



**WATERFRONT**Toronto

**Waterfront Design Review Panel  
Minutes of Meeting #61  
Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

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**Present:**

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair  
Paul Bedford  
Claude Cormier  
Pat Hanson  
Gerry Faubert  
Don Schmitt  
Brigitte Shim  
Betsy Williamson  
Jane Wolf

**Designees and Guests:**

Christopher Glaisek  
Robert Freedman

**Regrets:**

George Baird

**Recording Secretary:**

JD Reeves

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**WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed the Panel and introduced the Panel's two new members: Pat Hanson, an architect and founding principal at gh3, and Gerry Faubert, a sustainability expert and managing principal at Integral Group.

The Chair then provided an overview of the agenda before moving to General Business.

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**GENERAL BUSINESS**

The Chair asked if any Panel member would like to move to adopt the minutes from June 2012. One Panel member moved to adopt the minutes, and the minutes were unanimously adopted.

The Chair then asked the Panel if they had any conflicts of interest to declare and none were declared.

There being no other comments, the Chair then invited Christopher Glaisek to give his report.

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**REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN**

Christopher Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto's Vice President for Planning and Design, provided an update on the following projects:

- George Brown College has elected to go with a neutral-coloured white spandrel on the façade of their residence project in the West Don Lands rather than the previously approved orange-coloured spandrel.

- The Central Waterfront Queens Quay project has received its demolition permit and is now waiting on one final signature on the funding agreement before construction will start. The Panel was pleased and gave its congratulations.
- On the East Bayfront Storm Water Management Facility, Waterfront Toronto has been in discussion with Toronto Water and has agreed to adopt a Ballasted Flocculation Facility system for East Bayfront. The facility is likely to be located on the same site as the gh3-designed West Don Lands facility and would involve either a second building or redesigned larger building.

Mr. Glaisek then invited David Kusturin, Waterfront Toronto’s Chief Operating Officer, to provide an update on the Port Lands Acceleration Initiative. Mr. Kusturin’s presentation noted that the City executive committee recommended that council approve the Port Lands Acceleration Initiatives and their directives were consistent with the recommendations made by the Waterfront Design Review Panel.

The Chair then asked the Panel if there were any questions or comments.

One Panel member said they have no questions but would like to thank everyone for their effort to adopt the Panel’s previous recommendations for the Port Lands Acceleration Initiative.

The Chair then asked for a copy of the presentation and Mr. Kusturin agreed to provide it.

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## **PROJECT REVIEWS**

### **1.0 Private Development Application: 281 Front Street East (43A Parliament)**

*ID#: 1049*

*Project Type: Buildings/Structures*

*Location: 281 Front Street East*

*Proponent: Urbacon*

*Architect/Designer: WZMH Architects*

*Review Stage: Concept Design*

*Review Round: One*

*Presenter(s): Nicola Casciato, WZMH Architects*

*Delegation: n/a*

#### 1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Willie Macrae, Community Planning with City of Toronto, provided a brief introduction to the proposed data centre at Front and Parliament Street and then explained that the project fits within the existing zoning envelope. Mr. Macrae explained that, while it’s not part of today’s design review, this project is intended to enable an important land swap that will provide the City with the historically significant site of Canada’s first parliament building.

Mr. Macrae also emphasized the importance of timing for this project because the developer is looking to submit their site plan application in November. He then introduced Nicola Casciato, Principal, WZMH Architects.

#### 1.2 Project Presentation

Nicola Casciato, Principal with WZMH Architects, presented the project with plans, elevations, and renderings to explain the ideas behind the design.

### 1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked if Mr. Casciato could clarify which areas of the façade have vision glass versus spandrel glass, and if the proposal is in fact a black box building except for the ground floor. Mr. Casciato explained that you could only see inside on the ground floor but there would be windows on the upper floors at the elevator cores.

Another Panel member asked if terracotta was the only material being investigated for the solid portions of the façade. Mr. Casciato said, yes, it is the only option being proposed and it has been priced into the project.

Another Panel member asked if the data centre is the only main use of the building and how many people would work inside. Mr. Casciato explained that the data center is the main use of the building but there is some secondary street level uses and that approximately 100 people would work in the data centre facility.

Another Panel member asked how the building is intended to relate to the park. Mr. Macrae explained that it is unclear at this point because there are no detailed plans for the park but, the intent is that the park be a continuous element connecting the blocks to the east with David Crombie Park to the west.

Another Panel member asked if the louvered screen on the top of the building is intended to hide the mechanical structures. Mr. Casciato confirmed that the screen hides the mechanical equipment and then clarified that it is an opaque screen at the top and then louvered below.

Another Panel member asked if there was any room for a café or some other use to animate the ground floor. Mr. Casciato explained that it's currently conceived as office space but they don't have the final tenant layout for the area. Currently there is no provision for retail or café.

Another Panel member asked if Tier 1 of Toronto Green standards are being applied. Mr. Casciato stated yes. The Panel member asked if they are applying for LEED silver certification. Mr. Casciato confirmed that for the core and shell they will be applying for LEED silver.

The Chair noted that the data centre would generate excess heat, and then asked if there were any plans to capture and use the heat. Mr. Casciato confirmed that they intend to use the heat within the building.

### 1.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that they wished there could be a use other than a data centre but believed that this development is important because it allows the City to secure the historically important site of Canada's first parliament building.

Another Panel member stated that the building shape works with the overall site; however the opaqueness of the building is an issue. The panel member continued that the Renzo Piano's

Daimler Financial Services Headquarters building in Berlin is a good precedent and should be studied further. The Panel member asked that the proponent consider using the louvers more and extend them down to ground level so they're independent of the glass type behind. It would also give the building more depth and help blur the "black box" nature of the upper floors

A third Panel member pointed out that, given that the data centre will likely produce more heat than can be used within the building, the proponent should consider providing a connection to the outside of the building to allow adjacent properties to use the heat. The Panellist continued that he is not suggesting that they install heat exchanges, just a connection point for future. The Panel member also suggested that the proponent consider an integrated and efficient building envelope to assist in the energy use and should be conscious of this when selecting the glass types.

A fourth Panel Member stated that they feel it is an odd building that tries to hide the activity within the upper levels and that there is a great opportunity to take advantage of the opacity and have a building without windows. The Panel member continued that the building could have removable panels to allow for a conversion to a different use in the future.

A fifth Panel Member stated that beyond the architecture, it's important to address the park context and some sort of planning for the future park. The Panelist continued that the proponent seems to appreciate that the park side is really a front. The Panel member suggested that a volumetric depth on the corner could help articulate the importance of a two sided building and agreed with a previous panel member that the louvers should be extended to meet the ground and that the building should have an upper floor strategy for adaptive reuse.

A sixth Panel member agreed that the issue of convertibility is of primary importance to this project. The Panelist continued that the mirrored glass is unwelcoming and the louvers would help provide visual interest while screening the glass behind. The Panelist also suggested that the proponent consider a light-coloured louver system around the mechanical equipment at the top to help it disappear in the sky.

A seventh Panel Member appreciated the terracotta material and suggested that it be used more widely including the penthouse and the ground floor. The panelist suggested it would be more interesting if the building was conceived as a terracotta box with windows rather than a glass building with terracotta.

An eight Panel Member felt that this is a difficult project because it is opaque on the upper floors with three public sides on the ground floor, and that adaptive reuse or convertibility should be considered.

The Chair suggested that Herzog and De Meuron's Signal Box building would be an interesting precedent because it is also a closed and opaque building but is open where needed. The Chair agreed that the ability to retrofit is important. He also stated the location of the building's core, with its elevators, is an important consideration because it would be great if, at a particular point, there was an opening with a view back at the city. The Chair also stated that ground floor animation is important on this project and asked the proponent to consider giving the ground floor more height and felt that planning permission should be granted if this change had zoning envelope implications. The Chair also asked that the proponent consider ground floor uses other than office because it would help animate the park.

## 1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) There are concerns that the project could be “black box” and ways to add more animation on the ground floors with some openings above should be considered.
- 2) Consider sharing the excess heat generated from the data centre
- 3) Enhance the south-west corner of the building to help the building “turn the corner” and front both on Parliament Street and the future park.
- 4) Adaptive reuse and the ability for the buildings upper floors to be converted or retrofitted in the future.
- 5) The building should be more solid and take advantage of the terracotta with more texture or solidity rather than a predominantly glass box.
- 6) Engage the park as the threshold or gateway into the WDL

The Chair continued that they will see this project one more time and they understand that it is a quick process and that the architect is under a lot of pressure to finalize their designs. The Chair thanked the Proponent for the presentation and expressed hope that this could be a great opportunity to extend David Crombie Park.

#### 1.6 Vote of Support/Non-Support

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

The Panel voted for conditional support with the comments being addressed.

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## **2.0 EBF Development Proposal: Bayside Phase 1 – Block 8**

*ID#: 1040*

*Project Type: Buildings/Structures*

*Location: Bounded by Sherbourne Common, Bonnycastle Road, Queens Quay and Lake Ontario*

*Proponent: Hines*

*Architect/Designer: Arquitectonica*

*Review Stage: Detailed Design*

*Review Round: One*

*Presenter(s): John Curtis, Arquitectonica*

*Delegation: Salvatore Cavarretta, Tridel*

### 2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek, Vice President of Planning and Design at Waterfront Toronto, provided an introduction, noting that this is the third time this project has come to the Panel. Mr. Glaisek explained that the project was at the Design Development stage and that Panel approval was necessary for the proponent to submit their Site Plan Application to the City. Mr. Glaisek then summarized the Panel recommendations from the previous presentation (November 2011):

- 1) Further break down the mass of the large block
- 2) Research potential landscaping opportunities in residential areas with allotment gardens/terraces/green spaces
- 3) Develop an energy model and wind studies

## 2.2 Project Presentation

John Curtis, Principal at Arquitectonica, presented the project. Mr. Curtis noted that the Panel's feedback was taken seriously and the team had worked hard to address their concerns. The design team's environmental consultant presented the energy models.

## 2.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel Member stated that the "cube" was clearly a column-slab structure, then asked about the structure of the rest of the building. Mr. Curtis responded that it is combination of slab-column and slab with shear walls.

Another Panel Member asked the proponent to explain a little more about the design of the winter garden. Mr. Curtis, explained that it is a public realm extension of the east-west local street and connects it to Sherbourne Common park. The Panel Member then asked why it was called a "winter garden". Mr. Curtis responded that the space would probably be enclosed by removable glass walls to make it more comfortable in the winter months. The garden is a public space and will remain accessible even when enclosed during the winter.

A Third Panel Member asked how the balconies impact the environmental models. Mr. Curtis explained that they play a role but it is not as significant as originally believed.

A fourth Panel Member asked for the height of the winter garden and the ground floor retail. Mr. Curtis responded 10 meters and 5 meters, respectively.

A fifth Panel Member asked if there were perspective views along Bonnycastle Street and continued that it appears that the third floor is set back; they wanted to understand how that looks in perspective. Mr. Curtis said there was no perspective but showed a plan view to illustrate the design.

A sixth Panel Member asked if it was worth enclosing the winter garden because there doesn't appear to be much of "garden" that needs protecting and the concern is that the space could be privatized. Mr. Curtis responded that the adjacent retail space has entrances from the winter garden space and will this help reinforce the public nature of the winter garden.

A seventh Panel Member asked for the amount of natural light within the winter garden and if they have done studies to determine that plants can grow in the garden. Mr. Curtis confirmed that they have done solar studies but agreed that the landscape design for this area is still preliminary and needs to be developed further and brought back. Mr. Therry of West 8, the project's landscape architect, agreed and said the solar studies would be factored into the design.

Mr. Glaisek explained that Waterfront Toronto envisioned the space as a year-round public open space and that it is part of the precinct plan. Mr. Glaisek continued that the winter garden is not intended to be an open air passage, but a climate controlled year round space.

The Chair asked to what stage the design is currently developed. Mr. Curtis stated that it is at 95% Design Development.

## 2.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

A Panel Member commented that the role of the winter garden and its relation to the overall project and public realm needs to be developed further in order to be properly evaluated.

Another Panel Member wished the designer had brought more information on the residential unit plans to better understand how they work given the depth of the units. The Panel Member continued that they were glad to see that shear walls weren't proposed throughout because it seemed probable that the long units would one day be combined.

Another Panel Member appreciated that the design team had been struggling with the overall massing and had developed a varied massing to deal with the length and width of the site however, they felt it appeared too complicated and encouraged the design team to try and simplify the overall appearance. The Panellist also suggested that the massings above and north of the winter garden shift a little more to allow for more natural light into the winter garden. The Panellist also requested a view along Bonnycastle Street to confirm that the building works with the public realm.

Another Panel Member acknowledged that this project has a challenging site because there is no "back": each side of the building is a public face. The Panellist continued that they appreciated the effort to go down to bedrock with the basement levels to allow the designers to bury the mechanical and provide bike parking. Lastly, the Panellist requested a different kind of drawing to understand the entire elevation along Sherbourne Common because there should be sense of continuity for pedestrians.

Another Panel Member felt that reading the voids between the "boxes" in the façade was difficult and thought that it would be interesting if they could better articulated. The Panellist also agreed with the other Panel members and felt that the winter garden needed to be developed further.

Another Panel Member encouraged the design team to reevaluate the energy model once the façade treatments had been finalized.

Another Panel member noted that it has a busy façade and that it is unclear how this will impact the overall environmental model. The Panellist asked the design team to study the effects of thermal bridging.

Another Panel Member stated that they support the overall building design but felt that the winter garden was too intimate and, if possible, should be opened more.

Another Panel member thought that the architects were successful in breaking down a very large and long building but agreed that some simplification would be helpful. The Panellist continued that having four public façades is a difficult challenge and encouraged the designers to try and differentiate each façade; north from the south and the east from the west. The Panellist observed that it's unclear whether the winter garden is "garden" or a "passage" and that the design team should try to clarify its purpose.

The Chair agreed that the negative space between the "boxes" on the façade needs to read much more strongly to be successful. The Chair suggested that the areas could be either holes or

bridges, emphasized by using a different colour or material; transparent glass or breezeways could be considered. The Chair also encouraged the designers to review the “cube” on the south of the building and consider ways to give it more definition.

## 2.5 Summary of the Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Currently the winter garden is a passage and not a garden. West 8, who will be developing the design, should find ways to make it an “amazing” connection and public space.
- 2) Consider the expandability of the units and reduce shear walls where possible.
- 3) Consider a simplification of the façade while articulating the voids between the “boxes” on the façade more strongly.
- 4) Confirmation of environmental model with the final façade. Concerns about thermal bridging at the balconies needs to be studied more.

## Proponents Response

Mr. Curtis thanked the Panel for their feedback.

## 2.6 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Chair then asked the Panel for a vote of support, non-support or conditional support for the project. The Panel voted unanimously for conditional support pending resolution of the issues especially the winter garden.

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## CLOSING

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