

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 4 – April 13, 2023

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, April 13, 2023, at 12:30 pm.

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 March 9, 2023, by email.

MEETING 4 INDEX

- i. 1880-1890 Eglinton Avenue East – Phase 1 (1st Review)
- ii. 1920-1940 Eglinton Avenue East (1st Review)
- iii. 31 Tapscott Road (1st Review)

1880-1890 EGLINTON AVENUE EAST – PHASE 1

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review

APPLICATION SPAs

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Emily Caldwell, Community Planning;
Behnaz Djabarouti, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Leo Lin and Ralph Giannone,
Giannone Petricone and Associates;
Joaquin Sevillano, Land Art Design Landscape Architects Inc;
Luka Matutinovic, Purpose Building



VOTE Support (*with key condition*): unanimous*

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Gordon Stratford

PANELISTS Dima Cook, Jim Gough, Paul Kulig, Joe Lobko, Jim Melvin, Heather Rolleston, Eladia Smoke, Sibylle von Knobloch

CONFLICTS Presenter, Design Team: Ralph Giannone
Not in Attendance: Meg Graham, Margaret Briegmann, George Dark

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. Public realm design for elements such as streetscape along Eglinton Ave E and other streets;
2. Active uses at grade, locations of service areas, especially at Eglinton/Victoria Park intersection;
3. Façade articulation and exterior materials; and
4. Sustainable building and landscape design strategy and features.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for their presentation and commendable design to date. The transformation of The Golden Mile into a vibrant mixed-use urban community is a major step forward for the City, and it is exciting to witness the vision unfolding.

The proposed development is of a size, prominence, and ambition to make a significant contribution to The Golden Mile's evolution. Given its importance the project's design needs to be exemplary to set the standard for the completion of the proponent's master plan, as well as for future development throughout The Golden Mile

Panel members have commended the team's strong start in creating an urbane and engaging concept. The team is encouraged to develop the design further, so that through close attention to detail this strong start can achieve a thriving neighbourhood. Work needed includes but is not limited to the following areas:

Response to Context

- Phase 1 South-East Corner Context - Take into account the busy thoroughfare context along Victoria Park Avenue and Eglinton Avenue East. See Site Planning.
- Master Plan North-East Corner Context - Reveal the site's hidden natural context to enhance proposed park amenity.

Site Planning

- See Response to Context.
- West + South Edges - The west and south edges of the Master Plan and Phase 1 are heavily trafficked thoroughfares, which need more design attention.
 - Develop a strong corner concept that counters the busy Eglinton Ave. East and Victoria Park Ave intersection.
 - Remove the proposed vehicular access lane immediately north of the intersection, to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety.
 - Ensure that the pedestrian realm along the two major avenues is well buffered from these busy arteries.
 - For the pedestrian realm create a distinct transition from the hectic major avenues into the quieter and calming interior of the Phase 1 site.
- Retail
 - Map retail to the microclimate settings being created in the site plan.
- Mid-Block North-South Garden – Panel member comments are supportive of this type of public space as envisioned in the precedent images.
 - See Landscape below.
 - Develop the design further to attain the quality of the precedents (submission page 38).
- Block B Parking – Panel members questioned the proponent's "placebo parking" solution, feeling that it is too vehicle-dominated.
 - Develop this area to be primarily a green space with vehicular circulation/parking a secondary use.
- "In the Meantime"
 - Given the multi-phase development of the master plan, identify temporary public spaces/amenities that support completed phases until full roll-out is achieved.

Built Form

- The proposed hybrid tower-podium typology works well.
- Built Form Character – The strategy of avoiding a monoculture character is a great start.
 - Make sure that the degree of character variety doesn't lead to visual confusion. Develop design and then distill so that the whole has clarity.

- Retail – Retail character appears be overshadowing the creation of distinctive built form.
 - Make distinctive built form the primary and retail character the secondary.

Landscape

- Green – As currently proposed Block F lacks sufficient green space.
 - Enhance Block F with increased green space, including reducing the amount of hard surface in the mid-block garden.
- Mid-Block North-South Garden – There is a disjoint between the proposed landscape design and the precedent images shown.
 - Further develop the proposed landscape to attain the same quality portrayed in the precedents.

City

- Given the size of The Golden Mile, and anticipated densification, the Panel encourages the City to develop a district energy strategy to enable and support a highly sustainable community.

Panel Commentary

Overall Project Vision and Design Approach

- The Panel commended the team including the project sponsors and developers for the ambition of the exciting proposal as well as the level of urban redevelopment overall; the bar has been set high.
 - Applause was noted for the social and community value benefit considerations early on, including the integration of accessibility, diversity, existing communities, and affordability.
 - The overall site design was expressed as a good enhancement for what is currently very suburban.
 - The City was commended for pushing the creation of an urban district with the Golden Mile where there are currently parking lots.
- A panelist highlighted the challenges of converting through implementation and applauded the team’s great thinking around this, including the continued function of the grocery store and other primary tenants while the place is transforming; this is a good aspect of the project.
- A panelist noted appreciation for the touchstone images of the car, and the machine and metal aesthetic, including the reminder of the optimism the automobile brought at that time.
 - In consideration of the transformation of the site, and the continued use of the name Golden Mile, they queried what this new optimism in 2023 can bring.

Built Form

- Multiple panelists highlighted the architectural expression of the retail façades with varying perspectives.
 - One panelist questioned the retail treatment, particularly adjacent to the Garden Courtyard and felt that the identity of the retail store was taking over the architecture of the podium.

- Discrepancies in the presentation images were identified, and the balance between the architecture of the retailer versus the architectural expression of the podium was queried.
 - The precedent images reflect a very strong urban character to the streets, and the retail is secondary to that.
 - In contrast, renderings of the building reflect the identity of the retailer taking over at the base.
 - The architectural identity of the mews was encouraged to take precedence over the identity of the retailers, with strong tenant retail design guidelines recommended.
 - Another panelist provided an alternative perspective and underscored the experiential pleasantries of the wild shop fronts on Crescent Street in Montreal.
 - The streetscape with the particular identities of all the different shop fronts is very diverse and really nice; it feels as though one is experiencing multiple different spaces as opposed to one long contiguous experience.
 - The design team was encouraged to go in one direction or the other.
- Accolades were given for the Podium Retail Façade Study and the investigation of what is the right balance of prescribed common elements for the retail frontages as well as how to create a bit of character with each.
 - This is of particular importance in consideration of the pedestrian experience along the retail that will be flanking Eglinton as it is predominantly glazing.
- Concern was expressed that only a single food store of similar size to the current grocer is anticipated; enhancement measures were encouraged in consideration of the proposed population.
- Appreciation was noted for the block planning with the weighted importance of Eglinton and Golden Mile Boulevard including the strong move of lobbies off of the central through-block connections.
- Further work was encouraged regarding the western elevation and the Victoria Park-facing walls, as the entrance into the Golden Mile area.
- The team was encouraged to flip the underground bicycle parking with the electrical rooms at grade; animate the streets, increase the comfort as well as convenience and put proof to the commitments around sustainability as well as a low carbon operating system.
- A panelist noted that it would be great if the interruptions in the rental tower could be tied to changes in use.
- The blending of the podium to tower was underscored; the insertion of a midzone rather than a typical tower-podium is very successful and this opportunity has been brought to the fore in the design.
- A panelist highlighted the success of the tiered, terraced exterior rooftop amenity areas including how specific they are.
 - “Careful cascade” describes the attitude for the podium roofs.

Garden Courtyard and Greenspace

- The team was pushed to think of continuity in the proposal's green elements; especially in a residential setting, people thrive when the life around them thrives.
- Support was noted for the concept of an internal garden that is flanked with retail; this could become a very special space.
 - o A bold vision is needed to create allure and a different sense of intimacy to pull pedestrians off the street; it should be green and lush.
 - o Currently, it feels very hard; more could be done to create a softer, more comfortable space between those two blocks.
- A panelist highlighted the opportunity for the Garden Courtyard and the real potential to create urbanity there.
 - o The articulation of the street between two building has the potential to create an escape and something that is calming, more sheltered, and cooler.
- Multiple panelists expressed that the Garden Courtyard should be off slab with a connection to earth, and as green as can be to ensure a lush character.
 - o Perhaps there can still be a connection between garages, but the parking need not be entirely continuous between the two halves of the block to avert the maintenance scenario in future decades where everything is lifted up to put in a newer structure.
 - o In consideration of how carbon-intensive underground parking structures are, this may sync with the larger sustainability objectives.
- A panelist queried the microclimate design of the garden itself and applauded the unique approach as well as commitment to making the mid-block connection as humane and hospitable as was demonstrated.
 - o The next level of detail refinement was queried including how to begin to map the retail experience in consideration of the timing of sun and shade.
 - Further study could inform opening up the south edge towards Victoria Park to let sun in, or maybe tightening up the north edge where there may be northern winds.
- A panelist highlighted the variety in the architecture as well as irregularity in the frontages and wondered if this could be complimented with a quieter ground plane with powerful planting at the mid-block connection.
- A panelist encouraged the team to look at more movable furniture options in the courtyard; the heavy, immovable furniture with a retro look currently proposed will not age well.
- A panelist lamented the unfortunate lack of detail in the package regarding the landscape plan and highlighted the substantial amount of undefined space in front of the electrical room at the corner of Golden Mile and Entrance Boulevard.
 - o Hope was noted for a greener solution there.
- A panelist highlighted Craigton Court park in the context drawings and encouraged the City as well as the design team within their proposed connections to it, to consider something that either daylight or reflects the fact that there was a creek in the area, to have a little more nature as opposed to an urban park.

Transportation and Streetscapes

- Multiple panelists questioned if two major vehicular entrances were needed for the west block.
 - o The driveway onto Victoria Park Avenue interrupts the pedestrian realm on a major street, and in close proximity to a major intersection; this seems to contradict city policy.
 - o The preference to see no driveway on the major street with access handled on the north-side entrance was expressed.

- A panelist noted that there were a few places where aspects of the transportation design and streetscape elements were being pushed to a more normative, suburban model and expressed hope that more effort would be made to resolve these little compromises that chip away at the vision for an urban community, including:
 - o the sight triangles and left-hand turn lanes on Golden Mile to Entrance Boulevard that widen up that street
 - o the driveways on the servicing access that are rendered as a continuity of the roadway when they could be built as a continuation of the sidewalk.

- A panelist noted confusion at the inconsistencies regarding the largo and POPS.
 - o The corner of Victoria Park and Eglinton is a busy location; a strong concept is needed if it is meant to be a special urban design moment.
 - The team was encouraged to make it a mobility hub with sheltered bicycle parking and other features to enhance as well as facilitate intermodal connectivity there.

- Entrance Boulevard was noted to feel a bit strange, including the two short ends, mainly unanimated façades, and the dedicated back of house as well as electrical rooms.

- Further study regarding the streetscape planters was encouraged to maximize the buffer between the pedestrian realm and street while squeezing in as many extra trees as possible.

Sustainability

- The team was applauded for their incredible and wonderful larger sustainability objectives including considerations for whole life carbon performance.

- City leadership was encouraged to push as well as impose energy production and district energy requirements for the whole Golden Mile project, acknowledging that the buildings are being proposed independently.
 - o Radical approaches to dealing with energy productions will be needed by the time these developments are built.

*Vote with Key Condition

- The Panel voted unanimously to support the proposal with the key condition that the driveway access onto Victoria Park, just north of Eglinton Avenue East be reviewed to determine whether it can be removed.

1920-1940 EGLINTON AVENUE EAST

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review
APPLICATION ZBA (entire site) and 4 SPAs (one per block)

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Emily Caldwell, Community Planning;
Behnaz Djabarouti, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Andre D'Elia, superkül;
Gus Maurano, The MBTW Group;
Russell Fleischer, Turner Fleischer;
Steve Teeple, Teeple Architects



VOTE Non-support: unanimous

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Gordon Stratford

PANELISTS Dima Cook, Jim Gough, Paul Kulig, Joe Lobko, Anna Madeira, Jim Melvin, Heather Rolleston, Eladia Smoke, Sibylle von Knobloch

CONFLICTS Not in Attendance: Margaret Briegmann, Ralph Giannone
Observing: Meg Graham

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. Public realm design for elements such as streetscape along Eglinton Ave E and other streets, in particular in relation to the grade changes of Building B6 and B7;
2. Interface of proposed public park and public school;
3. Façade articulation and exterior materials; and
4. Sustainable building and landscape design strategy and features.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the proponent team for a very thorough submission. The transformation of The Golden Mile into a vibrant mixed-use urban community is a major step forward for the City. By virtue of the project site's size and strategic location it could make a significant contribution to The Golden Mile's evolution. With this potential in mind the project's design needs to be exemplary.

The proponent team has invested considerable talent and effort in addressing the tactical drivers and requirements of a complex high-density development. However, what is missing is a compelling vision story that weaves the overall site together into a cohesive and distinctive “place of choice” community.

Further work is needed to address this challenge; including but not limited to the following:

Response to (and Creating) Context

- Creating Context Story – Develop a site-wide “place of choice” future context strategy that makes this development a unique community within The Golden Mile, each Block a distinctive neighbourhood within that community, and key elements within those Blocks signature places (e.g.: Proposed Park, College Square, C2, A1, etc.).
- Centennial College – At the northwest corner of the site provide additional outdoor public space that supports and takes even more advantage of the College’s civic presence and activity.
- Southwest Corner – Take into consideration the emerging future context along the west side of the Block C while designing the Proposed Park.
- “In The Meantime” – Each development phase results in a “new vs. existing” work-in-progress context. Provide a strategy for how each phase will be complete in terms of a high quality-of-life environment with adequate support amenities.
- See Site Planning.

Site Planning

- Proposed Park – The current design is too formal and mannered. Design this key park as an activated and animated amenity for both the proposed community and development fronting the west side of the Park.
- Open Space Activation – Provide more information about intended open space amenity programming sufficient to support the anticipated population.
- Vehicles – Ensure overall site is a pedestrian-first environment. Reduce vehicular intrusion into the site, including consolidation of loading/servicing hubs.
- Pedestrian Realm – Ensure ease of pedestrian access throughout the overall site (e.g.: north-south access between B6 and B7 is problematic due to level changes).
- B6 and B7 – The organization of B6 and B7 needs to be rethought.

Landscape Strategy

- A Key Contributor – A recurring comment from Panel members; landscape needs to be a major contributor to achieving a successful “Creating Context Story.”
- Connective Tissue – Develop a landscape strategy that creates a high-quality green “connective tissue” that defines the entire network of outdoor spaces throughout the overall development.
- An Oasis (More Soft – Less Hard) – Reduce the amount of hard surface throughout the project, in favour of providing a substantially green landscape.
- A Variety of Settings – Ensure that this vital green amenity includes a variety of settings for health and well being... from activated and animated to quiet and reflective.
- See Site Planning.

Built Form

- Proposed Strategy – The strategy of a mix of built form character is a promising idea. Develop this approach further, including demonstrating how it meshes with

and highlights the development's "Creating Context Story" (see Response to Context).

- B6 and B7 – The aggressiveness of the proposed built form character for these buildings is at odds with the varied expression of the other buildings. Develop the design further to be a more harmonious part of the proposed skyline.

Panel Commentary

Overall Project Vision and Design Approach

- Multiple panelists commended the team on the amount of work completed in the proposal.
- Numerous panelists supported the design objective of multiple architects.
 - A panelist agreed with the premise of different architects to create something that has developed over time and is not homogenous, but rather has variety and character.
 - It was questioned if three architectural firms were enough in consideration of the proposed property and buildings.
 - In principle it is a great idea to have a variety of designers, but it could be pushed further.
- A panelist queried how the development could unfold over time and acknowledged that it will happen in pieces.
 - Perhaps the public spaces could become more organic and supportive of how the community will appear over time.
 - How the spaces can be influenced over time could be interesting.
- A panelist queried what the heart of this new development is; the park needs to be pushed to elevate it accordingly.
 - Potential was noted for it to be the open spaces and connective tissues in the form of the through-block connections.
- A panelist encouraged the City to make a decision as to what the character of the Golden Mile Boulevard will be: retail or residential.

Site Planning

- Multiple panelists noted that the transportation design seemed very well thought-out overall.
 - It is good that pedestrian connections are provided through the blocks and there is a good level of connectivity.
 - The separation of servicing and the use of north-south lanes is a laudable strategy.
 - Care has been taken to pair the loading with different buildings across the site; this is very good.
- The team was encouraged to take a second look at getting cars underground as soon as possible rather than bringing them very deep into the blocks, specifically around A2, A4, B4, B5, and C1.
- A panelist expressed that they would like to see the lanes reconsidered as to what their function is going to be.

- Particularly in the north-south mid-block connections, the proposal appears to take public realm material from the public streets and try to infuse it into a private lane; it is unclear if it is working or to the benefit of future residents.
 - Do not make them something they are not.
 - Put all the public realm assets in the public realm.
- The east-west lanes are more inclusive and have retail spaces abutting them.
- Numerous panelists questioned the turning circles and drop-offs.
 - The question was posed if they had to be so large, and if they were impeding the cohesion of the landscape elements for what could otherwise be green spaces.
 - They seem stamped around, with a lot of sameness; they should be seen as opportunities to differentiate the blocks and perhaps provide even more public art.
 - The potential conflicts of the east-west pedestrian crossings and nearby parking was highlighted; parking on these traffic circles is a bad idea for a few reasons.
- A panelist expressed that the streetscaping of the mid-block connections relative to the other streets felt inverted.
 - The internal streets where green oases would be imagined are car-dominated, octagonal piazzas.
 - This feels like a missed opportunity given the ambition, scale, and density of the place.
- Multiple panelists noted that the north-south connection at B6 and B7 is challenging; the area should be looked at again.
 - There is likely a solution that can be made without changing the grades.
 - If the idea is to encourage people into the site and focus on pedestrians, then the up and down seems contradictory to creating this idea of a more unified, equal, and accessible pedestrian plane.
- A panelist noted that there appear to be no trees proposed on the southern half of Warden Avenue; more effort needs to be made so that a strong green edge and comfortable pedestrian realm can be provided.
 - A really strong streetscape is vitally important in a development of this magnitude, especially for all the units facing that way.
 - The other streetscapes seem pretty sound.
- The issues of at-grade uses and their relationship to the public realm was highlighted, as they can create tension in a plan like this.
 - Grade-related units need defined private space, well away from the public walkway.
 - In some instances, the residential units directly at grade and the primary school at grade as well creates challenges for how to provide both some privacy between the spaces that need to be private, and yet still have them interact with the public realm.
 - Some consideration for the private and perhaps public spaces above grade could be better articulated in the plan.
 - Perhaps if the outdoor classroom was up on the roof that would create an opportunity for a different type of space to be used by the public school.
- A panelist encouraged the team to take another look at the spaces created in between the buildings as they are very similar in nature.

- The 3-metre front yard townhouses at grade were highlighted; based on the challenges here, they are quite commendable.

Built Form and Architectural Expression

- The range of very different architectural expressions was identified, and the design team was advised to take care about where the architecture meets.
- Numerous panelists advised further study regarding buildings B6 and B7.
 - o Some of the towers are slightly perplexing; they seem very harsh and angular for such a prominent corner where they should be welcoming people into the site.
 - o A fundamental rethink is necessary; from a planning perspective, there should be two distinct buildings with distinct architectural expression.
 - The monoculture presenting to Eglinton as the primary presence for this project is not appropriate; the architecture is not up to it as it is too massive.
 - o The sculptural quality of the façade has potential, but the white elements and the beige brick field backdrop bring these sharp elements to the fore.
 - If everything was the same colour then these elements would not look so additive, and the building would have more of a carved or sculptural quality.
- The school and office building (C2) needs more animation at grade, and seems quite opaque, especially on Eglinton; perhaps a colonnade could be used to ease that.
- A panelist wished that the brick residential building A1 was more carved and more jewel-like.
- A panelist identified that the exoskeletal expression of B3 only appeared on the south side of the tower, and not the north side, and wondered if this was a structural element.
 - o Should the architecture be conceived in the round?

Landscape Strategy and Park Design

- Multiple panelists referenced the variety in the architecture and identified opportunities for the landscape to be the cohesive link.
 - o One panelist noted that the overall landscape approach was quite good at pulling the public realm together.
 - o Another noted the need for more refinement of the landscaping and the treatment at grade; prioritize it to be more pedestrian and a stronger link.
 - o Another expressed that there appears to be an emphasis on fragmented planter areas rather than contiguous plant communities; continuity of the landscape is key.
- Numerous panelists expressed concern for the park design, generally advocating for something wilder with more green space.
 - o It is very formal with way too much hardscape and needs a more diverse amount of programming.
 - It would be nice to see more unpaved and green area, or at least the use of more permeable paving.
 - It seems so formal and restrictive; more green, undulation and buffering is needed if it is going to be a playground eventually to ensure more of a safe space.

- The addition of a green field was suggested to support soccer games in consideration of the kids in the nearby condos.
 - A friendlier edge with the school was suggested to encourage potential spill out.
 - Wild, green chaos might be good.
- One panelist advised the team to put away what has been done and start again.
- A panelist voiced agreement with a lot of the presentation's text but added that the landscape needs to be empowered to follow through on it; an outdoor classroom is noted but it is not kitted out as a classroom at all.
- A panelist referenced the bioswale imagery included in the precedent studies and questioned if there was a story to be told that the landscape is not demonstrating regarding how surface water will be treated on a site that is largely roof slab.
 - Beyond the image, it is not evident in the park design nor other aspects of the proposal.
 - There is a lot to do with the landscape stretching beyond just being green space.

31 TAPSCOTT ROAD

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review
APPLICATION OPA and ZBA

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Samuel Baron, Community Planning;
Mahsa Tayebi, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Andrew Ferancik, WND Associates;
Tahora Alimohammadi, Arcadis IBI;
Matthew Bernstein, STUDIO tla

VOTE Non-support: unanimous

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Meg Graham

PANELISTS Gordon Stratford, Dima Cook, Jim Gough, Paul Kulig, Joe Lobko, Jim Melvin, Heather Rolleston, Eladia Smoke, Sibylle von Knobloch

CONFLICTS None



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. Master plan vision: Character Areas, Malvern Main Street, Transit Plaza, and other public realm considerations;
2. Ground floor uses: locations of retail/commercial/community uses at grade;
3. Built form: mix of tall, midrise, and low-rise buildings;
4. Phasing strategy: integration with and improvements to the existing mall in the interim

Chair's Summary of Key Points

In summary, the proposal includes the construction of 5,700 new housing units. While some of the thinking and design required to create healthy and humane public space and a successful community are present in the spirit of the proposal, they are not yet evident in the design; as of yet the scheme lacks a unifying vision and identifiable sense of place.

The Panel agreed that the scheme as represented is too dense. While the alternate scheme was viewed as an improvement on the initial scheme — and the continuous park viewed as a strong

move — the height transition issues of the original scheme, while mitigated, remain; the development is too tall on Neilson Road in both schemes.

The Panel urged the proponent to reconceptualize the public realm, with an eye to creating a substantive network of parks and open spaces of various sizes; in the current proposal the parks and open spaces are neither well-connected, nor characterized by the large- to small-grain network that would better ensure the success of the public realm. Additionally: the courtyard spaces lack generosity and in some cases light; the transit plaza is notional and needs substantially greater development; the woonerfs are too tight, and the right of ways are too wide.

Further to this, deeper consideration and study of ground-related programming and its viability — retail, daycare, and other community uses — is needed.

It was the Panel's strong sense that the proposed density has impacted the proposal in a negative way. The Panel encouraged the proponent to return to first principles, to develop a vision and character for the site that would allow the proponent to address the underdeveloped and under-considered elements of the design and bring them together as part of a coherent and wholistic design.

Panel Commentary

Overall Site Strategy and Design Approach

- The Panel expressed concern with the amount of density proposed on the site.
 - The team was encouraged to take great care and perhaps work with the City to understand the impacts of the proposed increase in population on the area.
 - Examine what additional amenities are needed and community benefits, including for the neighbourhood at large as well.
 - A panelist noted that they were having trouble finding the proposal believable, and the unrealistic density ambition seriously impairs the team's ability to find a good solution in an odd and isolated place.
 - There is a significant gap between the visualizations and the reality of what is being proposed.
 - The renderings imply a highly resolved scheme, but the team was encouraged to revisit first principles as there are a lot of basics missing from the thinking overall.
 - Another encouraged the team to build a story; it is not enough to simply count the numbers and place it in built form, nor just build the buildings. There must be something that builds a place that makes people feel like they belong.
- The lack of an overall idea, and hierarchy of ideas across all topics was noted.
 - What has resulted is a density exercise; a larger vision about how to reimagine this place that was, and still is a community centre needs to come to the table.
 - The focus and analysis of the existing conditions is missing, including how this informs decision-making.
 - The in-between is missing.
- More sensitive thought around the development phasing was encouraged.
 - Particularly in phases 4-6, as proposed there will be a massive dead zone in the middle of the site for years.

- A panelist noted concerns with the presentation package overall.
 - The font was small; larger lettering was encouraged.
 - There was a lack of detail in the presentation related to design, as well as confusion about some of the precedent images included as they did not mesh with the proposal.
 - For example, bioswales were included in the imagery but not mentioned in the design.

Revised Master Plan

- Numerous panel members noted the improvements on the Revised Master Plan (page 27 of the submission package); although there is still work to be done, the revisions are trending in the right direction.
 - The placement and relative height of the built form is better than the initial scheme.
 - Appreciation was noted that the Revised Master Plan started to add the mid-rise typology along Tapscott.
 - The evolving street, built form, and block pattern is more promising.
 - The simplicity is preferred, but there are still issues concerning the roadway widths; an understanding of the scale and grain of urban places is missing.
- Multiple panelists highlighted the definite improvements to the road system in the revised scheme, including the removal of the road through the park.
 - The design team was encouraged to keep the park contiguous to get the most out of it.
 - If this street is removed, it will bring more pedestrians to Neilson which will add life to the street as well as support street-facing retail, while bringing more people to transit.
 - The suggestion was put forth to rework the roads boarding the eastern edge of the park and block access from Neilson.
 - It would be great if the routes are either not there or reduced to woonerfs to get a close connection between the built form and the places people will live with the park itself.
- Multiple panelists cautioned that equal care is still required at places like Neilson Road.
 - Neilson is not a back to the site, nor a throwaway street to propose taller buildings just because it is going to be a transit street.
 - A panelist noted that they were fearful of what Neilson would like even in the revised scheme; there are too many towers by far and would ruin this part of the street.

Open Space

- A panelist cautioned that the plan cannot rely solely on the big park; there needs to be a network of greenspace.
 - Currently, it is just the park, and everything else is built form or streets; a weave of parkettes, mews, and little pocket parks extending to the west is really important.
 - Another noted that the park appears to be well-placed with good amounts of sunlight.
- Concerns as well as opportunities were highlighted for Woods Park.
 - The wooded area was noted to often appear in shadow; the long-term impacts of this were questioned.

- Safety issues were raised, and more study was encouraged to ensure that the woodlot can safely thrive in the way it is designed to.
- A panelist suggested that more environmental causes could be integrated into the project through naturalized areas or stormwater considerations to support the design team's intent of making the continuous forest and park spaces more wild.
- Multiple panelists noted the essential importance of a transit plaza.
 - A panelist noted confusion and a lack of clarity in the discussion as well as drawing labels as to its location.
 - If it is the little plaza on the northwest corner of Tapscott at Neilson it does not seem to have much of a function and is generic.
 - The team was encouraged to consider it more as a place, including what function it could have to support the transit facility patrons through walking and cycling, especially if it will be the terminus of the LRT.
 - It deserves more attention and could be a mobility hub.
- The team was encouraged to re-examine the scales of the inner woonerfs, as the 12-metre widths would not allow for trees to be planted.
- The courtyard spaces were characterized as harsh, enclosed, perpetually in shadow and inhospitable. The team was encouraged to review their scale.
 - Consider creating variety and opportunities to let sunlight in by not having consistent podiums.
 - Consider how to create proportional, functional, hospitable, and welcoming public spaces.
 - The passive solar approach is missing from the public spaces provided in the courtyards.

Built Form

- A panelist highlighted the transition problems in the scheme, noting that they become apparent very quickly.
- The design team was welcomed to introduce mid-rises and some more variety of housing types in the proposal in an effort to introduce a middle-something.
- A panelist identified the architectural expression currently characterizing the proposal and encouraged the team to consider if some of the towers are to be signature, and not all the same.
 - View analysis was also encouraged including the long views of this kind of massing.

Retail and Street Frontages

- Numerous panel members expressed concern about the extent of retail, including the lack of an animation zone integrated with the retail and sidewalks flanking the streets.
 - Pedestrian clearways on the main street are not enough to encourage retail spill out uses by restaurants and cafes.
- The team was encouraged to consider careful placement in the retail, and to have a Plan B if it does not survive in the way it is currently proposed.

- A panelist expressed that the retail focus and the heart of the neighbourhood should be on that main street, rather than Tapscott or Neilson Road.
- Acknowledging the movement of residents and deliveries through the inner blocks, a panelist questioned if the woonerfs would be taking people away from the retail frontage.
 - o The team was encouraged to consider the distribution of lobbies; perhaps the woonerf could serve as a back lobby, and there could be another lobby on the retail street.
 - o Another panelist noted that moving the tower entrances to the main street would be an improvement.
- A panelist queried how to create a retail space that is more than just a replacement of the existing mall's lost GFA, and characterized the proposed retail as uniform, noting that it lacks a hierarchy, a destination, and a terminus.
 - o This will be needed to establish it as a serious retail street.
- Multiple panelists noted that the 23-metre right-of-way seemed wide and was not needed.
 - o The 18.5-metre ROW of Queen Street West was highlighted; why try to make it bigger than that?
- There is a need to modulate the street network in response to the parks and open space network.