

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 25 – October 22, 2009

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday, October 22, 2009 in Committee Room 4, City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 12:00pm.

Members of the Design Review Panel

***Meeting
Regrets***

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

Paul Ferris: Landscape Architect, Principal - Ferris Associates

Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal - Giannone Associates

Peter Halsall: Engineer, President - Halsall Associates

Daniel Leeming: Planner, Partner – The Planning Partnership

David Pontarini: Architect, Principal - Hariri Pontarini

Janet Rosenberg: Landscape Architect, Principal - Janet Rosenberg Associates

Eric Turcotte: Planner, Architect, Senior Associate - Urban Strategies

Sol Wassermuhl: Architect, President - Page + Steele / IBI Group Architects ✓

Confirmation of Minutes

On motion by Eric Turcotte, the Design Review Panel confirmed the Minutes of their previous meeting, which was held on May 25, 2009.

Recording Secretary

Hamish Goodwin: Urban Design, City Planning Division

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[Project 1: "Axiom" Condo, 424 – 460 Adelaide Street East](#)

[Project 2: Westwood Precinct Urban Design Guidelines](#)

[Project 3: Kipling Station Mobility Hub](#)

[Project 4: Fort York Pedestrian and Cycling Bridge](#)

Axiom Residential Development	
Pilot Area	King-Parliament Neighbourhood
Application Status	Pre-application consultation (Rezoning Site Plan Application)
Architect	Cliff Korman Kirkor Architects & Planners
Developer	Greenpark Developments
Review	First
City Staff	Willie MacRae, Community Planning Myron Boyko, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	David Pontarini
Evaluation	Refine – 0 ; <u>Redesign - 7</u>



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Introduction

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

- Does the massing of the proposed towers provide an appropriate transition between the approved project to the west and the existing buildings to the east?
- How has the proposal responded to the physical character of the surrounding King-Parliament context, including the adjacent heritage building to the north and the original ten city blocks to the south?
- A key component of the project is a proposed landscaped courtyard area at the southeast corner of the property, at the northern terminus of the Ontario Street view corridor. Can the panel provide some recommendations regarding treatment and programming of this space, as well as the built form at the view terminus?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Does the massing of the proposed towers provide an appropriate transition between the approved project to the west and the existing buildings to the east?

- Reduce the height of the west tower to improve the neighbourhood-scale transitions

How has the proposal responded to the physical character of the surrounding King-Parliament context, including the adjacent heritage building to the north and the original ten city blocks to the south?

- Reconsider the podium to establish a simpler horizontal datum scaled to the historic neighbours

Can the panel provide some recommendations regarding treatment and programming of this space, as well as the built form at the view terminus?

- Reconsider the design of the east tower as a more deliberate termination of Ontario Street
- Reconsider the planning at grade to animate the corner of Ontario and Adelaide Streets

Building Form and Articulation

- Use a material palette which is more reflective of the King-Parliament context
- Reconsider the colonnade

Landscaping Strategy

- Increase the set backs along Adelaide to 'give more back' to the street/provide significant enhancement to the street edges

Comments for City Staff

- very good presentation, including the contextual video clip

Related Commentary

Q 1 Does the massing of the proposed towers provide an appropriate transition between the approved project to the west and the existing buildings to the east?

The majority of Panelists felt that the overall scheme was better when compared to what had been previously approved for the site, but also that the current east-west transition was inappropriate. It was noted that while the proposal adheres to the City's Tall Building Guidelines, it has a definite 'bulky' presence suggesting that more work was required in terms of developing the project massing. The 6-8 storey podium, which was described as being 'heavy', and the Ontario Street façade, which exhibits a base condition molding into a point tower, were used to illustrate this point.

One Panelist suggested that a better on-site transition of height in the easterly direction could be achieved by shifting some of the density from the eastern tower to the western one. It was noted that this would also have the effect of reducing the sense of enclosure between the two towers.

Q 2 How has the proposal responded to the physical character of the surrounding King-Parliament context, including the adjacent heritage building to the north and the original ten city blocks to the south?

The Panel was most critical of the proposal when addressing issues within this question, regularly relating their analysis back to the urban structure and built form principles within the King-Parliament Secondary Plan. Many comments were provided about how the proposal was lacking in terms of forming a relationship with the historic warehouse context, and with the site itself. In

this regard, it was suggested that the provision of massing is not appropriately balanced by the provision of public realm contributions, particularly along the street edges.

Improvement, it was suggested, was required through the creation of a more responsive base condition, sensitive podium scale, and through the use of a more historically sensitive material palette. The proponent was encouraged to develop expression cues (e.g. datum lines) from the historic context rather than the newer neighbouring buildings in order to advance this aspect of the proposal. In this regard, it was noted that the proposed arcade along Ontario and Adelaide Streets is not a pre-existing expression within the King-Parliament, and furthermore, that its inclusion within the proposal may have a negative impact upon street animation.

Q 3 A key component of the project is a proposed landscaped courtyard area at the southeast corner of the property, at the northern terminus of the Ontario Street view corridor. Can the panel provide some recommendations regarding treatment and programming of this space, as well as the built form at the view terminus?

As a contributing element to the public realm, the courtyard portion of this proposal was very well received by the Panel. One Panelist described the size of this space as “enormous”, and applauded the proponent for its inclusion within the scheme. However, the overwhelming sentiment of the Panel was that much more work was required in the design of this space, and of the building which frames it (the ‘terminus’), in order for it to become a truly successful addition to the public realm. It was suggested that its current design was not well defined or bounded. Concern was expressed that the importance of the space could be lost because of this, and also because of lack of animation. In response, the proponent was encouraged to revise the design of the courtyard generally to provide a better link between the public and private realm. Specifically, it was suggested that this could be done both through landscaping and built form treatments:

Landscaping

The proponent was encouraged to develop the courtyard in a more urbane manner, including through the provision of benches and street trees. The Panel was also strongly in favour of the inclusion of a public art installation or water fountain within the courtyard to help keep it highly animated.

Built Form

In addition to the above, the Panel was equally in favour of using the built form to frame and highlight the courtyard and view terminus. It was suggested that the opportunity to frame a view terminus is a rare opportunity within a City of grids, and the proponent was compelled to develop a more refined response to reflect this.

Sustainable Design

The Panel was very appreciative of the proponent seeking LEED certification for the proposal, but encouraged them to develop a sustainability strategy which would address the goals of the project (e.g. is it aiming for high “benchmark” levels of energy efficiency or the minimum code requirement). Additionally, the Panel noted that the provision of less bicycle parking than is required by by-law seems to be counter-intuitive to this certification, and that the south façade of the proposal would benefit from shading, for reasons related to energy efficiency.

Site Plan Design

The Panel commented that the detailed design and treatment of the drop-off area will be very important given the number of people that this area services. Additionally, the Panel emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility within the ground floor layout so as not to preclude retail uses within those spaces designed for live/work use (additional comments on this are included below).

Building Form and Articulation

Some Panelists felt that the 'fluidity' theme of the proposal (also described as 'yin and yang', 'serpentine' and 'inter-locking') was interesting, but suggested that this effect was largely lost in the renderings due to insufficient contrast and other features, such as wrap-around balconies, which provide it with a sense of additional mass. Other Panelists felt that the theme was confusing and 'busy', and would benefit from deference to a stronger, simpler design. The architectural style of 275 King Street East was identified as a successful example in this regard.

The Panel felt the inclusion of live/work units within the scheme was interesting, but found it difficult to imagine them being used successfully for this purpose. Because of this, many Panelists felt that these spaces should instead be developed in a manner which primarily supports successful retail uses, such as the provision of tall ceiling heights.

Commenting on the broader ground floor plan, the Proponent was encouraged to further develop the relationship between individual spaces. As an example of this, it was suggested that a smaller vestibule space would help create a more successful environment for the potential retail uses in that area.

Landscaping Strategy

Members of the Panel held the strong opinion that the proposal should provide a significant enhancement to street edges and public realm. In this regard, it was suggested that the landscaping strategy and architectural design should receive equal attention. As presented, the Panel felt that the landscaping scheme did not relate to the site context and that this could have the effect of isolating the building.

Submission Package

The Proponent was strongly commended for the submission materials provided, with Panelists indicating these materials were both thorough and very helpful. In future reviews of this project, the Panel requested the inclusion of a context plan, and streetscape elevations set within the existing context. It was also suggested that a massing model would have been helpful for this review.

Westwood Precinct Urban Design Guidelines	
Pilot Area	Etobicoke City Centre
Author	Urban Strategies Inc.
City Staff	Brian Gallagher, Community Planning Edna Cuvin, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	Eric Turcotte
Evaluation	<u>Refine – 5</u> Redesign - 2



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Introduction

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

- Will the Urban Design Guidelines result in appropriate building location, massing and organization on the Courthouse site and elsewhere in the Westwood Precinct?
- Do the Guidelines promote the goal of a pedestrian-oriented environment in the Westwood Precinct?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Will the Urban Design Guidelines result in appropriate building location, massing and organization on the Courthouse site and elsewhere in the Westwood Precinct?

- Reconsider the location of the courthouse and the square to improve the positive formation of open space and streets at the intersection of Bloor and Dundas Streets

Do the Guidelines promote the goal of a pedestrian-oriented environment in the Westwood Precinct?

- Bloor and Dundas Streets are well landscaped and have exciting potential
- Consider establishing 3m minimum sidewalk widths, in addition to planting zones, and stronger definition of pedestrian realm
- give priority to high quality detailing and materiality when implementing the public realm strategy

Sustainable Design

- Consider that good sustainable design results in good urban design

- Consider aiming higher with ambitions for sustainability, moving this ideal beyond the built form

Response to Context

- Reconsider the resolution of the topography, access to Kipling Subway station and the hierarchy of streets at the Dundas Kipling intersection to give greater importance to transit access

Landscape Strategy

- Landscape identity needs research so that planting has a character specific to the context

Comments for City Staff

Master plans represent a major opportunity to get things right, to truly test the relationship between sustainability and planning, and to test and implement the highest quality streetscape standards for pedestrians and bicyclists and their interaction with cars. The City should consider bringing these plans to the Panel earlier in order to fully develop these important qualities.

Related Commentary

Noting that a significant portion of the revitalization lands are currently dominated by a vast system of roads and ramps, the Panel described this project as being highly important in terms of City building. In this regard they were appreciative of the opportunity to comment on this project, but also suggested that it would have benefited more from earlier involvement in the review process. Specific comments about the project are summarized as follows:

Q 1 Will the Urban Design Guidelines result in appropriate building location, massing and organization on the Courthouse site and elsewhere in the Westwood Precinct

The Panel was of the opinion that the siting and organization of buildings and surrounding streets should primarily be influenced by local environmental conditions such as topography and solar access, and that the determination of streets, blocks and urban design issues should follow from this. The Panel felt somewhat compromised in addressing the question in the absence of this information, indicating that it wasn't possible for them to comment on such issues as how grade changes and storm water runoff would be managed, or how broader social and environmental issues would be affected by its implementation (e.g. climate change). Nevertheless, the following comments were provided:

Height and Density

Several Panelists commented that the proposal did not seem to contain as much density as would be expected in an area with close proximity to public transit. This comment was also made in consideration of the high degree of open space which is contained within the plan, suggesting that some of these spaces may be residual. It was noted that the residential towers located in the centre of the scheme seem to be of similar height, and suggested that a "signature" tower with additional height might be appropriate there.

Street Hierarchy

The Panel suggested that the guidelines were unclear about the hierarchy of proposed streets and the related public spaces. It was suggested that Bloor Street would likely have the highest order, and that all other streets – and the subsequent response to the layout of built form and civic spaces - would then follow from this. Along the same lines of this reasoning, the Panel questioned the suitability of locating publicly accessible open space (Court House Square) at the prominent intersection of Dundas Street West and Bloor Street West.

Court House

Further to the above, the Panel felt the street hierarchy should be supported by the appropriate siting of buildings and open spaces. In this way, it was suggested that one of the most prominent buildings in the area – the court house – should be located at the intersection of the most prominent streets in the area - Bloor Street West and Dundas Street West.

Q 2 Do the Guidelines promote the goal of a pedestrian-oriented environment in the Westwood Precinct?

The Panel felt that more work could be done to achieve this goal, both in relation to developing the public realm strategy and in its implementation during detailed design. Being a City initiative, the Panel suggested this was an opportunity to implement public realm standards of the highest quality, including detailing, the use of high quality of materials, and a minimum sidewalk width of 3-metres.

In regard to the strategy, it was suggested that more deliberate relationships between public spaces, the transit hub, and the pedestrian routes between these places was required. It was suggested that this relationship could be further strengthened through the implementation of a retail strategy, and through consideration of anticipated levels of pedestrian activity both during the day time and the evening periods.

Sustainable Design

The Panel advised that the plan should provide a stronger emphasis on sustainability, extending beyond certifications for the built environment into broader social and environmental considerations.

Site Plan Design

It was suggested that the plan should include the provision of lay-by parking along the prominent streets in order to help with the success of retail uses to be located there.


Landscaping Strategy

The Panel expressed concerns with Courthouse Square as follows:

- the space provides an inappropriate frame to the 7-lane /42-metre right-of-way
- its north-west orientation is not ideal for open space
- its location could detract from a the creation of vibrant pedestrian environment
- its inclusion for the provision of a view corridor to the court house did not justify its presence and instead, could prove detrimental to the overall scheme

It was suggested that a suitable alternative would be the integration of built form at this intersection (ideally with the court house, but also possibly the redeveloped police station) with the 15-metre safety buffer zone. On this latter point, the proponent was encouraged to examine the possibility of holding a competition to inform the design of this zone, so that it emerges as a truly exciting space for pedestrians.

Kipling Station Mobility Hub	
Pilot Area	Etobicoke City Centre
Application Status	Site Plan Application
Architect	
Proponent	Metrolinx / GO Transit
Review	Third (1 st review July 2007 ; 2 nd Review – January 2008))
City Staff	Brian Gallagher Edna Cuvin
Conflict of Interest:	Peter Halsall Dan Leeming
Evaluation	<u>Support – 7</u> Non-support - 0



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Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, history and area policy priorities. The applicant team described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

The Panel appreciates the improvement in the design direction since last submission. The potential for a heightened public amenity is now visible. More development is encouraged to better characterize the quality of the materials and spaces.

Site Planning

- Consider giving greater emphasis to the east access, at the bridge underpass

Landscape Strategy

- Provide more detail on hard surfaces, edges and planting: the success of the design is heavily dependent on the selection of high quality materials and planting
- More detail is required to evaluate the scheme, especially in the selection of trees within the hydro corridor

Submission Package

- Coordinate the design intent shown in the 3D imagery with the 2D drawings, as there are numerous discrepancies
- The lack of coordination between the two made it difficult to comment on the architecture
- The Panel would appreciate the opportunity to review the detailed architectural design once it has been developed

Related Commentary

The Panel expressed appreciation in having the opportunity to review and comment on this project, which they viewed as being an incredibly important piece of infrastructure. With this importance, the Panel also expressed appreciation for the involvement of Metrolinx and applauded the agency for their approach to the project. This approach was described as presenting dramatic design solutions to an impossible situation. The Panel indicated that the proponent's increased financial investment in this project will have a significant pay-off in the long term, and provided additional comments as follows:

Building Form and Articulation

The Panel indicated that a discrepancy between the renderings and the drawings made it difficult to fully understand the proposal, and subsequently, to comment on the architectural components. In response to concerns about this expressed by Panel members, the proponent reaffirmed that the direction for the scheme derives from the renderings.

Pedestrian Realm

The Panel was appreciative of the way in which the proposal provided primacy to pedestrians and cyclists, and suggested that this approach will help make Dundas Street West into a more important street. It was noted that the plan suitably accommodates pedestrian movement in the north-south direction, but that additional attention was required in the east-west direction. Further to this, the proponent and the City were encouraged to explore the possibility of providing a pedestrian link (secured through an easement) in this in this direction from Viking Lane to Auckland Road.

Landscaping Strategy

Given that the scheme is a landscape-based design, the Panel stressed the importance of developing it in a manner which is sensitive to this intent both in terms of quality and character. Particular concern was expressed about the quality of planting materials to be located within the Hydro corridor, and it was suggested that in the absence of due sensitivity, the pedestrian experience in this area would be akin to walking through a Hydro tract. In order to prevent this, it was suggested that the scheme required more than just 'fuzz' (e.g. shrubs) in these areas, and the proponent was encouraged to persuade Toronto Hydro to at least permit the planting of small native trees there. Additional suggestions to improve the scheme included:

- the provision of public art, to provide a sensitive balance to the 'restricted' areas of the scheme; and
- develop tree planting along street edges in a manner which provides a frame to the urban pedestrian experience.

In terms of character and landscape identity, the Panel suggested the scheme needs to give appropriate consideration to the colour and material palette befitting an urban pedestrian environment.

Pedestrian & Cycling Bridge	
Pilot Area	Fort York Neighbourhood
Application Status	Municipal Class EA Preferred concept
Architect/ Designer	Montgomery Sisam Architects Stantec Consulting Ltd.
Review	Second 1 st review – May 2009
City Staff	Stephen McKenna Waterfront Secretariat
Conflict of Interest	none
Evaluation	<u>Support</u> – 6; Non-support - 0



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Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, history and area policy priorities. The applicant team described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Response to Context

- Consider flipping the south arch to the west so the view of Fort York is not obstructed by structural elements

Site Planning

- Consider alternate approaches to the south landing at Fort York, to better address main flows of pedestrian movement
- Develop a lighter landing strategy which extends the character of the bridge to the south side while diminishing impact on the heritage site
- Consider broadening the stair at Stanley Park to match the width of the bridge landing deck
- Consider moving the north edge of the south landing closer to the railway corridor to minimize safety issues

Landscape Strategy

- Consider integrating the bridge landing point strategies into a comprehensive landscape strategy

Related Commentary

The Panel was appreciative of the way in which this project is developing, indicating that it is elegant, well resolved on many levels, that it will enrich and transform the neighbourhood and be

a positive contributor to the identity of the City. The Panel was encouraged that the design is flexible to accommodate a future connection to the ordinance triangle lands and the Liberty Village neighbourhood beyond there. The Panel was less supportive of the way in which the tied arch inclination was reversed to face the inner part of the serpentine curve, but indicated this was a minor concern within the overall picture. Areas of concern which do require further attention and resolution in the detailed design stage were identified as follows:

Bridge Landing Points (general)

The Panel indicated the scheme would be improved if the length of the two landing ramps could be reduced. In making this assertion, the Panel was aware that this reduction is a function of the Strachan railway corridor clearance heights, which are still to be confirmed.

Northern Landing

The Panel was appreciative of the way in which this inclined serpentine feature was developing, but suggested it needs to be integrated into a comprehensive landscaping vision for the parkette. In doing this, the proponent was encouraged to ensure that the stairway and the pathway are afforded equal attention (e.g. scale), so that one does not detract from the other in terms of their hierarchy.

Southern Landing

Drawing attention to the length of this feature, it was noted that the southern landing structure is somewhat like a bridge itself, or a 'bridge within a bridge'. It was suggested that this presents an interesting opportunity to develop an additional experience for bridge users, different to that of the 'main' bridge.

It was noted that the southern landing point occurs on delicate territory and suggested therefore, that the landing itself should be delicate. Additionally, it was suggested that the landing should be designed in a way which does not distract attention from the Fort. For this reason, and because of the proximity of the interpretation centre, the proponent was encouraged to reconsider the use of heritage interpretation panels in this location.

Safety

For reasons of safety, it was suggested that careful attention be given to the design of the area between the landing points and the railway corridor. At the southern point, it was suggested that the size of this potentially unsafe area could be reduced by abutting the ramp as close to the railway corridor as possible. Doing this would have the added benefit of continuing the serpentine curve into this portion of the design, which, it was noted, is currently less fluid and more linear in shape.