



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #88 Wednesday, January 13th, 2016

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara
Claude Cormier
Jane Wolff
George Baird
Betsy Williamson

Regrets:

Don Schmitt
Paul Bedford
Pat Hanson
Brigitte Shim
Peter Busby

Designees and Guests:

Christopher Glaisek
Alka Lukatela

Recording Secretaries:

Rei Tasaka
Tristan Simpson

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by informing Panel members and the public that Will Fleissig, the new CEO of Waterfront Toronto would be following the presentation remotely. A roundtable of introductions were made, followed by an overview of the agenda before moving to the General Business portion of the meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair informed the Panel that there are proposed changes to the DRP By-laws, Policies and Procedures, however, without quorum, adoption of changes to the by-laws would have to be postponed until the next meeting. Adoption of the minutes was also postponed until the next Panel meeting.

The Chair then asked if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. No conflicts of interest were identified.

The Chair then asked Mr. Glaisek, Vice President of Planning and Design with Waterfront Toronto, to provide a report on project progress.

REPORT FROM THE V.P. OF PLANNING AND DESIGN

Mr. Glaisek introduced Rebecca Carbin, Public Art Program Manager with Waterfront Toronto to give an overview of the East Bayfront Public Art Master Plan. Ms. Carbin noted that the plan was passed by City Council December 9th, 2015. The objective of the plan is for art to act as a magnet, drawing people to the waterfront and adhering to the identity of the neighbourhoods. Water is the theme of the plan, used as a connective tissue throughout the precinct. Ms. Carbin also touched on thresholds, connections and destinations, terminology that has been chosen in order to develop a plan for public art that sets out a vision of how the art program will function within the public realm.

Mr. Glaisek then gave a brief update on the Gardiner East Environmental Assessment and Urban Design Study, noting that the team has studied and refined three Hybrid Design Alternatives that will be presented to the public on January 19th.

The Chair then moved to the project reviews portion of the meeting.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Port Lands Framework Plan

ID#: 1069

Project Type: Master Plan

Location: Port Lands

Proponent: City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: Public Work

Review Stage: Concept Design

Review Round: one

Presenter(s): Cassidy Ritz, City of Toronto, Amanda Santo, Waterfront Toronto, Adam Nicklin, Public Work

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Amanda Santo, Director of Development Approvals with Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project noting that City Council requested Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto to prepare a comprehensive Framework Plan for the Port Lands in 2013 at the completion of the Port Lands Acceleration Initiative (PLAI) phase I. The plan is intended to guide revitalization and redevelopment for the present and over the course of the next 50 + years. Ms. Santo noted that the plan has undergone tremendous amounts of public engagement and consultation with community members, which is reflected in the presentation.

1.2 Project Presentation

Ms. Santo began the presentation by noting that the Port Lands are underserved and underutilized but not a blank slate. There are multiple components that make up the Port Lands, including heritage buildings, the film industry, the river, and many industrial uses that need to be considered and guide the planning.

Ms. Santo introduced Adam Nicklin from Public Work to present the urban design portion of the presentation. Mr. Nicklin noted that the city was not built on a single idea and that makes it one of its defining characteristics. One year ago, a workshop was held with people that had an invested interest in the project. Mr. Nicklin explained that looking at some of the photos taken on site, you begin to see remnants of once active industrial uses – infrastructure embedded in nature, representing the DNA of the plan.

Mr. Nicklin concluded by explaining the principal of, designing with water as a resource, and to think of the plan as an overall system, not just the design of a street. Instead of each development treating water on-site, Mr. Nicklin proposed having a collective system that can connect them.

Ms. Ritz, with the City of Toronto, then explained that when looking at planning on a scale this large, fundamentals we can create a series of memorable communities influenced by the blue, green and grey. Ms. Ritz noted that the team is trying to put in balanced land use. She also emphasized the importance of critical mass to ensure a lively community, allowing for continued viability to the area. Ms. Ritz informed that Panel the employment estimates include 18-25K people and 25-30K jobs, along with 10-15K housing units. She noted that early on in the process, the team discovered that it's not just about people and jobs but also about the biodiversity of the area which is why a working group was arranged to form a robust biodiversity framework. Ms. Santo concluded the presentation by noting that this project is an opportunity to create a net zero district that addresses, ecological integrity, human health, climate change, innovation and economy.

The design team raised three questions for the Panel to think about:

- 1) An important component of the plan and vision is setting in place a resilient urban structures and public realm that can stand the test of time and allow for future evolution. Do you have any advice for further improvements to the urban structure developed to date?
- 2) The plan and vision uses a number of major ordering principles such as “blue and green” and “character defining elements that we should elevate further in plan?
- 3) Do you have any feedback on the other elements we've been developing such as the sustainability and biodiversity?

1.3 Panel Questions

One of the Panel members asked, how the team plans on mandating sustainability and innovation on owner/developer driven sites. Ms. Santo replied that the Planning Act enables some requirements around sustainability, though it would be ideal to mandate more. The Panel member also asked how the framework accommodates the planned projects happening today. Ms. Santo replied that the team has made a point of addressing the FedEx site and informing them of what is going to happen in the Port Lands, and understanding that this is a 50 year plan.

Another Panel member asked if the team has thought about phasing and sequencing given the long term nature of the plan. Ms. Santo replied that a lot of it will be market driven,

starting with development in Villiers Island (2023), followed by the Film Studio. Once the Unilever site gets developed, this will increase demand in the surrounding areas.

One of the Panel members asked the team if they had thought about the conflicts that arise between industrial and residential uses cohabitating. Ms. Santo replied that the existing industrial have raised concerns, as they currently don't have to abide by noise and dust rules. Separating uses while still cohabitating is the balance they're looking to achieve. Other users that are not industry based are excited and anxious to see revitalization. The success with Red Path and East Bayfront was cited as a possible model.

Another Panel member asked if it was fair assume that LaFarge is the most problematic in terms of environmental issues. Ms. Ritz replied that the Port Lands Energy Centre and salt operations are also challenges noting that there are precedents for effective buffers. Ms. Ritz noted that there are precedents that have developed strategies for buffers.

One of the Panel members asked if the high voltage electrical towers are operational. Ms. Santo replied that they are operational today, however, the framework assumes the electrical lines will be buried. A feasibility study is currently being undertaken with Hydro One to look at options.

The Chair proceeded to pose five questions for consideration:

- 1.) What is the relationship between this plan and the Don Mouth Naturalization Plan Environmental Assessment?
- 2.) Where in the plan is the retail?
- 3.) What is the attitude of the plan regarding access to the water's edge long term?
- 4.) What are the models globally for large scale transformation?
- 5.) What is the best example for transit to 21 Don Roadway?

1.4 Panel Comments

The Chair asked the Panel for their comments.

One of the Panel members thanked the project team for their ambitious presentation, feeling that imagining the place in fifty years is good. The Panel member felt that an urgent question was raised regarding water levels and climate change. Mr. Glaisek mentioned that global warming will make the lake water levels lower, not higher. The member then noted that this raises questions about "spongy edges" and the relationship of the edge of land to the lake. They also noted that thinking now about intermediate conditions is important as the Port Lands is a place with a particular cultural landscape. The Panel member recommended a phasing plan which thinks about temporary uses that can accommodate the goals in the interim, such as tree nurseries, farming, event space, and programmatic spaces. They noted a couple of examples in the Netherlands – the eastern harbor district and I-Burg – that were successful examples of ecological and programmatic phasing, as these places were inhabited incrementally and their public spaces were ephemeral. The Panel member also thought that there is a complicated issue with biodiversity and the success of this place relies much on the "gradients" of wildness that are not very accessible right now and must be managed well in the future.

Another Panel member recommended that the team should start with places that are already heavily used, and slowly build out from these populated areas. They noted places such as the T&T Supermarket which currently bring many people down to the Port Lands on weekends and after-work hours. The Panel member also noted that infrastructure such as bike paths must become a priority. It is critical to get people down to the Port Lands and the connection from the surrounding neighbourhoods needs to be pushed to a smaller scale within the framework. The Panel member noted the success of Corktown Common, which drew an influx of people to the area and how it catalyzed the surrounding neighbourhoods. Connecting the park down to Cherry Beach would be a good interim solution for the Port Lands as they are both very active nodes. Lastly the member wondered if there were any potential synergies between private developments that could happen here. It was compared to The Highline model, where good design and “hype” drove the real estate price and the “brand” became the attraction for development.

Another Panel member noted that it was a great presentation and there is much to digest. They liked the proposed “resilient urban fabric” of the plan and wondered how this fabric can connect back to the City through north-south connections. They wondered whether the Keating Channel and Eastern Avenue could also become these “connectors”, ensuring that the Port Land does not become isolated. The Panel member noted that the most important point is to connect to the water’s edge and wondered whether the urban fabric could expand more and “poke” right into the water. They also suggested that the team should have a section called “character” that should be studied and presented as part of the plan. There is a romantic connection to the City and this place and how the character of the Port Lands will be maintained is critical, because there is a fear of losing the character and appeal as it evolves, as it has happened in the industrial land that has been redeveloped in Montreal. The Panel member also noted that the process is not far enough along yet, but for now, the plan seems logical and coherent.

Another Panel member noted that the Chair’s questions earlier were valid and looked forward to hearing the answers to them at the next presentation. The member agreed to what had been said, except the suggestion of extending the roads to the edge, as he questioned the compatibility between new developments and protecting for the “wild”. They felt that the challenge will be, as the team moves forward, in testing all of the presented aspirations that conflict with one another. The Panel member also thought that the “resilient” urban fabric should be coarser than the fine-grained blocks that are shown to the east of the Don Roadway. The member also felt that the reference to New York’s DUMBO was not a compelling example because it is half a century earlier in its creation and the density is much higher. The member mentioned if the World Fair in Toronto is a possibility, the team should look at successful examples such as the PanAm Village, where there was an organized proposition where units and facilities were created and designed to ensure a good urban “afterlife”.

The Chair commented that the most powerful move in the plan is between 21 Don Way and the Hearn. With Union Station close to capacity, no one imagined that another major transit hub would be located east of the Don River. Now with this as a possibility in the very near future, this will shift the centre of gravity of the city to the east in a positive

way. The Broadview streetcar line to connect to the future GO station and continuing diagonally to the south is similar to Broadway in New York City.

Mr. Glaisek raised concern about the diagonal alignment proposed for Broadview, feeling that it is anomalous in this area. It is not small enough nor big enough move for what it is trying to be, and Broadview's length is not long enough to be an interesting counterpoint to bring the same fascination as Broadway Avenue and therefore introducing the diagonal here is an artifice. He noted that the First Gulf site today feels orphaned from the city and requires connectivity through the street grid. He also felt that Broadview's character is that of following the river and questioned the necessity of the shift of this view from the river to the smokestacks.

Another Panel member noted that The Hearn is not entirely a "destination" but it is more like a football stadium, as it is a large monument in physical sense, but does not have continuous activity. They noted that whether straightened or diagonal, Broadview could be a good north-south street for retail activity. They felt that the GO station will make a big difference to this area, but Cherry Street would remain a local "focus". The first buildings that will stand on Villiers Island will be the most stupendous thing done in Toronto and will instantly alter public perception of this area.

A guest designee noted that the diagonal Broadview alignment seems to be based on a strong idea of iconic views. They noted that public transit to this area will be critical and is hopeful for solutions regarding transportation to be worked in parallel with the framework plan.

Another Panel member noted that everyone's commented are astute. They noted that putting emphasis on Cherry Street may not be the right thing, and perhaps supporting activity along Broadview could be good. They felt that Broadview's relationship along the river is a strong experience and should be maintained, rather than taking it "inside" the precinct.

Ms. Ritz noted that there are significant challenges to the area regarding the connection of Broadview and extending south to Port Lands, but emphasizes the importance of a continuous connection south of the Ship Channel.

The Chair noted that the plan's depiction of the mouth of the Don seems different than the competition phase. Mr. Glaisek explained the evolution of the competition through the Port Lands Acceleration initiative as well as the Lower Don EA process.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- The plan seems like two disconnected plans on either side of the Don Roadway, the roadway needs better integration
- The Broadview alignment is a big move that will improve the outcome of the framework plan and needs careful consideration
- The issue of water being the theme of all proposed landscape and art is too didactic

- The plan needs to assume that this area is different than the rest of the city and all the negative criticisms
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2.0 Project Under Gardiner

ID#: 1070

Project Type: Precinct Plan

Location: Under the Gardiner from Strachan to Bathurst

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto,

Architect/Designer: Public Work, Greenberg Consulting Inc.

Review Stage: Concept Design

Review Round: First

Presenter(s): Marc Ryan, Public Work

Delegation:

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Pina Mallozzi, Director of Design with Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project, reminding everyone that it is being funded by a generous philanthropic gift from Wil and Judy Matthews. The objective is to transform the area into vibrant community spaces that will play host to a range of cultural, heritage and arts programming – creating a new outdoor living room for local residents and visitors. Ms. Mallozzi noted that the opening for phase I of the project is scheduled for July 1st, 2017.

2.2 Project Presentation

Ms. Mallozzi then introduced Marc Ryan, Principal at Public Work, to give the presentation. Mr. Ryan began by explaining that this project is a “stitch” within the city that links areas east-west and north-south – a project of connectivity. He noted that this project aims to be a truly Toronto project and one that can only occur under the Gardiner Expressway. The location of the Gardiner makes it a prelude to the waterfront, which is why the partnership with Waterfront Toronto is so fitting.

Mr. Ryan explained that precedents from around the world are generally defined by a singular use. The idea behind the Under Gardiner is to have a multitude of uses, defined by different “rooms”. Mr. Ryan expressed that there could be active versus quiet areas from one end to the next that would help program the space. He also noted that having a number of hands to help build the project by producing materials locally, and salvaging existing material could evolve into something that builds on the legacy of the city.

2.3 Panel Questions

One of the Panel members asked what phase I includes. The proponent replied that it includes the area just west of Strachan all the way to Bathurst beneath the elevated structure. It also includes the creation of the trail which travels just outside of the project area to Spadina.

One of the Panel members asked the proponents if they could do a cost comparison to the High Line in New York. Mr. Ryan explained that it would likely amount to one tenth

of the cost of the High Line. The Panel member also asked if there were any existing trails along the study area. Mr. Ryan explained that there are trails, but nothing formal. The Panel member also enquired about who would be in charge of the Under Gardiner once it is complete. Mr. Glaisek responded that this matter was yet to be determined and the team is currently procuring a consultant to figure out who is the most suitable to run it. The Panel member also asked if the City is looking for private ownership. Mr. Glaisek responded that the team is not at that stage yet.

Another Panel member asked for clarification of Waterfront Toronto's role in this project. Mr. Glaisek replied that this is a public realm project that will help transform the area, comparable to Queens Quay. Waterfront Toronto wants to deliver this project because it will be beneficial to the waterfront.

2.4 Panel Comments

Mr. Fleissig expressed to the design team that the issue of partnerships and operations and maintenance are front and centre as part of a larger picture. Mr. Fleissig asked the Panel if there were certain locations along the study area that the team was focused on. The proponent replied that they believe the portion under the Gardiner from Fort York to Strachan is achievable because it is public land.

One of the Panel members agreed with Mr. Fleissig's comments questioning whether achieving what the design team is proposing is realistic given the time frame. The Panel member also cautioned the team that it would be unfortunate to have this project crudely done. The Panel member also questioned the proposed trail noting that just because the project is linear, it does not mean that the trail needs to follow suit. The Panel member explained that this project will need to be a giant curatorial machine in operation, similar to Bryant Park – without direct access to the same level of private funding.

Another Panel member concurred with the previous comments, feeling that the path is not a strong enough idea to carry the project forward. The Panel member explained that the design issue in this case is that there is space bleeding out, as you cannot use the upper edge of the Gardiner as the defining edge at grade. The Panel member also noted that the team has to prepare a clear vision for the project through rigorous detailing. They suggested that instead of active and quiet areas, the team should take each room as a separate room and create places of intensity rather than stretching them out in a thin layer. The Panel member concluded by stating that this presentation has raised more questions than answers and stresses the need for design rigor to see the project through.

Mr. Fleissig explained to the project team they need to think of the project in a less architectural and landscape way given timing and funding constraints. He suggested each "room" to be a showcasing opportunity for local designers, that if you were to give a handful of designers \$1 million each and ask them what they would suggest doing with the space in a 7-9 month timeframe you would get some amazing results, some of which might only be temporary.

One of the Panel members asked the design team to come back to the Panel with a new trail and look at linkages throughout the project. One of the Panel members requested to see a design for one of the "rooms" at the next meeting.

2.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

Summary of Panel's Comments:

- The linear path as conceived is not a strong enough idea to carry the project forward – either strengthen its connectivity to adjacent systems, or integrate it more subtly with the other elements.
- The idea of the “rooms” needs to be infused with a clear vision for place making, including ideas about materiality and detailing as well as relationships to the surrounding urban context.
- The idea of a “multi-purpose” space should not become a substitute for design intent, and the O&M and Programing must be extremely well coordinated with the design.
- Demonstrate how “high end” or “crafted” design is part of the proposal and add a sense of spectacle to project
- Consider focusing on the area between Strachan and Fort York as it is the most powerful space because of the high soffit, nice underside, and active adjacent owners.

CLOSING

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