Community Planning Department
Burlington Urban Design Advisory Panel

Meeting Minutes:
Aug. 21, 2025 (3:30pm - 4:30pm)
Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Item #2:
517 Plains Rd. E.

Design Review:
First Review at Burlington Urban Design Advisory Panel (BUD)

Application Type:
Pre-consultation for Official Plan Amendment & Zoning Bylaw Amendment

		present	absent
Members of the Burlington Urban Design Advisory Panel			
Matt Reid (Chair)	BUD Member	✓	
Jackie VanderVelde (Vice Chair)	BUD Member		✓
David deGroot	BUD Member		✓
Jessica Hawes	BUD Member	✓	
Mike Flint	BUD Member	✓	
Nigel Tai	BUD Member		✓
Alexandru Taranu	BUD Member	✓	
Christopher Moise	BUD Member	✓	
Timmithea Chan	BUD Member		✓
City Staff			
Benjamin Kissner	Senior Planner, Development	✓	
Kyle Poole	Planner, Urban Design	✓	
Proponent & Design Team			
Duncan Russell	Weston Consulting	✓	
Ian Male	Weston Consulting	✓	
Fernando Lima	Lima Architects	✓	
Ashok Dhir	Ownership Group	✓	

Disclosure of Conflict-of-Interest:
None.

City Staff Presentation 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 Bylaw. City Staff's presentation provided a brief overview of the proposed development along with the existing and upcoming context of the surrounding neighbourhood.

City Staff asked the BUD Panel members for design advice in the following three areas:

1. Context & Public Realm
   How does the proposal respond to the surrounding context and future vision of the Plains Road East corridor. What improvements could assist in integrating the proposal into the surrounding urban fabric?

2. Built Form & Site Design
   Is the proposed site layout, circulation strategy, floorplan and massing appropriate given the site's context? How could the site design better assist in ensuring an activated and engaging public realm?

3. Open Space & Sustainability
   How effectively does the proposal integrate opportunities for meaningful amenities and recreational opportunities? How could the proposal better contribute to long-term sustainability objectives (e.g., climate resilience, floodplain considerations, tree canopy, access to green infrastructure, etc.)?

Proponent Presentation Overview:
The Proponent & 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 presentation included:

- a brief development overview including key site statistics, subject property size, frontage, surrounding site context and other proposal details.
- the current (1997) Official Plan designation as Mixed-Use Corridor – General and 2020 Official Plan designation as Urban Corridor.
- an overview of the draft site plan outlining the 11-storey building with a proposed 179 residential units and eight commercial units.
- a total of 95 proposed parking spaces, located both at grade and within two levels of underground parking.
- although the landscape plan included is based on a previous design, the landscape treatment is intended to remain the same, however will be updated to reflect the new building layout.
- proposed pedestrian access from both the Plains Road East frontage and Mary Street frontage, along with proposed vehicular access off Mary Street.
- three step backs in building massing are proposed from the Plains Road East frontage.
- a wraparound canopy to create a focal point as well as punched windows offering additional interest to the building façade.
- proposed rooftop amenity areas in addition to at grade amenity areas at the rear of the building.

BUD Panel Contextual Questions:

BUD Panel members asked the Proponent's Design Team the following clarifying questions. Answers below were provided by the Proponent's Design Team.

Q1: Regarding the tenure of the building, is it anticipated to be a condominium or rental building?
- The Design Team noted tenure is anticipated to be a purpose-built rental at this time.

Q2: Understanding the current vehicular access to the site is off Plains Road East, have conversations with the City occurred regarding the vehicular access proposed off Mary Street?
- Yes, preliminary discussions with the City have occurred regarding this and they are still ongoing.

- Some of the concerns with vehicular access off Plains Road East pertained to existing driveways and separation distances. The access off Mary Street was proposed as an alternative based on a preliminary design.

Q3: Can you clarify the discrepancy in landscape plans shown in the presentation compared to the submission materials? The building layouts and ground floor plans appear different - can you clarify?

- The design showing a long, narrow, rectangular building and vehicular access off Plains Road East was a concept originally submitted as part of the pre-consultation process. This design is no longer being put forward.
- Adequate time was not available to revise the landscape plans accordingly, to reflect the most current site design with the building fronting Plains Road East and access off Mary Street.
- The landscape treatments will remain the same.

Q4: What is the existing topography of the site? Is there any significant existing vegetation on site?

- The grading of the existing site is generally flat.
- With the exiting motel, there is limited vegetation on site. Most of the site is asphalt parking and the building footprint.

Q5: What are the Design Teams thoughts on sustainability – not just the building but the site as a whole?

- The development is in the preliminary stages of design development and sustainability is on the list of items to be addressed in more detail.
- Initial ideas around building sustainability include limiting the amount of glass and provision of green roofs.

Q6: Can you provide some thoughts on the vision for the commercial uses at grade? Perhaps the anticipated size and the two units with no frontage on Plains Road East.

- Regarding size, the anticipated user is a range of small businesses and smaller shops. This continues to be refined based on what the anticipated demand maybe for this area.

Summary of BUD Panel Advice:

BUD Panel members provided the following design comments for consideration with respect to the three guiding questions posed by City Staff. Answers below were provided by the BUD Panel members.

1. **CONTEXT & PUBLIC REALM**
   How does the proposal respond to the surrounding context and future vision of the Plains Road East corridor. What improvements could assist in integrating the proposal into the surrounding urban fabric?

- A context plan is recommended to complete an analysis (including 3D model) of how this proposal fits with the existing and proposed (emerging) context. This context plan was suggested as a valuable tool in explaining the emerging context of redevelopment to key stakeholders - in particular residents of the existing low-rise neighbourhood to the north.
- The proposed side yard setbacks were noted as being very tight, with a strong possibility to sterilize redevelopment potential of the adjacent properties. Greater than Ontario Building Code would be required, and modelling of the adjacent sites (to understand potential) could help to determine an appropriate amount.
- BUD panel members suggested further investigation of alternative options for built form typologies, focusing on how the building mass may be more appropriately articulated and distributed. Potential for a substantial podium and elongated slab type structure (T-shaped) were suggested as possible typologies.

- The scale of the proposed building was noted as being out of context, with respect to the surrounding current development context and the future surrounding redevelopment context. The scale and massing of the building as currently proposed was not thought to be justified.
- The proposed building was noted to be quite deep. Refinements to the building massing and layout were suggested as to provide for more livable units, incorporating more light penetration to interior units and opportunities for additional windows.
- With respect to context integration, motifs and design themes from the surrounding context should be integrated into the development, such that the proposal speaks to the local Burlington character while enhancing the public realm of the Plains Road East corridor.
- BUD panel members expressed concerns with the impacts of the proposal on Mary Street, noting significant traffic impacts along with a need to be respectful of the neighbourhood character.
- Extremely restrictive side yard setbacks were noted to be further negatively compounded by the proposed projected balconies protruding from the side facades.

2. BUILT FORM & SITE DESIGN

Is the proposed site layout, circulation strategy, floorplan and massing appropriate given the site's context? How could the site design better assist in ensuring an activated and engaging public realm?

- BUD panel members appreciate the streetscape treatment along Plains Road East provided by the rear vehicular entrance off Mary Street, however suggested a more appropriate balance could be achieved permitting access off Plains Road East.
- Larger side yard setbacks were noted as being required, along with additional landscaping at the rear of the property to assist in screening to the established residential neighbourhood.
- The need for additional modelling to study and understand the built form implications of this project on its site and adjacent sites within the broader neighbourhood context was emphasized.
- Given the intended rental tenure of the building, significant concerns were raised regarding the scale and massing of the floor plate along with the character of the units. While detailed floor plans were not provided with the submission materials, it was recognized that floor plans for upper floor plates of a building of this size (28m x 50m +/-) would be extremely challenging to lay out. A building of this form and configuration was not ideal in supporting long term rental tenants as opposed to turnover rental tenants.
- The lack of step backs on the back and two sides of the building were noted as giving the building a very dominating, looming, undefined and blocky appearance. It was suggested measures be taken to reduce the apparent mass of the building.
- Although difficult to confirm from the drawings provided, the proposed floor plate was thought to be excessive for an 11-storey building. It was anticipated that the current proposed floor plate would be in the range of 1,400 square metres, where a maximum floorplate of 750 square metres would be more reasonable.
- BUD panel members appreciated the level of detailing within the building but thought the proposed overset balconies on the building edges further inflated the overall building scale and massing.
- The two proposed commercial units fronting the west side yard appear out of place. The practicality of expecting patrons to find and access commercial units along the side of the building appears unreasonable and not conducive to financial sustainability.
- The proposed size of the ground floor commercial units was thought to be very small, while a greater mix of residential unit types was suggested to include three-bedroom units.
- A clear span wall versus the proposed shear wall for the commercial ground floor units was recommended to enable greater control over the size of the ground floor commercial units.
- Vehicular access and maneuvering on site appeared tight and challenging to navigate. Specifically, a conflict with the access ramp to the underground parking garage was noted given the proposed four vehicle parking spaces located immediately at the top of the underground parking ramp.

- BUD panel members noted an access ramp to the underground parking garage could be discretely provided off the Plains Road East frontage. This would assist in removing vehicular access off the smaller residential street (Mary Street) and provide primary vehicular access off the fronting Plains Road East corridor.
- Site design and layout of elements within the rear portion of the site was advocated for further investigation and potential redesign to assist with the site programming, flow and function.
- The ground floor was advocated to benefit from provision of a primary residential access as opposed to the single, central corridor currently proposed. The front of the building facing Plains Road East was suggested as the most appropriate location for this primary residential access, with potential for a secondary exit to the rear.
- The east and west side elevations of the building were encouraged to be treated as primary elevations given this redevelopment would likely stand apart and alone for a significant amount of time until neighbouring properties redevelop. Given the delay in adjacent redevelopment, these east and west elevations will be highly visible from up/down the Plains Road East corridor.

3. OPEN SPACE & SUSTAINABILITY

How effectively does the proposal integrate opportunities for meaningful amenities and recreational opportunities? How could the proposal better contribute to long-term sustainability objectives (e.g., climate resilience, floodplain considerations, tree canopy, access to green infrastructure, etc.)?

- An enlarged at-grade amenity area was suggested as an opportunity given the rental tenure of the property and number of residential units.
- More generous setbacks may allow for additional soil volumes or additional tree planting. Trees were noted to be good environmental features and assist with combatting the urban heat island.
- BUD panel members recommended no surface parking or minimal surface parking along the Mary Street frontage, opting for minimal asphalt and enhanced greenspace to contribute to the character of the street and surrounding neighbourhood.
- Under the umbrella of sustainable development, social sustainability was flagged reinforcing the need for a larger, more thoughtful at grade outdoor amenity area.

End of Item #2.