

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 2 – February 21, 2013

The Design Review Panel met on Thursday February 21, 2013, in Committee Room 2, 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

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Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal - Giannone Associates

✓

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

✓

Brian Hollingworth: Transportation Engineer, Director – IBI Group

Alun Lloyd: Transportation Engineer, Principal - BA Group

Joe Lobko: Architect, Principal – DTAH

✓

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

✓

Adam Nicklin: Landscape Architect, Principal - PUBLIC WORK office for urban design

Roland rom Colthoff: Architect, Director – RAW Design

David Sisam: Architect, Principal – Montgomery Sisam Architects

✓

Sibylle von Knobloch: Landscape Architect, Principle - NAK Design

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Confirmation of Minutes

On motion by Joe Lobko, the Design Review Panel confirmed minutes of Meeting 13, Dec. 4 2012

On motion by Jim Melvin, the Design Review Panel confirmed minutes of Meeting 1, Jan 23 2013

Recording Secretary

Hamish Goodwin: Urban Design, City Planning Division

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- i. 8 Eglinton
- ii. 501 Yonge Street
- iii. 25 Richmond Street East
- iv. Tall Building Guidelines

8 Eglinton	
Planning Area	Yonge Eglinton Centre
Design Team	r.varacalli architect; NAK Design
Application Type	Rezoning
Review	3 rd Review (previous review July 2012)
City Staff	James Parakh, Urban Design Tim Burkholder, Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	Sibylle von Knobloch, NAK Design
Vote	<u>Support – 5</u> ; Non-Support - 0



Introduction

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

1. The Official Plan suggest tall buildings be designed of three parts (base, middle, top) carefully integrated into a single whole. Please comment on the exterior expression of the tower(s) in light of the panel's comments from the previous review.
2. Please comment on the revised design of the north tower including issues such as the revised floor plate as well as how the tower meets the street.
3. The Yonge Eglinton Centre Urban Design Guidelines calls for a possible plaza at the north east corner of Yonge and Eglinton. Please comment on the design of this space (volume height and extent of the cantilever) as well as the revised configuration of the subway entrance (re-located from previously being internal to the building).

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

Chairs Summary of Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Sustainability

Too often, issues of sustainability appear as footnotes to a project, or in the case of this project, don't appear at all. Large towers are not easily retrofitted in the future so it is important to integrate appropriate practices for sustainability into them during their design.

- The east elevation of the north tower appears to be almost fully glazed.
- Given that the program behind the wall is for the most-part circulation space, this wall treatment seems unrealistic and doesn't give much confidence with respect to considerations for sustainable design.

Response to Context/Site Plan Design

- The scheme has improved substantially with each submission.
- The density and height of this proposal is appropriate.

- Panel generally supports the idea of bringing the subway entrance out from the tower to give it a clear identity of its own. There was, however, concern about the accessible green roof and its appropriateness at this location – practical concerns about safety would necessitate railings... It was suggested that the subway entrance could be like a glass lantern oriented to bring in west afternoon light.
- The configuration of the plaza was well received. The street furniture was seen as somewhat incidental and a little misplaced in a very active plaza that could and should accommodate bike parking and possibly a Bixi bike station.
- Drawings showing the treatment along Roehampton Avenue were convincing. The balcony planting as shown and the thinness of the north tower contributes to the streetscape.
- Concern was expressed about the potential future development of the Yonge Street frontage to the west of the north tower.
- There were also some concerns about turning radii in the motor court off Roehampton.

Pedestrian Realm

- It is important to have engaging retail tenants at the corner of Yonge and Eglinton, and to ensure the bank is located to the north of the intersection.
- The increased sidewalk width of Yonge Street is a positive initiative.
- It is important to plant the largest caliper trees possible along the three bordering streets.

Built Form and Articulation

- The general massing has improved substantially from earlier schemes.
- Some Panel members felt that the south tower top needed more articulation that needn't be 'a hat' but rather a more subtle expression.
- The north tower achieves this by virtue of the position of the amenity floor.

Submission Package

- Package is very clear and complete with the exception of any documentation regarding sustainable design.

Related Commentary

Members expressed strong support for this project suggesting it has good aspirations for an important City intersection, and is important for urban designers and architects as an attempt to deliver a new tower façade composition. Panel commended the architect for the evolution of this project through the design review process, and provided the following suggestions for consideration during refinement:

Please comment on the exterior expression of the towers in light of the panel's comments from the previous review.

Panel was supportive of the distinction between buildings, and of the proposed density. There was some agreement amongst Members that additional height would be acceptable for the south tower. Additional comments for the south tower included:

- Architecture and articulation is exciting, energetic, inventive, and shows strength and audacity
- Ensure cladding is delivered
- Appreciate subtlety of graphic quality
- Do more to acknowledge that tall building doesn't just end at the sky
- The visible slab edge at the top underlines graphic idea of the shaft
- Don't want to see this line; want top to keep going and finish well

Please comment on the revised design of the north tower including issues such as the revised floor plate as well as how the tower meets the street.

Members were supportive of revisions to the north tower, including the tower top. With a 7-metre wide floor plate, this tower was described as being both bold and astonishing. At the pedestrian level, Panel felt the tower was also convincing. Members were strongly supportive of attempts to bring landscape and artistic elements into the Roehampton elevation (including balcony planting), and encouraged both the applicant and staff to ensure delivery of this concept.

Please comment on the plaza design as well as the revised configuration of the subway entrance.

TTC entrance

Members supported the concept of new subway entrance location within the plaza. Reservations were expressed with the practicality of the concept, being an accessible green roof. The following suggestions were provided for consideration during refinement:

- Consider shifting entrance to west (currently it is east) to allow more light penetration below grade
- Determine if the green roof will actually survive, and respond appropriately
- A glass beacon might be a better solution, and relate better to the ECLRT pavilion language
- Embrace energy and go even further, allow people to climb and interact fully with it

Animation

- Plaza needs animation including through ground floor programming
 - the notion of an active plaza falls apart if it is fronted by a bank
 - ensure the bank is shifted up to north edge
- Consider the "chaotic" effect of retail upon the design (signage, canopies, shade structures etc.)
- Think more about the interaction of cyclists and bicycle parking within the plaza design
 - bicycle parking, including Bixi, should be provided given proximity to transit
 - bicycle usage will grow over time, and have a great impact upon plaza activity
- Plaza seats don't have same energy of building

Comments to Staff

Ensure that shadows cast by redevelopment within the area, including the Build Toronto site, do not fall on to this plaza.

Landscape Design

- The great energy shown in the building expression should be replicated in the landscape plan
 - push design further to ensure success (lighting, material, paving, quality etc.)
- Give further consideration to how the building to the east of the plazas redevelops, and the impact this will have on the plaza definition.

Trees

- Look at options for placement of trees, in consideration of below grade infrastructure
 - Placement should be determined by below-grade conditions which maximize growth and survival, rather than by formal design cues
 - ensure sufficient soil depth for silva cells and trench
- Install large caliper trees to provide an equally great impact

Sustainable Design

- Issues of sustainable design need to be taken seriously
- More refinement is required (e.g. east wall of north building)

501 Yonge Street	
Planning Area	Downtown
Design Team	Architects Alliance
Application Type	Rezoning
Review	1 st Stage (previously reviewed Oct 2012)
City Staff	James Parakh, Urban Design Sarah Henstock, Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	n/a
Vote	Support* – 5; Non-support - 0



* Condition: Support on condition that it comes back for an addition review with Panel concerns addressed prior to rezoning

Introduction

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

1. Please comment on the revised design "parti" of the overall project which now has two towers of differing height. Please comment on the design of the towers and if they should be more distinct from each other.
2. Please comment on the materiality and design of the podium and how it contributes to the character of Yonge Street. Consider the design and animation of the podium and its relationship with all three fronting streets as well as the laneway and proximity to adjacent buildings.
3. Please comment on the design and plans for the ground floor and retail area(s), taking into consideration issues such as sidewalk animation, retail uses and design, setbacks (including space for possible side street cafés), laneway treatments and vehicular drop-off.

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

Summary of Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Response to Context/Site Plan Design

Panel saw much improvement since the last submission. This was particularly evident with the attempt to recognize the transitional nature of the site by substantially reducing the height of the north tower.

- The base condition was much improved although one panel member had reservations about the use of stone. Most members felt the south base treatment needed more work (the proponent said this was a work in progress).

- The treatment of the parking enclosure must on the one hand recognize the scale and rhythm of the heritage buildings to the north but at the same time contribute to the vibrancy of the street (and not take its design cues from the courtyard Marriott to the south).
- The north residential lobby could be given some visual presence on Maitland Street by pulling back the retail slightly to the west.
- Concern was expressed about the proximity of apartment units on levels 4 and 5 to the apartment building to the east.

Pedestrian Realm

- The laneway should have mews-like qualities reflected in the paving materials, lighting, building articulation, and material quality and possibly some artwork. It should have the feeling of a pedestrian passage that occasionally accommodates cars and service vehicles.
- Provide large caliper trees along the sidewalks fronting the three streets.

Built Form and Articulation

- The towers have a clear expression of base, middle and top. A contrast in the expression between the two towers could be further developed.
- Wrap-around balconies of both towers add bulk and should generally be reconsidered, particularly where the two towers come together
- This scheme is a significant and well-designed contribution to Yonge Street (setting an example) and as such should follow the Tall Building Guidelines particularly with respect to the minimum 25 meter distance between towers.
- Some concern was expressed about the exterior expression for floors 4 and 5 under the north tower.

Submission Package

- Package was very comprehensive and clear

Sustainability

- Issues of sustainable design were touched on in the briefing statement but without much follow-through in the presentation of the scheme. A clearer explanation and demonstration of strategies integral with the design needs to be developed.

Related Commentary

Please comment on the revised design "parti" of the overall project which now has two towers of differing height. Please comment on the design of the towers and if they should be more distinct from each other.

Panel was appreciative of the evolution of the scheme, and that some of their previous concerns with respect to height had been addressed. This reduced height (of the northern tower) was noted as being significant, and the relationship of this revised height to the heritage context was described as being much improved. However, significant concerns still remained with respect to the disposition of massing, as it related to the following:

Tower Bulk

Members expressed concern with the bulkiness of the southern tower, and the impact the larger floor plate was having upon the separation distance between the two towers. As a means of alleviating this concern, the proponent was encouraged to:

- Revise the south tower to meet the Tall Building Guideline floor plate requirements;

- Introduce greater articulation and shaping to the tower shaft to improve separation conditions; and
- Rethink continuous wrap-around balconies

Tower Separation

Concerns expressed at the previous review with respect to the 20-metre separation distance between towers on the site, and between the neighbouring building to the east, were reiterated again during this review. To illustrate the compromised separation condition, it was noted that units on the parking/residential levels 4-5 were only 11.61m from this neighbouring property. Members indicated they were unable to support this condition, suggesting it should meet the minimums established within the Tall Building Guidelines.

Tower Design

Panel was appreciative of the differentiation in massing within the base building, and encouraged the proponent to emphasize this distinction further through articulation and expression – both in the base and within the towers (i.e. make them look like different buildings).

Architectural Expression

Members were generally supportive of the architectural expression, but the majority expressed some hesitation that it was a suitable reflection to the traditional Yonge Street character.

One Member felt that the base building expression of the north tower, at the 4th and 5th level, was not successful as a transition element, and encouraged the proponent to rethink how it is expressed, with the objective of increasing exuberance (for example, vertical landscaping, glazing colour). The applicant was also encouraged to re-examine how the tower soffits are expressed, with Members noting that these are a highly visible surface area – and hence, an opportunity - in a building of such height.

Please comment on the materiality and design of the podium and how it contributes to the character of Yonge Street. Consider the design and animation of the podium and its relationship with all three fronting streets as well as the laneway and proximity to adjacent buildings.

On the whole, Members were impressed with improvements made to the base design and expression. There was some suggestion that the use of brick rather than stone might be a more suitable material, particularly for the northern portion, as being more in keeping with the heritage character there.

The majority of Members felt that the attempt to screen the above-grade parking (including minimizing light trespass) was improved over the first version. Suggestions to consider during refinement related to materiality (see comments above), and the use of other mediums – such as vine planting - to soften the building edge.

One Member expressed reservation with the parking/base building expression, suggesting that it was bland, and not reflective of the Yonge Street character.

Please comment on the design and plans for the ground floor and retail area(s), taking into consideration issues such as sidewalk animation, retail uses and design, setbacks (including space for possible side street cafés), laneway treatments and vehicular drop-off.

Members were strongly supportive of the ground plane of the proposal, suggesting that it would be a very successful combination of landscape and program. Panel applauded the applicant for their commitment to animate the laneway, and provided a variety of suggestions to help further improve its quality and character:

- Animation begs need for increased material quality
- Textured concrete at a pedestrian scale would work well
- Convey sense of gritty pedestrian character that Yonge Street used to have

- Give lobby space and lay-by definition, through paving, in laneway
- Engage an artist and landscape architect as part of team to work on laneway
- Look at revitalization of laneways in Melbourne for successful precedents
- Make it a really friendly character

North Lobby

The suggestion was made to give the north residential lobby some presence along Maitland Street, to aid with safety and to provide it with a municipal address on a street (currently it is accessed solely from the laneway).

Comments to Staff

Staff were reminded about the importance of precedent, with Members cautioning that the industry notices when a project that does not meet the guidelines is supported. Following this, Members again encouraged staff to reinforce the tall building guidelines (e.g. separation distance) as "minimums".

25 Richmond Street East	
Planning Area	Downtown
Design Team	Architects Alliance
Application Type	Pre-application Consultation
Review	First
City Staff	James Parakh, Urban Design Angela Stea, Community Planning Paul Maka, HPS
Conflict of Interest	n/a
Vote	<u>Redesign – 6</u> ; Refine - 0



Introduction

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

1. Please comment on the design of the base and the tower step back in the context of the site's sensitive heritage streetscape.
2. Please comment how the proposal complies with the *Downtown Tall Buildings Vision and Performance Standards Design Guidelines*, including setbacks and floor plate size.
3. The Official Plan suggests tall buildings be designed in three parts (base, middle, top) carefully integrated into a single whole. Please comment on the design and the integration of these three parts as a coherent composition.

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

Chairs Summary of Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Response to Context / Site Plan Design

- The project is too overwhelming for the site both in terms of built form and height.
- Preservation of the heritage structure and insertion of new lower-scale infill "corten" buildings with modernist structures above is a positive point of departure.

Pedestrian Realm

- Due to the preliminary nature of the submission there was little information on the ground level pedestrian realm.
- The 2-tower scheme appeared to provide more amenity at ground level than the 1-tower scheme, including a clearer north-south pedestrian passage through the site.
- The 2-tower scheme (excepting the excessive height) was generally preferred

Built Form and Articulation

- The proposal contradicts the Downtown Tall Building Guidelines in a number of ways:
 - the proposed height - for both schemes – is excessive and should be more reflective of the Downtown heights vision (i.e. 20 to 35-storeys).
 - The built form of the single tower scheme was variously cited as being “too bulky”, “too big”, “too massive” and “overwhelming”.
 - the single tower scheme comprises sky view
 - the taller building has inadequate setbacks from all three streets.

Heritage

- Panel strongly supports Heritage Staff's position on preserving whole buildings rather than just facades.
- However, Panel feels that building either above or beside the heritage building would be acceptable if handled in an appropriate way. Building above the heritage building provides more flexibility for the overall site development.

Submission Package

- The submission package was clear and revealed the design process and evolution which members of the Panel appreciated.

Sustainability

- The project was in a very preliminary (massing) stage and sustainable design issues were not discussed.

Related Commentary

Panel was appreciative of the project coming at the early conceptual stage of design, and the inclusion of an alternative (2-tower) massing scheme within the briefing package. They were appreciative of some elements of the 1-tower scheme, but felt that it was too tall and contained too much massing. Members were interested in the alternative 2-tower scheme, as it appeared to alleviate some of their concerns with the 1-tower scheme (for example, impact on the public realm, and sky view). However, their fundamental concerns with height and density remained and Members did not support either options for this reason.

Please comment on the design of the base and the tower step back in the context of the site's sensitive heritage streetscape.

Members felt the modern expression of the base worked well against the heritage context, particularly the first 4-storeys. However, with minimal tower step back from the base - on Lombard as well as Richmond - they felt the heritage properties were overwhelmed and compromised by the proposal (they did not feel "autonomous").

Please comment on how well the proposal complies with the *Downtown Tall Buildings Vision and Performance Standards Design Guidelines*, including setbacks and floor plate size.

Members noted that one of the objectives of the Downtown Tall Building Study is to develop buildings in a manner which sensitively fits into their context and makes a positive contribution to the streets and public realm surrounding them. They felt that while the proposal contained some positive public realm components (heritage restoration, through block connections), that on the balance, it was not making a positive impact. The proposal was described variously as being overly bulky, massive, containing too much density and massing, being too compromised, and "over the top".

Height

Members expressed strong support for the Downtown height vision which was recently endorsed by City Council, and suggested that this proposal should comply with it. They were cognizant that a 50-storey tower in this location would set a precedent for others to follow, and felt that the proposed

height – being nearly twice as high as the Downtown vision – was not suitable or appropriate. One Member also noted that the proposed height was similar to the first project reviewed during this session (58 storeys at Yonge and Eglinton), and that this project was in a location where these heights were much more appropriate (the intersection of higher-order transit).

The Official Plan suggests tall buildings be designed in three parts (base, middle, top) carefully integrated into a single whole. Please comment on the design and the integration of these three parts as a coherent composition.

Members were not supportive of the disposition of massing. In addition to comments noted above relating to bulk and floor plate size, they also noted the contradiction in terms within the notion of a 20-storey base element, and suggested that the base and tower being in the same plane was unsuitable.

Response to Context and Heritage

Noting the considerable quality and character of the existing heritage fabric, Members identified the opportunity with this proposal to contribute an equally remarkable "heritage" building for the future. They suggested the quality and character of the existing heritage buildings should inform the design response of the new proposal, and that while this was partly evident in the base expression, the overall design was too massive and overwhelming in scale, character and form - both for the historic structure on site and the one adjacent to it

Lombard Street

Members were quite excited by the character of Lombard Street, which they felt extended far beyond the historic listed properties to include the 1960's Dickinson-style office building and a 1990's condominium. They felt the approach to address this street within the 2-tower scheme (the first 10-storeys, at least) was significantly more successful in contributing to this broader character of Lombard Street than the 1-tower scheme.

Heritage building at Lombard & Victoria:

One Member was of the impression that this property has site specific zoning which permits greater density on it. The applicant and staff were encouraged to examine this further, noting that it could have significant implications for the proposed scheme.

Comments to Staff

Panel was comfortable with the cantilevered building mass over the heritage structure in the 2-tower scheme as a means of preserving historic fabric in-situ, and as a creative way of dealing with issues of height and density. They noted that this approach was not "facadism", that it provides the heritage structure with "breathing room", and that it would contribute to the broader historic character of Lombard street. Conversely, they felt that the 1-tower scheme was compromised in the absence of this cantilevered approach, and encouraged staff to consider more flexibility in way that new and old can work together to get a better disposition of built form.

Site Plan Design

- Members appreciated the difficulty of servicing the site and providing vehicular access
- Members were also appreciative of the inclusion of retail
- They encouraged the City and the applicant to develop the laneway in a pedestrian-first manner

Project 4: Tall Building Guidelines Discussion

Panel received a brief summary of updates made since the previous presentation on this topic (December 2012). Members responded with mostly positive comments, particularly about the layout, graphics, and changes that had been made to address previous comments. Beyond general comments, they focused on two issues for further study and examination. These comments are summarized below:

General

- Wonderfully evolved and clear
- Graphically very good, really well illustrated
- Good attempt to address cluster effect
- A straight-forward document that makes everyone's job easier by providing clarity
- More direction on how to address large commercial floor plates would be helpful

Location of Tall Buildings

- The issue of where tall buildings should be located is a grey zone
- For example, King-Parliament: there is a clear policy about height, yet it seems to be a "free-for-all"
- It is important to reiterate height regime across the City

Open Space

- It is fairly simple to secure open space on large suburban sites
- It is much more difficult in the Downtown, which is unfortunate given the clear capacity issue
- The guidelines are only conceptual with respect to open space provision
- There is a need to determine open space requirements for each proposal
 - this should be a function of height and density
- There is also a need for tools to secure an appropriate response, through the provision of high-quality publically accessible open space