

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 5 – July 17, 2024

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Wednesday, July 17, 2024, 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: Associate – 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 June 19, 2024, by email.

MEETING 5 INDEX

- i. 2400-2440 Dundas Street West (1st Review)
- ii. 110 Adelaide Street East (2nd Review)

2400-2440 DUNDAS STREET WEST

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

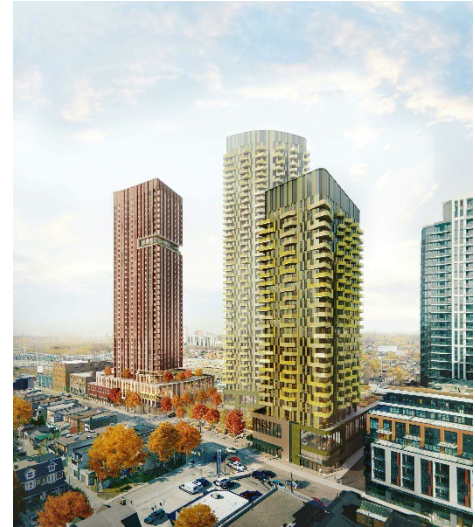
DESIGN REVIEW	First Review
APPLICATION	ZBA
DEVELOPER	Fora Developments

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Melanie Schneider, Community Planning;
Julie Bogdanowicz, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Ralph Giannone and Michael Rietta,
Giannone Petricone Associates

VOTE Support: unanimous



REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Meg Graham

PANELISTS Jim Gough, Jessica Hutcheon, Olivia Keung, Paul Kulig, Heather Rolleston

CONFLICTS Applicant Team, Presenter: Ralph Giannone
Not in Attendance: Margaret Briegmann, Juhee Oh

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. Does the proposal integrate well with the local context, balancing the existing low-rise scale with the intention to deliver density at the GO Station?
2. Is the public realm delivering Transit-Supportive Development and prioritizing pedestrian access to the station? Does it also function well for vehicles?
3. Does the development deliver an ambitious and unique urban design response to this site which will remain highly visible from three sides?

Summary of Project's Key Points

The following items were highlighted in the verbal meeting summary by the Chair, based off feedback heard from the Panel members.

The subject property is a tricky site, but a very important one with respect to its location. It is akin to Union Station, given the rich density of transit. As such, it is an important site to develop properly and accessibly for the future. While much thought should be given to the adjacent context of a low-slung, single-family residential neighbourhood, a mid-rise designation for the

subject site is not relevant given the housing crisis. In consideration of this, and at a high level, the Panel was unanimously appreciative of the proposal put forward.

- Public Realm

○ Response to Context

- The concept of a low-slung podium was well received and appreciated. It goes a long way to align the proposal with the neighbourhood to the west, across Dundas Street West.
 - The proponent was encouraged to reinstate more of the prominence achieved in the first iteration of the proposal, where possible; this was even more successful in the first design and shone there.

○ Open Space

- There was general consensus that the revised park configuration is more successful and feels less vestigial; great appreciation was conveyed for this.
- The Panel recommended designing the pedestrian mews in concert with the park to enhance connectivity. Consider other opportunities and elements to enhance the mews, such as relocating the bike parking.

○ Wayfinding

- Further study was advised for intuitive wayfinding and access to the GO Station and UP Express; the sense was that it was much cleaner, stronger, and more efficient in the first design.
 - The changes to the proposal were acknowledged, but more identification of the route was encouraged, perhaps prominently on the crash wall.
 - Caution was noted that it feels like a back alley which is not intended; further development is needed moving forward.

○ Pedestrian and Vehicular Access

- The proposal handles this well and will contribute to the future opportunity of improving the streetscape in its entirety for the neighbourhood.
 - Appreciation was noted for the project's wider sidewalks and setback from the road, which will certainly contribute to an improved streetscape in this area.
- Additional considerations were recommended including a sheltered lay-by space, traffic-calming devices that reduce the amount of hard paving in the area, as well as more activation and safety enhancements along the private roadway.

- Architectural Expression and Built Form Context

- The composition was well received, and the sense was that it generally fits in quite well with the neighbourhood.
 - The transition from the neighbourhood fabric is successful both morphologically and materially.

- Sustainability

- Consider a district energy system moving forward. Even at the early stage of the project course, it is not too early to remark on sustainability targets and aspirations.

Panel Commentary

Overall Concept and Response to Context

- The overall composition of the proposal was applauded, including its integration into the existing neighbourhood and the desire to respect some of the heritage elements. Comments conveyed that the proposal will be a positive addition to this section of Dundas, increasing the urbanization of the street.
 - It was advised that the development fits in well with the existing, older post-industrial buildings to the north.
 - Appreciation was noted for how the project is relating to the local context in the early materiality and colour palettes presented.
 - The increase in density was appreciated as it makes the best use of the infrastructure invested nearby.
 - Excitement was noted for the adventurousness of the landscape design as well as the architectural towers.

- Appreciation was noted for the affordable housing and gearing the residential component towards families. Further study was recommended on how to push this further.
 - In reference to the landscape precedents on slide 33, a panelist queried where the spaces for children and seniors will be. They encouraged more thought about what people will be doing here, and what people in the neighbourhood want.
 - Further thinking about the park as well as the roof-top amenity space was encouraged, as a semi-private zone with opportunities.

Transportation

- The proposal's delivery of pedestrian access improvements and vehicular access to the site was applauded.
 - It was advised that there is a tight balance between access to the development and to the GO Station on the fairly narrow site, but that it is handled well in the concept presented.

- The future opportunity to improve the streetscape was highlighted, in the long run.
 - It was advised that the traffic in this area starts to speed up north of Bloor; the increasing urbanization from this proposal and other developments nearby should mitigate this to a small degree.
 - In consideration of the future reconstruction of Dundas, it was advised that there is a good opportunity as well as rationale for the City to review the cross-section and design of Dundas, given the large amount of pedestrian activities along the street.

- The second entrance to the Dundas West Station was highlighted as another positive; it will help to accommodate the pedestrian demands on the east side.

Public Realm and Open Space

- Support was noted for the revised location of the public park dedication which is more central and generous; it will create a nice street frontage along Dundas.
 - It was advised that the setbacks to building frontages were appropriate and make a lot of sense with the pedestrian mews through the buildings.
 - The incorporation of a lot more usable space was appreciated, given its shape, which will allow it to feel more knit in than the previous triangle park proposed in

the first submission.

- Appreciation was noted for the very natural progression of the public realm. Starting from the north and progressing south along Dundas, a panelist advised that the transition from the existing neighbourhood works well.
 - o They added that the retention of the heritage façade helps to pull that character into the frontage, and the setting back of the podium at the galleria area is a nice move before the generous opening into the park.
- Continued study was advised regarding the landscape open space between the parkland and the pedestrian mews, as its functionality is not yet clear.
 - o It was advised that insight into the desires for the public park would be useful for the design team. This would help them ensure that the open space is designed to support and enhance it, as well as support the movement of people through the mews.

Private Road

- The provision of a small amount of lay-by space was recommended; this would be very logical in terms of accommodating delivery vehicles, given the proliferation of this function by multiple modes.
 - o Moreover, the necessity for sheltered lay-by parking was reiterated in consideration of the grocery store.
- Caution was noted that the private road is very wide. Further study of traffic-calming devices was encouraged, as well as study of vegetated bump outs that may serve as stormwater collection or treatment areas.
 - o The proponent was encouraged to lessen the paved surfacing while providing this functionality.
- Concern was noted that there is a bit of a tradeoff, given that the private road feels like there is a lot of servicing. Further study of activation and pedestrian safety was advised, in consideration of those walking alone at night.

Pedestrian Mews

- Further study was suggested regarding how the edges of the pedestrian mews are wrapped, as well as the programming that will make it successful. Caution was noted that the current adjacency of a residential lobby corridor with bike rooms may not provide sufficient active programming. Multiple alternative strategies were suggested.
 - o Consider rotating the mews 15 degrees clockwise to guide pedestrians more directly to the station destination, rather than perhaps orienting it towards the crash wall.
 - o Consider flipping some bicycle storage to the other side, or consolidating it.
 - o Consider thinking of the mews as a destination itself, paired with bike repair or facilities that can provide a communal space that does not rely on retail or other uses. It was added that this could serve as a bridge between the back-of-house laneway and the front-of-house POPS courtyard.
- Continued study of pedestrian comfort was advised, as it relates to the mews. Further consideration of lighting, adjacent active uses, and height was recommended as the project develops, to ensure those provide a feeling of safety during all hours of operation.

Eastern Boundary and Crash Wall

- In reference to slide 39 and pedestrian connections, additional work was recommended to negotiate a safe and convenient path through the back of the development, to the GO pickup and drop off.
 - o Further study was advised to incorporate a wide sidewalk, determine the crosswalk location, and stitch it all together, with the different design team that may be executing the pickup and drop off work.
- The importance of the crash wall as a design element was highlighted; it will be a prominent backdrop on the main drive from the signalized intersection and the pedestrian mews. It was advised that it will be critical to integrate it in a way that signals the wayfinding but is also something more than GO directional signage.
 - o Further study of landscape treatments, vines, supergraphics, murals or something that accepts that it will likely get tagged, were recommended, as well as lighting.
 - o The huge opportunity for a lenticular wall was identified, for something that changes as one goes by.
- The inclusion of more information on the drop-off space would have been appreciated, to understand the interface along the eastern property line.

Built Form and Design Inspiration

- Deep appreciation was conveyed for the scale and thoughtfulness of the development. In particular, the two-storey low-slung podium, which relates well to the existing context.
 - o It was advised that it is a rare thing to see a two-storey podium, and it fits very well in this area of Dundas.
- Appreciation was noted for the interesting and dynamic built form; the mitigation of some tight tower separations through sculpting is convincing.
- Appreciation was noted for the shifting and reshaping of the southern-most tower, and how the three work together.
- No issues were flagged with respect to the height and density proposed.
- Appreciation was noted for the imagery shown of the architectural idea, including the seasonality, and the deep colours of lichen, fungus, and tree bark.
- Appreciation was reiterated for the idea of the tree and leaves, and how that works with the landscape proposal at grade.
- In consideration of colour and texture, appreciation was conveyed for the expressive balcony shapes. It was added, that like many beautiful textures, these often rely on a high degree of repetition, which provides an overall impression of simplicity on the towers.
- In reference to the saw cut at the northern-most tower, and the design inspiration of a saw cut in a tree, a panelist wondered if it could be something that pushes out, instead.
 - o They recommended something that is a little bit more expressive and opined that a gesture more akin to a fungus rather than an inset may align better with the design ideas.

Sustainability

- In consideration of embodied carbon, appreciation was noted for the minimalist approach to parking, and building below grade; this is very appropriate given the richness of transit in the neighbourhood.
- In reference to the project's sustainability goals (slide 52) including the energy and GHGI targets, concern was noted that only the minimum is targeted for Toronto Green Standard. It was added that TGS is one year away from an update, and therefore there is less than a year before these targets become obsolete.
 - The proponent was encouraged to push further, given the prominence of the site.
- District energy was suggested, as the site is not too small for it to be considered. The unique opportunity to re-use waste heat generated by the supermarket to start to service the residential blocks, was identified.
 - It was advised that developers are often appreciating high-sustainability performance as a marketing strategy for proposals.

110 ADELAIDE STREET EAST

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW Second Review

APPLICATION ZBA and SPA

DEVELOPER Stafford Homes

PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF Christy Chow, Community Planning;
Juliana Azem, Urban Design

DESIGN TEAM Henry Burstyn, Arcadis;
Michael Presutti, MEP Design Inc.

VOTE Non-support: unanimous

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR Meg Graham

PANELISTS Jim Gough, Jessica Hutcheon, Olivia Keung, Jim Melvin, Heather Rolleston

CONFLICTS Not in Attendance: Margaret Briegmann, Paul Kulig



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. Please comment on the relationship between the proposed building massing (podium and tower) with the neighbouring properties in terms of scale, height (podium) and setbacks;
2. Please comment on the public realm, along both frontages, Adelaide and Lombard Streets, in terms of boulevard setback, pedestrian scale podium, ground floor uses and streetscape/tree planting;
3. Please comment on the relationship between the proposed building and the St. James Park.
4. Please comment on the exterior expression of the podium and tower and how they relate to the neighbourhood and the adjacent St. Lawrence HCD.

Summary of Project's Key Points

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

The site is a gateway location, and the significance of the proposal is entrenched in its relationship to its context. Travelling east, the original city blocks of York and Toronto are uniquely characterized by the smaller scale and materiality of the area. Moreover, St. James Cathedral across from the subject site, as well as the larger neighbourhood, all form significant pieces of our urban fabric, our cultural history, and our cultural fabric. The Panel opined that none of these considerations have appeared in a substantive way in the proposal, nor are they reflected in the architecture. This is a significant issue with the present design and further effort is needed.

- Architectural Expression and Relationship to the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District Context

- In summary, panelists advised that a different architectural expression is required.
 - The expression is aggressive and unrelated to the context.
 - The proposed building materials exacerbate and amplify the disconnect with the existing building massing and design of the neighbourhood.
 - Consider more noble materials such as brick, in this regard.
 - The vertical elements on the podium do not recall, nor align with the buttresses of St. James Cathedral, nor the local mansard roofs.
- The Panel advised that regardless of what may emerge around it, St. James Cathedral and the original Town of York blocks will remain. The proposed building must speak to them, as well as the greater fabric around the neighbourhood and context; this is a must.

- Built Form (Massing, Scale, Podium Heights, and Setbacks)

- The building is over scaled and coarse in its expression as well as massing.
- The balconies make the building feel thicker instead of tapered, as it goes towards the top.
- The setbacks discussed with the original proposal are not sufficient and should no longer apply, given that the building is now proposed to be much taller and of greater density.

- Public Realm

- The Panel felt that there was not an engaging nor accommodating design for pedestrians, in consideration of the boulevard setback, podium scale, ground floor uses, streetscape and planting. They advised that a thorough redesign is needed.
 - Consider moving the exterior piers inside the building envelope to give the sidewalk greater width.
 - Whatever can be done to make the ground floor pedestrian realm more accommodating, more welcoming, and more generous is needed, while acknowledging that it is a downtown site.

- Relationship to St. James Park

- The Panel advised that the scale is imposing, and the proposed design simply looms over the park in a way that is unacceptable.

- Transportation

- The Lombard access is rational and reasonable.

- Sustainability

- The quantity of glazing, the complex building form, and the continuous balconies need reconsideration as the proposal moves forward in the design exercise.

Panel Commentary

Planning Rationale

- In reference to the review of the site's previous proposal, prior concerns raised by the Panel regarding setbacks were highlighted. A panelist advised that the level of concern related to these has gone up because of the increase in density and height proposed in the present iteration. They questioned what the planning rationale would be for not adhering to any of the Tall Building Guidelines with respect to the setbacks on the east and west.
 - o Input from the applicant's planner would have been appreciated.
- Strong concern was noted for the proposed densities; a panelist advised that 28.4 FSI is very high for this area.
 - o They noted that it would have been helpful to see some examples of other buildings approaching this density, as they were not aware of any.

Neighbourhood Context and Architectural Expression

- The significance of the relatively small site and the importance of the location as a gateway experience were highlighted in reference to the original 10 blocks of the Town of York, St. Lawrence neighbourhood, and St. James Park. Given the importance of the block in the city, a panelist advised that they would have expected a proposal with an exterior expression that is more related to, and perhaps in tune with, the character of this really important neighbourhood.
- Strong concern was noted that design-wise, the architectural expression of the project is very over scaled for what is existing on the block. A panelist advised that there is no regard for adjacent datums, nor materiality.
 - o They expressed that the building does not use any scaled elements to speak to the fact that it is a residential use.
 - o They opined that it is out of scale and very coarse for where it is located within the block.
- A block-long elevation study was recommended, as well as starting to pay attention to adjacent datums. A panelist suggested perhaps looking at breaking down the scale of this with smaller elements.
- The materiality selected was questioned; a panelist encouraged explorations with perhaps more noble materials like brick, and others that are present in the neighbourhood.

Relationship to St. James Cathedral and Park

- A panelist advised that the architectural expression is quite aggressive and does not really relate to the context in terms of its massing, nor its materiality. They questioned if borrowing the language from the cathedral and applying it to a condo building was appropriate, given that St. James is intended to be a centrepiece for the neighbourhood and may be in some ways muscular.
- Further consideration was advised regarding the contextual relationship of the proposed building to St. James Cathedral. A panelist appreciated the intent of trying to reflect the cathedral in the architectural style but expressed that they would prefer to see perspective imagery depicting the proposed building in context with the cathedral.

- They advised that the cathedral is a major piece of urban architecture in the area. Given the proposal's heights and architectural style, they cautioned that it will be a distraction from the lines of the church.
- Strong concern was noted for the impact of the podium on Adelaide to the public realm of St. James Park. A panelist found the scale imposing, almost like it looms over the park. They cautioned that the ground floor seems taller than the other retail offerings on this block, and the upper visual limit of the podium is taller than the nearby property at 90 Adelaide.
 - The panelist added that the unfamiliarity of the material selections to the neighbourhood exaggerates this when looking at it from the park, and the street wall suddenly feels quite interrupted.

Transportation and Parking

- The proposed access arrangement via Lombard Street is entirely logical, particularly so bike access along Adelaide is not interrupted.
- A panelist expressed support for the lack of parking proposed on the site. They noted that the proponent's transportation consultant surely provided a good rationale for this.
 - They highlighted the wealth of transit access around the site that is both existing and proposed.
 - They added that there are so many destinations within walking distance that a car should not be needed for residents at this location.

Public Realm and Streetscapes

- In reference to the pedestrian accommodations, a panelist expressed that they did not see the design as being particularly engaging, which is important given the number of future residents. They cautioned that a lot of people will be flocking onto a 2.1-metre-wide sidewalk that is only a few metres in length.
 - The panelist did not believe that the design featuring big plate glass windows would provide any kind of physical enhancement to the pedestrian experience.
 - They suggested a much more engaging and sheltered entrance space to ensure that pedestrians are made to feel welcome as well as accommodated.
- Another panelist echoed concerns and struggled to believe that the street will be activated with the way the building is laid out. They advised that this development needs to be able to give a lot more to the neighbourhood considering what it is asking for in terms of height.
 - They noted the flow of people coming in and out along Adelaide, and highlighted that the Lombard Street frontage will mainly be for servicing.
- Further study was advised to consider the flows of people, the time of day and usage, and what happens when everyone is leaving for work, including how this flow comes out of the building and into the public realm.
- A panelist suggested removing the decorative columns and shifting them inbound of the building face to provide more streetscape.
 - They advised that this would enhance the public realm improvements being provided on Adelaide, to thus give the full 4.8-metre frontage width to pedestrians.
 - On Lombard, the panelist appreciated the little extension of the 2.1 metres inward even though it is bounded by the existing buildings to the east and west, but suggested removing the pieces of the decorative structure on the columns to create

a better space.

- The streetscape constraints immediately adjacent to the site were acknowledged, given the tight conditions and limitations of the existing. It was advised that the more public realm space that can be made available, the better.
- A panelist opined that the scale of the podium on Lombard relates much more to the adjacent buildings, but recommended further study of the canopy. They did not think that the narrow canopy located at the high height shown would provide much protection to pedestrians below.

Built Form Elements

- Concern was noted for the spatial inefficiency of some of the areas. A panelist recommended further study to try to lay out some of the units and amenity spaces, given that some end up being long and narrow, while others have irregular shapes.
 - o The applicant was encouraged to make sure that these spaces work and are livable.
 - o The importance of ensuring adequate daylight was highlighted, given that the window placement situation is very complex.
- In reference to page 20 and the expression of the balconies, a panelist advised that they make the building appear thicker and fatter at the top. They added that it appears to be quite top heavy and rather than disappearing or fading towards the sky, the building seems to increase.
 - o The panelist noted that this did not seem consistent with the taper idea proposed at the base of the building. They queried if there was a way of increasing the design dialogue between those two elements and tapering the building towards the sky.
- Additional views of the stepping occurring on the north would have been appreciated. A panelist expressed that not enough were included in the package and only a little of it is barely seen in one of the views.

Sustainability

- Appreciation was noted for the inclusion of energy modeling results in the presentation package, which is rarely received. The applicant was applauded for doing the exercise early on.
- A panelist cautioned that the modeling results indicate that the proposal is barely squeaking by; the thermal energy is barely compliant which is a risk to the project. They advised that it is evident why, given that the building form is so complex and so irregular, with so much glazing and so much continuous balcony.
 - o The panelist recommended simplifying the building form and starting from first principles, rather than trying to compensate for this through other sustainable features.
 - o The carbon deficit resulting from the demolition of an existing building on the site was highlighted; the applicant was encouraged to try to do a bit better in this regard.