



Planning & Infrastructure Department
Heritage + Urban Design (HUD)

May 31, 2023

MEMO TO: Leigh Ann Penner, Senior Planner
FROM: Kunal Chaudhry, Senior Urban Designer

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT, ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT

Applicant Name: Smart Centres / South Hill
Municipal Address: 9301, 9325 and 9335 YONGE STREET
City File No.: D01-20015 and D02-20029

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above noted application circulated to the Heritage and Urban Design Section. Urban Design staff (staff) have reviewed the materials in the second submission in accordance with the City's Council approved *Official Plan* (OP) and *Citywide Urban Design Guidelines* (UDGs), and provide the following urban design comments:

Proposal Summary:

The application proposes a high-density development across several small-scale blocks, replacing the existing commercial centre with residential uses and accessory retail-commercial at-grade, with parking below and above ground. Phase 1 / Block 'A' (South Hill), the subject of this application, consists of 2 high-density residential towers, with accessory retail and structured parking. Based on the Urban Design Brief (Amended) and submitted Master Concept Plan, we are providing the following detailed comments in connection with South Hill.

General Comments:

We thank the applicant for submitting a Master Concept Plan for staff's review, and have appended a recommended Master Concept Plan for the applicant's consideration (please refer to Appendix 1 attached to this memo). The City envisions this quadrant of the KDA to be a complete mixed-use community where people can live, play and work within a safe, comfortable and sustainable built environment. As correctly noted in the Urban Design Brief, this site falls at an important existing and planned transportation juncture. Based on the anticipated foot traffic to one of the City's most prominent destinations, the objective is to be able to facilitate a pedestrian focused area, complete with a mix of uses.

Comments below are prefaced on the idea of an east-west Market Promenade concept that runs perpendicular to Yonge Street, through the subject lands. The east-west Market Promenade should be viewed as one of the primary elements that shapes a built form response, and enables maximized benefits for the development as a whole through retail activation of a specialized street. We request the applicant to revise the Urban Design Brief and drawing packages keeping that idea in mind. An appropriate approach to the implementation of South Hill, will be an integral precedent setting design solution, and in turn a benchmark for the remainder of the lands.

Preliminary design comments have been provided for the applicant's consideration. Any comments that do not directly impact the amendments sought within the OPA and ZBLA may be addressed as a future Site Plan Application stage.

A) MASTER CONCEPT PLAN / URBAN DESIGN BRIEF (Brief)

Issue	Comments / Recommendations	Policy/UDG Ref.
1. General	<p>Please note that the comments below are based on the vision to further a pedestrian oriented Market Promenade. The key elements of the revised Master Concept Plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a City Engineering standard right-of-way for the east-west road, the alignment and size of which we defer to the Engineering department; • the accommodation of an east-west Market Promenade; • a square (Celebration Square) that intersects the north-south road running parallel to Yonge Street and the Market Promenade to reflect the intent of the Smart Centres vision; and • a park in the north-east corner. 	OP 3.4 OP 5.27
2. Building Placement and Orientation	<p>Section 4.1.1.3 of the Brief identifies residential lobbies as a use meant to activate the corners and edges of the development. Staff find that large residential lobbies do not facilitate the activation of public streetscapes, given the retail emphasis of the Market Promenade. Remove any verbiage pertaining to street activation through private residential lobbies, and please consider detailed comments in section B5 below.</p> <p>Furthermore, please revise any verbiage that speaks to the south elevation as the primary face of the proposal.</p>	UDG 6.6.17 OP 5.27
3. Setbacks	<p>Section 4.1.1.3 of the Brief identifies setbacks as a tool to accommodate a pedestrian-oriented public/private realm. While we appreciate the intention, Staff recommend revised setbacks (to be accounted for within the ZBLA and the drawings as well) that reflect a hierarchy of the four sides of the development, as per the General Comments above.</p> <p>The recommended setbacks below are a redistribution of the applicant's proposed setbacks. Please consider the following suggestions are based on street prioritization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A setback of 2.5m on the North and 1.5m on the South, to facilitate the creation of the Market Promenade in the North (refer to point B3 and B4 below); • A setback of 2.0m on the West and 1.0m on the East. The west elevation shall ensure the accommodation a large volume of footfall traffic exiting a future higher order transit station across the street. 	UDG 6.6.15 OP 5.27
4. Building Design	<p>Section 4.1.3 of the Brief identifies various design strategies. Additional energy should be put into verbiage describing the architectural expression of the development, given the prominence of the KDA as a significant mixed-use centre in Richmond Hill. A narrative establishing the approach to design excellence should be captured. Staff would like the applicant to identify the specifics of how to achieve 'pedestrian scaled built form and articulation'. Please refer to Section C below for further comments and details.</p>	OP 3.4 OP 5.27
5. Streetscape Design Strategy	<p>Section 4.2 of the Brief should speak to details of a streetscape/public realm strategy for all the blocks, as it relates to South Hill and the broader master planning vision for the property lands. Refer to section 3.6 of the UDGs to comprehend the City's objectives and vision for streetscapes.</p>	OP 5.27 UDG 3.6

While staff note and appreciate the verbiage added to the Brief, the applicant should consider cross sections to illustrate different streetscape typologies that can be deployed in the entirety of the north-east quadrant of the KDA. Please refer to comments D1 and D2 below for further details.

B) SITE ORGANIZATION

Issue	Comments / Recommendations	Policy/UDG Ref.
1. Ground Floor / Podium Uses South Elevation	We seek clarification from the applicant on the design of the podium's south elevation in terms of how it addresses the adjacent street frontage (i.e. slip street parallel to 16 th Avenue) and public sidewalk.	OP 3.4.1.47 UDG 6.6.10

The applicant should verify if glazing is being proposed, and if yes, whether it is vision or spandrel glass. Furthermore, if any vents or other utilities/services are contemplated, please ensure they are integrated into the built form to mitigate their visual impact on the streetscape. Staff would like to better understand how unsightly views of the interior of a parking structure are being screened from public view.

2. Liner Residential Uses for the West Elevation	While secondary to the North elevation, the West elevation is a prominent façade since it faces a future subway station. Staff note and appreciate the efforts made to mitigate the visual impact of the above grade-structured parking through a recess from the primary face of the built form. However, we strongly recommend the applicant consider additional residential units to line another bay of the parking structure. This will ensure that a smaller percentage of the structured parking face will be exposed on a prominent elevation. Please refer to the images below (Fig.1.0-3.0) for further clarification. We find that an opportunity exists to add fairly sized units to this portion of the floor plans	UDG 5.4.28-31
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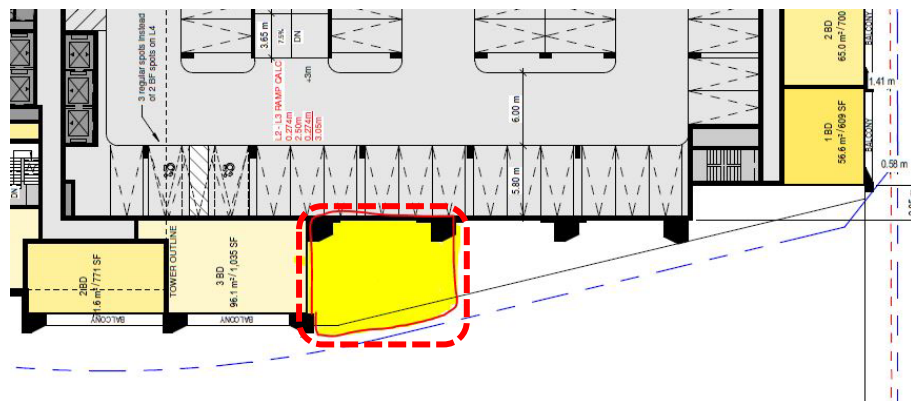


Fig. 1.0 Consider an additional residential use bay to line the above grade structured parking on the West Elevation

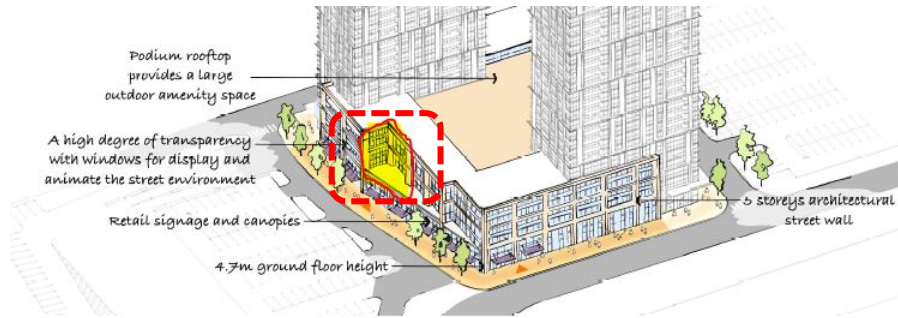


Fig. 2.0 A liner residential used for the highlighted portion will visually mask a greater percentage of the structured parking on the West elevation.



Fig. 3.0 The addition of a residential bay within the podium as a liner use for the structured parking will be in line with the general design vision for above-grade parking facilities in the City.

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| 3. Retail Unit Depths | The applicant should confirm that the configuration (i.e. depth) of space dedicated to retail with frontage on the North and West is viable and sufficient to support the proposed transit/Celebration Square and Market Promenade with flexible retail programming. | OP 4.4.1.4 |
| 4. Setbacks from the Market Promenade | <p>Section 4.1.1.3 of the Brief identifies setbacks to accommodate a pedestrian-oriented public realm. Staff recommend the addition of verbiage within the Brief and Zoning By-Law Amendment that allows for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the appropriate setbacks as noted in point A3 above; and • a certain percentage of the primary face of the North elevation (25% to 35%) to be further set back to accommodate larger pedestrian traffic flow and exterior amenity areas associated with ground floor uses. Such uses may include seasonal uses such as patios, seating integrated with planting, artful streetscape elements, etc. | OP 4.4.2
UDG 6.6.15 |
| 5. Limit Residential Lobbies on Retail Streets and Attraction Areas | <p>In light of the Market Promenade/retail emphasis, relocate the residential entrance lobby at the north-west corner to the mid-block of Street 'C' to capitalize on commercial opportunities at the intersection, anchor Celebration Square and adjacent retail frontages.</p> <p>Alternatively, the applicant could consider the reconfiguration of the residential lobby of the north tower so that a smaller percentage of it fronts the Market Promenade.</p> | UDG 6.6.16-.19 |

C) BUILT-FORM MASSING AND DESIGN

Issue	Comments / Recommendations	Policy/UDG Ref.
1. Streetwall Design	<p>While we appreciate the efforts made by the applicant in the treatment of the base building, with a finer grained approach to the streetwall design, staff find that to reflect the pedestrian scale the following should be considered for further visual interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wall plane changes; • architectural elements (such as balconies and canopies) that alternatively project and recess from the building face; • atypical or unique architectural elements (such as signage placements or canopy designs, or wall lighting features) that aid in placemaking principles and help distinguish the Market Promenade as a specialty street, distinct from any other in the city. <p>All of the comments above should be reflected in the Brief through a comprehensive built form design strategy, and shall be illustrated in the elevation drawings and renderings.</p>	OP 3.4.1.40 UDG 6.6
2. Articulation of the Towers	Additional energy put into the architectural expression of the towers is required. Staff find that there is an opportunity to establish a unique addition to the city's skyline, as well as a better visual relation with the base building. Currently, the architectural elements, materials and colours proposed for the towers are not coherent with the base building.	UDG 6.6
3. Articulation of a 'Top'	Please shape the built-form of the development to clearly articulate a 'top' for both towers, including well-resolved design to screen roof-top mechanical penthouse equipment.	UDG 6.6.43-49
4. Tower Stepback from Base Building	Staff have no concerns with a small percentage of the tower being brought down to the grade level to create visual interest at the corners. However, a greater step back of the north tower from the base building should be provided to facilitate an improved pedestrian scaled response to the Market Promenade. This will also help create a clear visual break between the base building and the tower from a massing perspective. Please refer to the snippet below that articulates a greater tower setback on the West elevation. Staff find that there is sufficient distance between the two towers to accommodate this shift.	



Fig. 4.0 Staff request a greater stepping back of the tower on the North elevation, similar to what is proposed on the West elevation.

5. At-grade Design	<p>To better understand the design intent, please provide detailed at-grade coloured elevation drawings at a scale of 1:50 to illustrate the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail frontages on the Market Promenade, Street 'B' and Street 'C'. Please include the base building and storeys above the base to a maximum of three storeys. • The main building entrances and its relationship to adjacent bays on either side, including the upper storeys to the top of the podium; and • The west elevation as it relates to the treatment of the structured parking. <p>Furthermore, the applicant shall ensure mitigation of spillover from any nighttime illumination of the structured parking facility.</p>	OP 5.27
6. Emergency Egress/ Exit Doors	Provide upgraded and enhanced doors for emergency exits facing public sidewalks and streets, including potential treatments for vault doors and/or utility rooms that are facing public areas.	UDG 6.7.28
7. Underground Parking Vents/Air Shafts in Sidewalks	Indicate the placement and location of all exhaust and intake vents for parking areas, ensuring these are incorporated into the building façade with corresponding architectural treatments that blend the vents into the façade walls.	UDG 5.9.2
8. Parking Garage Entry and Doors	Provide information and details concerning the treatment and presentation of loading and entrances to structured parking in proximity to public sidewalks.	UDG 5.9.6 UDG 5.9.8
9. Rooftop Amenity/Green Rooves	<p>In light of the Market Promenade concept, the applicant is encouraged to consider a green roof or rooftop amenity space that extends to the Northern face of the base building.</p> <p>Consider rooftop planting that will be visible from the streetscape to further the notion of a specialized street, not just for the subject lands or the KDA, but the city as a whole.</p>	UDG 3.3 UDG 6.5.29 UDG 6.8.16

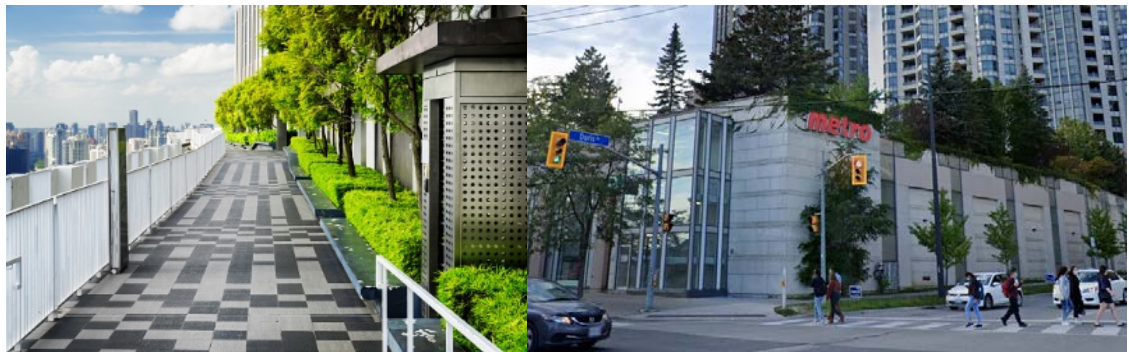


Fig. 5.0 Consider an active green roof with tall planting along the edge of the North face, atop the base building, to up visual interest along the east-west Market Promenade

10. Mitigating Wind Impacts	A Desktop Wind Study should be conducted to ensure there are no adverse wind impacts to the podium rooftop amenity space or the public sidewalks. Design measures shall be taken to mitigate any downdrafts that may arise from the tower design.	OP 3.4.1.42
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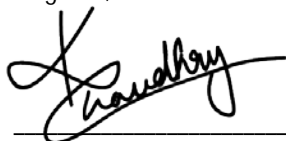
11. Exterior Material and Colour Schedule	A clear understanding of the proposed materials and colours is requested. The <i>Exterior Material and Colour Schedule</i> should be submitted in tandem with this Site Plan Application. Refer to: https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/Exterior-Material-and-Colour-Schedule.pdf . The applicant should also submit coloured elevations that label proposed materials clearly, and include a digital sample board.	Submission Requirement
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D) PUBLIC REALM AND STREETSCAPE AMENITY DESIGN

Issue	Comments / Recommendations	Policy/UDG Ref.
1. Streetscape Aligned with Ground Floors	Please provide detailed information on the execution of streetscape related to South Hill, identifying and showing all dimensions for sidewalks and boulevards from the curb line to the face of buildings/street wall condition on all sides of the development block.	OP 3.4.1.11 UDG 3.6
2. Streetscape Amenities	In a subsequent iteration of the submission, please illustrate where various streetscape elements, that are conducive to implementing a successful Market Promenade, can be accommodated and integrated. This includes, but is not limited to, locating bicycle parking, planters, seasonal uses, seating spaces, and artful elements. Please also include design strategies within a revised Urban Design Brief.	OP 3.4.1.40 OP 5.27 UDG 3.6

For future submissions, please have the applicant indicate how each of these comments has been addressed using a chart or spreadsheet format with any accompanying drawing packages. While we appreciate the efforts made in the Urban Design Brief, we strongly encourage the applicant to revise the document with respect to the comments noted above, and provide a Brief that further elaborates on strategies for built form and streetscape design. This will aid staff in understanding the design intent and will facilitate a comprehensive review. It should be noted that staff will provide in depth and additional design commentary at the Site Plan application stage.

Regards,



Kunal Chaudhry, B.Arch., M.UD
Senior Urban Designer

Heritage and Urban Design Section,
Planning and Infrastructure Department,
4th Floor , 225 East Beaver Creek Road

APPENDIX 1: Revised Master Concept Plan

Prepared by: Heritage and Urban Design, City of Richmond Hill
May 31st, 2023
For Discussion Purposes Only

