



Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #7 Wednesday, April 19, 2006

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
George Baird
Paul Bedford
Tania Bortolotto
Peter Clewes
Renee Daoust
Siamak Hariri
Janet Rosenberg
Greg Smallenberg
Charles Waldheim

Regrets:

Peter Halsall
Anne McIlroy
Don Schmitt

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

Recording Secretary:

Pina Mallozzi

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the Panel. He reviewed the day's agenda and noted that the meeting would be relatively brief and efficient given the small number of items.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

Mr. John Campbell, the Corporation's President and CEO, began by summarizing progress made during the past month.

West Don Lands

- A kick-off event in the West Don Lands on March 27, 2006 was very successful. The three levels of government participated and the press coverage was very positive.
- The CN Bridge contract was awarded and construction is proceeding.
- The Corporation plans to bring forward a re-zoning application for the West Don Lands for approval at the June City Council meeting. A Developer Proposal Call for District Three will be issued soon after.

East Bayfront

- The Corporation is preparing a business plan and ground floor animation strategy which is scheduled to be submitted to the City in June. The re-zoning for the East Bayfront Precinct is scheduled to come forward to City Council in September.
- In keeping with the corporate strategy to build the public realm first, the design of Sherbourne Park is likely to be initiated this fall.

World Expo 2015

- The World Expo team is focusing their proposal on the Port Lands, with the preferred site lining both sides of the Ship Channel. The plan should be consistent with the Port

Land's Implementation Strategy, which outlines those districts as early development sites, and close coordination between the World Expo plan and precinct plans will be essential.

- If the bid is successful, \$2.5 billion will be invested into infrastructure in the Port Lands, which could expedite revitalization.

The Corporation has, over the last month, received a lot of positive press coverage which is encouraging. The public is beginning to see that waterfront revitalization is underway.

Organizationally, the Corporation is staffing up, and will soon be filling the following positions: V.P. Development of West Don Lands; Director of Sustainability; Director of Program Control & Risk Management; and Senior Planner.

The Chair then thanked Mr. Campbell for his presentation and asked the Vice President Planning and Design to give the project report.

VP PLANNING AND DESIGN REPORT

Mr. Christopher Glaisek, Vice President Planning and Design, gave a brief update on project progress over the past month.

Central Waterfront

- In keeping with the Corporation's commitment to hiring the best talent from around the world, five outstanding teams have been chosen to participate in the Innovative Design Competition:
 - PORT, a consortium including: Weisz and Yoes, Snohetta, Sasaki Associates, nArchitects, H3 Hardy Collaboration, Balmori Associates, and Halcrow Yolles
 - WASAW, a team based in Princeton NJ including: Stan Allen Architects, Ron Witte and Sarah Whiting, and a consortium of advisors
 - West 8, in collaboration with du Toit Allsopp Hillier, Diamond + Schmitt, Arup, Halsall Associates, Schollen & Company and David Dennis Design
 - Foster & Partners with Atelier Dreiseitl
 - Tod Williams Billie Tsien with Martinez Lapena-Torres
- A day long kick-off orientation event was hosted by the Corporation on March 30, 2006. Briefings were given by Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Ted Tyndorff, Bill Boyle, Vicki Barron, Brenda Librecz, Ken Lundy, as well as an inspiring address from Mayor David Miller. This was followed by a boat and walking tour of the site as well as a detailed explanation of the Competition Brief by Christopher Glaisek. A question and answer session with the City Staff Technical Team and the Central Waterfront Stakeholder Group was followed by a visit to the top of the CN Tower. The teams left excited and equipped to initiate the design process.
- The design teams are now approximately 3 weeks into the process and will be coming to Toronto April 20, 21, and 24 for mid-reviews. Final submissions are due May 11, 2006 with an exhibition and public forum planned at the BCE Place Galleria.

West Don Lands

- Michael Van Valkenburgh, who is now two months into the conceptual design process, is here today to present his initial pre-design for Don River Park.
- A public meeting was held yesterday, and the feedback thus far has been positive.

Lake Ontario Park

- The Corporation has selected James Corner of Field Operations to prepare a master plan for Lake Ontario Park, and he will be invited to attend an upcoming Design Review Panel meeting.

Martin Goodman Trail

- The Corporation has received several responses to the construction tender, and work will begin shortly on implementing the Victor Ford design as modified through the input from the Panel.

The Chair then opened up the meeting for questions or comments from the Panel.

One Panel member asked when the Corporation is planning to issue the first RFP for developers in the West Don Lands. Mr. Campbell noted that the Corporation is aiming to issue the developer proposal call in September at which point the parks will be underway, zoning approved and a risk management plan filed with the Ministry of the Environment. This strategy is intended to minimize uncertainty for developers. Mr. Campbell commented that the Corporation's approach to issuing the developer proposal call is to start with a manageable project of 600 units, 120 of which are planned as affordable housing.

The Chair asked what methods, strategies and practices the Corporation is implementing to push for design excellence in architecture. It was noted that the success of the precinct plans will be driven by the quality of the architecture.

Mr. Campbell explained that the Corporation has a steering committee for the developer proposal call but that it is difficult to develop criteria for evaluating architectural aesthetics. For example, if the Corporation chooses to pre-select established teams in an attempt to assure excellence, such a process may preclude younger talent. The Panel suggested that different criteria could be established for different sites and offered help in structuring guidelines and procedures.

One Panel member noted that because of the current interest in architecture, the first building on the waterfront will be really scrutinized and therefore must be done right. It was suggested that a design competition should be conducted for the first building or first few buildings to set the tone.

Mr. Campbell noted that there is a place for design competitions on the waterfront and that the Corporation is currently considering a competition for one of the most imminent development sites. Mr. Campbell noted that the Corporation has considered as an alternative that cultural facilities, a university or place of worship could provide opportunities for signature architecture.

The Chair cited the St. Lawrence community as an example of a great community which fell short in terms of architecture. He noted that the West Don Lands Precinct Plan reflects the industrial language of the site but probably not as much as the Panel would like. The East Bayfront Precinct Plan is less defined at this point, which will allow for innovation, but the selection process for who gets the first building will be even more critical to its success. It was noted that the Corporation's commendable approach towards innovation in the public realm must also be reflected in the architecture of the new communities.

One Panel member suggested preparing a list of "pre-approved" designers that developers can choose from. Another Panel member suggested that the Corporation ask for examples of top quality design in the proposal calls and evaluate it based on them. Another Panel member noted

the importance of ensuring that the public realm around the buildings be considered as part of the process.

It was noted that the waterfront should be a place for showcasing talent, particularly young talent.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Don River Park

ID#: 1006

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Area bounded by the Don River, CN Rail Yards, Bayview Avenue, and King Street

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA)

Review Round: One

Delegation: Emily Mueller De Celis, Catherine Habel

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced Michael Van Valkenburgh and thanked him and his team for coming and spending two days in Toronto meeting with many different groups and stakeholders. Mr. Glaisek explained the current status of the project, noting this is very early in the design process, and asked the Panel for feedback on the following:

- Flood protection landform massing
- Park massing
- Park programming

1.2 Project Presentation

Mr. Van Valkenburgh provided a brief introduction to the Don River Park project highlighting some of the challenges posed by the flood protection landform, the precinct plan's nascent Beaux Art quality, the park's size limitations, and opportunities to provide viewsheds to the river and back to the city skyline.

Mr. Van Valkenburgh then walked the Panel through the components of the concept park design. He noted several highlights including introduction of topography, clustering of trees complemented by open spaces, a pavilion with a firepit, and a water feature that would provide an ice feature in the winter.

Mr. Van Valkenburgh also noted that the design team has yet to resolve public art and it was suggested that heritage be incorporated through the use of vegetation that emphasizes the Toronto native plant palette. He highlighted the importance of finding a balance between the demands on the park to meet the city's active recreational needs and the wish for passive spaces of contemplation.

1.3 Panel Comments

One Panel member lauded the design, and noted the importance of starting with public space, rather than creating it from left over spaces. It was noted that the 16-acre site should translate into 16-acres of great parkland, not a series of disconnected smaller pieces. Mr. Van Valkenburgh noted that he "likes to cook with whatever is in the fridge" and that he sees the opportunity presented by the challenges facing Don River Park.

The Panel asked for more details on the water feature. Mr. Van Valkenburgh explained that the design of the water feature is still undefined. The current configuration was motivated by feedback that the water feature should be larger. The sinuous shape was inspired by water bodies in other public spaces that make the parks feel bigger by always disappearing out of view.

The Panel liked the “camouflaging” of programming and asked Mr. Van Valkenburgh to list what activities could be accommodated. Mr. Van Valkenburgh responded that the park would support a large playground on the hill, a junior soccer field adjacent to the school, a tobogganing run adjacent to the pavilion, a market place, a skateboarding area, and a dog run.

A Panel member expressed interest in the play equipment and suggested that finding a good manufacturer is integral to ensuring the result is inventive. Mr. Van Valkenburgh suggested a German company that he has worked with in the past. Another Panel member suggested that Prague has developed very interesting play equipment.

The Panel noted the importance of connectivity west to River Square and east across the Don River. Mr. Van Valkenburgh explained that the team has been working to create a strong pedestrian connection across Bayview Avenue to River Square and that one-way streets on either side of River Square ensure it is connected to its adjacent land uses. Mr. Van Valkenburgh noted that they are working with Ken Greenberg to develop that connection. Mr. Glaisek noted that making a connection east of the park is not in Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates’ scope of work and has thus far proven to be a difficult challenge conceptually.

A Panel member inquired on Michael Van Valkenburgh and Associates’ role in designing the Bala underpass. It was noted that although the Bala underpass is already beginning construction the design team has strategically planned for the pavilion to act as a beacon for users. The intention is for the building to be visible from the river side of the site, the Martin Goodman Trail and Bayview Avenue.

The Panel inquired on the winter uses planned for the park. Mr. Van Valkenburgh explained the intention of including either a permanent area for skating or a temporary skating rink on the soccer field. He asked the Panel’s opinion on skating in the park. The Panel noted that skating would bring use to the park in winter. They also noted that although many opportunities for skating exist in the city they are in high demand, and few are pond-like.

One Panel member noted that there is an interest in seeing alternatives for Front Street that reconsider the centre median. Ms. Mueller De Celis noted that they prepared a schematic drawing for Front Street which moves the street trees to the center median which therefore becomes much wider, similar to Commonwealth Avenue. The Panel provided other alternatives including putting the road in the middle and increasing the landscape on either side activating its street life and making it a great place to hang out. Mr. Glaisek noted that such a change would likely require approval by City Council.

1.4 Summary of Panel’s Key Issues

N/A

2.0 Port Lands Implementation Strategy

ID#: 1011

Project Type: Precinct/Master Plan

Location: Area bounded by Keating Channel, Lake Ontario Park, The Inner Harbour, and Leslie Street

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Sterling Sweeny Finlayson

Review Round: One

Delegation: N/A

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the Port Lands Implementation Strategy by noting that it is a very broad strategy for an approximately 1000 acre future community, an area representing approximately 8-10 distinct precincts. The Port Lands Implementation Strategy is not intended to be an urban design exercise but rather intended to provide a development phasing strategy and key objectives to guide the long-term development process and asked the panel for feedback on the following:

- General appropriateness of precinct definitions
- Timing and phasing
- Vision and future mix of uses

2.2 Project Presentation

Mark Sterling of Sterling Sweeny Finlayson provided a brief overview of the Port Lands Implementation Strategy which is now at a final draft stage. Mr. Sterling began by outlining the purpose of the strategy, report structure, consultation strategy, and implementation components upon which the strategy makes recommendations including: parks, precincts, services, infrastructure, land uses and existing uses. Mr. Sterling then outlined the site scale, precincts and development phasing, urban structure, open space, transportation infrastructure, transit and development yields. He concluded with a summary of initiatives already underway and early and intermediate work programs.

2.3 Panel Comments

One Panel member questioned the necessity of the Don Greenway, noting that it is unlikely that the revitalized Don River will follow that route. It was also noted that the World Expo would likely focus on east-west connections along the Shipping Channel, rather than preserving a north-south corridor along the Don Greenway.

The Panel commented on the lack of the sense of “magic” that the site possesses in the strategy. It was noted that there is no mention of quality of place and the opportunity to create a new typology specific to the site. One Panel member highlighted the wonderful industrial legacy that exists on the site that should be embedded in the next evolution of the plan. Mr. Sterling explained that the report does not treat the site as a *tabula rasa*, but emphasizes the industrial legacy with the water as a backdrop. The Panel noted the importance of “planting seeds” that would enable this process to evolve.

The Panel questioned the viability of the World Expo’s future ability to reintegrate into the city. The Panel asked for clarification on the role of the Corporation in the bid process. Mr. Glaisek explained that the World Expo Bid is being led by TEDCO, and that John Campbell sits on the committee which advises the bid team. A feasibility study is being prepared for City Council, who will decide in May whether or not to pursue the bid. The Panel requested that the World Expo Bid be presented to the Design Review Panel as well as the plans for FilmPort.

The Panel felt that the driver for redevelopment of the Port Lands should be the Ship Channel because of its unique quality. The Panel noted the importance of multiple bridges across the ship channel to create the sought after connections north-south. A bridge at the Don Greenway and one further east was suggested. One Panel member countered that the mystique of the place is its isolation.

2.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

N/A

3.0 Sustainability Framework

ID#: 1012

Project Type: Study

Location: N/A

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: N/A

Review Round: N/A (for information only)

Delegation: N/A

3.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the Framework by noting that the Corporation has made a strong commitment to the environment and particularly sustainability. As part of this commitment the Corporation has prepared a Sustainability Framework which sets out broad goals for making the waterfront a model of best practices in creating new communities. A checklist has been prepared, which will be used as a tool for evaluating every project and the Panel will be asked to make sustainability part of its reviews. The check-list will be distributed to all consultants who do work for the Corporation.

Mr. Glaisek then asked the panel for specific comments on the following:

- Is this the right set of goals for achieving a uniquely sustainable urban fabric?
- Are there specific requirements they feel cannot be achieved?
- Are there goals missing?

3.2 Project Presentation

Mary MacDonald, a member of the Program Management team with CH2MHill, provided a brief overview of the Sustainability Framework. Ms. MacDonald outlined the tasks that the Corporation has undertaken to ensure sustainability gets integrated into each project. Ms. Macdonald then went through each of the goals in the checklist and explained to the Panel the importance of creativity in using it to get good results.

3.3 Panel Comments

The Panel noted the importance of linking sustainable design to the quality of architectural design. It was felt that the integration of sustainability into architecture and landscape could be something that makes the waterfront communities unique and may characterize the place in a way that moves away from "pure" style. Ms. Macdonald suggested that a goal be added to the list about the integration of design and sustainability. It was suggested that a product of the Panel's upcoming visioning session be a design excellence checklist which could be linked to the sustainability checklist. This would enable the Corporation to speak more directly to the cultural sustainability of architecture and cities.

One Panel member suggested that Goal #7 (Vibrant street life) and Goal #10 (Conservation of cultural heritage and existing structures & buildings) be removed as they are not strictly related to sustainability. Another Panel member suggested that creating enduring greenspace and long term maintenance should be identified in the checklist. Another Panel member suggested that the list is too long and suggested ten goals as an appropriate number.

One Panel member asked how the checklist would determine if a project passed. Ms. Macdonald explained that the goal is not to establish a “pass-fail” so much as it is to force everyone to think about why they are making certain decisions and to reflect them. Raising awareness in many cases is all that is needed to change common practices. She also suggested the possibility of providing incentives to motivate users of the checklist.

3.4 Summary of Panel’s Key Issues

N/A

CLOSING

There being no further comments, the Chair adjourned the meeting.
