Community Planning Department
Burlington Urban Design Advisory Panel (BUD)

MINUTES

November 17, 2020, 1:45 pm
Virtual (Online) Meeting

Members of BUD

	present	absent / regrets
Ken Coit (Chair)	✓	
Jana Kelemen (Vice Chair)		✓
Alexandru Taranu		✓
Jackie VanderVelde	✓	
Jessica Hawes	✓	
LeAnn Seely		✓
Matt Reid	✓	
Michael Barker		✓
Nigel Tai	✓	

Item #1: 1120 Cooke Boulevard

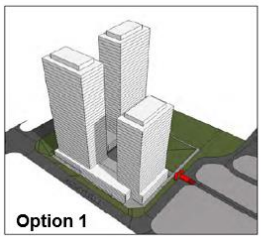
Design Review: First Review

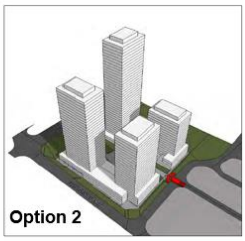
Application: Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments

Presentations:

City Staff: Kyle Plas, Coordinator of Development Review

Design Team: Babak Eslahjou, Core Architects & Mario Patitucci, Adesso Design





Disclosure of conflict-of-interest

None.

City Staff Overview

City staff outlined the project details, planning framework and existing and future context. Staff are seeking the Panel's advice on the following key issues:

Public Realm

1. What design strategies could be used to encourage active transportation by residents of this development, and ensure a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented public realm along Masonry Court, Cooke Boulevard and Waterdown Road, in light of the grade changes along Masonry and Waterdown and the planned future pedestrian connection to the GO station at the north terminus of Cooke Boulevard?
2. How should site and podium design relate to the Waterdown/Masonry and Cooke/Masonry intersections?

Ground Level Outdoor Amenity & Site Design

3. Please comment on the advantages and disadvantages of each option with respect to the provision of ground level outdoor open space. What other opportunities could be explored to ensure the incorporation of high-quality, ground-level open space on this site?

Building Form, Massing & Materiality

4. Please comment on the overall form, massing and materiality of the towers and podiums in contributing to an interesting skyline and achieving a human-scaled environment at the street level.

Design Team Presentation

The project architect provided an overview of the proposal. Two options with the same density were presented. Option 1 consists of three towers (39, 39, and 29 storeys in height) and a ground-level outdoor space on the north east corner of the site. Option 2 proposes four towers with shorter heights (39, 18, 25, 32 storeys) and some smaller floorplates compared to Option 1.

Both options contain two, four-storey podiums. The podiums are designed with projecting balconies to give depth to the streetwall. An enlarged wood canopy is proposed at the building entrances. In the towers, balconies are brought in from the sides and designed with glass components to give a slender shape to the towers.

Option 1 - The project architect explained that the ground floor of the building along Masonry Court is below grade and will be used for parking. Residential uses are provided at the ground floor along Cooke Boulevard. The landscape architect explained that the park space was located on the northeast corner to connect to the future City park to the north. The landscape plan is preliminary at this time; the intent is to create a space that will connect to Cooke Boulevard, the Metrolinx pathway and city stormwater pond.

Option 2 – A shorter tower is provided on the north east corner with the intent to transition to the adjacent development to the east. An open view is created to Waterdown when entering the site from Cooke Boulevard. The same parking condition along Masonry Court as Option 1 is proposed. Amenity space for this option is focused on the podium rooftops, between the towers.

The project also walked the Panel through the shadow studies, and noted that in Option 1, the outdoor amenity space will be in shadow for a large portion of the time.

Panel Questions:

The Panel asked the following questions of clarification:

- How close is the proposed development to the nearest park and was that park designed/planned to accommodate this level of density? Are there parks within walking distance from this location?
    - The lands immediately to the north were planned to be a park and open space area as part of Station West Phase 1. Hidden Valley Park is nearby, exact distance unknown.
    - The project team also clarified that a decision has not yet been made about making the proposed open space on the north east corner of Option 1 a privately-owned public space; it is currently considered a private amenity space.
- Are there any long-term plans for Waterdown Road, such as widenings?
- Who developed the lands to the east?
    - It is also by ADI but involved a different architect.
- What is the rationale behind the two options?
    - The project architect acknowledged that there is a lot of shadow on the ground-level open space. He explained that Option 2 was developed first, and then the team looked at what it would be like to free up a corner. The project architect felt

that the difference between 30 and 40 storeys is not noticeable, but a parkette is noticeable.

- There seems to be an assumed density for the site; where does that come from?
    - The project team explained that the proposed density is based on the client's desire for higher densities and proximity to the GO station, not the City. The site was always intended to have higher densities than Phase 1.
- Since this area is close to transit, a mix of uses and a more active uses at grade would be desirable. Were café or offices ever considered?
    - The project team explained that no commercial is contemplated at grade at this time, and that this development is within walking distance of Plains Road.
- What types of unit sizes are contemplated? Larger sized units are generally encouraged.
    - The project manager explained that the majority of units will not be studio units. The focus will be on 2-bedroom and 1-bedroom-plus-den units.

Panel Advice:

Public Realm - *What design strategies could be used to encourage active transportation by residents of this development, and ensure a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented public realm along Masonry Court, Cooke Boulevard and Waterdown Road, in light of the grade changes along Masonry and Waterdown and the planned future pedestrian connection to the GO station at the north terminus of Cooke Boulevard? How should site and podium design relate to the Waterdown/Masonry and Cooke/Masonry intersections?*

All Panel members felt that although Option 1 is generally more supportive of active transportation and a vibrant streetscape than Option 2, the inward-focused configuration of both options currently does not provide the opportunity to create a positive interface with the street. The Panel recommended that the podiums be turned outwards to address the streets, with at-grade entrances, lobbies, and retail space facing the streets. Amenity space facing the street would also assist with enlivening the streets.

The Panel felt that since transit users will likely move along Masonry Court and Cooke Boulevard, at-grade treatment of these streets is most important, and residential uses along these streets may not be appropriate. Building shadows on Cooke should also be minimized. The Panel suggested that a fulsome consideration of the surrounding context, including the future conditions of Waterdown Road, would be beneficial for informing how the building should address the streets.

The Panel suggested providing active recreational uses in the proposed open space area to complement the future, likely passive, public park (e.g. children's play area and/or dog parks). The Panel felt that having residential uses face the public stormwater pond and park is desirable for eyes on the street.

To address the grade changes, the Panel recommended using architecture and landscape rather than having one elevation for the entire development. In particular, the podium could be articulated so that it rises with the elevation (i.e. taller height at Waterdown and lower at Cooke). Doing so could help reduce shadowing on the proposed open space, redistribute density to where it may be most appropriate (e.g. closer to Waterdown Road), and relate the building to the site topography.

The Panel also felt that the internal space in both options read as primarily for vehicle movements and questioned the usability of the internal courtyard space in Option 2. Paving / surface treatment could be used to convey that this space is primarily a public space. Tucking the loading space away from Cooke Boulevard, as in Option 1, is desirable.

Some Panel members also felt that bicycle parking at both corners is a good idea but questioned how accessible it will be from the street due to the site's grading.

Ground Level Outdoor Amenity & Site Design *- Please comment on the advantages and disadvantages of each option with respect to the provision of ground level outdoor open space. What other opportunities could be explored to ensure the incorporation of high-quality, ground-level open space on this site?*

The Panel agreed that it makes sense to locate the open space at the northeast corner of the site, adjacent to the future public park in Option 1, but was very concerned that the park will be in shadow most of the time and asked that it be addressed in the future development application. The Panel suggested that the shadowing could be improved through podium articulation, tower sculpting and reduction in overall tower heights and mass. The Panel suggested that the applicant consider how the park will be used in the future and possibly consider relocating the park elsewhere on site with a path to connect to the public park instead.

Built Form, Massing & Materiality *- Please comment on the overall form, massing and materiality of the towers and podiums in contributing to an interesting skyline and achieving a human-scaled environment at the street level.*

The Panel appreciated that two options were submitted and that the design process was explained. However, all Panel members were concerned that both options are overdeveloped for the site and area and noted that overbuilding is the underlying issue to the concerns raised in the Panel's responses to earlier questions. Specifically, the Panel advised that:

- Transitions to adjacent properties and between the buildings within the site, in terms of scale, mass and height, are missing. The City's Tall Building Guidelines exemplify a very clear, gradual transition in height (e.g. 24 storeys to 16, 8 and finally 3 storeys), which is not currently reflected in the proposals.
- Providing ground-level, outdoor amenity space on site is essential given the level of density proposed, but the shadow conditions in Option 1 are not desirable.
- With respect to skyline, the podiums appear disproportionately small in relation to the towers and the 6-storey buildings to the east, and the towers appear as one large mass rather than individual buildings, despite appearing to meet the City's tower separation guidelines. Since the towers will be seen from all angles and visible from a distance, more differentiation between the towers, and between the tower and podium shapes is needed.

To address the above concerns, the Panel felt that ultimately, the number and height of towers and overall density should be significantly reduced. The easterly towers, in particular, should be reconsidered.

In addition to removing towers and significantly reducing the height of towers, the Panel recommended that the applicant experiment with different tower and podium shapes, heights and orientations and test the options with shadow studies to ensure that sun access to the open space area and courtyard is improved. For example, one tower could be designed to act as a beacon to the development. This would also help with telling a good design story. The Panel also suggested that increasing the height and articulation of the podium could partially help to lower the overall tower heights.

Finally, the Panel felt that the heights and massing may be premature as planning for the precinct is not yet complete. The Panel questioned the urban design rationale of having the proposed heights on this site, in relation to other properties within the area. It may make more design sense to concentrate the tallest heights elsewhere in the precinct.