

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 5 – June 3, 2026

The Design Review Panel met in-person and virtually on Wednesday June 3, 2026, 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

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 (Acting)

Maxine Cudlip: Urban Design, City Planning Division

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meeting, which was held on May 6, 2026, by email.

MEETING 5 INDEX

- 1) In Camera Session
- 2) Weston in Gear Study (1st Review)

Weston in Gear Planning Study

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW First Review

APPLICATION City Study

PRESENTATIONS

CITY STAFF Nicholas Deibler, Community Planning
 Wenting Li, Urban Design

CONSULTANT Andrew Davidge, Gladki Planning Associates
 Brent Raymond, DTAH

VOTE NA

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS

CHAIR Gordon Stratford

PANELISTS Olivia Keung, Paul Kulig, Anna Madeira, Dima Cook, Joe
 Lobko, Jessica Hutcheon, Jim Melvin

CONFLICTS None



Introduction

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

1. Does the Panel have any advice on the built form and public realm elements that could contribute most to reinforcing the 'village like' character within this highly intensifying urban context?
2. Does the Panel support the recommended Built Form Strategy?
3. Does the Panel have any advice on how we can expand and improve the limited public realm offering beyond what is currently recommended?
4. Does the Panel have any additional observations or comments as we work toward completing the final phase of the Study?

Summary of Project's Key Points

The Panel would like to thank the City and consultant team for undertaking this complex and timely study. Panel members recognize that Weston is at a critical moment of transformation, driven by transit investment and significant development pressure. The Panel acknowledged that this study represents an important opportunity to establish a coherent framework that can guide growth while reinforcing community identity and improving overall livability.

At the same time, members expressed significant concern that much of the development in the area has already been approved, with several thousand units, estimated by Panel members to be on the order of approximately 5,000 units, effectively establishing a future built form in advance of a comprehensive planning framework. This sequencing was repeatedly described as a fundamental challenge and limiting the ability of the study to meaningfully influence outcomes and creating a risk that growth will occur in a fragmented and uncoordinated manner.

In this context, the Panel emphasized that the work must move beyond high-level visioning and instead provide clear, strategic, and implementable direction. There was a strong expectation that the study clearly identify where meaningful intervention is still possible and focus its effort on those areas. Members stressed that the study should not simply document change that has already been set in motion but should instead actively guide what remains to be determined.

Vision and Urban Structure

The Panel strongly supported the emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and belonging, and recognized the importance of grounding the study in the social and cultural reality of

Weston. The intent to reinforce a strong sense of community identity was seen as appropriate and necessary given the scale and pace of anticipated growth.

However, the Panel strongly questioned the reliance on a singular “village” concept as an organizing framework. Members noted that Weston is not a single cohesive entity but rather a complex collection of distinct areas shaped by different histories, built forms, and community conditions. These include post-war apartment neighbourhoods, employment and industrial lands, traditional main street segments, and lower-scale residential areas. Several members explicitly described Weston as a “collection of villages” rather than a single one and raised concern that the current framing risks oversimplifying the area’s identity and overlooking important layers of its evolution, including its post-war and multicultural character.

Panel members emphasized the need for a more nuanced and spatially grounded approach. In particular, there was a strong interest in understanding where the existing “heart” of the community is located today, with discussion indicating that this is generally perceived to be along Weston Road north of Lawrence Avenue, although not as a single continuous area. Members stressed that identity is tied not only to built form, but also to social and cultural activity, and encouraged more detailed mapping and articulation of community anchors, including schools, religious institutions, libraries, arts spaces, local businesses, and informal gathering places.

Overall, the Panel encouraged the study to move beyond abstract concepts and to develop a clearer, spatially explicit understanding of how different parts of Weston function and how identity is distributed across the area.

Public Realm and Open Space

The Panel expressed significant and repeated concern about the adequacy of the public realm in relation to the scale of projected growth. A central issue raised throughout the discussion was the absence of clear, accessible, and comprehensible data linking existing and projected population growth to parkland provision and community infrastructure capacity. Members noted that they were not seeing basic information presented in a way that could be readily understood, such as current population, anticipated population including approved development, and how this growth translates into park space per person, school capacity, childcare provision, healthcare access, and other community services.

The absence of this information was described as a limitation, as it prevents a meaningful assessment of whether Weston can function as a complete and livable community in the future. While it was acknowledged that the area is not currently identified as parkland-deficient according to existing City metrics, Panel members

questioned whether this designation adequately reflects the realities of projected population growth.

The Humber River was recognized as a significant asset, but members emphasized that it remains disconnected from the everyday life of the community. The Panel also questioned the practical accessibility of the ravine system, noting that existing physical and perceptual barriers limit its day-to-day use and that proposed connections require further clarification to understand how they will function in practice. While improving access to the ravine system was strongly supported, there was a clear consensus that this cannot substitute for providing local, accessible, and programmable open spaces within the neighbourhood itself.

The Panel encouraged a more proactive and ambitious approach to public realm planning. This includes identifying opportunities for land acquisition, particularly where key sites such as underutilized parking areas, station lands, or publicly controlled parcels, could be repurposed or leveraged. Members also encouraged exploring a broader range of tools, including privately owned publicly accessible spaces, redevelopment opportunities, and unconventional approaches suited to a constrained urban context. At the same time, there was recognition that relying on opportunistic solutions alone may be insufficient.

There was also strong concern regarding the lack of street trees and green infrastructure, which was described as a major deficiency in the current environment. Members emphasized that improvements to the public realm must address not only access to open space, but also the quality of streets, microclimate, and pedestrian comfort. Overall, the Panel expressed the view that public realm planning is not currently keeping pace with the scale of development pressure.

Built Form and Density

The Panel supported the general strategy of concentrating height and density around transit, recognizing that this approach aligns with broader planning objectives. However, members emphasized that a substantial portion of the future built form has already been established through recent approvals, which could significantly limit the effectiveness of the study's recommendations at a broad scale.

In this context, the Panel stressed the importance of focusing on the areas that remain subject to change. There was a strong expectation that the study clearly identifies these locations and provide detailed, site-specific guidance rather than relying on general principles.

Particular concern was expressed regarding the lack of a clearly defined and robust

mid-rise framework along Weston Road, as well as insufficient attention to transitions between areas of differing scale. Members also questioned whether existing assumptions around lot depth and parcel configuration are adequate to support high-quality mid-rise development. Shallow and narrow sites were identified as a risk, potentially resulting in compromised building form and reduced livability.

The Panel encouraged exploration of alternative approaches, including parcel consolidation or extending development permissions to achieve more viable configurations. There was also recognition that existing mid-century apartment buildings, while not aligned with traditional “village” imagery, may offer valuable lessons in terms of delivering community-serving space and accommodating density in a more livable manner.

Mobility and Connectivity

The Panel supported the emphasis on active transportation but raised significant concern about the lack of integration between the mobility strategy and the broader planning framework. Members noted that key decisions related to street design, lane configurations, and traffic management are being deferred to a separate mobility study, which limits the ability to evaluate the implications of the proposed public realm and built form strategies.

There was a strong concern that, without clear coordination, future transportation requirements—such as road widening, turning lanes, or increased parking provision could undermine public realm objectives. Members emphasized that streets should be conceived as public spaces first, with priority given to pedestrian comfort, cycling, and traffic calming.

Several members suggested that more assertive approaches may be required, including reducing lane widths, limiting the dominance of vehicles, and reallocating space to support people-oriented uses. Concerns were also raised about the potential for over-engineered transportation solutions to erode the character and livability of the area if not carefully managed.

The rail corridor was identified as a major structural barrier that reinforces a significant east–west divide within the community, with differing conditions observed on either side. The Panel emphasized the importance of improving both physical and visual connections across the corridor, as well as strengthening integration between these areas.

Panel Commentary

Planning Context and Urgency

Panel members noted concerns regarding the sequencing of development and planning, observing that a number of approvals have already established much of the future built form in advance of a comprehensive planning framework. This condition was understood to limit the study's ability to fundamentally reshape outcomes, while also introducing a risk that change will occur in a fragmented or uncoordinated manner.

The Panel emphasized that the study should respond to this context by adopting a more strategic and focused approach. This includes clearly identifying where meaningful change is still possible, prioritizing those areas, and articulating specific actions that can continue to influence future development. Members also noted the importance of ensuring that the study does not simply document ongoing change but provides direction for the aspects of growth that remain to be determined.

Public Realm and Community Infrastructure

A central concern was the lack of clear, accessible, and easily understood data related to population growth and community infrastructure capacity. Members noted that while growth projections have been developed, they are not presented in a way that clearly communicates existing conditions, approved development, and future population in relatable terms. As a result, baseline information—such as current and projected population, parkland provision per capita, and the capacity of schools, healthcare facilities, childcare, and social services—was not clearly conveyed.

This gap was seen as a significant barrier to understanding whether the area can support the level of growth being anticipated and to evaluating overall livability. Members emphasized that as substantial new population is introduced, there is a corresponding expectation that community infrastructure and public realm quality will keep pace. The Panel stressed that these metrics must be made explicit, clearly communicated, and fully integrated into the study.

There was also concern that community infrastructure planning and public realm strategies are being treated as parallel or subsequent processes, rather than as foundational components of the planning framework. Members emphasized the need for stronger coordination and alignment across these areas to ensure that growth is supported by adequate infrastructure and that decision-making is informed by a comprehensive understanding of capacity and need.

Character, Heritage, and Identity

The Panel emphasized that Weston's identity is rooted not only in its built form but also

in its social and cultural fabric. Members highlighted the importance of immigrant communities, local businesses, and informal gathering spaces that contribute to the everyday life of the area and noted that these elements are often dispersed and not easily legible within the current framework.

There was concern that these qualities are not fully captured in the study and that conventional approaches to heritage may overlook important intangible cultural assets, including how communities use space, where they gather, and the smaller-scale places that support daily life. Members also noted that many of the businesses and services that define the community operate at a small scale and may be vulnerable to displacement as new development occurs, particularly where larger-format retail and standard podium conditions are introduced.

The Panel encouraged more detailed mapping and recognition of both physical and cultural assets, including identifying key locations that function as anchors or points of identity for the community. Members emphasized the importance of designing future development in ways that support small-scale retail, local businesses, and community-serving uses, and that enable these elements to remain viable within a changing urban context.

Implementation and Integration

The Panel stressed that the success of the study will depend on its ability to integrate multiple streams of work, including mobility, servicing, public realm, and community infrastructure planning. Members expressed concern that these processes are currently proceeding in parallel without sufficient coordination or alignment in timing, creating a risk of conflict, duplication, or missed opportunities.

There was particular concern that decisions emerging from one stream especially transportation could inadvertently undermine objectives in others if not carefully coordinated. Members also noted some uncertainty regarding how the work of the consultant team would translate into subsequent policy, guidelines, and implementation tools.

The Panel called for a more coordinated and integrated approach to ensure that decisions across different areas reinforce one another and contribute to a consistent and coherent vision, supported by clear alignment between studies as they advance.

Level of Detail and Next Steps

While the overall vision and guiding principles were appreciated, the Panel noted that

the study remains at a relatively high level and would benefit from further refinement to more directly support implementation. Members observed that the current level of detail does not yet provide a clear understanding of how proposals will translate into physical conditions on the ground.

The Panel emphasized the value of advancing more detailed, site-specific analysis, including block-by-block and street-level considerations, to help illustrate how public realm improvements, built form conditions, and development interfaces could function in practice.

There was also an emphasis on identifying priority sites, clarifying expectations, and illustrating how proposals may operate at the scale of everyday experience, as these steps will help ensure the study has meaningful and practical impact.