

City of Hamilton

Design Review Panel

Meeting Summary:

1452 Upper James Street, Hamilton

The Design Review Panel met virtually at 1:30pm on Thursday March 12th, 2026.

Development Proposal	Type of Application	Applicant/ Agent	City Staff Planner
Mixed-Use Multiple Residence Proposed Development 1452 Upper James Street	Site Plan Application	Owner: Elite Developments Agent and Presentation: Armstrong Planning and Project Management	Chris Hampson- Curtis, Planner 2

Panel Members Present:

- Jennifer Mallard, Chair
- Sharon Mittman
- Olga Pushkar
- Graham Taylor
- Tyler Walker
- Shadi Adab
- Eric Lucic

Regrets:

Jennifer Sisson, Dennis Lago

Declarations: None

Staff Present:

- Ken Coit, Director of Heritage & Urban Design
- Michael Votruba, Program Lead Urban Design
- Edward Winter, Planner 1-Urban Design
- Chris Hampson-Curtis, Planner 2

Others Present:

- Andrea Camina-Medina, Armstrong
- Jon McGinn, Chamberlain Architects
- Ahmed Mahmoud, Elite Developments

Summary of Comments: 1452 Upper James Street

Note: The Design Review Panel is strictly an advisory body and makes recommendations to Planning Division staff. These comments should be reviewed in conjunction with all comments received by commenting agencies and should be discussed with Planning Division staff prior to resubmission.

Development Overview:

The proposed development includes an 8-storey mixed-use residential building on an parcel of land at 1452 Upper James Street. The proposal will consist of a total of 252 residential units, 2 retail units with a total of 822 square meters of commercial space proposed at ground level. The proposed building would be served by parking spaces are proposed on grade, 1 level underground, and 1 level above grade. 120 Long-term and 19 short-term bicycle spaces are proposed.

Key Discussion Topics suggested to the Panel by Planning Staff:

- Does the proposed building massing and height minimize impact on neighbouring buildings and public & private spaces by creating transitions in scale and respecting existing street proportions?
- Does the proposed building's design features and material selections work to fit within the character of Concession Street and the adjacent community.
- Does the proposal create a pedestrian oriented place that is human-scale and comfortable for all users of the proposed development as well as the larger community?
- Does the landscaping support the pedestrian realm on Upper James Street sufficiently to support the public realm using landscaping features such as planters, furniture, canopies, etc., and does the landscaping provide screening and transition to the low-density residential to the west?
- Does the overall design of the proposed development set a good precedent to guide intensification along this corridor which is beginning the process of transition from suburban/semi-rural to an urban corridor?

Panel Comments and Recommendations:

a) Overview and Response to Context

- Panel members commented there was a desire for greater articulation along the Upper James Street frontage, and a need to lighten the massing which appears heavy and wide – improvements to the streetscape would support the transition to an active and denser corridor.
- The panel also saw opportunity for increased efforts to the landscaping and transition to the existing lower-density community.

b) Built Form and Character

- Panel members felt the U-shaped mass was appropriate and has the ability to transition to the lower-density community and connection to the community – but some refinement to the articulation and pedestrian experience are needed.
- Panel members found the stepping on the west side or back of the building more successful than the front facing Upper James Street, and panel members suggested the building mass be refined to include a step-back above the podium/base to reduce the bulkiness felt on Upper James Street. The panel felt this would not only improve the pedestrian nature of the proposed development but potentially improve wind performance as well.
- Panel members noted that the commercial ground floor would benefit from additional height.
- Panel members noted the elevations appeared economical and lacked some vigor that should accompany a development that is determined to set a precedent and making a statement of what the community identity is moving towards. Panel members appreciated the economic value of EIFS material on the higher storeys, however, the panel was adamant that brick-patterned EIFS was not an appropriate alternate to traditional clay brick cladding at ground level where durability, touch and aesthetics demand solid, time-tested materials.

c) Site Layout and Circulation

- Panel members felt the sidewalk should be moved inwards creating a grassed boulevard between the street curb and the sidewalk in order to protect pedestrian and support the desired commercial activities.
- Panel members noted the location of the hydro transformer to be awkward and needing to be pushed back further into the property to provide space for landscape screening.
- Panel members felt the surface parking was a little awkward and needed some refinement to both improve pedestrian useability and community fit or connection especially along the south side driveway.

d) Streetscape, the Pedestrian Realm & Landscape Strategy

- Panel members saw opportunities for the roof-top amenity space to be refined to provide some separation and privacy for the adjacent residential units built into the layout of the amenity space.
- Panel members noted the 2nd storey (projecting) balconies were not supportive of a high-quality pedestrian realm, recommending revisions to Juliet balconies.
- Panel members thought a greater depth to the boulevard would benefit the pedestrian realm and also support the commercial activities with freer pedestrian movement and additional space for street furniture.
- Panel members saw potential for improvements to the pedestrian realm on Upper James streets by re-thinking the location of planters, furniture and seating spaces, along with moving the sidewalk off the curb, and the inclusion / addition of private and street trees.

Summary

The panel thanked the applicant team for a presentation and offered support for development at the site and offered some comments and suggestions that could improve the proposed development in terms of design, function and fit within the existing community.

- The panel found a meaningful step-back on Upper James Street is needed to appropriately define the street wall to support the pedestrian activity and commercial units.
- The panel felt the landscaping and boulevard needed to be refined to provide a safer pedestrian experience and more circulation space fronting the building and commercial units by moving the sidewalk off the street curb.
- The panel found the EIFS (brick or wood pattern) was not appropriate at ground level on what will be a precedent setting development.
- The panel advocated for trees within the boulevard to establish a successful and vibrant development along Upper James Street.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm