



Meeting Summary

The Design Review Panel met virtually on **Thursday January 14, 2021** via Webex.

Panel Members Present:

David Clusiau, *Chair*

Dayna Edwards

Hoda Kameli

Joey Giaimo

Jana Kelemen

Jennifer Mallard

Jennifer Sisson

Eldon Theodore

Staff Present:

Anita Fabac, Manager of Development Planning, Heritage and Design

Victoria Cox, Urban Designer, Urban Team

Mark Kehler, Planner I, Urban Team

Others Present

Presentation #2 Mixed Use Development 1629 – 1655 Main Street West	Christina Karney , mcCallumSather Inc. Ashley Paton , GSP Group Inc. Aaron Waxman , 2480545 Ontario Inc.
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Regrets:

Ted Watson (Panel member)

Declaration of Interest: N/A

Schedule:

Start Time	Address	Type of Application	Applicant/ Agent	Development Planner
3:30 p.m.	Mixed Use Development 1629 – 1655 Main Street West	Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment	Owner: 2480545 Ontario Inc. Agent and Presentation: mcCallumSather	Mark Kehler, Planner I

Summary of Comments:

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.

1629 – 1655 Main Street West

Development Proposal Overview

The applicant is proposing to permit a mixed use commercial / residential development consisting of a 16 storey tower, a 21 storey tower and a 24 storey tower connected by a 3 storey base building and “tower links” at floors 6 to 11. A total of 583 dwelling units, 1,355 square metres of commercial space and 307 parking spaces are proposed. The subject property is located on the south side of Main Street West between Rifle Range Road and Ewen Road and contains four one storey commercial buildings and associated parking areas. Surrounding land uses include a one storey commercial building and two and a half storey multiple dwelling to the north, vacant land and a one storey commercial building to the south, a one storey commercial building to the east and a hydro corridor to the west.

Key Questions to the Panel from Planning Staff

1. Does the proposal promote intensification that makes appropriate and innovative use of buildings and sites and is compatible in form and function to the character of existing communities and neighbourhoods?
2. Does the proposal encourage a harmonious and compatible approach to infilling by minimizing the impacts of shadowing and maximizing light to adjacent properties and the public realm?
3. Does the proposal contribute to the character and ambiance of the community through appropriate design of streetscapes and amenity areas?

Panel Comments and Recommendations

a) Overview and Response to Context (Questions 1, 2 & 3)

- The panel recognized that the property is underutilized and represents an opportunity for appropriate intensification and mid-rise development. It is difficult to respond to the existing context that includes low-rise commercial and industrial development to the west, east and south and a low-rise residential neighbourhood to the north. The proposed development will be precedent setting and should carefully consider the City's vision for the south side of Main Street West.
- Overall, the panel appreciated the architecture and at grade elements of the proposal but considered the massing of the building to be excessive. The proposed building has a bulky appearance that would dominate the landscape, limit sky views and shadow public sidewalks. The proposal does not adhere to key elements of the City-Wide Corridor Planning Principles and Design Guidelines and the Downtown Hamilton Tall Buildings Guidelines and it is unclear how the proposed massing will implement the City's vision for a low to mid-rise corridor along Main Street West.

b) Built Form and Character (Questions 1, 2 & 3)

- The panel admired the architecture of the building noting that it has a bold simplicity, with cues to the industrial heritage of the area. One panel member suggested that the development provides an opportunity to further strengthen the connection between McMaster University and the Ainslie Wood Neighbourhood and recommended incorporating design elements that complement the neighbourhoods' historic character.
- The panel recommended strategies for reducing the bulkiness of the building, including meeting a 45-degree angular plane where possible by introducing additional step backs and reducing tower floorplate sizes to meet the Downtown Hamilton Tall Building Guidelines. The panel noted that the east and west elevations are too wide and dominant. They suggested stepping back the tower top and using lighter colours on the towers to help them visually recede.
- The panel noted that the "tower links" are unlikely to result in additional light or sky views at street level and result in the building reading as one monolithic structure. The panel suggested looking at eliminating or significantly reducing the size of the "tower links" to reduce their visual impact, improve sky views and allow sunlight to reach the sidewalk. Utilizing a lighter colour for the "tower links" could help reduce their visual impact.

- Panel members expressed concern with the building setback to the adjacent property to the south and recommended the design team further consider impacts on the adjacent property in terms of overlook and separation. Further refinement is recommended to the design of the south side of the building to ensure an appropriate relationship with the future development to the south.
- The panel appreciated that the three towers on site provide the recommended 25 m tower separation distance from the Downtown Hamilton Tall Building Guidelines but noted that the orientation of the towers results in overlook concerns for many of the units. The design team is encouraged to look at staggering the towers where possible.

c) Site Layout and Circulation (Question 1 & 3)

- The panel noted that the above grade parking results in a long blank façade facing the south property line, which creates a difficult interface with future development to the south. The design team is encouraged to look at ways to wrap units around the parking area to eliminate the blank facades. A visual barrier should be provided along the south property line.

d) Streetscape, The Pedestrian Realm & Landscape Strategy (Questions 2 & 3)

- The panel commends the design team for incorporating retail and activating the public realm along Main Street West. The design team is encouraged to continue to refine the connection between the development and the public realm including through the development of a parkette at the corner of Main Street West and Rifle Range Road.
- The design team is encouraged to retain the residential units on the second and third floor facing Main Street to activate the street edge and avoid having parking facing the public realm.
- Outdoor amenity areas should be included at the podium level to provide gathering space for student residents. The panel encouraged the design team to consider providing balconies for individual units, but if private outdoor amenity space is not feasible, a robust shared amenity space should be provided.

Summary

The panel thanked the applicant and design team for the presentation. The proposal has positive elements but further refinements to the massing are required to provide for appropriate intensification and to implement the City's vision for the south side of Main Street West. The panel recognized that many elements of the design are preliminary and would appreciate the opportunity to review the proposal again once further refinements have been made.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.