

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 10 – November 23, 2023

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Thursday, November 23, 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

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, Climate Strategy – Choice Properties

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 October 5, 2023, by email.

MEETING 10 INDEX

- i. 522 University Avenue (1st Review)
- ii. Overlea Bridge Project (1st Review)
- iii. Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods – Major Streets (2nd Review)

522 UNIVERSITY AVENUE

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW	First Review
APPLICATION	ZBA and SPA
DEVELOPER	Industrial Alliance Insurance and Financial Services Inc., 522 University Avenue Holding Inc.



PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF	Nasim Adab, Urban Design; Susan McAlpine, Community Planning; Erin Smith, Heritage Planning
------------	---

DESIGN TEAM	Nicola Casciato, WZMH Architects; Sharon Hong, ERA Architects Inc.
-------------	---

VOTE	Support: 10 Non-support: 1
------	-------------------------------

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR	Gordon Stratford
PANELISTS	Michael Leckman, Jim Gough, Jessica Hutcheon, Olivia Keung, Paul Kulig, Joe Lobko, Anna Madeira, Jim Melvin, Juhee Oh, Heather Rolleston, Sibylle von Knobloch
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 conservation strategy in relation to the significance of the existing heritage building on University Avenue as a civic corridor
2. The conservation strategy for the existing heritage building in relation to embodied carbon/sustainability
3. The relationship of the proposed tower (its size, location, design, stepback and reveal) with the shape, form and materiality of the existing heritage building and its attributes and character
4. The height, scale, and massing of the proposed tower in the context of University Avenue as an important civic corridor

5. Public realm enhancement, streetscape improvement along all streets and open space plaza improvements

Summary of Project's Key Points

The following Panel member discussion points were highlighted in the verbal meeting summary by the Chair:

Panel comments appreciated the potential of the design presented, as well as the existing Parkin building in its entirety, as a distinctive piece. In the evolution of University Avenue, this proposal seems to have the possibility and potential of a more elegant and thoughtful approach between new and existing, than other developments that have come before the Panel. The project has a site and shape that allows for this perhaps better than the others. Moreover, there is an admiration and deference implied in the design to the existing building.

- Site Plan and Public Realm
 - Panel members have noted that there are possibilities, potential and intrigue but more work is needed, with some of the comments included below:
 - Many comments appreciated the efforts to evolve the ground floor plane and the wonderful DNA started in the original building, including the moves to try to unlock as well as smooth out some of the existing barriers. Take this to the next level to realize the possibilities demonstrated in the renderings.
 - Examples include the floating pavilion and the exposure of the waffle ceiling.
 - Ensure that the private realm and the fascinating idea with potentially great views translate to a livable space.
- Built Form
 - Many comments identified the homage to the existing building as a positive thing, but also acknowledged that the original building is complete, and should be appreciated as that.
 - Make the clarity of the moves shown clear; the fewer the moves, the greater the care that is needed to ensure that the existing and proposed dance well with each other.
 - Further study is advised for the treatment at the south end of the existing building.
 - Consider bending more towards the original character and feeling of the original building itself, as opposed to trying to overlay a piece that takes cues from the existing but is not; it confuses the very elegant and simple parti.
 - Ensure that all of the care that has been used in the original building carries its way forward into the residential floorplates as well, and also ties into sustainability aspects.
- Sustainability
 - Push sustainability strategies further. There are some moves in the built form that require further thought not only in terms of the parti of the building, but also from a sustainability perspective as well.

- Submission Documents
 - The Panel acknowledged that this is a piece of work in progress but advised that there is a need to develop the design further to clarify and mesh the story. In this process, address comments above.

Panel Commentary

Project Vision and Context

- Numerous panelists shared appreciation for the proposal; it is a beautiful addition to the downtown and University Avenue. Appreciation was noted for:
 - the very important corner in the city and the beautiful project;
 - the overall approach including the preservation of the office from numerous perspectives including heritage, embodied carbon, and the mix of uses;
 - the thoughtfulness of the public realm.
- In reference to the shadow studies, a panelist identified a little bit of shadow impact on the park on McCaul, and some impact in front of Sick Kids, but noted that generally, the shadow studies are very successful, and the shadow impacts are quite small.
- Appreciation was noted for the overall city views on page 8. A panelist expressed that the slender proportion of what is proposed is quite aesthetically pleasing, even with just a massing view.

Streetscapes

- A panelist noted that parking was not discussed. They questioned if there will be anything additional added to the underground and if this might include residential, visitor, and office parking.
 - Further ideas about parking were encouraged including how it will be affected on site with the new development, as well as the possible changes to adjacent streets and on-street parking.
- In reference to page 41 and the images of future streetscapes on University, a panelist advocated for the Potential Future Street Edge condition. They advised that it provides a far wider and better public realm, moving to 6 metres from the 3.6 metres identified in the alternative Proposed Street Edge condition.
 - The panelist encouraged City staff to request the developer to develop the Potential Future Street Edge and cycle track as depicted, as well as to continue it south to Dundas to create a consistent look and feel for the street edge along University, between Elm and Dundas.
- In consideration of a unified ground plane and paving, a panelist suggested that whatever it may be, that the public realm on University's west side should all be the same extending between Elm and Dundas.
 - They advised that it should be the same profile as the Potential Future Street Edge on page 41 and that this would be a big step forward for University Avenue.

- A panelist advised that the northern part of the site along Elm Street will be much nicer with a widened boulevard, and could be considered as a new opportunity for streetscape.
 - Further study was advised for the whole new boulevard including potential constraints from underground utilities.
 - They suggested that perhaps the boulevard could become a long, continuous piece and have more volume as well as layered planting with understory, to introduce a softer element along the street.
 - They suggested that perhaps the University-side seating could be wrapped around on the Elm Street façade and sidewalk moved.

- The important role of trees along the edges was highlighted. A panelist hoped that every effort was made in working with utilities and that planters could be introduced on all streets whether they are raised or not.

Public Realm and Plaza

- Multiple panelists shared appreciation for the improvements at grade to the ground floor plane, notably the attempts to open it up and make it feel more public in terms of lighting, access, and landscaping.

- A panelist expressed appreciation for the level of study and care that has gone into the public realm with what is proposed.
 - They opined that the existing conditions were likely a great example of the objectives and goals back in the day with respect to the monumental plinth and the idea of something very civic existing in the public realm.
 - They expressed that some of the softening with the benches and planters are very much appreciated, in addition to the slight movement of the ramp location to the north side, as well as the shortening of the barrier free ramp length.

- Appreciation was noted for the refreshing approach to address the big divide of the plinth on University. A panelist expressed that the staggered seating and planters are a lovely way of opening it up.
 - They added that if the drops are managed successfully, railings could be avoided in some locations.

- Multiple panelists shared appreciation for the protected outdoor public space under the coffered soffit.
 - This included the soffit lighting and creation of a new spotlight on an area of the building that perhaps has not been noticed as much as it could have been previously; it is a great idea.

- Further study was advised regarding the plaza, including how it could be a benefit for the community.
 - A panelist expressed that it feels a little devoid of life given that is a critical point in the landscape between the two lobbies, where almost every building user will pass. They wondered if it should feel like a special moment and somehow take advantage of the elevated condition, while respecting the heritage.
 - A fabulous bench or a subtle water feature was suggested for consideration.
 - Another panelist queried if it was a private or publicly accessible space.

- A panelist questioned the new plaza on the University side where it has been cut back from the podium, given that the retail would be at a separate elevation. They advised some closer thinking about how it could function in the future, and suggested possibly tying it to the retail or some other means.
- A panelist noted that the existing building seems to have a lot of landscape planter beds underneath and questioned how much planting would grow in those conditions.
- A panelist wondered whether all the openings on the north side were required. They suggested that perhaps they could be reduced, and more planters added.
- Careful consideration was advised moving forward, with respect to the various grade changes and railing requirements to ensure they do not clutter.

Accessibility Ramp

- Appreciation was noted for the porosity developed on the north side, and the location of the accessibility ramp but a panelist suggested reversing the run so that the destination is at the corner of University and Elm.
 - o They advised that this will be a more natural movement in consideration of the building entrances as well, and makes more sense than the circuitous routes shown in a drawing.
- A panelist asked for more generosity; what is being provided is the bare minimum. They advised advancing the accessibility so that it is more than an accommodation, but also, an enhancement for the public.
 - o They expressed that this kind of podium building in the public realm makes a statement to those with mobility challenges. They advised further consideration beyond those using wheelchairs to include families with strollers as well as the elderly.

Southern Plaza and Edges

- A panelist advised that the southern plaza space needs a bit of work given that it does not offer much in the way of seating, nor activation.
 - o They highlighted the opportunity for the artwork shown in the renderings to fill the area and create a space that emphasizes the setback.
- A panelist expressed concern with the different southerly columns of wood and advised that the architectural attributes at grade, at the base, and ceiling, should be considered as one entity. They highlighted the key component of trying to preserve this entirely as one piece.
 - o The panelist opined that pedestrians would find it odd to come across the column, that is the same shape as others, but has a different material finish on it.

Heritage Strategy and Built Form

- A panelist expressed admiration for the overall thoughtful and effective strategy of the project including the respect shown to the existing building and the appreciation of the site conditions.
 - o They acknowledged that the approach means the removal of a third of the building base, but permits the elevator position for the residential vs office use, the overall

nature of the building, streets and spaces to the north, as well as the development of a much more substantial roof garden at the reveal levels.

- In reference to the existing façade and the reconstructed piece, panelist appreciated that the proportion has been kept the same as the existing building, which is very important in terms of the office portion of the building.
 - o They suggested that perhaps the new type of skin on the reconstruction could be knit into the existing façade and advised that appreciating the value of the precast, its proportion, materiality as well as depth in the new portion, is important.
 - They did not think that it needed to be different, and opined that it can be recreated in a way that brings back the beauty of the base as a whole rather than trying to illustrate it as two parts perhaps, new and old.
- Appreciation was noted for the remarkable inventiveness of the John C. Parkin studio, including the column-free space with slender columns at the perimeter as well as the frugal but very thorough use of resources back in the 60s and 70s. In this context, a panelist highlighted the structural marvel required to achieve the tower as proposed, as well as the suggestion to include mass timber in the equation.
 - o Although, there is strong advocacy for mass timber, they opined that it may be a bit of a distraction on the southern third of the building.
 - The panelist expressed that it does seem like it is getting in the way of fulfilling the possibility of either a reinterpretation or completion.
 - They cautioned that the clarity of the diagram is really being challenged when taking the glass façade over the timber and putting it next to the bronze glass in the reveal.
 - They strongly advised reconsidering this, if continuing in the current form.
- A panelist appreciated the idea and aspiration of the complimentary treatment of new and old at the base but sensed that there was more work to do.
 - o They expressed caution about how glass can diminish the proportional complementarity that is evident in the renderings, if the façade of the new extension to the south is literally intended as a flat plane glass façade.
- A panelist expressed appreciation for the discussion and lengths that are being taken to maintain the democratic moves in the lower portions of the building.
- Alternatively, one panelist expressed that they were not a fan of this type of building extension as it feels like a copy job. They highlighted the great existing building and its real heritage presence along University in terms of the evolution of the street.
 - o They suggested something more contrasting to the existing, perhaps with more of a setback that would highlight the Parkin building better.

Architectural Detailing and Grid Expression

- Numerous panelists encouraged further study with respect to the design details. The proponent was encouraged to include more in drawing form to be reassured that the details will be built as intended.
 - o The massing and approach to heritage was characterized as enticingly simple and attractive but frustratingly vague. The importance of how the materials, expression of the grid, and the recreation of the heritage are resolved in detail, was highlighted.

- A panelist appreciated the architectural expression put forward, including the idea of celebrating the grid and continuing something that is quite simple as well as elemental for the additions proposed.
 - o The importance of the detailing was strongly reiterated, given that the expression is very simple and elemental.
 - o They expressed that the idea of a very glazed curtain wall with the existing grid proportions behind it was interesting but cautioned that the expression changes in some of the renderings where it starts to become quite reflective, especially at the reveal volume which feels like the architecture disappears there.

Roof Terrace and Reveal Level

- Appreciation was noted for the roof garden and the large open space, but further study was advised to determine what will make the area inhabitable in consideration of its location on the north side of the tower, getting little sun, and a lot of downwind.
 - o Wind studies were advised, including consideration for how things will be anchored. A panelist doubted that the space will have a lot of umbrellas.
 - o The little alcoves under protection on the east and west sides of the building were highlighted as a nice part of the amenity space.
- In reference to questions about the maintenance equipment needed to maintain the existing façades and the portion of the new building, a panelist highlighted the importance of thinking about this in the context of opening up the roof plane, which they opined will be quite beautiful in terms of open space.
 - o They identified the real opportunity for the mechanical floor at the top to be used to take some of the fuss of the area down below.
- In consideration of the wonderful, coffered ceiling and soffits of the existing building, multiple panelists queried if this could be referenced in the residential building.
 - o In a similar way that the soffit of the building below is celebrated, a panelist wondered if there could be some consideration for this where the tower hovers over the existing structure, as a nod to the history of the beautiful Modernist building that is there.
 - o A panelist advised that it is really important to ensure that if a 5-metre-wide ceiling is proposed at the 15th or 16th floor, that it would be something commensurate with all of the engineering and architectural energy appropriate to this project.
- A panelist advised that they had trouble with the reveal volume as it is not entirely coordinated in the package. They highlighted its importance on the north side and identified it as a make or break move in the project because the moves are very simple.

Residential Tower Expression

- A panelist highlighted the importance of the cladding on the upper tower for the success of the building. They queried if there were ways to indicate its investigation, including the proportions and materiality that are being proposed.
 - o Mirvish Village was suggested as a reference for its materiality that includes lots of precast doing important jobs outboard of the slab.
 - o In reference to the delicacy achieved at the Tower Hill towers, the panelist suggested that perhaps there is a depth and delicacy that provides continuity as well as further development of the tower vocabulary being shown in the proposed.

- Further study was advised with respect to the residential floor plates and the beautiful lacy façades. A panelist advised that there must be some consideration in terms of their scale, and a layer of reality in how they meet the intent shown in the renderings.
- In consideration of the articulation of the tower materially, a panelist cautioned that the expression of this very simple frame, may sometimes be challenging if trying to incorporate balconies into the mix. They noted that how this is actually achieved will be important.

Sustainability and Façade Performance

- A panelist expressed that there are really great starting points for the sustainability initiatives and appreciated the measures being explored at the building. They highlighted the fantastic opportunity for the proposal to be an exemplar for where the residential sector needs to go with respect to façades and sustainability, particularly in this corridor where many glass towers are proposed.
 - o They opined that the existing heritage building and the proposed somewhat have an aesthetic of a passive house building. The panelist noted that TGS is trying to take the residential sector towards much more robust façades, but those developments have typically been averse because they do not want that look.
- A panelist identified a bit of a conflict with respect to the double façades in trying to pay homage to the heritage building, drilling down to the details. Rather than the double façades, they queried if a better insulated façade could be created that would use the thickness of the walls and better insulation to really improve the overall thermal performance of the building, to drive sustainability through energy efficiency as well as the retention of the existing building.
 - o The design team was encouraged to look at the façade options with RJC and resolve how to maintain the proposed look while driving sustainability.

Sustainability Strategies

- A panelist highlighted the big conversation in sustainability regarding how demolition can be avoided. They expressed that the proposal is a really great addition to that conversation and could even serve as a demonstration piece for how legacy buildings can be renewed in the city.
- A panelist expressed that they would have liked to hear more about the specifics in terms of carbon, sustainability, and the systems being implemented to comment on what is being achieved.
- A panelist lamented that the proposal is only applying for Tier 1 of TGS; this is somewhat unambitious in the current times of climate crisis.
- A panelist reiterated concerns about the Tier 1 targets and advised pushing further to demonstrate more commitment as well as intentionality with the strategies proposed, given that a lot seems to be promised.
 - o They highlighted the interest in the envelope and how it will be achieved.
 - o They highlighted the thermally broken balconies identified in the package but questioned if balconies were proposed.
 - o They highlighted electrification which was noted in the presentation and asked how far this would be taken and if zero-carbon is the target.

- They highlighted the mention of a timber structure as a great idea that the panelist would love to encourage, but again asked for a level of commitment to the proposed strategies.
- A panelist expressed appreciation for the deep lake cooling approach.

Programming

- In reference to the potential of the increasingly common mix of residential and office, a panelist encouraged further thought about how those uses could blend together, rather than being expressed as very discrete uses of res, office, and retail. The proponent was advised to think about it more as a community being created, including future residents as well as the broader community in which it sits, and the health district that it is supporting.
 - They queried if there are programmatic ways to start to tie some of this back into the space, from a design perspective as well as a leasing perspective, which may be helpful rather than really traditional office uses.
 - They queried if there are ways to include institutional partners or other uses like daycares that can support the growing population, or a particular need that may be identified in the community.
- In reference to the second-floor mezzanine area under the soffit that looks like it is subdivided into offices, a panelist queried if it could be an event space or something that expresses the formal architectural specificity and heritage of the building, and reflects it back in the programming.
- A panelist queried if there are ways to share the ground floor lobbies so that there is not a strict break between residential and office, to promote openness as well as the mixing that supports the broader idea of community.
 - They expressed that versions of this have been seen in which there is a shared lobby, and then the res and the office lobby start to split above at a second level. This would allow for the first floor to truly be an open passage that respects the heritage of the architecture but also speaks to different modes of living in a much more intensely mixed way.
- A panelist expressed support for the idea of the lobbies at the north end of the ground floor, which are highly transparent.

OVERLEA BRIDGE PROJECT

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review
APPLICATION City Infrastructure



PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Adam Popper, Cycling and Pedestrian Projects, Transportation Services

DESIGN TEAM Justin Chen, Morrison Hershfield; Mark Langridge, DTAH

VOTE Support: 10
Non-support: 1

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Gordon Stratford

PANELISTS Michael Leckman, Margaret Briegmann, Jim Gough, Jessica Hutcheon, Olivia Keung, Paul Kulig, Anna Madeira, Jim Melvin, Juhee Oh, Heather Rolleston, Sibylle von Knobloch

CONFLICTS Observing: 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. Bridge Barrier Design
 - General comments on proposed design, materials & finishes in terms of functionality, aesthetics, durability and maintenance. Do you have any suggestions to help improve the current proposal?
2. Pedestrian and Cyclist Experience
 - Do you have any suggestions to help enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience approaching and crossing the bridge?

Summary of Project's Key Points

The following Panel member discussion points were highlighted in the verbal meeting summary by the Chair:

Bridges are often overlooked for their potential to be more than just a pragmatic means of conveying traffic across the valleys and ravines of Toronto. They have the power to become

important signature moments in the city; elevated sculptural expressions of civic progress and design excellence.

The Overlea Bridge project offers such an opportunity, with the submitted design showing clear signs of promise but requiring further work to move beyond bridge pragmatics. The following highlights Panel input regarding next steps, with more detailed feedback included in the minutes:

- Response to Context:
 - The history of East York's growth and change includes a strong presence of modernist design, and the proposed bridge design has started to reference that tradition.
 - Develop the bridge design further to fully celebrate modernist expression.

- Built Form:
 - The Panel has commented broadly on the promising start and encourages the team to take it further, including the following:
 - The thinning of the bridge structure is praised, with further development advised.
 - With respect to the proposed safety barrier, provide a more veil-like appearance with sufficient transparency for people to see the valley landscape beyond.
 - In consideration of the modernist expression, extend that design language to include the entire bridge and its approaches as a unified coherent signature.
 - Use a colour palette that fits with and accentuates the sweep and clean lines of modernist expression.
 - Introduce light standards (as part of an overall lighting design strategy) that evoke the simple elegance and cadent clarity of modernist design.

- Sustainability:
 - This project provides an opportunity to explore how bridges of this type can be more sustainable:
 - Research and include lower carbon strategies in every step of the design process.

- Site Plan:
 - Panel comment highlights include:
 - Design the bridge, its approaches, public art and landscape as a cohesive modernist whole.
 - The separation of (and footprint for) cars, bikes, and pedestrians is very strong, and much better than the present conditions.

- Storyline / Public Art:
 - Panel comments highlights include:
 - Ensure that the bridge/approaches/landscape, and public art are designed as a cohesive whole.
 - Choreograph Indigenous heritage, East York history and modernist heritage to create a visual storyline; realized at scales that can be readily seen and appreciated by all bridge users (whether walking, biking, speeding by in a car, on public transit, etc.)

- The above needs to be clearly visible both on and beneath the bridge.

Panel Commentary

Connectivity and Mobility

- Numerous panelists expressed appreciation for the key move to widen the bridge and create a safe space for all users; the expansion and inclusion of the various modes on the bridge is to be commended.
- A panelist reiterated support for the widening, which will enhance mobility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists on the bridge, as well as at the proposed protected intersection of Don Mills.
- A panelist advised that the narrowing of the traffic lanes as per the current standards is something that will help enhance safety on the bridge and more effective use of the space.
- Beyond the scope of the project, a panelist highlighted the key importance of continuity in the success of a cycle network.
 - They advised that it would be valuable to have the recommendation made in the report if someone were to pick it up in the future.
- A panelist acknowledged that the bicycle paths would be further created, and encouraged study regarding any signage necessary to manage how merges will happen in the temporary conditions of those transitions.
 - The team was advised to ensure the safety of all users while the connections are being built, including pedestrians, cyclists, and cars.
- Appreciation was noted for the widening and generosity of the sidewalks as well as cycling infrastructure, but a panelist expressed that enlargements of the bridge would have been useful to clarify the orchestration of movement between cars and cyclists, particularly at the ends.
- Looking at the exercise from a broader context, a panelist was interested to know more about the Renewing Overlea Project and issues of walkability throughout the neighbourhood.
 - In consideration of similar tower neighbourhoods and challenges of walkability with respect to buildings spread far apart, they advised that tying the exercise of the pedestrianization of the bridge into larger issues of walkability in this neighbourhood would give it a different perspective.

Built Form and Approaches

- Multiple panelists encouraged further study regarding the end conditions and how the bridge announces itself.
 - The addition of a little more height and volume to some of the termination walls at the end was suggested for consideration.
 - The bridge at Hamilton including the niches to the forefathers that were never filled was referenced as a precedent, although perhaps not on that level of grandeur. It was advised that some kind of gesture in this direction would make this a special kind of project and announce it as a special place in the city.

- The opportunity to create more of a sense of place, perhaps with seating, art, or planters was also identified.
- A panelist expressed that the great bridges of the world are seen as one thing. Pickets, tubes, lights; all the structures are of one piece. In starting from scratch, they advised that if there was some way to orchestrate those things, as well as the bents and structure, as one bridge as opposed to an assembly of different modules, it would elevate the design.
- In consideration of the deck being built from scratch, a panelist queried if the drainage design could be optimized with the low points placed between the cars and the bikes, where the buffer barrier is.
 - It was advised that this could optimize the operations and maintenance as crews could stay in the car lane to clean and suction from their trucks, rather than having to hop over the barrier.
 - Concern was noted that the current design with the crown of the road and the drainage at the curb of the bike lane is a bit of a default mode to when bike lanes are retrofitted.
 - It was cautioned that draining through holes in the barriers that will get gummed up with junk, and across the bike lane to a gutter, may lead to a whole lot of opportunities for black ice through the freeze and thaw; this could be avoided by catching the water before it gets to the barrier.
- A panelist enjoyed the text as well as the textured walls at the entrance, and wondered if there was a way to pull the design language beyond the bridge at both ends as a nice extension into the neighbourhood.
 - The opportunity to offer potential moments of rest was suggested, to support members of the community that may need it after the long journey across the bridge. It was suggested that this might increase the specialness of the investment even more.
- Multiple panelists reiterated support for the idea of a greater moment of pause to enhance the pedestrian experience as well as add a little bit of grace and exclamation to what is perhaps formally, an extremely rigid linear composition.
 - Opportunities to engage with the view, as well as consider the history and identity of the bridge and place, were identified.
 - If the bridge permits it, a moment of pause off on the pedestrian side with a small bay or projection of some kind was also suggested.
- Multiple panelists reiterated further consideration for the wall termination, including an extension of the language of the bridge barrier to the point where only a few guards are required, rather than the existing standard tubular rail protection system.
- Similarly, a panelist queried how the concrete barrier between the bikes and cars would extend beyond. They hoped to see the bike lanes extended east and west with an appropriate language of concrete barriers, noting that they would hate to see crash attenuation barriers with steel with a bunch of yellow.
- Appreciation was noted for the thinning of the profile in the revised bridge on page 3, to both edges, the structure and upper layer; a panelist opined that this will look quite elegant.

- A panelist expressed appreciation and agreement with the preferred barrier option on page 10; it gives pedestrians more room to breathe, is less climbable and less accessible when it is farther away.
- Another panelist reiterated support and expressed that the option selected for the barrier works well; it has clean lines and visual connection to the ravine below which is nice in that sort of condition.
- A panelist opined that the cleanliness lacked a sense of place or neighbourhood but expressed that the form line on the interior of the bike lane will add interest to the journey across, and the proposed artwork will likely add some colour and excitement to make it a unique experience.

Materiality

- A panelist expressed that the perpendicular condition of the tubes is very satisfying from a vehicular point of view down below, but that the oblique condition is of concern because the sense of the panorama is lost; continued contemplation was advised.
 - o They opined that the web net feels like a step up from the aluminum tubes, and that the tubes have a very industrial quality to them once installed that is substantively less satisfying than the web net.
- In consideration of the perimeter barrier and the 2-inch pickets with a 5-inch gap, a panelist wondered how much visibility pedestrians have over the adjacent panoramic view other than what is directly to their right.
 - o They advised that as proposed, it is a much denser peripheral barrier than on the Bloor Viaduct.
 - o Further study was encouraged to provide more of a view out while crossing the bridge; perhaps the spacing can be modified or the tube size reduced.
- Appreciation was noted that the bridge is not overly designed, but that a lot of details went into the execution. The team was encouraged to continue to look at the materials being selected in consideration of sustainability.
 - o It was advised that the way bridges are designed inherently include all carbon and steel, which have very high embodied carbon. Further study of low-carbon concrete mixes that might affect the schedule were encouraged early, as there is potential for a big impact with infrastructure of this scale.
- In consideration of the concrete patching and the retrofit of the existing piers, discrepancies between drawings were identified and a panelist wondered how this would be resolved; the renderings suggest a smooth consistent finish however the sections acknowledge the patches and additions that will be part of the work.
 - o The team was encouraged to embrace the palimpsest, rough texture, and consider how it can be integrated intentionally, perhaps through different concrete, colour, or texture.
- In consideration of the black vertical rail supports, and the bronze horizontals, a panelist opined that colour variations should be considered on the horizontals so that people can lean against them.
 - o They cautioned that the dark colours tend to get a lot of heat, and a lighter colour may be nicer, such as a light grey rather than bronze.

- A panelist complimented the railing; it is very simple, well thought out, and not very fussy. They opined that it echoes the veil that is on the Bloor Viaduct, and that a Toronto typology is developing for the type of protections we place on our bridges.
 - o They suggested further consideration with respect to the reflectivity of the materials used as they can really make a difference in how the bridge is perceived, looking through it.
 - It was advised that the more reflective it is, the more it will disappear rather than obstruct in the view across the bridge.
- A panelist questioned the use of the exposed aggregate rivulets in the concrete, by the formwork. They expressed that it would be great if the walls could be more reflective of the International, Modern style as evident in images shown for Thorncliffe Park, and perhaps even the Don Mills side as well.
- Another panelist expressed appreciation for the transition from the vertical poles to the vertically textured concrete; it is quite successful.

Lighting

- A panelist expressed that they hoped the City and Toronto Hydro could be convinced to place the light poles on the divide to the bike lane and the travel lane. They advised that there is efficiency in lighting there, everything works better.
- Appreciation was noted for the use of lighting and the design in general; it seems very functional and simple which in itself is very beautiful.
- Appreciation was noted for the careful consideration of the use of lighting on the top of the bridge, but a panelist wondered if the experience on the underside had been considered as well to enliven the significant space underneath.
- The team was encouraged to think, plan, and anticipate the demand for banners as well as tchotchkes on the light standards, while acknowledging that Hydro will make many of those decisions.
- A panelist liked the location of the light standards in the buffer between the bikes and cars, but encouraged another look with respect to the details as discrepancies were identified in the drawings.
 - o They advised that the renderings show a deeper base for the light standard resting on a curb, whereas the cross-sections show them resting on the asphalt of the bikes.
 - o The team was encouraged to be mindful of safety and to sit them raised and separate from the bike path so that opportunities for crashes are not created.
- The light standards at the barrier between the cycling and vehicle traffic was highlighted; a panelist wondered if the bump outs created, even with the curve at the bottom, had been assessed in consideration of cyclist safety.
 - o They questioned if this design had been implemented adjacent to other cycling lanes and tested as an edge condition for cyclists elsewhere with respect to concerns such as height and the catching of handlebars.

Safety

- A safety lens was applied, and further consideration was advised for a few aspects regarding visibility as well as escape from the long linear passage.
 - A panelist questioned how visible cyclists are from the car lanes, in case of a circumstance where a biker wipes out in the evening and no pedestrians are present on the bridge.
 - They queried if cameras would be stationed across, at the light stations.
 - A panelist wondered if there would be any wisdom in providing a few gaps in the barrier between the bike and car lanes to allow pedestrians to get out of the space, or to run to safety if perhaps they were uncomfortable with the conditions ahead of them.

Heritage Plaque and Public Art

- In consideration of the existing heritage plaque, multiple panelists highlighted the opportunity to extend the history outlined, to include the present day as well as further back to an Indigenous heritage.
 - One advised that mention of the town of Leaside and its history is not something that should be erased but rather added to, and perhaps there is an opportunity to speak to the public art that will be incorporated.
- A panelist noted appreciation for the public art competition but expressed that it would be great if something else could be added to the bridge elements that might include Indigenous artwork.
- In reference to the art selected and an image shown depicting the artwork as plaques and bronzes laid in the concrete, a panelist expressed that it would be great if elements of the Silk Road art pieces could perhaps drape over the terminal walls and somehow become more visible to cars, because the horizontal placement in the pavement would not be seen.
- Appreciation was noted for the care and attention paid to putting a title on the bridge including the font that is of the place and matches the Thorncliffe font.

EXPANDING HOUSING OPTIONS IN NEIGHBOURHOODS – MAJOR STREETS

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW Second Review

APPLICATION City Study

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Rong Yu, Urban Design;
Brooke Marshall, Zoning

VOTE None

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Gordon Stratford

PANELISTS Meg Graham, Margaret Briegmann, Ralph Giannone, Jim Gough, Olivia Keung, Paul Kulig, Joe Lobko, Jim Melvin, Juhee Oh, Heather Rolleston

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. Design of the Rear Facing Lots
 - There are few examples of rear-facing lots redevelopment in the city. Do you have any design suggestions for establishing new frontage along a major street while also addressing the existing frontage facing a local street?
2. Servicing
 - With the maximum 30 units for small-scale apartment, are there best practices for managing garbage and solid waste curb side pick-up, especially on the major streets with narrow boulevard spaces?
3. Side Yard Setback
 - The current City-Wide harmonized Zoning Bylaw makes no distinction between primary and secondary window openings in relation to side yard setbacks. Staff are reviewing and modeling side yard setback requirement for the draft Zoning Bylaw Amendment in order to maintain the livability and quality of residential units. Do you have any suggestions?

Summary of Project's Key Points

The following Panel member discussion points were highlighted in the verbal meeting summary by the Chair:

- Initiative Importance:
 - This initiative is essential to the future of Toronto and needs to be very well and thoroughly accomplished to achieve success.
 - The initiative is also a delicate one for many of the stakeholders; thus requiring sufficient time and care to gain the understanding and support of all parties.
 - A number of Panel members feel that the Panel and EHON team need additional review sessions to work together on this important initiative.

- Sensitivity to Context:
 - There are several types of contexts that need attention and further study:
 - Community's Physical Context - Consider different: areas of the city, streets types, neighbourhoods, residential typologies, etc.
 - Site Context - Consider varying site types, sizes, shapes, topography, on-site and adjacent amenities, etc.
 - Development Context – This type of development will likely not attract large scale developers. Consider the smaller developers that implement small projects, with smaller returns.
 - Target Audience Context - Consider developers, ratepayer groups, neighbours, general public, municipality departments, funding parties, etc. This is a very diverse audience with each being unique, and great care will be needed to collaborate with each accordingly.
 - With each of the above contexts avoid “one size fits all” solutions. They will not fit every context and do not guarantee success.

- Flexibility and Agility:
 - Currently - There are many rules, regulations, and guidelines (RRGs) that were not designed for this form of development, and will not make sense. They will make the initiative difficult to achieve if not dealt with upfront, especially given the broad range of site types and conditions. Some sites will be simple and straightforward, but there are others that will be incredibly challenging.
 - Recommended Action – Team with designers and developers to identify upfront the problem RRGs, and develop case studies (up to a 30-unit limit) to test how to deal with the problems. Explore creative problem solving that enables flexible and agile solutions, with the aim of ensuring that the projects can get built.

- Engagement:
 - Know and engage your target audience, especially at the right time in the process. For example...it is important to engage development and design stakeholders now; targeting and encouraging the “exemplary players” (the ones who design and build quality in the small development market) to become involved.

- Good Intensification:
 - Intensification is needed but it must be the good, sensitive type. Focus on this with your engaged design and development participants.
 - The goal is to achieve quality living inside and outside:
 - Yes - to quality in livability, accessibility, landscape, etc.
 - No - to following problematic rules, regulations, and guidelines.
 - Example - If current parking requirements are ruling a site to the detriment of creating quality living and providing homes within city boundaries, tackle these requirements head-on now (see Flexibility and Agility above).

- Communication:
 - o Panel member comments regarding your submission indicate that more work is needed.
 - The submission as presented is dense and confusing... simplicity and clarity is essential.
 - Case studies are needed; use Toronto locations and conditions familiar to your target audience.
 - Employ an iterative process; test your work with representatives from your target audiences.
 - Question your target audience to confirm whether they understand the work? Is the message clear enough? Can they relate to the content?
 - Again, engage the design and development stakeholders upfront to get feedback early for an efficient and fruitful consultation process.

Panel Commentary

Overall Strategy

- A panelist sympathized with the team and recognized the political pressure associated with the work. They acknowledged the initiative's stealth strategy of working within the existing policy frameworks, and within the existing definition of Major Streets to limit the amount of OPAs, to support an easy approval.
- Another panelist liked the ambition and instinct of trying to keep it simple in the scope of the Major Streets initiative, through incremental progress. They acknowledged that the projects, from townhouses, to 6 storeys, and up to 30 units, are certainly a range that can make a big difference across the city.

Importance of the Initiative

- A panelist highlighted the importance of the study and mandate. They expressed that it is essential that we get this right, and as fast as possible because it needs to be catalytic and incredibly ambitious to deliver this kind of housing. The team was commended on the effort, and the complexity was understood but the panelist advised that it needs to be a little easier.
- A panelist expressed that this is a once in a multi-generational opportunity to make change, and to make a sustainable, beautiful as well as accessible city where streets are knit together, and neighbourhoods become more connected; much more work is needed to do so.
 - o They expressed that a vision and a structure is critical as well as necessary, for what this is going to be. The panelist advised that this would help people to achieve something that is much more innovative, forward looking, and forward performing than what has been done for the last number of decades.
- The team was strongly encouraged to ensure that this is a water-tight zoning document because people will hire planning lawyers and game it right away. A panelist cautioned that this could result in some bad apples in very nice neighbourhoods, which is not what we want to happen, collectively.

Major Streets Definition

- A panelist opined that the Major Streets definition seems like it is suited for transportation networks and has nothing to do with development or urban design other than it is in the Official Plan.
 - o They expressed that Minor Streets over 20-metres wide, as classified in Schedule 1, seem like perfect places to also implement the initiative, but they are outside of the definition and therefore not captured.
 - o They opined that the approach to implementation is perhaps missing things that would be logically included from a purely objective perspective, considering first principles, ROW, scale of the street and development parcels.
- A panelist highlighted the importance of the Major Streets definition but expressed that they did not understand it right now. They wondered if it should be a specific definition as related to this type of EHON housing, and perhaps have its own separate definition as required for this.

Consultation

- A panelist expressed that they struggled with the idea of workshops and consultations, and recommended consulting with the people battling this typology every day.
 - o They advised that it is not enough to simply send this work to BILD, but rather they must be brought to the table to get their help.
- A panelist encouraged consulting practitioners familiar with the small-scale work and their zoning bylaws, such as those with BCIN numbers. They advised that this would be more useful than talking to BILD or developers that are doing a lot of tall concrete projects.
- A panelist strongly advised that architects and engineers must absolutely be consulted, including the folks that work on these types of developments more regularly.
 - o They reiterated the need to speak to architects as they will innovate and see new potential, as well as people who build.

Implementation

- A panelist expressed that although this is incremental density, they were not sure that the infrastructure such as schools, parks, and all of the places that are sacrosanct in a lot of neighbourhoods already, is there to support the initiative in all areas of the city.
- In consideration of these developments as complete communities, a panelist encouraged pushing the possibility for neighbourhood retail options. They advised that the program is important and really missing in the city.
- A panelist advised that they were worried about simply stating that land assembly on Major Streets is being encouraged. They expressed that this needs to be done carefully, and more careful than the information that has been provided.
 - o They advised that the document starts defining lot sizes to have minimums, after assembly and minimum depths, but there is contradictory information.
- In reference to delivery and executing the plan, it was suggested that this cannot just be about zoning. There must be an ambition and an army around it that captures all the

peripheral things that come with it, such as waste management, parking, and SPA approvals.

Approval Regulations and Scope

- In reference to slide 10 and the Neighbourhood-Major Streets conditions concentrated in the suburbs and car-based places, a panelist recommended further consideration for parking being part of the formula.
 - o They hoped that parking would not be permitted or be limited, to expand livable housing options. The panelist opined that far too much land has been given to vehicular movements and parking in the examples.
 - o They expressed that if there is intensification, let's not intensify the use of the car but rather intensify the use of amenity spaces; make those part of the formula or restriction.
- A panelist acknowledged that loading requirements are already part of the zoning bylaw, but expressed concern that if the City is looking to add further requirements, this will make the projects really hard to deliver from a practical perspective and hard to design within the footprints available.
 - o They advised that the existing policies for pick-up/drop-off and access from local roads are important, but the panelist opined that if they are added to the zoning bylaw, they would be an extra barrier to delivering and designing these developments.
- A panelist reiterated concerns and questioned why the PUDO requirements need to be included in the zoning bylaw. They opined that this seems to counter the goal of making it easier to build the missing middle.
- In reference to the sustainability thresholds and testing for feasibility, a panelist identified that some of the larger typologies are getting into territory that would fall under the Green Roof Bylaw and mid-rise standards for TGS.
 - o They expressed that this is a great scale that we know how to achieve high-performance buildings but cautioned that they would not want requirements to disincentivize anyone from building a small apartment, for example.
- A panelist suggested more consideration of the height topic to build in more of a buffer. They urged for a little more generosity on that aspect and advised that there are a variety of situations where a bit more wiggle room is needed, such as the desire for a taller ground floor or a scenario where there cannot be access directly at grade.
- A panelist expressed that preserving existing mature trees is great as a concept, and agreed that globally this must be done around the city, but cautioned that preserving a tree can stall, if not kill an entire development.
 - o They advocated for more coordination in the City in terms of what the priorities are, in developing more desperately needing housing in an affordability and housing crisis.

Pedestrian Connections

- A panelist appreciated the thought put into the pedestrian connections. They queried how to make sure that the frontages being created are activated and connected in consideration of retail and small offices, as well as how to ensure that the existing business owners are

able to survive in these scenarios.

- A panelist understood the ambitions around the idea of punching the pedestrian connections through the rear-lotted subdivisions but expressed that this can be incredibly onerous.
 - o They highlighted a scenario in which someone buying 1 or 2 houses, which are 30-metres wide, would have to give 7-metres for a pedestrian walkway. The panelist advised that this is a lot for one project to carry and encouraged the team to consider the impacts of this.

Typologies and Setbacks

- In consideration of the nature of the illustrations used as examples, a panelist suggested referencing real sites across the city and region, rather than the drawings and abstractions included, which in theory may be from anywhere. They opined that these illustrations are not helpful and are confusing.
 - o The panelist suggested studying built townhouses, stacked townhouses, and small apartments on a variety of sites which would make things more tangible, more quickly, for people to understand.
 - o They appreciated keeping the policy simple but advised that those policy points could be better informed by real examples which will help attempts to resolve a theoretical range of site conditions.
- A panelist expressed that the forms shown are backward-looking, lacking in innovation, and will not achieve what is required from an urban perspective. They opined that the forms are largely parroting what owners and developers have been able to eke out of the system to date.
 - o They advised that a lot more porosity is needed.
 - o They highlighted the need for accessible housing and cautioned that townhouses are not accessible in consideration of stairs and older folks. They advised that a lot of townhouses made sense from a land development perspective, but not from an urban, sustainability and accessibility perspective.
- In reference to the various built forms such as 5-storeys, 6-storeys or townhouses, a panelist advised that it seems convoluted and there should be a simpler way to present it.
 - o They advised that simplicity is essential while acknowledging the overall complexity, given that every site and every part of the city is very different.
- A panelist noted that the communications piece could be improved upon, with respect to the details. They opined that there is a disconnect between the study, which looked at building types, scenarios, and what ifs, versus the zoning slides that did not identify the details.
 - o They recommended a simple graphic that lays out opportunities for what can be implemented on parcels with varying widths and depths.
- A panelist expressed appreciation for slide 24 which began to look at front yards, rear yards, and side yards in different neighbourhoods.
 - o This consideration was encouraged as the panelist did not think that one size fits all because these neighbourhoods have very different lot sizes. Moreover, they did not see how a single set of rules for these different types will actually fit in different neighbourhoods.

- A panelist expressed that they really liked the idea of getting rid of FSI, and liked the growing trend with the multiplex. They advised that if it is dispensed, then we must be really smart about the built form and the setbacks; if everything is in the setbacks then we must test that out.
- In reference to some of the renderings shown, a panelist wondered if their functional requirements had been thought through to the extent necessary to meet the zoning bylaw requirements. They expressed worry about being able to deliver this, meet the requirements and support this initiative from a design perspective.
- In reference to the design of the rear facing lots, a panelist expressed that they were not sure what the purpose of the frontages was, and how the priority is being put on either the major or back streets.
 - The team was encouraged to clarify who the frontage is for, and where we are dedicating private space, in consideration of occupants or community residents that may question where their space is.
- In reference to back-lotted lots, with 6 storeys on the major street, and 4 storeys on the local street behind, a panelist expressed that this seems unnecessarily deferential.
 - They noted that when a house is behind on that very same parcel, 6 storeys with only a 7-metre setback can be proposed. They opined that we are more deferential to the local street than to the neighbourhood backyard, which does not seem consistent.
 - The panelist opined that if we can do 6 storeys in someone's backyard, we can do 6 storeys on a street.
- In reference to slide 27 and side yard setbacks, a panelist expressed that they found the issue very difficult to understand with respect to primary windows being allowed on side yard setbacks because they saw this as in contradiction to the maximum depth for the buildings.
 - They advised that if properties can be assembled in a certain neighbourhood which result in a square-type form, the panelist could then see the desire for primary windows on the sides, but did not think that this should be allowed.
 - They advised that when a minimum depth is set on assembled properties, it is mostly related to a double-loaded building that faces the front and the rear; they opined that those two things seem to be in contradiction with each other.
- A panelist expressed that they do see expanding housing options, but from a landscape perspective they do not see enough space for living.
 - They encouraged the involvement of architects that can smartly design small complexes to efficiently handle local garbage pickup from the street.
 - They queried if porches should become part of the development which could perhaps reduce some of the setback.
- A panelist thought that the stacked townhouses did not seem to have an opportunity for outdoor amenity. They wondered if there were opportunities to include flat roofs with amenity space on the rooftop.