

## Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 12 – December 9, 2014

The Design Review Panel met on Tuesday December 9, 2014, in Committee Room 1, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 12:00pm.

### ***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 – Halsall Associates	✓
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	✓

### ***Confirmation of Minutes***

The Panel confirmed minutes of their previous meeting which was held on November 13, 2014.

### ***DRP Coordinator***

Hamish Goodwin: Urban Design, City Planning Division

### ***Meeting 12 Index***

- i. Grange Park Revitalization
- ii. John Street Revitalization
- iii. Boulevard Café Design Guidelines
- iv. 25 Ontario Street, Rezoning Application

<b>Grange Park Revitalization</b>	
<b>Design Team</b>	PFS Studios / thinkc design
<b>Review</b>	Information Item
<b>Application</b>	N/A
<b>City Staff</b>	Alex Shevchuk, Parks Planning
<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	none
<b>Participating Members</b>	SVK, DS, DC, JL, GS, JM, JMM, AN, MG, RG
<b>Vote</b>	N/A



## Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, project history and area policy priorities. The consultant described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel.

## Chairs Summary

Panel commends the proponent for an exemplar community involvement process, unique funding model and strong design start for one of the City's key parks. Further design development is encouraged including focus on building stronger connections with surrounding context, a holistic sustainable water strategy and four-season programming throughout the park.

## Discussion Summary

Panel was strongly supportive of the proposed design, and the community-based process to reach this point. General comments and suggestions for consideration during design development are summarized below.

### Landscape Design

- The big design moves are appreciated; they provide the park with a natural, relaxed and informal feel that is not always found in city parks.
  - This is not simply a design exercise; it feels like a park "of its time"
- The large tree canopy is appreciated, but give consideration to how this will effect the understory planting and lawn
- The extent of garden beds, use of ground cover, and other proposed elements will require a level of maintenance that most City parks are unaccustomed to
- The range of occupation is welcome, but more information on how the park will be used in winter would be appreciated

## **Design Elements**

### Seating

- The variety of seating proposed is appreciated; it supports a variety of uses at various times of the day
  - Seating integrated into planters is great; It has a multi-purpose role
- Give consideration to flexible seating / lawn chairs (such as those in Bryant Park, NYC)
  - Flexible seating can make a place feel civilized
  - It makes a statement about urban civility, giving the park back to the people
  - The act of giving people control of where they sit is really community minded
  - Evidence shows that chairs will not be stolen
  - It could be a real spark, help give people feeling of ownership

### Pods

- Re-examine architectural choice of pods
  - They might be better-off expressed as pavilions
  - Make them obvious rather than hiding and concealing them

### Promenade

- Concern that there is not a lot of width to the promenade
  - It is not clear what should happen here
  - If it is an alley of trees, what happens underneath it?
- The promenade is so formal; sense that it should be a strong draw
- It has so much energy at the top; some of this energy needs to flow further southwards

### Paving

- Exercise great caution with the choice of pavers
- Handling the proposed curves might prove challenging

### Amphitheatre

- Will it feel empty / void when not in use? Explore this further.

## **Response to Context**

- The materials and presentation were light on contextual information
  - The context of the edges are equally important as the park itself
  - Materials/drawings show the park in a void of white
- Desire lines need to be very carefully looked at
  - E.g., the very strong desire lines at the south end, near the church, needs to be addressed in more detail
- Connections
  - Confirm all minor ones all work
  - The connection to park under OCAD and a new entrance to the gallery is welcome
  - Removal of the fence along Beverley Street would be good to see
- Grange Road
  - the public realm at this entrance point needs to be improved
- Heritage
  - The circular pathway restores some of the original grandeur of The Grange; it captures the heritage spirit

- The design shows that you can take children's play really seriously, while still being respectful of a heritage resource

### **Sustainable Design**

- Recognize the importance of water as a feature, and as a critical resource
- Consider the responsible management and use of water in park design
  - Examine the reuse of water within the water feature
  - Consider the source of water for lawn irrigation and use in washrooms (eg water being captured on surrounding roofs)

### **Process / management model**

- Members were strongly supportive of the community-based management and private investment as a model to help reinvigorate parks across the city
- The suggestion was made to track the success of this park, to help inform how the model might be used elsewhere

<b>John Street Revitalization</b>	
<b>Planning Area</b>	Downtown and Central Waterfront
<b>Design Team</b>	DTAH, MMM
<b>Application Type</b>	EA, Detailed Design
<b>Review</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Review (1 <sup>st</sup> Review, Feb. 2011)
<b>City Staff</b>	Alka Lukatela, Urban Design
<b>Participating Members</b>	G. Stratford; S. Von Knobloch; D. Sisam; D. Cook; J. Melvin; M. Graham; R. Giannone; A. Nicklin; J. McMinn
<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	J. Lobko, DTAH
<b>Vote</b>	N/A



## Introduction

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

- Tree Planting Strategy
- Sustainability Initiatives
- The termination of John Street at Grange Park and Front Street
- Event locations

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

## Chairs Summary

Panel commends the proponent for their design progress on this vital project since the last review. Further work is recommended by Panel towards realizing the concept's full potential. This includes simplifying the design with a focus on clarity, connection to surrounding context, and flexibility to accommodate both permanent and "pop up" events. An extension of this is reconsidering the placement of enhancements; increasing ground plane openness and placing supportive improvements above the street.

## Related Commentary

Panel was enthusiastic about the project overall, but expressed a variety of concerns at a granular level. Many of the directions that came through registered as either a unanimous voice or that of the majority. These points are summarised below. Comments that were not clearly made by a majority of Members are noted as such within each category/heading.

## **Tree Planting Strategy**

Majority members did not support the tree planting strategy, for a variety of reasons, listed below. Specific comments from Members also noted.

- The effect on programming
  - Consider the impact of trees when an event is taking place, and whether they will obscure views
  - Give the event planners space to create great events
  - The number of tree is having a programmatic effect
- Tree health and sustainability
  - It seems like there are too many trees
  - The City needs to do at least what you ask developers to do (re. soil volume and tree grates)
  - If you can't provide sufficient soil volume, then reduce the number of trees
  - Reducing the total number of trees will allow other ones to thrive
  - John Street is only a 20m ROW; you might get better results with fewer and better trees
  - It is preferable to have fewer large caliper trees, than more smaller ones
  - You have chosen the hardest place to plant a tree (beside the curb, where pedestrian volume is at its highest)

## Tree Species

No clear direction was evident from Panel on this point. One member expressed an inclination for a tree species with a more open canopy; one that allows sunlight onto the street and makes for a more comfortable year-round pedestrian environment. Another member, however, was very enthusiastic about the proposed use of Elms.

## Recommendation

*In refining the strategy, Members felt it was appropriate for the street to have some areas – primarily the event spaces – without any trees. The south-east corners of Queen and King were specifically identified in this regard.*

## **Sustainability Initiatives**

Several members noted the imbedded sustainability goals of the project as one that promotes walkability and which gives priority to pedestrians. Conditions for trees which promote long-term health and allow them to thrive were also identified as important (soil volume, placement, irrigation, number of trees etc.). A partnership with Toronto Hydro was identified as a potential educational opportunity, as it relates to the creative use of renewable energy to power the intensive elements of the proposal (lighting, multimedia etc.).

## **The termination of John Street at Grange Park and Front Street**

Panel was in agreement that it would be worthwhile to explore an overlapping zone with the Grange Park design expression, and that the portion of John Street between Queen and Stephanie was an obvious place for this. They felt this move would eliminate the "stop-start" public realm interface that currently exists between the two projects; that the location of trees on this section was ideal; and that this move would help bring the park down to Queen Street, making a visible "gateway" announcement.

## Event locations

Members did not comment on the number of proposed event spaces, but provided a variety of comments for consideration in their location and design:

- King and Queen Event Spaces
  - These are great event spaces
  - Examine if the paving and lighting treatment can bleed out in an east-west direction on these streets to help define the larger event space
  - Carefully consider the placement of trees on the south-east corner of King and John, and Queen and John, to ensure they don't constrain the programming potential of these spaces
- Consider the sensitivity of residential uses when locating event spaces
- Metro Hall
  - Give careful consideration to the programming of this stretch of John Street to ensure it supports an animated public realm
  - Currently the retail uses on this stretch are located on the west side of John Street

## John Street as a "Place"

Members were encouraged to see the City bringing forward a contemporary right-of-way design that places such a strong emphasis on pedestrians. However, there was a strong level of disappointment that this emphasis didn't go further to create a pedestrian-first environment. Comments in this regard were as follows:

- It looks like a road with really nice pavement, and linear lines of trees
- It should be more differentiated, less sameness
- The curb with a different colour reinforces it as a street
- I thought it was going to be a shared street
- It seems to lack the liveliness of pedestrian streets, such as what you might see in Copenhagen
- This is like 1 roll of carpet for 800 metres
- It should be difficult for cars to navigate, but it looks easy
- It is not supposed to be a thoroughfare
- I encourage you to find ways to not have a long straight road
- This would help slow down cars, and encourage pedestrians to cross mid-block
- The street needs to feel as a pedestrian space, where cars are invited
- Considered the day-to-day use of a person who lives close by; the scale needs to be comfortable

Stemming from these comments, it seemed apparent that Members were not entirely sure of the quality of place that would result from the proposed design. While some of this was a reflection of the early stages of design, it might also have been a result of the precedent images that were presented. One Member noted that these images were more a "kit of parts" which were difficult to assemble in the context of John Street, and suggested instead that a precedent street in its entirety would have been more useful to convey the vision.

## Paving

Members were in agreement that a quality, robust and durable paving surface was required, but were not in agreement about the proposed pattern: some were very supportive, or encouraged the proponent to emphasize the expression even further particularly around the

event spaces ("make them more splashy"). Others, however, felt the proposed pattern would be distracting and should be quieter/calmed-down.

### **Programming**

Comments were provided suggesting that images would be helpful to understand how the street will function on event days (event day versus typical day). Further clarity on the specific programming of these conditions was recommended as the design develops. One Member expressed a preference for bollards over planters (planters feel temporary; bollards give a feeling of permanence and importance). It is noted that no other members expressed a preference either way.

### **Patios**

Some concern was expressed about the 1.9 metre patio width that is proposed in some locations, with comments following that this is a very challenging dimension from a retailing perspective. One member provided more of a general caution about patios, and their impact on the pedestrian clearway if there is lots of movement and high pedestrian volumes; this member drew upon experience from Montreal ("some of the patio streets are almost unwalkable").

### **Street Elements**

There was some concern amongst members that the street was being overly "crowded" with element such as bike rings and street furniture, and that it would benefit instead from a design which relies on occupation of the space as its defining driver of quality and character. Comments in this regard were as follows:

- I am not sure that permanent street furniture will be truly necessary
- They could distract from, and encumber the public realm
- Colour and activity in the area will be sufficient
- Give consideration to how street furniture elements will impact/impede events
- Consider where you want variety versus uniformity; currently the design feels very rigid
- It's not the objects in a space that make it interesting, it's the activity that occurs within

### Recommendation

*One strategy to help address concerns about rigidity of design was to think about designing the street as a volume rather than as a plane: trees, light standards, catenary lighting and other suspended elements frame the stage (in this case, the street).*

# Boulevard Café Design Guidelines

Information Item

Chris Ronson, Public Realm – Transportation Services

## Introduction

City staff outlined the area context, history and area policy priorities and responded to questions from the Panel.

## Chairs Summary

This is a timely and essential project for the City, and Panel commends staff for a strong start in enhancing character, animation and variety along our streets. Further content development is recommended with a focus on achieving guidelines that avoid over-regulating in favour of enabling the wide variety of restaurants and cafes that define Toronto's unique character. Considering population density, ensure sufficient sidewalk width and patio size for success. In terms of process, replace current polling with criteria for fairness in terms of consistent city-wide interpretation, and develop a graphic tool kit handbook for clear communication.

## Related Commentary

Panel appreciated the opportunity to review and comment on this study. The majority of comments focused on revisions to the polling process, allowing for flexibility of design, materiality, and flexibility of implementation. The full discussion is summarised below.

### Polling / Principle of Fairness

- The polling process is "draconian" and "problematic"
  - It introduces a high degree of risk to business operators
  - Patios can be vital for restaurants – it is an extension of their business; the polling process can have a catastrophic impact on these businesses
- The polling process is unfair
  - a restaurant operator in one area can do something that an operator can't do in another area, all other things being equal (dimensions, noise etc.)
- The guidelines are an opportunity to provide city-wide clarity on these issues; in this way, an objective of this project should be to remove the need for polling
  - update the by-law to remove it as a requirement

### Guidance and Flexibility versus Regulation

- It will be difficult, and likely undesirable, to regulate design quality
  - E.g., plastic chairs can look really nice and be very comfortable
  - E.g. old rusty chairs might be an extension of the restaurant theme/aesthetic
  - Variety of design and materials makes the patio experience interesting
  - Irregularity is a real benefit, it brings visual interest and charm
- Give care to the definition of terms ("durable, commercial grade" etc.)
  - It is difficult to define what is attractive and durable, this is a big hurdle
- You need to be careful that you are not inhibiting the patio experience through overly-prescriptive regulation

- Think of patios on The Danforth; they have evolved organically, and provide a diverse yet very successful/pleasant environment
- Think about the cities / streets / patios you visit as a tourist...all the good ones [patios] probably "break the rules"
- Flexibility of location should also be considered, so that the café doesn't necessarily have to be located directly out the front of a restaurant
- Regulations need to be about minimum safety concerns and accessibility
  - Individual designers and restaurants should be able to determine what is best for them for all other issues
- Beyond safety and accessibility issues, the guidelines should be presented as a toolkit to help applicants understand the process
  - This will benefit the City as being seen to enable café owners rather than restricting them
  - The document should show really good precedents
  - Focus on simple language

### **Implementation**

- Guidelines need to be tested, and revised if they aren't working
- Important that the guidelines get applied on a case-by-case basis
  - E.g. on some streets you will clearly be able to get more than the minimum
- Part of this project should include streamlining the approvals process
  - Community Planning, Urban Design, Transportation, Public Realm, Street Furniture, trees etc.
- Explore the potential to support the Food Truck program with this project

### **Minimum / Maximum Dimensions**

- Flexibility for street context is important
  - Incorporate flexibility to make cafes bigger if possible
  - E.g. reconsider the statement that "cafes should not be wider than the pedestrian clearway", particularly in consideration of The Esplanade context, where wider patios work very well
- Narrow patios don't give the experience people want

### **Details / Design Considerations**

- Weather protection
  - Is it intended to protect the café, or provide protection to pedestrians as well?
- Advertising
  - The City should restrict advertising on boulevard café fencing
  - It is an incursion on the public realm that we should have more control over

<b>25 Ontario Street</b>	
<b>Planning Area</b>	King-Parliament Neighbourhood
<b>Design Team</b>	Graziani + Corazza Architects
<b>Application Type</b>	Rezoning
<b>Review</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Review (new submission)
<b>City Staff</b>	H. Tang; M. Boyko; P. Maka City Planning Division
<b>Participating Members</b>	JM, JMM, MG, SVK, DS, DC, GS
<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	none
<b>Vote</b>	Refine – 0; <u>Re-design</u> - 6



## Introduction

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

- Recognition of the Old Town of York Area of Special Identity character and overall built form of the King-Parliament area
- Relationship between the new tower and the old heritage building
- Built Form relationship to the south and east
- Consideration of the impact of the proposal when viewed from the north along Ontario Street as a view terminus

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

## Chairs Summary

Panel thanks the proponent for their progress since the last review, and recommends further design development to unlock the potential of the site and fit within existing context. This includes: adhering to older existing context through altering lower/mid level massing and step back datum lines to harmonize with existing building west of site; making tower proportions more slender; and increasing street level animation along both frontages.

## Related Commentary

This meeting was the third time this project had been presented to the Design Review Panel; previous reviews occurred on March 19, 2012 and June 7, 2012. On each occasion, the Panel has been presented with differing massing and articulation, and on each occasion - including this one - the proposed design has not been well received. While the proposal presented at the meeting of December 2014 addressed some general comments previously provided by the DRP, and also responded – through tower form and an increased setback –

to noise issues emanating from a neighbouring property, Panels "non-support" was a reflection of member's continued concerns relating to massing, articulation, and response to context. These concerns are outlined below, as a summary of the Panel discussion. Notwithstanding, Panel expressed unanimous support for the proposed rental tenure and mix of 2 and 3-bedroom units.

## **Recognition of the Old Town of York Area of Special Identity character and overall built form of the King-Parliament area**

Panel was unsatisfied with the response to context, from a variety of perspectives:

### Tower Expression and Materiality

- The striped vertical panels draw attention unnecessarily to the tower
- The tower expression looks more corporate than residential
  - It is not very harmonious with its context
- The vertical banding does not help make the tower appear thinner
- There are too many expressions / articulations being contemplated; this takes away from the juxtaposition of old and new

### Building Composition and Proportion

- The tower might have a more elegant proportion if the base building was lower
- The taller base building creates the appearance of a stubby tower

### Height

- One Member indicated they were comfortable with the proposed height, however the majority either expressed concerns or reservations with it.
- Panel noted that the tallest building in the area – the Globe and Mail Office building - is located in the centre of the block and has greater stepbacks so the pedestrian does not 'feel' the tower's presence
- Other comments included:
  - This neighbourhood is not characterised by "height" (i.e. tall buildings)
  - The tallest building in the area should not be used automatically as a precedent; sometimes these heights are tied to site-specific exceptions
  - It can be worthwhile to lower the mass and see if it creates a better fit

## **Relationship between the new tower and the old heritage building**

- Panel comments on this issue, as it relates to expression and building composition, are summarised above
- Members were unanimous in expressing concern about the viability of retail uses in the heritage building. These concerns related to challenges with accessibility, street prominence, marketing, and general visibility.
- In Panel's opinion, the heritage building seemed more suited to a commercial office setting

## **Built Form relationship to the south and east**

Members felt the attempt to relate the north and west elevations to the immediate neighbours was unsuccessful. Instead, they felt the proposal would be more successful by relating the height of the base building more closely to the warehouse buildings on the west side of Ontario Street. Specific comments follow:

- The expression looks piecemeal; two expressions don't come together well at the corner
- I am not convinced they are the right height, nor of the right proportions
- Pick up on the lower datum line; this is what people will see from the street
- There is too much variation of height; this is compounded by the lower scale of the heritage building

Lowering the overall base expression would help address issues related to proportion, noted above.

### **Sustainability**

- Being a rental building, the developer has a longer-term perspective on the investment related to energy efficiency, and the opportunity to save money over time
- Take full advantage of this through architectural expression
  - Don't default to glass
  - Exploring this could also help achieve a better fit with the neighbourhood context
- The extent of bike parking should be celebrated
- The convenient at-grade location for bike parking is also welcome
  - Explore ways of increasing visibility to the bike parking area; this will also assist with animation of the Adelaide Street frontage
- Re-examine the air shaft location along Adelaide to ensure pedestrian comfort