

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 4 – March 29, 2011

The Design Review Panel met on Tuesday March 29, 2011, in Committee Room 2, City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 1:00pm.

Members of the Design Review Panel

Members Present

Gordon Stratford (Chair): Architect, Senior Vice President, Design Director - HOK Canada

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Michael Leckman (Vice Chair): Architect, Principal - Diamond and Schmitt

Robert Allsopp: Landscape Architect, Planner, Architect, Principal - du Toit Allsopp Hillier

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Shirley Blumberg: Architect, Principal – KPMB

Calvin Brook: Planner, Architect, Principal - Brook McIlroy Inc | Pace Architects

Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal - Giannone Associates

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Charles Hazell: Heritage Specialist, Architect, Principal - Taylor Hazell Architects

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Alun Lloyd: Transportation Engineer, Principal - BA Group

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Jim Melvin: Landscape Architect, Principal - PMA Landscape Architects Ltd.

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Roland rom Colthoff: Architect, Director – RAW Design

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David Sisam: Architect, Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects

✓

Eric Turcotte: Planner, Architect, Senior Associate - Urban Strategies

✓

Sibylle von Knobloch: Landscape Architect, Principle - NAK Design

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Confirmation of Minutes

On motion by Ralph Giannone, the Design Review Panel confirmed the Minutes of their previous meeting, held on March 8, 2011.

Recording Secretary

Hamish Goodwin: Urban Designer, City Planning Division

Introduction

City staff introduced the Streetscape and Open Space initiative prior to review of the first agenda items. As a general response to this initiative, the Panel provided the following comments:

Panel appreciates the significance of these two studies, the challenges and opportunities of both study areas, and the City/consultant teams' considerable efforts to create viable urban environments out of suburban settings. Of particular note in the Scarborough Study is the transition of grand gesture key civic and retail built forms into a finer urban fabric. Of equal note in the Etobicoke Study are the efforts to integrate the study area's disparate site conditions and functions into a vibrant whole. Both studies provide an important opportunity to highlight deep sustainability on a scale that will positively impact our City, and both need to focus on this moving forward. Given the context of both studies, they form a key watershed moment in the urbanization of the City.

Scarborough Centre Streetscape and Open Space Plan	
Planning Area	Scarborough Centre
Design Team	DTAH/ARUP/SWERHUN/JAMES URBAN/UFU/URBANMETRICS
Application Type	n/a
Review	First
City Staff	Robert Stephens, Urban Design Kelly Dynes Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	None
Vote	n/a



Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Sustainable Design

- Develop an integrated and publicly visible sustainability strategy, including but not limited to:
 - storm water management strategy
 - passive strategies through street/block shaping, site planning and built form relative to solar orientation

Response to Context

- Develop stronger connections between study area and surrounding areas
- Create a public realm that responds to and supports the planned future population context

Site Plan Design

- blocks/streets pattern and street activation strategies (and street parking) very positive; develop further
- develop bike lane network throughout study area and connections into areas beyond
- ensure all civic and private exterior and interior open spaces are strongly interconnected and have well animated edges

- build intuitive, legible way finding into master plan for area
- increase density to create a strong urban environment

Commercial Precinct

- Further develop urbanization strategy around mall to include:
 - design strategies that address both mall owner's and City's goals
 - a balance of high quality plazas along all edges of mall

Civic Precinct

- Develop further to increase density
- Create a more urban environment and more tightly define/frame open spaces, including open spaces surrounding Civic Centre
- Give thoughtful consideration to design of Campbell Square Extension to provide a more pedestrian scaled space overall
- Create options to urban development relationship with Civic Centre, including the Centre as a civic landmark:
 - Set in broad open space
 - More tightly framed by urban development
 - Ensure exterior/interior pedestrian path through Civic Centre open 24/7/365

Built Form and Articulation

- Develop a massing study to focus on appropriate density/height and open space relationship with built form
- Recommend that proposed Link to Civic Centre along east edge of Civic Green Amphitheatre be included in design of library

Landscape Strategy

- Increase/develop quantity and quality of parks and squares throughout area north of LRT, to match area south of LRT
- Develop landscape strategy as an integral part of sustainability strategy for entire study area

Submission Package

- A mockup/model of the study area recommended
- Improve graphic clarity of some of the diagrams (e.g.: page 7)
- Include "before and after" condition figure ground drawings

Related Commentary

General

The Panel was in agreement about the challenges of urbanizing the two Scarborough Centre precincts within this project as being:

- creating spaces scaled to the pedestrian experience; and
- generating a population density that is large enough to create a vibrant urban environment

The Panel felt the proposal was well thought out with respect to the identification of streets, blocks and connections. Specific comments were provided for both the commercial precinct and the civic precinct as follows:

Commercial precinct

Members felt that the 'bigger moves' within this element of the proposal were heading in the right direction, given the challenge of land ownership and use. These moves included the realignment and normalization of Borough Drive, proposed treatments for the main approach roads, and proposed streetscape improvements. The main deficiency identified by the Panel was in the

provision of green open spaces. It was suggested that the proposed open spaces are currently too hard, and that the Plan should include more direction for the long-term provision of green space. Concurrently, the proponent was also encouraged to give consideration to how some of the internalized mall activity could be brought outside to animate the larger hardscaped spaces.

Civic Precinct

Members felt that the success of this precinct will be driven by the number of buildings, and subsequently, the number residents that it can accommodate in the long term. The biggest challenge in achieving this success (increasing the population) is derived from vestiges of the original development plan (based upon 'Buildings within Landscape') which has resulted in large areas of open spaces and irregular 'developable' land parcels. Members felt that the proposal was well developed in terms of resolving this challenge. The following specific comments were provided for consideration during further refinement of the plan:

Connectivity

Members were satisfied with the approach that was being pursued with respect to connectivity, and the introduction of a finer-grained pedestrian scale to the precinct. The following elements were identified as being important components of this approach:

- Bike Lanes on Borough Drive
- the indoor library link to the Civic Centre from Borough Drive
- the walking path around the perimeter of the Civic Centre were all identified as being important elements of this approach.

In moving forward, the Panel indicated a desire to see how the proposed connections, including bike lanes, tie in to networks beyond the two precincts under study. Similarly, a desire was expressed to have a better understanding of the movement of pedestrians emanating from the SRT station. The proponent was also encouraged to examine integrated way-finding solutions to assist with the movement of people through the Centre who are unfamiliar with it. Finally, It was suggested that re-grading of the Civic Common could enhance the visibility and prominence of the civic centre link.

Borough Drive

Members were supportive of the proposal to reconfigure Borough Drive as a means of enhancing the civic nature of the road. The Panel was appreciative of plans to include on-street parking on Borough Drive, indicating that this will help with vitality and animation of the street.

Wood Lots

The wood lots were identified as being very important edges. Noting the sensitive nature of the understory, the Panel indicated that management of these lots may be necessary to ensure long-term damage is minimized. In order to address the challenge of increasing the population within this precinct, some members felt that it would be appropriate to develop the civic common between the two wood lots. The majority of members, however, disagreed with this suggestion.

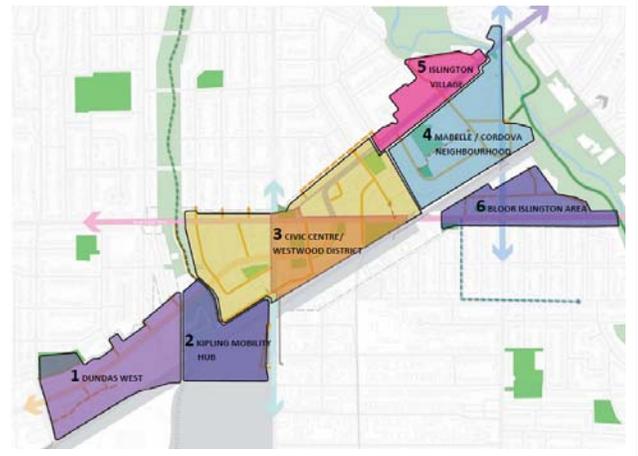
Open Space

Members commented that there is 'no shortage of open space' within the civic precinct, and suggested that some of the open spaces may in fact be too large. Specifically, the proponent and the City were encouraged to ensure that the Albert Campbell Square 'extension' is designed in a way which does not disperse the energy (ie people) that it may otherwise have.

Animation and Vitality

An additional challenge identified by the Panel was in creating urban street edges lined with retail uses. Members suggested a long-term solution to this challenge would come from increased population density and the flexible design of spaces, which will enable the precinct to make gradual shift from a suburban to an urban experience.

Etobicoke Centre Streetscape and Open Space Plan	
Planning Area	Etobicoke Centre
Design Team	Urban Strategies Inc., The MBTW Group, GHD
Application Type	n/a
Review	First
City Staff	Robert Stephens, Urban Design Kelly Dynes Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	None
Vote	n/a



Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Sustainable Design

- Develop an integrated and publicly visible sustainability strategy throughout the study area

Response to Context

- Work with and strengthen existing context of distinctive neighbourhoods within study area
 - determine whether there is a single Etobicoke centre or a number of centres within study area
- Ensure strong linkages with diverse surrounding context
- Extend beyond study boundaries to capture true edges of distinctive neighbourhoods and entry/gateway conditions

Site Plan Design

- Further develop street and streetscape strategy as major connective issue for study area:
 - as a common element that weaves throughout study area
 - with Dundas and Bloor as major connectors tying area together
 - Strengthen/create more north/south connections
 - Explore Auckland Avenue as a potential "greenway" to extend north
 - Site/building entry and address guidelines integrated into strategy
 - High quality and safe pedestrian realm at all underpasses
- Develop a hierarchy of focus, defining large to small scale efforts and priorities for each
- Further develop distinct neighbourhoods within study area, rather than a single distinctive study area
- Break down larger blocks to create finer grain, intimate urban fabric
- Explore potential for greenbelt throughout study area along rail corridor
- Further develop high quality setting for emerging institutions

Landscape Strategy

- See Site Plan Design section of this Summary
- Make landscape a prime integrating element throughout study area
 - further develop streetscape strategy to provide a well-treed, urban forest character

Submission Package

- A well prepared submission package depicting thoughtful creative concepts
- Simplify and clarify drawings

Comments for City Staff

- Support and build community involvement, and engage people in process

Related Commentary

Members were supportive of the proposal and provided a number of positive comments about the direction that the Plan was taking. The biggest challenges identified by the Panel was the size of the study area, and how to make it read as a cohesive unified area. It was suggested that community support and involvement in the Plan formulation would go a long way towards getting 'buy in' and eventual implementation

Character Areas

The proponent was encouraged to place a focus upon quality place-making and use of quality materials within the public realm of each character area. The Panel felt that a 'big move' to unify the character areas was not vital to the success of the Plan, and furthermore, that it was appropriate to treat the character areas differently in terms of urban design treatments.

Streets with transit routes, and areas in close proximity to transit stations were identified for particular attention in terms of enhancing the associated public realm.

Unifying elements

Members were supportive of the proposed unifying elements (eg street furniture and lighting), particularly the tree planting. In refining the Plan, the proponent was encouraged to develop a hierarchy of these elements, outlining the relative importance of each one as it pertains to each character area.

Civic Centre Precinct

In order to act as the hub and focal point of Etobicoke Centre, the Panel emphasized the need to get a strong mix of uses working together in this precinct (retail, institutional, residential and office) as well as a strong pedestrian-scaled focal point. Concern was expressed by some members with respect to the planned right-of-way width; these members felt that the precinct would benefit from a more tighter and discreet configuration.

Spatial Patterns

Members spent some time discussing the block structure within the Centre and comparing it with the block structure of communities just outside the centre (eg those to the south-east and north-west). It was noted that unlike these communities, most blocks within the Centre – particularly those along Dundas – are relatively long. It was further noted that these spatial patterns present a different rhythm of streets and blocks to the 'regular' pedestrian experience of these communities, and suggested that this should be studied to determine how best to address the design and location of gathering/ meeting places within the Centre.

Gateway Features

For each gateway, the proponent was encouraged to develop specific plans which provide guidance on how new buildings should address the street and what other streetscape enhancements should be implemented.

Connectivity

A variety of comments relating to connectivity within and across the Centre were provided as follows:

- The importance of positive pedestrian experiences along the full length of all streets within the Centre was emphasized, with particular attention being provided to improving conditions within the railway underpasses
- Auckland Avenue, north of Dundas Street, was identified as an opportunity to implement recreational uses such as sports fields
- Auckland Avenue and the 30-metre rail corridor setback were both identified as possible opportunities to expand the bicycle trail network
- More north-south connections would be preferable
- Segregated bicycle lanes are appropriate and should be explored as a means of enhancing street interest and vitality.

424 - 460 Adelaide St East	
Planning Area	King-Parliament
Design Team	Kirkor Architects & Planners STLA Design Strategies
Application Type	Rezoning
Review	Second (1 st review Oct. 2009)
City Staff	Myron Boyko, Urban Design Willie MacRae, Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	Sibelle von Knobloch
Vote	<u>Support – 8</u> ; Non-support - 0 Condition: Employ retail at terminus base and explore greater tower setback to north and west



Introduction

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

- How well have the proposal's built form, massing, podia and tower setbacks responded to the physical character of the abutting King-Parliament area context?
- A key component of the project is a proposed landscaped courtyard area at the southeast corner of the property, at the northern terminus of the Ontario Street view corridor. Can the panel provide some recommendations regarding treatment and programming of this space, as well as the built form expression of the view terminus?
- Can the panel provide feedback on the applicant's sustainability approach?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Panel thanks the proponent for the considerable effort and positive steps made to address comments from the 1st Review, and for the comprehensive submission which included clear comparisons between the original and current design.

How well have the proposal's built form, massing, podia and tower setbacks responded to the physical character of the abutting King-Parliament area context?

Built form, massing, podia and tower step backs need further development to fully respond to context. Refer to Built Form and Articulation section in Summary below for further comments.

A key component of the project is a proposed landscaped courtyard area at the southeast corner of the property, at the northern terminus of the Ontario Street view corridor. Can the panel provide some recommendations regarding treatment and programming of this space, as well as the built form expression of the view terminus?

The proposed courtyard area will work better as a public square, with adjacent functions to suit this change. Refer to Site Plan Design and Built Form and Articulation sections in Summary below for further comments.

Can the panel provide feedback on the applicant's sustainability approach?

- The applicant's sustainability approach is a starting point, but much more needs to be done to create a comprehensive strategy that is effective over the life span of the development.
- Build upon initial efforts (e.g.: green roofs, some passive shading) and develop a comprehensive strategy that includes but is not limited to:
 - taking advantage of all possible means of passive design, including a façade design strategy that completely and effectively mitigates solar exposure

Response to Context

- Existing/planned context immediately adjacent to north and west edges of site negatively impact residential units along these edges
 - develop design to address these conditions

Site Plan Design

- Change proposed courtyard at Adelaide and Ontario to an animated/dynamic public square, with retail space along its north and west edges
 - shift amenity to east edge of building
- Develop north side of site to address the following:
 - develop drop off area as a courtyard, and make it less deep and dark
- Develop bike parking design on the west side of site to be safer and more connected to adjacent open space

Pedestrian Realm

- See Site Plan Design above
- The proposed west and north edges are of concern... create a continuous, safe and attractive pedestrian-friendly realm along these edges

Built Form and Articulation

Base Building

- Develop brick podium character to create a simplified and clear modern interpretation of neighbourhood's heritage, not a re-creation of it
- Create a stronger signature expression at terminus façade on north side of public square
- Explore alternatives to proposed height difference between west and east podia
- Along Adelaide shift east edge of west podium west to provide more light and view into raised courtyard between towers

Towers

- Tower heights too similar; vary height more for a distinctive skyline profile
- Follow Tall Building Guidelines for distance between towers
- Reshape/reduce north side and north west corner of east tower, to increase distance from adjacent buildings north of site
- Further develop tower language to provide a clear base/middle/crown parti

- strengthen crown to create a stronger signature (earlier version does this better than current proposal)

Landscape Strategy

- Further develop strategy to create an overall consistently high quality landscape
- Change proposed street corner courtyard landscape from a private setting to a permeable, inviting public realm
 - along south edge use landscape to mitigate busy Adelaide
- Develop west edge of site to be compatible/integrated with adjacent open space

Related Commentary

Members appreciated the opportunity to review this project a second time, and were pleased to see how some of the issues identified during the first review had been studied and addressed. The Panel was satisfied that the scheme had improved throughout this process, and provided the following comments for additional refinement:

How well have the proposal's built form, massing, podia and tower stepbacks responded to the physical character of the abutting King-Parliament area context?

Height differential

Some Members indicated that the proposal might benefit from greater emphasis of tower height differential (e.g. 16 and 20 stories), suggesting that the current heights of 17 and 19 stories were too perhaps similar.

Base building Language

Members were supportive of the material palette (stone, brick etc.) but felt that the base building expression was unsuccessful. The proponent was encouraged to 'tone down' the use of historicist cues, and introduce a more modern interpretation of the built form fabric it is trying to relate to.

Relationship of Towers to Base

Members were uncertain as to why the base building did not have a consistent height across its full length. Members also indicated that the 2.2 metre setback of the tower from the base building was inadequate, given that projecting balconies are included within this setback.

Tower

The proponent was encouraged to give more design attention to the top portion of the tower, as a means of unifying the overall scheme. The Panel felt that the clarity of the proposal was interrupted by the inclusion of an additional unit on floor 8 and 9, where the proposal transitions from the base to the tower. It was suggested that the proposal would benefit significantly from removal of this unit, as it would have the effect of providing greater distinction between the built form elements (base and tower), and would allow more sunlight penetration onto the green roof courtyard, and the laneway to the rear

Some concern was expressed with respect to the location of the western tower, in terms of its proximity to the neighbouring tower further west, as well as to the neighbouring property to the north. The proponent was encouraged to site this tower in a way which was consistent with minimum spacing distances outlined in the Tall Building Guidelines.

A key component of the project is a proposed landscaped courtyard area at the southeast corner of the property, at the northern terminus of the Ontario Street view corridor. Can the panel provide some recommendations regarding treatment and programming of this space, as well as the built form expression of the view terminus?

The key to addressing the first part of this question was whether or not the space would be mostly private, as is implied by the term 'courtyard', or publically accessible, in which case it would act more like a square. In addressing this issue, the proponent indicated that the spirit of the space was intended to feel public.

Given this, Members felt that the current arrangement, with residential uses facing the courtyard with little or no public-private transition, would result in very uncomfortable conditions. The Panel were unanimous in supporting the notion of at-grade retail fronting the square, noting that it would reinforce the public nature of the space, would result in greater animation of the space, and would likely be very successful given its south-facing orientation. Relocating the amenity use to the Ontario Street frontage would have an added benefit of enhancing the transition of uses from this proposal to the residences located further north on that street.

If retail uses fronting the square were not possible, the Panel indicated that the public-private transition should be significantly enhanced through the landscape design.

View Terminus

The Panel was supportive of the way in which open space was being used to frame and emphasize the view terminus. However, noting that similar open spaces were included in developments to the east and west of this one, some Members expressed concern that this portion of Adelaide street was developing as a series of "buildings and gaps" as opposed to a more continuous streetwall.

Members appreciated the approach which was deployed to define the view terminus through developing a massing relationship with neighbouring buildings. However, Members were less supportive of the way in which this termination statement was architecturally expressed. The Panel felt it would be more appropriate to move this expression away from the built form fabric towards something which provided more of a stronger individual statement.

Can the panel provide feedback on the applicant's sustainability approach?

Members were appreciative of the green roof within the proposal. They expressed concern with respect to the quality and liveability of residential spaces along the north and west facades, given their proximity to neighbouring buildings.

Site Plan Design

Members were supportive of the proposed drop-off space located off the rear laneway, indicating that it was an appropriate arrangement and that it would increase animation within the laneway. The proponent was encouraged to provide a demarcated pedestrian zone (eg pavement materials and/or markings) along the south side of the laneway in order to enhance the pedestrian experience there. The proponent was also encouraged to pay close attention to the quality and safety of the drop-off, with Members noting that it is deeply recessed into the northern façade of the building, and is only 1-storey high.

Inconsistencies between the site plan and the landscaping plan were identified in the area along the western edge of the ground floor, in the vicinity of the bicycle parking: the landscaping plan indicates that this area will be gated, while the site plan indicates that it will be open. The Panel indicated a preference for keeping this area open, both for security reasons as well as for increasing porosity into and around the site.

Further to the issue of pedestrian safety, Members highlighted a 'notch' shown on the ground floor plan to the east of the drop-off, and to the rear of the northern-most unit along Ontario Street, and its removal removed from the design.

Landscaping Strategy

Members felt that the landscaping strategy required more work in order to mitigate the busy nature of the proposal's main frontage, Adelaide Street East. In order to provide suggestions as to how this could be undertaken, Members indicated a desire to understand the landscaping context to the western neighbor. In the absence of this information, they suggested that continuous tree planting should be provided along the Adelaide frontage, and that trees should be planted within trenches to ensure sufficient soil volume. This suggestion was qualified with the understanding that the sidewalk dimension in this location was tight, and that ideally, there would be sufficient space both for pedestrians and street trees.