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# CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES: MEETING 4 – April 17, 2018

The Design Review Panel met on Tuesday April 17, 2018, in Committee Room 2, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 2:00pm.

## Members of the Design Review Panel

Members Present

- Gordon Stratford (Chair):** Architect, Senior Vice President, Design Director – HOK
- Michael Leckman (Vice Chair):** Architect, Principal – Diamond Schmitt Architects ✓ †
- Carl Blanchaer:** Architect, Principal – WZMH Architects ✓
- Dima Cook:** Heritage Specialist, Architect, Senior Associate –EVOQ Architecture ✓
- George Dark:** Landscape Architect, Urban Designer, Principal – Urban Strategies
- Ralph Giannone:** Architect, Principal – Giannone Associates ✓
- Meg Graham :** Architect, Principal – superkül
- Brian Hollingworth:** Transportation Engineer, Director – IBI Group
- Jessica Hutcheon:** Landscape Architect, Principal – Janet Rosenberg & Studio ✓
- Viktors Jaunkalns:** Architect, Principal – MacLennan Jaunkalns Miller Architects
- Joe Lobko:** Architect, Urban Designer, Principal – DTAH ✓
- Jenny McMinn:** Sustainability Specialist, Managing Director – Urban Equation
- Jim Melvin:** Landscape Architect, Principal – PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.
- Adam Nicklin:** Landscape Architect, Principal – PUBLIC WORK
- Heather Rolleston:** Architect, Design Director – Quadrangle Architects ✓ \*
- David Sisam:** Architect, Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects
- Sibylle von Knobloch:** Landscape Architect, Principle – NAK Design Group

*\*in conflict for second item*

*†chair of meeting*

## Design Review Panel Coordinator

Meredith Vaga: Urban Design, City Planning Division

## CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meeting which was held on March 23, 2018 by email.

## MEETING 4 INDEX

- i. High Park Apartment Neighbourhood Area Character Study (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)
- ii. 721 Eastern Avenue (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)



# HIGH PARK APARTMENT NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA CHARACTER STUDY

## DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

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DESIGN REVIEW Second Review

APPLICATION City Study

*PRESENTATIONS:*

CITY STAFF Elisabeth Silva Stewart,  
Community Planning; Allison  
Reid, Urban Design



VOTE No Vote

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## Introduction

City staff outlined the project history, existing and future context, and planning framework. Staff are seeking the Panel's advice on the following key issues:

The purpose of this review is to present the findings of the character analysis to the Panel and receive comments on the draft guiding principles and draft infill development criteria which will inform the basis of the Site and Area-Specific Policy and supporting Area-Specific Urban Design Guidelines. The Panel is also requested to advise about which metrics they consider most important to the area character and should be contained within policy.

## Panel Comments

The Panel thanked the study team for a very detailed, well put together package and presentation. The Panel commended the study team on the level of detail in their analysis of the neighbourhood, with one member calling the study "incredibly inventive" and another member complimenting the team's commitment and thoughtfulness in working to understand the place when developing the document.

Several Panel members were pleased to see that many of the comments at the previous review had been taken into consideration by the study team, particularly those around the unique identity of the Tower in the Park typology.

The Panel thought there had been a lot of great work done by the study team. Some members noted that this document could be used to inform what could be occurring in many places throughout the city regarding the Tower in the Park typology as well as general tower renewal and growth projects.

Many members felt it was a very meaningful study into the history of Toronto, and suggested it could become a "crucial" preliminary work into characterizing and understanding a place in the city.

## Draft Guiding Principles

### Application of Guiding Principles

A member noted that the strength of the draft guiding principles was that they were all supportive and worked together. However, some members felt that there too many guidelines, with a member commenting that "half of [the guidelines] already exist for the City" and another member finding the amount of analysis "directionless". Several members questioned the ultimate goal of these guidelines and what was intended for extrapolation to other sites undergoing similar analyses.

Many members felt that the study was still missing some basic analysis. One member pointed out that even if the information was there it belied an issue with how the information was being gathered and communicated. This member thought that the graphic standards and communication needed to be standardized and improved across the City.

#### Natural Features & Environment Guiding Principles

Some members thought that the enforcement of the existing landscape and pattern between the existing buildings laid out in the draft principles was appropriate. One member felt the most interesting criteria developed under the guiding principles were those around open space and required setbacks to secure unencumbered land for trees.

#### Built Form Guiding Principles

Many Panel members were encouraged that the principles were supporting "sensitive infill" as well as proportionally higher open space than built space. One member observed that porosity was fundamental to the success of the neighbourhood.

Another member questioned how the sites identified for intensification would be developed given the guidelines. This member was concerned that the development could become detrimental to the "pedagogical ideal". Other members felt that the guiding principles were still missing an overarching vision or clear direction regarding ways in which infill could successfully happen.

### **Heritage Conservation**

#### Conduct Heritage Review

The Panel advised the study team that there needed to be an in-depth heritage review of the site that specifically looked at the built form in relation to the landscape. One member thought the study should look into the cultural significance of each building typology in addition to inventorying the existing buildings.

Another member suggested that the study should "start with conservation" when looking to manage any future development or change. One member cautioned that care needed to be taken when allowing any of the existing buildings to be removed as the neighbourhood makes up a "massive asset" for the City.

#### Distinct Neighbourhood Character

Commenting on the distinct character of the area, many members thought the neighbourhood could be a good candidate for heritage designation to ensure the character was maintained. Other members thought that the neighbourhood could be protected through the implementation of specific policies. Some members elaborated that while the area is a unique place, it is also an integral piece of Toronto's character.

Several Panel members thought that any new architecture should have a "forward looking" composition that builds on the neighbourhood character, but is "different" from the existing built form.

### Tower in the Park Typology

One member struggled with the legacy of the Tower in the Park typology, noting that while the history of the form's development reflected an ideal in its time, in its implementation the ideal was never fully realized and the resulting area today is not perfect. A few members felt there therefore needed to be a balance between preserving the heritage form and improving the area, such as through the development of more explicit landscape elements.

Looking at the built form, another member pointed out that the existing buildings have a very distinct "solid to void dynamic" and massing that needed to further examination in how it affected such things as tower articulation and separation distances when compared to more contemporary "glass towers".

### **Built Form Typology**

#### Existing Slab Form

Several Panel members were pleased to see that the study team had "embraced the slab" form. A few members thought the study team should conduct a broader international examination of similar slab typologies, including precedents such as Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation in France. Another member suggested looking at the Tower Hill development at Spadina Ave and St Clair Ave.

Regarding the draft infill development criteria shown on pg. 48 of the drawing package, one member wondered why new slab buildings could not be taller than 11-storeys. This member noted that the criteria should be developed based on the built context with separations and facing distances functioning as the limiting factors rather than building height or length. Another member agreed that with a slab typology it was more important to have a "visual space" between the buildings.

#### Neighbourhood Composition

Many Panel members reiterated that the study area was a composed landscape and neighbourhood of buildings in open space. One member felt that the area was about "pure form" and relationships between the landscape and the buildings. A different member advised the study team to take advantage of the distances and setbacks between buildings.

Several members noted that the neighbourhood comprises "very important" rental stock for the City. These members pointed out that the document was missing information regarding these landowners. One member wondered if the plans could be developed on a site by site basis to incorporate these community considerations. This member noted that having this information would explicitly demonstrate that the study recommendations were an appropriate response.

Another member cautioned that the present quality of the existing building stock was unknown and could require "massive investment".

#### Separation Distances

Several members felt that the "bubble diagram" was one of the most important diagrams in the briefing package. However, many members cautioned that the proposed criteria for future development needed to be tested in another bubble drawing to ensure that there were still buildable areas in the neighbourhood.

Some members suggested developing another bubble diagram to look at the separation and offset distances in the existing slab buildings. A member noted that an in-depth understanding of the existing slab typology would help with "tuning" the required distances on the different facades.

### Infill Development & Introduction of a New Typology

The Panel thought there were still unaddressed questions around infill development. To encourage sensitive infill the Panel advised the creation of a specific set of rules governing any future development. Several members wondered whether the implementation of more slab buildings was advisable. These members suggested that there was an opportunity to create a different residential urban environment from what is occurring elsewhere in the city.

The Panel felt that by responding to the existing built form and heritage, a new building typology could be specifically "tuned" to the High Park Apartment neighbourhood. Many members did not think point towers with podiums were an appropriate design response for the neighbourhood. These members encouraged the study team to embrace the uniqueness of the area. Wondering if the podiums had been introduced to mitigate wind effects, one member pointed out that there were other primary forms that could address those issues.

### **Landscape & Open Space**

#### Develop Midblock Connections

The Panel strongly encouraged the development of midblock connections as the existing blocks were very "long". Several members felt that increased linkages and a clear open space strategy would be critical to the success of the study.

The Panel thought it was important that people were able to "infiltrate" the neighbourhood's "expansive amount of open space". One member pointed out that increased pedestrian connections would support the "Tower in the Park" typological condition.

#### Trees & Vegetation

Many members questioned whether there was a strategy to better protect the existing street trees. A member noted that ensuring appropriate soil volume for the trees was very important.

One member thought there should be more site specific conditions for "special character" trees such as trees along the central High Park Ave. Another member noted that while the realization of the original "Tower in the Park" ideal had been hampered by the parking garage network below grade, the neighbourhood's existing tree canopy was "one of the most successful in the city".

#### Landscape Strategy for "Tower in the Park"

Many members were concerned that ultimately the neighbourhood would be left without a "park". Some members wondered if a distinct park should be developed to protect the green space and heritage of the area.

One member suggested the park could have a "contemporary response to the modernist idea of the Tower in the Park". Another member recommended that the study team look at Parc Hydro-Québec in Montreal by Claude Cormier + Associés for a different approach as to how landscape can infiltrate and engage with urban spaces.

#### Underground Connections

Many members were pleased to see the "thoughtfulness of thinking" about the underground territory in the study area. A few members specifically appreciated the parking diagram.

# 721 EASTERN AVENUE

## DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

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DESIGN REVIEW	Second Review
APPLICATION	Rezoning & Subdivision
<i>PRESENTATIONS:</i>	
CITY STAFF	Paul Mule, Community Planning; Deanne Mighton, Urban Design
DESIGN TEAM	Quadrangle Architects
VOTE	Support – Unanimous

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## Introduction

City staff outlined the project history, existing and future context, and planning framework. Staff are seeking the Panel's advice on the following key issues:

1. **Frontages:** The overall built form composition along both the Eastern, Lakeshore Avenue, and new street frontages with special regard for scale, character, architectural fit.
2. **Heritage:** Integration of the existing industrial buildings with the new design.
3. **Site Organization:** The Site Plan composition including circulation plan, grades and relationship with adjacent lands to the east and the west.
4. **Landscape Identity and Relationship to Linear Park:** integration and interface with the surrounding public realm, internal program, edge treatment, how the overall landscape concept improves the pedestrian experience of the site and linear park, pedestrian comfort and safety
5. **Sustainability and Innovation:** use of sustainable building technologies, energy efficiencies, green infrastructure, how the proposal integrates innovations in mobility through programming or design.

## Panel Comments

The Panel commended the design team on a cohesive and succinct drawing package. The Panel appreciated the ongoing design efforts and several members noted support for the organizational efforts and the evolution of the project. Some members felt that the proposal needed further development and one member commented that the design should not be so unyielding. Many members were pleased to see the commitment to the employment lands in this part of the city.

## Frontages

### Site 1 Massing and Articulation

Many members thought that the scale and architectural fit was working well. A few members commented that the proposed building was "provocative" and "exciting". One member liked how the building was "pushing itself out into the public realm" and was interested by the elevated placement of the cars.

One member felt that the building seemed to have some inconsistent articulation. They felt that the primary massing was expressed by "three fingers spreading out" in a curvilinear articulation, but that there was a disparate mass "slamming" into the building in behind.

Another member thought the transition in form with the finer grain towards Eastern Ave was working well. A different member felt the frontage experience along Lake Shore Blvd needed to be "more interesting". Another member noted that the structure felt "iconic" and like a "gateway building" even though it was not located at a gateway intersection.

#### Proposed Café

Several members felt that the café needed further development. Some members questioned who the target market for the café was (e.g. GM patrons, cyclists, employees). Many members suggested an additional design element, such as a canopy, would help the café integrate with the corner and façade. A member thought the showrooms at the edges of the café were well placed.

#### Develop Sites 2 & 3

Several members found it difficult to know who would occupy the buildings on sites 2 and 3; however, one member thought the project could be an interesting catalyst to draw in tenants and employers. A member suggested the proposed plaza could attract firms who value such spaces.

### **Heritage**

#### Need More Information on the Heritage Buildings

The Panel was frustrated by the continued lack of information on the heritage buildings. Several members expressed concern that this absence of material hampered the ability to make design decisions. The Panel felt that it was difficult to comment on what should be preserved or integrated. Many members commented that the heritage was the "key question" for the site and proposal.

#### Innovate Ways to Preserve Heritage

Several Panel members pointed out that while it was very easy to dismiss heritage retention, there are many cases where "extraordinary measures" had been taken to save heritage buildings in some form. One member cautioned that once the heritage buildings are gone "they are gone".

Many members recommended that the incorporation of heritage could be another opportunity for innovation. One member suggested the heritage could be maintained to address the relationship between the site and the "significant institutionalized employer". Another member suggested looking for ways to preserve "a sense of the industrial past" in addition to the physical heritage.

#### Preservation of the Existing Buildings

Some Panel members pointed out that because it was a large site under a single owner, the design team should be able to preserve the heritage buildings. One member noted that the entrance off Rushbrooke Ave extension should enable the retention of buildings A and B.

Many members noted that while the existing buildings A, B, F, and G were all being preserved in some fashion, in the current proposal there was very little retention of these buildings in order to provide parking. These members felt that parking was not a good reason to demolish heritage with one member calling it "an incredibly poor strategy" and "not an acceptable solution".

While noting that they were operating under limited information, one member was not certain that the preservation of the façade of building F was an improvement and suggested looking to better preserve other elements on the site in its place. However, another member thought maintaining the façade would honour and preserve the industrial heritage of the building and the site.

#### **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

The Panel thought the preservation of building G needed further study, but didn't think they had enough information to comment on. One member wondered if the restoration of the Evergreen Brick Works in the Don River valley could be an appropriate precedent. Another member wondered if building G could architecturally cover the whole of Innovation Plaza.

One member thought the retention of building I in the original strategy worked well as it addressed both Lake Shore Blvd and Eastern Ave.

## **Site Organization**

### Internal Vehicular Circulation

A few members noted general appreciation for the way the current proposal addressed cars and movement. However, one member thought the fact that vehicles had to cross pedestrian spaces twice to enter the site should be looked at. Another member wondered if the curve of the turning radius in the ring road could be removed to "subvert" the space.

### Broader Site Context

The Panel wanted to see broader site context to better understand how the proposal would sit in the area. One member cautioned that the redevelopment of FreshCo could block the corner views towards the proposal. A member appreciated how the proposal responded to the "unique geometry" of Lake Shore Blvd and another member thought that views towards the building when travelling east-west would be "very dramatic".

A few members thought the connections between Eastern Ave and Mosley St should be closed to prevent accidents, and one member felt the prospective connectivity between Rushbrooke Ave and Leslie St had potential.

### Extension of Rushbrooke Ave

The Panel commended the move to extend Rushbrooke Ave south as a public street. One member noted this would help with the connection between Eastern Ave and Lake Shore Blvd and another member thought it would allow for more active elements in the south west portion of the site. A member additionally noted that the extension would help with the "public face" of GM.

### Intersection at Rushbrooke Ave and Lake Shore Blvd

A few members were excited by the imagery showing the proposed transformation to the Rushbrooke/Lake Shore intersection. However, the Panel strongly felt there needed to be further traffic calming measures implemented where the intersection meets Lake Shore.

Many members advised the further development of ways to alert cars of potential pedestrians and cyclists in the area. The members suggested the incorporation of elements to force the driver to stop and pause before making a turn such as different paving or the introduction of bicycle signals.

## **Landscape Identity & Relationship to Linear Park**

### Landscape Identity

Some members questioned how the berm concealing the "back end" of the site would work with the overall architecture and landscape. One member wondered if there was a different way of addressing the "back end" architecture and allowing it to be a part of the public face of the building.

Many members thought the rectilinear benches proposed throughout the site seemed oversized and read as a barrier in the public realm. Another member suggested integrating the

vents and structural components into the landscape design. Several members noted that the connection to the café was now safer for pedestrians and cyclists and one member wondered if there could be exclusively pedestrian access to the café on the corner.

#### Innovation Plaza

While as an initial design move the Panel thought that the proposed plaza was a good central, porous public space, the members wanted to see more development to the Innovation Plaza as it was currently too "nebulous" and "ambivalent". Some members were concerned that the plaza would ultimately become a vehicle drop off area.

Many members felt that if the plaza was going to be called "innovative" it should have a "good story" and actually innovate something. Several members praised the concept of the plaza as a "great opportunity" and a place that could work for many different users at different times, including employees, visitors to the site and members of the surrounding community. These members suggested developing a clear framework regarding programmatic elements in the space.

The Panel felt that there needed to be a detailed study of how heritage building G could be part of the plaza.

#### Relationship to Linear Park

While the Panel generally thought the design team had established a successful point of connection into the trail system, some members recommended further study on how the path and sidewalk connections would work to keep people safe.

A member thought the proposed south-facing plaza adjacent to the Linear Park felt too big. They suggested developing a "point of pause" to improve the space for pedestrians and cyclists. A few members wondered whether there was a way to connect the proposed Innovation Plaza and the Gardiner remnants more integrally.

### **Sustainability & Innovation**

#### Sustainability

Some Panel members pointed out that 2030 was not too far in the future regarding the sustainable development goals. One member noted that sustainable measure and innovation needed to be a part of every project regardless of building type. A few other members felt that the design team should develop innovative and creative ways to implement adaptive reuse aspects of the site and deal with any existing contamination.

#### Innovative Approach to the Site

Many members thought there should be a more ambitious approach to the overarching site and programming. One member suggested the Innovation Lab could be more outward looking and be used to draw people to the plaza.

Some members pointed out that while there will be important jobs in the main GM building in the south, the brunt of the rejuvenation of the site will occur at sites 2 and 3. As such, the design team should develop an equally innovative proposal for the north portion of the site as they had done for the south portion.

Several members noted that the two development stages needed further refinement. One member wondered whether there was a way to innovate how the site moves from the interim condition to the final condition. They suggested the interim stage could serve a specific purpose that gets "bigger and better" after the second stage.

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#### **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**