

Minutes of the Design Review Panel Meeting 13 – September 24, 2008

The Design Review Panel met on Wednesday, September 24, 2008 in Committee Room 2, City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, at 12:50 p.m.

Members of the Design Review Panel

***Meeting
Regrets***

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

Daniel Leeming (Vice Chair): Planner, Partner - The Planning Partnership

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

Shirley Blumberg: Architect, Principal - KPMB

✓

Paul Ferris: Landscape Architect, Principal - Ferris Associates

✓

Ralph Giannone: Architect, Principal - Giannone Associates

Peter Halsall: Engineer, President - Halsall Associates

Michael Leckman: Architect, Principal - Diamond and Schmitt

David Pontarini: Architect, Principal - Hariri Pontarini

✓

Janet Rosenberg: Landscape Architect, Principal - Janet Rosenberg Associates

✓

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

Sol Wassermuhl: Architect, President - Page and Steele

Confirmation of Minutes

On motion by Ralph Giannone, the Design Review Panel confirmed the Minutes of their previous meeting, which was held on July 24, 2008.

Recording Secretary

Hamish Goodwin: Urban Designer – City Planning Division

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[Project 1](#) [251 - 255 King Street West, King-Parliament Pilot Area](#)

Project 1

King-Parliament Pilot Area	
Address	251 - 255 King Street West
Use	residential
Application Status	Rezoning and site plan application
Designer	Prishram Jain, TACT Design Inc.
Owner	Rams Head Development Inc.
Review	First
City Staff	James Parakh, Urban Design; Michael Hynes, Community Planning; Sherry Pedersen, Heritage Preservation Services

Conflict of Interest: Eric Turcotte

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Evaluation: Refine – 1; Redesign - 5

Introduction

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

- How does the proposed built form relate to the existing and approved buildings in the area?
- How well is the heritage building integrated within the new proposal?
- How well does the overall proposal respond to its public realm including views, vistas and frontages particularly at street level)?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

Q 1 - How does the proposed built form relate to the existing and approved buildings in the area?

The panel recommends that further design work is needed to improve the relationship of the proposed built form relative to existing and approved context, and provides the following comments:

- Develop design to address:
 - height, setbacks and datum lines of existing context
 - street corner environment, through changes to massing and setback
 - sun/shadow conditions (angular plane as acknowledged by building east of site)
- Develop animation/articulation of south and east façade, including:
 - setback of façade to allow introduction of windows

Q2 - How well is the heritage building integrated within the new proposal?

The panel recommends that further design work is needed to improve the integration of the heritage building within the new proposal, and provides the following comments:

- Develop clearer articulation of new construction from the existing heritage building, including:

- setback of new construction from plane of existing heritage building
- create a material difference between new and heritage, to provide greater contrast
- Maintain the spirit of the original heritage building within the replicated version
- Reconsider the proposed cut-outs at north-west and south-west corners
- Enhance the balance of new podium façade relative to heritage building, including:
 - lowering height of podium to improve street proportions and relationship to adjacent buildings
 - reducing width of new façade flanking both sides of heritage building
 - making reveal less solid and dark
 - carrying scale, proportions and articulation of heritage façade into new façade

Q3 - How well does the overall proposal respond to its public realm including views, vistas and frontages particularly at street level?

The panel recommends that further design work is needed to improve response to the public realm, and provides the following comments:

- Develop design to providing maximum sunlight at street level through attention to:
 - building shape and height
- Develop the degree of building transparency at street level, including:
 - maintaining existing conditions within the heritage building
 - maximize transparency within new construction

Related Commentary

The Panel was appreciative of the complexities of this corner development site, noting that it’s location along a north-south street – where the location of taller buildings generally results in less shadowing concerns - was balanced by its frontage along an east-west street – where the shadowing effect of taller buildings can be more problematic. Additional challenges with the site come from it’s need to relate to its setting within the King-Parliament neighbourhood, which is an area that the Panel described as both gracious and successful in terms of its built form. Panelists generally felt that the proposal had the potential to meet this challenge, however they also felt that it needed to respond better to a variety of conditions in order to do it successfully. These conditions were as follows:

- **Access to Sunlight**

Acknowledging the attempt of the building to the immediate east of the site to address the angular plane requirements of the zoning by-law which allow for access to sunlight on King Street East, the Panel was unsure as to why a similar attempt was not being made with this proposal. Subsequently, the Panel suggested that the proponent should either give more regard to this angular plane in the proposal’s built form, or provide further justification as to why the proposed height is appropriate for this location.

- **Building Form and Scale**

The Panel felt that the building was overly bulky, to the degree that its form detracted from its ability to relate to the existing and approved buildings in the area. To illustrating this, Panelists drew attention to “unresponsive” portions of the proposal such as the east façade, which contains very few windows, and the southern façade, which does not appear to be designed in a way that maximizes its prominent southern exposure. The Proponent was therefore encouraged to examine ways of increasing the life and animation of these facades, either through the use of additional glazing or introduction of additional balconies. The also Panel suggested that the intrusion of balconies into the setback portion of the building at the northern façade (King Street East) did not seem to relate as well with established setbacks in the area.

The Panel felt that the heritage building was significant for contextual reasons, as opposed to an architectural landmark, and suggested that its integration into the new construction was a suitable method for its retention. The Panel indicated, however, that the approach would be more successful if the contrast between the old and new buildings was enhanced further. Suggestions for how this could be done were as follows:

- Re-examine the almost equal balance in height between the heritage building and the levels above it with a view to increasing the visual contrast between these two elements, particularly along the King Street East elevation
- Create greater contrast by increasing the reveal separating the two portions; and/or by setting the new building back from the plane of the heritage building
- Maintain the integrity of the existing openings in the heritage building rather than implementing the proposed “cut-outs”
- Introduce a greater level of transparency in the new building, particularly at-grade
- introduce a greater contrast of materials between the two forms

In commenting on the proposals contribution to the public realm, the Panel again suggested that increasing access to sunlight at the pedestrian level would help serve to create a more successful street-related environment.

Other opportunities for improving the pedestrian level of the proposal were also identified, with the general emphasis of these being upon the interaction of the heritage building with the new construction. Specific suggestions as to how this interaction could be enhanced included:

- reconsidering the cut-outs of the heritage building, similar to the reason outlined above, but also in order to create a more successful corner condition
- introducing more glazing to the lower level of the new building; and
- applying the vertical and horizontal fenestration pattern of the heritage building into the new building.