

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 10 – October 18, 2011

The Design Review Panel met on Tuesday October 18, 2011, in Committee Room 3, 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	✓
Robert Allsopp: Landscape Architect, Planner, Architect, Principal - du Toit Allsopp Hillier	✓
Shirley Blumberg: Architect, Principal – KPMB	
Calvin Brook: Planner, Architect, Principal - Brook McIlroy Inc Pace Architects	✓
Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal - Giannone Associates	
Charles Hazell: Heritage Specialist, Architect, Principal - Taylor Hazell Architects	✓
Alun Lloyd: Transportation Engineer, Principal - BA Group	
Jim Melvin: Landscape Architect, Principal - PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.	✓
Roland rom Colthoff: Architect, Director – RAW Design	✓
David Sisam: Architect, Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects	✓
Eric Turcotte: Planner, Architect, Senior Associate - Urban Strategies	✓
Sibylle von Knobloch: Landscape Architect, Principle - NAK Design	

Confirmation of Minutes

The Design Review Panel confirmed the Minutes of previous meetings, held on September 27, 2011.

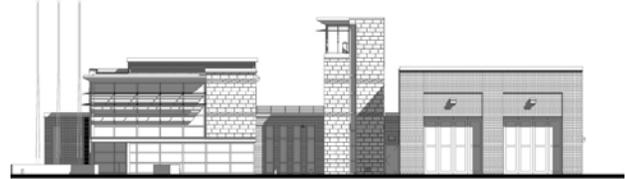
Recording Secretary

Hamish Goodwin: Urban Designer, City Planning Division

Meeting 10 Index

2575 Eglinton Avenue East, Fire Hall
40 Scott Street, Condominium

Fire Hall	
Address	2575 Eglinton Avenue East
Design Team	Thomas Brown Architects
Application Type	Site Plan Application
Review	2 nd review (1 st review May 2011)
City Staff	Kelly Dynes, Community Planning Xue Pei, Urban Design
Conflict of Interest	None
Vote	<u>Support – 5</u> ; Non-support - 0



Introduction

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

Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Panel noted many positive steps in the evolution of a competent design, were appreciative of the presentation materials, and acknowledge the improvements made in response to comments from the first review.

Context analyses and sustainability strategies were notably absent from the package, and should be incorporated in the next phases of design work. As a new civic project housing a 24 hour community member such as the Fire Department, every opportunity should be taken to maximize all potential benefits to the neighbourhood.

Some features of the design, revealed in greater detail with this submission, have created confusion. As currently planned, relocating the front door to face onto Eglinton Avenue has created an entry sequence disconnected from interior planning. The landscape design on the corner is overwrought, has introduced an arbitrary and confusing diagonal geometry, and obscured the entrance. Much simplification is needed in the landscape design on this important urban corner.

Related Commentary

Members were appreciative of the changes which were made to the scheme from first review, and suggested that these changes represented an overall improvement to the scheme. They felt that locating the building closer to Eglinton Avenue was a positive move that would benefit the public realm, as would the improved clarity and robustness of materials. Panel did feel that the landscaping plan required significant additional refinement, and that it would also benefit from some refinement of the building layout and massing as described below.

Sustainable Design

Members were appreciative of some sustainable initiatives, such as the green roofs, but felt the scheme would benefit from a more comprehensive action plan. In the absence of this, they felt the project could benefit from smaller changes to the existing program. One example included increasing the degree of glazing in the fitness room to capture natural light and thermal energy. Another example included providing much greater opportunity for building occupants to interact with the green roof, through the provision of windows as well as walk-out doors.

Response to Context

Further to comments provided at first design review, Panel questioned whether enough was being done in terms of the building layout and programming to maximize civic opportunities, especially as it relates to the role that on-duty firefighters have as "neighbours".

Site Plan Design

Members were appreciative of the move to locate the building entrance closer to the street, however they still felt that the entrance would benefit from refinement. In illustrating this, they noted that on entering the building you are faced with a blank/unanimated wall and corridor. Panel suggested that the entrance seems disconnected from the remaining interior spaces, and several Members described this entry condition as being a 'bit of a let-down'.

Building Form and Articulation

Members felt that the tower massing was not readily apparent, and that the proposal would benefit from making the tower taller. This suggestion was partly as a general desire amongst Members to see a better response to the corner condition, both through massing and landscaping.

Comments were also provided in terms of refining the built form expression. Some specific examples provided related to the garage door, and providing greater horizontal treatment there, and the cornice line, which was described as looking "heavy".

Landscaping Strategy

Members were appreciative of moves to capture the corner and create a more positive public realm there. Overall however, Panel was concerned that the landscaping strategy was too busy, and was not effectively working to integrate the space and the related building elements. Subsequently, Panel felt the scheme should be simplified, with greater attention being given to unifying the corner public space with the front entrance.

Some suggested examples for this included:

- reducing the amount of sod and increasing understory planting
- refine seating wall arrangement to ensure the enclosed space does not seem too small
- explore exterior lighting fixtures which tie more into the language of the building
- re-examining the relationship between surface parking, entranceway, and landscaped spaces.

40 Scott Street	
Planning Area	St Lawrence Neighbourhood
Design Team	Page + Steele / IBI Group Architects
Application Type	Rezoning and Site Plan Application
Review	First
City Staff	Sarah Henstock, Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	None
Vote	<p><u>Refine – 6; Redesign – 0</u></p> <p><i>Conditions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue to explore base relationship of block within its heritage context; - continue to refine shaft/tower portion of tower - provide more visual information to enable proper assessment of transition conditions - provide specific information on sustainability objectives



Introduction

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

- Does this development represent an appropriate transition from the Financial District to the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood?
- Can Panel provide recommendations on the most appropriate ground floor layout in light of the Urban Design Guidelines' recommendations for animation and transparency of street level uses?
- Can Panel provide direction on the proposed streetscape/landscape plan?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Panel appreciated a well detailed and well presented first submission for this important site, on the threshold between the financial district and the St Lawrence Neighbourhood. Panel also noted and applauds a proposal that exceeds the City's Green Building Standards and instead targets LEED Gold, among the first few to do so in the 4 years of the panel's existence.

On the important question of whether this development represented an appropriate transition from the financial district to the St Lawrence neighbourhood, Panel felt that while this was a good place for a tall building, experiential analysis was incomplete, and insufficient to make a strong case for or against the heights proposed here.

There was concern over the design of the ground floor and podium as only 1 ¼ of the building

faces were illustrated in this extremely dense urban condition; fully 2 ¼ of the remaining faces were not adequately represented or analyzed and should be part of subsequent submissions. The British Colonial Building, directly adjacent to the site, was designed to form a contiguous street wall; the set-back and laneway proposed by the 40 Scott Street project would reveal an unintended and un-designed party wall of that building. Instead, Panel felt the proposal should connect directly with the adjacent buildings, re-establish the contiguous street wall, and create a porte-cochere access to the proposed laneways if required.

Finally, the proposed two storey tall windows on the south east corner were seen as having the potential to make a positive contribution and animate the streetscape, and should be extended northward. However, the proposed atrium was not seen as a convincing programmatic response: in its current definition, it is not behaving as an atrium, nor does it suggest anything more than an un-programmed and unfurnished lobby space. Much more development is required to fulfill the Urban Design Guidelines for the street level.

Related Commentary

Does this development represent an appropriate transition from the Financial District to the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood?

Members were in agreement that the site was appropriate for a tall building. They were also in agreement, however, that sufficient information to address the issue within this question was not available to them. It was suggested that the 'birds-eye' views presented were not relevant to the question and that instead, long street views which illustrate the impact of the tower on the skyline from a pedestrian's perspective should have been provided. Panel indicated that an analysis of the proposal's impact upon sensitive view corridors and sight lines, such as from the Flatiron Building, should also be undertaken.

Can Panel provide recommendations on the most appropriate ground floor layout in light of the Urban Design Guidelines' recommendations for animation and transparency of street level uses?

Various recommendations for the ground-floor layout were provided as follows:

Wellington Street

Some Members felt that this elevation was the weakest part of the scheme. They felt that setting the building façade back was the right move at ground level, but that the remainder of the elevation should maintain the existing façade plane (ie not be set back).

Concern was also expressed with the public realm treatment (consistency and quality of materials) of the set-back area, and how this would transition to the existing treatment beside the British Colonial Building and further across to Yonge Street.

Maintain Party-wall Conditions

Panel was in agreement that the prevailing character of party-wall buildings on this block should be maintained through this development. Subsequently, they felt the street-wall gaps which currently appear on Colbourne Street and Wellington Street should be filled in, by bringing the proposed building flush to its neighbour in these locations.

Service Lane

Further to the above, Members indicated that access to the service area could be provided by a port-cochere at ground level (i.e. through the party wall). Panel felt that the service area should not be publically accessible, unless the related ground floor uses within the building were designed to respond to this possibility.

Atrium Concept

Members were unsure of how this space would work in terms of programming, and suggested that more work was required to determine this. In terms of design, Members felt that the height of the space would need to be increased in order for the atrium concept – which is suggestive of a grand, light-filled space - to succeed.

Ground Floor Uses

As a general response, Members felt the proposal would benefit from the inclusion of more commercial uses at-grade. The proponent was encouraged to reconsider locating amenity uses at-grade (eg the gym at the north-east corner on Scott Street), instead providing uses which facilitate greater interaction with the public.

Can Panel provide direction on the proposed streetscape/landscape plan?

Suggestions for each elevation were provided as follows:

Colbourne Street

Members were unable to provide much direction for this street, as they had not been provided with much information on it within their briefing package (ie no section). As a general observation, it was noted that the sidewalk appears to be very narrow, and that subsequently, the provision of greater dimension here should be explored.

Scott Street

Noting that this section of the street is in shade/shadow, Members felt the landscaping plan should be simplified to respond to these conditions (eg single row of trees instead of double). At the same time, they felt that a heightened architectural statement at this elevation was warranted in order to maintain the quality of space.

Materials

Panel suggested that the proposal should apply consistent high-quality materials at-grade throughout the ground-plane as a means of unifying and raising the quality of the associated public realm.

Sustainable Design

Panel requested greater detail from the applicant in terms of how the LEED Gold sustainability objectives (LEED Gold) translate to building and site design, and building performance.

Heritage

Members supported the idea of keeping existing heritage building, though expressed some hesitancy in the way that this was being achieved through façade reconstruction. Notwithstanding this, Members did feel that the heritage building was well integrated into the proposal, and that it was responding well to its context.

Building Form and Articulation

Members were generally comfortable with the tower design, but did feel that it would benefit from a simpler, contemporary expression. Members were interested by the concept of relating various levels of the tower to neighbouring towers, however they felt that this neighbouring context would be likely to change over time. Subsequently, Panel was unconvinced by this concept, and encouraged the proponent to focus on making a grand and contemporary design that is unique to the subject building.

Some Members felt that the floor plate size was too generous at its lower elevations, and suggested that a reduction in this size should be explored.

The proponent was encouraged to carry the datum line from the British Colonial building across to the Wellington Street façade of the subject proposal in order to visually connect the massing between these two buildings.

Briefing Materials

Panel was appreciative of the quality of materials provided in the briefing package and the presentation. For the next stage of review, Members requested additional information relating to all edges of the block (eg sections) as well as the relationship with Yonge Street.