Community Planning Department
Burlington Urban Design Advisory Panel (BUD)

MINUTES

May 22, 2025
1:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Members of BUD

	present	absent / regrets
Matt Reid (Chair)	✓	
Jackie VanderVelde (Vice-Chair)		✓
David deGroot		✓
Jessica Hawes	✓	
Mike Flint		✓
Nigel Tai	✓	
Alexandru Taranu		✓
Christopher Moise	✓	
Timmithea Chan	✓	

Item #1: 1056 – 1060 Brant Street

Design Review: First Review

Application: Pre-Consultation for OPA and ZBA

Presentations:

City Staff: Benjamin Kissner – Senior Planner, Community Planning

Design Team:

- Cale Vanderveen – Bousfields Inc.
- David Falletta – Bousfields Inc.
- Tom Kasprzak – Bousfields Inc
- Len Abelman – WZMH
- Florence Tam – WZMH
- Sam Mandelbaum
- Nolan Moss



Disclosure of conflict-of-interest

None.

City Staff Overview

City staff presented an overview of the development proposal, which was submitted through a pre-consultation for proposed amendments to the City's Official Plan and Zoning By-law. Staff's presentation provided a brief overview of the proposed development and the existing and planned context of the surrounding neighbourhood, including area amenities and emerging new developments.

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

1. **Context and Public Realm**

   Please comment on how the proposed building addresses the streetscape along Brant St., including its contribution to a cohesive public realm, pedestrian experience, and relationship to surrounding built form and landscape character.

2. **Built Form and Site Design**

   Please comment on the proposed building scale, and massing, including the use of setbacks, step-backs, and overall building articulation, as well as the functionality of ground floor circulation for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.

3. **Amenity Space and Sustainability**

   Please comment on the proposed landscape strategy, and whether there are opportunities to strengthen the project's sustainable and environmental performance through additional or enhanced measures.

Design Team Presentation

The design team presented the site and area context, including key planning framework considerations with a focus on the proposed development and its design. Key ideas expressed in the team's presentation included:

- The Subject Site is located just south of the QEW and north of Burlington GO Station, (approximately 800m to the southeast), within the edge of the MTSA, which is envisioned as Burlington's new downtown.
- A recent study was conducted by the City permitting up to 45 storeys closest to the GO Station, stepping down to 19 storeys south of Leighland Road.
- The Subject Site and adjacent townhouses are zoned for 6 storeys and designated as Mixed Use – Regional Intensification Corridor.
- Site is adjacent to Rickman Common (a private laneway) with a separation distance of approximately 18m to townhouses, including building setbacks, parking, and a landscape buffer.
- To the North: 2-storey medical office; South: low-rise residential; East: mix of uses, including 4-storey apartments and a proposed 12-storey building across Brant St.
- Brant St. is a 7-lane arterial road with limited pedestrian activity and serves as a high-speed connection from the QEW to downtown Burlington.
- The design team emphasized the challenge of transforming a corridor into a place with visual interest, drawing on European examples of proportionate street wall heights to road widths.
- The proposed building creates a proportional street wall to Brant St.'s 36 m width, applying an angular plane at 28.8m (80% of the 36m street width) to transition to future developments.
- The rear massing respects the angular plane from the residential designation behind the Rickman Common townhouses.
- Building design uses a four-storey horizontal brick base to reflect the scale and materiality of the existing context. Upper floors step back and shift to a more vertical articulation to reduce the perception of height and massing.
- Ground floor includes a transparent lobby and amenity space to animate Brant St.; loading is internal, with below-grade parking access from Brant St.
- Site design enhances the public realm with street trees and landscaping:
    - Brant St. frontage includes tree planting where few currently exist.
    - The south side features an outdoor amenity area, with green buffers and landscaped interfaces. Landscape design includes smaller seating spaces, planting beds, and stone gardens, creating a quieter space buffered from the surrounding city.
    - The west side (adjacent to Rickman Commons) incorporates tall trees and a wooden fence for screening.
- Floor plates are efficient, with upper-level step-backs and massing breaks to reduce bulk and create visual interest.
- Typical floors include an east-west corridor with units facing primarily north and south, with corner units having additional views.

- Shadow impacts are minimal and mostly cast north into the hydro corridor and along Brant St.

Panel Questions

The Panel asked the proponent's design team the following questions of clarification, and the below answers were provided:

- Can you please clarify whether you are aware of the planned 40 m Right-Of-Way along Brant Street and whether the design is being adjusted to accommodate it?
    - The team noted that the road widening has been a point of concern. While the 47 m right-of-way was identified through the Transportation Master Plan (TMP), it is not reflected in the Official Plan.
    - The design team has been in ongoing discussions with the Region, given that Brant St. is a Regional Road, as the Planning Act requires such designations to be outlined in the Official Plan.
    - The team also confirmed that the current proposal reflects a 36 m right-of-way, consistent with the Official Plan designation, which includes a 1.5 m widening.
    - They emphasized that the additional 5.5 m requested by the TMP would have significant impacts on an already constrained site.
    - At this stage, the applicant is not proposing to dedicate any additional land and continues to work with the Region and the City to resolve the discrepancy.

- Can you please provide an approximation of what is the proposed unit ratio (1-bedroom, 2 -bedrooms, etc)?
    - The proposed development contemplates 93 units – 3 studio units, 61 one-bedroom units, 20 two-bedroom units, and 9 three-bedroom units.
    - The proposed ratios are approximately 10% three-bedrooms, 20% two-bedrooms, and the remaining amount is for one bedroom and smaller.

Summary of Panel Advice

- The Panel expressed general comfort with the proposed height and overall built form of the development.
- While the articulation was viewed as well executed, the Panel recommended further refinement of the massing and sculpting to better respond to adjacent conditions.
- The Panel suggested that exploring larger step-backs could help mitigate the overall massing and enhance the building's integration within its context.
- With respect to amenity areas, the Panel emphasized the importance of ensuring the landscaping is both functional and responsive to the needs of future residents, particularly given the mix of unit types and anticipated family occupancy.
- Enhancing open space at grade was encouraged, with consideration given to how underground parking and servicing elements may impact opportunities for planting and tree growth.
- Acknowledging the site's constraints, the Panel advised minimizing ground-level conflicts among various users through thoughtful organization and design.

- The Panel questioned the necessity and function of the proposed rock gardens and suggested their potential removal or relocation to reclaim valuable outdoor space.
- The Panel recommended considering redistributing certain programmatic elements to other levels in order to improve site circulation and create additional ground-level open space.

1. Context and Public Realm

Please comment on how the proposed building addresses the streetscape along Brant St., including its contribution to a cohesive public realm, pedestrian experience, and relationship to surrounding built form and landscape character.

Context

- The Panel acknowledged that the proposal represents a key transition along the corridor and sets a precedent for future development.
- The Panel recommended that the planned context be illustrated as part of the team's visuals, including potential six-storey developments to the north and south, to help frame the project as consistent with anticipated growth.
- The Panel appreciated the articulation and overall design approach, including sensitivity to neighbouring properties.
- The Panel noted that while the building massing and design respond reasonably well to the context, improvements to the western screening were encouraged.
- The Panel recommended considering a through-block pedestrian connection to improve walkability and break up the block scale.
- The Panel suggested exploring opportunities to enhance the landscaped buffer along the western property edge, potentially in collaboration with adjacent landowners. The Panel noted that planting on the neighbouring property to create a permanent green buffer was unconventional but potentially beneficial.

Site Organisation

- The Panel acknowledged the design team's efforts in locating vehicular activities and loading facilities at the rear of the site and noted that appropriate screening should be provided for the adjacent townhouses to the west to mitigate impacts.
- The Panel also suggested that shared access for residents and service vehicles via the rear laneway be explored, as it could improve internal circulation and reduce asphalt coverage at grade.
- The Panel suggested that the ramp to the underground garage be placed before the loading area to free up outdoor amenity space at the rear.
- The Panel raised concerns regarding the limited provision of vehicular and bicycle parking, particularly given the high unit count and tight site conditions.
- The Panel acknowledged the proximity to the GO Station but emphasized the need to clearly indicate and potentially increase bicycle parking on site.

Public Realm

- The Panel recognized the intent to minimize vehicular access fronting Brant St. and instead activate the public realm with the lobby and amenity spaces.
- The Panel encouraged the team to explore flipping the driveway location to the south to align with the existing driveway, thus improving the public realm interface by connecting to the healthcare building to the north, creating a continuous pedestrian experience along Brant St. and avoid privileging the green space adjacent to the single-family home.
- The Panel suggested relocating the indoor amenity space to the second floor, allowing the lobby to shift and improve ground-level use efficiency.
- The Panel again stressed the importance of improving the public realm interface and encouraged the team to consider potentially relocating the ramp to the underground parking to an earlier point before the loading area.
- The Panel noted that continuous pedestrian paving across the driveway, as shown on the floor plan, should be reflected in renderings to convey the intended pedestrian experience more clearly.

2. Built Form and Site Design

Please comment on the proposed building scale, and massing, including the use of setbacks, step-backs, and overall building articulation, as well as the functionality of ground floor circulation for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.

Built Form

- The Panel found the articulation of massing and choice of materials effective in breaking the 11-storey building into multiple smaller volumes, which works very well.
- The Panel agreed the approach to breaking up the massing is quite successful, and the Panel is generally comfortable with the building height and overall massing.
- The Panel suggested further refinement of the varying step-backs (1.5m and 3m), noting the 3m step-back is more meaningful from a massing and expression perspective, though the 1.5m can also be effective in some locations.
- The Panel identified a challenge at the rear elevation, which functions almost as a frontage to adjacent townhouses, and recommends further sculpting to reduce perceived massing from those homes' perspectives through step-backs that are similar to the front elevation.
- The Panel advised introducing step-backs at the rear, similar to the front, to mitigate the building's visual impact on neighbouring townhouse front yards.
- The Panel highlights the difference in how the building reads in renderings versus elevations, cautioning that on-the-ground character may differ.
- The Panel emphasized the importance of material quality, particularly the striping in the taller sections, and flags potential challenges in accurately matching colours between brick and other materials.
- The Panel noted that the brick base is successful in some elevations but appears heavy from the north, urging careful consideration of proportions and brick cuts to ensure overall success.

Site Design & Organisation

- The Panel found the short-term parking located at the rear challenging due to lack of clear sidewalk access to the lobby, suggesting these spaces be relocated ahead of unloading areas.
- The Panel proposed earlier integration of the basement ramp, potentially within the building footprint, to improve site efficiency.
- The Panel questioned the use of rock gardens on a constrained site, suggesting their elimination in favor of more practical uses of space.
- The Panel observed that the building setbacks are generally well resolved but finds the podium's solid brick material occasionally too heavy, recommending further articulation or introduction of alternative materials such as metal accents to reduce visual weight.
- The Panel questioned the depth of the north-facing balconies, noting potential impacts on natural light, and suggests deep balconies may be better suited to the southern elevation.
- The Panel noted that bicycle parking appears limited to visitor use and is located in a corner potentially conflicting with vehicle circulation.
- The Panel recommended relocating bicycle parking closer to the building front or to a location minimizing conflicts with vehicles.
- The Panel raised concerns over the absence of long-term resident bicycle parking, advising provision of secure storage, typically underground.
- The Panel inquired about a designated drop-off area, questioning if the two short-term parking spaces suffice, and suggests considering a dedicated parallel drop-off zone for brief vehicle stops such as rideshare or deliveries.

3. Amenity Space and Sustainability

Please comment on the proposed landscape strategy, and whether there are opportunities to strengthen the project's sustainable and environmental performance through additional or enhanced measures.

Amenity Space

- The Panel noted that placing trees on the ground level required careful consideration of whether there was enough volume beneath for proper soil depth, which could potentially impact the garage footprint.
- The Panel emphasized that although the space was labeled as "amenity," a 93-unit building was sizable enough to support a real community, making the amenity space programming critical.
- The Panel commented that locating the outdoor amenity terrace at ground level provided a positive contribution to the streetscape; however, the 4.5-metre depth was considered narrow, especially with a 1.5-metre balcony overhang above, which significantly reduced sunlight.
- The Panel suggested moving the indoor amenity space to the second floor, where units were more compromised, as a way to avoid the overhang and provide better outdoor space at grade.
- The Panel also noted that only three metres of outdoor amenity space remained under the overhang, which limited its usability, and proposed exploring the opportunity to place the outdoor amenity on the fifth-floor terrace instead.

- The Panel appreciated the idea of a pollinator garden in the front yard landscape treatment, which reflected the existing character of Brant St. as a residential frontage rather than a retail-oriented street.
- The Panel supported the continuation of the existing front yard character with planted areas rather than just paved frontage and encouraged the proponent to carry this pollinator garden concept throughout the site.
- The Panel questioned how the outdoor space could better serve as a true backyard for residents, noting that while there were many places to sit, there appeared to be limited functional or engaging outdoor uses.
- The Panel recommended further exploration of meaningful outdoor programming to create functional, enjoyable spaces that support daily living for a diverse group of residents, including families.

End...Item #1