



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #38 Wednesday, October 14th, 2009

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
Paul Bedford
Renee Daoust
Siamak Hariri
Janet Rosenberg
Brigitte Shim
Greg Smallenberg
Betsy Williamson

Regrets:

George Baird
Peter Clewes
Anne McIlroy

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Panel, noting that there is only one agenda item on the day's agenda.

REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN

Christopher Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto's Vice President for Planning and Design, provided a summary of project progress.

Gardiner Expressway Environmental Assessment

- Planning for the Ideas Competition is underway.

Queens Quay Environmental Assessment

- The Queens Quay Environmental Assessment received strong support from Council (32 to 1) on October 1st, 2009. The EA addressed all major stakeholders concerns and has been submitted to the Ministry of the Environment. Waterfront Toronto is hoping to start construction next year.

Water's Edge Promenade

- As per the comments heard from the Panel at the site tour of the September, 2009 Design Review Panel meeting, Waterfront Toronto has commissioned another paving option for the Water's Edge Promenade which is now being priced.

West Don Lands Public Art Strategy

- Waterfront Toronto will have an artist selected to join the Public Realm team for the Underpass Park by the end of November. Waterfront Toronto is also looking to add an artist to the Design Review Panel to participate in meetings when art comes before the Panel.

Sherbourne Park

- Construction is progressing at Sherbourne Park with the pavilion being constructed, and the 1.5 metres of clean fill being spread across the site.

Canada's Sugar Beach

- Construction is progressing at Canada's Sugar Beach with the foundations for the umbrellas and dockwall repairs underway.

Spadina WaveDeck

- The Spadina WaveDeck has won numerous awards including an American Society of Landscape Architects, City of Toronto Urban Design Award and the Ontario Builders Award of Excellence in the past month.

The Chair asked the Panel if there were any questions or comments. There were no questions asked.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. No conflicts were declared.

The Chair moved to adopt the minutes from September 2009. The minutes were then adopted.

There being no other comments, the Chair moved to the Project Review portion of the meeting.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 West Don Lands Development: TCHC

ID#: 1019

Project Type: Building/Structure

Location: Area bounded by King Street, River Street, Eastern Avenue and St. Lawrence Street.

Proponent: Toronto Community Housing Corporation/Daniels (TCHC/Daniels)

Architect/Designer: Baird Sampson Neuert Architects Inc. (BSNA)

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Three

Presenter(s): Jon Neuert, BSNA

Delegation: Ian Douglas, BSNA

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Derek Goring, Director of Development for Waterfront Toronto introduced the project noting that TCHC/Daniels had received additional funding that would allow the entire development to

become affordable housing. Mr. Goring stated that the previous scheme included a market-rate condominium that is now an affordable seniors building. Mr. Goring noted that this change will also help Waterfront Toronto achieve its affordable housing targets, adding that the development is scheduled to start construction in January 2010.

1.2 Project Presentation

Jon Neuert, Partner with BSNA, provided an overview of the project including the physical changes to its form since the Panel reviewed it in July 2008. Mr. Neuert stated that the massing of what is now the affordable senior's building had been reduced - resulting in one less storey and a larger entrance forecourt and open space off of the publically accessible private driveway. Mr. Neuert stated that the change in building program had also resulted in a change in landscape of the courtyard and that all garbage will be taken care of below grade instead of curb side pick-up. Mr. Neuert then described the grade-related units, landscaping treatments, and sustainability strategies including their LEED Gold Certification target.

1.3 Panel Questions

The Chair then asked the Panel for questions of clarification only.

One Panel member asked how the team had addressed the Panel's concern from July 2008 regarding the design of the at-grade units on River and St. Lawrence Streets. Mr. Neuert stated that the size of the windows had been increased, there was greater material diversification, and the elimination of curb-side garbage pickup resolved the issue of the storage garbage bins.

Another Panel member asked for an elaboration on the design of the open space adjacent to the driveway. Mr. Neuert stated that the space has been broken down into a loading and outdoor amenity area, adding that it will include a raised planting bed, outdoor bicycle storage, and a sunken patio at the corner for the commercial tenant.

Another Panel member asked why parking had been reduced and why the balconies on the south façade had been removed. Mr. Neuert stated that the seniors building necessitated less parking and that budget considerations resulted in the loss of the balconies. Another Panel member wondered if parking still needed to go under the driveway. Mr. Neuert stated that it still made sense for the parking to be in this location for structural reasons.

One Panel member wondered if the courtyard would only get sunlight in the summer time. Mr. Neuert stated that the courtyard is oriented on the North-South access, allowing the courtyard to receive sun every day, all year long.

Another Panel member asked who was responsible for maintaining the space between the property line and the street, noting that the ownership seemed ambiguous. Mr. Glaisek stated that the space was City right of way and as such the City would maintain it. Mr. Glaisek added that it is the role of the West Don Lands public realm designers to design it, not the Proponent.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member felt that the location of the loading and garbage conflicted with the outdoor amenity space. Another Panel member felt that the service space seemed to take priority over the outdoor amenity space, noting that these spaces could be more defined and articulated. Other Panel members agreed, feeling that no one would want to sit next to garbage unloading.

Another Panel member felt that there could be an opportunity for more shading of the outdoor amenity space. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that it could be articulated with a bosk of trees or low garden wall at this location.

One Panel member felt that having the seniors and family building sharing amenity space created a great “social condenser”. Another Panel member felt that more emphasis should be placed on creating a real place in the courtyard, adding that it could be a great communal space for the block. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the use of the courtyard was still ambiguous.

One Panel member felt that the place to gather was at the corner of the “woonerf” and River Street, feeling that a lot of people will go to the coffee shop here. Another Panel member felt that the entrance to the “woonerf” was too large. Another Panel member felt that the “woonerf”, the publically accessible private driveway, relied on the compression of the space, feeling that the reduction in the buildings mass had removed that compression.

Another Panel member felt that there was a conflict between the location of the parking ramp and the garbage and loading area. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the topographic changes were creating a barrier between the seniors building and the courtyard. Other Panel members agreed that there should be a stronger emphasis on creating a more integrated project and integrated space – courtyard to laneway.

Another Panel member stated that the landscaping did not have much style, feeling that it was just decorated with planting material. Another Panel member felt that the designers should not be relying so heavily on perennial planting materials. Another Panel member urged the team to look at what the green wall is, feeling that the Virginia Creeper planting proposed may not be robust enough to climb all the way up the wall.

One Panel member felt that the south elevation of the seniors building was very flat, while the north side was very articulated. Other Panel members agreed feeling that the North elevation was more successful. One Panel member felt that the team should consider reinstating the balconies on the upper floors.

Several Panel members felt that the grade related units did not feel very residential, feeling that the materiality and punched windows added to a “bunker-like” quality. Another Panel member noted that it was challenging to design bedrooms at grade, feeling that there were security issues that the designers were conscious of.

Several Panel members agreed that the comments seemed to be focused on the ground floor, feeling that the design of the building above was fantastic. Another Panel member felt that the amount of detail paid to the design of the building was commendable.

One Panel member felt that there were two different hands at work in the design of the seniors and family buildings.

1.5 Summary of the Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) There should be greater articulation and transparency on the grade-related family units for a less “bunker-like” quality
- 2) Think about the two buildings as one project – a social condenser for families and seniors
- 3) Study the scale and character of the woonerf

- 4) Create more continuity and consistency with the interior courtyard
- 5) Consider shading devices on the south elevation of the seniors building as well as the public space

I.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Neuert thanked the Panel for their feedback.

I.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Chair then asked the Panel for a vote of support or non-support for the project. The Panel voted to grant conditional support to the project.

CLOSING

There being no further business, the Chair then adjourned the meeting.