

City of Hamilton

Design Review Panel

Meeting Summary – 33 & 35 Hess Street South, Hamilton

The Design Review Panel met virtually at 1:30pm on Thursday September 10th, 2026, via WebEX.

Development Proposal	Type of Application	Applicant/ Agent	City Staff Planner
Mixed-Use Multiple Commercial Development 33 & 35 Hess Street South	Site Plan Application	Owner: 1000156564 Ontario Inc. Agent and Presentation: A.J. Clarke & Associates Ltd.	Erik Heinbecker, Planner 2

Panel Members Present:

- Jennifer Mallard, Chair
- Sharon Mittman
- Olga Pushkar
- Eric Lucic
- Shadi Adab
- Jennifer Sisson

Regrets:

- Dennis Lago
- Graham Taylor
- Tyler Walker

Declarations: None

Staff Present:

- Jana Kelemen, Manager Heritage & Urban Design
- Michael Votruba, Program Lead Urban Design
- Edward Winter, Planner 1-Urban Design
- Erik Heinbecker, Planner 2

Others Present:

- Ryan Ferrari, A.J. Clarke
- Vivian Zhang, Z01 Architects
- Derek Leung, Z01 Architects
- Bonnie Chan, Z01 Architects
- Megan Hobson, Hobson Built Heritage

Summary of Comments: 33 & 35 Hess Street South

Note: The Design Review Panel is strictly an advisory body and makes recommendations to Planning Division staff. These comments should be reviewed in conjunction with all comments received by commenting agencies and should be discussed with Planning Division staff prior to resubmission.

Key Discussion Topics suggested to the Panel by Planning Staff:

- How does the proposal engage with both Hess Street and George Street and provide a connection with the Hess Village pedestrian experience.
- How does the building massing, ground floor layout and materials selections fit the built environment of Hess Village.
- How well does the proposed design work with the Heritage character of Hess Village?
- How well does the landscape plan address the highly pedestrian nature of Hess Village and support pedestrian circulation on both Hess and George Streets?
- What is the relationship of the proposal with the height, massing and scale of nearby buildings (planned and constructed)?

Panel Comments and Recommendations:

Overview and Response to Context

- Panel members had support for the overall height of the proposed massing – indicating it was an appropriate transition in height from the conditionally approved development on the western portion of the [city] block.
- Panel members had support for the proposed uses of the hotel and restaurant – and saw them as a natural fit for the area.
- Panel members established the subject site as a prominent fixture in Hess Village and important to the vitality of Hess Village -- being at the southeast corner of the Hess Village arches anchoring the activity on the street.

Built Form and Character

- Panel members called for the materiality of the building be used to achieve a visual cue to a step-back that references the predominant height of Hess Village (4-storeys max.) in lieu of a physical step back which is not possible due to the small site dimensions.

- Panel members felt the faceted or rounded corner window feature was not relevant to the Hess Village location and a lost opportunity in the overall design of the building. Panel members expressed the action on the street and patios was arguably more important than a design feature on any single building and design efforts are better spent incorporating design that felt cohesive to the area rather than creating an oddity on the street with a visual connection that only makes sense on the ground floor.
- Relating to the glazed corner, panel members also offered that less was more, and could be more appropriate to the location.
- Panel members wanted to see more heritage references in the materiality and in the detailing of the exterior.

Site Layout and Circulation

- Panel members felt the retaining wall was acting more of an obstacle to connection with the street and called for a re-imagined strategy for the patio that decreased the difference in height and need for the retaining wall. Panel member also felt the material and detailing of the retaining wall was important to get correct – whether or not it was referencing heritage features.

Streetscape, the Pedestrian Realm & Landscape Strategy

- Panel member noted the challenges in the change in grade across two sides of the property but also noted it was crucial to arrive at a design that did not feel restrictive to the pedestrian experience on Hess Street and George Street.
- Panel members commented on the blank wall that would be highly visible on approach from the east – and offered that this wall made an excellent opportunity to include public art or a mural.
- Panel members offered support for the street trees and offered encouragement to include more landscaping where possible.
- Panel members noted the exterior building material choices should also support a continuous street wall.

Summary

The panel thanked the applicant team for a presentation and offered support for development at the site and offered comments and suggestions that could improve the proposed development in terms of design, function and fit within the existing community.

- Panel supported no physical step back [at the 4th storey] but called for the material references and detailing to establish the street wall along Hess Street.

- The panel supported the lack of parking given the existing garage owned by the applicant within 300m per City of Hamilton regulations.
- The panel saw the success of the proposed development linked to the choice of materials and the material detailing.
- The panel offered that the use of stone on the lower levels with brick above signalled a more prominent and public building which was appropriate as a hotel and restaurant.
- The panel noted the importance of getting the proportions correct in the design of the building was very important for this corner building, noting that a building base, middle and top elements should be achieved, and that the cornice location and detailing was important to be integrated into the overall massing and provided a visual reference and connection to the built environment of the area.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm