

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 1 – July 7, 2015

The Design Review Panel met on Tuesday July 7, 2015, in Committee Room 2, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 11:30am.

Members of the Design Review Panel

Members Present

Gordon Stratford (Chair): Architect, Senior Vice President, Design Director – HOK Canada	✓
Michael Leckman (Vice Chair): Architect, Principal – Diamond and Schmitt	✓
Carl Blanchaer: Architect, Principal – WZMH Architects	
Calvin Brook: Planner, Architect, Principal – Brook McIlroy	
Dima Cook: Heritage Specialist, Senior Architect & Senior Associate – FGMDA	
Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal – Giannone Associates	✓
Meg Graham: Architect, Principal – superkül	✓
Brian Hollingworth: Transportation Engineer, Director – IBI Group	✓
Joe Lobko: Architect, Principal – DTAH	✓
Jenny McMinn: Green Building & Energy Services Manager	
Jim Melvin: Landscape Architect, Principal – PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.	✓ *
Adam Nicklin: Landscape Architect, Principal – PUBLIC WORK office for urban design	✓
David Sisam: Architect, Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects	✓
Sibylle von Knobloch: Landscape Architect, Principle – NAK Design	

* *absent for 1st project*

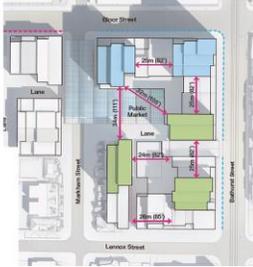
DRP Coordinator

Janet Lee: Urban Design, City Planning Division

Meeting 1 Index

- i. Mirvish Village
- ii. 53-65 Ontario St and 102 Berkeley St
- iii. 5365 Dundas St West
- iv. 4208 Dundas St West
- v. Townhouse and Low-Rise Building Guidelines

Mirvish Village	
Design Team	Henriquez Partners Architects Janet Rosenberg
Review	First Review
Application	Rezoning
City Staff	Graig Uens, Community Planning Rong Yu, Urban Design Georgia Kuich, Heritage Preservation Services
Conflict of Interest	none
Vote	Refine with conditions – Unanimous Condition: Provision of Massing refinements to improve access to light and views, and to provide open space on the site.

Introduction

1. How can the proposed height, density, and building massing be reduced and/or distributed to better respond to the context and transition to its surroundings, understanding that the final form of a development on this site will influence the redevelopment of other sites on the Bloor corridor as well as the other 3 corners of Bathurst and Bloor?
2. How can the approach to, and extent of, the conservation of built heritage, including how the proposal responds to the established heritage character of the site and adjacent heritage properties, be amended to better respect the character of Markham Village?
3. How might the provision of on-site parkland, which is estimated at 2,000 square metres for this proposal, be achieved on site in a way that compliments a redevelopment of the site?

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel commends the proponent team for their ambitious, socially-conscious project; presented within a significant submission package. Given the design intent and the site's prominence there is a unique precedent setting opportunity, but further design is needed in order to achieve this benchmark potential.

Adhere to project's own social goodness goals throughout design and:

- work within tall building guidelines
- reconsider proposed density, height and scale
- ensure universal access to view and natural light
- improve sensitivity to surrounding context
- further develop fine-grain "vertical village" character

Given the potential of the proposed development, and impact on the neighbourhood, the Panel would like to spend more review time with this project.

Related Commentary

The Panel emphasized that the site is an incredibly important and unique corner of the city. The members complimented the well-documented package and the proponent's comprehensive vision that includes public realm, market, social aspirations and sustainability. Appreciating the positive aspects of the project, Panel were of the opinion that there should be massing revisions to improve light and views, as well as increased open space on the site.

Public Realm

The Panel was unanimous in their support of the proponent's public realm and market ambitions to create an exciting social hub for the area.

Panel members recommended that there should be an increase in open space such as a 'POPS' (privately owned publicly accessible open space), to provide a fully accessible open space outside of market programming, especially since approximately close to one third of the open space is dedicated solely towards market use. The benefits of Kensington market with its adjacent parkland was noted as an example: "when it closes it benefits from the open space beside it". Parkland dedication on-site was raised as a significant item to be reviewed by one member. Another member suggested that the market building should not be a food store. The roof over Markham St was felt to indicate a privatization of the street and was recommended to be removed.

The provision of active uses such as playgrounds was recommended by several panel members to support an increased and varied population. A suggestion was to also be more ambitious with the outdoor green space in the upper levels: to increase the areas, have full planting, fully integrate or "carve out" these spaces into the design of the buildings, and to program the spaces for active uses.

Built form and articulation

Height

The Panel was unanimous in their concern for sunlight and view provisions on adjacent streets. Suggestions were made such as lowering building heights, and of locating and/or re-orienting taller heights to strategically provide more sunlight. The strategy of providing lower heights at the street with the placement of taller heights near the southern side of the site, away from the streets, was raised as an option that could provide sunlight on Bloor and Bathurst streets.

Several Panel members noted that the proposed "jump in scale" was a difficult fit with the existing context where the highest building is a mid-rise on Bathurst St (B-Street condos at 9 storeys tall), and one member noted that mere transit access was not sufficient justification for the scale proposed. The recognition that areas near the city's residential neighbourhoods need a different scale and provision of light and view, was raised by several members. Increased massing transition down to Palmerston St and Lennox St was also a suggestion. One member did not discount higher height as unacceptable in future massing revisions, however, but also recommended the need for revisions to provide sunlight on the streets.

Base building

Although creativity was encouraged to not merely follow the Mid-rise or Tall Building Guidelines, concerns were expressed almost unanimously that the street wall was generally too high and would impact streets, with one member describing the streetwall as "formidable" in scale. A suggestion of providing more openings on Bloor to bring more life and connectivity into the ground plane, along with more indentations, was made. The west-east breaking down of the scale of the block was noted as a positive move.

Articulation

The Panel encouraged the proponent to edit and simplify the architectural aesthetic and massing. While generally supportive of the Union Square example shown by the proponent as a strategy for massing, they encouraged the simplification of the language in the proposed buildings and recommended that the project should "cool down" the pastiche. Regarding scale, one Panel member noted that the Union Square or Grant Park massing exists adjacent to open spaces rather than the 20m wide streets for this site. Another member noted that materiality would be important in using this type of expression. Further possibilities were raised such as the provisions of more indents, porosity and openings, and use of sunlight access to create distinctions between masses to achieve more articulation and animation.

Heritage Buildings

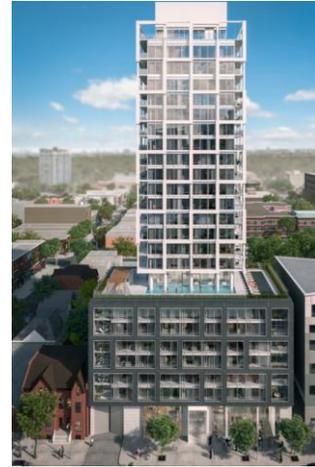
While the heritage expert was not present at this meeting, one member raised concerns regarding the integrity of the heritage buildings being compromised, and the massing response to the heritage buildings. Noted as examples were the overhanging of heritage buildings with built form and the 'chopping' of the bottom portions on the east side of Markham street.

Specific comments from the Panel were as follows:

- This is the most comprehensive application we have ever received – the most provocative
- So much here should be supported – the public realm, market and other kinds of green space
- Appreciating everything about the project- there should not be trade-off between community life at the street and density.
- There is room for towers at Bloor and Bathurst but not at the cost of solar access
- The shadow impact must be dealt with
- As you move west, the residential neighbourhoods need a different scale – light and views
- The jump in scale is a lot to absorb – what justifies it?
- Bring the heights down and better recognize the city's guidelines and have the site plan [as is]
- I agree with the collage aesthetic approach to help manage the density proposed but question if this approach sufficiently address all others [such as] double podium height and overall height
- There should be more indentations within the project and base
- The street wall is too high in places

The need for more time to review this complex project as it progresses and for it to come back to the Panel in the future was recommended by all members.

53-65 Ontario St and 102 Berkeley St	
Design Team	Architects Alliance
Review	First Review
Application	Rezoning
City Staff	Henry Tang, Community Planning Myron Boyko, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	none
Vote	Refine – 1; <u>Redesign - 8</u>



Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, project history and area policy priorities, and sought Panel's advice on the following:

Staff are seeking panel's advice on the following issues:

1. Recognition of the character and scale of the Ontario Street streetscape
2. Consideration of the relative height impact of the proposal
3. Relationship between the base building and the heritage building across Ontario Street

The consultant described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel is concerned about the design intent of this submission. Within an older neighbourhood every new building must be sensitively and positively additive to that neighbourhood. Further design work is needed in order for this submission to achieve this goal.

Work includes increasing sensitivity to and connection with adjacent context; including:

- decreasing density
- reducing podium and tower height
- improving setbacks and built form proportions
- shifting to a more solid materiality

As well more (and more accurate) existing and future context information is needed.

Related Commentary

Panel noted that the project is within an "incredibly desirable" and interesting area of the city. There was a general level of concern regarding the massing of the base building and its relationship to other buildings. In addition, the tower and its "tight" fit on-site was a concern, with one member noting that "the density proposed is compromising too many things".

In addition Panel identified the need for plans showing the future build-out of the area and adjacent sites to determine massing and at-grade relationships, and potentials for connectivity through the sites.

Base building and Relationship to Context

It was recommended that the base building be lowered by the majority of Panel members with more visual relationship to the scale of the north heritage building. In addition, a suggestion was made to "give the corner of the Victorian building back to the public realm" by providing more room around it. It was noted by several members that the lower base would also better relate to the context across the street.

Regarding the relationship to the south building, several panel members noted that the south existing building was an anomaly on the street and that it would be a "mistake to line up with that". Another member suggested aligning with where the south building changes materially, and looking at how the 2 storey retail relates and can better align with the south building. Several members raised concerns with the blank north wall proposed. One member felt that the base building was appropriate for Ontario St.

Specific comments were as follows:

- It slams up to the building on the north – it's cramped
- the building to the north needs more room, materially and scale needs reference
- I struggle to justify the height of the podium itself – it doesn't feel like it's the right height – too tall
- There should be either a midrise here with 2 storeys on top, or it's a tower with a lower base
- An 8 storey blank wall is not acceptable
- There should not be a party wall condition to the north building – there should be a response

Height

The Panel generally noted that more context information on heights and future development were needed to provide commentary on height, with one panel member noting the errors in the applicant-submitted height context map. As a result, Panel members did not comment directly on the acceptability of the tower height. A recommendation was made to proportionally lower the height of the tower if the base building is lowered by one member. Specific comments were as follows:

- It has the responsibility to provide better upper levels when rising up from adjacent sites
- What is the building giving back for the height – what more could it do?

Setbacks and Fit of Building

Panel were concerned with the reduced setbacks of the tower noting the potential for cumulative negative impacts for the area and "too close" conditions with adjacent neighbouring properties. Several Panel members further questioned whether the site was large enough to support a tall building. In addition, the lack of adequate open space and outdoor amenity provisions was noted by one member.

Specific comments were as follows:

- It squeezes too much into the site – overly ambitious density for the site
- Setbacks are too small – if there is a building in the future at the east, it will be too close
- A big issue in the city is putting towers on small sites – 12.5m [setback] is a minimum standard, not the ideal
- Look at if the neighbour can do the same thing and is it desirable cumulatively?
- If there are only a few sites on the block that could have height, the applicant should show how it could be built out. Then you could develop a rationale for the 9m setback if the adjacent site does not develop for some time.
- The quality of life infrastructure such as gardens and spaces with light: is this [project] complete enough? The site is completely filled.

Block Plan and Connections

A general recommendation from the Panel was the need for a strategy for the entire block showing future development build-out, and possibilities for increased connections through sites.

The lack of public realm connections through the site and absence of links with adjacent sites was noted in the proposed. A suggestion was made to provide an open laneway as opposed to covered access in order to allow for public connections.

The rationale for severing off 102 Berkeley St was questioned by several members.

5365 Dundas St West	
Design Team	Quadrangle Architects MBTW
Review	Second Review
Application	Rezoning
City Staff	Julie Bogdanowicz, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	none
Vote	Support – Unanimous



Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, project history and area policy priorities, and sought Panel's advice on the following:

1. Does the proposal respect the intent of the planning framework described in the Secondary Plan? Could the towers be further setback from Dundas St?
2. Does the master plan provide a meaningful pedestrian environment and does it provide sufficient interest to the public realm and the prominent corner?
3. Does the building design respond to the Tall Building Guidelines: location of the entry, location of the tower, prominence of the podium, etc.

The consultant described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel appreciates the positive evolution of this development's design from earlier reviews. There is a promise in this project that can it can be a significant catalyst in the neighbourhood. Further work is needed in order to complete this promise of becoming a benchmark for high quality urban change.

Work includes:

- further developing public accessibility/programming throughout the overall site
- increasing pedestrian permeability at north, west and east edges of overall site; including connectivity to adjacent sites
- developing highest quality landscape environment and pedestrian realm
- infusing the evident quality of the ground plane design into the built form of the development

Related Commentary

The Panel noted that this is a challenging site and an important project for this side of the city. Members commended the significant improvements from the initial review, with a revised clear and logical public realm plan. They were enthusiastic about the potential richness of the connected public realm elements: POPS and Pedestrian Plaza on Dundas St, leading to the Central Square, mews and Linear Park.

Public Realm

The Panel emphasized that the ground plane for this project ties all the buildings together and must be carefully designed. As such a key direction is for it to be designed as a pedestrian priority environment, so that the landscape reads as a connected whole. Recommended were elements such as reduced vehicular lane widths, reduced curbs, the provision of on-street parking, bollards, and attention to the detailed design of hard surfaces. Accommodating cycling throughout the site was also suggested. In general, the design of the site should be for pedestrians - so that vehicles feel like it is a "privilege" to be let into the site.

Central Square

The Central Square should be designed as a strong focus for the project and be integrated with adjacent public realm spaces such as the mews and POPS. In addition to minimizing the presence of vehicular driveways, suggestions included increasing the soft landscaping and reducing hard edges of both the central square and the mews so that they "have the same feeling through the whole site", with shared landscape language and programming connections. The street to the north of the central space (south of Buildings D and E) was recommended to not resemble a street and to be refined in its design as a pedestrian-only realm.

Panel members emphasized the importance of the central square to create an active public life. The proponent was encouraged to program the central area and design uses for a variety of future residents - for people of all ages, dogs, and incorporate design particularly for children. One member noted that the open space would have overlook from the tower residents, and that some enclosure and privacy from canopies would mitigate overlook and make the space more comfortable to use.

A recommendation was that the design of terminus points, axes and views should be more rigorously designed. This would help better integrate walkways, the POPS on Dundas, mews and other open spaces areas with the Central Square. Another recommendation was to vary the topography, with mounds and grade variation, so that it is not just a flat site.

Panel noted that the amenity building (Building F) is a good improvement and publicly visible, and encouraged the consideration of public uses in its programming. It was further noted that the success of the site relies on emphasizing the amenity building 'pavilion' and landscape, so that the towers are less of a presence.

POPS

Members encouraged the proponent to improve the POPS on Dundas St (privately owned publicly accessible open space) by relocating the stair and ventilation shaft to a more rational spot that has less visible impact, and emphasized the importance of repairing conditions on Dundas St. As noted above, the Panel recommended further unifying the POPS with other open spaces in the project, by integrating paving and landscape materials, and downplaying the presence of vehicular paving.

Connections to transit

The importance of establishing strong connections west-east was noted, along with the recommendation that for Phase 3, the key connections to transit should be secured on-site, and through the property to the east.

Driveway Layout

A recommendation was that the vehicular driveway/lane along the east edge of the site should be re-aligned to meet Dundas St at a 90 degree angle, and that the 'pork-chop' (traffic island) at the East end of Dundas should be removed. This would achieve a more rationalized layout and increase the landscaping along the east edge of the site.

Specific comments on public realm were as follows:

- The plan is definitely a huge improvement
- You've made a silk purse out of sow's ear
- The potential of the public realm at the ground plane is rich with connected space –it's exciting
- It succeeds in its 'publicness'. The language of streets leading to park – try to find common language for public access into site as it progresses
- It's a wonderful development for its diversity of moments
- The landscape is very important and should live up to the precedents you've shown
- Push the landscape aspect of it – it ties the buildings together
- Towers-in-the-park do not have a great track record - the ground plane is extremely important
- The width of streets – they look very wide. They should be more narrow and have bollards to make it more difficult for cars and more pedestrian-friendly.
- The connectivity to Phase 3 and POPS works well
- The trees on top of the [underground] parking – they may not be sizable. If they are little whippets then it will be a wind-blown place

Built form and Articulation

Base buildings

Several members were concerned with the minimal base building setbacks and recommended they be increased. They also noted that wind mitigation was an issue that would be improved with enhanced base building setbacks. In recognizing Dundas St as having potential for a consistent streetscape, one member suggested further visually connecting Buildings D and E, with elements such as a canopy at the base buildings.

Regarding the tower setback on Dundas: While members did not generally feel the towers should be set back as much as the Secondary Plan outlines, several member suggested that the towers should have meaningful increases in tower setbacks from base buildings so that the landscape and base buildings take visual precedence over the towers. Specific comments were as follows:

- Define the podium more to create definition on ground plane
- Perhaps bring towers back so that you feel the base building and ground plane more than towers
- Recognize wind mitigation with the base building

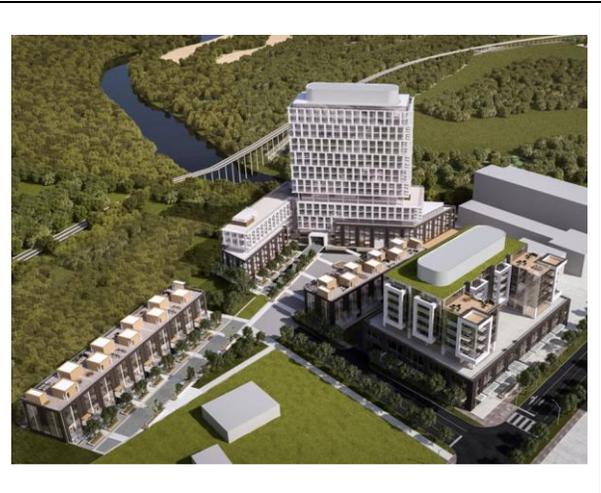
With respect to locations of lobby entries, one member commented that the entrances to residential condos should be secondary to retail frontages and that the doors are in rational place.

Tower Articulation

While appreciating that the design is in progress, the proponent was encouraged to evolve the exterior form of the towers. Specific comments are as follows:

- The large white frames make the buildings more bulky and squat. I wonder if there could be a diversity of height – it seems one-dimensional
- The expression is a bit heavy and overwrought with the white frame - encourage more nuances. It's a bit too tough

4208 Dundas St West	
Design Team	Wallman Architects
Review	First Review
Application	Rezoning
City Staff	Julie Bogdanowicz, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	none
Vote	Refine – 1; <u>Redesign - 8</u>



Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, project history and area policy priorities, and sought Panel's advice on the following:

Staff are seeking panel's advice on the following issues:

1. Is the design of the tower and the size of the floor plate an appropriate response to the context?
2. Does the massing and architectural treatment of the mixed use building on Dundas St W appropriately address the Avenue and adequately address the corner?
3. Will the provision of the POPS and the design of the private and public realm contribute positively to the area?

The consultant described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel appreciates and commends the proponent team's efforts to creatively address the challenging nature of the site. At the same time the site offers unique opportunities and further work is needed in order to unlock that potential.

Work includes:

- developing design to interweave throughout the site natural landscape environment context and built form into a permeable, interconnected "buildings in a park" strategy
- considering joining Blocks 1A and 2, creating a single larger landscaped courtyard area to the north
- considering tightening gap between Blocks 1B and 1C, resulting in more open space at northwest end of site
- with the above taking into account open space contribution to broader precinct goals

The Panel also requests that moving forward project be clearly shown within existing and future context.

Related Commentary

Members were enthusiastic about the opportunities for this challenging but potentially "spectacular" site beside a river, which should be designed so that the river connection permeates the site and increases its desirability and marketability. As a key component to the success of the project, the Panel encouraged the proponent to focus on and improve the landscaped open space and provide significant connections to the river to the east, as well as essential west connections.

Panel noted that to support the future increase in population, the establishment of well-designed and connected public spaces would be of high importance. Panel also commented on the way the buildings could better be sited and massed to create a strong central space for the site.

Several members noted that plans showing existing context (with the gas bar for example) and future context, would be helpful in the review.

Public Realm

As a fundamental diagram to organize the whole site, Panel felt that the project should be opened up to the river at the east and that links to further development to the west should be better established. Panel encouraged the proponent to revise the project so that the site design is less of a secluded private enclave on a cul-de-sac, but instead is made to feel larger and more desirable by making important connections. The public street diagram was felt to be an "odd diagram" and needing more work by several members.

East publicly accessible connection to the river:

In addition to establishing a publicly accessible walkway to the river, further suggestions were made to strengthen and visually open the project to this attractive feature of the site. The base building of the tower was encouraged to have a significant visual opening to the river valley by removing portions of the lower levels and designing elements such as a glazed lobby to take full advantage of the view. "A portal to the valley" should be provided with public access to the ravine amenity for the neighbourhood, and in so doing, enlarge the feeling of the central space and maximize its desirability as a "great space near the river".

Central Open Space:

Members also focused on possible improvements to the disposition of elements framing the central open space to make it successful. The Townhouse Block 1A was of particular concern, with most members suggesting that it felt incongruous and should be removed, or moved back significantly to open up an important central space. A specific comment on the project was that "a good central open space between mid-rise and tower would give it a visual focus which it lacks at the moment" and that the open space proposed felt "residual" and not fully developed. It was also recommended that instead of a cul-de-sac, the removal of the townhouses could allow for a looped street.

However it was also noted that this townhouse building screens the loading and servicing areas for the mid-rise building, and that these areas would need to be successfully relocated to not detract from the central space. Further concern was expressed regarding the potentially tight conditions between the Townhouse Block 1A and the mid-rise building, particularly at lower levels, with section drawing and further study recommended.

It was also noted by several members that the buildings were too close to the new streets and open space, requiring further setbacks.

West portion of the site and Townhouses: There was a general level of concern with the west portion of the site – that the townhouses were located in a remnant part of the site, lacking connections. Concerns were further raised regarding the suitability of locating the west townhouse block with views directly across from the gas station. Suggestions were made to remove this west

townhouse building and locate the POPS there instead. Several members noted that the successful expression of the west street and how it connects to the adjacent parcel, would be a key element of the site plan. Panel also noted general concerns about the "monumental walkway" and that it "peters out to the west" and appears as if it was abruptly ending.

POPS location

While appreciating that rationale of a POPS location at the terminus of the street, Panel was concerned that the proposed POPS was "orphaned and will not be well used", and "will not be significant because it doesn't go anywhere". All members felt that the POPS should be moved and strategically located to open up connections west-east. Suggestions included moving the POPS to the west and using it to connect to future west development, or of moving it to the east so that it is passed through on the way to the river.

Landscape and detailed comments

More greening of the open spaces was encouraged, as was the elaboration of soft landscaping over hardscape. Overall detailed comments included the concern that the central walkway was too wide and seemed "unreal" within the context, and that the vehicular lanes also appeared too wide at 3.5m each and could be minimized with a bike path provided. The loading locations were not thought to have been fully resolved, with the Townhouse Block 1A terraces facing the loading areas for example.

Specific comments were as follows:

- This will be spectacular site but the west townhouses and east don't contribute to a cohesive space
- The site feels hemmed in and makes the courtyard feel unconnected or leftover - a residual space. Even if it has slim connection to ravine it would feel much larger
- I am looking for greater connection to the landscape – greater connections between architectural elements - it doesn't gel right now
- I am not confident this will be a positive environment yet
- The landscape should be more garden like and not court like, and more easygoing funkiness to this neighbourhood...less English and more garden-like instead of street and square

Built form and Articulation

Tower

With regard to the tower floorplate, Panel raised concerns as to whether or not this would be appropriate given the current design and site plan design, while not completely negating it as a possibility. Several members noted that the larger floorplate might be appropriate for this site in particular, provided that there is good access to the ravine, massing refinements to open the site up visually to the ravine, and a great central space. Several other members however were of the opinion that "the case had not been successfully made" for a larger floorplate, and that the proponent should show what a smaller floorplate would look like on the site for further evaluation.

It was noted that more height would be preferable to a "squash and spread" massing by one member. (Massing that enlargens building footprints and often results in making the massing more bulky, as opposed to adding density in height.) Several members also recommended that extra massing should not be placed on top of the other buildings along the central space in the redesign of the proposal. One member noted that it would be preferable to have all 3 storey grade-related buildings along the central space, with the extra mass from the 6 storey base building removed and placed on top of the tower.

An iconic tower for this site at the edge of the river was encouraged for this unique site.

Mid-Rise Building on Dundas

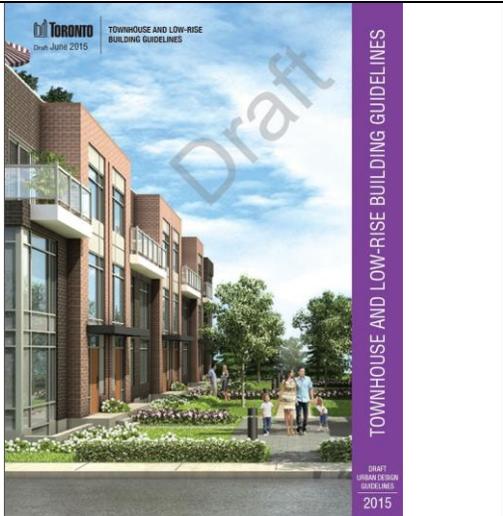
While members did not feel that the corner needed to be addressed in an extraordinary manner, the Panel felt that the building needed more work, particularly when viewed from the corner. Appreciating that the project is still in progress, the Panel commented that the top and bottom elements need to work together and at this point, the building appears to be designed by two architects. Panel thought that much more work on the design would need to be undertaken – that the "floor-to-ceiling glass and big white frames need to evolve". One member suggested that the base of the mid-rise could be a storey taller. Panel members emphasized the importance of a successful building on the Dundas St frontage.

There were concerns raised regarding the relationship of the townhouse building at the rear of the mid-rise building on Dundas St, as noted in the above comments on the central open space.

Specific comments were as follows:

- This is a huge improvement of the original site plane but the tower was cooler in the first one – The tower should be cooler and curved
- The south building needs to go back to the drawing board – the top and bottom don't go together

Townhouse and Low-Rise Building Guidelines	
Design Team	City Planning
Review	First Review
Application	City-initiated Study
City Staff	Diana Birchall, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	none
Vote	No vote



Introduction

City staff outlined the purpose, schedule, observations arising from research, consultation process and guidelines content and organization. They sought Panel's general comments on the document and responded to questions from the Panel.

Chair's Summary of Key Points

The Panel appreciates the considerable effort of the proponent team, and the opportunity to review these Guidelines. Based upon the Panel's experience since 2007 this remarkable document is a highly valuable and much needed addition to the City's suite of urban design guidelines.

Further development of the Guidelines is encouraged, with following highlight comments:

- make document graphic and direct; favouring diagrams, sketches and images, and minimizing verbage
- distill content wherever possible for clarity and directness of message to intended audience
- clearly outline requirements vs. guidelines
- ensure consistency of message of a cohesive strategy
- include ancillary items in document; such as service/loading/waste handling
- capture townhouse hybrid strategies
- include case studies; showing history, precedents and challenges/opportunities relevant to each study

The Panel is very interested in supporting these Guidelines, and is ready/willing to contribute further review and input at any time.

Related Commentary

The panel was appreciative of the document which complements the existing city-wide building typology guidelines on Mid-rise and Tall Buildings and that it was comprehensive and well-organized.

The document was advised to be edited and repetitive elements removed to make it more concise and easy to use. Universal guidelines were recommended to be compiled under a general section, to avoid repeating sentences in multiple sections. (eg: mews streets should not be gated)

The City was encouraged to focus on the objectives and deal with the technical issues which are often critical aspects of these building types.

Objective of guidelines and intended audience

The final outcome of the guidelines should be clarified in terms of by-laws, building codes, standards or guidelines status. A suggestion was made to target stacked and back-to-back townhouse issues in particular and that more general planning issues such as transition in height should be removed.

It was recommended that the guidelines target its intended audience acknowledging that a wide variety of designers work on stacked townhouses versus tall buildings for example. The building code was noted as an example that responds to its audience with more prescriptive elements under Part 9 buildings versus Part 3.

Importance of resolving technical issues

Members noted that the following issues would be important to resolve, and that consistency in interpretation of building code and zoning issues city-wide should be reviewed and achieved:

- technical resolution of garbage truck access, requirements and layout. The City's guidelines for garbage pickup was cited as being confusing by the transportation expert, with hopes that these guidelines would help clarify that document.
- location and layout of loading spaces (eg: loading spaces are too far from units typically and are space-consumptive)
- grade interpretation to be made consistent
- exiting interpretation and other building code issues to be made consistent. (eg: the required width of stairs for two exiting doors is not consistently interpreted)
- location of gas meters and other building servicing elements
- consistency between guidelines and City standards for streets known as DIPS (Development Infrastructure Policy and Standards) for items such as 6m paved width of private streets versus 8m widths required in DIPS

General comments

Street address: The lack of public street address for back-to-back stacked townhouse types in general was raised as a problem, in addition to narrow passageways, and issues of safety, quality of space, design and light. It was noted that in return for back-to-back and stacked units which do not face a street, a higher level of design and detailing should be provided.

Separation Distance: . In general, Panel commented that the street and mews widths should respect and respond to the scale of development, and the guidelines should allow for flexibility.

-A recommendation was to include a guideline addressing the distance between different types of spaces (primary to primary windows between living rooms, primary to secondary windows etc).

- The issues of closer distances having noise and sun issues were raised, with access to sunlight cited as an important quality to achieve success in these types of projects. It was also noted that cultural overlays are important factors, with examples in Italy cited where buildings are closer together but noise is minimized by residents at later hours, for the benefit of school children. Another member noted that 11m separation distance was sufficient based on a Regent Park example

Definitions: The definitions of building types should be expanded to explain building types for public knowledge. (eg: define back- to-back and stacked types)

Achieving Design Quality

Several members noted that affordability was driving the design of some of the building types and further noted the difficulties of achieving quality in design with budget constraints, wood frame construction and increasingly challenging sites.

The Panel recommended that the guidelines should "inspire grand design rather than mandate it". They should promote good design by being more graphic, use effective images, and place less emphasis on words to encourage well-designed projects.

The Panel emphasized that the Case Studies section (which have not been completed) will be important as per Tall Building Guidelines to inspire stacked townhouse design and illustrate what could be achieved. A good example to refer to was cited as the Citizens' Guide to Density by Urban Strategies for CMHC, with sample projects, photos, and clearly dimensioned site plans and sections.

Several members thought that the document should not be too prescriptive whereas other members commented that the extent to which guidelines are prescriptive is a difficult level to determine. The guidelines should allow for innovation in architectural design. Examples noted were that the guidelines discourage materials such as vinyl, however if that material is well used and detailed, it would be preferred to certain types of brick cladding. In addition, the suggestion was made to be careful to avoid dictating 'taste' in the guidelines.

Document general comments

-Structure of the document: To edit the document for ease of use, each section could be graded into primary, secondary and tertiary headings/information with increasing complexity. The primary headings would be the simplest, and the document could be read more easily depending on what type of information the audience would be seeking.

-Care should be taken to avoid contradictory images and text. For example, there is language regarding universal accessibility but photos and figures show mostly stairs.

Panel members would like to review the document as it evolves and encourage the City to return to the Panel.