

# CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

## MINUTES: MEETING 1 – January 17, 2024

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 12:30 pm.

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### 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

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### CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meeting, which was held on December 7, 2023, by email.

### MEETING 1 INDEX

- i. 2444 Eglinton Avenue East – Housing Now (2<sup>nd</sup> Review)

# 2444 EGLINTON AVENUE EAST – HOUSING NOW

## CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

### DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

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DESIGN REVIEW	Second Review
APPLICATION	Pre-Application Consultation (Future ZBA)
DEVELOPER	CGWIN LP



#### PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF	Kwasi Kankam, Community Planning; Marina Haufschild, Urban Design
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DESIGN TEAM	Gregory Henriquez, Henriquez Partners Architects
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VOTE	None
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#### REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR	Michael Leckman
PANELISTS	Gordon Stratford, Ralph Giannone, Jessica Hutcheon, Paul Kulig, Joe Lobko, Anna Madeira, Juhee Oh, Heather Rolleston
CONFLICTS	Not in Attendance: Margaret Briegmann

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## Introduction

City staff outlined the project history, existing and future context, and planning framework. Staff are seeking the Panel's advice on the following key issues:

1. Appropriate built form for the site and the context, including proposed building types, tower floor plate sizes, and tower heights in relation to the Neighbourhood areas
2. Interface between development and abutting public streets, potential design strategies to address above-grade parking along Eglinton overpass and quality of pedestrian space along Service Road
3. Ground floor organization and design solutions for:
  - Main pedestrian entrances
  - Vehicular access and access to building service
  - Proposed uses at grade
4. Sustainable Development features

## Summary of Project's Key Points

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

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At this time in Toronto, there is no more urgent an issue than promoting wholistic neighbourhoods, affordable housing, and producing high-efficiency low-emissions buildings. It is undeniable that this project achieves a provocative vision of mixed-ownership housing on a challenging site with immense potential. The team should be congratulated for such a strong image of an optimistic future.

The following highlights Panel input regarding next steps, with more detailed feedback included in the minutes:

- Overall Project Vision and Submission Package
  - The Panel was glad to see that the design dared to dream beyond the boundaries of the site to propose an inclusive, and rich vision for a place, not just a development site.
  - The team provided a strong presentation with clear comparisons to the previous iteration; evidence of this evolution was helpful.
  - The sustainability strategy considered the big picture, and was better than most projects of this type.
  
- Site Context and Public Realm Adjacencies
  - The Panel advised that many key components to the vision seem indeterminate at this early stage. This includes the community gardens in the hydro corridor, the status of the space at the Eglinton underpass, as well as the connectivity of the public realm in general.
    - The development team, the City, and the relevant landholders need to continue to pursue intense collaboration to achieve success, to ensure that the proposed landscape and urban identities are fully realized.
    - Further study was advised with respect to the hydro corridor constraints; nothing is permitted within a 15-metre radius of a tower base.
      - The team is encouraged to work with Hydro to evolve the scheme accordingly.
  
- Built Form
  - In consideration of the tower size and separation, Panel comments highlighted a key observation that the wider tower without balconies perhaps behaves even more slenderly than a typical building with 750-square-metre floor plates and balconies.
  - Continued conversations were advised regarding unit sizes and the balance of supplying affordable housing while meeting City standards.
    - Ensure that the needs of the future co-op residents and families are being reflected, and not just those of the market.
    - Further study was advised regarding storage spaces to support the smaller unit sizes.
  
- Site Planning at Grade
  - There were mixed comments with respect to the north service road; some panelists proposed entrances to animate it whereas others suggested that the use of commercial retail units ensures that the project is not an orphan on the site.
  - Further study was advised to consider the risks associated with retail on the site, as well as to examine the opportunity for all community uses to front the hydro corridor.

- More careful consideration of the driveway design was recommended as the gateway into the site, in consideration of the various modes of transportation proposed and the risk of conflict that the overlapping uses present.
- Above-grade Parking Garage
  - The majority of panelists supported the parking above grade conditionally, with further development. Further refinement was advised to occupy the edges and consider each condition differently.
    - Eglinton: As proposed, the edge condition would look into the parking structure which does not convey the site as an occupied and humane place to live.
    - Hydro corridor: Consider the possibility of expanding the community garden story, and including occupancy along the sloped edges so that the imagery is not just of green but of people enjoying the space as well.

## Panel Commentary

### Overall Project Vision

- Numerous panelists expressed support for the project’s ambition and commitment to affordable housing; the development concept is intelligent, thoughtful and a marked improvement from the previous iteration. The team was commended as well as thanked for their comprehensive and beautiful submission package.
- A couple of panelists expressed great support for co-op housing.
- Given the harsh nature of the environment around the site, a panelist expressed that the proponent has done a fantastic job of creating a project that has character and brings a sense of place to this corner that is otherwise lost in a sea of transit connections.
- The proponent team was congratulated on their vision which dares to dream beyond the defined legal boundaries of the site, and will have the ripple effect of benefit beyond those boundaries.
  - A panelist cautioned that the joy of working beyond the boundaries creates a challenge as to whether all the other parties will come through in the end to fulfill the proposed dream. They queried what considerations an alternative design may have if the hydro corridor is not developed as desired and the space beneath Eglinton does not result.

### Site Connectivity and Public Realm

- A panelist suggested thinking about the site as peripheral in the neighbourhood, rather than the current perception of central, which has been driving the work.
  - They cautioned that the east-west connection on the north service road seems like a bit of an afterthought and may be a busier pedestrian route for residents than the Eglinton underpass, in consideration of nearby community amenities such as schools.
- A panelist advised further study regarding the route of pedestrians travelling eastbound along Eglinton and how they will enter at the western triangle; ensure there is enough

- space to achieve the desired outcome with the proposed greenhouse.
- A panelist loved the transit plaza and advised that it needs a desperate champion, perhaps through the councillor, to ensure the vision does not fall through the cracks.
  - In reference to the public realm and future context, a panelist opined that much more assertiveness is needed from the TTC and City staff.
    - o They advised that a lot of development will be coming in this neighbourhood but without a lot of open space, particularly at Kennedy and Eglinton.
    - o They advocated for more of a leadership role and reiterated support for a councillor to perhaps organize a group to shepherd a public realm strategy in consideration of the number of future residents.
  - A panelist cautioned that Kennedy Station will likely be denser than currently illustrated and suggested that the TTC and City come together to imagine the site in a realistic way.
  - A panelist encouraged more Underpass Park and Bentway thinking with respect to the way the underside of the Eglinton overpass may emerge.
  - A panelist recommended more details about how pedestrians will move through the north-south woonerf, and opined that it seems vehicular-dominated.
    - o They wondered how the pedestrians will access the three lobbies and the quality of that experience, as well as how it will be designed to support their movements while also serving as the main vehicular loading entrance.
  - Another panelist reiterated concerns that the functionality of the servicing, parking entries, and turnaround, are defeating the woonerf; the proposal's promises of a humane place to live still need to be fulfilled in this space.

### Built Form and Massing

- A panelist expressed a lot of support for the redeployment of the density and the massing revisions in this iteration. They advised that this is great for a number of reasons including sunlight and the pairing of volumes with the nearby Rainbow Village development.
- A panelist reiterated commendations for the proponent's urban design adjustments regarding the lower form towards the neighbour to the east and the Eglinton overpass; the rearrangement of the urban design concept is substantially better than previously proposed.
- In reference to the tower size, floor plates, and tower separation, a panelist forewarned staff that the approval of the design as proposed may become problematic for the City as the 800m<sup>2</sup> floor plates and 22-metre tower separation will be used as precedent by others.
- Given the atypical site, a panelist opined that some deviations from typical policies can be justified, such as around the underground parking, but recommended that tower separation should be held. They cautioned that there are strong reasons for this, including privacy.
  - o They advised staff that if things may budge, the priority should be solar access given that this arrangement prioritizes sunlight on the community gardens compared to the previous iteration as well as other options; perhaps this may be a path forward to justifying or rationalizing some minor deviations from the standards.

- Another panelist reiterated concerns about the creeping intrusion with respect to the tower separation and floor plates; this needs to be worked on.
- A panelist highlighted the gap between the two podia as it gets tighter, and wondered what that feeling will be as it seems like a critical area.
- A panelist appreciated the compelling notion of green flowing up from the hydro corridor and onto the podia, but questioned how it will be achieved. They noted that the diagrams show it as continuous, with a oneness of greenery wrapping down but in reality, it will be broken along the face fronting the hydro corridor.

### Ground Floor Planning

- A panelist opined that the retail at the edges fits very well with the retail located at Rainbow Village, which currently feels like an orphan within the community.
  - o They expressed that this project will bring that existing development in, to feel like more of a community, rather than an orphaned project.
- A panelist suggested further study of the retail in terms of the emerging neighbourhood context, and queried what the retail will be like in the bottom of the new adjacent buildings.
  - o They highlighted that one immediate need in this kind of community will be a grocery store. They advised that having the ability to free up the ground floor plane for perhaps more retail, or larger-scale units which can serve larger communities, might be of advantage rather than smaller-scale unit sizes.
- A panelist expressed that the idea of the retail podium at grade is incredibly compelling and the veil of glass that allows openness to promote this under the road, as well as the public realm experience, is a good idea.
  - o They advised that the retail should be given a pro forma value of 0. It will be an amenity to the units and neighbourhood to embrace this addition, but hard work will be needed to attract retail.
- A panelist cautioned that the proposed retail will be competing with a lot of prominent retail at Kennedy and Eglinton. They noted that people walking on site will likely be residents and suggested perhaps reducing some of the retail on the north service road, to ultimately prioritize community over retail.
  - o They advised that the residential lobbies could then be pushed forward to animate the north service road, while amenity uses, and community services could be doubled with the entire hydro corridor frontage reserved for them.
- A panelist opined that a lot of space has been given over to loading, perhaps as a consequence of the above-grade parking garage.
  - o They encouraged pushing some of the more utilitarian spaces into the parking structure.
  - o They highlighted the opportunity to remove some of the functions from the ground floor plane, to free it up more and allow for the lobbies to be brought to the forefront rather than buried in the back of the scheme, as currently proposed.
- A panelist expressed appreciation for how the ground floor is planned given that there is no back; it is viewed and interacted with in the round. Alternatively, they liked the lobby locations for each of the towers being at the heart of the development.

- A panelist expressed support for a daycare. They advised the City that this vital amenity should be provided in consideration of the number of proposed units and co-op housing, as well as the proximity to transit.

### Parking Garage

- Numerous panelists expressed support for the above-grade parking noting that it is very logical for the reasons cited by the proponent. Numerous panelists also expressed concerns about the open parking. Further study with respect to the evolution of treatment, aesthetic, and screening was strongly advised.
- A panelist questioned if the above-grade parking worked on all sides. They expressed that they had difficulties particularly with parking facing the hydro corridor and queried if a veneer of residential could overlook it instead.
  - o They cautioned that if the structure looks and acts as an open-air parking garage, it will take away from the rest of the proposal's story.
- A panelist reiterated concerns and questioned if the garage needed to be open on all sides. They opined that the north side of the berm starts to break down as the openings are made, and the intended gestures start to be lost.
- A panelist cautioned that an open parking garage adjacent to Eglinton may not be the ideal outcome, as anyone going over the road will be staring into the garage. Moreover, they did not think that the greenery would survive.
  - o In consideration of the co-op, they worried about the maintenance of the green walls, which is so important to the reading of the garage. They also cautioned that the lighting leak towards Eglinton may be obtrusive, and not consistent with delivering the softer, gentler expression intended.
  - o They opined that a physical green idea might be interesting, to create some kind of veil that is more solid, that may work within the budget, and deliver something more compelling as well as acceptable in physical reality.
    - Study of above-grade parking garage precedents in Miami was suggested.
- Another panelist suggested looking at Vaughan and Winnipeg for precedents.
- A panelist opined that the parking structure is quite beautiful, and expressed that as far as above-grade parking structures go, the edges have been detailed nicely. They suggested connecting the residential buildings at roof level to the ground plane, to amplify the character of this development and provide a great back door that links to the hydro corridor.
- A panelist recommended introducing some uses for people along with the cars in the above-grade space.
  - o Pods of community use were suggested beyond the ground floor; perhaps some could be integrated within the parking structure where people and cars have the potential to mix at both sides of the development.
    - Greenhouses were highlighted for consideration.

### Façades and Architectural Expression

- In reference to the façade, a panelist appreciated the honeycomb idea as a great starting point but questioned what the rigid pattern would do to the units behind, including those of different sizes as well as layouts.
  - o They wondered whether the circles meant to bring daylight into the living space would start to shift or change size as a result.
- In reference to the architectural representation a panelist encouraged the team to keep going. They noted that it is clearly a diagram and cautioned that it does not work with the demising.
- In reference to the honey image, a panelist suggested that perhaps shades of buildings could be used to distinguish the three separate volumes if there are concerns about the same architectural skin being applied on all three.

### Unit Sizes and Balconies

- The small unit sizes were highlighted including the minimal in-unit storage; a panelist suggested storage lockers and bike storage somewhere in the building to help support the units, in consideration of families.
- A panelist opined that the unit layouts were quite thoughtful. They suggested further study with respect to the bed sizes in the smaller rooms, as all the beds have been drawn at the exact same size when there will likely be variation in a 3-bedroom family unit.
- In consideration of balconies, a panelist cautioned that units feel smaller when they are gone, and expressed that particularly in smaller unit sizes, that balconies do support a secondary space that is usable at certain points in the year.
- Another panelist strongly agreed with the elimination of balconies in the context of delivering large amounts of affordable and co-op housing, quickly.
  - o They advised that the slenderness of the towers will be improved as a result.
  - o In consideration of the slightly larger floor plates, they opined that the absence of balconies is a very appropriate tradeoff and compromise to deliver this housing.
  - o They cautioned that the absence of balconies absolutely puts more pressure on the public realm.

### Hydro Corridor and Community Amenity Area

- Citing lessons learned from the Meadoway, a panelist advised further discussions with Hydro One regarding the proposal's big moves, and what will be permitted within the hydro corridor.
  - o They cautioned that anything within a 15-metre radius of the hydro tower footings will likely have to be at grade, in reference to the raised amphitheater and the swooping arch of green indicated in the parti.
- A panelist expressed support for the landscape ideas including the structured, formalized uses within the hydro corridor; this is a pitch-perfect solution.
- In reference to slide 103 and the large berm feature that turns its back on the hydro corridor, a panel suggested further consideration because the visual and physical



connection will be crucial along that frontage.

- A panelist identified a new urban farm pilot program under hydro corridors at Flemington Park and Malvern Urban Farm where the food produced is meant to be available for sale in the community. They opined that this proposal is a great site to push this forward.
  - They queried if some of the retail could have a relationship to the community garden and build up the program.
  - They recommended further development for how the gestures captured in the renderings will be implemented and configured, to ensure success.
- A panelist loved the food theme and highlighted its importance in a multi-cultural community, including the potential for year-round food delivery.
  - In reference to the Benny Farm Community Garden, they expressed that a key component of the precedent is the sharing of food as well as shared experiences, notably community events that happen in the midst of the gardens.

### Sustainability

- In terms of sustainability performance, a panelist expressed that it was great to see that the One Planet Living principles and the Toronto Green Standards are balanced well. They advised that they are creating a great synergy for the project.
- A panelist applauded the pursuit of Version 4 Tier 2 standards. They acknowledged that there is a hesitancy within the residential sector as to whether Tier 2 is realistic, and appreciated that CreateTO as well as the City are providing examples as to how it will become a reality.