

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 6 – January 24, 2008

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday, January 24, 2008 in Meeting Room 310, Metro Hall, 55 John Street, Toronto, at 12:00 p.m.

Members of the Design Review Panel

Regrets

Gordon Stratford (Chair): Architect, Senior Vice President, Director of Design HOK Canada

Daniel Leeming (Vice Chair): Planner, Partner, The Planning Partnership

✓

Robert Allsopp: Landscape Architect, Planner, Architect, Principal, du Toit Allsopp Hillier

Paul Ferris: Landscape Architect, Principal, Ferris Associates

✓

Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal, Giannone Associates

Michael Leckman: Architect, Principal, Diamond and Schmitt

David Pontarini: Architect, Principal, Hariri Pontarini

Sol Wassermuhl: Architect, President, Page and Steele

Shirley Blumberg: Architect, Principal, KPMB

Janet Rosenberg: Landscape Architect, Principal, Janet Rosenberg Associates

Peter Halsall: Engineer, President, Halsall Associates

✓

Eric Turcotte: Planner, Architect, Associate, Urban Strategies

Recording Secretary

Hamish Goodwin, Urban Design

Confirmation of Minutes

The Design Review Panel confirmed the Minutes of the meeting held on November 22, 2007

Meeting 6 Index

[Project 1](#) [Park Lawn Road Streetcar Loop: Humber Bay Shores](#)

[Project 2](#) [Menkes Cosmo 3 Condominium: North York Centre](#)

[Project 3](#) [The Palm Condominium: North York Centre](#)

[Project 4](#) [Kipling Subway Station: Etobicoke City Centre](#)

Project 1 – Etobicoke York District, Humber Bay Shores Pilot Area

Park Lawn Road Bus Loop – Expansion to Accommodate Streetcars	
Address	South-west corner, Park Lawn Road and Lake Shore Boulevard West
Use	Open space and TTC operations
Zoning	Open space
Application Status	Pre-application; Site Plan review will be required
Architect	Bryan Shaw; Bob Dobbin (landscape architect) - Earthtech
Owner	City of Toronto
Applicant/Agent	Toronto Transit Commission
Review	First
City Staff	Lorna Day, Urban Design; Michael Wehkind, Transportation Planning

Conflict of Interest: none

[\[back to top\]](#)

Evaluation: a vote for this item was not held as there were insufficient members to form quorum

Introduction

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

- Given the anticipated increased transit use and pedestrian activity in the area, does the proposal adequately address the emerging public realm objectives for Humber Bay Shores?
- Is the proposed design an appropriate 'gateway' into Humber Bay?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Sustainable Design

- Develop and integrate a comprehensive sustainable design strategy, including but not limited to:
 - supporting site energy needs through use of photo voltaic and solar panels (possibly incorporated into canopies)
 - reduction of hard surfaces through growing grass between streetcar tracks (see European precedents)

Site Plan Design

- Develop a stronger street and gateway presence through:
 - changing orientation of station and canopy
 - alignment and placement of service poles
- Develop the streetcar line placement to further integrate proposal into the park

Pedestrian Realm

- Develop further to ensure pedestrian comfort and protection (eg. sufficient canopy coverage from elements)

Building Form and Articulation

- This project presents an excellent opportunity for the TTC to reestablish a progressive design presence and quality
- Develop the overall design to achieve the above, and provide a landmark gateway to the neighbourhood
- Develop building to:
 - reduce/simplify massing and materials
 - create design “in the round”, giving equal attention to all elevations
- Develop canopy design to:
 - lower height and adjust coverage to provide more shelter for pedestrians
 - ensure high quality structural clarity and articulation
 - well resolved details
 - quality materials

Landscaping Strategy

- Develop landscape strategy to:
 - provide a solution that fits with the park environment
 - increase quality
 - integrate/support strong gateway presence

Submission Package

- Provide further information regarding:
 - larger context, both present and future
 - proposed materials

Related Commentary

Sustainable Design

Given the relative compactness of this project, several comments were made regarding the opportunity to incorporate sustainability elements into its design and that doing this could contribute to its “gateway” quality. Specifically, the Panel indicated that the placement of solar panels could be considered for the shelter canopies, which may then allow some of the building components to be self sufficient in terms of their energy requirements. One Panelist indicated that the canopies could be oriented to maximize the efficiency of the solar panels.

Response to Context

The Panel suggested that a large component of the surrounding context derives its identity from the prominent footbridges in the area. The Proponent was encouraged to examine how these design elements could be introduced into the proposal. In relation to the project’s immediate context, it was the Panel’s opinion that the proposal has an urban quality that contrasts with its park-like setting.

Site Plan Design

In response to staff’s question regarding the gateway qualities of the proposal, it was the Panel’s opinion that more could be done to develop this aspect of the proposal. The rationalization of overhead utility poles and cables would help facilitate this, and while recognizing that this work is not a TTC requirement, the Panel appreciated planned efforts to do this. The gateway qualities of the proposal would also be enhanced by reorganizing the building and the vehicle entry/exit so that the proposal addresses Lake Shore Boulevard West. Additionally, the Proponent was encouraged to give equal consideration to the design of all elevations (including the west and overhead elevation).

Building Form and Articulation

The Panel suggested that the streetcar platform canopy would be too tall to provide shelter to persons underneath it and that subsequently, it should be lowered in order to provide this intended amenity. The installation of bench seating would provide additional amenity and comfort to transit patrons.

The Panel suggested that more refinement of the canopy design, including the detailing of the canopy edges, was required, and recommended the Proponent develop the precision of its structural design. The glass transit shelters located across the City were suggested as good examples on how this could be achieved.

In terms of materiality, it was the Panel's opinion that there are currently too many competing materials within the proposal. Subsequently, the Proponent was encouraged to develop a simpler material palette, which would help them to deliver a clearer and more elegant design.

Landscaping Strategy

The Panel made several suggestions as to how the landscaping for this project could be enhanced. Firstly, it was suggested that the structure should be more clearly integrated into the landscape so that both elements of the proposal – the structure and the open space – have a similar identity. Secondly, the Proponent was encouraged to design the landscaping along Lake Shore Boulevard West in a way that increases the project's prominence, thereby enhancing its overall gateway quality. The Proponent was also encouraged to examine the use of sod rather than hard surfacing between the streetcar tracks, which would also help to integrate the station into the landscape.

Additional Comments

The Panel indicated that a larger context plan of the area outlining the broader gateway conditions would have been a useful presentation material.

Project 2 – North York District, North York Centre Pilot Area

Menkes Cosmo 3 Condominium	
Address	1-17 Anndale Dr, 3135 Bales Av, and 22-70 Glendora Av
Use	Residential (Condominium)
Zoning	R6 & R7 (8 metres) - existing
Application Status	Zoning Amendment Application
Architect	Andrew Bigauskas, Rafael + Bigauskas
Owner	Rosedale Development Inc.
Applicant/Agent	Adam Brown, Solicitor, Sherman Brown Dryer Karol
Review	First
City Staff	Catherine Cieply, Community Planning; Barry Livingstone, Urban Design

Conflict of Interest: none

[\[back to top\]](#)

Evaluation: Non-support (6-1)

Introduction

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

- What additional considerations might enhance the street definition and streetscape along each of the three public street frontages of the development?
- Is the proposed open space appropriately located and defined, or are there alternative opportunities for other types and locations of open space on the site?
- Does the proposal create adequate opportunities for pedestrian circulation within the site, as well as encourage and facilitate pedestrian access to the Yonge/ Sheppard subway?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Sustainable Design

- Develop and integrate a comprehensive sustainable design strategy throughout the project

Response to Context

- see reference to context in other sections of this summary

Site Plan Design

- Develop a vehicular strategy on site to:
 - reduce/tighten space being taken for this use
 - increase and improve pedestrian and landscape realms
- Develop tower address and entry on street; consider creation of mid block street or mews, with tower address on this street

- Develop townhouses to:
 - avoid blank end wall conditions along streets
 - turn street corners
 - replace cycle storage enclosure with residential presence
 - slightly raise ground floor level above street level, providing public/private transition
- Develop street frontage to:
 - avoid building gaps currently in design
 - create strong, continuous, urban street edges

Pedestrian Realm

- Develop design to:
 - reduce degree of porosity into and through site
 - rebalance and enhance pedestrian realm by reducing vehicular areas

Building Form and Articulation

- Consider alternatives to bulky slab tower including:
 - point tower strategy (higher/thinner), providing more room for enhanced ground plane and street edge conditions
 - hybrid strategy of point tower combined with mid rise
 - higher street edge buildings
- Develop emphasis on urban design with focus on:
 - using building mass and positioning to reinforce stronger edges along streets and at corners
 - improving quality of spaces between buildings
- Develop alternatives to tower and townhouses aesthetic to:
 - avoid having all buildings look the same
 - provide more visual variety

Landscaping Strategy

- Develop site to:
 - avoid the small, left over spaces currently in design
 - provide sufficient landscape space to balance against bulk/size of tower
- Develop landscape elements to provide sizing more suitable to tower mass and height
- Create a style that is compatible with aesthetics of buildings

Comments to City Staff

- The Panel is concerned that the city's development rules and guidelines result in design conditions that are detrimental to the creation of a successful urban environment. The slab tower in this project is an example of this condition

Related Commentary

Sustainable Design

The Proponent was encouraged to further develop the sustainable design strategy.

Site Plan Design

It was the Panel's opinion that the site plan is currently dominated by transportation-related activities; it was suggested that this is more of a suburban approach to servicing than could be expected for this development. The result of this approach detracts from both the quality and the quantity of open space that can be provided on site. Subsequently, the Proponent was encouraged to examine ways to reduce, or consolidate with existing servicing, the amount of on-site servicing and transportation activities, which would then allow them to include more amenable open space in the plan.

The Panel noted that the current servicing arrangement and pedestrian through-routes result in too many “gaps” in the street edge and not enough built form and animated spaces there. The back/side yard arrangement of the Block B and C townhouses, and the bicycle storage facility on the western edge of Block A contributes to this condition. The Proponent was encouraged to re-examine the street edges of this block with a view to reinforcing the street network and creating lively spaces along the edges. One Panelist suggested that that existing at-grade townhouse elevations may result in privacy issues for its occupants.

The Panel was concerned that the main entrance of the large building “C” is located mid-block rather than on a main street. It was noted that this arrangement removes activity from the street, which can sometimes result in unsafe conditions. The Panel suggested developing the north-south space between building “C” and the townhouses (Block A) as a mews, or a mid-block lane, thereby “normalizing” the main entrance to this building by providing it with a street frontage.

Pedestrian Realm

It was the Panel’s opinion that there is currently sufficient pedestrian permeability on the site, and therefore, that the extra circulation portals shown in the proposal are not required.

Building Form and Articulation

Some Panelists were appreciative of the proposed townhouses, indicating that they would be an effective means of buffering the mass of Building C. Others were less appreciative, indicating that the townhouses required more thought in terms of their design/sameness, how they address the street, and their material palette. Similar concerns about sameness were expressed with the main building and the earlier phases of development on this block. One Panelist suggested that this type of repeated building design is poor City-building.

The Panel was supportive of some elements of the main building, including its orientation, as well as its 3-storey podium, however there was firm agreement that its massing was too immense. While acknowledging that this massing was a direct response to the height and built form policies for this area, the Panel encouraged the Proponent to consider alternative options for this site. Suggested alternatives included a taller point tower, and two point towers with a mid-rise component along Tradewind Avenue. These types of alternatives would allow the Proponent to provide more open space at grade, which would then also help contribute to a more legible streetscape.

One Panelist observed that the current building seems to have evolved from a standard unit and floor-plate design, and that this has a negative impact on the building’s overall design. The suggestion was made for the Proponent to first examine the massing alternatives of the site, then develop the unit and floor-plate design from there.

Landscaping Strategy

It was the Panel’s opinion that the landscaping and open space dedication in this proposal, much of which appears to be leftover by the servicing functions of the proposal (loading, ramps and the entry court) is insufficient. The result is that the open space does not provide an appropriate balance to the massing of the proposal. The Panel encouraged the Proponent to develop the landscaping strategy of this proposal so that it contributes to the identity of the development and enhances the street edges.

Additional Comments

The main concern about this project expressed by Panelists was with the building’s mass, and the fact that this design was clearly being driven by the height limitations within the North York Centre Secondary Plan. It was suggested that the exceptional bulk of the tall building in this proposal is a clear example of why these limitations need to be changed.

POST MEETING

After the public meeting adjourned, the Panel met in-camera to discuss several procedural matters as well as some of the outcomes from the session. The following motion in relation to this project review was passed during this in-camera session:

Motion

Having reviewed a number of applications in the North York centre Pilot area, on motion by Sol Wassermuhl, the Design Review Panel:

1. strongly recommends the City review the height and built form policies within the North York Centre Secondary Plan, in the interest of achieving a better built form.
2. requests to meet with the Chief Planner or his designate to discuss this motion further.

Project 3 – North York District, North York Centre Pilot Area

The Palm Condominium	
Address	5740 Yonge Street
Use	Residential (Condominium)
Zoning	Site Specific Bylaw 32919
Application Status	Pre-application; Site Plan review will be required
Architect	Harry Christakis, HCA Architecture; Bob Parkin, John Quinn Associates
Owner	Castle Royal Developments / 1650227 Ontario Inc.
Applicant/Agent	Castle Royal Developments / 1650227 Ontario Inc.
Review	First
City Staff	Mark Chlon, Community Planning; Leo Desorcy, Urban Design

Conflict of Interest: none

[\[back to top\]](#)

Evaluation: Support (7-0)

Introduction

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

- The approved Zoning By-law places the building at the back of the site away from the Yonge St. frontage. This is to provide a separation from the existing office building and residential apartment building located on the adjacent properties. What can be done to build a positive Yonge St. experience in light of the Zoning By-law and the existing context for a building set so far back from Yonge St.?
- The future service road will be located just west of the subject site. The site will not have direct frontage on the road but may be able to obtain future access through one of the abutting properties. What relationship should the building have to the future service road and how should the back end of the building be treated?

Harry Christakis, Architect, and Bob Parkin, Landscape Architect, described the design rationale and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Sustainable Design

- Develop and integrate a comprehensive sustainable design strategy for the site

Response to Context

- Consider impact of potential future context immediately north and south of site, within the design concept
- Consider joint development with site to south, and resulting higher potential for solutions
- Consider design concept's fit with potential larger context of green pocket zones along west side of Yonge Street

Site Plan Design

- Site specific development conditions result in a unique opportunity to create a high quality garden courtyard off Yonge Street.
- Develop the courtyard concept, including:
 - addressing public potential of space and resulting public/private transition
 - building upon precedents of high quality garden courtyard buildings/spaces
- Develop street edge to create strong street wall presence and reinforce Yonge Street
- Consider use of access from west, including:
 - potential of west entry to tower, with garden courtyard used for pedestrian entry from Yonge St and private use space
 - potential of service access to reduce vehicular use of courtyard

Pedestrian Realm

- Develop vehicular/service functions within the courtyard to increase quantity and quality of the pedestrian realm
- Create true courtyard concept – avoid the demarcation of vehicular and pedestrian areas

Building Form and Articulation

- Further develop the design concept, including:
- Providing clear massing/articulation of point tower
 - through development of detailing and materials
 - to develop high quality building integral with courtyard quality
- Rationalization/articulation of building form to reflect functions, including the tower entry
- Exploring tower siting/massing options
- Development of curved wall at grade as integral part of courtyard solution

Landscaping Strategy

- Develop high quality garden courtyard, including:
 - providing more space for landscaping
 - public art potential
 - massing/materiality/articulation of street wall
 - quality detailing
- Explore potential use of pergola to help form linear street wall edge

Comments to City Staff

The DRP sees the development conditions of this proposal as being uniquely site specific, and not a pattern to be repeated. At the same time there appears to be a “zoning puzzle” in this area that is creating awkward and unusual development solutions. It is the panel’s opinion that further guidance from the City is needed in order to maximize the quality of development within the block, and bring planning/urban design clarity to the surrounding neighbourhood. To this end please provide:

- Guidance to proponent regarding west access corridor and how best it could be used to meet the goals of the project
- A comprehensive, coordinated plan for the block in which the site rests
- 3D modeling of the proposed/anticipated future context for this area

Submission Package

- Provide tower siting and massing options

Related Commentary

Response to Context

Given the challenges of this site, which Panelists indicated range from its setting in a “sea of asphalt” to the in-force zoning and Official Plan policies, the Panel was generally supportive of the proposal and its response to the surrounding context. It was noted that there is a disconnect between the urban context that one would expect to exist in this location of the City, and its actual suburban reality. Contributing to this context is the surprising amount of open space, as opposed to built form, along the street edge. It was noted that while the garden court component of the proposal provides it with a visual connection to the street, the physical presence along the street edge requires strengthening.

Site Plan Design

In relation to the possibility of a rear access point to the site, one Panelist commented that they would not like to see any more transportation-related uses on site than are currently proposed. Another suggested that if it could be implemented, it would then become possible to convert the garden court at the front of the proposal into a place entirely for people. And while generally acknowledging that vehicle access to the rear (west) of the site could be beneficial in terms of circulation, it was the Panel’s overall opinion that there remained too much uncertainty about this issue to expect the Proponent to address it in the project design.

For the access and servicing components that are part of the proposal, the Panel made a number of suggestions as to how they could be improved. These included treating the driveway as a plaza rather than a place solely for vehicles, shifting the driveway closer (westwards) to the building in order to maximize the amount of open space, and reducing the turning radius for cars entering the underground parking lot, for similar reasons.

Additionally, it was suggested that the connection between the building canopy and the building itself could be further strengthened.

Pedestrian Realm

The Panel encouraged the Proponent to develop a strong street edge in order to enhance the Yonge Street quality of this proposal. Specific comments on how this could be achieved included increasing the material quality, relocating the exhaust grill located on the north-east corner of the street edge, and examining the possibility of relocating the pergola from the central driveway and incorporating it, or something of more dramatic design, into the street edge.

Built Form and Articulation

The Panel was appreciative of the proposal’s articulation, indicating that it was creative and interesting architecture. The Panel did, however, indicate that more information regarding the pre-cast building details was required, and that the window structure may not be strong enough. Some Panel members would also like to have seen the different massing options that were considered for the proposal.

Landscaping Strategy

The Panel indicated that the success of this proposal is dependant upon the quality of the garden court component. Subsequently, they were adamant that the Proponent should invest heavily in its design and material palette so that it becomes a stunning amenity rather than a bare space. Additional suggestions as to how the garden court could be improved included making the area more public, possibly through a public art installation, developing a more coherent interaction between the building and the court yard, and the use of screens and plantings as defining elements of the garden. The Proponent was encouraged to learn from successful garden court

examples in the City, such as the Garden Court Apartments at 1477 Bayview Avenue (Page and Steele, 1939).

Finally, the Panel emphasized that their support for the garden court concept within this proposal is an exception resulting from the constraints of this site; the concept is not something they would like to see emulated throughout the City.

Comments to Staff

In further response to the issue of possible site access to the rear (west) of this site, the Panel indicated that it was incumbent upon the City to provide more clarity on the issue if they want the Proponent to seriously investigate it. This should be provided in the form of a comprehensive plan for the whole block, not just on a site by site basis.

Additional Comments

The Panel noted that many of the site constraints, such as access and the prominence of servicing, would be removed if the Proponent was able to consolidate this site with the one located to its immediate south.

Project 4 – Etobicoke City Centre, Etobicoke York District

Kipling TTC Station, Mississauga Transit and GO Transit Bus Terminal	
Address	5337-5339 Dundas Street West & 0 Aukland Road
Use	Inter-regional Transit Terminal
Zoning	U - Utilities & I.C1 - Industrial Class 1
Application Status	Site Plan Application
Architect	Philip Kwan, URS Architects and Engineers
Owner	Hydro One Networks Inc. & City of Toronto
Applicant/Agent	GO Transit
Review	Second (first review held July 2007 – see page 4)
City Staff	Brian Gallagher, Community Planning; Emilia Floro, Urban Design

Conflict of Interest: none

[\[back to top\]](#)

Evaluation: Non-support

Introduction

City staff outlined major design issues identified during the first review of this project and sought the Panel's advice on the following:

- Given the competing priorities of this complex project, are there any design issues identified in the first review that have not been implemented, that you feel should have been?
- Can the Panel suggest any other ways to improve the pedestrian experience for those using the station?

Philip Kwan, Architect, presented the design rationale, outlining how the issues identified from the first review were studied, and summarized the response to these issues in the revised proposal.

Commentary

Upon hearing the Proponent's presentation of this project, the Panel Chair spoke on behalf of the Panel, and expressed broad concerns with it, ranging from the project's general design concept to some of more specific design details.

The Chair expressed concerns about the design priorities for this project which seem to emphasize traffic engineering operational requirements, rather than the broader civic nature of transit and the connection to its users. Indicating that this is an opportunity for the TTC to regain its role of delivering civic places, the Chair suggested that transit agencies have a larger obligation in the city-building process than providing functional turning radii.

It was the Panel's opinion that the technical-based design emphasis of this project has resulted in a proposal that provides minimal civic enhancement to the area. By doing this, the Chair indicated that the Proponent has missed a tremendous opportunity to build upon the existing foundation – Kipling Station – and deliver a prominent civic space to an area that is in clear need of enhancement.

Commenting on the design of the existing station, the Chair suggested that it is a beautiful building, and noted that the Station is a defining civic moment in the area. As such, it was the Panel's opinion that the prominent vaulted barrel design of Kipling Station should not be replicated in the other structures proposed for the site; doing so would diminish its prominence.

Relating his commentary on this project back to the Panel Mandate, which is to provide professional, objective advice to the Chief Planner on matters of design that affect the public realm, the Chair indicated that there would be no need to go through the scheduled meeting procedure for this project - the Panel's comments and corresponding vote on this project would remain the same as provided for the first review.

POST MEETING

After the public meeting adjourned, the Panel met in-camera to discuss several procedural matters as well as some of the outcomes from the session. The following motion in relation to this project review was passed during this in-camera session:

Motion:

On motion by Shirley Blumberg, the Design Review Panel requested the Panel Chair to meet with City Planning staff for the purpose of drafting a letter to the Chief Planner, copy to the Mayor, outlining the Panel's concerns about the proposed design direction of the Kipling Station project.