

High Park Condo	
Address	1844-1854 Bloor St W; 35 & 37 Pacific Ave, & 6-14 Oakmount Rd
Design Team	Diamond and Schmitt Architects LandArtDesign Landscape Architects
Application Type	OPA & Rezoning
Review	1 st review
City Staff	Emilia Floro, Urban Design Philip Carvalino, Community Planning
Conflict of Interest	Michael Leckman
Vote	Refine – 6; Redesign – 0; Abstain - 1 Condition: give greater consideration to the Mid-Rise Buildings Study; and to the quality and scale of the public realm



Introduction

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

1. Does the proposal represent an appropriate building massing and environmental design solution with regard to the built form context and the natural environment in this significant location across from High Park?
2. Does the proposal to incorporate commercial at grade, the proposed streetscape design and the landscape strategy provide for a high quality built environment within this context?

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

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement

The Panel states the importance of the site with its prime Bloor Street address, High Park frontage and proximity to two subway stations. As such, the project needs to set a positive precedent for this area – in transition with other development opportunities. This project will set the tone for future developments.

Q1. Does the proposal represent an appropriate building massing and environmental design solution with regard to the built form context and the natural environment in this significant location across from High Park?

Panel appreciated the proponent's efforts to respond to the City's Mid-Rise Performance Standards. Despite these efforts, Panel expressed concerns about the bulk of the overall massing and how it responded to its context. Further design development and massing refinements should address:

- the height of the Bloor Street façade in relation to the Mid-Rise Building Performance Standards. A height datum of seven storeys was suggested as being more appropriate;
- the base townhouses on the East and West Façades should more appropriately respond to the fine grained fabric and height of the existing buildings across. A larger setback above the townhouses should also be considered;

- the overall height, massing, articulation and ground floor treatment of the North Facades should be reconsidered. Height reduction, introduction of building setbacks and alternative building form exploration such as point tower to redistribute the density were suggested. The Panel also expressed concern that building did not properly take the TTC Park into consideration;
- the appropriateness of the overhanging building volumes should be reconsidered. The proponent should consider pulling the volumes back instead of overhanging them.

Q2. Does the proposal to incorporate commercial at grade, the proposed streetscape design and the landscape strategy provide for a high quality built environment within this context?

The Panel responded positively to the integration of grade related retail as well as the incorporation of a courtyard fronting and opening onto Bloor Street. Panel members noted that the courtyard has the potential to become a destination, however its function, size, relationship to adjacent building uses and design quality should be further developed to ensure its success. Concerns were raised about the nature and type of retail. Smaller fine grained “Bloor West” retail typology was preferred over a single large retail unit.

The Panel emphasized the importance Streetscaping. The streetscaping needs to be exemplary, with the qualities of a grand promenade. Examples of Paris and New York, buildings along Central Park, were cited as sought-after precedents. The Panel requested that a more generous and high-quality landscape setback be provided and that further design development done to ensure a holistic approach to the streetscape, park and building base/ground floor. To ensure the healthy growth of trees, it was further requested that the underground parking not extend beyond the building face.

Finally, concerns were raised with regard to the appropriateness of choosing a planting scheme based on the High Park flora (dogwood, Oak tree) as the two conditions/context are different and that specific environmental conditions around the building may not be best suited to ensure proper growth conditions.

Site Plan Design

- The Panel requested that further exploration be done better to integrate loading facilities which are currently fronting the TTC Park.

Sustainable Design

- The Panel praised the proponent’s commitment to pursuing Tier 2 of the City of Toronto Green Building Standard.
- Explore practical options to integrate the Water Rill within the sustainability strategy

Submission Package

- The Panel commends the proponent for the quality and level of details provided in its submission package and presentation. Comments were raised regarding differences between materials included in the package and material presented.

Comments for City Staff:

- The Panel requested that when an Avenue Segment Study is available, a copy be provided to help properly assess the project.

Related Commentary

- The project will be a great asset considering its location
- The project is working hard to accommodate many issues
- Interesting intensification

- Project will be the first of many, therefore important to get it right.

Q1. Does the proposal represent an appropriate building massing and environmental design solution with regard to the built form context and the natural environment in this significant location across from High Park?

- Moves are typologically interesting, especially the volumes and the breaking down of space
- The building may be trying too hard to fill in the allowable envelope; the east and west side slabs should perhaps be cut back more
- Complying with stepbacks brings the height down a little
- The east and west wings fronting onto Bloor should follow a 45 degree stepback
- Also question impact of building upon open space to north of site
- Perhaps a point tower would be better way of deploying massing
- Transition to residential neighbourhood has to be addressed carefully
- Concern for the scale of the townhouses on the east and west sides
- They need to create a more residential feel to these streets
- On Oakmount Rd, townhouse scale works against relationship to houses across the street
- 4-storey expression is perhaps too much
- Along Pacific Ave. the scale transition is not made
- more care must be given to the study of the streets and built form relations (one to the other)
- Project must fit into the neighbourhood and consider neighbourhood transition

Q2. Does the proposal to incorporate commercial at grade, the proposed streetscape design and the landscape strategy provide for a high quality built environment within this context?

Commercial at Grade

- Large single retail food store may be operationally challenging given site constraints, including parking
- Smaller stores would likely find more success, and are preferable to single larger store
- 3-sided glass will be difficult to address successfully with respect to animation
- Screened windows (painted, papered-over, backed by shelving) are not appropriate
- Need for a higher level of architecture at the retail level; should reflect a higher level of complexity as seen behind it
- Retail perhaps needs to be rethought

Streetscape Design

- Sidewalks should be more generous:
 - o no overhangs
 - o no parking underneath (parking should follow the building face)
 - o The curb to building-face dimension should be wider

Landscape Strategy (including courtyard)

- Bloor St elevation present opportunity for a grand walking space Like development of public realm in private space
- Great idea to "extend" High Park, but uncertainty about success of transporting plants into an urban condition
- Courtyard presents a fantastic opportunity for spill out space
- Currently the main function looks to be about residential movement (point of entry and exit)
- Without more width it will likely always function strictly as a residential movement space
- Think more about this programmatic function, as well as dimensions and materials
- Enhanced materials would enliven potential of the space; make it more successful
- Retail may also benefit from grater articulation of canopies

Sustainable Design

- Tier 2, Green roof , other roof spaces, and rainwater harvesting are commendable
- Some other green efforts are suggested but not clearly delivered