

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 1 – January 14, 2021

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday January 14, 2021 at 12:35pm.

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

†Chair of First Session

††Chair of Second 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 December 11, 2020 by email.

MEETING 1 INDEX

- i. 284 Lawrence Avenue West (1st Review)
- ii. Humber Bay Park East Master Plan Phase one Implementation: New Building and Wetlands – 100 Humber Bay Park Rd W (1st Review)

284 LAWRENCE AVENUE WEST

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review

APPLICATION OPA & Rezoning

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Matt Armstrong, Community Planning; Swathika Anandan, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Russell Fleischer, Turner Fleischer Architects; James Roche, DTAH



VOTE 10 – Non-support
1 – Support with condition*

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 proposed site circulation uses a driveway and POPS, with a natural feature to the east (Douglas Greenbelt). We would appreciate comments from the DRP regarding site circulation, setback provided, location of a park and other open spaces.
2. Is the massing and height of the proposal appropriate for its site, adjacent streets/private streets and open spaces, and to its context while responding to the Avenue Study?
3. The TRCA regulated lands to the east must remain natural. How can the site integrate with its natural context while also providing formal, programmed public recreation space?

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent for a clear presentation. This project is important as it can be part of a gateway condition to the ravine, can revitalize local retail and streetscape, and create highly desirable apartments with permanent views of a lush landscape. To appropriately fulfill those goals, Panel commented that the overall scale of the massing was too large for the context, that set-backs from the east were insufficient and created blank walls visible from a great distance, and that a stronger connection needed to be made between the ravine and the public street.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

- Consider more closely following Mid-Rise guidelines for transitions to context and conformance to angular planes.

Site Plan Design

- Consider consolidating loading to reduce impact on the ravine facing elements at grade.

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Pedestrian Realm

- Consider removing the southern mass over the driveway, to more clearly signal the public nature of the access to the ravine.

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

- Consider more closely following Mid-Rise guidelines for transitions to context and conformance to angular planes. Current design is considered too large for the neighbourhood and the site.

Landscape Strategy

-

Sustainable Design

- Consider a comprehensive approach to high-performance low-energy design that meets or exceeds the TGS in force when the building is occupied.

Comments to the City

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Panel Commentary

The Panel thanked the design team for their presentation and many members noted appreciation for the well prepared drawing package and clearly presented information. Some members noted that while it was the preliminary scheme showed some promise, the design team was contending with a challenging site.

Moving forward, the Panel advised reconsideration of the site circulation and building massing, height and density. The Panelists further advised the project needed to adhere to the Tall and Midrise guidelines and the Avenue Road Avenue Study, as well as have more consideration of the existing neighbourhood context.

The Panel looked forward to seeing the project again.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

Better Respond to the Existing Neighbourhood Context

Several Panel members felt that the design proposal needed to better respond to the existing neighbourhood and greenbelt context. Many members noted that the Bedford Glen was a "lovely scale" and an award winning development. The Panel felt this project should both consider the development to the north as well as step down in deference to it.

Reinforce Greenbelt

The Panel noted that the design team wasn't showing the full extent of the existing green spine traversing through the neighbourhood beyond the Douglas Greenbelt.

Many members pointed out the green system also continues north through Bedford Glen and the glulamb bridge, then up into Brookdale Park, as well as south from Lawrence Ave W all the way to Sunnybrook and beyond. The Panel strongly advised that this was a "fantastic" green piece and worth reinforcing by this project.

Various members suggested this could be achieved through the design treatment of the northeast corner of the site. Some members wondered whether the proposed park and POPS adjacent to the greenbelt could reach out to the streets more explicitly.

Streetwall & Response to Context

The Panel questioned how this proposed development would fit into the surrounding context. The Panelists felt the southern building and proposed 0 setback/resulting blank party wall would be particularly problematic.

The Panel pointed out that when driving west on Lawrence the elevation from the street would be perceived as a blank wall. Several members also questioned how this elevation would relate to either the existing adjacent building and/or any future development.

The Panel noted that Lawrence Avenue West is not a street with a continuous streetwall or large buildings. The members strongly felt this would be an "unfriendly legacy" to leave to the neighbourhood.

Both the large blank face and challenging relationship created by the 0 setback and massing projecting over the access road were noted as needing to be rethought. Several members commented that the current proposal would also create an "oppressive entrance" for public attempting to access the POPS.

Various members additionally questioned the proposed location of retail. These members advised that the retail should be located down the entire stretch of Avenue Rd. rather than on Douglas Ave or Lawrence Ave W.

Site Plan Design

Site Plan Design

Some members noted that Lawrence is an unusual street in Toronto given that it is both a major artery but at moments has established low scale and residential uses. These members thought that gently increasing the density and height on the corner of Lawrence Ave W and Avenue Rd made sense from that perspective, but advised stepping down the height away from the corner, especially going north.

Within the site, many members felt that all the garbage and loading should be moved underground. These members pointed out that this would free up the entire site and allow for different building configurations, such as facing the POPS.

Site Circulation

The Panel strongly felt the site circulation needed to be reworked. Several members felt the level of traffic activity on the driveway coming off Avenue Rd due to Pusateri's will be an issue and the Panel thought the circulation would be improved if it was reworked such that the primary access was off Lawrence Ave W. The Panel additionally commented that having a more robust access off Lawrence would improve the pedestrian access into the POPS space.

The Panel was concerned about the safety implications around the proposed entrance off Avenue Rd. Several members noted that the area in the back of the site will end up being quite busy and heavily used by vehicles.

Some members questioned whether the service drive needed to key into the building while other members suggested only keeping the Avenue Rd access point and removing both the Lawrence Ave W entrance and building overhang above.

The Panel felt that due to these various concerns a more engaging and pedestrian friendly access from Lawrence Ave W needed to be strongly considered.

Pedestrian Access & Safety

The Panel thought the pedestrian realm needed improvement. Several members felt the project should find a way of encouraging public access east towards the POPS without compromising pedestrian safety or vehicular access.

Looking at the ground floor plan on pg. 18 of the briefing materials, a few members noted it would be great if the 5 visitor parking spaces on the private road could be eliminated to develop more pedestrian oriented lobbies.

Other members wondered whether different paving and/or bollards could be implemented to establish these access routes as pedestrian first places, though they acknowledged this could be difficult given the anticipated amount of truck traffic. A few members advised including a pedestrian hardscape adjacent to the buildings.

Some members wondered whether there could be stronger north-south connection to Douglas Avenue for improved pedestrian connectivity.

Townhouse Location

Many members noted that Pusateri's is an incredibly successful establishment with both large amounts of people shopping as well as the necessary servicing and shipping that has to occur. Due to these factors, the Panel was concerned how the residential uses at grade will feel, particularly the townhouses on the internal driveway that will be "overwhelmed" by the continual traffic.

The Panel advised reconsidering the location of many of the townhouses, commenting that this was not a good mix of uses. Some members wondered whether the at-grade townhouses could be shifted closer east towards the green spaces.

A few members additionally pointed out that having the backdoors of the townhouses on Lawrence against the elevator lobby would not provide enough privacy.

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

Massing, Height & Stepbacks

Many members wanted to see a context plan or a sectional diagram from an urban design perspective showing such things as street level animation, retail and the building above.

The Panel did not understand the overall scale of the proposed building and strongly felt it needed to conform to both the general urban design guidelines as well as the site specific Avenue Road Avenue Study in terms of density, height, massing and angular planes. In general the Panel thought the building was too big for the site.

Several members specifically pointed out the current proposal did not respect the angular planes from the streets and that the height was higher than recommended by the Avenue Study. Various members additionally noted that the proposed north building would also put shadow on the green space.

The Panel advised "aggressively" reducing the massing and height of the building and further stepping down the building from the corner as it moves north and east away from Avenue Rd and Lawrence Ave W to respect the existing neighbourhood context, including the Bedford Glen to the north.

In terms of setbacks, the Panel thought the zero setback and blank wall on the east façade should be greatly improved. Many members additionally felt the building should be pulled back from Lawrence Ave W.

Built Form Articulation

Various members felt there were "handsome qualities" to the architecture, particularly with respect to the base and top of the built form. However, the Panel thought the middle section of the architecture needed further development.

A few members commented that the inset balconies were reading well. Other members questioned why some things were applied to the south building but not the north building.

Some members also noted appreciation for the vertically oriented rhythm of the building form. However, these members thought the horizontal expression of the center portion of the built form felt like an outlier and was reading like ladders in the renderings.

The Panel suggested bringing the center portion into the vertical language expression. Some members suggested eliminating the solid balcony guards and two floor square forms.

Looking at the low base, many members noted that the two storey base specified by the Avenue Study seemed to work well for the area context. These members felt the proportions shown by the design team – low two storey base, larger midsection and articulated top – were appropriate for the area.

Typical Suites

Some members pointed out that the typical two bedroom suites shown in the elbow of the building on floors 2-10 had an insufficient amount of exterior glazing for two bedrooms and a living space.

Landscape Strategy

POPS Location

Several members pointed out that the proximity to the greenbelt, while inaccessible to the public, was a "real gem".

While the Panel agreed that locating the POPS adjacent to the greenbelt would be beneficial, they felt that the access to the POPS from Lawrence Ave W and Avenue Rd needed to be significantly improved.

Many members commented that it currently felt like a private entrance and route.

-Right now the access to the pops feels in private domain, privacy gate

Streetscape Design

Various members noted appreciation for the setback on Avenue Rd and the proposed trees. However, these members pointed out that the space between the trees and the buildings may become less public through the eventual inclusion of patios etc. To combat this, the members suggested opening up the porosity on the corner of the site, noting this would be the "place of arrival".

Some members recommended having less planters at grade, and suggested inside stepping the roof slab for the parking below to accommodate this. One member noted that appeared to be "one huge air vent" at Avenue and Lawrence. This member strongly advised rethinking that location.

***Vote**

The Panel introduced a condition onto the vote. The vote of support was then conditional on the following:

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- A reduction in density;
- Improved connections to the POPS and naturalized green spaces from the public realm on Avenue Rd and Lawrence Ave W; and
- An improved road network, including better transitions into the neighbourhood via Douglas Ave.

The Panel voted 10-1 in non-support.

HUMBER BAY PARK E MASTER PLAN PHASE 1 IMPLEMENTATION: NEW BUILDING AND WETLANDS – 100 HUMBER BAY PARK RD W DESIGN REVIEW PANEL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review

APPLICATION City Study

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Peter Klambauer, Parks Forestry & Recreation; Emilia Floro, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Jon Neuert, Baird Sampson Neuert Architects; James Roche, DTAH



VOTE No vote

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:

Buildings:

- Integration in the landscape – routes to, over and around the building.
- Presence / visibility – from the car park and the ponds / boardwalk.
- Creation of a place from where to observe and appreciate nature.

Pond Improvement:

- Implementation of the Master Plan, including ecological and habitat restoration through the creation of wetlands.
- Integration of new routes with existing park routes.

Boardwalk:

- Creation of an experiential journey through different kinds of landscape.

In Remembrance of Barry Sampson

The Design Review Panel was honoured to have the opportunity to review this project, given the recent passing of Barry Sampson, principal at Baird Sampson Neuert Architects. For many Panel members Barry was also a close friend and mentor.

In remembering and celebrating Barry, the Design Review Panel acknowledges the incredible work and significant impacts Barry had on architecture as well as on the Toronto design community as both an architect and educator. Barry was a leader in the field who always brought architectural excellence to everything he did, which has been again epitomized in this project.

The Design Review Panel extends their deepest condolences to Barry's family, colleagues and friends. He will be greatly missed.

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Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for an elegantly designed place of discovery, wonder and contemplation.

This graceful project is important to our City as an exemplary civic amenity; sensitively connecting community with nature and deepening appreciation of our waterfront's ecology.

So much about this design is completely right for its place and programme. Further work is recommended towards adding to this already accomplished work:

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

- The design's holistic response to and strengthening of its surrounding context is remarkably thoughtful.
- See Site Plan Design and Built Form.

Site Plan Design

- The site plan folds effortlessly into and enhances its surrounds.
- The following is recommended:
 - Strengthen the arrival sequence with a more clearly signalled pavilion entry.
 - Ensure that the design of the berm and pathway north of the pavilion meets CPTED requirements.
 - The elevated green roof's active areas will provide a wonderful visitor experience. Ensure that a variety of vantage points (expansive, cozy, quiet, contemplative...) are woven throughout the site. This includes sheltered spaces (outside and inside) and the opportunity to view life below water level.
 - Emphasize a sense of simplicity and serenity throughout site.

Pedestrian Realm

- This project is an experiential haven that is universally accessible to all pedestrians.
- See Site Plan Design.

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

- The strategy of built form deference to site and landscape is a significant hallmark of this design.
- The following is recommended:
 - Reduce exterior wood-clad bulkhead/soffit of wings and emphasize thinness of roof planes.
 - Ensure that interior gathering spaces are flexible but not so fluid that they lose their individual definition.
 - See Site Plan Design.

Landscape Strategy

- The design's primacy of natural landscape and waterscape throughout the site is exemplary.

Sustainable Design

- This highly public amenity is a perfect platform for deep sustainability.
- Take every opportunity to make this a whole site "sustainability at work" learning experience for all visitors.

Comments to the City

- Exemplar for Change:
 - This rapidly changing part of the City is fortunate to be close to Lake Ontario, and to gain an amenity like this project to counterbalance the degree of development represented by the recently reviewed 2150 Lakeshore development.
 - This project emphasizes how essential it is to have not only sufficient quantity and variety of public green space and amenity, but also quality.
 - Equivalents to this exemplar need to be sewn throughout our City. They do not need to be complex... they just need to be relevant, nurturing and really great (like this project).

Panel Commentary

The Panel thanked the design team for their presentation and noted that they felt honoured to be able to review the project. The Panelists noted the significant impact BSN has had in Toronto and Ontario. The Panel unanimously felt that this project, once completed, would be a gift to the City.

Various members remarked that the presentations were incredibly sophisticated with beautiful drawings and clear concepts. The Panel thought this project would enhance Toronto as well as the natural life on Lake Ontario.

The Panel commended both the design team and the City of Toronto and noted they were looking forward to seeing the project continue to evolve.

Response to Context (including local character and heritage)

Overarching Design

The Panel thought the project was very commendable. Many members commented that it would bring dignity, civility and delight to design in Toronto. Different members commented it was an "incredible project" a "stunning design" that was "constrained, powerful" and "responds well to the natural environment".

The Panel felt the design of a building in the landscape was "wonderful" and would be a great interface between humans and nature. The Panel members thought the parti of building as landscape would set a very strong sense of place.

The Panel felt that the design was proposing a phenomenal collection of buildings that were well integrated into the landscape. Many members commented the public realm had been impeccably developed. A few members noted that the project reminded them of gardens with follies that allowed a visitor to keep discovering new aspects enlivening the entire place.

The Panel strongly felt that they had full confidence in the stewardship of the entire team, and that they couldn't wait until the project was complete and it was safe to gather and enjoy it.

Microclimate

Various Panel members noted delight at the "gift" of exploring the wetlands in an urban city. Some members pointed out that the park will be providing a unique microclimate that is not seen in the nearby natural areas, such as north of the city.

Precedent Potential

One member felt that this project should be used as a precedent for the nearby development site at 2150 Lake Shore (the Christie site). This member thought this project was an excellent example of a pastoral landscape.

Surrounding Development Context

Some members pointed out that this project was particularly welcome given the intensity of development in the area.

These members noted that this project was a great example of the interface between people and nature and cautioned that this interface would need to be continually managed over time to ensure density was in line with nature and green space provisions.

Views

Several members liked the specificity of the views illustrated in the drawing package and presentation; however, the Panel thought addition viewpoints should be considered. Some members suggested strategically pruning some trees could provide strategic views back to the City of Toronto.

Many members wanted to see views from the roof top, and many other members thought long range views should be explored in addition to the short and mid views currently shown. These members suggested that rooftop views to the lake, City, recreational pond and creek would be a wonderful addition.

The Panel agreed that the all the various views should be privileged and should block out the surrounding buildings.

Site Plan Design

Parking Lot & Parklands Entrance

The Panel was looking forward to the reconfiguration of the parking lot and the pollination of the area.

The Panelists were strongly supportive of the move to create more prominent entrances; however, many members felt the connections could be further enhanced to provide a stronger sense of arrival.

Looking at the entrance at the lake, some members noted that the vista would be incredible. These members advised specifically enhancing this entrance. Many members recommended that the "huge public face" to the service building should be balanced with the "great" water facing pavilion.

Boardwalk & Path System

The Panelists noted appreciation for the "scribed lines" of the path system and several members thought the simplicity of the proposed boardwalk was "wonderful".

Many members felt the scribed lines were well complimented by the organic shapes of the landscape. Several members noted that this dialogue was a nice counterpoint to the pavilion when approached on foot.

Looking at the linear geometry and it's termination at the paths, some members wondered whether the intersections could enhanced more strongly.

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

Pavilion Architecture & Design

The Panel thought the proposed pavilion would be an exquisite and landmark building. The Panelists appreciated the way the building was nestled in the landscape and several members commented that the façade facing the water was very positive. One member noted that from an aerial view the building resembled a lily pad.

Several members complimented the design team on how the pavilion was expressive of the surrounding unique wetland ecology/environment as well as would reflect the "transformative experience" of exploring this ecology in Toronto. One member wondered whether the pavilion glass could be brought down into the pavilion to allow people to see the ecology under the water.

Various members questioned whether the corner windows would be bird friendly, and advised further examination into how those windows could be treated to ensure bird-friendliness.

Looking at the interior of the pavilion, the Panel thought the materiality was very successful. Comments included the appreciation of how the "warm wood" would envelope the user and support for the dialogue between interlacing elements, such as the carefully articulated bench and "fishing weir approach" to the screen wall.

Pavilion Soffit

While the Panel strongly supported the pavilion architecture, they advised playing more with the soffits to further lighten the architecture and improve the functionality of the verandas.

Various members noted that although they really liked the generous eave and the thinness of the building edge, they felt the soffits may be too heavy at eye level. The Panel recommended thinning the angled wood of the building edge.

Other members questioned how much rain protection the verandas would provide given the generous upswing of the edge of the soffit.

Many members also wondered whether the continuity of the glass ribbon and wooden soffit could be used to signal the western entrance/arrival more strongly. One member pointed out there would be many cycling paths coming from the west.

Accessible Green Roof

The Panel thought the accessible green roof would be "incredible" and many members noted appreciation for the materiality choices. Several members commented that the roof would become an interesting ground plane offers another great view point.

Many members additionally liked the "meandering walkway" and interesting stepping system up to the roof.

Some members advised ensuring the roof could accommodate a large amount of people as it would likely be very popular. A few members noted that the accessible roof reminded them of a "gentler" version of the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT) in Lisbon, where the roof becomes a second elevation and ground plane providing an opportunity to look over the river.

One member cautioned that the inclusion of an accessible roof overlooking water, with an overhang, on Parks, Forestry & Recreation property could become problematic from a liability perspective.

Pavilion Programming

The Panel was very supportive of the idea that the pavilion was about shelter and respite, and less about specifically programmed space.

That being said, some members felt that the interior spaces may need some more touch stones or landmarks within the space to provoke uses. These members were concerned that while beautiful, the spaces were a bit too fluid and amorphous at the moment.

Service Building Design

Several Panel members felt that the service building design should be further elevated to match the pavilion. Various members commented that it was "Bauhaus-y" and had "less humanity" than the southern face of the pavilion.

Some members pointed out that there was a "fantastic opportunity" to create a new public face to the service building and given its siting at an entrance the Panel thought it was worth balancing the architecture of this building with that of the pavilion.

Landscape Strategy

Landscape Design

The Panel was excited about the overarching landscape design and overall plan for use.

Many members noted particular interest in the edges of the project, with one member commenting that this is where the richest habitat and broadest biodiversity will be found. These members noted that the riparian zone was generally very important and beneficial to the success of the landscape.

Some members advised that some of the existing invasive tree species such as *Pinus nigra* will need to be removed in the future. These members suggested that thinning out these trees would also help with the views.

Various members commented that they appreciated the themes of "interlace". Other members thought the benches and weir-like screen were interesting. The Panel advised careful consideration to the details to ensure the aesthetic is not disrupted by elements that will find their way into the site, including garbage and recycling bins.

Many members additionally noted that some of the existing landscape, including the berm of the north side of the building will need to be reconfigured. It was also noted that the foundation work will necessarily cause some trees to be removed. The Panel advised developing a landscape management plan to address how the site will be maintained.

The Panelists thought the design was "so stunning" to the point that one member wondered whether the site may need crowd control down the line due to popularity with the public.

Pond Design & Programming

Various members felt the west edge of the pond seemed hard. While they understood the need to balance the use of the pond by model sailors with the increased wetlands habitat, these members thought this edge should be "less clean and crisp". Some suggestions to develop more of a pond-like edge included possibly a fish habitation zone or landscape rocks.

Some Panel members cautioned the City against having recreation ice-skating here, noting that it would lead to operations issues and cleaning issues including where the snow piling would go. These members felt the pond should be left as a "nice" and "fresh" landscaped winter space.

CPTED Design

Some members advised further consideration of CPTED design, including how police would patrol the site.

Sustainable Design

Sustainability Strategy

The Panel complimented the design team on their sustainability ambitions, particularly the passive geothermal goals. The Panelists strongly felt that the project should accommodate net zero goals as well, particularly given that it was a City of Toronto and TRCA project.