

# CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

## MINUTES: MEETING 7 – June 20, 2019

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday June 20, 2019, in Committee Room 2, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 2:25pm.

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### Members of the Design Review Panel

*Members  
Present*

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

*\*Absent for First Item*

*\*\*Absent for Third and Fourth Items*

*##Conflict Second Item*

*#Conflict Third Item*

*†Chair of the meeting*

*^Absent for Last Item*

### Design Review Panel Coordinator

Meredith Vaga: Urban Design, City Planning Division

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### CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meeting which was held on May 30, 2019 by email.

### MEETING 7 INDEX

- i. Yonge Street North Planning Study (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)
- ii. 300-304 The East Mall (1<sup>st</sup> Review)
- iii. 176-178 Front Street East & 33 Sherbourne Street (1<sup>st</sup> Review)
- iv. 2 Bloor Street West (1<sup>st</sup> Review)

# YONGE STREET NORTH PLANNING STUDY

## DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

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DESIGN REVIEW Second Review

APPLICATION City Study

**PRESENTATIONS:**

CITY STAFF Guy Matthew & Victoria Fusz,  
Community Planning; Rong Yu,  
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:

1. The consultants proposed tall buildings in the nodes around the future subway stations with mid-rise along Yonge Street and transition areas surrounding the nodes. Are these the appropriate building typologies? Are there other characteristics and particular issues along this stretch of Yonge Corridor that the study should be aware of?
2. Are the draft Secondary Plan boundaries appropriate or should other areas be included?
3. The consultant proposed a network of parks and open spaces. Is the network appropriate? If so, are there things that can be done to compliment it?

## Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the City for bringing this project to the panel. The project had been dormant since 2014 but has been re-launched in response to the new subway extension and heightened development interest in the subject area. Generally, it is an area in transition and therefore at a critical point in its history. There are other areas in the City undergoing transition; in this sense the project represents the opportunity to develop a new model that learns from and possibly reinvents earlier policies and planning that weren't as successful as anticipated.

The Yonge Street North Planning Study will consider questions of built form, transportation, conceptual parks and open spaces, community services and facilities, and services and infrastructure. Next steps include updating the existing vision and community consultation, leading into the preparation of draft Secondary Plan policies in late 2019/early 2020.

Consideration for more development was suggested in the following areas:

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

- Perform a more substantial re-think of the area and initial work, in the context of current development trends, applications, and provincial intentions, and the particular nature of this stretch of Yonge Street;

- Due to the rapid pace of development, consider either reducing the study to a five to ten-year study/plan **OR** increase the study area, to include the area north of Steeles in particular;
- A strong sense of the road network and roles of the individual street should be defined through the Study.

### **Site Plan Design**

- n/a

### **Pedestrian Realm**

- The development of a neighbourhood specific liveability vision as part of the Study is critical;
- Planning for underground pedestrian connections is warranted.

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

- See context, above.

### **Landscape Strategy**

- More substantive amount of open space than what is currently envisioned is needed;
- A major park on Yonge Street, is not warranted; open space could be developed at intersections/nodes instead.

### **Sustainable Design**

- Environmental conditions are inhospitable to pedestrian and cycling comfort and safety along this stretch of Yonge Street; urban morphology should be defined to mitigate this;
- Consider innovative storm water management as a critical piece of the Plan.

### **Comments to the City**

- The Study should aim to be aspirational, to set a new benchmark in public realm design and planning.

### **Panel Commentary**

The Panel thanked the study team for their presentation, along with everyone who had put their efforts into this project thus far. Several members thought the study was located in an interesting but challenging part of the city. Some members found the study "initially puzzling".

Moving forward, the Panel thought a robust vision needed to be developed and used to establish clear parameters and guiding principles for the future of the area. The Panel looked forward to seeing the evolution of the project.

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

#### Develop Strong Vision for the Project

Many members found the document "opaque" and difficult to analyze. Several members pointed out the work to date was primarily an inventory and mapping, and felt that ultimately the study should make stronger recommendations.

The Panel was concerned that the study was perpetuating what had been done in the south on Yonge without addressing the existing issues there. The Panel advised that the vision should establish livability objectives that could be used as a guiding principle for redevelopment.

### Rethink of Context

The Panel felt the capacity of the document needed to be considered in a different way and advised it needed a "substantial rethink" due to the physical and policy context. Many members thought the study should be "thinking bigger and more broadly" and felt it should be more aspirational.

### Master Plan Precedents

The Panel advised developing a clear vision by looking at the project as a character study. Many members suggested looking at Cerdà's *Eixample* plan for Barcelona and Berlage's *Plan Zuid* for South Amsterdam. The Panel thought this study was an opportunity to set a new urban model.

### Short Term vs. Long Term Proposal

A few members suggested instead doing a smaller 5-10 year study plan that focused on specific areas. Some members thought either a short term study or studying a larger area that included Steeles Ave would be more successful approaches than the one currently proposed.

### Consider Natural Heritage Context

Some members thought the study should investigate the agricultural heritage of the area, as well as some of the geological aspects including ravines etc. These members suggested the natural heritage could be reflected in the open space plan and aspirations for a green network.

### Steeles Avenue & Cross Municipal Networks

The Panel pointed out that Steeles Avenue was a "giant node" not being captured by the study. Several members additionally noted that to the north of the study boundaries there were two other municipalities, Markham and Vaughan, coming together at Steeles and the Toronto city limits.

The Panel questioned how these three networks would meet each other as well as how the Steeles node would impact the study area.

### Future Area Transition & Change

Several Panel members noted that with the proposed densification and future area transition the study needed to balance the existing low form of development with the "massive" ongoing growth.

Many members thought there was a duty to represent both the existing residents while imagining a new place for future residents. Several members did not think there was "enough reward for the change that is going to inevitably occur".

Thinking about issues around transition in scale and density delivery, some members thought townhouses would be a form of development that supports the impact of the transition and change that will take place on Yonge St.

## **Site Plan Design**

### Redefine Study Boundaries

The Panel found the study boundaries difficult to parse. Some members, reflecting on the pattern for density to transform outwards from the corridor into the adjacent residential neighbourhoods, wondered whether a larger boundary "window" would be more appropriate.

### Proposed Nodes

While the Panel understand the logic behind placing increased density at transportation nodes, they wondered if the study was missing a "more subtle opportunity". Several members instead suggested spreading the density across the Yonge corridor rather than having two large nodes.

Some members pointed out that when the nodes are concentrated at either end of the study boundary the area in between lacks activity or activation. One member suggested testing a single

node in the middle of the study area, noting that then there would be two ways to access transit, leading to a more activated public realm supporting commercial areas.

#### Yonge Street as a Great Street

Several Panel members advised further defining what the nature of Yonge St wanted to be in this part of the city. Many members supported developing Yonge as a great street, but some members cautioned the study team against asking Yonge to do too much. The Panel agreed Yonge should become a "fabulous place".

An example of an existing great public street mentioned was North Michigan Avenue in Chicago due to its "great avenue feeling" from its size, weight and rhythm. Some members suggested interspersing more green space into the street fabric would help develop Yonge as a great street.

#### Urban Network

The Panel felt that the road network, including the roles of the individual streets, needed to be better defined as a part of the study. Some members were happy to see there was no proposal to reconfigure the roads to the rear of Yonge St as had been done directly south.

However, a few other members noting that part of the vision for the REImagine Yonge south was to use Beecroft Rd and Doris Ave as service roads and hoped that infrastructure could be taken advantage of and extended north.

#### Public Realm

Several Panel members thought that while the study had good intentions with regards to building typologies and density, the public realm seemed to be an afterthought. Many members advised developing the public realm as a living street.

#### More Substantive Open Space

The Panel did not think enough open space was being provided by the study, and felt it should be redeveloped as an open space network. Some members commented that the open space diagram shown in the presentation was a difficult document to read.

Looking at the large central park proposed in the diagram, many members pointed out that it would only be realized through a "radical transformation" via expropriation. The Panel noted that it would be much more likely for the nodes to become the places of larger open space assemblies.

#### Green Network

The Panel felt there was an opportunity to develop a green network in the study area. Many members suggested trying to put the parks where the density will be. Some members pointed to the linear parkland that is being developed by the TRCA in Scarborough.

A few members felt that if some areas of Yonge weren't pedestrian friendly, directing people to one of the secondary streets directly east or west could be part of the vision for a green network. A member noted that downtown a green pedestrian network was being proposed east of Yonge.

#### Park at Centrepont Mall

Some members commented that they were not sure a large park on Yonge St was warranted. They suggested instead Centrepont Mall at Steeles and Yonge was a big opportunity for open space.

#### Density & Liveability

Many members felt that the livability of the area, including total open space provided, needed further consideration against the amount of proposed density. Some members felt that the study was missing how the area would become a "truly great quality [and] livable neighbourhood". Several members thought the plan needed to be more ambitious.

## Transit

Some members felt the future transit growth was another missed opportunity by the study. In addition to the potential future routes, a few members pointed out that there was an opportunity to redevelop the large TTC parking lot at Finch.

## Develop Area as Mixed-Use

The Panel advised that the area needed to support a variety of uses and spheres of operations and felt it was important the area didn't become a "complete residential haven".

## **Pedestrian Realm**

### Walkability & Pedestrian Safety

Many Panel members pointed out that along this stretch of the Yonge corridor Yonge St is very wide. The Panel advised that pedestrian safety and resilience needed to be addressed as part of the public realm. Looking at walkability, some members commented that pedestrians in the area "feel like [they're] walking sideways above a car highway".

Many members pointed out that many people choose to walk on the secondary streets to avoid Yonge. A few members suggested creating a robust secondary route for pedestrians using the secondary streets and/or open space network.

### Lighting Infrastructure

Some members noted that the area needs pedestrian specific lighting along the secondary streets to support walkability within the neighbourhood beyond Yonge St.

### Intersection at Drewry Ave/Cummer Ave

Looking at the Drewry Ave/Cummer Ave and Yonge St intersection, a few members noted that due to the tight ROW, with increased density that intersection would become dangerously crowded. These members advised preemptively spreading the pedestrian movement north and south. One member suggested that a new signalized crossing just north of Cummer Ave would be helpful.

### Establish Underground Pedestrian Connection

Some Panel members recommended planning for underground pedestrian connections, particularly at the large nodes and subway stations, in a way that does not detract from the surface connections or animation on the street.

The members noted out that an underground connection could help manage crush loads as well as provide an option during inclement weather or for those who have trouble getting across the light.

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

### Learn from what has Come Before

Looking at the proposed built form, the Panel thought that it "felt like a lot more of the same". The members were concerned that the study was repeating issues that were evident further south along Yonge as well as elsewhere in the city.

The Panel advised looking at what worked and what was problematic, and using the knowledge to rethink or reinvent what was done elsewhere. Many members noted that people were living in different ways today. The Panel wondered how this project could become a model for the future.

### Explore Different Building Typologies

The Panel hoped there was an opportunity to densify the area with forms that weren't only "pure tower/podium between midrises". Many members felt this was an issue occurring throughout the city where large new development blocks "take over existing smaller scale residential patterns and street patterns".

The Panel advised extending the architectural language of the proposed forms, possibility through a series of hybrid typologies that could propose a variety of different options for how density could be distributed.

#### Squash & Spread

The Panel thought there needed to be a better transition in scale between the existing low rise neighbourhood and future developments. Many members suggested looking at alternative forms such as midrise buildings with street frontage retail. Barcelona was noted as a strong precedent.

Several members thought a "squash and spread" approach to form would help with livability, walkability and cycling. The Panel suggested looking at a type of building fabric that spreads out a bit more and is "more urbane" in its neighbourhood creation as opposed to the already implemented "tubular planning system" and tower/podium approach.

### **Sustainable Design**

#### Stormwater Management

Some Panel members encouraged the study team to consider stormwater management as one of the parameters. A member noted that stormwater management is something being grappled with at a municipal level as well as globally. The Panel thought all planning studies should address water management in both the immediate and long term future.

#### Wellness & Sustainability

In terms of sustainability and wellness, many members felt the environmental conditions in the study area were inhospitable to pedestrian and cycling comfort and safety.

#### Mitigate Shadow & Wind Conditions

Some members pointed out that the wind conditions in the area are already so strong that the open spaces aren't used. The Panel felt that there was a need to link the intention of what the study was trying to achieve with the health and wellness of the occupants to see whether those intentions were being met and delivered.

A few members wondered whether any tower forms could be located only on one side of the street to reduce shadow impacts and ensure sunshine.

# 300-304 THE EAST MALL

## DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

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DESIGN REVIEW First Review

APPLICATION Rezoning

**PRESENTATIONS:**

CITY STAFF Nicole Ivanov, Community Planning; Maryam Sabzevari, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Quadrangle Architects



VOTE Support with Condition\* – 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:

- **Built Form Massing, Height & Articulation View from Highway 427]**  
The tall buildings located at the subject property, along with the tall buildings at the neighbouring properties to the north and on the west side of HWY 427 at Eva Road, could shape an interesting skyline and act as a gateway to Downtown Toronto. Please review and comment on the architectural character of the towers and if there are articulations necessary to contribute to the skyline.
- **Landscape Strategy [network of open spaces]**  
As part of this application and the applications for the neighbouring properties to the north, we strived to create a network of parks and public open spaces connected by an internal road. Please review and comment on whether or not the proposal adequately responds to the achievement of this vision.
- **Additional comments for consideration during the forthcoming Site Plan design process**

## Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the City and the proponent for bringing this project to the panel. The package reviewed today is a refinement, based on staff and community feedback of the rezoning materials submitted in 2018. The proposal involves the demolition of an existing office complex, and its replacement with a mixed-use development that includes a public park.

This is a project that transforms a single use development into one that balances a diversity of uses, on a site that is bordered by a major highway and a major arterial. Other projects of a similar nature have both preceded and will follow it. Critical to them all is the balance of an appropriate public realm, liveability (including air quality and noise), and good urban form. The East Mall proposal represents an ambitious intensification of a challenging site, aiming to create active frontages throughout the block and distributing density in a manner that optimizes the liveability and humanity of the development.



Consideration for more development was suggested in the following areas:

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

- Consider flipping the site plan on the east-west axis; this would shift the focus of the architectural or street edge from Bloor Street to the East Mall;
- Review the location of the townhomes, considering the notion that the office use could create a better relationship to the street in this location;
- Review the articulation of the west building facades with a view to ensuring that they respond to their location on a major highway.

### **Site Plan Design**

- Review the proposal with a view to better defining and demonstrating the "front door" or "front doors" of the project;
- Transportation and traffic design is well planned and considered.

### **Pedestrian Realm**

- Develop a more robust connection between the POPS and the park, and generally between all green and pedestrian areas/connections and amenities, including the school;
- Review whether the south east corner is the best location for the park.

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

- Articulation of the three towers was well received.

### **Landscape Strategy**

- See Pedestrian Realm, above.

### **Sustainable Design**

- Develop a much more robust commitment/demonstration of environmental responsibility.

### **Comments to the City**

- n/a

### **Panel Commentary**

The Panel thanked the design team and noted that they had a very complete and well-presented package. Many members complimented the renderings and the Panel noted it was easy to understand the proposal with the context around it. Several members felt the design had been skillfully evolved from its earlier version and was a substantive improvement on what exists on site.

The Panel had many questions around quality of life considerations, particularly with reference to the proximity to the 400 series highway and the need to develop an appropriate design response. The Panel looked forward to seeing the further evolution of the project.

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

#### Urbanize a Difficult Site

Several Panel members felt there had been a substantial improvement to the site and appreciated the effort to urbanize a difficult area. Many members noted that this was a remarkable opportunity to push the project further to develop a better model for sites along major roadways and highways.

#### Existing Road Network

#### **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

Many members pointed out the site has two very different existing road conditions: Hwy 427 which functionally acts as a "vast river" and the East Mall which acts as a "modernist collector" connecting various building typologies from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but not offering a lot in terms of pedestrian walkability. They felt the proposed north-south road would be the urban street for the area.

#### Gibbs St On-Ramp

Some members pointed out that what happens at Gibbs St intersection needed further consideration regarding how the intersection of "small public domain" would function with the Gibbs St on-ramp to the highway.

### **Site Plan Design**

#### Location of Density, Open Space & Urban Edge

Several members felt further consideration was needed regarding where the density and open space on the site wanted to be beyond the idea of creating an "iconic gateway" between Hwy 427 and the neighbourhood beyond.

The Panel questioned which street the urban edge of the project should be located, specifically whether it was on Bloor St or on the new street internal to the block.

Many members questioned where the "front door" of the development was located, or whether it had multiple front doors and in which case how they would be treated differently.

#### New North-South Road

The Panel thought the proposal for a new north-south road that picks up on the existing road to the north was a "really good move". Many members pointed out that it would promote marketability. Some members noted that it provided improved parking and servicing access. A member felt it was "perfectly logical" how the transportation was arranged on the site.

#### New Park Location & Gateway

Many Panelists felt the location of the park could make a good connection and gateway into the neighbourhood; however, many other Panelists felt the proposed location was not the best place regarding active and full demographic uses.

Some members appreciated the proximity of the proposed park location to the school as well as its visibility from Bloor St. A few members noted the park would have good sun exposure. Some members felt a building would be more appropriate at that corner and the park moved elsewhere.

#### Investigate Flipping Site Organization

A member suggested flipping the site organization north to south to bring the focus of the architecture to the Bloor St edge as opposed to along the East Mall. This member noted that the East Mall was not a street well contained or well defined by architecture. They thought the East Mall would benefit from a park more central to the school and noted the park could be linked to the MTO ROW.

#### Proposed Townhouse Location

The Panel questioned the proposed townhouse locations at grade. Looking at the townhouses proposed along Gibbs Rd, some members felt they didn't have a "good sense" of how the front doors would relate to a highway access ramp, particularly regarding comfort and noise.

Looking at the townhouses proposed for Bloor St, many members thought there was an opportunity for different spaces along Bloor. One member felt the daycare would be better located on Bloor, and other members noted there were a number of community or office "destination places" that would benefit from being at grade and could offer a better public realm relationship to the street.

## **Pedestrian Realm**

### Enhance Proposed North-South Road

A few members wondered whether the new road could be approached as a pedestrian space that cars have access to. Some members felt that the courtyard configurations seemed to support this approach and many members suggested incorporating great planting, lighting and civic elements.

Many members advised further enhancing the pedestrian clearways to make the road a more comfortable space to walk through. Some members pointed out a fair bit of traffic will likely be going through the street. One member suggested using the laybys on the east side of the road as an opportunity to bring the street trees closer to the curb and the walkway closer to the building face.

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

### Built Form Massing & Articulation

Several members felt the massing of the project was successful. Some members appreciated the simple form and diversity of colour. Many members commented that the articulation of the towers was also well done, and appreciated that although the towers were all connected there was a diversity of form and materiality that was skillfully managed.

However, the Panel strongly felt that the massing and articulation along Hwy 427 and Gibbs Rd needed to be considered further due to the proximity to noise and pollution.

### Townhouse Typology

The Panel questioned the decision to privatize the ground floor space into very conventional, small townhouses. They felt the townhouse typology needed further consideration into the long term adaptability and flexibility of the ground floor. Some members wondered if a "less conventional townhouse" could be explored that was more resilient and adaptable to a range of futures.

### Opportunity for Courtyard Space

Some members suggested cutting back the proposed four storey podium piece to the south to create a courtyard space with direct access to Bloor St that was still contained by architecture on the east side.

### Proximity to 400 Series Highway

While they understood the desire to develop a gateway from the highway, several members noted the issue of creating a transition in scale towards the neighbourhoods and parks meant that the bulk of the density will be against a 400 series highway.

The Panel urged for more consideration of the architectural expression along Hwy 427, specifically by developing a response to the condition that is very different from any buildings inboard from a highway. Many members pointed out it would not be appropriate, for example, to have balconies on that façade.

Some members suggested having the south part of the podium go to the property line to create more of an acoustic buffer from the highway. A few members suggested looking at Ralph Erskine's Byker Wall in Newcastle upon Tyne for an example where the architecture responds to a major highway condition.

## **Landscape Strategy**

### Green & Open Space Network

The Panel advised developing a more robust connection between the park and POPS space. Many members suggested expanding a greenway along Gibbs Rd to connect it to the school in a more

substantive way. Some members noted the existing dog run along the MTO setback in the north that could also be utilized in the creation of a larger green and open space network for the area.

#### Future POPS Space

The Panel thought the POPS space needed a lot of consideration through landscaping and programming to ensure it didn't become an unused or "forlorn" space due to the amount of lobby space and lack of continual activation. Several members suggested incorporating some movement of program through the building itself.

#### Green Roof & Increased Biodiversity

Many members encouraged the design team to increase the biodiversity in terms of the proposed green roof and parkland. These members also suggested looking at how the schoolboard management could be supportive to both the green roof and the parkland.

Some members pointed out that the green roof is the view being given to the residential units.

### **Sustainable Design**

#### Develop Comprehensive Sustainability Plan

The Panel wanted to see a more comprehensive sustainability plan that addressed both energy and non-energy related sustainability matters. In general, the Panelists encouraged a more robust commitment to environmental responsibility, for both the open spaces as well as the built form and building envelope.

#### Built Form Energy Plan

Many members pointed out that the high density and interesting mixed uses could be used to create synergy when developing the energy plan. The Panel recommended looking at the overall energy consumption to balance and take advantage of the different needs of the various uses.

#### Quality & Noise

Several Panel members raised the issue of air quality and noise for spaces adjacent to highways. A few members noted that the pollution around the 400 series highways in Toronto was "heavy duty".

#### Support Active Community Uses

Many Panel members wanted to see more support for active community uses in the park. These members questioned who the intended users of the park were (e.g. students? residents?) and noted that the water jets and play area seemed to be intended for small kids.

The Panel wanted to see more active and passive programming, including seating areas and safe spaces, to ensure the park was useable for all the intended users.

### **\*Vote**

The Panel voted to support the proposal with the condition that serious consideration be given to responding to the proximity to the 400 series highway as the design develops. Specifically, the Panel wanted the project to evolve keeping in mind that the different aspects needed to respond to the various conditions, and specifically the condition of Highway 427.

A more general comment not tied to the vote of consideration, the Panel also asked the City to offer some information on a citywide basis regarding the issue of the interface between air quality in the city, any mitigating measures and concentrations of density.

# 176-178 FRONT STREET EAST & 33 SHERBOURNE STREET

## DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

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DESIGN REVIEW First Review

#### PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Henry Tang, Community Planning;  
Myron Boyko, Urban Design; Paul  
Maka, Heritage Preservation  
Services

DESIGN TEAM Giannone Petricone Associates



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. Advise on how to create a better built form fit for the remaining historic character of Front St. E.
2. The placement and programming of the different uses on the ground floor in order to allow for better flows of pedestrians, cyclists, vehicular movement and loading movement.
3. Integration of the heritage contributing properties as part of the development.

## Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the City and the proponent for bringing this project to the panel. Located on what is currently a gas station site within the boundaries of the Town of York, the project is an essay on the creation of better built form 'fit' for the old town – design that deeply considers and delivers form and materiality appropriate to the area, and thoughtfully integrates heritage properties into a vibrant public realm.

Consideration for more development was suggested in the following areas:

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

- The brick fins and use of brick were well received, but there isn't a sufficient amount of brick used – more brick and thicker fins are needed;
- Ensure appropriate offset of new architecture from the heritage buildings.

### Site Plan Design

- n/a

### Pedestrian Realm

- See Built Form, below.

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

- Podium height and articulation were successful, though the tower height should be reduced;
- Tower separation should be increased to 12.5m to mitigate the impact of the development to the south;
- While the concept of the 'Largo' was well-received, the articulation of the podium and ground plane contrasts the well-received simplicity and 'gentleness' of the tower above.

### **Landscape Strategy**

- See Built Form, above.

### **Sustainable Design**

- Tower proposes too much glass; amount of brick should be increased to improve thermal performance and heritage integration.

### **Comments to the City**

- n/a

### **Panel Commentary**

The Panel thanked the design team for a "really good" and "complete" presentation as well as an organized drawing package. Many members felt that overall the proposal was well executed and appreciated the integration of the adjacent heritage properties.

Many members thought the proposed form, materiality and public realm was overall a contextually appropriate response to the important heritage district. Generally the Panel felt the project was moving in a good direction and were looking forward to seeing the evolution of the design.

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

#### Original 10 Blocks of York

The Panel noted that the project was located in a very important historic part of the city. Some members pointed out that the area also illustrated a "fantastic timeline" for Toronto, including the 10 original blocks of York, the significant industrial heritage. The proximity to David Crombie's "remarkable" and "vibrant" St. Lawrence neighbourhood to the south was also noted.

Several members commented that they enjoyed the area and felt the city had been providing stewardship for many years around its evolution, including the preservation of the historic character of both the 10 blocks and of Front St E.

#### Brick & Mercantile Context

Several members appreciated the idea of drawing inspiration from the mercantile bank, and the Panel liked the examples shown of brick buildings, noting that bricks play an important, fundamental base material role in the whole area. The Panel advised further developing this historic materiality context through the use of more, integrated masonry materiality and articulation.

#### Adjacent Development & Setbacks

Generally speaking, the Panel found the proposal to be calm and elegantly composed, particularly when contrasted against the bulkier new developments and proposals in the adjacent area.

Many members felt that the development proposal directly to the south of the site was very large and "aggressive". These members suggested, in contrast, further refining the gentle nature of this proposal.

### **Site Plan Design**

### Public Realm & Ground Floor

The Panel supported the expansion to the public realm. Many members noted there would be a lot happening at grade. While the Panel acknowledged this was in contrast to the "simplicity above" they encouraged further rationalization of the ground floor.

### Transportation & Loading

Some members noted that while there wasn't a lot of flexibility in terms of where the various functions could be located, the orientation of the parking and loading seemed to make sense.

With the residential lobby located off Sherbourne, many members were concerned by potential conflicts between the existing bike lane and drop off activity at the lobby. They suggested directing the lobby functions onto Front, noting it were more in keeping with the character of that street.

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

### Response to Heritage & Relationship to Adjacent Heritage Buildings

The Panel supported the preservation of the two heritage buildings on site and liked the strategy to have distinct articulation between the old and new components. Many members pointed out that the project was sited in a heritage conservation district. Several members liked the overarching approach to "layering history" within the architectural composition.

Looking at the massing strategy and treatment of the adjacent heritage components, the Panel advised further pushing back the glass reveals from the heritage buildings and further developing the detailing around the offsets to ensure there was an appropriate contrast between the old and new forms as well as enough breathing room for the heritage structures at grade.

Many members noted that the connections to the heritage buildings were "incredibly important" and should be carefully developed as the project evolves.

### Podium Articulation

The Panel appreciated how the proposed building related to the adjacent existing datums. Many members thought the podium height and articulation were a supportable composition of parts. The Panel advised further simplifying and refining the podium articulation to ensure appropriate contextual fit in the heritage district.

### Built Form Massing

Several Panel members expressed appreciation for the delicate approach to the massing, and the Panel advised further simplifying the form for a "lighter, slimmer" and quieter building in contrast to its neighbours.

Reflecting on the corner aspect of the bank typology precedent, some members suggested both a horizontal element as well as a "heaviness" on the base were missing from the proposal.

A few members suggested looking at Bertrand Goldberg's Marina City in Chicago for an example of an orthogonal and Cartesian urban structure contrasted against a stylized building "moment" that creates different forms in the skyline.

### Streetwall

Looking at the streetwall, several Panel members noted there were a lot of moving parts at grade, including canted frames, glass walls and the heritage architecture. While they appreciated the need for a vibrant urban condition, the Panel advised developing a hierarchy to calm down some of the complexity of the moving pieces.

### Tower Separation Distances

The Panel had differing perspectives on the proposed tower separation distances. Many members commented that meeting the 12.5m setback would be of assistance at the street level as well as mitigate the impact of the development to the south.

However, some other members commented that they did not think increasing the podium height was a solution to achieving the setback and smaller floorplate.

#### Materiality

The Panel thought there was not enough brick, especially on the lower portion of the building. The Panelists felt that the brick fins were too thin. Many members pointed out that just above the retail "all of a sudden glass starts appearing" while above the podium level the brick disappears into the glass balconies.

The Panel advised incorporating more brick heaviness and continuity to refine the materiality on the lower levels. Many members pointed out that more masonry on the podium would better respond to the heritage context of the area.

#### Vertical Fins

The Panel thought the vertical fin aesthetic was an interesting evolution of thinking about the proposed form and masonry expression; however, the Panel felt in the current submission the fins were too thin.

Several members suggested considering the masonry fins as structural elements or piers. Many members felt that with further refinement the vertical fins could give a really distinct, contextually appropriate character to the building.

#### Height Considerations

Although they recognized that corner buildings should be markers and thresholds in general, one Panel member felt that the proposed 37 storeys was too tall. Looking at the precedents shown, this member suggested reducing the height would be a better fit and more easily supportable.

### **Landscape Strategy**

#### Proposed Plaza & Widened Sidewalks

Many members supported the move to widen the sidewalk as well as the public realm through the proposed plaza. Some members noted that the inclusion of trees was "welcome" in the plaza.

#### Decorative Pavers

A few members questioned the decision to incorporate decorative paving throughout the public realm. They suggested instead consolidating the decorative paving to where the building steps back to emphasize the "mini plaza feel".

### **Sustainable Design**

#### Impact of Façade System on Energy

Several Panel members were concerned by the impact the façade would have on energy consumption, specifically via the masonry, the continuous balconies and the fully glazed façade system behind. The Panel wanted further improvement on the building's energy performance.

Many members pointed out that the balconies needed to be fully insulated with thermal breaks and various members commented that there was proportionally too much glazing on the facades. The Panel advised that increasing the brick on the facade would help with the thermal performance.

Looking at the masonry, some members pointed out that the deep vertical fins with glazing behind were traditionally used as exterior shading devices to provide glare control while reducing solar



gain. These members then suggested developing the vertical fins as structural components to: support the balconies, provide thermal breaks and reduce solar gain as well as strengthen the response to context.

#### Toronto Green Standard

The Panel appreciated seeing a fully indicated sustainability strategy; however, many members noted that the project was only targeting Tier 1 of the Toronto Green Standard. The Panel encouraged the design team to go to Tier 2 if possible. One member noted there were still credits they might be able to pursue in support of Tier 2.

## 2 BLOOR STREET WEST

### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

#### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

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DESIGN REVIEW	First Review
APPLICATION	Rezoning
<i>PRESENTATIONS:</i>	
CITY STAFF	James Parakh, Urban Design
DESIGN TEAM	Giannone Petricone Associates, Janet Rosenberg & Studio
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. The public realm concept (which includes the Cumberland Street Park as well as the Yonge Street POPS) as it relates to The East of Bay Public Realm Plan.
2. The Built Form Massing and in particular the conceptual design of the two western most buildings. Specifically should they be designed as a pair or as two distinct buildings.
3. The Podium Design as it relates to Cumberland Street.

### Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the City and the proponent for bringing this project to the panel. Located on a challenging site with an existing and approved redevelopment scheme in place, this revised scheme is a thesis on how to build in a connected, optimistic and forward-thinking way in this area of heightened development and diverse scales.

The proposal is one that delights and surprises, and builds on the careful planning the City has developed for the area, in a way that is clear and complementary to the area's existing and planned context.

Consideration for more development was suggested in the following areas:

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

- Shadow projected on Ketchum site is problematic and should be addressed;
- Graphic architectural expression could be refined, subdued.

### Site Plan Design

- See notes above and below.

### Pedestrian Realm

- It was noted that appropriate programming would be key to the success of the concourse and the park, and that this aspect of the project should be very carefully considered and planned.

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

- Podium would better support the public realm with a more robust colonnade;
- Critical to the success of the development to create an invitation to enter the concourse from the park/grade.

## **Landscape Strategy**

- Current landscape is predominantly hard scape, which will make storm water management difficult; develop soft scape/storm water management infrastructure.

## **Sustainable Design**

- Develop a robust and appropriate sustainability strategy for the building and site.

## **Comments to the City**

- n/a

## **Panel Commentary**

The Panel thanked the design team for their presentation and submission. In addition to the consultants, the Panelists also thanked City staff and the owners and developers of the site for bringing forward a "wonderful" and "clear proposal for a complicated project".

The Panel noted the project was an enormous ask for the area, but also thought it was a "really great give" in terms of the public realm and placemaking. Some members felt the proposal was a thesis on "how to build a connected, optimistic and forward thinking" project in an area of considerable development.

While they acknowledged it was still early in the process, the members advised further development and refinement to the built form and public realm. The Panel thought the project was very unique and looked forward to seeing it again.

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

### Connected Public Realm Network

The Panel thought the proposed public realm network would be a great improvement for the area. Several members felt it met the goals that Urban Design staff had been espousing for the area including connectivity and a great new public realm.

Many members pointed out that the area also has "a great inventory of really usable elegant public space". The Panel commended the design team on developing an additional layer of "Mondrian-like" connections to the existing monuments and places of interest in the city as part of the scheme.

In addition to the strong civic nature of the proposed public realm network, several members complimented the design team for bringing a degree of magic and whimsy to the design.

### Provision of Public Community Services

Many Panel members thought the incorporation of public community services into the project was really important, especially as the city becomes more of a "high rise high density city".

### Cumberland Street

Many members supported the move to establish Cumberland as a kind of "unique street" between Bay and Yonge. One member felt it could become an evolved model of an intimate street.

## **Site Plan Design**

### Programming

The Panel thought that programming would be key to the success of the public realm and concourse spaces. Many members felt that flexible programming in the winter should be used throughout the project.

Due to the subterranean location of the community hub, the Panel felt a lot of attention would be required to ensure the space was successful. Several members wondered whether spaces at grade could also be for the hub. Some members commented that not all of the open spaces needed to exclusively cater to office workers.

### 50 Bloor & Critchley Lane Connection

The Panel thought it was very important to keep working with 50 Bloor to resolve the screen and Critchley Lane connection on the north-east corner of the site. Several members commented that otherwise it could have a negative impact on the enjoyment of the space.

### Pocket Park on Yonge St

Many members thought the proposed pocket park on Yonge St was a great idea. Some members noted that Yorkville is known for small intimate spaces and felt a small parkette at the intersection between Yorkville and Yonge and Bloor would be a great contrast for the broader area.

## **Pedestrian Realm**

### Support for Cumberland Street as Pedestrian Only

From a transportation perspective, there was strong support from many of the Panel members to make Cumberland a pedestrian only street, for as much of the street as is feasible.

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

### Arches & Podium Design

While acknowledging it was still early in the design process, the Panel thought the podium design needed further development. Many members pointed out that the articulation of the arches was quite flat and suggested having some of the perimeter of the building be functional, such as by developing the arches as a colonnade or a canopy to layer on an additional civic benefit.

A few members felt the renderings were "highly graphic and abstract". One member thought the arches were reminiscent to how many of Minoru Yamosaki's buildings touched the ground.

### Podium Height

The Panel felt the podium should be more than two storeys. One member commented that the podium should "promise a multi-storey world inside". Some members preferred option 1 while other members preferred option 7. A few members did not like the angle down to Cumberland.

### Vertical Invitation through Podium Design

The Panel noted that while the arches were an implicit invitation to go up into the upper levels of the podium and buildings, there was no equivalent articulation inviting people to go down onto the concourse level.

Many members pointed out that the community hub and indoor public spaces would have a lot of activity in the winter months.

### Bring Some Subterranean Programming Up

The Panel suggested bringing some of the community spaces up to grade. A few members noted that in the current submission all the expensive stores were at grade while all the public amenities were in the basement.

Many members felt that allowing some of the community spaces to surface would be "really potent" and "an extension of that capacity to delight and surprise" as well as extend the public realm. One member suggested bringing some of the spaces up would also be more democratic.

#### Massing of Western Buildings

The Panel thought the two western buildings should remain a pair, with several members pointing out that otherwise there would be three different architectural languages. Some members thought the current distribution of the three towers complimented the network being proposed at grade.

One member felt that unifying the pair with a "tuning fork aspect" was more interesting than two separate forms. Many members wondered whether there was an opportunity for more connectivity between the two towers further up. Other members cautioned the design team about the graphic nature of the expression of the architecture on the towers.

#### Shadow Impact throughout Public Open Space

Many members pointed out that the public open space will be in shadow. The Panel advised that the shadow impacts needed to be dealt with as best as possible both architecturally and from a landscape perspective.

#### Tower B Shadow Impact

Many members were concerned by the shading from proposed Tower B on the Jesse Ketchum school grounds as well as on the adjacent Jesse Ketchum Park. Some members pointed out that much of the shadow impacts were originating from above the 40<sup>th</sup> floor of the tower and advised sculpting the south west corner of Tower B above the 40<sup>th</sup> floor.

### **Landscape Strategy**

#### Reflecting Pool

Thinking about usable space in the public realm, some members questioned the proposed reflecting pool. These members felt it would squish the space and would have only seasonal use. They also wondered whether the pool itself would be programmed or just the spaces around the pool.

Other questions included if the pool would be drained in winter or if it would become an ice rink.

#### Lighting Strategy & Canopy Veil

Several Panel members thought the lights and the conceptual idea of the light canopy could be a great reconnection for the area. Many members thought the veil would bring the "massive scale" of the towers to a more human scale. However, some members challenged the design team to find a solution using natural infrastructure rather than traditional electric lights.

#### Bring Daylight to Concourse Level

The Panel felt light should be brought down in a more fulsome way to the public concourse. Some members suggested developing the concourse as a "vertical and horizontal conduit of light and activity [through] a separate component that is perhaps even more robust than what has been suggested".

One member wondered whether the reflective pool could be used to bring light down. A member suggested having integrated seating that doubled up by daylighting the concourse space as well.

#### Ghost Houses

Some members commented that they preferred other programming elements to the ghost houses.

#### Paving Strategy

A few members indicated support for the continuous street paving, noting that by extending it across the street it made the public realm feel more like a pedestrian zone.

## **Sustainable Design**

### Stormwater Management

Some members noted that 100% of the development space in the public realm seemed to be a fully landscaped landscape. These members cautioned the design team that it would make stormwater management "extremely challenging".

To combat this, these members suggested developing a synergy between the architectural elements, such as by using the proposed reflective pool to help with the stormwater management.

### Climate Resiliency & Mitigate Wind Effects

The Panel noted that the proposal needed a comprehensive strategy for ensuring thermal comfort in the public spaces, especially with respect to wind mitigation due to the tall buildings. Some members suggested wind mitigation could be integrated into the light veil concept.

Many members pointed out that most of the public realm will be in shadow for much of the year. Some members commented that great public spaces are places that encourage people to stay outside for longer parts of the day and for longer parts of the year.

Several members pointed out that the shadow and climate conditions matter, and the design needed to better respond to them.

### Develop Energy Strategy

The Panel wanted to see an energy strategy for the buildings, especially given the high density of the site. Many members noted that understanding the energy impacts as early as possible was important, particularly with respect to the east tower which is proposed to have cantilevered balconies creating thermal bridging, as well as a fully glazed building envelope.