

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 8 – July 12, 2011

The Design Review Panel met on Tuesday July 12, 2011, in Committee Room 2, City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 12:00pm.

Members of the Design Review Panel

Members Present

Gordon Stratford (Chair): Architect, Senior Vice President, Design Director - HOK Canada	✓
Michael Leckman (Vice Chair): Architect, Principal - Diamond and Schmitt	✓
Robert Allsopp: Landscape Architect, Planner, Architect, Principal - du Toit Allsopp Hillier	✓
Shirley Blumberg: Architect, Principal – KPMB	✓
Calvin Brook: Planner, Architect, Principal - Brook McIlroy Inc Pace Architects	
Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal - Giannone Associates	✓
Charles Hazell: Heritage Specialist, Architect, Principal - Taylor Hazell Architects	✓
Alun Lloyd: Transportation Engineer, Principal - BA Group	
Jim Melvin: Landscape Architect, Principal - PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.	✓
Roland rom Colthoff: Architect, Director – RAW Design	✓
David Sisam: Architect, Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects	
Eric Turcotte: Planner, Architect, Senior Associate - Urban Strategies	✓
Sibylle von Knobloch: Landscape Architect, Principle - NAK Design	

Confirmation of Minutes

n/a.


Other Items:

On motion, the Panel voted to recess the public session of the meeting and to review the final agenda item – the Pan Am Athletics Stadium - in a closed session in order to consider drawings which will form part of a competitive tender. Minutes from this session will remain confidential until the public release of information is authorized.

Recording Secretary

Hamish Goodwin: Urban Designer, City Planning Division

4050 Yonge Street	
Planning Area	York Mills
Design Team	KPMB Architects
Application Type	Site Plan Application
Review	Second (1 st review Sept. 2010)
City Staff	John Andreevski, Community Planning Dawn Hamilton, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	Shirley Blumberg, Eric Turcotte
Vote	n/a



Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, history and area policy priorities, and sought Panel's advice on the following:

How has the proposed development responded to the Panel's comments from September 2010 with respect to:

- The proposed building setbacks on Wilson Avenue and Yonge Street, and are they appropriate?
- Providing adequate setbacks at grade and amenity along the street and open space edges for pedestrians?
- The location of the ground floor uses and the appropriateness of how they animate the street and valley edges, considering the site's location at a prominent corner along 2 major streets, which includes an existing subway stop?
- The articulation of the various facades of the building in terms of scale and fit, given the surrounding context?

The applicant team described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Panel noted many positive steps in the evolution of a high quality design, and in particular were appreciative of a presentation package which clearly showed where and how the adjustments were made in response to previous comments.

Some key elements of the design have progressed well, and some may have been lost, such as the direct connection between the atrium and the valley. The proponent was encouraged to investigate ways of adjusting the planning and articulation of the west massing and atrium to re-establish this important flow.

Further, panel thought the uniqueness of a building at the corner of "Yonge and Nature" could benefit from more development, by emphasizing the urban edge, then the valley. The erosion of the building form's south-west corner on the first two floors has helped in that regard, and could be pushed further. In addition, the planting scheme could be more interactive with the valley,

distinguishing the urban edge from the urban forest. The extent of tree removal to the north-west was regretted, but the forest was understood to be on poor fill, and covered with weed trees. In response to Staff questions, it was observed that while the project's set back differs from the building across Yonge Street, the distance from curb was similar, and found to be acceptable. Panel emphasized that food and beverage uses, as opposed to retail, are key to the successful streetscape at grade; that the all-glass skin, while in principal a negative quality of the design, was supported when done in combination with the proposed automated sunshades and natural ventilation.

Related Commentary

How has the proposed development responded to comments relating to the proposed building setbacks on Wilson Avenue and Yonge Street, and are they appropriate?

Members felt the setbacks were a positive step. In moving forward, the proponent was encouraged to explore ways of making the building more transparent on Wilson, in order to enhance the expression of the "Green meets Yonge" theme.

How has the proposed development responded to comments relating to providing adequate setbacks at grade, amenity and open space edges for pedestrians?

Members felt the refined retail spaces would work much better than their original configuration, particularly the retail along Wilson. However, Members noted that the expanded retail area in this location had resulted in the reduction of atrium space at the western elevation. Panel felt that this loss was detrimental to the clarity of the scheme, and encouraged the proponent to explore ways of maintaining the original atrium flow-through.

Some concern with the corner retail at Yonge Street was expressed, in that it seemed too small and too narrow. Because of this, some Members wondered if the setback in this location was perhaps too large.

The location of the ground floor uses and the appropriateness of how they animate the street and valley edges, considering the site's location at a prominent corner along 2 major streets, which includes an existing subway stop?

Panel felt the ground floor arrangement had a huge potential to animate the site. Members noted, however, that the retail spaces appeared geared towards food and beverage tenants, and wondered how successful these spaces would be if such tenants were difficult to attract.

The articulation of the various facades of the building in terms of scale and fit, given the surrounding context?

Members were appreciative of the revised design, indicating that the articulation works well, that the solar chimney will be iconic, that the scale and fit is strong, and that the urban building sits nicely in the landscape. On this latter point, the proponent was encouraged to go further in terms of integrating the proposal with the 'green' qualities of the site.

Panel Members suggested that the loading area seems to be large and overly generous, and described the curb cut as being massive. The proponent was encouraged to revisit these aspects of the design, with the goal of increasing animation along Wilson and reducing the amount of non-animated edges.

One Member felt that the taller height of the original proposal was better suited to the site, as it provided it with a greater sense of distinction.

Landscaping Strategy

Members expressed concern with the removal of mature trees and questioned whether or not more could be retained. Members also felt that more could be done to tie the street planting strategy in with the natural environment, and to emphasize the "Yonge and Nature" theme.

154 Front St East	
Planning Area	King-Parliament
Design Team	Architects Alliance
Application Type	Rezoning and Site Plan Application
Review	First
City Staff	Myron Boyko, Urban Design Willie Macrae, Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	None
Vote	Refine – 1; <u>Redesign - 7</u>



Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, history and area policy priorities and sought the Panel's advice on the following:

1. Is the proposed height and density appropriate given the existing planning framework and evolving built form context for this area of King-Parliament?
2. How well does the built form and articulation respond to the neighbourhood character (podium treatment, materiality, etc.) and the Design Criteria for Review of Tall Building Proposals?

The applicant team described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Panel appreciated a high quality proposal, employing compelling forms and developed from well informed references, but found it to be out of context for this area and site, and inappropriate. Panel asked that the City needs to better determine where height is appropriate; to panel, this site does not appear to be the place. To the question "What on this site justifies a significant exception to the secondary plan heights?" the panel did not hear a successful argument, nor were able to see a reason to do so.

Panel felt that proceeding with this height threatened the scale of the original 10 blocks of the City, the nature of the space and character envisioned in the secondary plan.

Related Commentary

The Design Review Panel was strongly supportive of the proposed design, suggesting it was both highly skillful and provocative. However, placed within the Old Town context and measured against the regulatory framework, Members felt that it did not represent a good fit for the site. In voting for 'redesign' of the proposal, the following comments were provided:

Is the proposed height and density appropriate given the existing planning framework and evolving built form context for this area of King-Parliament?

Density

In response to the different massing options which had been explored, Members opined that density objectives appeared to be the primary driver of the built form, and suggested that this should never be the case in the exercise of city building. Panel felt that the original 10 blocks of the Town of York (Toronto) was not a place for a tower, and encouraged the proponent to look for intensification by other means. Members further noted that any form of development on this site would achieve intensification and meet growth objectives.

Height

In addressing height, Members drew parallels to recent approvals in the area, including a development in the Corktown area where the issue of 7-storeys versus 8-storeys was strongly contested amongst stakeholders. Members were unconvinced as to why the qualities of this site were so different that they would warrant such a dramatic increase in height beyond that specified in the regulatory framework.

Notwithstanding the above, several Members felt that the proponent had made a good argument to exceed the established datum height of 15-17 storeys. These Members pointed to the fact that the proposal did not cast any shadows along King Street East. While not endorsing any specific heights, these Members encouraged the proponent to conduct perspective studies from prominent public open spaces within the area (King Street East and David Crombie Park) to ensure that the visual impact of the proposal is minimized.

Context

Members also expressed concern with the impact that this proposal would have in terms of future development in the area. Panel was unanimous in suggesting that the proposal would be precedent setting, and subsequently, in expressing concerns in terms of the negative impact that this would have upon the area. Given the site's historic context, this precedent was described variously as being dangerous, problematic, and dramatic.

For the reasons outlined herein, Panel felt the current proposal was too aggressive in terms of its density and too high in terms of the planned context for King-Parliament. Members felt the site was generally more suitable for a fabric building as opposed to a tall building, with some suggesting a mid-rise building form would be most suitable for the site.

How well does the built form and articulation respond to the neighbourhood character (podium treatment, materiality, etc.) and the Design Criteria for Review of Tall Building Proposals?

Members were strongly supportive of the partii, indicating that the fractured box scheme was compelling in the way that it alludes to the fractured form of the broader City. The scheme was described as being innovative, inventive and a fresh expression of contemporary building. The proponent was encouraged to maintain the fractured form in moving forward, and provided the following comments for consideration:

Materials

Some Members were uncertain how stone would relate to the neighbouring brick buildings, however Panel was generally supportive of the proposed materials.

Podium Treatment

The majority of Members felt the base was well crafted while some expressed concern with its abstract quality. Those in support felt that the scale and height were appropriate, and that it would be a positive addition Front Street. Concerns with the base related more to how it would

feel in reality, once built, and whether or not it would have sufficient qualities to engage the public and animate the public realm.

Tall Building Criteria

Members suggested the proposal meets the general spirit and intent of the tall building guidelines, particularly in terms of setbacks, without being slavish to it. They felt the bridge element was clever, and that it would create an interesting and welcoming silhouette on the skyline. At the same time, however, they felt the bridge element emphasized the proposal's sense of height. Some expressed concern that the proposal would read as one large slab building, given the bridge element, the tower alignments and site configuration.

Sustainable Design

The proponent was encouraged to incorporate passive sustainability into the design, by ensuring that the expression of each façade is responsive to localized environmental conditions.

Response to Context

While appreciative of the proposed design as a stand-alone piece, Panel felt that it carried little relationship to its site and context. To illustrate this point, Members suggested that the proposal would fit appropriately along Bloor Street and a variety of other Toronto locations. Members indicated that the proposal should exhibit greater consideration to its unique historic context and that this context was significant enough to warrant a Heritage Impact Assessment.

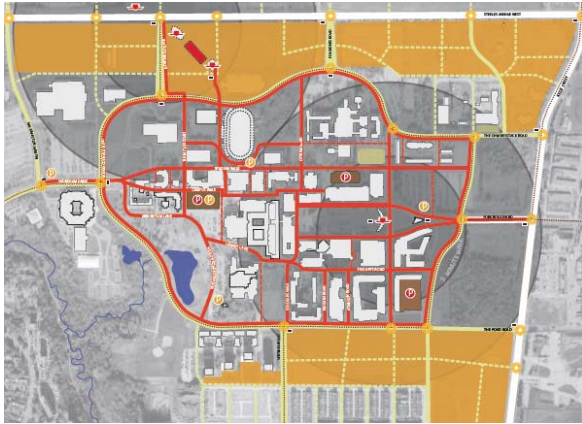
Site Plan Design

Members felt that the plan could benefit from a variety of revisions which would help enhance the quality of the public realm and reduce the overall scale of the building mass. One example in this regard was the exterior ground-floor amenity on the south-west corner. Panel did not see any compelling reason for the inclusion of this space within the plan, given the 3-metre setback that is proposed along the full length of the Front Street elevation. The internal pedestrian through-way and atrium lobby was also identified as an element for further consideration. Members felt that the plan might be better served by a different configuration of this space, given its uncertain quality (it is essentially lined by blank walls - loading areas etc.), and that this large amount of space has no public use.

Building Form and Articulation

Panel was appreciative of the scale of retail space. In moving forward, the proponent was encourage to think about the inclusion of retail signage, and to increase the grandness of entrances.

York University Campus Plan	
Planning Area	York University
Design Team	Greenberg Consultants; The Planning Partnership
Application Type	Master Plan
Review	First
City Staff	Helene Iardas, Urban Design Cassidy Ritz, Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	None
Vote	n/a



Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, history and area policy priorities and sought the Panel's advice on the following:

1. Does the Master Plan respond appropriately to the 6 objectives identified in the York University Secondary Plan?
2. Does the Master Plan provide a suitable framework to address the key development principles identified in the York University Secondary Plan, including:
 - respecting the scale and character of the University;
 - protecting important views;
 - providing a connected, fine grain network of pedestrian/cycling connections within the campus and to the surrounding area; and
 - restoring and enhancing the Commons as the University's major central open space and preserving/enhancing other important open spaces such as the courtyards.
3. Are there any other goals, objectives or issues that should be included in the Master Plan?

The applicant team described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

The Panel would like to thank the proponent for bringing the Campus Plan forward to the Design Review Panel, and for the excellence of thought and creative design clearly shown in the work to date. Further development of the Plan is encouraged, with recommendations included below.

Q1 – Does the Master Plan respond appropriately to the 6 objectives identified in the York University Secondary Plan?

The Master Plan does respond to the 6 objectives but needs further development to fully embody and realise the potential of those objectives. Examples are included in the Summary of Key Comments section for this project summary.

Q2 – Does the Master Plan provide a suitable framework to address the key development principles identified in the York University Secondary Plan:

The Master Plan is working towards a suitable framework but needs further development. Examples are included in the Summary of Key Comments section for this project summary.

Q3 – Are there any other strategies that should be included in the Master Plan?

Additional/further strategies are recommended and are included in the Summary of Key Comments section of this project summary.

Sustainable Design

- Take sustainability strategy to a higher level, as part of achieving an integrated and sustaining learn/ live/ work community.

Response to Context

- More strongly connect campus with surrounding community.

Site Plan Design

Streets

- Further develop hierarchy of streets (primary, secondary, tertiary):
 - including east-west and north-south “signature” streets.
 - anticipating change in pedestrian patterns due to subway stations.

Transit

- In addition to the new subway integrate other transit into Plan (e.g. bus, streetcar, nearby GO Transit).

Connectivity

- Ensure strong connectivity/integration between zones on either side of Ring Road
- Develop strategy for future buildings (including infill) to include inter-connective uses

Academic Core

- Develop learn/ live/ work balance in core
- Ensure vibrant, safe, pedestrian-first 24/7/365 community that attracts and retains people

Open Spaces

- Match high design level of Main Quad at other major public spaces (e.g. Steele Station, new stadium).
- Create urban spaces along Ring Road as Connectivity noted above.
- Include strategy for high quality small spaces throughout the Plan
- Resolve conflicts between service elements/routes/buildings and public spaces to ensure high quality Plan throughout.

Pedestrian Realm

- See Site Plan Design above
- Develop fine grain design strategy for increased, effective pedestrian/bike mix throughout Plan.

Built Form and Articulation

- Develop built form strategy that ensures high quality urban design and architecture at both large and small scale.

Landscape Strategy

- Develop landscape strategy:
 - for continuity of highest quality throughout the Plan
 - as a major connector

- as strong visual brand/celebration of University out into community.

Submission Package

- A well-organized document with strong graphics providing a clear future vision for the University.

Related Commentary

Does the Master Plan respond appropriately to the 6 objectives identified in the York University Secondary Plan?

Members felt the plan response appropriately to the 6 objectives.

Does the Master Plan provide a suitable framework to address the key development principles identified in the York University Secondary Plan, including:

- **respecting the scale and character of the University;**
- **protecting important views;**
- **providing a connected, fine grain network of pedestrian/cycling connections within the campus and to the surrounding area; and**
- **restoring and enhancing the Commons as the University's major central open space and preserving/enhancing other important open spaces such as the courtyards.**

Members felt the framework for supporting pedestrians and cyclists was crucial. The idea of shared spaces was supported, with the proviso cycling/ pedestrian/ service vehicle conflicts would require resolution. Opportunities to enhance cycling convenience were suggested, such as locating bicycle parking near building entrances, and the commitment to not building more vehicular parking was commended.

Members appreciated the ring road approach, but stressed the importance of not using it to define/restrict the campus boundaries, suggesting instead that the campus should be intertwined with the City (ie the campus boundaries should be visibly difficult to determine).

Are there any other goals, objectives or issues that should be included in the Master Plan?

Panel was very supportive of the planning framework, and provided a variety of comments for consideration in further refinement of the Plan. These areas are interrelated, and are outlined as follows:

Community Connection

Members felt strongly that the plan should include as many connections to the community/city beyond its boundaries as possible, rather than isolating itself.

Animation

To help encourage connections, it was suggested that the Plan should include a blend of uses inside and outside of the academic core and along the development edges. Mixed uses, student housing and related amenities would help bring life and vitality to the area, both non-academic periods, as well as periods of the day which tend to be quiet (eg early morning and night time). Another way of considering this issue is providing an environment in which people want to stay beyond their regular university requirements.

Enrich the Social Aspect of Campus Life

While noting the importance of the virtual-world connection to campus life, Panel also stressed the importance of creating and nurturing strong physical connection to the campus. The creation

of interesting places, which are compatible with student life – living and studying on campus – is key to this.

Transit

Panel suggested that the seamless integration of Steeles Subway within the campus realm would be crucial. One Members encouraged the proponent to give some consideration to the integration of a secondary level of transit, such as streetcars.

Landscape Strategy

Noting the 'delicate way' in which the university meets the surrounding City, Members felt the plan should include a sophisticated balance of landscape with its unique built form.

Infill Lens

Within the "infill lens", the proponent was encouraged to think about small-scale infill as well as larger infill. Further to this point, Members noted how it will be the smaller spaces that accompany each new building that will provide a collective enhancement to the community and campus life.

Pedestrian-First Lens

Members felt the plan would result in the creation of comfortable streets and enjoyable spaces. In refining this lens, the proponent was encouraged to ensure that the pedestrian structure responds directly to the modeling of pedestrian movement that will occur once the new subway stations are operational.

Sustainability Lens

Members expressed appreciation that the plan included a sustainability lens. In refining this lens, one Member encouraged the plan to establish targets for the reduction of energy use and waste diversion.