

Oakridge Urban Design Vision

The architecture of Oakridge is a response to a myriad of functional, poetic and visionary aspirations set forth by this unique opportunity

to build Vancouver's only municipal town centre outside of the downtown core.

The architectural expression is both urban and topographical, combining multiple positive attributes found in the history of cities. Fundamental principals were distilled from such disparate planning movements such as Ebenezer Howard's Garden City movement of the late 19th century to Le Corbusier's Radiant City and poetic inspiration from Italian hilltop towns to the urban street walls of Europe. Each of these addressed the relationship between nature and the urban fabric.

The resulting concept is a modern street-oriented urban experience that integrates nature and topography to create an organic expression of architecture emerging from the landscape. The genesis of the design narrative begins by reintroducing the lost forest displaced by the original mall and then sculpts new retail street walls to define the perimeter of the site and the high street within, knitting together the surrounding urban fabric. Into this new landscape are sculpted retail gallerias and public rooms which emerge and define the edges of the park above. From this foundation of parks and plazas, office and residential towers terrace upward out of the landscape and are capped by iconic towers marking gateways, capturing views in all directions.

Oakridge visitors will be citizens in a new organic micro-city connected to both downtown to the north and the airport to the south by rapid transit, inhabiting one the most meaningful sustainable models of suburban mall redevelopments in the world.

Oakridge DP1 – Building 3 & 4 Design Rationale

Skin & Bones Concept

The metaphor of skin and bone is the ordering principle for the Architectural Tectonic. It is born from the idea of draping the Mall with a landscaped Park. The act of wrapping or revealing becomes architecturally significant when defining the relationship between the landscape and buildings, as an approach to breakdown the mass of the buildings, as a passive solar strategy to have the buildings respond to their environment, and for providing wayfinding and programmatic identity.

Skin as Veil

Expanding upon the skin & bones concept, the skin is treated like a fine light fabric that wraps the buildings in a unifying veil. It is both delicate and protective, and is expressed architecturally as a plane of Curtain Wall that extends past the building itself in vertical and horizontal fly-bys. The Curtain wall design is reduced to its essence of transparent glass using 4 sided SSG, grey sealant and gaskets, light colored shadow boxes and only horizontal spandrel.

The extent of the wrapping of the veil is related to the buildings orientation, as the veil opens toward the light, allowing the deep recessed terracing of the bones to shade the spaces within.

Lifting the Veil

Just as the veil wraps the building as a protective, unifying element, it also lifts like a billowing fabric at the Street and Park to provide physical and visual permeability. The veil lifts to reveal a transparent Retail edge, and to provide weather protection along the Street and up into the Park, landing again just after the upper Park building entry. The amplitude of the lift responding to the Anchor Tenant, the Parkade entry and the Residential and Office Lobbies, providing wayfinding clues. In order to mitigate the complex billowing geometries the Curtain Wall is triangulated to provide added relief to the scale of the Podium façade. The exposed Retail edge is highly transparent Structural glass that is purposely differentiated from the Curtain Wall Veil above. The triangulation and the overhanging veil weather protection also reduce bird collisions.

Animating the Veil

Sculptural pods are hung from the face of the veil to provide special balcony environments for the residents and to breakdown the scale of the Tower façade.

Tower façade

Conceived as self-contained environments, the pods will come pre-manufactured with built-in conveniences for occupant comfort and enjoyment. Unlike a typical slab extension balcony, they will be hung from the building to reduce thermal bridging. They are intended to be sculptural in nature providing visual contrast to the Curtain Wall veil. Their location on the façade providing an organic pattern, rhythm and scale.

Differentiating the Bones

The bones are differentiated from the skin by accentuating the horizontality of the slab edge. While the veil is a single vertical plane, the bones are many stacked horizontal planes terracing up from the Park. Built-in planters in the lower terraces and in the reveal between the skin and bones, create the effect of pulling the landscaping from the Park up into the Building, blurring the distinction between topography and building. Adding to the juxtaposition between skin and bones, the bone's deeply recessed Curtain Wall will have black sealants and gaskets, dark colored spandrel and a mix of horizontal and vertical spandrel. If the veil is conceived as delicate glass skin, the bones is the environmental workhorse having a higher ratio of opaque wall to vision glass.