CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

MINUTES: MEETING 7 – September 9, 2026

The Design Review Panel met virtually on Wednesday, September 9, 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
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 – Kulig Studio
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
Sibylle von Knobloch: Principal – NAK Design Group

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meeting, which was held on July 8, 2026, by email.

MEETING 7 INDEX

i. PAC (IN CAMERA)
ii. 309-349 George Street (1st Review)

309-349 GEORGE STREET

CITY OF TORONTO - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW	First Review
APPLICATION	Pre-Application Consultation (Future SPA)
DEVELOPER	City of Toronto



PRESENTATIONS:

CITY STAFF	Jeremy Humphrey, Community Planning; Ran Chen, Urban Design; Georgia Kuich, Heritage Planning
DESIGN TEAM	Santiago Kunzle and Linnea Coveney, Montgomery Sisam Architects
VOTE	None

REVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

CHAIR	Meg Graham
PANELISTS	Michael Leckman, Ralph Giannone, Jim Gough, Jessica Hutcheon, 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. Integrated Public Realm
    - Seamless landscape integration with the George St. Streetscape Masterplan

2. Ground Floor Animation
    - Programming and uses at grade that create an inviting pedestrian space for people to stay and linger, in coordination with the gathering places envisioned for George St.

3. Architectural Expression
    - A building design with articulation and palette that complements the surrounding heritage context

Summary of Project's Key Points

The following Panel member discussion points were highlighted in the verbal meeting summary by the Chair, based off feedback heard from the Panel members:

The Panel generally commended the proponent team for the sensitivity and thoughtfulness with which the project has been crafted to date, especially given the complex program and the effort to integrate the proposal with the existing heritage context.

- Architectural Expression and Massing
    - The Panel recommended further resolution of the building's materiality, form and overall architectural expression.
        - The current design was viewed as long and highly institutional in character.
    - Panelists suggested exploring brick coursing, texture and other façade treatments to articulate the building's different programmatic components.
        - One member described this approach as "quilting."
    - Several members felt that the ground floor is overly dynamic architecturally and would benefit from additional moments of visual quiet or rest.
    - While multiple entrances were generally supported, the Panel felt that the primary entrance and overall wayfinding need to be clearer.
        - The current horizontal and vertical massing, together with a relatively uniform street-level expression, could make entrances difficult to identify without significant signage.
    - Mirvish Village and Lincoln Alexander Hall at McMaster University were identified as useful precedents for considering how the building could be articulated and addressed.
    - The street wall above the canopy requires additional refinement, particularly regarding the balance between straight and curved forms.
    - The mechanical penthouse was considered overpowering and unresolved.
        - Its design and visibility from different vantage points should be studied further.

- Architectural Detail
    - The Panel questioned whether some of the proposed details could be executed as currently represented, particularly the slender columns, thin canopy and curved building forms.
    - The extensive natural light was appreciated, but further study was advised about refining the amount of glazing and the resulting institutional character of the building.
    - One member suggested prioritizing gracious and functional interior spaces over exterior architectural expression, although this was not a consensus position.

- Landscape and Public Realm
    - The Panel recommended rethinking the master plan and landscape strategy to create a stronger and more functional public realm.
        - Caution was noted that some landscape and architectural elements, including columns and planters, may impede pedestrian circulation as well as snow clearing.
        - Dead-end conditions at grade should be eliminated or appropriately addressed through architectural or landscape design.
    - Further study was advised to create a streetscape that functions as a comfortable, inviting place for people to gather and spend time outdoors.
        - Consider landscape treatments that are differentiated according to location, prominence and anticipated users.
    - At grade, the Panel suggested consolidating planters into fewer, larger groupings and considering moving trees farther away from the building and canopy.

        - One member suggested creating a more substantial “forest” condition along George Street, rather than relying on isolated or smaller groupings of trees.
    - Further study was advised regarding the location and integration of bicycle parking.

- Green Terraces
    - The Panel strongly supported the proposed green terraces and encouraged the team to make them as accessible, inviting, and usable as possible.

- Sustainability
    - Appreciation was noted for the project’s net-zero mandate as an important sustainability objective.

Panel Commentary

Overall Design Concept and Building Character

- A panelist was intrigued by the “home front” approach to engaging the programs into the neighbourhood as it helps to reduce the typical institutional presence and suggest a more caring, residential character to the building.

- Nevertheless, caution was noted that the building continues to read as highly institutional in scale and expression.
    - Further design development was advised to reduce this character while preserving the treatment of all programs.

- Further study was advised to resolve a clearer architectural strategy; caution was noted that the site expects granular fragmentation at grade relative to the distinct programs and resolves at contiguous floors above, but the current proposal reads as the opposite.

- Consider additional contextual and oblique-view studies to demonstrate how the building is perceived from key approaches, particularly from the south.

Massing, Façade, and Material Expression

- Further study was advised regarding “de-institutionalizing” the character of the building to provide more variety in the expression. Concern was noted that there is a homogeneity to the current proposal that contributes to the institutional character.

- Consider if the upper massing could appear lighter so that the street building and the retained heritage elements remain prominent.
    - Concern was noted that the grey massing element should be reconsidered because it appears jarring and overly monumental from some viewpoints.
    - Consider integrating more order into the towers as well.

- A “quilt-like” approach using one principal material such as brick was supported for further study, with subtle changes in coursing, texture, stacked bond, recesses and depth.
- The material hierarchy requires further study, particularly the use of metal at street level with brick above, in consideration of the predominantly brick residential context.

- A clearer balance and logic were advised for the curved and rectilinear elements.

    - Moreover, the curved forms should be tested for constructability to ensure that the design intent is realized through detail development.

- Architectural precedents discussed included Mirvish Village, Lincoln Alexander Hall at McMaster University, and the Sisters of St. Joseph project at O'Connor Drive and Broadview Avenue.

Heritage Integration and Contextual Response

- Appreciation was noted for the heritage retention strategy for the Allan School House which preserved the full building.

- Further study was advised regarding the integration of the Robert Armstrong Houses.
    - Refinements were recommended for the parapet, material interface, and a reveal so that the heritage elements read as clear bookends rather than being surrounded by new material.
    - One panelist noted appreciation for the clear distinction between the heritage façade and the new building.

Ground Floor, Entrances, Wayfinding, and Shared Interior Spaces

- The multiple entrances and active ground-floor uses were generally supported because they provide animation along George Street and reduce the institutional character of the building.

- A unifying architectural language, coordinated signage, and highly-visible wayfinding were strongly recommended to ensure the building entrances are legible relative to their interior programs.

- Caution was noted that the ground floor and public realm are too dynamic; consider integrating moments of pause, rest, and gathering along the frontage.

- The importance of interior spaces was highlighted; explore shared interior amenities and "town square" spaces between program areas to support interaction as well as shared use.

- Consider more activation around the community hub courtyard, perhaps through a building entrance or a large gathering space.
    - Concern was noted that it may present safety concerns and a dead-end condition, as currently proposed.

Outdoor Amenity, Terraces and Staff Respite

- Additional usable outdoor amenity space was strongly recommended, particularly for long-term-care residents and other building users.

- Maximize accessible green roofs and terraces wherever operationally feasible and provide broader access for residents, program users, and staff.
    - Consider providing staff-only respite areas where operational separation is required.

- Therapeutic perimeter planting should be explored as part of required safety barriers to avoid visually intrusive fencing or tall glass guards where possible.

Public Realm, Accessibility and Pedestrian Movement

- Further study was advised for the George Street frontage to provide a more functional public realm supportive of the various programmatic uses.
    - Operational scenario testing was recommended, that considers emergency-shelter queues, ambulance and stretcher movements, visitor access, servicing and through-pedestrians.
    - Further study was advised regarding the logistics of snow clearing, snow storage as well as the potential winter damage to proposed planting.

- Panelists advocated for a continuous, minimum 2.1m pedestrian clearway.
    - Concern was noted that there are multiple pinch points where sidewalk width is insufficient.
    - Concern was noted that the meandering pathway, as currently proposed, may provide challenges for maneuvering around obstacles, particularly for the visually impaired.
        - Consider refinements to the paving, planters, trees, canopies, bicycle parking, curb geometry and entrance zones. They should be coordinated to remove obstacles and improve legibility.

Landscape Strategy, Planting and Bicycle Parking

- Concern was noted for the overall public realm master plan; a stronger relationship to the building was recommended.

- Large and meaningful planting areas were supported; however, simplification was suggested to provide fewer, larger, and better-coordinated planting zones that are more viable.
    - Further study was recommended for the curvilinear landscape geometries and their relationship with the curb.
    - Consider planter edges that are more protective of planting, without creating barriers.
    - Further study of the plant material was recommended to address understory shading, soil volume, heat from concrete planters, trampling, animals, salt exposure, and snow removal maintenance.

- Bicycle parking, particularly near the community hub, should be reconsidered to ensure it does not conflict with the roadway, entrances, or gathering space.

- The laneway edge around the Allan School House should be studied further to strengthen the connection through paving, while continuing to retain the existing flowering tree.

- Consider refinement to the proposed paving pattern to relate more clearly to the planters or entrances.

- Consider multiple rows of trees or a stronger grove along George Street to provide shade, environmental comfort and mitigation of the building's scale through a forest of trees.

- Utility conflicts were acknowledged, but coordination of the tree placement, planters, and building canopy was recommended to ensure they are not interfering with each other.

Canopies and Weather Protection

- The colonnaded strip was supported as a weather-protected extension of the sidewalk; however, refinements to the canopy were suggested as it may be too long and visually continuous.
    - Consider a shorter, discontinuous or program-specific canopy that supports entrance differentiation and signage, while retaining effective rain protection.

- Reduce canopy posts and investigate cantilevered or soffit-integrated strategies to improve pedestrian navigation and avoid conflicts with trees.
    - Caution was noted that the thinness of the canopy may not be preserved through design development once slope and drainage considerations are resolved.

Indigenous Design, Ceremony, and Stewardship

- Consider integrating Indigenous principles and elements into the architecture, landscape and public realm rather than limiting them to applied art or isolated features.
    - Potential areas for exploration include meaningful brick patterning, grading and drainage expression, longhouse-related spatial concepts, water principles, learning opportunities and public art.

- Further study was advised regarding the stewardship and governance of these spaces.
    - If long-term commitments cannot be secured, perhaps the spaces should be reconsidered in their current form.

Sustainability, Glazing, Water, and Resilience

- The zero-carbon mandate was strongly supported, together with continued structural optimization to reduce concrete and embodied impacts where feasible.

- Further study was advised for glare, solar exposure and occupant comfort for the expansive glazing, particularly during low-angle evening sun in the corridors.

- Consider integrating stormwater management and Indigenous principles relating to water into the architectural and public-realm design.
    - Drainage away from the highly glazed ground floor and resilience during severe weather or service interruption should be demonstrated.