



PLANNING A GREAT CITY TOGETHER

CITY OF TORONTO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES: MEETING 1– February 18, 2016

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday February 18, in Committee Room 2, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 1:00pm.

	<i>Members Present</i>
Members of the Design Review Panel	
Gordon Stratford (Chair): Architect, Senior Vice President, Design Director – HOK	✓
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: Sustainability Specialist, Vice President – BuildGreen Solutions	
Jim Melvin: Landscape Architect, Principal – PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.	
Adam Nicklin: Landscape Architect, Principal – PUBLIC WORK	
David Sisam: Architect, Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects	✓
Sibylle von Knobloch: Landscape Architect, Principle – NAK Design	✓

* *was absent from the last item*

Design Review Panel Coordinator

Janet Lee: Urban Design, City Planning Division

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meetings which were held on December 17, 2015 and January 14, 2016.

MEETING 1 INDEX

- i. 88 Queen St East Pre-Application Workshop (1st Review)
- ii. 141 Bay St (1st Review)



88 QUEEN ST EAST - WORKSHOP

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW	First Review
APPLICATION	Pre-Application
DEVELOPER	St Thomas Developments
DESIGN TEAM	Page & Steele/ IBI – Mansoor Kazerouni Cormier & Associates – Claude Cormier
CITY STAFF	James Parakh, Urban Design
VOTE	No Vote (pre-application)



Introduction

City staff outlined the project history, existing and future context, and planning framework.

The purpose of this review is to introduce the site to the Panel, present key design themes and receive early comments. Staff are seeking Panel's advice on the following issues:

- 1) Public Realm Concept: The public realm concept, including the edges, permeability with a focus on the concept of the retail mews
- 2) Open Spaces: Placement, concept, scale and program of the two on site open spaces (one city park and one POPS)
- 3) Overall composition of built form: The overall composition of built form with particular focus on the central building and the concept of linking them with sky garden terraces

The consultants provided background information, process to date, design rationale and responded to questions.

Chair's Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Panel would like to thank the City team for pairing the following projects for review. Both are very large developments that will have a significant impact on the physical and social context of their surrounding environs. Both have aspirational goals, and while one is an exemplar of the highest quality the other needs to be reconsidered in order to achieve excellence.

Summary of Key Comments:

The Panel appreciates that the proponent team is sharing the project at an early stage, and commends the substantial body of work outlined in the submission. The Panel also appreciates how important it is that an exemplar, sensitively integrated development be achieved; and with so much at stake in this regard further design work is needed in order to achieve this goal... including:

- Changing the internally-focused retail amenity design to be extrovertedly engaged with surrounding existing streets (the Panel urges the proponent to avoid repeating the internalized pedestrian retail mall model of the Eaton Centre and Village by the Grange).
- Ensuring that the mid-block mews does not draw pedestrians away from those streets.
- Ensuring that the authentic and engaging high quality of life depicted by precedent photos actually happens in the design (this currently is not the case).
- Developing greater sensitivity to surrounding existing physical and social context.
- Rethinking the built form strategy of the middle tower to create a more livable environment.
- Aiming for much higher sustainability goals for the overall project.

Related Commentary

Panel members commended the high quality and clarity of the package and the ambition of the scheme. They were appreciative that the project has come in early in the process. While acknowledging that the site is challenging, Panel members recommended alternative concepts for the public realm plan and general massing. Several Panel members advised that conceptual diagrams should be included and while appreciative of the quality of the package, they were surprised at the advanced state of drawings for pre-application.

Vision and Context

There was a general level of concern that the project has not sufficiently addressed the context of the area and created "a compelling vision for Downtown East". More information and analysis should be provided as noted by several members including:

- how the open spaces relate to the greater community should be better illustrated to determine if they are in the right locations
- the future development on adjacent streets and area should be shown such as the Downtown East Study area

PUBLIC REALM CONCEPT

Pedestrian Mews

West-East Pedestrian Mews

Panel members commended the two west-east pedestrian mews as a positive urban design move to break up the scale of the long block. They recommended removing the loading functions fronting the mews by either relocating them to the central spine or below-grade.

North-South Pedestrian Mews

Impact on Public Streets: Some Panel members were concerned with the pedestrian mews and its impact on the existing public streets of Dalhousie and Mutual. Other Panel members commented that they were open to the possibility that a form of retail mews could be demonstrated to work on the site.

Panel members raised the following issues:

- a. Loading and Servicing Areas: To animate the mews, the significant loading spaces shown should be removed from the frontages which should be animated. If the north-south pedestrian mews were eliminated, the loading could occur there and not impact the streets
- b. Animation on Dalhousie and Mutual Streets: The majority of Panel members commented that they were concerned that by reinforcing the mews it will compete with the streets - pedestrian street life and animated places on the Dalhousie and Mutual streets will likely suffer.
- c. Blank Walls/Non-animated spaces on the streets: Several members cautioned against the ability for retail to be animated on three sides and that realistically, there will be blank walls. It is likely that if the emphasis is on the animation of the north-south mews, the streets will be sacrificed.
- d. More generous setbacks along Dalhousie and Mutual streets may result from the possible removal of the north-south mews. A better streetscape should be achieved with this development, as advised by several members.
- e. Reduction of the mews may help reduce buildings heights as raised by one member

Retail Program of Mews

Several members were concerned about whether the retail would succeed and made the following comments:

- a. Viability of the retail and of mews in general: The Panel asked for further analysis of the retail concept and viability.
- b. Retail challenges in relation to the social context: The use of Metropolitan United Church and St Michael's Hospital as places of refuge for the homeless, was noted by several Panel members as a reality of the site. This should be considered in the urban design and retail strategy.

Edges

Loading Areas: These areas were noted by all Panel members as having negative impacts to the proposed development. The project is at a scale of development whereby the three loading areas should be relocated below-grade. "The two loading areas on Dalhousie Street

and one on Mutual should disappear" from the at-grade conditions and replaced with animated uses.

Streetscape

The majority of Panel members commented on the streetscape on all four sides as needing to be expanded and generally "undersized" for the scale of development proposed:

-Increased setbacks to the streets should be provided. The possible elimination of the north-south mews would help achieve that.

-Strengthen the streetscape: it should have its own strong statements without relying on the open spaces alone.

-Better tree locations should be explored. It was noted that the City has made strides in planting on top of utilities that may help with tree placement.

-Landscape Focus for the site's edges: One member noted that the streetscape pattern on Dalhousie and Mutual streets in the proposed is not a continuous street wall approach but rather a series of built form and open space elements. This type of landscape urbanism could be strengthened in the design.

OPEN SPACES

The design ambition for the open spaces was commended by the Panel however they made the following recommendations so that the public spaces have sunlight, visibility, and animation:

Review Placement:

Context - There should be more context shown to understand whether the POPS and Park spaces are in the best locations with respect to the overall community. Several members noted that it was difficult to assess whether they are located in the right areas without that context.

Presence on streets - Several members advised that there a greater open space presence on Queen St and Shuter St should be considered, and were concerned that the scheme may be too internalized with the proposed siting of the POPS and Park on Dalhousie and Mutual streets.

Remove servicing area:

Loading areas and ramps should be located away from the open spaces and mews.

Park Shadows:

Several members were concerned with the shadow impacts of the proposed buildings. One member noted that the open spaces are in shadow for 80% of the time: *"For the City to invest in a Park that is right out of the gate in shadow, does not make sense."*

OVERALL COMPOSITION OF BUILT FORM

Overall Height and Density

In general Panel noted that at this point, acknowledging the early stage of the project, the case for increasing density from the previous approval was not as yet convincing. A better overall neighbourhood vision, and public spaces with meaningful locations of these spaces within the community, should be provided. The provision of public realm and open spaces with sunlight, visibility, animation and safety were also advised.

It was also noted by one member that the previous approval for 3 towers fit comfortably on the site as compared to the proposed.

Height in Context

-One member noted that the heights on Yonge St (as referenced by the design team as a rationale) are not convincing as a reference and that the addition of non-residential area as the rationale for extra height is problematic.

-Another member cautioned against introducing a height precedent for the area with negative effects by subsequent projects as seen in other areas of the City.

-A member commented that there should be a transition of height down as you move east from Yonge St.

-Several members commented that the approval of the northeast tower at 30 Mutual St was unfortunate in advance of the establishment of the block plan and massing for the 88 Queen St East site.

Queen St

Several Panel members advised the following:

-Height: The tall tower was commented on as "excessive" and an anomaly in the current context. It was also noted by one member that due to the lack of transit note, there is "*no rationale for a tall tower on Queen St.*"

-Several members advised that it should be moved away from Queen St which would result in the relocation of the open space facing Dalhousie.

-Heritage building relationship: The south side of Queen Street was noted as being a particularly attractive street frontage. While acknowledging the early stage of the project, several members advised a quieter expression and scale, and a more sympathetic architecture facing the existing historic buildings rather than a vocabulary of stacked buildings for example.

Middle Towers

Although several panel members commented on the sky gardens as an interesting idea, they were concerned about issues as follows:

-Bulky massing and skyview: Several members were concerned that the two buildings at 700sm floorplates each will read as a 1400sm floorplate building and be "clunky and overly massive" and have a lack of sky view between the buildings.

-Reduced separation distance and overlook issues: One member was concerned that the reduced 7-11m separation distances will form "high canyons" between the towers with compromised views and overlook issues for future residents facing the sky gardens. A member noted that as a key source of density on the site, the twin towers with sky gardens should address the issues of internal compromised views.

Tower Separation

Several members noted that due to the narrow widths of Dalhousie and Mutual streets, redevelopment of properties across the streets would already result in insufficient separation distances which should be revised. For example a member noted that if a tower was built on the west side of Dalhousie, it would be 16m away and the project would already be putting conditions on adjacent development.

Several Panel members advised that there should further be a strategy in place to address the future redevelopment of Dalhousie and Mutual streets to design for adequate tower separation.

SUSTAINABILITY

Several members commented on the architecture proposed and sustainability issues. The sustainability expert noted that although there are a lot of interesting strategies in the architecture, thermal performance is the key gap of the package that will result in building-code non-compliance as the baseline standards are raised in the city. The adaptability of facades should be considered such as the Mexican building example with shading over the glazing.

While acknowledging the visual interest of the shifting building envelope ins and outs and the different permutations of balconies, several members noted that this will affect energy and comfort performance. As one member noted: *The building expression does very little for sustainable design...the expression should be rooted in more than what it's going to look like.*

141 BAY ST

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW	First Review
APPLICATION	Rezoning
DEVELOPER	Ivanhoe-Cambridge
DESIGN TEAM	Wilkson Eyre Architects – Dominic Besson
	PUBLIC WORK – Adam Nicklin
CITY STAFF	James Parakh, Urban Design
VOTE	Refine - Unanimous



Introduction

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

- 1) Public Realm Concept: The public realm concept with a focus on the location and design and animation of the privately-owned publicly-accessible amenity areas at Yonge and Bay streets
- 2) At-grade pedestrian connection: The location and configuration of a potential at-grade pedestrian connection linking Yonge Street with Bay Street
- 3) Pedestrian Circulation Network: This project will play a key role in making pedestrian connections in all directions (PATH / Union Station/Harbourfront). Staff are interested in the Panel's comments on these circulation systems with a focus on navigating level changes and linkages to Union Station.

The consultants provided background information, process to date, design rationale and responded to questions.

Chair's Summary

The Panel commends the proponent team for an exemplar project with a clear and elegantly stated ambition for design excellence. The bold move to create a civic link across the rail corridor is particularly appreciated, as is the cadence of the thoughtfully-tailored towers and progressive sustainability goals.

Further work is encouraged in the following areas:

- Develop an integrated and sustaining relationship between green space and the towers' workplace environment.
- Infuse the uniquely organic character of the upper level park throughout the street level public realm; creating a distinctive civic signature across the development.
- Focus on ensuring that the pedestrian realm transition between street level and upper level park is seamlessly inviting and accessible.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Related Commentary

PUBLIC REALM

The Panel were enthusiastic for the opportunities in this "major addition to the City's public realm" proposed by the elevated park over the rail corridor. As a "miniature version of a 'Highline' for us", the high quality of both the built form and public realm were commended as a high mark in the history of the Design Review Panel as noted by several members.

Panel also noted that as an extremely complex site, the multiple connections to be made in the project will be a significant advantage to the City.

The extension of the public realm over the rail corridor was noted as being the first project to "stitch the City back together again over a centuries-long barrier". As one member noted the provision of air rights over the rail corridor with decreasing usage for buildings and landscape is a new threshold: *This project is spectacular and exciting...it represents the next generation of urban design for the City.*

Plazas

The Panel noted that in general the plazas and connections to the City are well-considered. They provided comments on improvements to the plazas/ POPs (privately-owned publicly accessible spaces) located on Yonge and Bay Streets:

Public Entrances to the Park

The proponent was advised to make the elevated park as easily accessible and visible for the public as possible from the plazas and streets so that they can access this "tremendous contribution to the public realm":

a. Vertical Circulation: Panel was supportive of the recent addition of escalators in the plazas to bring the public up to the elevated park instead of approximately 21m high stairs. One member noted that the City does not have very many examples of exterior escalators due to climate and was supportive of their locations in sheltered conditions for public comfort. Several members noted the importance of elevators and their locations in concert with the escalators to bring the public up to park level.

Central Stair: Several members commented that the central stairs from to the Park should be looked at for alternatives, and noted their height and length may be daunting.

b. Expression of Public Entrances to the Park

Several members noted that the entrances were "hard to distinguish from the corporate space" and advised a more distinctive public presence when seen from the plazas and streets.

Examples given by way of illustration were different colour palettes, or contrasting materiality such as using the more organic forms or timber materials of the park such that

the park language is more strongly expressed at-grade. The entry areas to the park should be made much more visible from the street and be "really obvious". It was advised that the park entry should "feel like it's owned by the public in a more complete and intuitive way".

c. Animation of Lobby-Dominated Public Realm

The animation and typology of open spaces adjacent to lobbies was raised. A member compared London plazas in front of the 'Shard' development at London Bridge station to the one in Central St Giles. As one member noted: *Consider more carefully Central St Giles as an example that could work here... with large tables and meeting areas to put eyes on the street and better inhabit public spaces.* The lobbies as transitional spaces could be made more encouraging of greater lengths of stay and inhabitation as also seen in New York city lobby plazas, which would be appropriate for the entry areas of such a significant public park.

Architecturally, another member suggested that the corporate clean elevation could be more animated with the addition of uses, glass detailing or more solid elements for 45 Bay.

d. Yonge St Plaza

One member commented that the potential for pedestrian conflicts with accessing parking and loading should be considered, and the area designed for pedestrian safety as it progresses.

e. Park

Public Use: Panel members asked questions and made comments to underline the importance of establishing a public park versus one that would feel like it is corporate and private. Several members advised that there should be as much animation and 'eyes on the street' at the park levels. As one member noted: *Who would use this park and how would it be used? An amenity for the development with public access is one way to see it but a hopeful one is a miniature version of the 'Highline' for us.*

Expression: While commending the landscape and material quality of the park design, one member noted that the Highline in NYC has developed a language of landscape bridges: *My concern is that the perspective looks like a park at-grade...it should not have the feel of a park elevated in the air but more of a bridge-like feel.*

AT-GRADE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION

East-West Laneway - south of 1 Front

Several members noted that the integration of the Dominion Building could be a wonderful space. While commending the quality of the architecture in general, a quieter architectural expression was advised by one member to better respond to the scale of the historic façade.

The importance pedestrianizing the north edges to ensure that it's a comfortable space was noted by several members.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION NETWORK

PATH Connections

The PATH connection within in 141 Bay was advised to be improved. The route on Level 1 was noted to be along the south side of the 141 Bay elevator core, with blank walls to the south. A member advised that the PATH connection could possibly through the lobby space north of the elevators so that you can see the south side of 1 Front St. If not achievable, the PATH route proposed in the spaces south of the elevator cores should be lined with retail or active uses.

PATH connections for commuters particularly to the buses were commended as being more humane and enjoyable in general as compared to existing conditions, by one member.

Off-peak hours:

It was recommended that outside of peak commuting hours, the consideration of what is open at different times as it affects safety for pedestrians should be reviewed. Another member advised that the connections during off-peak hours could have more animation and "whimsy" to make it interesting.

Pedestrian comfort:

The consideration of weather protection and comfort for people in the park and connections should be further reviewed.

Other Comments:

Railway Adjacency Issue:

One member noted based on experience that the vibration of the railway damaging pipes is an issue to consider, particularly for the ice rink.

Architecture:

Although not part of the issues for design focus, the towers were commended by the majority of members as "spectacular" and "incredibly elegant and bringing things we haven't seen before".

Separation Distance: The 12m gap between the 141 Bay St towers was noted as a possible issue while acknowledging that the office uses are different from residential requirements for overlook and privacy.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project was commended as a great start with LEED platinum as a goal which has become typical for commercial buildings. The sustainability expert strongly encouraged more thinking about passive strategies for the architecture and glazing, and passive opportunities in the vent level diagrams as well. Carbon neutral goals structurally and aesthetically should be considered as resiliency is becoming important in the City.