

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL COMMENT RESPONSE

Applicant: UrbanSolutions Planning & Land Development Consultants Inc.
Date: December 12, 2024
Location: 925 Main Street West- & 150 Longwood Road South, Hamilton, Ontario
Owner: 925 Main Street West (Hamilton) Limited.

RE: Official Plan Amendment & Zoning By-Law Amendment Application

In support of the subject planning application, UrbanSolutions participated in the City of Hamilton's Design Review Panel. In addition to the panel and City of Hamilton members, also present was Whithouse Urban Design and KNYMH Architects of the project team. UrbanSolutions has prepared comment responses to the common themes raised during the Design Review Panel meeting, highlighting the valuable suggestions made by the panel and how they were incorporated into the revised concept.

Key Questions to the Panel from Planning Staff

Question: How well does the proposed massing build upon the established pattern of development – noting the differences between the existing conditions on the north and south sides of Main Street West. Does the proposal include elements of transition successfully noting the lower density residential on the north side of Main Street West and the challenge of the two open corners with the adjacent school and commercial plaza?

Response: The design carefully addresses potential shading and privacy impacts typically associated with tall buildings. Mitigation measures have been integrated into the revised site and building design, including a 6-storey podium that remains below the Main Street West angular plane, tower floorplates limited to a maximum of 750 m², and appropriate tower separation distances. These elements reduce the proposal's perceived massing, improve permeability, and support more favourable sunlight and shadow conditions for the public realm and surrounding properties. In combination with the existing built context, the proposed design provides an appropriate and comfortable transition in scale to the low-density residential neighbourhoods primarily located north of the subject lands.

Question: How well does the proposal develop the pedestrian realm along the street corner condition of Main Street West and Longwood Road South? Does the relationship of the building façade, landscape and sidewalk provide ample space for the proposed growth in pedestrian use?

Response: In addition to the above design measures, numerous building entrances are located along the north and eastern building facades, facilitating a high degree of pedestrian permeability along the street frontage and positively contributing to the pedestrian realm. The interface with the public realm is also enhanced through the use of ground-floor glazing providing sightlines to and from the sidewalks along Main Street West and Longwood Road South. As depicted in the enclosed Site Concept Plan, continuous sidewalks are provided across the driveway entrance to Main Street West to clearly depict pedestrian priority and improve the safety of pedestrians crossing at this location.

Question: How successfully does the proposed development consider the view from the highway condition, and does the massing integrate with the site?

Response: From the highway condition, the site exemplifies visual prominence and reinforces the gateway nature of the subject lands. The rear of the site nearer the highway slopes up toward Main Street West, with the proposed building massing exaggerating the change in grade by crowning the highest point of the lands at the corner of the intersection of Main Street West and Longwood Road South. The massing design incorporates the sloping nature of the site into the design and reinforces the transition in scale from the urban corridor to the rear open space and highway corridor. Overall, the proposal enhances the importance of the site and recognizes that it will become an anchoring landmark of the community, easily recognizable from the highway corridor and therefore greatly contributing to the existing community identity and sense of place.

Question: How does the proposal respect and use the natural topography of the subject site to an advantage, and does the proposal address the condition of the highway below to the south? Does the proposed development use the existing natural features / trees and vegetation as transition and screening from adjacent properties and the highway condition?

Response: In addition to the response above, the proposed development retains numerous trees along the periphery of the site to maintain a natural buffer to neighbouring properties. Additional plantings are proposed for the rear of the site as depicted in the enclosed Conceptual Landscape Plan which will further enhance the pedestrian experience in this open space, provide further buffering to the highway corridor, and enhance the sense of privacy without compromising safety.

Question: How well does the proposed building (and landscape) design incorporate sustainable design features?

Response: The proposed development contemplates a compact, sustainable built form which makes use of both existing and planned municipal infrastructure, services, and transit corridors. In addition, all new development is required to comply with the Ontario Building Code, which establishes minimum performance standards for energy efficiency in building design and systems,

as well as provincial requirements for efficient water use and fixtures, providing for the efficient use and conservation of energy and water. Further, rain gardens, a Low-Impact Development feature, are proposed in the lower open space lands to support on-site stormwater treatment and facilitate ground water infiltration. In addition to the above sustainable design features, the Functional Servicing Report prepared by S. Llewellyn & Associates proposes the use of an “Up-Flo” filter to remove approximately 81.2% of Total Suspended Solids (TSS) from stormwater prior to discharge into the existing storm sewer along Main Street West and provide an efficient means of stormwater quality control.

Panel Comments and Recommendations

a) Overview and Response to Context

a. Panel members generally were supportive of the proposed infill density in the proposal which also included commercial units at grade to support the community and strengthen the pedestrian realm with an active streetscape.

- i. Response: Acknowledged. The provision of residential suites atop at-grade commercial units supports a more complete community by allowing additional residents to serve the existing and future local businesses and public service facilities, especially in proximity to Westdale, McMaster University, and Downtown Hamilton.

b. The panel did have some concern for the strategy employed to use the lower (southern) portion of lands next to HWY 403 and the number of mature trees that would be removed to facilitate the design, however there was also interest in the ability to use the land for an amenity space / potentially a POPS parkette space.

- i. Response: The southern portion of the subject lands is intended to be used for outdoor private amenity space for residents of the proposed development. The details surrounding tree removal and compensation will be further refined at the Site Plan stage. Please refer to the enclosed Landscape Plan prepared by Whitehouse Urban Design for further information.

b) Built Form and Character

a. Panel members noted the two towers being proposed as the same height was not beneficial to the overall design and made the proposed complex seem larger and heavier than it should. Panel members suggested creating some asymmetry in the tower heights.

- i. Response: The revised proposal incorporates this feedback and provides staggered tower heights. Tower A, nearest to the intersection of Main Street West and Longwood Road South, has been revised to 29 storeys, whereas Tower B toward the

west of the site has been revised to 26 storeys. To further reduce the perceived massing of the proposal, tower floorplates have been reduced to less than 750 m² each. The heights of the towers have increased to accommodate the loss of floor area resulting from the reconfiguration of the towers. The revised design grants prominence to the intersection of Main Street West and Longwood Road South while elongating the built form without any significant change to the width creating a slimmer, lighter massing than previous design iterations.

b. Panel members noted the towers were larger than the 750m² floor plates suggested by the Tall Building Guidelines, and further suggested to refine the tower floorplates to reduce the overall area, and add articulation to the exterior design.

- i. Response: As noted above, the tower floorplates have been revised to fall below the 750 m² recommendation contained within the Tall Building Guidelines, contributing to an overall lighter perceived massing of the proposal. The tower design is articulated through varied use of inset and projecting balconies while a lighter colour palette is incorporated on the tower to differentiate the use of a darker and 'heavier' colour palette being generally limited to the podium section. These revisions improve visual interest in the tower designs while reinforcing the prominence of the building's mid-rise podium along the pedestrian realm.

c) Site Layout and Circulation

a. Panel members also noted the location of the parking ramp felt out of place next to the amenity space entrance – and noted concern for competing pedestrian circulation and vehicular space.

- i. Response: In order to preserve a pedestrian-oriented environment at-grade, especially along the street and within the building footprint, parking and loading uses have been accommodated at the rear of the site. The loading space at the southeast of the proposed building has been recessed further into the site away from Longwood Road South to accommodate greater flexibility for pedestrian circulation while reducing pedestrian/vehicular conflicts in this area. As a result of the intuitive site organization and proposed location of primary and secondary entrances into the building, interactions between pedestrians and vehicles are expected to be limited. The relocation of electrical equipment away from the ramp also reclaims more area dedicated for convenient pedestrian circulation. An abundance of pedestrian pathways are intended to be provided on site which will provide direct, off-road routes between the proposed building and the outdoor amenity area.

b. *Panel members noted the pedestrian connection to the large exterior amenity space south of the proposed building was not refined and felt like a void or no-man's land.*

i. Response: The connection at the southeast corner of the building interface with the amenity area has been revised to further recess the loading areas into the site and adding more permeable landscape area, providing a more cohesive linkage between the proposed building and southern amenity area. The revised plan introduces a hardscape connection to the southern amenity area, allowing for direct circulation from the building to the open space.

c. *Panel members also noted the size of the green space lent itself to wider public use potentially a POPS (Privately-Owned-Public Space) – but also felt the space needed better access, more visibility across/through the site, potentially from Longwood Rd*

i. Response: As previously noted, the southern amenity area of the subject lands is proposed to remain in private ownership to ensure effective management of maintenance, safety, and long-term upkeep. Retaining private ownership provides clear responsibility for landscaping, drainage, and liability, and helps prevent unintended public access, loitering, or through-traffic across private lands.

d) Streetscape, The Pedestrian Realm & Landscape Strategy

a. *The panel appreciated the commercial units at grade and the layout of the generous sidewalk space to serve these units. Panel members encouraged adding some soft landscaping and additional tree planting as the design is refined.*

i. Response: Acknowledged. Further details regarding the organization of landscaping, tree placement, and sidewalks along the street frontages will be refined throughout the Site Plan approval process. However, all internal pathways are designed to accommodate a minimum width of 2.0 metres to support accessibility throughout the lands.

b. *The panel noted the challenge with the change in grade/topography of the southern portion of the property proposed as an exterior amenity / parkette space. A panel member noted the desire to reduce the number of (mature) tree removals to facilitate the design. Panel members also expressed concern for the quality of amenity space based on the adjacent 403 Highway presenting obvious noise concerns and potential safety issues.*

i. Response: Based on the enclosed Tree Protection Plan (TPP) prepared by Whitehouse Urban Design, tree removal on primarily the rear of the tableland is required to

accommodate the proposed building, underground parking, and regrading of the site to accommodate suitable stormwater management and safe pedestrian access to the southern portion of the site.

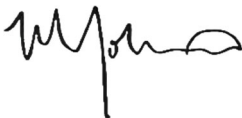
c. *Panel members noted the need to refine the access and lighting in the amenity space for comfortable and safe usage.*

- i. Response: As previously noted, further details regarding the organization of landscaping and sidewalks, including refinement of access to and from the southern amenity area, will be addressed throughout the Site Plan approval process. The amenity area does not function as a public edge, pedestrian through-route, or access point to any other publicly-accessible lands. The retention of the lands in private ownership will ensure that unintended public access is mitigated and result in improved overall safety of the open space. Site lighting is therefore appropriately concentrated in the north portion of the site where primary entrances, vehicular access, and the majority of pedestrian circulation occurs. Introducing lighting within the southern amenity area is not warranted given its passive function and limited visibility from off-site areas. Concentrating lighting in active areas of the site aligns with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles by reinforcing activity nodes while avoiding unnecessary illumination in areas not intended for evening use.

If there are any questions or comments, do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Regards,

UrbanSolutions



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Principal



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