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Gary Wright
Acting Chief Planner & Executive Director
City Planning Division
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
12th Floor, East Tower
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

Re: Redevelopment of Kipling Station

Dear Mr. Wright:

I am honoured to represent the City of Toronto Urban Design Review Panel in the capacity of Panel Chair. This Panel has been running for several months now and we have reviewed development projects in every district within the City. Although still in its infancy, the Panel will make a tremendous positive impact to the public realm within the City in the years to come. At this early stage, however, we feel obliged to write and notify you directly about our concerns with a project that we have now reviewed on two occasions. This project is the redevelopment of Kipling Station, and our concern is with how the design places a higher emphasis upon traffic engineering operational requirements than on the broader responsibility of transit agencies to build urban landscapes that become true instruments of civic life.

The Panel's first review of the redevelopment plans for Kipling Station took place in July 2007. As presented, these plans outlined a purely functional project that made very little contribution to, or enhancement of, the existing public realm conditions. Containing limited reference to essential principles of successful urban design, the Panel voted unanimously to reject the proposal. The intent of this vote was to encourage the TTC to reexamine their proposal and make some fairly substantial changes to its design – at the very least, the Panel wanted to see a proposal that moved beyond addressing solely functional operational requirements of transit operations, to one that engaged its surroundings and enhanced the civic prominence of the area.

The project came back to the Panel for a second review six months later, in January 2008. While the revision included some minor improvements, to our unanimous disappointment the essence of the original design had been maintained and the potential of this prime site was still largely unrealized. Subsequently, it was not possible for the Panel to support the revised scheme. The message we took away from this process was that the TTC places limited priority on its important role as city-builder, instead choosing to focus on the accommodation of the technical requirements of its business. This confined approach to designing transit infrastructure is to the detriment of the City, as it disregards significant opportunities to improve its environs through the provision of civic architecture, and an engaging, supportive environment for the community.

The TTC is a vital contributor to the life, energy and economy of Toronto, and as a result is an essential part of the fibre and character of our city. Given this major prominence and importance, it seems reasonable, if not essential, that these characteristics should be expressed in all aspects of the TTC, especially in its design excellence. There are many examples of this approach for transit agencies of major cities, and it has resulted in highly successful station redevelopments. The City of London's St. Pancras station is one such example. In addition to making significant improvements to the transportation operational abilities of this station, the project also serves to

create lively, engaging and vital places – places which now foster civic pride amongst its residents, and which contribute to success and revitalization within the local economy.

There are similar opportunities available to this City, with Kipling Station being a prime example. After Union Station, Kipling is one of the City's most important transportation hubs: located on the western fringe of the City, it acts as a gateway not only to our suburban neighbours further west, but to the many regional, national and international travelers who enter the City through the transit connections between Pearson Airport and Kipling Station. This major factor alone is a compelling reason to spur the creation of a place that is more than just a functional transportation hub. At this critical location for redevelopment we should be building a place of civic prominence, a place that strives for the highest standards of design excellence.

Following the project's second Panel review, by which time GO Transit had assumed the role of project lead, a design charrette was arranged in an attempt to solve of the design issues with the proposal. This is a very positive and encouraging outcome. It is the hope of the Design Review Panel that similar regard to design excellence will follow in forthcoming transit initiatives. It is also the Panel's hope that the TTC – as a City agency – can reintroduce its rich history of building fine public buildings, and fulfil its important role of building urban landscapes that become true instruments of civic life, vitality and identity.

If you would like to discuss this issue with me further please me by telephone at 416-203 9993 ext. 7081 or by e-mail at gordon.stratford@hok.com.

Sincerely,



Gordon Stratford, OAA/RAIC LEED
Chair, Urban Design Review Panel.
Senior Vice President and Director of Design, HOK Canada

Cc: Gary Webster, Chief General Manager, TTC
Richard Butts, Deputy City Manager
Gary McNeil, Managing Director and CEO, GO Transit
Michael Fenn, CEO, Metrolinx
Daniel Leeming, Vice Chair, Urban Design Review Panel
Robert Allsopp, Member, Urban Design Review Panel
Paul Ferris, Member, Urban Design Review Panel
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Peter Halsall, Member, Urban Design Review Panel
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