long façade and be visually appealing to passerby.</p>
Resilience <i>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.</i>	
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 Panel acknowledges and supports the proposed approach to Base Building Sustainability and eventual Zero Carbon transition. The Panel encourages the use of low impact development and stormwater management strategies through future phases of design evolution (rain garden elements noted during Panel discussion related to the east / west pedestrian spine).
Applicant Response	The project will utilize Low Impact Development strategies and supply native drought-tolerant vegetation. Phased construction and site boundaries are currently impacting the implementation of green stormwater infrastructure but this item will be revisited at a later stage during development of recreation centre site.