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RIGHT TRACK**
Guide Will Shape
Design of TO's Transit
Infrastructure

■ CAN MODULAR CONSTRUCTION BECOME A MODEL FOR RAPID DELIVERY OF LONG-TERM CARE IN TORONTO?

MODULAR ON THE RISE

Matt Durnan

A shift in thinking about building forms in long-term care and supportive housing could not only expedite the delivery of these much-needed facilities, but could also help to improve the overall health and well-being of the people who live in them.

In 2020, **Montgomery Sisam Architects (MSA)** completed phase one of a modular supportive housing development, between its builds at 11 Macey Avenue and 321 Dovercourt Road, adding 100 new housing units to the city's inventory of supportive housing.

Phase two of the project is ongoing and will consist of modular supportive and seniors' housing developments comprising a total of 398 new self-contained units across five distinct sites in the city of Toronto: at 175 Cummer Avenue, at 540 Cedarvale Avenue, at 7 Glamorgan Avenue, at 4626 Kingston Road and at

150 Dunn Avenue.

"These are rapid delivery supportive housing [developments] that are [designed] to cater to a population of people that are experiencing homelessness, that are in the shelter system and looking for permanent homes," Montgomery Sisam director and principal **Daniel Ling** told *NRU*.

Currently, the Toronto-based architectural practice is also venturing into modular builds for long-term care homes, and although MSA representatives were unable to speak to the specifics of their current projects, industry experts advise that modular housing forms are at an important juncture and present

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Map identifying the locations of modular supportive housing developments that will add close to 500 new housing units to the City of Toronto's supportive housing inventory. Modular construction can deliver housing projects more quickly, more efficiently and more cost-effectively than many traditional construction technologies. Phase one of the City's modular supportive housing program was completed in early 2021, while phase two is under various stages of construction.

SOURCE: MONTGOMERY SISAM ARCHITECTS



GETTING ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Matt Durnan

Increased focus on transit-oriented communities, coupled with the City of Toronto's expanding rapid transit system has given city planners and transit experts the opportunity to take a closer look at best practices when it comes to designing transit infrastructure through the development of the city's first Transit Design Guide.

At its April 27 meeting, City of Toronto planning and housing committee received

an information report on the current status of the guide, with senior staff members updating the committee on how far developed it is to date, how it is to be used and outlining its core functions.

The Transit Design Guide is a living document that has been in the works for nearly two years and has so far set out design guidelines for bus terminals, ancillary structures (traction power substations, emergency exit buildings

and vent structures), elevated guideways, elevated stations and portals and retaining walls.

Elements of the guide that will be covered in the next phase of its development include design guidelines for on-street bus and light rail transit stops, passenger pick-up and drop-off facilities, maintenance and storage facilities and transit-oriented development integration.

"The guide is being developed now to articulate how the city's planning policies, design guidelines, regulations and standards should be applied to transit infrastructure," City of Toronto transportation planning senior project manager **Hans Riecko** told NRU in an email.

"In many cases, staff have been applying the principles

articulated in the guide as they were being developed to their ongoing review of transit project designs. The design

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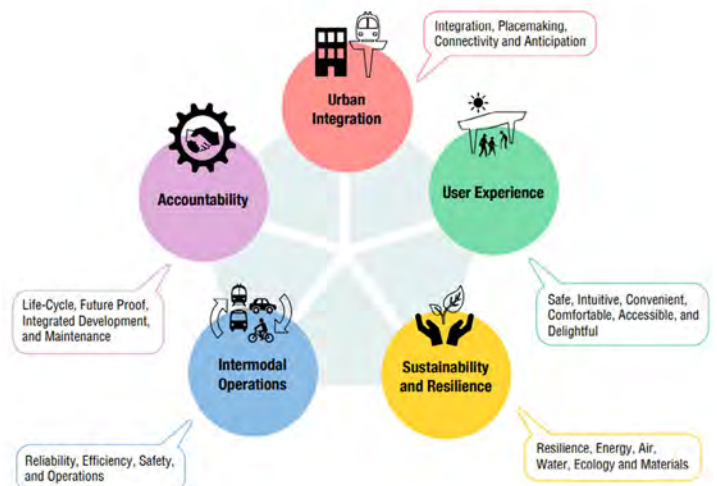


Below left: Cover of the City of Toronto's Transit Design Guide. The guide sets out guiding principles and best practices when it comes to designing the city's transit infrastructure. Senior city staff members provided an update on the guide and its future during a planning and housing committee meeting on April 27.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

Below: Infographic showing the five design principles that were developed to inform the content of the City of Toronto's Transit Design Guide. To ensure broad consistency and applicability with key stakeholders, these principles were developed in collaboration with multidisciplinary professional staff from various city divisions involved in the delivery of transit projects.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO



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issues encountered on various transit projects have helped to inform the development of many guidelines.”

The audience for this guide is split primarily among two groups: City of Toronto staff and design professionals engaged in the design and delivery of transit infrastructure. The guide’s intent is to clarify how the city’s planning policies, standards and guidelines should be applied to transit infrastructure, which Riekkö says “is inherently unique and complex compared to many other forms of development”.

A core team has been established to create the guide, headed up by the City of Toronto planning department along with a consultant team from **Access Planning** and **Perkins&Will**, who have engaged with various city divisions including **Metrolinx**, the **TTC**, **CreateTO**, economic development and culture division, engineering and construction services and transportation services.

“The design team at Metrolinx worked with stakeholders to develop design requirements and standards to support a consistent approach to transit design,” Metrolinx communications coordinator **Fannie Sunshine** told *NRU*.

“As a regional transit provider with customers who travel through many municipalities, bringing as much consistency as possible [to transit infrastructure design] helps all customers navigate the transit network in the region. The City of Toronto used the information Metrolinx provided to inform their work and further support [design consistency]” Sunshine said.

Work is ongoing on the Metrolinx Ontario Line, a 15-stop subway line designed to connect all 15 planned stations along its 15.6 km route.

At planning & housing committee’s April 27 meeting, ward 14 Toronto-Danforth councillor **Paula Fletcher** raised questions about how the guide would play into the Ontario Line work.

“I know you’ve got guidelines for different features,

particularly the Ontario Line, but they’re going to be out doing the work long before the guideline has been established, so I’m just wondering how that’s going to work for us,” Fletcher said during the meeting.

“They’ve already got tenders for the wall design, they’re going to tender for all these different things, stations will be tendered...and my second question is, what have they [Metrolinx] agreed to do vis-à-vis our thoughts on these things because as we know, they do whatever they want.”

City of Toronto director of transit and transportation planning **James Perttula** explained in response that while the guide is not a hard and fast set of rules, Metrolinx has been amenable to the principles that have been set out.

“Part of what we’re talking about is not specific standards, but design principles to shape a response in the particular place,” Perttula said.

“We’re finding on many things that Metrolinx is quite

responsive to the ideas that we’re raising.”

That same line of thinking from Perttula was explained by Riekkö in his email to *NRU*, speaking to the desire for the guide to be a living document that will evolve and grow over time.

“The transit design guide will remain as a guideline, building on the foundation of related official plan policies,” said Riekkö.

“The intention of the guide being a ‘living document’ is that it will continue to be added to and updated over time. Staff engaged in transit work will continue to use the guide as a resource and we will continue to document and share lessons learned and best practices and update the guide as needed.”

So, what are some actual examples of the principles outlined by the guide in its current form? The guide goes to great lengths within each subsection (ancillary structures, bus terminals, elevated guideways, etc.)

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Photo of the Highway 407 transit terminal, used as an example of the vision that is set out within the City of Toronto’s Transit Design Guide. The guide states that sites like this should be designed not only for efficient movement and to encourage transit use, but to integrate into the existing and planned context of a site, provide a high-quality experience for pedestrians and other users, and ultimately, to help build more complete and sustainable communities.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

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to provide specific design guidance and best practices.

Five design principles that shape the guide are woven into each subsection, with objectives clearly laid out.

Looking specifically at bus terminals for example, the design guidance itself is broken down into five design principles: urban integration, user experience, resiliency and sustainability, intermodal operations and finally, accountability.

In reference to design principles for bus terminals, the guide states, “Bus terminals serve an important connectivity

and exchange function within the larger transit system. As land intensive facilities, they should integrate with the existing and planned urban context and take advantage of the physical infrastructure to create a sense of place within the public realm.”

Under the urban integration design principle, guidelines include maximizing opportunities for continuous active street frontages and avoiding blank walls or fences along public streets, as well as minimizing the street frontage of the bus terminal itself and its operational functions while

maintaining access to the site for pedestrians and bus terminal users.

User experience highlights design principles such as ensuring that waiting areas are located in highly visible and well-lit areas, providing clear sightlines to transfers to other services and modes, as well as minimizing the walking distance between different bus platforms and between rapid transit and the bus terminal.

Currently, the nearly 100-page guide contains dozens upon dozens of design principles to establish the public realm framework for Toronto’s transit system, with work on the guide expected to continue for the next several years.

“Prior to the development of this guide, there often wasn’t much directly applicable

guidance to address the unique nature of transit infrastructure,” said Riekkö.

“With the significant investment in transit infrastructure now occurring, it is essential that it is designed in a way that integrates well into the community, and interfaces appropriately with adjacent development and the public realm.” 🌱

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