

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 2 – February 16, 2023

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, February 16, 2023, at 11:30 am.

Members of the Design Review Panel

Gordon Stratford (Co-Chair): Principal – G C Stratford – Architect

Michael Leckman (Co-Chair): Principal – Diamond Schmitt Architects

Meg Graham (Co-Chair): Principal – superkül

Margaret Briegmann: Associate – BA Group

Dima Cook: Director – EVOQ Architecture

George Dark: Partner Emeritus/Senior Consultant – Urban Strategies

Ralph Giannone: Principal – Giannone Petricone Associates

Jim Gough: Independent Consultant, Transportation Engineering

Jessica Hutcheon: Principal – Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Olivia Keung: Architect – Moriyama & Teshima Architects

Paul Kulig: Principal – Perkins & Will

Joe Lobko: Partner – Joe Lobko Architect Inc.

Anna Madeira: Principal – BDP Quadrangle

Jim Melvin: Principal Emeritus/Advisor – PMA; Owner – Realm Works

Juhee Oh: Director, Sustainability & Energy – WSP

Heather Rolleston: Principal, Design Director – BDP Quadrangle

Eladia Smoke: Principal Architect – Smoke Architecture

Sibylle von Knobloch: Principal – NAK Design Group

Design Review Panel Coordinator

Lee Ann Bobrowski: Urban Design, City Planning Division

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meeting, which was held on January 26, 2023, by email.

MEETING 2 INDEX

- i. 200 University Avenue (1st Review)
- ii. 505 University Avenue (1st Review)
- iii. 1250 Eglinton Avenue West Housing Now (1st Review)
- iv. 140 Merton Street Housing Now (1st Review)

200 UNIVERSITY AVENUE

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review
APPLICATION OPA, Rezoning, and SPA

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Susan Mcalpine, Community Planning;
 Kristen Flood, Heritage Planning;
 Nasim Adab, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Chris Couse, KPMB Architects;
 Neil Phillips, ERA Architects;
 Tony Volpentesta, Bousfields Inc

VOTE Support: 5
 Non-support: 3



REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Meg Graham
PANELISTS Gordon Stratford, Michael Leckman, Dima Cook, Ralph Giannone, Jim Gough, Paul
 Kulig, Heather Rolleston, Eladia Smoke
CONFLICTS Not in Attendance: Margaret Briegmann

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 relationship of the proposed tower (its size and design) and the proposed retail addition along University Avenue with the shape, form and materiality of the existing heritage building and its attributes and character.
2. The height, scale and massing of the proposed tower in the context of University Avenue as an important civic corridor.
3. The relationship of the proposed tower with the immediate context, especially with Shangri-La hotel in terms of setback, separation distance and building face.
4. The impact of the proposed retail space on the University Avenue public realm.
5. The impact of the proposed retail space on existing public art and architectural features at Shangri-La hotel.

6. Public realm enhancement and streetscape improvement along all streets.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team and City for bringing this prominently located and historically significant building site to the Panel.

As the City continues to grow and flourish, and undeveloped sites in the downtown core become few to non-existent, overbuild projects (such as this one) have become more common. They are a challenging building type in every respect: design, cost, and construction. The existing building at 200 University Avenue, designed by John B. Parkin and Associates and built in 1961, was added to the City of Toronto Heritage Register as a listed property in 1991. It is a challenging project and an exceptional site.

The majority of the Panel's comments focused on the pavilion addition, the heritage-related aspects of the project, and the project's impact and improvements to the public realm.

Heritage impact:

- The massing and high-level architectural language of the addition – based on the language of the Parkin building – are commendable;
- Proponent to ensure that the hierarchy of detailing on the Parkin building is achieved in the addition, (including the proportionality and dimensions of the existing pilasters); it is not yet evident.

Pavilion addition at grade:

The appropriateness of adding the pavilion was questioned, given that a key driver for doing so was to meet the commercial area required by the Downtown Plan. Enhancing, creating, and building on the civic boulevard and public realm are of greater importance than area requirements. Further to this, the consensus on the Panel was that the pavilion would have a detrimental heritage impact; specifically, it obscures and removes evidence of the original relationship of the building to grade and its original composition where the banking pavilion was to the south.

Public realm impact:

The addition of the loading dock in the back impacts the quality of the pedestrian experience; ensure that its addition is counterbalanced by a strong public realm design and review the potential of moving waste handling to the basement.

The Panel has great confidence, given the evidence in front of us so far, and the work that has already been done by this team, that the project will be handled well. It is an exceptional and challenging site and building, as previously noted, and its development deserves exceptional care and craft.

Panel Commentary

Context and Public Realm

- Panelists highlighted the importance of a robust animated streetscape, particularly for University Avenue.
- A panelist noted that a great civic boulevard should be a bit gentler, and perhaps different language was necessary for this kind of project. The hope for the design is that the civic

- nature is maintained and upheld, which generally comes through in terms of setbacks as well as landscaping.
- Consideration of a setback from the 3m lot line was encouraged in the next iteration.
- A panelist implored a more mindful consideration of the shadow impacts, particularly on the nearby Osgoode Hall lawn. The omission of the 250 University overbuild was noted, to the detriment of the shadow study evaluation.
 - There were no major transportation comments identified; the merging of the loading and parking access on Simcoe Street was felt to be appropriate as well as commendable.
 - It was noted that the addition of the loading dock at the back challenges the quality of the public realm, and that it needs to be counterbalanced by a strong public realm design.
 - Panelists highlighted challenges with the waste handling approach. The suggestion was made to move it to the basement, as it could be buried into the parking structure with a freight elevator, allowing for more retail to consume the space.

Design Concept and Proposed Building Addition

- Multiple panelists greatly appreciated the ambition of the project and the sophisticated approach to the building, but cautioned the structural feat required.
- Panelists noted the likelihood of the pilasters growing to accommodate the addition as a great concern; maintaining their character and elegance must be realized to achieve the project's potential.
- It was noted that resolving the building's structural solution in a way that is consistent as well as compatible with the existing cladding is paramount. Panelists underscored the importance of maintaining the dimensions and proportions of the existing pilasters as a key component in the success of the design.
 - A panelist advised prioritizing the structural resolution as soon as possible, to provide clarity on the approach.
- The Panel highlighted the effort required to ensure that the existing building does not become lost in the efforts to build on top, and underscored the necessity for the new as well as existing to successfully coexist.
 - A panelist noted that they appreciate the massing strategy; the simple stacking and extrusion.
- A panel member advised the review of the program elements, including the amenity and lantern, as they may be at cross-purposes with the formal resolution of the two building volumes.
- The Panel encouraged the reinterpretation of the building's lantern in a contemporary way, perhaps through colour or cladding. The glowing transition between the existing heritage building and the proposed addition appears strong. Although, it would not be lit consistently as it would become inhabited space.

Existing Heritage Building and Architectural Expression

- Numerous panelists applauded the design approach to the heritage building; the applicant's team has demonstrated a fascinating understanding of the building and an interesting concept overall. The strength of the architectural expressions with the larger design gestures was highlighted.
- Panelists noted that the hierarchy of the existing Parkin tower building envelope detailing was not yet evident in the proposed addition above.
- Panelists encouraged the review of the addition's design character, including the horizontal expression as it currently presents the appearance of a pure glazed building mass without a third level of detailing.
 - o The proposed currently reads as one note, with the grid and gradation of the existing detailing lost in the upper addition. It would benefit from another level of architectural expression, but this does not necessarily need to be reproduced based off of the existing.
 - o A panelist commented that there appears to be a layer missing between the signature pilasters and textural elements. Further, that there is potential for one that negotiates between the office and residential languages, perhaps through balcony expression.

Pavilion

- There was significant debate concerning the proposed one-storey pavilion. The majority opinion of the Panel was in opposition to it, with the two key arguments against it being the privatization of public space, and its detrimental impact to the existing building's heritage aspects.
 - o The privatization of public space:
 - Several panelists were concerned that the one-storey addition privatized previously public space, particularly along the important corridor of University Avenue. Preference for the open space to be retained for public use was noted, rather than private amenity.
 - A panelist objected to the first level addition, noting the importance of the public realm and that it is one of the opportunities for the building to connect as well as interact with the ground plane. The suggestion for the building to step back rather than forward to create animation was also put forth.
 - It was noted that perhaps the pavilion was not the solution to resolving the relationship with the Shangri-La and that the operational issues of the building were of a smaller scale of importance to the civic boulevard. The rationale of satisfying OPA requirements to the detriment of a coherent public realm is lacking.
 - A panelist encouraged the team to review vision plans for University Avenue, with the intent to integrate work for a coherent public realm across the avenue, with the addition of trees as well as other elements to provide grace to the symmetrical podium of the heritage building.
 - o The detrimental impact to heritage:
 - Panelists noted the significant negative impact of the pavilion to the building's heritage considerations, as it obscures and removes evidence of the existing relationship to grade.

- Panelists noted that the architecture of the existing building is marked by this relationship; how the columns sit on the ground are key to its architectural style, and the one-storey addition conceals this.
 - It was reiterated that the inclusion of the pavilion to satisfy commercial GFA requirements is not sufficient to justify the substantial alteration of the building's relationship to the public realm and the clarity of expression of its original architecture, nor at the expense of a clear and coherent canopy on the heritage structure.
- An alternative opinion was put forth, that the new glazed pavilion would be a welcome addition, and that it was formalizing existing relationships currently on the sidewalk. Specifically, that the pavilion as proposed helps to resolve the clumsy components of the adjacent Shangri-La building at grade.
- A panelist also noted that the relationship to the Shangri-La building is somewhat resultant, and that there could be some solution that completes the composition, regardless of whether the pavilion is included in the design. Further investigation on how forms meet is suggested.

505 UNIVERSITY AVENUE

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review
APPLICATION Rezoning and SPA

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Derek Waltho, Community Planning;
Erin Smith, Heritage Planning;
Nasim Adab, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Les Klein, BDP Quadrangle;
Ray Ronaghan, STUDIO tla;
Goldberg Group



VOTE Non-support: 6
Support: 2

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Meg Graham

PANELISTS Gordon Stratford, Michael Leckman, Margaret Briegmann, Dima Cook, Ralph Giannone,
Jim Gough, Paul Kulig, Eladia Smoke

CONFLICTS Not in Attendance: Anna Madeira, Heather Rolleston

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 demolition and modified reconstruction of the existing heritage building.
2. The conservation and significance of the existing heritage building on University Avenue as a civic corridor.
3. Loss of embodied carbon/sustainability by demolishing the existing building.
4. The relationship of the proposed tower (its size and design), its form and materiality with the existing heritage building and its attributes and character.
5. The height, scale and massing of the proposed tower with the immediate context and in the context of University Avenue as an important civic corridor.
6. The public realm enhancement along both streets and the public space along the north side of the building.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

With this project and others like it, we are witnessing the transformation and intensification of University Avenue; University Avenue is historically Toronto's primary civic and ceremonial avenue, and the location of many significant public institutions. Development projects such as these raise the question of how to maintain, or conversely evolve, the civic and material character of the architecture and public realm of this great street.

There was ambivalence on the panel as to whether the west and south façade elements of the original building should be kept or demolished. If demolished, the Panel questioned the retention of original massing, urging the proponent to pursue a design that created more public open space at grade and mitigates shadow impact. This could be achieved through a one-storey element at grade similar to what currently exists. Panel noted that in keeping with the building's prominent location on University Avenue, it is critical that elegant, durable, and timeless cladding materials be used throughout the development.

Panel felt strongly that the proposal represented a significant diminishment of the public realm throughout. The public realm proposed lacks amenity and grace and is generally inhospitable. The north sidewalk in particular requires a comprehensive rethinking.

Notwithstanding the above, Panel queried whether this elegant existing building could be adaptively reused and transformed to meet modern needs instead and urged the proponent to study this possibility; the adaptive reuse of this building could be a remarkable precedent for the city and for this great street moving forward.

Panel Commentary

Architectural Strategy and Adaptive Reuse

- Numerous panelists lamented the overall design approach as a missed opportunity to put forth a more radical proposal and adaptively reuse the existing building.
- Several identified the unfortunate loss that the design did not transform the existing to meet current needs rather than propose demolition, including the one-storey base around the building, nor did the proposal design take advantage of capturing embodied carbon.
- A panelist strongly supported the potential for reuse, noting the elegant and beautiful presence of the existing building along the great street of University Avenue. Regardless of whether the heritage elements were listed or not, these features could be strongly maintained in the design with the new components pushed to the background.

Design Approach and Materiality

- If the building is to proceed as currently proposed, by complete demolition and rebuild, panelists encouraged the design approach to be less strict when considering the existing elements that are not actually original.
 - o This includes the relationships at grade, as the proposed openings are very rigid. The original architectural expression of the building provided a more open design at the base to mitigate the rigidity of the upper structure; this intent has not been translated in the current proposal.

- The gesture of breaking up the massing along University is appreciated, and the thirteen-storey podium scale seemed appropriate. Panel members noted their appreciation for the retention as well as addition of employment space.
- A panelist applauded the elegant and interesting tower approach, including the slipped, conjoined idea. They commended the applicant team for the inclusion of corridors with natural light at the end, noting that these would augment the daily experience of building residents and help break up the silhouette of the large tower.
- Another panelist reiterated the elegant tower solution, but wished this elegance was married with the Shell Building as it currently is, and not as the design proposes.
- A panel member highlighted their appreciation for the differential treatment of the elevations as they face in different directions. They noted that it becomes difficult to read as the east-west gesture of differential shading elements get lost in comparison to the north-south treatment; perhaps less restraint would be well placed to make the gesture come through.
- A panelist advised that the relentlessness of the façade at grade works as perceived across the street, but perhaps this does not translate up close.
- A panel member credited the project for creating a new stone base in the character of the building immediately to the south, and maintaining that civic character as well as the calm of the architecture. They also questioned if the daylight autonomy and stone could come together more persuasively; perhaps the existing proportions of the building do not need to be adhered to as strictly in the proposed.
- The future of the building materials was questioned, as to what may be retained or kept. A panelist suggested that if the current building would not be saved in its entirety, that the history and story of the Shell Building could be carried through in part in the materiality of the proposed; that its memory could be used throughout the new building in a meaningful way.
- If the decision is made to remove, preserve, and restore the existing facades within the podium of the new building, a panelist noted their appreciation for the inclusion of the beautifully detailed material.
- The design team is encouraged to decide what is being preserved; heritage, carbon or the public realm, as they are currently struggling to come together.

Public Realm and Streetscape

- The Panel identified numerous issues with the design at grade noting that the building reconstruction as proposed leaves an impoverished ground floor.
 - The pedestrian environment necessitates better support for more of an active living space.
- Concern was raised about the public realm treatment and that overall, more could be done to make the ground plane hospitable.

- A panelist highlighted that a fair amount of greenspace is provided along University, but most is located in the middle of the avenue. As a result, a greater effort is required to ensure the provision of green opportunities and amenities along the edges, which are not proposed on the current site plan.
- It was noted that minimal private public space has been provided.
 - o A panel member suggested reconsidering the building form as this is an ideal project for the tower to be smaller, the podium to be larger, and the public realm at grade to be more generous.
 - o Perhaps there could be less reliance in the approach for all public urban realm to be the City's issue.
- A panelist also underscored safety concerns for the public area on the north; it is compromised and needs to be rethought.
 - o Bordered by tall building faces on both sides, the width of the sidewalk is extremely narrow and essentially creates a pathway without options.
- A panelist voiced their appreciation for the regularity at the ground plane but identified the main building corner as requiring more work. They wondered if the arrival points for the office and residential components were sufficiently emphasized.
- It was noted that the Edward Street frontage has public park gestures currently shown in the proposal as flat planes, which leave room but do not define space.
- Appreciation was shown for the high number of bike parking provided; ensure that the Edward Street frontage works as well for those users.
- A panelist expressed concern that the proposed little building legs are antithetical to the original design concept that historically appeared to float.
- A panelist encouraged a design decision between the bistro tables, or a walkway as represented in the drawings, given the space available.

One Storey Pavilion

- Several panelists suggested maintaining or reconsidering some version of the one-storey pavilion as it helps to interpret the grade relationship.
- The beauty of the existing Shell Building with its certain severity was noted, and it was suggested that retaining some component of the pavilion would have done wonders for the design. As a result, there is a greater reliance on the landscape to do what the built form once did.
- A panelist noted that some version of the pavilion would help to mitigate downward wind factors and that the patio umbrellas alone were unlikely be successful, particularly along Edward Street.

1250 EGLINTON AVENUE WEST HOUSING NOW

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review

APPLICATION Rezoning

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Annely Zonena, Strategic Initiatives;
Michael Sakalauskas, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Justin Yan, DTAH;
Mary Tremain, PLANT

VOTE Non-support: 6
Support: 2

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Gordon Stratford

PANELISTS Michael Leckman, Meg Graham, Dima Cook, Ralph Giannone, Jim Gough, Paul Kulig,
Heather Rolleston, Eladia Smoke

CONFLICTS Not in Attendance: Margaret Briegmann, Joe Lobko



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. How can the integration of the building over the transit entrance achieve design excellence and safe urban design, accounting for the constraints of the easement at the perimeter and above the station entrance?
2. How can the public realm at the Allen Expressway onramp improve the connection to the neighbourhood to the north, and the main transportation hub along Eglinton Avenue West?

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for their presentation and considerable design efforts to date. Thanks too to the City and CreateTO teams for their vision. The CreateTO Housing Now initiative is of utmost importance to the City, and this project is one of the more challenging ones to review and critique.

The Panel understands that the proponent team is attempting to design around and above a new Metrolinx station pavilion. The resulting fractured site development process (on a confined site

bordering a very busy thoroughfare and expressway on-ramp) has contributed to a proposed design that needs to be rethought.

Further work is needed to unlock the site's potential while addressing its conditions. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- **Response to Context**
 - Situate built form to avoid expensive structural solutions resulting from building over the Metrolinx pavilion.
 - Create setbacks along the expressway on-ramp frontage, deep enough to provide high quality landscape, a safe pedestrian realm, and seamless connectivity with the proposed Allen Greenway.
 - Can the curb edge of Eglinton Ave West be altered to provide more site space for development?
 - Can the Allen Expressway on-ramp (including the approach lane on Eglinton West) be altered to slow traffic and create a safer pedestrian context?

- **Site Planning**
 - See Response to Context.
 - Revisit the mixed-use programme to confirm what makes the most sense to include on site, given its conditions.
 - Decrease density to avoid overcrowding the site.
 - Shift tower away from the Metrolinx pavilion.
 - Ensure any retail space is large and deep enough to be useful.
 - Take advantage of the public laneway to best contribute to site planning.

- **Built Form**
 - See Response to Context and Site Planning.
 - Articulate street building from tower.
 - This site has landmark potential. Now is the time to create a high-quality, expressive built form character; to ensure subsequent development realizes your design vision.

Panel Commentary

Tower Location

- The Panel applauded the efforts of the team in addressing the challenges of the site, but there was significant debate regarding the location of the proposed building tower.
 - Numerous panel members questioned the rationale of the siting, and suggested that the tower move eastward.
 - Multiple noted similar shadow impacts in a shifted location.

- Although City staff had explained that the proposed location was the most opportune for density, a panel member noted that this density was coming at the cost of urbanity and a decent public realm; the building cantilevering over the small station looks ill-considered and uncoordinated.

- A panel member noted that the architecture of the Cedarvale Station was not exceptional and struggled with the idea of making a costly built form to create a backdrop for it.

- Another noted that suspending over the existing station was an expensive way to put a building on site.
- Multiple panelists questioned the expense of the design approach and expressed skepticism about the two-way cantilever over the station. Concern was raised about the feasibility of the structural gymnastics required to realize the design.
 - o Suggestions were made that the City should look to incorporate the single-family homes on the north side and consolidate the block to achieve appropriate intensification along the stretch.
 - The team was encouraged to consider the cost/benefit of the cantilevered design strategy in reference to the purchase of these homes.
- A panelist expressed that the tower on the corner was problematic; another noted that perhaps it is more sensible to avoid the station if it cannot be incorporated into the proposed building.
- A panel member suggested that a slight eastward shift in the tower may introduce a certain amount of efficiency, cost savings and structural simplicity that could be worth the effort.
 - o Although the design may still be cantilevered, this approach could avoid the second stair in the tower floorplate resulting in a more conventional core with a typical switchback stair instead.

Building Design

- A panel member commended City staff and CreateTO in their efforts to promote urban intensification at this scale, as public entities. They were in support of the proposed height and density in the appropriate location on Eglinton, but they expressed worry that the proposal was not ambitious enough.
 - o They conveyed concern that other than the exceptional structure that will be required to cantilever and bracket over the existing pavilion, the remainder of the building is too simple where exceptionality is required along the street.
 - o The panel member challenged the team to be more expressive and inventive with the building at grade as well as the first three floors.
- Multiple panel members suggested revising the proposed building's relationship with the station.
 - o One suggested opening up the end of the site from a safety, public realm and massing perspective. They advised that removing the first few floors of the building directly north of the station entry and adding columns would provide greater visibility as well as room around the entrance.
- Multiple panelists expressed that the retail components appear problematic and challenged in terms of viability.
 - o A suggestion was made to relocate the lobby to where the retail is currently proposed as it would provide the opportunity for Metrolinx and the LRT to physically connect into the station, if desired.
- A panelist highlighted the architectural character of the small, narrow commercial buildings along Eglinton Street. They noted that the long expanse of the proposed façade does not link into the existing context; it is too big of a gesture but perhaps breaking up the massing may help integrate the proposed with its adjacencies.

- Multiple panelists noted that the expression of architecture along Eglinton was challenging, notably the archway; it appears out of scale, and does not work with the windows.
 - A panel member questioned the grandness of the public realm gesture in consideration of its use as a service entry to the garbage and loading area. They reiterated that the architecture of the portico does not seem proportionate to its urban design value, unless the public laneway is improved to provide more of a destination.
- A panel member encouraged the team to revise the design at the base of the building, noting that they wished it sat better and that the weight hit the ground.
- Concern was expressed for the lack of balconies on the building units.
 - Although there is potential for significant white noise from Allen Road, perhaps there is potential for the team to be more creative with the types of outdoor spaces proposed, including balconies that are more room-like that provide shelter from noise and wind.

Site Context and Layout

- The Panel applauded the courageous efforts to address heavy constraints but encouraged the team to reconsider the basic design approach to alleviate some of these challenges for an easier and more logical development strategy.
 - Panelists underscored the difficulties of the site, and the laudable effort to maximize it, but noted this as the source of the proposal's problematic aspects.
 - The Panel encouraged the team to reconsider the challenges, so that the design and urban realm is more privileged.
- A panelist noted that the site layout makes perfect sense from a transportation perspective and applauded its urbanization.
 - They underscored the challenges relating to traffic movements, as drivers tend to make high-speed turns onto the Allen, and expressed pedestrian concerns for that corner.
- Multiple panelists encouraged the bolstering of the pedestrian aspects adjacent to Allen Road, suggesting large sculptural bollards or stones to do so. They reiterated the paramount necessity for safety, and that more protection was needed at the public plaza.
 - The resultant design should make pedestrians feel safer, and make drivers feel further confined to help lessen aggressive speeds.
- An additional setback is vital in consideration of the Allen Expressway.
- A panel member reiterated that moving the building tower and providing a proper plaza could facilitate pedestrian linkages including the Allen greenway connection.
 - Providing a generous and protected open space connecting northward into the neighbourhood would be beneficial.
- Panelists expressed concerns for site safety around the entry with the laneway easement.
 - They noted the potential for blowing garbage and leaves resulting in a poor pedestrian experience.

- A suggestion was put forth that the subway pavilion access should be located in a plaza open to the sky.
- The potential for the rear of the site to be unsafe was also underscored.
 - While the programmatic separation of the fire table area from the loading/garbage area is logical, the current fenced design essentially makes a dead end; it is not inviting.
- The proposed outdoor uses including the long communal table, outdoor kitchen and covered bicycle parking were questioned.
 - A panelist noted that the design felt intimate, and perhaps there could be more publicly-oriented uses proposed with more room to move.
- A panel member also noted that the stacked bike parking area is not working.
 - Removing the stacked bicycle parking and perhaps the units above was presented as a strategy to begin to help liberate the public realm to provide a design scheme that could justify the tower location and structural innovation required to cantilever.
- A panel member questioned if there is a way to integrate the public laneway, to ensure that street frontages are as activated as possible.
- A panelist encouraged the team to be more explicit with sustainability, as well as impressive and visionary with the public realm imagery.

140 MERTON STREET HOUSING NOW

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review
APPLICATION Pre-Application Consultation

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Doris Ho, Community Planning;
 Grace Gao, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Santiago Kunzle and Dustin Hopper,
 Montgomery Sisam Architects

VOTE Support: unanimous



REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Michael Leckman

PANELISTS Gordon Stratford, Meg Graham, Dima Cook, Ralph Giannone, Jim Gough, Paul Kulig,
 Heather Rolleston

CONFLICTS Not in Attendance: Margaret Briegmann, Joe Lobko
 Observing: Eladia Smoke

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. Is the proposed development designed to establish an attractive and livable community through its architectural design, such as materiality, colour, scale and rhythm etc.?
2. Does the proposed site organization provide appropriately designed publicly-accessible spaces, mid-block connections, streetscapes and street animation?
3. The south-west portion of the building integrates the existing heritage building – does the proposed building design complement the heritage building?
4. Does the proposed development employ appropriate green technologies and design considerations to meet sustainability goals? What other recommendations should be considered to meet higher levels of sustainability targets?

Chair's Summary of Key Points

140 Merton is a very important project: not only because of the contribution it will make to the affordability, to its neighbourhood, and to the city, but also because it is the first time Panel is reviewing a crucial next stage in CreateTO's Housing Now process: the actual submission of a

proposal, in the pre-application consultation stage, by a development team, and based on the earlier pre-approved zoning envelope.

This proposal also represents the fulfilled potential for the zoning envelope and for the site as expressed in a building. When we review the rezoning phase presentations, the expectation is that the zoning envelope is the minimum required, and the final project should try to fulfill it in the marketplace with design excellence.

Panel Members have been receptive to the possibility of the proposal's building's connection to landscape for several reasons: the way it observes setbacks along Merton Street, the pre-existing side yards that are part of the development, the good fortune of being across the street from a lower building offering views of the landscape to the south, and its inherent proximity to the Gardner Beltline Trail. So, it is an extraordinary location with an immense potential.

Panel members have shown support for the podium and tower configuration in general, but they expressed that the proposal can be improved in several important ways: much more commitment to a response to context; greater investigation of the materiality of all four facades of the tower; more study of the proportionality of fenestration in those facades; and much more resolution between elevation design, window design and coordination with interior planning. This is a great team, and they have produced significant buildings across the city, so we understand that there will be further development of a high quality. Nevertheless, those areas were left as question marks, and Panel would hope that the team is planning to continue to significant evolution of the design.

Panel Commentary

Public Realm and Landscape Open Space

- Panel members expressed their excitement for the potential of the design noting that it could be a precedent-setting development, particularly for landscape and appreciated the generosity implied by the preliminary plans.
- A panelist encouraged pushing the landscape design further, with greater connectivity between the indoor and outdoor spaces. They noted the exciting potential for the layering of landscape elements at the front of the building.
- A panelist struggled with the lack of differentiation between the various landscapes, noting that the equal setbacks to the podium and tower generated the spaces. The suggestion was put forth to bias the building on the site to amalgamate space. Doing so on the west could align to the Beltline connection and establish the beginnings of a network. Additionally, more of the heritage façade could potentially be explored if the building is shifted.
- The Panel suggested a greater understanding of the connectivity along the north edge to other sites and encouraged creating neighbourhood linkages.
- The Panel encouraged the maximization of the greenspace. The more contiguous greenspace, the more soft landscape, the more the Indigenous heritage can infuse itself and allow the building to have a broader influence beyond the construction boundaries.
- Appreciation was noted for the spirit of the Merton Street analysis; the part of the street is very distinguishing.

- The suggestion was made to introduce pedestrian treatments and design enhancements at the proposed midblock connection across Merton.
 - o Establishing pedestrian priority, visibility and a safe access to the nearby Beltline trail would be highly desirable.

Architectural Design

- Several panelists expressed their excitement for the proposal noting that it is a fantastic and carefully considered design.
- Multiple panel members expressed great support for increasing the building height. They acknowledged the importance of the building program and its delivery at a fulsome level, while reiterating the development's high aspirations for social sustainability as well as social responsibility.
 - o They underscored the urban design considerations as further justification to explore more height, including the proximity to the nearby subway.
- A panelist noted their appreciation for the architect's embrace of the design complexities but believed that significant consideration should be given to the neighbours to the north. Currently, the elevation leaves a lot to be desired, and while the sustainability concerns are appreciated, as proposed the north is a tough and relentless façade with punched windows.
- Another panelist expressed concern about the solidity of the base of the building as well as the north façade. They identified the large suites proposed in the northeast tower plan but the minimal light provided, and encouraged the team to consider opening the north façade as well as podium.
- A panel member highlighted the balconies on the tower's south and questioned if this passive shading strategy could be carried onto the east or west sides.
- A more detailed look at the lobby was encouraged, as there is an opportunity to give more space back to community use.
- Providing access to the green roof was also suggested.
- A panelist applauded the consideration given to the interior apartment layouts. They encouraged this level of care and detail to continue to the building massing as well as the exterior, as the articulation of the architecture is currently behind in its development in comparison to the interior.

Building Materiality

- Panel members noted that there was room for further detail regarding the building materials and facade but acknowledge that the level of resolution may be indicative of the phase of development.
- The materiality was identified as underrepresented and underwhelming; greater thought, composition and detailing is required as the podium seems flat. Texture and depth could be integrated to become a great backdrop to the heritage building in the front.

- A panelist noted that the heritage building felt rather lopped off; the junction between the two building components needs to be reviewed and articulated to ensure that they are not rammed together.
- A panel member suggested proposing a material palette that was more harmonious in its tonality to the brick and materials of the heritage building.
 - The colours and textures currently proposed contrast too greatly to the palette of the heritage building.
- A panelist suggested that creating further variations in the building envelope would allow for more architectural expression and lamented the missed opportunity for the design to integrate Indigenous communities to celebrate the tenancy within the architecture.
 - The east façade presents an opportunity to visibly integrate artistic expression into the architecture, while perhaps including more natural material selections such as wood.
 - The panelist encouraged the team to develop a design language inspired by the building use that is more expressive, and visible.