The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday June 25, 2020 at 1:15pm.

**Members of the Design Review Panel**

- **Gordon Stratford (Co-Chair):** Principal – G C Stratford – Architect
  - Present
- **Michael Leckman (Co-Chair):** Principal – Diamond Schmitt Architects
  - Present
- **Meg Graham (Co-Chair):** Principal – superkül
  - Present
- **Carl Blancher:** Principal – WZMH Architects
  - Present
- **Dima Cook:** Director – EVOQ Architecture
  - Present
- **George Dark:** Design Partner – Urban Strategies
  - Present
- **Ralph Giannone:** Principal – Giannone Petricone Associates
  - Present
- **Jim Gough:** Department Manager, Transportation Planning – WSP
  - Present
- **Jessica Hutcheon:** Principal – Janet Rosenberg & Studio
  - Present
- **Viktors Jaunkalns:** Partner – Maclennan Jaunkalns Miller Architects
  - Present
- **Joe Lobko:** Partner – DTAH
  - Present
- **Jim Melvin:** Principal Emeritus/Advisor – PMA; Owner – Realm Works
  - Present
- **Adam Nicklin:** Principal – PUBLIC WORK
  - Present
- **Juhee Oh:** Director, Sustainability & Energy – WSP
  - Present
- **Heather Rolleston:** Principal, Design Director – Quadrangle Architects
  - Present
- **David Sisam:** Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects
  - Present
- **Sibylle von Knobloch:** Principal – NAK Design Group
  - Present

*Absent for First Session  †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 May 28, 2020 by email.

**MEETING 6 INDEX**

- i. 253 Markham Road (1st Review)
- ii. 100 McCaul Street – OCAD University North Addition (1st Review)
**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:

**Response to Context**

1. What opportunities exist to ensure the tall building built form, (inclusive of podium heights and footprint), appropriately responds to the surrounding context?

**Pedestrian Realm**

2. What strategies could be used to enhance the pedestrian realm on Markham Road and improve the interface between the public private realm taking into considerations the topography related challenges posed by the adjacent overpass structure?

**Site Plan Design**

3. What improvements to the site organization could be made to ensure the proposal incorporates high quality shared outdoor amenity space at grade for residents?

**Chair's Summary of Key Points**

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for a clear and concise submission package, and rational design approach.

Thanks as well for proposing a significant affordable living development. A project such as this is an essential contribution towards creating a city that offers housing opportunities addressing all community needs. To ensure success further work is needed in the following areas:

**Response to Context (including local character and heritage)**

- The site context is particularly challenging due to a number of constraints, with the following needing further attention:
  - West Edge of Site – Ensure Markham Road embankment landscape design creates a new context that helps visually screen structured parking, provides a buffer between Markham and new residential units, and offers a high-quality landscape setting for residents.
  - North Edge of Site – Provide wider (north-south dimension) new landscape buffer context to screen residents from rail corridor.
Site Plan Design
- See Response to Context and Built Form.
- The proposed site plan is too dense, cramped, and regimented:
  - Provide more open space within townhouse area and close to main entry/lobby for towers.
  - Increase landscape-buffered personal/private outdoor space for townhouse residents.
  - Create more generous north-south pedestrian way through townhouse area.
  - Develop a less-regimented built form siting pattern.
- East-west pedestrian way design shows promise; develop further.
- Increase visual screening of parking access / loading bay facility and dog run from adjacent residential units.

Pedestrian Realm
- See Site Plan Design.

Built Form (Massing, Height, Articulation, Heritage Conservation)
- See Site Plan Design.
- Create alternatives to stacked townhouse built form typology that result in more open space for residents.

Landscape Strategy
- See Response to Context and Site Plan Design.
- Phase 1A Interim landscape areas – Programme these areas with outdoor amenities for residents (e.g.: vegetable/flower gardens, etc.).
- Develop alternative landscape screening strategies for structured parking fronting on Markham.

Sustainable Design
- Provide deeper whole-site sustainability strategy to ensure long-term viability of this development.

Comments to the City
- Ensure that public park circulation integrates with key pedestrian pathways in residential development.
- See Response to Context re: landscape improvements to Markham Road embankment.

Panel Commentary
The Panel thanked the design team for their presentation. Many members remarked that the drawing package was very clear and skillfully illustrated the issues and planning rationale.

The Panel thought the project was in the hands of a great design team and strongly felt the project was essential, noting the high social impact and importance of affordable housing.

Moving forward, the Panel advised further consideration of the site plan design and chosen building typology, specifically questioning the back to back stacked townhouses. The Panel looked forward to seeing the project again.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)
Edge Conditions
Some members commented that the diagram illustrating the constraints was helpful in understanding the various edges conditions the project is dealing with.

Water Main
A few members noted that there was an issue with the water main which would still need to make the transition at the tracks. These members wondered whether it could be service trenched.

Project Phasing
While they acknowledged the phasing was still being developed, some members advised that the resultant blank faces before both parcels were completed could be challenging.

Other members suggested the phasing was a great opportunity to create something for the community including something tied to the existing community groups in the neighbourhood, such as vegetable gardens.

Site Plan Design
Stacked Townhouses & Density
The Panel strongly felt the site plan was overly dense and needed more breathing room. The Panelists specifically thought there was a fundamental issue in the relationship between the townhouses and open space, and questioned the proposed amount of stacked units.

Several members noted that the street edges at the stacked townhouses were constrained and felt the density had been pushed one row of units too far. The Panel pointed out that the distance between houses also seemed overly close at around 13m and the circulation constrained. Some members noted this would be exacerbated when balconies are added.

Many members advised further consideration of the views between units. Various members suggested incorporating more private amenity space for each unit, such as bigger open balconies or roof terraces.

Circulation & Open Space
Many members commented that the square form or "tartan" of townhouses was causing the pathways to be quite tight and suggested considering a different option to break up the built form and create more public space.

Several Panelists questioned how people would walk to their houses, including what sidewalks/paths would be taken. The Panel noted that because residents could access their townhouses from below and the north-south connections were leading nowhere, if one traced the path of any individual from parking or open space there would be very few people walking through those spaces.

The Panel advised both creating a park destination in the north as well as alleviating the density either by pursuing a midrise typology to capture more green space or by reducing the lines of stacked townhouses to improve the safety and space planning issues. Many members further suggested decreasing the length of the pedestrian paths.

Safety & Eyes on the Street
The Panel was deeply concerned about the townhouses not fronting streets and the lack of overlook in many spaces. The Panelists noted that the amount of doors not visible from the street was problematic.
Several members pointed out that this lack of visibility and overlook would present serious safety issues. Many members noted that people will close their blinds due to the tightly packed units resulting in further reduced "eyes on the street".

**East-West Connection**
While the Panel appreciated that the design team had tried to activate the northern east-west access way with ping pong tables etc. they were concerned that it was still a tight space that would not be activated by any entrances.

A few members noted appreciation for the idea of the strong southern east-west connection noting it was starting to host many different landscape treatments and had the potential to bring the community together. Many members pointed out that if the northern connection had the same space provision as the southern connection it would feel more generous.

**Tower Location on Markham Rd**
Some members pointed out that the proposed towers would be located significantly closer to Markham Rd than the existing adjacent ones. These members suggested developing a strong landscape identity on Markham Rd to manage the transition to the west.

**Lobby Condition**
Looking at the lobby condition, some members wondered whether there was an opportunity to carry the curb straight to create a more vegetated buffer between the adjacent units and fairly activated lobby. This would give the units more privacy and the road could be widened after the lobby.

**Parking & Loading**
Some members noted that the location for parking and loading access could create site line problems for drivers headed west, and suggested a T-intersection would work better.

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

**Mid & High Rise Building Typologies**
The Panel thought that having midrise and high rise building types on this site made sense. Many members were generally supportive of the tower design, noting that the application was still at the rezoning stage when architecture doesn't come into play.

The Panel was concerned that the design team was pushing the site too much by not exploring other housing forms. The Panelists advised that a midrise would be a better building typology than the proposed townhouses for the site.

**Materiality & Podium Architecture**
Some members commented that fiberboard, precast concrete and wood at the base seemed like good materiality choices. Various members appreciated the architecture of the 2 storey expression on the west of the building. These members felt it minimized the actual height of the building.

A few members liked how the treatment of the podium façade was "playful" and felt this character and quality should be extended to the other buildings on site.

**Stacked Townhouse Typology**
The Panel did not think the argument for stacked townhouses was warranted in the area given that there is a large park in the east and no impact to the north and the Panelists didn't think this typology was necessary for a transition in scale. Instead, the Panel noted that a midrise typology would have more density while touching the ground more lightly.
Several Panelists additionally had issues with the fact there would be front doors not visible from the principle street due to the fact there would be stacked units wholly internal to the site. Some members pointed out that with a midrise all the housing could face a private road and the consolidation of density would allow for a centralized open space.

Some Panelists noted that in stacked townhouses defining what was private versus public is problematic. Many members also noted the challenges with having bedrooms or other primary rooms at lower levels. These members noted window wells or other treatments would be required.

Some members suggested the design team should consider using land buffers if they went forward with the stacked townhouses.

Parking Structure
Some members were not convinced by the vines on the parking structure and instead suggested incorporating a public art or lighting component so it didn't feel like a "pit" for people walking near it. One member suggested looking at the LAPD Motor Transport Division & Main Street Parking Garage in Santa Monica.

Landscape Strategy

Existing Slope & Underpass
Many members noted that the slope was a difficult condition and several members appreciated the move to vegetate it with one member recommending filling the entire slope with planting. Some members advised further consideration of the underpass on the western edge of Markham Rd.

Consider Different Typologies to Increase Amount of Green Space
The Panel noted that a fundamental issue of the proposal was the relationship of the stacked townhouses with the green spaces.

Various members pointed out that because residents will be able to access their units from below compounded by the fact the north-south spaces have no park destination, there will be safety issues with the proposed arrangement.

While they appreciated the economic challenges associated with midrise typologies, many members advised that exploring a different typology to capture more green space on site would be beneficial.

Street Trees
Some members noted concern that the street trees seemed to be in jeopardy and advised further consideration.
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:

- Impact on the public realm along McCaul Street (including loss of trees and reduced public realm space)
- Materiality and the colour palette of the building in relation to the other landmark buildings in the context
- Relationship and transition to the table top building and in relation to other landmark buildings in the context
- The visual impact of the proposed development within the surrounding context

Chair's Summary of Key Points
The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for an accomplished design achieved within extreme site constraints; and an impressive, well-communicated submission package.

This project presents the potential for a provocatively crafted contribution to one of Toronto's most significant cultural contexts. Much of this has already been achieved by the proposed design, but to fully realise this possibility further work is encouraged in the following areas:

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)
- **Surrounding Context:** The design's response to its built form context is generally sensitive and dynamic in conversation with its neighbours. Exception to this is that proposed design needs to better acknowledge the context of iconic forms when seen from Grange Park.
- **Street Level Context:** The built form's elevator core footprint along McCaul reduces room for pedestrian movement. Develop design to improve street level context.
- **Heritage Context:** The proposed building skin’s abstracted woven quill patterning is elegant in concept but not yet fully realized in the design. Recommending further development to move beyond current graphic representation and capture plasticity and textured quality of quill pattern. Ensure that there is appropriate sensitivity to its indigenous heritage context.
- See Site Plan Design.
Site Plan Design

- See Response to Context, Landscape Strategy and Comments to City.
- Focus on increasing and improving the public realm along OCADU's McCaul frontage, especially in front of proposed design.
- Ensure pedestrian safety where sidewalk crosses laneway servicing AGO loading and parking, and elevator core impacts visibility.

Pedestrian Realm

- See Site Plan Design.

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

- See Response to Context.
- Lighten elevator core built form presence at street level.
- Variegated green cladding preferred (vs. charcoal) by Panel.

Landscape Strategy

- Increase green landscape amenity along McCaul.

Sustainable Design

- Provide deeper sustainability strategy to ensure long-term viability of OCADU.
- Lead by example.

Comments to the City

- This project presents the impetus to reimagine McCaul Street as a generous, high quality cultural campus public realm.
- As part of this reinvention the Panel encourages the City to rethink the balance between vehicles and people; providing more space for: pedestrians to move and gather, increased landscape amenity and the celebration of creativity.

Panel Commentary

The Panel thanked the design team for their presentation and several members complimented the team on their "compelling" visuals and images. The Panel noted familiarity with the prominent and culturally significant site, and many members thought the proposed addition was "provocative" and well done.

Moving forward the Panel thought further consideration was required in reconciling the massing, materiality and how the building engages with the public realm. Many members noted the proposal had the potential to add to the existing iconic architecture in the immediate area.

The Panel looked forward to seeing the project progress.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

Significant Site & Cultural Context

The Panel noted that the project was located at an incredibly prominent corner in a very unique and important area for the city. Several members noted the cultural opportunity in the area and other members reflected on the great diversity in the city and public realm including how each neighbourhood has its own identity. One member noted the historical connection to the Group of Seven with the area.
Many members commented that the project was located in one of their favourite parts of the city. Various members commented on the "exuberance", "charm", and "anti-gravitational" nature of the existing architecture and many members also noted the value and success of Grange Park.

However, the Panelists pointed out that the project was also located on a very tight site. Some members noted that public realm and the protection of both open spaces and existing iconic buildings was one of the mandates of the Design Review Panel.

The Panelists thought there should be further consideration of the existing significant context.

**Merging Old & New**
Looking at how this proposed building would be straddling an existing building, some members advised that this project could become a precedent for how the City could successfully merge old and new buildings, including from programmatic and phasing perspectives, while still celebrating the architecture of both the original building and new addition.

These members noted that this approach would provide a better alternative for how the City deals with existing buildings while increasing density.

**Site Plan Design**

**Public Realm**
The Panel advised that there was an issue with how the building addition pinches the sidewalk and impedes the public realm. However, many members felt this was an issue for the City to solve, commenting that the street no longer serves the functions required.

Some members noted that the AGO has set up an idea of outdoor rooms and wondered if that could be continued with this addition. The Panel pointed out that the corner of McCaul and Dundas is "very active". Several members felt that the public realm should be rethought by reallocating some of the road allowance to prioritize pedestrians in an expanded public realm.

**Public Realm in Winter Context**
Some members advised that further consideration of the public realm during winter was required. These members noted that attention should be made to ensuring the trip from the subway to the building was as efficient and enjoyable as possible.

**Pedestrian Realm**

**Expand the Public Realm on McCaul St**
Several Panelists noted that there is so much activity, life and pedestrian traffic at the corner of McCaul and Dundas that it is very uncomfortable to drive down. The Panel strongly felt that this section of McCaul needed a new ratio prioritizing pedestrian realm to vehicular traffic.

Many members noted that the street could become an incredibly important piece of public realm through complete or partial pedestrianization.

Some members commented that while they appreciate the street grid in Toronto, not every street needed to be for cars. Instead, the Panelists advised that different streets should be used to provide different functions.

A few members felt that this would become increasing important in the post-COVID world. One member suggested Section 37 funds be used to pay for a rethinking of McCaul.

**Creation of a Pedestrian Mews**
The Panel thought creating a pedestrian mews along this portion of McCaul made sense given the proximity of OCAD and other cultural institutions.
However, many members pointed out that there would still need to be streetcar access and some members suggested redeveloping the street similar to Roncesvalles Ave or Charlotte St. Other members noted Gould St, and Simcoe St as additional precedents.

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

**Visual Impact from the Street**
Many members noted that while the project was physically large, the visual impact of the proposal was overwhelming when viewed from the street due to the reduced size of the public realm and the already physically and visually congested corner at Dundas and McCaul.

Referring to the perspective looking down McCaul from Dundas, several members commented that there were a lot of competing shapes and forms, including the AGO, the tabletop building, the Rosalie Sharp Pavilion and various heritage architecture further down the street.

Several members were concerned that this proposal would be an overwhelming presence that would vie for a lot of attention on this already congested street.

**Built Form Massing & Height**
The Panel thought the proposed addition was an "intriguing" as well as a "powerful" structural solution to keep the building operational during construction. Several members felt the datum lines worked well both on the street and as a liner above the historic brick buildings around the park.

Many members appreciated the strict adherence to the datum lines of the tabletop building and some members commented that it created a nice dialogue between the two structures. A few members appreciated how the massing was being brought down to the street calling it "totem-like".

However, the Panelists noted that there were a lot of competing forms in the massing and advised keeping the geometry simple to help the addition integrate into the streetscape and scenery. Some members specifically thought the angled windows were distracting in the broader planar composition of forms and suggested simplifying them.

Several members felt that while the height and overarching datum lines seemed appropriate, the colour and plasticity of the skin needed further development.

**Service Entrances**
Some members pointed out that the existing service entrances to the north of the addition was a weak point. One member called it "a museum of service entrances" and other members noted the "blankness" to the area.

Various members wanted to see more consideration for this area noting that public buildings should provide something to the public.

**Visual Impact from Grange Park**
Many members felt that the view of the proposal from Grange Park unlocked the scheme. These members appreciated how the proposed addition appeared as an autonomous object in conversation with the tabletop.

Some members felt that the form as viewed from the park was "sculptural" and other members thought there was a composition of forms working together while protecting the existing views of the AGO, tabletop and park.

However, when looking at the proposed cladding the Panel questioned whether the addition was adequately contributing to the existing iconic buildings. Several members thought the formal and textural language needed further consideration to compliment the iconic "prismatic" forms.
Façade Materiality
Several members advised using the masonry base as a starting point for the expression of the addition. A few members questioned whether Porter House was an appropriate precedent, noting that in Porter House the brick is primarily viewed close up and the metal materiality is only seen from a distance.

While many Panel members felt the line drawings were acceptable, the Panelists called into question the texture, uniformity, plasticity and width of the cladding. Many members also noted concern that the façade was too monolithic and overbearing.

Looking at the woven quill texture, while the Panel liked the concept of the organic billowing forms wrapping the addition, the members felt the texture and plasticity was not coming through. The Panel advised developing the plasticity of the skin such that it didn't read as a surface graphic.

Various members noted that the pattern was competing with the overhangs resulting in a competing vocabulary between building form and skin treatment. Many members felt that the skin was also competing with the surrounding iconic buildings. Some members additionally cautioned the design team about appropriating First Nations' forms.

Façade Colour
The Panel had difficulty with the compounding impact of the shown colour options and lack of skin plasticity. The Panelists agreed that introducing a colour onto the entirety of the façade made sense and was "wonderful" given the "cacophony of colours" on the surrounding buildings.

Many members preferred the greenish colour of the two options shown; however, many other members thought the green looked like an "army barracks" and felt a third colour choice should be pursued.

Several members supported pursuing a metal cladding that changes colour with light, noting it could both appeal for an institution such as OCAD and allow for a stronger dialogue between the existing buildings. Other members advised further consideration of different lighting conditions, including how the façade would read at night such as through the incorporation of lighting.

Elevator Core
Many Panel members were concerned about the pinch point at grade that would be created by the landing of the elevators in the addition. Some members wanted the elevator core to become more internal to the building.

Several members thought this portion of the addition would be improved if the elevator was not a blank face on McCaul St. Instead, these members advised activating the elevator façade. On the other hand, a few members noted appreciation for the bareness of the McCaul façade.

Many members noted appreciation for the backlit glazing as the envelope turns the corners; however, they felt the sides still felt very heavy from a distance. Many members thought the McCaul St windows felt ominous and too small. A few members additionally suggested enlarging the OCAD name on the window.

Various members suggested the elevator core and blank façade could be subject to an art competition and many members suggested bringing the glazing up the core to expose the elevator and further introduce are on each floor. Many members felt that lifting the skirt to expose the elevator core could also help mediate between the street and large scale of the building.
Some members, while appreciating the intention of having the addition come down onto the "peg leg" of the elevator wondered if the influence of the new architecture could be spread out more laterally down the street rather than consolidating vertically to one point.

**Landscape Strategy**

**Loss of Existing Trees**
Many members thought the loss of linden trees in the public realm was unfortunate. Some members noted that the loss of these trees would change the views from the north as one enters the site. The Panel encouraged reintroducing trees along the McCaul frontage to reinstate the view.

**Seating & Gathering**
Many members thought the seating and gathering spaces made sense, but they encouraged developing a larger variety of seating options in different places, including both individual options and backed options to aid in creating spaces for people to gather.

One member noted that the existing spaces with triangles seemed to be popular.

**Relocation of Bike Racks**
Many members thought the relocation and orientation of the bike racks was generally successful. However, these members advised a larger provision of bike racks would be necessary. Some members suggested including them in more locations, and one member suggested have additional bike storage internal to the building as well.

**Sustainable Design**

**Opportunity for Sustainable Infrastructure**
Looking at image number 22 in the presentation, some Panel members pointed out that the roof of this proposal as well as of the existing table top had a lot of potential to contribute to sustainable infrastructure.

Some suggestions included expanded green roofs, making it inhabitable, and participating in a demonstration of solar panels.

One member pointed out that much of the adjacent neighbourhood has a direct sight line to the OCAD roofs meaning that implementing sustainable infrastructure on the roofs would have an educational effect for the broader neighbourhood.