

Attachment 6: Chief Planner Roundtable Summary

Chief Planner Roundtable
Mid-Rise Building
April 24th, 2015
9:30AM – 12:30PM
Committee Room 1, City Hall

Panel Moderator: Jennifer Keesmaat (Executive Director & Planner, City Planning, City of Toronto)

Panel Members: Harold Madi (Director, Urban Design, City of Toronto), Lorna Day (Manager, Urban Design, City of Toronto), Joe Lobko (Partner, DTAH), Roland Rom Colthoff (Director, RAW Architects), Ann Borooah (Executive Director & Chief Building Official, Toronto Building, City of Toronto), Jasmine Cracknell-Young (Partner, N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited), Jack Winberg (President & CEO, The Rockport Group)

Participant	Discussion Item
<p>Jennifer Keesmaat (Executive Director & Planner, City Planning, City of Toronto)</p>	<p>Mid-rise building is about creating a livable city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "No single topic has greater impact on the life and attractiveness of the City space than active open and lively edges when rhythms of city buildings produce short units many doors and are carefully designed details and ground level they support life in cities and near buildings. When edge work they enforce city life. Activities can supplement each other the wealth of experiences increase, walking becomes safer and distances shorter." -<i>Cities for People</i> by Jan Gehl (2010)
<p>Harold Madi (Director, Urban Design, City of Toronto)</p>	<p>The mid-rise in the Toronto context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the pre-war Toronto was mid-rise in character, but despite this the city does not have a strong mid-rise tradition. • Toronto does a lot of high-rise building, and relatively well – creating a city of contrast in building types with low-rise neighbourhoods on one hand, and high-rise that are increasingly getting taller on the other hand <p>The policy context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avenues in the Urban Structure Map of the Official Plan are recognized as areas that are able to accommodate and support future growth. • From 2002-2008 there have been 19 Avenue Studies conducted, with the mid-rise typology being the preferred development in all of them. • To speed-up the process, the Avenues & Mid-Rise Building Study was initiated in 2008 to provide a proactive, city-wide strategy, of which Section 3 was approved by Council in 2010. <p>The (main) Performance Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-rise buildings are to be no taller the width of the primary street they address to a max of 11-storeys for a residential building, 9-storeys for a commercial. • A 45 degree angular plane at 80% of the width of the adjacent right-of-way is required to allow for a minimum of 5 hours of sunlight on the street. • 7.5m rear yard setback with a 45 degree angular plane taken from the rear of the property or laneway (or at 10.5m above the setback point for

	'shallow' properties) is required.
<p>Lorna Day (Manager, Urban Design, City of Toronto)</p>	<p>Mid-rise building statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 217 total applications from July 2010-Dec 2014 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - +/- 6% are Built, - +/- 40% are Approved but not yet built - +/- 43% are in the 'pipeline' (approval pending) - +/- 11% may not be relevant - We are gathering data from built and approved which will total approximately 100. <p>40 approved applications are reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier to achieve the 1:1 Maximum Allowable Height on the wider Right-of-Ways (27m, 30m, 36m) • Generally developments are using 'Shallow Lot' Performance Standard on Most Approvals • Many are not even meeting the 'Shallow Lot' Performance Standard (+/- 50%) • Corner lots are more attractive for developers • Difficulty achieving appropriate sidewalk zone • 100% of approvals reporting in Retail Priority area have retail as the at-grade use • It is generally achievable to place the mechanical penthouse within the angular plane (difficulties occur on narrow ROWs) • Generally access is off Avenue or side streets <p>Internal Consultations have concluded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Standards were generally helpful to staff • Deep and irregular lots not anticipated by the Standards • Lack of clarity about 'order of magnitude' • Confusion regarding applications on non-Avenues? • Thresholds and compatibility with Tall and Low-rise Guidelines • Sidewalk zones not wide enough <p>External Stakeholder Consultations have concluded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for clarity about 'Character Areas' and how to make local exceptions (one size does not fit all) • There is a lack of clarity on some Performance Standards such as 'Pedestrian Perception Step-Backs'

<p>Joe Lobko (Partner, DTAH)</p>	<p>In 2005, a Mid-rise symposium was conducted by City Planning, Canadian Urban Institute and the Toronto Society of Architects to explore explore opportunities for encouraging more mid-rise buildings along the Avenues.</p> <p>Summary of findings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and city-wide issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No market for mid-rise - Property assembly is very difficult given small lot sizes - Unreasonable City Standards - Parking, Garbage, Water - Poor transit - Unrealistic Retail Policy - NIMBYism • Building code issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concrete Structure = high construction costs - Need for common spaces (un-leasable) - Convertible ground floor space = expensive - Small sites = difficult site plan (inefficient footprints) - Underground Parking (extremely expensive) - Required second means of egress results in inefficiency - Elevators are an expensive component of smaller buildings - Loading and Garbage Requirements • Market and economic issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finicky Market (competition from tall buildings) - Ground Floor Uses (pros and cons) - Transit (pros and cons) - Location is key for empty nesters / seniors market - Affordable Housing = NIMBY - Onerous City Review Process (time = \$) - Ground Floor Property Tax - Risk – both market and approvals – OMB costs the same whether for mid-rise or denser tall buildings • Suggestions from symposium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not permit tall buildings near possible mid-rise areas - Establish Development Permit System – as of right zoning - Develop financial incentives, taxes, reduced fees, charges - Reduce parking requirements - Do not ‘shrink wrap’ zoning envelopes - Coordinate city department approvals as a priority - Allow live/work in lieu of retail ground floor requirements - Re-think onerous garbage and loading requirements
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<p>Roland Rom Colthoff (Director, RAW Architects)</p>	<p>Challenges for mid-rise development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 Degree angular plane <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rear Angular Plane is pushing elevators and stairs closer to the front – limiting depth of retail units - The 45 degree angular plane should be treated as a guidelines with some flexibility rather than a strict rule - Angular planes have created a variety of residential units in each building (pros and cons) - St. Clair Ave by-law allows for 60 degree front angular plane and 30m max height, perhaps this guideline better utilizes transportation infrastructure? • At-grade use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Much of the ground floor is dedicated to parking, transformers, gas metres, electrical meters, water service, etc - Does not leave a lot of space for retail on ground floor • Where the Performance Standards apply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avenues do not cover a lot of the city where the Performance Standards should apply - Maybe we should have slightly different standards for non-Avenue buildings • There is a need for guidelines for in-between tall and mid-rise building
<p>Ann Borooh (Executive Director & Chief Building Official, Toronto Building, City of Toronto)</p>	<p>Mid-rise wood frame construction for 6 storey development is effective as of January 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permitted occupancies: Residential and office, assembly, retail and parking (permitted only below 3rd storey) • Building area limits for residential decrease with the height of the building • Benefits of wood-frame construction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design Flexibility - Sustainable Building Materials - Construction Cost/Time Savings/Affordability - Urban Intensification/Main-Street Development • Fire protection and safety requirements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire sprinklers - Non combustible exits (1.5 hr) - Fire rated floors and mezzanines (1 hr) - Residential separation from other occupancies by fire rated construction (2hr) - Non combustible cladding when over 4 storeys in height - Limits on combustible piping - Fire blocking required - Concealed space limits - Rating for roof covering - Balconies sprinklered if more than 610 mm in depth - Emergency Power – lighting and fire alarm (1 hr) • Fire Department access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimum 10% of building perimeter must be within 15 m of a

	<p>street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire fighter access – maximum 20 m from route to uppermost storey
<p>Jasmine Cracknell-Young (Partner, N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited)</p>	<p>Market context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2010 high-rise sales have surpassed low-rise sales • Since 2013, 30,000 of units brought to market by high-rises, compared to 4,000 by mid-rises <p>Market challenges for mid-rise developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-Rise competitive advantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Views - Iconic Buildings - Amenities / Maintenance Fees - Sales Absorptions / Investors (high-rises sell 20 units/month, mid-rises sell 4 units/month) - Marketing costs (similar marketing costs as high-rise, but spread out over fewer units) • Stacked Townhouse competitive advantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower maintenance fees - “ground-oriented” housing • Not all areas along the Avenues have the market demand or the revenue potential to support mid-rise apartment product <p>Market opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to appeal to broad market range - young people looking to buy their first home, as well as older people scaling down • 6-Storey Wood-Frame • Along Transit Corridors: new, existing and planned • Gentrifying or about to gentrify neighbourhoods • Fringe areas where land assembly may be easier

<p>Jack Winberg (President & CEO, The Rockport Group)</p>	<p>An important segment of the market wants a more approachable residential product than the high rise offerings at or near high intensity transit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our purchasers include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First time home buyers - Downsizers - Families <p>Challenges to mid-rise development feasibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Standards are too strict, should be more flexible and site specific • Large development sites are difficult to find, developers must assemble 5-6 properties for suitably sized mid-rise • Sites are not deep enough, need to buy adjacent properties in rear to allow for creative and flexible design • Costs for mid-rise and high-rise are similar, but mid-rise takes a lot longer to sell • Need 100-120 units per building to justify economies <p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates different suite types/sizes due to elevator locations and step-backs • Creates impacts on costs (building going straight-up with no step-backs is cheaper to build) • Sometimes the FSI in as-of-right zoning was not attainable due to Performance Standards • Need more certainty, perhaps pre-zoning land is an answer? <p>City should encourage mid-rise by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permitting adjacent properties to the rear to be part of the mid-rise development • Reducing indoor and outdoor amenity space requirements • Reducing parking standards when on transit lines/hubs • Special consideration for S. 37 calculations • Increasing rental replacement threshold • Need to find middle ground between flexibility and predictability when it comes to mid-rise developments
<p>Break</p>	
<p>Jennifer Keesmaat (Executive Director & Planner, City Planning, City of Toronto)</p>	<p>There is a tension between how we create an environment in which we have more predictability, but also allow for some flexibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and predictability however are not compatible • The place that we're at today is somewhere in-between because portions of the Mid-Rise Performance Standards are negotiated. • Negotiating Performance Standards leads to flexibility • How can these two competing objectives be resolved?

<p>Jack Winberg (President & CEO, The Rockport Group)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to find middle ground between flexibility and predictability when it comes to mid-rise developments • Perhaps when there are small variances that breach the rules but not the intent (ie balcony railings) they should be allowed
<p>Roland Rom Colthoff (Director, RAW Architects)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the guidelines as a mean and have a grey zone on either side that have a limited amount of projections, particularly with elevators and stairs
<p>Joe Lobko (Partner, DTAH)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability of achieving Performance Standards depends on the context of the site - i.e. if 5hrs of sunlight is achieved on a site we should then allow more flexibility with the height and step-backs of the building
<p>Lorna Day (Manager, Urban Design, City of Toronto)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some things are more difficult to measure than others – i.e. hard to quantify a 10% loss in sky view or privacy • There may however be some Performance Standards that are weighted in a different way, allowing for some flexibility • We don't need flexibility in the Performance Standards to achieve growth objectives – who would benefit from flexibility?
<p>Harold Madi (Director, Urban Design, City of Toronto)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to clarify what is negotiable within the Performance Standards and what is not. • Economics might not make sense now, but one day they will, and we need to be mindful and patient that we're mid-rises might take a long time to build out
<p>Jasmine Cracknell-Young (Partner, N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-6% savings in construction costs from 6 storey wood frame • In some neighbourhoods, retail is successful and owners don't want to sell – making land assembly difficult • There is a lack of available corner lots

Meeting Notes

Prepared by: Mladen Kucic