Community Planning Department
Burlington Urban Design Advisory Panel (BUD)

MINUTES

April 20, 2023
1:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Members of BUD

	present	absent / regrets
Jessica Hawes (Chair)	✓	
Matt Reid	✓	
David deGroot	✓	
Mike Flint	✓	
LeAnn Seely	✓	
Nigel Tai	✓	
Alexandru Taranu		regrets
Jackie VanderVelde		regrets

Item #1: 141-153 Plains Road West



Design Review:	First Review
Application:	Pre-consultation
Presentations:	
City Staff:	Elyse Meneray, Community Planning
Design Team:	Atif Aqeel, AAA Architects
	Frank Venditti, Evans Planning

Disclosure of conflict-of-interest

None.

City Staff Overview

City staff provided an overview of the application's status, as it came through a Pre-consultation for an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) and a Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA). In the presentation, staff outlined the surrounding context, transportation and mobility network, project details, as well as the existing and planned context.

Staff are seeking the Panel's advice on the following key issues:

1. Context and Circulation

Please comment on the relationship between the proposed building and the surrounding context, particularly with respect to the overall building design, and existing and future development context. Does the proposed development support context sensitive design in relation to the Aldershot MTSA and to the character of Plains Road West?

2. Site Design and Built Form

Please comment on the overall site design, particularly with respect to the building mass, setbacks, proposed balconies/ terraces, functionality of space and internal circulation, location of parking and building utilities. Does the building massing affect the surrounding context in terms of setbacks and privacy? Does the proposed development contribute positively to the pedestrian realm and enhance the pedestrian's experience on Plains Road West?

3. Landscaping and Sustainability

Please comment on the project's articulation of building materials from a design and sustainability perspective, the proposed landscaping scheme, as well as the location and design of the proposed outdoor/ indoor amenity space. Do you have any comments or suggestions for the integration of amenity space or landscape space for use by the residents?

Design Team Presentation

The design team provided a detailed description of the development proposal through a presentation of the proposed building in a 3D model format. The proposed building is 11 storeys in height, with a tiered podium form design. The tiered podium ranges in height between 4 and 6 storeys, to avoid creating a monotonous building form.

The design team explained the proposal from a built form perspective, highlighting that the design of the building is dramatic in its architectural expression with the inclusion of vertical elements in the podium. To create visual interest on the east and west facades, vertical slits/ panel elements are proposed to emulate the skin of the building being peeled back to show the building form within. This architectural element articulation allows for penetration of daylighting and allows for the introduction of balconies to the structure. Also, on the front façade of the building, similar insert panels are proposed, as well as staggering balconies from the podium to add to the dramatic effect of the façade. The design of this building is innovative in comparison to the typical generic building that are seen within the city. This dramatic design is based on precedents from projects that are designed by famous architects such as MVRDV architects in Europe within urban contexts.

The top portion of the proposed development is stepped back from the podium and consists of glazing, spandrel panel and more balconies that wrap around the building. To the rear of the building, the team mitigated noise concerns from the abutting industrial properties to the north, by introducing a series of angled walls that almost create a blank façade when viewed from an elevation perspective. The angled walls also help direct views of the units towards Hidden Valley Park and to the natural heritage system.

To maximize parking availability without having 3 levels of underground parking, the team proposes a mezzanine level as part of the building podium. Parking is proposed at grade and at the second floor, toward the rear of the building. A number of green roof top amenity spaces are also proposed at the top of the building and at the podium level, however, were not displayed in the 3D model presented.

Panel Questions:

The Panel asked the design team the following questions of clarification:

- How big are the balconies facing Plains Road West and the balconies facing the rear of the building?
    - The balconies facing the street project from the façade by approximately 6 feet or 1.2 metres
    - The balconies to the rear are approximately 1.7 metres in depth and are approximately 1.7 metres in width
- Have there been any discussions with the neighbours of the property, specifically the owner to the north regarding access to the property from the north?
    - Yes, there have been discussions with all the adjacent neighbours of the property as this is an area in transition. However, not with the owner to the north.
- The terraces were mentioned as looking underwhelming in the model, Can you speak to the plan for these spaces?
    - The intention is to have outdoor amenity spaces; however, the design of these spaces is not developed. Development of the outdoor amenity space is contemplated at the site plan stage.
- Can you talk about the choice of colours and materials? Why were these colours chosen, and how does it fit into the context?
    - The colours have not been finalized, specifically the choice of red colour. The intent is to create a strong contrast as though something has cut through the building skin and the building is exposed. Hence the red colour is chosen as a dramatic colour. There are also discussions with the owner regarding softening the red tone. Other colours that are used are meant to be earthly, and warm in tone with glass added in. The intent is to have a cool toned building with glass and grey colours that would tie in with the red tone using the warm toned elements such as wood texture panels and frosted glazing on the balconies. The red tone is also meant to bring out and add to the warm tone of the building.
- Can you speak to any sustainability features that are being considered as part of this building? Is there any affordable component that is being considered as part of this proposal?
    - This is a rental building that is going through the CMHC rental program for housing, thus affordability is a main characteristic of this building. The building is not proposed as a condominium.

- Also, the MLI Select program for CMHC requires the exceeding the Ontario Building code requirements to achieve compliance and gain points. This will result in the building being more efficient that the typical requirement by the building code. The amount by which it will be efficient is under negotiation with CMHC.

Panel Advice:

Question #1: **Context and Circulation –** *Please comment on the relationship between the proposed building and the surrounding context, particularly with respect to the overall building design, and existing and future development context. Does the proposed development support context sensitive design in relation to the Aldershot MTSA and to the character of Plains Road West?*

The Panel commented that it is important to consider both the existing and future context of this proposal. In terms of the future context, the building proposal aligns with the context and the 11-storey height is consistent with the direction of the policies. Also, with the building being located at the edge of the MTSA on the eastern end of the neighbourhood, it can act as the higher point transitioning to the other properties to the west. The building's position close to the street is consistent with the range of setbacks in the area. On the south side of Plains Road, apartment buildings are setback further from the street while the building to the north of the street are closer to the street. Also, while there is a transition on the west side building structure, the Panel cautioned that the building structure is very close with minimal setbacks to the east and west property lines, with a 6 storey podium on the west side. This may affect development potential of surrounding properties in the future.

The Panel commended the team on their proposal being a rental building in tenure and for going through the CMHC process. The panel believes that the building's circulation and parking features are too exposed. From the perspective of a pedestrian approaching the building at the west corner, the internal circulation of the building is highly visible. More screening is recommended to help hide the loading area and parking. The ground floor is heavily dominated by vehicular circulation. The proposed design has a midrise built form but a suburban ground floor and parking condition. The Panel recommends that the team look at this in greater detail and better configure these two components. If the proposed design of the parking at grade was to be mirrored to all the properties surrounding the

proposed building, this would not result in a positive outcome to the context. The Panel advised the design team to re-examine the configuration of the ground floor to reduce the amount of parking, allow for greater tree planting opportunities and to add space for cyclist circulation. The Panel also recommended that a ground floor bike room be provided as to allow for ease of cyclists to navigate through. The Panel also recommended that the design team consider the future development of this area, and its connectivity and walkability being as part of the MTSA. The Panel advised the team to incorporate more pedestrian connections through the extension of the proposed north south connection on the east side to provide and protect for connectivity between sites in the future.

Question #2: **Site Design and Built Form –** *Please comment on the overall site design, particularly with respect to the building mass, setbacks, proposed balconies/ terraces, functionality of space and internal circulation, location of parking and building utilities. Does the building massing affect the surrounding context in terms of setbacks and privacy? Does the proposed development contribute positively to the pedestrian realm and enhance the pedestrian's experience on Plains Road West?*

The Panel commended the team on their choice and use of design elements to create a building that stands out rather than fitting in. The Panel cautioned the team that having a standout design like the one proposed may result in challenging public consultations down the road, as well as other renters in the area feeling left out and/or future tenants feeling singled out. When considering built form, the Panel agreed that the proposed height is appropriate for the area. The Panel also agreed that the podium's basic geometry and proposed setbacks of the building are appropriate. However, there are privacy issues regarding the east and the west side of the building that need to be considered.

As for the balconies that are proposed facing Plain Road West, although they may look good on a 3D model from a functional perspective, a balcony that has the dimensions of 6 ft deep and 1.4 metres wide is not enough functional space as it can only fit one chair and that will be half of the circulation in the space. Also, some of the units seem to have multiple adjacent balconies (east facing units on the 4th floor plan have 6 balconies!), which is not very functional or practical. The Panel advise that the design team re-examine their design proposal from a functional and practical use perspective to find a

good balance between form and function. The Panel also recommended that the balconies become more continuous to allow for better function. The Panel recognises that the team propose an innovative solution to the noise issues faced to the north of the property. However, the proposed units at the rear of the building are approximately 12 meters deep, which raises concerns of daylighting penetration into the units. This is especially a concern for the 2-bedroom units, as this results in an interior bedroom with a 45-degree window. The Panel recommends that the team consider the depth of these proposed units in relation to daylight access through simplification of the proposed design elements. The Panel also recommended that the design team look at refining the interior layout so that the units are shallower rather than having a mirrored depth to the unit layout.

The Panel advised the team to work on the detailing of the outdoor amenity space on the rooftop, as the proposed massing shows clean, thin profiles as roof tops. However, if this space was programmed for use by the residents, as a roof terrace and an amenity space there will be requirements of rail guards, and wind guards, etc. This will result in much thicker profiles than those proposed.

The Panel encouraged the design team to take a closer look at the proposed ground floor from a pedestrian and cyclist perspective. This includes looking at additional detailing like inclusion of signage and screening so that the parking area is not too prominent and helps enhance the pedestrian experience. The aim here would be to align the proposal with the vision of this area to be pedestrian and cycling focused rather than car focused. Also, this proposal would be setting a precedent for future developments in the area, as such it is strongly recommended that further exploration be made into the treatment of the ground floor uses to be more inviting and precedent setting in terms of best practices for future uses in the area. The Panel also noted that the use of high-quality materials and details for both the internal layout and exterior design of this proposal is highly recommended as it forms a major part in the success of its objectives and design.

Question #3: **Landscaping and Sustainability –** Please comment on the project's articulation of building materials from a design and sustainability perspective, the proposed landscaping scheme, as well as the location and design of the proposed outdoor/ indoor amenity space. Do you have any comments or suggestions for the integration of amenity space or landscape space for use by the residents?

The Panel found it difficult to comment on the proposed amenity space as no details were provided by the design team regarding the programming and design of such spaces at this stage. The Panel however sees great opportunity and highly recommends the inclusion of roof top and ground floor amenity space and further detailing of its design and programming out as part of the proposed development.

From a streetscape perspective, the Panel recommends that the design team think about the details of the pedestrian realm as there is no amenity space provided at the ground plane. Although the proposed design is innovative in its design elements, the Panel advises the team to reconsider the design of the ground plane to accommodate more ground floor amenities and landscaping opportunities for better pedestrian experience and user interface. The Panel also recommends the inclusion of large or medium stature trees to create inviting pedestrian realm where possible, as well as enhancing the pedestrian connection on the east side of the site to allow for connectivity. The proposed design contemplates a 0.0.m lot line, as such the Panel advises the team to look further into the depth that is required to provide adequate soil volume to provide trees especially on the north and east sides of the property. Also, further screening and softening is recommended on the north side of the property.

As for sustainability, the Panel highlighted that the proposed window to wall ratio is high and needs further examination as this adds to the overall thermal load of the building in terms of heating and cooling. The Panel also suggested the use of pre-fabricated new technology balcony systems such as the Sapphire Glide-On, which has a better thermal bridging performance. This will also assist in achieving the CMHC requirements from a sustainability perspective. The Panel encourages the design team to think of the drainage flow from the roof gardens, how does rain travel through the building and can rainwater be guided to the roof so that residents can use it to plant on the roof gardens. The Panel also recommends the inclusion of a centralized laundry facility paired with

communal amenity space such as a roof top garden is the perfect combination to encourage socialization and mingling opportunities for the residents as well increase the energy performance of the building through minimization of heat penetration of the envelope in individual units and enable heat recovery through a centralized system. Reducing thermal loads of the building can also result in rent saving or operational cost saving. Finally, the Panel commended the design team for going through the CMHC funding program for housing and for having an affordable component included in it. The Panel recommended that the team explore the application process further as there are portions of the application benefiting high efficiency buildings with forgivable loans, assisting with additional cost of the high efficiency and reducing the long-term operational cost of the building.

The Panel commended the design team on taking the risk on a unique and interesting building and advised that the team continue to take similar risks in the design of the amenity spaces such as inclusion of urban agriculture, roof gardens, etc, rather than the typical standard condominium amenity space. It is important to keep in mind that residents will be renting in this building for a long time and efforts put in these spaces will help enhance the community and by extension the broader area.

End...Item #1

Meeting Adjourned