

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 6 – May 30, 2019

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday May 30, 2019, in Committee Room 2, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 12:00pm.

Members of the Design Review Panel

*Members
Present*

Gordon Stratford (Chair): Principal – G C Stratford – Architect	✓#
Michael Leckman (Vice Chair): Principal – Diamond Schmitt Architects	
Carl Blanchaer: Principal – WZMH Architects	✓
Dima Cook: Director – EVOQ Architecture	
George Dark: Design Partner – Urban Strategies	
Ralph Giannone: Principal – Giannone Petricone Associates	✓**
Meg Graham: Principal – superkül	✓**
Jessica Hutcheon: Principal – Janet Rosenberg & Studio	✓
Viktors Jaunkalns: Partner – MacLennan Jaunkalns Miller Architects	✓
Joe Lobko: Partner – DTAH	
Jim Melvin: Principal – PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.	✓*
Adam Nicklin: Principal – PUBLIC WORK	
Heather Rolleston: Principal, Design Director – Quadrangle Architects	✓
David Sisam: Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects	✓†
Sibylle von Knobloch: Principal – NAK Design Group	

**Conflict for First Item*

***Absent for First and Second Items*

#Absent for Last Item

†Chair of the last session

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 May 9, 2019 by email.

MEETING 6 INDEX

- i. 8450 Sheppard Ave E (1st Review)
- ii. Crosstown Celestica Block 1A – 844 Don Mills (1st Review)
- iii. Five Year Official Plan Review: Built Form & Public Realm Policies (3rd Review)
- iv. Five Year Official Plan Review: Public Realm – Higher Order Transit Policies (1st Review)

**8450 SHEPPARD AVENUE EAST
NE SCARBOROUGH COMMUNITY CENTRE
DESIGN REVIEW PANEL
DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES**

DESIGN REVIEW First Review

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Katrien Darling, Community Planning; Shan Li, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Perkins + Will

VOTE Non-support – unanimous



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:

Built Form:

1. What are the opportunities to ensure that the built form (ie. building footprint, height and massing) appropriately responds to the surrounding context?

Connections:

2. What strategies should be used to enhance connectivity of the community centre to the streets, the adjacent open space corridor, the neighbourhood and school site?

Integration:

3. What design features or refinements to the site plan could be used to ensure the proposed community centre sits comfortably on the constrained site and reserves suitable outdoor space for active programming?

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for their submission. This team has the challenge of designing on a very tight site and creativity is evident in the work to date; The success of this project will be based on setting the right path through the site and placing programme at key moments along the way. Further effort is needed in the following areas to achieve this:

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

- Respond to adjacent residential context by acknowledging the northeast corner of site as a major entry point.
- Provide a strong integration/connection with open space context north and west of the site.

Site Plan Design

- Current pedestrian circulation in the design is counterintuitive to the diagonal flow through the site. Rethink the site and building design by developing a site-wide "streets and blocks" plan that takes into account the larger context.

- Plan circulation permeability to encourage a natural, universally accessible path through the building.

Pedestrian Realm

- See Site Plan Design.

Built Form (Massing, Height, Articulation, Heritage Conservation)

- Rethink the "built form object on site" approach; looking to earlier design considerations for solutions.
- Design building to define outdoor rooms.

Landscape Strategy

- Layered landscape concept is a strong idea but ensure pedestrian security/safety throughout.

Sustainable Design

- Make every effort to achieve the highest level of sustainability possible.
- Include a visible sustainability story throughout the building and site design, as a community-learning opportunity.

Comments to the City

- Encourage City teams to present within agenda time limits.

Panel Commentary

The Panel thanked the design team for their presentation, noting that it was very thorough and easy to follow. Many members acknowledged that the project was located on a really challenging site, but felt the design team had been very thoughtful in their assessment of the site.

The Panel wondered whether the proposal had "maybe moved past the design solution" and suggested further analyzing their earlier work. The Panel looked forward to seeing the project again.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

Establish Green & Public Space Connections

The Panel thought there was a huge opportunity to develop an "amazing green connection" via a larger green network in the broader area that connected the site with Joyce Trimmer Park, the future and existing schools, the zoo and the Rouge Valley to the west.

Many members advised paying more attention to the edges of the site with reference to coordinating these potential connections. The Panel suggested using this proposal to encourage the adjacent site to organize their public spaces to the benefit of this green/open space network.

Develop Block Context Plan

Due to the lack of obvious access to the site, along with questions of where the future school to the north might be located the Panel felt the design team needed to develop a block context plan as a part of their proposal.

Many members also noted that a block context plan would reveal opportunities to build on or expand available open space between sites, such as with the future school site in the north.

Site Plan Design

Integrating the Building with the Site

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Several members were concerned that the proposed building was acting like an object in the center of the site with a parking lot on one side and a park on the other. Many members noted that the current position of the building and ramp was turning its back on half of the site.

The Panelists wondered whether the building could be used to better define outdoor rooms instead of pushing the outdoor components to the periphery of the site. The Panel felt that the earlier diagrams showing various ways of occupying the site had more potential.

Integrating the Entrances on the Site

While the members supported the idea of trying to recapture the lost landscape on the roof, the members felt that having the ramp dead end was not working. While some members felt the expression of the main entrance was clear, they pointed out that it was dependent on the location and geometry of the ramp.

They advised ensuring the site entrances were integrated with the site before further developing the architecture.

Establish Connections throughout Site

While some members felt that the proposal was starting to suggest ways to connect to the adjacent areas, the Panel advised further work on how people would flow through the site was required. Several members suggested using the paths to actively engage people coming through the site as opposed to pushing them to the periphery.

Thinking about how people in the school to the north would access the coffee shops on Sheppard, many members were concerned there would be congestion where the building was blocking the flow of people across the north east corner of the site.

Northeast Easement

The Panel felt the easement coming from the neighbourhood at the north east corner of the site was an important access point and should be further developed. The Panel thought there needed to be a stronger sense of arrival in that corner. Many members felt that the urban agriculture elements would be better located closer to the outdoor seating areas to encourage community engagement.

The Panel pointed out that in the design team's original diagram of the building there are both ramps going up and down. Several members felt that the ramp going up could respond to the easement in "quite a wonderful way" and better engage that portion of the site with the building.

Entrance to the Ramp

The Panel advised rethinking how the building and ramp interact with the existing pathway through the site. While the Panel thought having the ramp come up from the east was "a little bit odd" given the precast yard, some members thought having the building step down along the existing path in that portion of the site made sense.

Access Points & Orientation of the Main Entrance

The Panel thought the design team had made some good moves integrating the site with the building, such as by orienting the main entrance to the south west corner for both pedestrian street access and proximity to the parking.

However, while several members thought the entrance plaza and incorporation of a beacon that could be seen from the street made sense, the Panel was concerned by how far away the building was from the street. Some members noted there was room to bring the entrance closer using the space where the splash pad was proposed.

Built Form (Massing, Height, Articulation and Heritage Conservation)

Accessible Solution for the Proposed Ramp

The Panel strongly advised that any park space and programming on the proposed ramp needed to be accessible for all people of ages and abilities. Many members noted that it was hugely important that this community centre building was a place for everyone without barriers for use.

Safety & Security on the Proposed Ramp

The Panel pointed out there were large issues of security by having the ramp dead end at the top. The members questioned whether the ramp would be accessible and work as a park. The Panel was concerned that the top of the ramp could become a dangerous space "where the tough guys chase you into that back corner at three in the morning and then there's no place to go".

The Panel felt that if there were a way to come up and then go down, or if the building could be moved through, it would alleviate the safety issues as well as better support the main siting and parti diagram. A few members suggested that a secure playground could be another solution.

Programming the Roof/Ramp Space

Many members commented that they liked the idea of utilizing the quasi-roof space for active recreation. They felt allowed for that "different type of experience and view" and created a unique experience. While several members thought the concept of the ramp was very strong, without the raming looping back down it just comes up to some fairly secondary spaces on the second floor.

To further develop the ramp concept and programming, one member suggested looking at the MAAT in Lisbon for how the roofscape becomes a place of activity with an overview.

Views from the Ramp

Some members pointed out that as shown the ramp spaces would have views out to the parking lot. These members suggested that if the ramp were relocated to the north the views and architecture would be better integrated with that landscape.

Building Massing & Spatial Relationships

A few members liked the design of the community centre as "a beautiful box". These members thought the internal spatial relationships within the building were well considered. Other members felt that the ramp was negatively impacting the other programming elements, such as the pool.

These members thought that if the massing was further separated into a cloister or courtyard scheme the would be more opportunity for light, access and developing adjacencies with the parking/temporary markets etc.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Strategy on Sheppard Avenue

Some Panel members felt that while they appreciated trying to achieve a sense of arrival from Sheppard, the current landscaping felt a little "hard" with too much paving. As this piece was located at the tail end of the ravine, these members suggested connecting some of the plant material selection accordingly on the fire hall side to reinforce the link to the ravines.

Amount of Green Space

The Panel pointed out that the existing well-loved park would all be gone when the proposed community centre is developed. The members therefore stressed the importance of building the landscape into the building.

A few members thought using the parking for potential markets sounded "fantastic".

CROSTOWN CELESTICA BLOCK 1A – 844 DON MILLS

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review*

APPLICATION Site Plan Control

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Michelle Corcoran, Community Planning; Rong Yu, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM CORE Architects

VOTE Support – 5; Non-support – 1



**'Don Mills Crossing' study was reviewed March 2017; 'Wynford Green Master Plan' was reviewed October 2017; 'Celestica IBM Building Block 12' was reviewed April 2019*

Introduction

City staff outlined the project history, existing and future context, and planning framework. The Master Planned Crosstown development has been before the Design Review on two previous occasions in relation to the now approved Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Draft Plan of Subdivisions Applications. Block 1A will accommodate the first building of the Crosstown development – a nine storey office, a portion of which will be occupied by Celestica Inc. The site will also accommodate an at-grade entrance to the Science Centre LRT Station, and provide a connection to the adjacent Block 1B. Block 1B will provide for commercial uses and a POPS connections from Eglinton Avenue East to Street C. Recognizing this location as a gateway to the Crosstown development, staff are bringing this proposal to the Design Review Panel at the pre-application stage of the Site Plan Approval process.

Staff are seeking the Panel's advice on the following key issues:

Pedestrian Realm & Landscape Strategy:

1. Does the office building on Block 1A appropriately respond to Don Mills Road, Eglinton Avenue East, and Street C in terms of landscaping, street furniture, ground-floor uses, and servicing?
2. Is the design of the POPS space consistent with public realm concept of the master plan?

Site Plan Design:

3. Is the internalized POPS connections through the LRT station entrance from Eglinton Avenue East to Block 1B appropriate?

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for bringing forward their design; especially given that it is one of the first buildings in the realization of a significant master plan. This is an opportunity to create an exemplar for future projects to aspire to, and in consideration of this work is needed in the following areas:

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

- Ensure that the design follows the future context vision created by the master plan and urban design strategy.

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- Develop design to mitigate very busy Don Mills Road context.
- Include in drawings the larger pathway context (set out in master plan + existing).

Site Plan Design

- Create an experiential street urban design strategy that flows the length of Street B, through the project site and on to public transit access and the corner of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue.
- Ensure that pathways on project site integrate with broader existing and future pathway network.
- Increase size and placement of plaza to achieve the open connection with Street B set in the Master Plan.
- Celebrate entry points into site's public realm (e.g.: TTC station, etc.).
- Rethink proposed retail strategy to achieve long term viability.

Pedestrian Realm

- See Site Plan Design.

Built Form (Massing, Height, Articulation, Heritage Conservation)

- Reshape retail pavilion to enable diagonal pedestrian flow set in Master Plan.
- Provide a pavilion character distinct and separate from that of the office building.
- Develop building design to achieve a simple, clean elegance.
- To enhance underground TTC station increase access to natural light and view above.

Landscape Strategy

- Animated use of green adds a playfully tactile and engaging setting. Further this approach through an increase in trees along Don Mills Road.

Sustainable Design

- Given size and mix of proposed development in Master Plan provide information about how this project can fit within an integrated sustainability strategy for the entire development.
- Use passive measures to mitigate solar gain along east, south and west faces of building.

Comments to the City

- No comments.

Panel Commentary

The Panel thanked the design team for their submission, with many members commenting that the presentation was very thorough and clear. Several members appreciated the inclusion of before-and-after images and found the perspective images very helpful.

The Panel felt that starting with parcels 1A and 1B in the master plan was a great idea. The Panelists thought the proposal was located at the corner of a remarkable site in the city, with some members calling Eglinton Avenue the "new midtown connector" for Toronto. The Panel looked forward to seeing the proposal develop.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

Future Context Vision

The Panel thought developing parcels 1A and 1B simultaneously was a great idea. Several members pointed out that it will allow the proposed plaza space to be fully realized thereby providing an anchor for the future community.

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The Panel noted that as the first project to be developed in this master plan the design will need set the bar for every subsequent piece.

Overarching Master Plan Context

The Panel members pointed out that the design team will need to ensure that the proposal "pick[s] up on a piece of the thread" in terms of connecting the public realm pieces across the master plan.

Expanding on this, some members gave the example that the proposed pavilion sits very differently when looking at the project in the context of the master plan, as currently it's being designed against an edge when in actuality it will sit in the middle of several future developments.

Include More Context in Drawing Set

The Panel wanted to see more context included in the drawing set, including both the master plan and existing conditions. Many members pointed out that the context of the adjacent buildings, street network and public realm should inform the design response to ensure every proposal is creating a connected community.

Site Plan Design

Street B Configuration

Many Panel members pointed out that while Street A traverses the entirety of the overarching site as the major organizer in the master plan, Street B is what will connect the community buildings as well as will be the primary shopping street.

Several Panel members suggested further looking at the road configuration for Street B, both due to its importance as a connector as well as given that the street is currently proposed to be discontinuous with dog legs, while the rest of the street network has been developed to be rationale and Cartesian.

Plaza Connection to Street C

The Panel wanted to see the missing information on how the POPS plaza would join to Street C to the north of the site. A few members suggested incorporating a cove of trees to the north of the plaza to help ease into Street C.

Many members pointed out that in the previous plan the plaza "flair[ed] out" towards Street C. The Panel noted that having the plaza open up more towards Street C would help the midblock aspirations, and encouraged developing the space in that design direction.

Make POPS More Dynamic

By narrowing the north end and separating the space from Street B, the Panel thought the POPS had been turned into a "bit of a tunnel". Several members pointed out that the space was now reading like a private space due to these modifications. The Panel suggested finding ways to increase the porosity back to Street B.

The Panel advised further development to regain the "dynamic nature" of the POPS space. Looking from the perspective of complete communities, some members recommended thinking about who will be using the space and how to ensure it provides for all users, not just those from the office.

Retail & Spaces Bordering POPS

Some Panel members questioned the long term viability of the spaces bordering the POPS. Although these members thought locating the retail to the north of the plaza would work once there was a full build out, they found it problematic with the first phase of the project.

The Panel suggested framing the POPS space with retail for better animation to the plaza.

Transit Connections

The Panel appreciated that transit connections were being figured out from both sides of the street. Many members pointed out that the height of the tunnel should be bumped up to 3.6m or 4m, noting that the current dimensions were asking people to walk a long distance in a small space.

Don Mills Road

Several members thought incorporating trees along Don Mills Road could mitigate the edge of the road. These members supported moving the retail behind the road and putting it on a sheltered street, commenting that it would provide a retreat via the inside of the block.

Built Form (Massing, Height, Articulation and Heritage Conservation)

Office Building Articulation

Several Panel members appreciated the articulation of the office and daycare building, particularly the quilted and faceted façade system. Some members additionally appreciated the written and verbal description speaking to the idea of subtly amplifying the pattern using mirrored glass and vision components.

Many members suggested further refining the building to ensure a clean overarching expression.

Office Building Canopy

Many members thought the canopy was really inviting and playful. Some members appreciated how it was being used as a wayfinding idea in addition to a canopy on the building.

Develop Canopy into a Public Veranda

A few members suggested using the configuration of the canopy to develop a place that speaks to the public aspect of utilizing transit. These members suggested the canopy could become a dynamic public veranda that protects from weather rather than just a "festive and diagrammatic" element.

One member wondered whether a public shelter could be developed on the other side of the POPS space as well.

Increase Amount of Outdoor Daycare Space

Some members felt that the outdoor space provided for the daycare would not accommodate a large number of children. These members advised increasing the amount of outdoor daycare space.

Better Integration of Mechanical Penthouse

Many Panel members advised better integrating the mechanical equipment and penthouses on the office building. These members noted that currently they were reading like an add-on at the top of the building.

Retail Pavilion

The Panel thought the retail pavilion needed further development. Several members felt that it was reading as a piece of the office building, noted that they shared the same orange soffit and faceting. The Panel thought the pavilion would work better as a foil to the "simple expression" of the office building.

Several members wondered about having the retail pavilion have double access by extending the middle part through to the other side. These members pointed out this would help expand the porosity between Street B and the POPS space.

Retail Phasing

Some members noted that in the first phase there would be a lack of animation. Many members were concerned that the front door of the retail would end up facing Street B meaning that the back of house would be facing into the plaza/POPS space. The Panel advised re-examining this condition.

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Gateway into Broader Site

The Panel noted that the architecture on the corner should be further developed to reflect its prominence as a gateway into the broader site. They felt that the design response should be "special" and should celebrate the entrances into the public realm.

Enhance Transit Entrance

The Panel supported the move to celebrate transit via the big entrance statement with the canopy integrating with the office building. The Panelists felt there was an opportunity to further enhance the access to the LRT. They recommended developing a multi-storey entrance to bring light down into the transit tunnel. Some members suggested this could be achieved via a skylight.

Landscape Strategy

Green Wall

Several Panel members liked the idea of the green wall and thought using it to animate a portion of the plaza was a good application. Some members commented that people would respond well to the wall and felt it could become a special moment. Many members encouraged having the wall be more interactive, including by carving out areas of respite.

A member advised continuing to research technologies to ensure the success of the wall, noting what the space would be left with if it fails or maintenance is too difficult.

Landscape Strategy along Don Mills Rd

Some members thought the landscape approach along Don Mills Rd was interesting and appeared to respond well to the office building. Many members felt a double row of trees was appropriate.

These members noted that the raised planters along Don Mills Rd would impose a barrier, and suggested that at the south-east corner of the building the trees could all be at grade in tree grates to allow the retail space to expand around the entrance of the transit station.

Internal Courtyard/POPS Landscape Strategy

Several members felt the POPS plaza area would be more successful if it was less segregated by the edge of hedging and raised planters. Instead some members suggested including a number of trees to provide shade.

Many members thought incorporating more seating beyond just on the periphery would work well. Various members felt the raised planters were overly containing the POPS.

Introduce Elements that Reference the History of the Site

Some Panel members noted that there was an opportunity to use the landscape to include "intriguing" elements and suggested using the landscape to introduce elements that reference the built and natural history. One suggestion was to have the paving pattern be an interpretation invoking the history of the site.

Sustainable Design

The Panel wanted more detail around the sustainability strategy for the overarching site. Regarding the office building, many members pointed out that with the shallow floor depth it needed a robust sustainability strategy, including passive ways to shade the east and west facades.

FIVE YEAR OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW: BUILT FORM & PUBLIC REALM POLICIES DESIGN REVIEW PANEL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW Third Review

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Steven Dixon, Strategic Initiatives,
Policy & Analysis, City Planning
Division



VOTE No vote

Introduction

City staff outlined the project history, existing and future context, and planning framework. Staff are seeking the Panel's advice and general commentary on the updated draft Built Form and Public Realm Official Plan policies following Stakeholder and public consultation.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the Review team for sharing their further development of this essential initiative. The direction taken is positive and holds great potential, with the following outlining recommended next steps:

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

- Respond to trends in urban context towards achieving a "Democracy City" that addresses the following human needs: access to natural light and view, need for visual and aural privacy, access to a variety of high-quality public realm spaces and green landscape, environmental comfort.
- Encourage increase in mid-rise development and densification within existing city footprint context.

Site Plan Design

- See other sections in this summary.

Pedestrian Realm

- Ensure access to what should be publicly accessible (e.g.: POPS, etc.).

Built Form (Massing, Height, Articulation, Heritage Conservation)

- Address challenges of doing mid-rise development.
- Include flexibility to anticipate hybrid situations (e.g.: opportunities that may involve using atypical building typologies to achieve a successful outcome for the whole community).

Landscape Strategy

- No comments.

Sustainable Design

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- Use sustainability as a fundamental foundation and framework for this document; based upon "four pillars" balancing of Environmental, Social, Cultural and Economic needs.

Comments to the City

- Make deliverable concise and specific in communication.
- Use graphics wherever possible to reduce words and make message visually clear.
- Include strategies on how to get developers to abide by (and provide solutions according to) requirements.
- Get buy-in from all City Departments for high-quality results.

Panel Commentary

The Panel thanked the review team for their presentation and updated draft policies. Several members appreciated the way the presentation itemized the key changes between drafts. The Panelists felt the policies had progressed well since the last review and many members noted their pedagogical agreement with the aspirations of the document.

Moving forward, the Panel encouraged further refinement to the overarching ideas as well as clarification to the policy language.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

Address Different Context across City

Many members pointed out that the draft policies were looking through the lens of a traditional city, rather than address the reality of the vastly different urban contexts that exist across Toronto. The Panel advised amplifying the pluralism of the various areas of the city in the document.

Identity and the City

Several members thought that the notion of identity was another aspect that should be reflected in the draft policies. Some members commented that Toronto has a diverse identity within every neighbourhood, and the Official Plan should think about what the diverse residents want as opposed to putting the city "into a box that we've created".

Civic Responsibility

Many Panel members questioned the decision to take out the portion of the built form policies preamble that spoke to civic responsibility ("*Great cities are built one building at a time, [...] Developers and architects have a civic responsibility to create buildings that not only meet...*").

The members advocated incorporating civic responsibility back into the policies, noting that the sentiment seemed "pretty foundational" to the overarching idea of the policies.

"Pseudo-Public Spaces"

Some members, commenting on the nature of public and private space pointed out that because publicly accessible spaces were privately owned there are limitations and regulations around what can occur in these spaces, such as public demonstrations. Several members felt that the nature of these spaces was non-democratic.

Democratic City

Several Panel members strongly felt that any definition of the public realm needed to define the civic and democratic importance of the spaces. A few members noted that squares aren't very public, and that while the proposal for Alphabet City could include physically great public spaces, the conditions around it vis a vis data collection weren't conducive to great public space.

The Panel advised stressing the democratic necessity of public space.

Green Space Deficiency

Many members pointed out that Toronto does not have enough existing or projected green space. Some members contrasted Toronto's waterfront against Chicago's to emphasize the disparity with a comparable city. The Panel thought having provisions for more park and green space was critical.

Ongoing Densification

Many Panel members supported the changes that were made to the draft policies with respect to future pedestrian volumes due to increased densification and how those things will impact public spaces. With respect to ongoing densification, the Panel advised that the policies also needed to address access to: natural light, view, privacy, and public space.

Intensification Challenges

Several members pointed out that there needed to be political will to addressing many of the challenges around density and where intensification should occur for the policies to be enforceable.

Encourage Midrise Development

The Panel advocated for the strong encouragement of midrise construction. Some members pointed out the disparity of intensification between neighbourhoods such as the King Spadina Precinct against places along Bathurst St or the Danforth. They suggested that the midrise typology would go a long way towards spreading density across the city and getting people and activities close to transit.

Site Plan Design

Types of Streets

Several members appreciated the wording around restricting private streets. A few members commented that streets were an important part of the growth of the city. Some members pointed out that there were different types of streets, including residential, commercial, industrial, retail and great streets. They advised emphasizing these differences through the policies.

Looking at complete streets, some members felt that while they were the aspiration, it needed to be acknowledged that not every street can be a complete street. Other members pointed out that street width was an "incredibly important" aspect of streets.

Streets & Human Scale

When talking about facades and the scale of the street, some members noted that having a human scale was very important. These members felt that the "wonderful quality" of Toronto was the "staccato" and "messiness" of the existing main streets, such as along Bloor and Bathurst, Bloor and Ossington, and Queen St W.

One member called these streets "a little fragment of urbanity" and suggested their human scale took precedence over prescriptive numbers with respect to street proportions.

Street Utilities

A few Panel members questioned whether any policies would speak to an overarching plan for the street utilities.

Servicing & Vehicles

Some members noted that the requirements for accommodating the set sizes of servicing and fire vehicles was having a tremendous effect on the way cities are being built. A few members felt these were indicative of issues with department integration and street proportion standards.

Public Realm & Transit

Referencing the King St Pilot project, a member thought the public realm policies should speak to the ability of the city to close lanes and change them into different things.

Location of POPS & New Parks

Looking at policy 3.1.1.20b and the siting of POPS and new parks in highly visible locations, many members felt there was value in having these spaces sometimes be discovered off a laneway. These members thought the location of these spaces needed to be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Skyview Terminology

While the Panel understood the difficulty in quantifying skyview, they felt it was an important word to use throughout the document. Many members suggested the term could be further clarified in either an introductory description or a sidebar.

Coordination in the Public Realm

The Panel pointed out that coordination was a key to a successful public realm. Several members felt that while the City had made inroads into the coordination of streets and creating more livable, urban and accessible spaces, the policies needed to address this aspect in a more substantive way.

One member elaborated that the lack of coordination or design was a huge issue on the sidewalks, resulting in spaces that aren't built to accommodate the existing or projected density of the city.

Pedestrian Realm

Amenity Spaces Including POPS

Several Panel members pointed out that as the city is starting to see the result of the limit in creating public space at grade level many amenity and green spaces may no longer be located at grade. They wondered what this changing definition of the public realm would mean for continual democratic access to these spaces by the public.

Many members noted a trend where private amenity spaces are being built in exchange of a proper public realm. These members felt it was important that the public realm was not neglected due to this trend, and that regardless of location, these green spaces are accessible to the public.

Looking specifically at draft policies 3.1.2.11-13, a Panel member advised amending the policies to state that where possible interior and exterior amenity spaces should be continuous.

Capture Existing as well as Future Public Realm

While they appreciated that the public realm spaces were expanded to include POPS, lanes and public square typologies, many members wondered whether the draft policies were capturing all of the potential public realm pieces that exist or could exist in the future.

Squares as Parkland Dedication

Some Panel members thought that squares should not be POPS. These members noted that by requiring squares be POPS it was creating a real problem for architects to secure the spaces. They felt that squares should be given to the City as part of parkland dedication.

A few members felt that smaller squares tend to work better in Toronto. One member commented that "the more that people are [...] virtually connected, the more they yearn for physical connection". This member felt that public squares were an important way to facilitate connections in the public realm.

Cars & Parking Structures

The Panel supported limiting the above grade parking structures. Some members wondered if the policies should explicitly say more about actively supporting fewer cars.

Streets as Pedestrian Realm

Some members suggested the next wave of urbanity could include looking at the entire street as part of the pedestrian realm. These members felt that this was important in the context of looking at different types of neighbourhoods and different types of intensification.

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One member noted that the Well project between Front and Wellington St will provide a pedestrian realm at a different kind of intensity in the city. Yorkville was noted as the only district "where you can actually walk on Bloor and have a continuous pedestrian [retail] experience".

Built Form (Massing, Height, Articulation and Heritage Conservation)

Hybrid Typologies

The Panel questioned the requirement that all the identified building typologies adhere to specific built form requirements, with no opportunities for hybrid typologies or new ways of creating built form.

Looking at tall buildings, many members disagreed with the idea that all buildings of a certain size should consist of a tower and a podium. Various members pointed to successful precedents around North America where large buildings did not have podia, including The Row in Los Angeles, Union Square in Manhattan and the Financial District in Toronto. Barcelona was also referenced as a city with successful hybrid buildings.

The members pointed out that while all those examples contained "massive buildings" they were all well designed and produced very unique urban characters for their respective cities. The Panel felt that the opportunity to create really interesting alternatives to traditional building types should not be precluded by these draft policies.

Buildings Are Contextual

The Panel noted that the design of buildings should be contextual and not define overarching specifics. While they understood the intention, many members felt the draft built form policy typology preambles were too descriptive. They cautioned that they precluded other things from being developed as well as ignored the specifics that exist already that need to be planned to.

Several members felt that as part of achieving a more substantive and cohesive public realm the built form policies needed to be "more imaginative and innovative around the building forms themselves and how they come together as a whole".

Prescriptive Elements

Some members appreciated the reduction of many of the prescriptive elements from the previous draft. Other members were supportive of the retention of the prescriptive elements with respect to midrise development.

Urban Character

A few members questioned the sidebar describing Transition in Scale, particularly with reference to the underlying effects on the urban character. These members thought that the statement "It should balance growth with the negative impacts of intensification in a way that is both repeatable and predictable in its impacts" did not sufficiently acknowledge the need for a contextual response.

Several members felt policy 3.1.2.9a needed to be revisited. They noted while sometimes a consistent streetwall was preferable, many celebrated parts of the city had "jumbled" facades. Other members noted that in other cities much of the richness in the fabric happens when the facades don't line up but are built up organically.

Tall Buildings

Some members were concerned that the underlying language around tall buildings was overly negative. These members felt that this typology, while the most intensive form of development, presented both opportunities and challenges.

A few members pointed out that tall buildings were a reality in the city unless there was willingness to open up some of the neighbourhoods more intensively.

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Tall Building Components

Some members questioned the implication that all tall towers need a podium. They noted that there were many examples of successful tall buildings without podiums, including in the Financial District and the MacDonald Block.

Address Midrise Challenges

The Panel noted that there continues to be challenges to deliver midrise buildings, particularly to do with value. One member commented "you're asking these large sites to carry a big lift". Several members wondered if there was a better way to augment the ease of midrise in the Official Plan.

Weather Protection

Some members, while supportive of weather protection, pointed out that it was not desirable to have colonnades or canopies everywhere. They felt the policies needed to be clarified to include an acknowledgement of contextual appropriateness.

Landscape Strategy

New Tree Planting

A few members pointed out that while there was language around tree planting with respect to preservation and long term growth, encouraging new tree planting hadn't been identified as an aspiration in the document.

Above Grade Mature Trees

One member pointed out that it was not always easy to get above grade mature trees.

Sustainable Design

Sustainability needs to be a Major Thread throughout Official Plan Document

While they appreciated that the "sustainability policies" were coming later, the Panel strongly advised that sustainability should not be a discrete policy section of the Official Plan, but should be "the fundamental foundation framework for this entire document".

Rather than having a page speaking to incorporating sustainable elements, the Panel advised that an overarching idea of the entire Official Plan needed to be one of sustainability. Various members recommended "infusing" sustainability into every aspect of the whole document. Some specific policy notes included:

- policy 3.1.2.10a should be amended to read "improvements to adjacent boulevards and sidewalks promoting sustainable design elements"
- policy 3.1.3.1a, rather than being about parcels of appropriate size, should be about designing to maximize the site and building sustainability

Comments to the City

Deliberate Language & Wording

The Panel emphasized the importance of utilizing clear language in the policies. Many members felt the document had improved substantially from what had been brought to the Panel before, but recommended further strengthening the policy language was still necessary. Some specific suggestions included:

- "may" vs "must" and "you have to" is frustrating
- while the policies should be clear, think there should still be an element of flexibility
- ensure consistent terminology (e.g. sunlight vs daylight, public realm vs parks)
- the use of the word "excessive" in policy 3.1.3.12c is ambiguous and subject to interpretation; suggest editing policy to read "avoids lighting"

Graphics

The Panel felt that incorporating specific graphic elements that related to the draft policies was very important. Many members recommended showing case studies and examples of good precedents.

Some members suggested the text should also be graphically presented, through bolding or underlines for emphasis etc. Other members suggested graphically representing primary, secondary and tertiary information.

Enforceability

While in general several members stated their agreement with the aspirations and ideals sold in the draft policies, they questioned the enforceability of the document. Looking specifically at the public realm, many members pointed out that there are often cases where "the builder or the developer is building something that doesn't really meet [the policies] but they get away with building less of a public realm than they should."

Buy-In

Noting that the draft policies will form Urban Design policies within the Official Plan, many members questioned how the policies would get buy in from the other departments within the City. Several members brought up previous experiences of conflicting standards between different departments.

Many other members questioned whether the draft policies had sufficient buy in from developers.

FIVE YEAR OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW: HIGHER ORDER TRANSIT POLICIES DESIGN REVIEW PANEL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Michael Hain, Transportation
 Planning, City Planning Division



VOTE No vote

Introduction

City staff outlined the project history, existing and future context, and planning framework. Staff are seeking the Panel's advice and general commentary on the updated draft Higher Order Transit Official Plan policies following Stakeholder and public consultation.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the Review team for their presentation and submission.

The Draft Public Realm, Higher Order Transit Policies presented to the Panel as a handout focused almost entirely on station design for public transit. Vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, electric scooter etc. transportation was not covered so Panel comments regarding those transit modes were made without the benefit of seeing the draft policy revisions. Panel comments include:

- Design quality of transit stations is of paramount importance.
- The public realm for transit stations and the governing aspirations should include the station interior as well as the exterior.
- Natural light should be introduced into the station interior even to the platform level if possible.
- Materials and artificial lighting should be durable and subject to the same scrutiny as exterior materials and street lighting.
- Policy will apply to stations regardless of ownership.
- Policy will not address density around transit stations.
- The human experience of transit should be recognized (as opposed to method of packing the transit cars with as many people as possible such as in Tokyo).
- As cycling becomes more prevalent, thought must be given to places for bicycle storage.
- Policy must be developed for storage of electric scooters etc.
- Concern was expressed about the large number of Uber vehicles on the road.

Panel Commentary

The Panel thanked the study team for their presentation and for the submission of a "really nice, concise little document." The members noted that they were reviewing the higher order transit policies without the benefit of reading the broader transportation policies.

The Panelists thought the draft had many promising components but advised further development of some overarching identity, public realm, integration, and human considerations.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

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Transit Oriented Society

The Panel felt that developing a more transit oriented society should be one of the goals emphasized by the policies. A few members suggested one of the reasons to encourage good design is so that people feel comfortable and have positive experiences.

Some members suggested amending the first paragraph of the document to read: "...facilitates the creation of complete communities and contributes to placemaking **and encourages the use of public transit.**"

Transit Station as a Public Amenity

The Panel noted that transit was a public amenity and felt the focus should extend to the interior public spaces leading to transit as well. Several members appreciated the wording in Section 3 of the document around the "simple and consistent approach to design" that was "distinct" and "directly safe".

A few members commented that it was important to recognize the smaller pieces within the overarching structure.

Challenges around Integrated Development

The Panel advised developing a better process to both encourage and facilitate integrated development and an integrated transit system.

Various members recalled projects where it was "enormously difficult" to have transit integrated into another building, including a development at Bessarion Station where ultimately what got built was "a fancy new subway station and a fancy new condo 10 feet behind it".

Design of Station Interior

The Panel felt the policies should encourage a higher level of design in all of the interior transit spaces, with one member commenting that "the whole spatial experience is really important".

A few members noted that in the Far East there are some great examples of "wonderful" multi-storey spaces in transit stations where "the public realm is not just outside the building, it's inside the building, it's on the platform".

Access to Natural Light

The Panel strongly advised the importance of having natural light in the transit stations, penetrating all the way to the platform level whenever possible. Some members thought the most successful higher order transit stations are the ones that have sunlight reaching level 2 at a minimum.

Design Consideration of Tunnels

A few members noted that if the public realm constitutes everything that is incorporated into the station, the tunnels should also be integrated beyond their role as throughways. These members recommended addressing this through the use of material, lighting and proportion considerations.

Human Experience

The Panel strongly felt the preamble for the document needed to acknowledge the importance of the human experience on transit. Some members pointed to Michael Wolf's "shocking" photo-essays on the Tokyo Metro ("Tokyo Compression") as an example of a transit system that does not prioritize human comfort on transit.

Develop Identity & Public Art Opportunities

Several Panel members noted that there was more and more pressure on having easily identifiable transit entrances. Some members felt there was a disconnect between Toronto's transit branding and the reality of using the transit system and stations, commenting that often the actual

experience was "really not very good". Many members felt that public art could be a large part of a solution to some of the experiential problems, particularly at transit stations and key transit stops.

One member noted that the stops along the St. Clair streetcar line were a successful example of using public art to help establish an identity and an experience, although they noted the elements could have been "bigger, bolder".

Multi-modal Transit Storage

The Panel felt it was essential that the policies incorporate how to provide adequate storage for scooters and other multi-modal sharing vehicles, in addition to bikes, that is safe, convenient and weather protected.

As a precedent, some members noted that Copenhagen has "incredible canopies that cover a thousand bikes". One member suggested there could additionally be amenity spaces associated with the storage to do with bike servicing or retail.

Rideshare & Transit "Disruptors"

Several members pointed out that the proliferation of ridesharing services was an underlying problem for transit networks as they put so many more cars on the street. Some members also noted that people are choosing to call these services rather than take transit.

Safety Considerations

With the grey area around where some of the new vehicle types including Segways, scooters, electric skateboards and bikes etc. should be operated, safety was highlighted by the Panel members as another issue that should be addressed in the transit policies.

Anticipate Impacts from Alternative Modal Types

Many Panel members noted that these new vehicles and modes of transit were beginning to form a growing alternative transportation system. The members felt that this was beginning to be a problem with the existing sidewalks, road networks and bike paths.

Some members, referring to the different speeds and types of mobility of these new vehicles, wondered how to anticipate what will happen as these alternative networks continue to grow.