



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #50 Wednesday, June 8th, 2011

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara
George Baird
Paul Bedford
Peter Busby
Peter Clewes
Claude Cormier
Betsy Williamson

Regrets:

Brigitte Shim
Greg Smalenberg
Jane Wolff

Recording Secretary:

Melissa Horwood

Designees and Guests:

Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Panel and provided an overview of the agenda. The Chair then invited Christopher Glaisek to provide his report.

REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN

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

Don River Park

- The pavilion structure is substantially complete. The berm is under construction, and topsoil will be put down soon.

Underpass Park

- Block 19 and 20 are currently underway, but we will require an extra \$2M to finish Block 18. The benches are currently being put in.

Sherbourne Common

- Testing of the fountain is complete and should be running by the second week of July 2011.
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George Brown College

- Currently under construction.

York Quay

- Currently one third of the way through excavation.

Portland's Water's edge

- Widening of the promenade is underway and there are new sheet piling walls.

Storm water Management Facility

- Construction is under way for the tunnel.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair stated that there is a lot of speculation and uncertainty surrounding the Queens Quay project, given recent news stories of the TTC moving ahead on its own. The Chair stated that this committee needs to understand the lay of the land and if the Panel is actually reviewing something that has a reality base.

Mr. Glaisek stated that it has been a long process getting to this point and that Waterfront Toronto has budgeted \$48M for 800 meters of the Queens Quay Boulevard project. Mr. Glaisek stated that the challenge with the 800 meters is it does not get you from one end of anything to the other end of anything. Mr. Glaisek stated that City of Toronto staff are not comfortable building the street with temporary end conditions without any commitment of funding, and advised Waterfront Toronto that it was not feasible to do only 800 meters. Therefore we will need another \$30M out of our Long Term Funding Plan. Mr. Glaisek stated that Waterfront Toronto still has \$700M to spend on the waterfront and we are not asking the governments for more, but asking to reallocate funding for the Queens Quay Boulevard project. Mr. Glaisek stated that Waterfront Toronto is currently working on the full design from Bay Street to Spadina Avenue in hopes that Waterfront Toronto will get the reallocated funds, noting that the commitment is there and intention to deliver the project is there, but what is missing is the collective ability to move the funds. Mr. Glaisek stated that it comes down to priorities and timing.

One Panel member asked for an example of a project that would be deferred.

Mr. Glaisek stated that the Queens Quay East LRT, Regional Sports complex, and Fort York bridge might be possibilities. Mr. Glaisek stated that they are all worthy projects but the Regional Sports complex doesn't have sufficient funding or mayoral support currently, and the East Bayfront LRT faces a similar challenge. Mr. Glaisek stated that under a Construction Management approach the Queens Quay Boulevard project would only take about 2 years to complete and is nearly ready for construction.

One Panel member asked if there have there been discussions with the other partners on which projects to defer. The Panel member felt that the Queens Quay East LRT should be the last thing deferred, as currently there is no transit to the East Bayfront and West Don Lands.

Mr. Glaisek stated that in the interim Waterfront Toronto will have to run bus service on Queens Quay, noting that the bus solution will likely be a 5 – 10 year solution in the best scenario, possibly longer.

The Chair stated that the value of the lands in East Bayfront and West Don Lands is tied up with accessibility because with no transit there is no appeal for the residential condominiums.

Another Panel member countered that completing the Bay to Spadina revitalization will have a larger public visibility impact.

Mr. Glaisek stated that he feels very optimistic that the Bay to Spadina revitalization is going to happen, noting that if there is enough political support for it Waterfront Toronto should be able to shift the money.

The Chair suggested that the night before the last panel meeting each July, the Panel members should have a get-together regarding the challenges and process of the panel and have a self-evaluation with past and present Panel members. The Chair stated that previously there were some early discussions that were quite good. The Chair stated that the Panel should hear from Peter Busby as a new member to find out what he sees as the challenges in the processes of this panel. The Chair stated that the Panel members have committed a huge amount of time to this vision and that most people in the public do not see the larger picture across the waterfront. The Chair stated that there have been numerous attempts to communicate this, but it needs to be done more effectively.

Mr. Freedman stated that the City of Toronto sent a survey to everyone that appeared before the City of Toronto Design Review Panel, and that he will provide the survey to this panel

The Chair then asked if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. George Baird declared a conflict of interest with the TCHC Blocks 21 & 22 presentation.

The Chair then moved to adopt the minutes from April 2011. The minutes were adopted, with an amendment that Betsy Williamson was not present at the meeting.

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

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Central Waterfront Public Realm: Queens Quay Boulevard

ID#: 1034

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Queens Quay from Spadina Avenue to Parliament Street

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: West 8+DTAH

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Three

Presenter(s): Adriaan Geuze, West 8 and Adam Nicklin, DTAH

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek, Vice President of Planning and Design for Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project noting that it was at the Design Development phase. Mr. Glaisek informed the Panel of some changes from the previous submission, including the removal of grass in the TTC median, revised north side sidewalk with vehicular laybys and a 7.2 meter promenade on the south side of

Queens Quay. Mr. Glaisek informed the Panel that there is an anticipated Fall 2011 start date for the relocation of utilities and the bulk of work commencing in Spring 2012.

1.2 Project Presentation

Adriaan Geuze, Partner with West 8, provided an overview of the elements of the project including; the South side walk/promenade, the Martin Goodman Trail, the TTC right of way & platforms, the road, the north sidewalk, the tree planning strategy, materials, furnishing and way-finding. Adam Nicklin, Partner with DTAH, provided an overview of the Bus Management Strategy.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel members asked what the tree spacing was along the east-west axis and asked for clarification on species type along the north side. Mr. Nicklin stated that the trees are spaced 10 meters from each other, noting that in Toronto trees are typically spaced 5 to 7 meters apart which is too close for them to mature. Mr. Nicklin also stated that the south side will consist of only London Plane trees. The Urban Forestry department at the City of Toronto insists on a diversity of species, so we are providing that on the north side, on a block by block basis. The Panel member then asked where all of the buses would be located. Mr. Nicklin stated that they have allocated York Street and Bay Street as well as one location along Lake Shore Boulevard as a location for buses when handling large events.

One Panel member stated that the project is a result of a very strong effort and amazing coordination. The Panel member also stated that they really liked the red granite but the renderings look as though they are really rough. Mr. Geuze stated that it was a European rendering texture and the granite will be smooth granite, like East Bayfront.

One Panel member asked if there was a way to make part of the Rees Street parking lot an area for bus parking as opposed to the proposed park. Mr. Glaisek stated that Waterfront Toronto is currently looking into that option, noting that the Councillor and many residents do not believe that the location is the best place for a park but should address other needs, such as bus parking.

One Panel member asked if the mosaic motif extends all the way to the property face on the south side of the street. Mr. Nicklin stated that this is the ideal situation. And will require negotiation with property owners.

One Panel member stated that often the roots of the London Plane species push up pavement. Mr. Nicklin stated that there is an air space between the top of the soil and the underside of the granite, preventing this from happening.

Another Panel member asked if an edge between the laybys and walkway is required. Mr. Nicklin stated that no, there can be a sloped edge. The Panel member then asked where all of the signs were, noting that it will likely look cluttered. Mr. Nicklin stated that they are currently developing a comprehensive sign strategy which will be presented in the future.

One Panel member asked if there are still parking spots along the street and if so, will any of them have electric plug-in stations. Mr. Nicklin stated that there will be short term parking, and they can look into plug-in options.

One Panel member asked if there can still be grass between the TTC tracks. Mr. Nicklin stated that because four different wheel bases must be accommodated on the TTC ROW, there would only be room for a few inches of grass, so this is no longer an option.

One Panel member asked if specific locations have been discussed with Bixi about station locations. Mr. Nicklin stated that yes, they have spoken with Bixi and locations may even be able to be tweaked in the future, as needed.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that they felt uneasy about the range of tree species for the north side of the street. The Panel member stated that the species should be specified in advance with a consistency in scale and shape. The Panel member stated that diversity should be discussed, but not at the expense of spatial continuity. Another Panel member agreed, stating that consistency is what makes this project great, along with all of the other great streets in the world. The Panel member also stated that they like the choice of the London Plane species, noting that it was selected on Bloor Street as it is an urban tree.

One Panel member was concerned with the spacing of the trees, noting that the design team should make a rule that there are never fewer than two together, so the linearity of the pattern is preserved.

One Panel member stated that the design team has done an excellent job on the customization of the standard elements. The Panel member stated that the design team has been so successful that there is a possibility of a feedback effect on how the city can use those elements in other parts of the city.

One Panel member stated that, wherever possible, they are hoping that the asphalt being used is permeated. Mr. Glaisek stated that the City of Toronto will not accept it.

One Panel member stated that the consultants should comb every inch of the project to make sure that it is fully accessible for disabled users.

One Panel member stated that they were happy to see the enhancements on the north side of the street. The Panel member also stated that it is essential to reallocate any funds required to do the entire project, not only a portion of it, and that failure is not an option for this project. A few Panel members also stated that there is an opportunity for Mayor Ford to champion this project.

One Panel member stated that they give the project full support and that they appreciated the designer's unwillingness to compromise on design excellence. The Panel member also expressed that the end product is showing that everyone is moving together with the City of Toronto.

One Panel member stated that there needs to be material evidence to show that the waterfront is changing and this is a critical project that will do that. The Panel member also noted that Quay to the City, the trial period of closing down the lanes, was brilliant and people really enjoyed the experience.

One Panel member stated that in the previous presentation to the Design Review Panel, the design team had a number of options for the median – concrete, grass, granite. The Panel member stated that perhaps the team has to go back to another option.

One Panel member stated that when West 8 and DTAH come to the Design Review Panel, they always learn something about process, which makes their presentation enjoyable.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Consider the tree species
- 2) Find a way to start implementing it as soon as possible

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Geuze and Mr. Nicklin thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Acting Chair then asked that Panel for a vote of support, conditional support or non-support for the project. The Panel voted unanimously in support of the project.

2.0 West Don Lands Development Proposal: TCHC Blocks 21 & 23

ID#: 1019

Project Type: Building/Structures

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

Proponent: TCHC

Architect/Designer: CORE & Scott Torrance Landscape Architects

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Six

Presenter(s): Babak Eslahjou, CORE & Scott Torrance, Scott Torrance Landscape Architects

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Derek Goring, Director of Development at Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project, noting that the project is moving forward quickly. Mr. Goring stated that there are 243 affordable rental units for seniors as well as families. Mr. Goring stated that they project should be under construction by the end of 2011 with occupancy in early 2013.

2.2 Project Presentation

Babak Eslahjou of CORE provided an overview of the project reminding the Panel of the program, design objectives and the overall context. Scott Torrance of Scott Torrance Landscape Architecture Inc. provided an overview of changes since the last time the project came before the Panel.

2.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked if the projection at the top of the building is gone from the previous presentations to the Panel. Mr. Eslahjou stated that yes, it has been eliminated.

Another Panel member asked what the white material was in the renderings and how well it ages. Mr. Eslahjou stated that it is Hardie Board, a low maintenance material that is supposed to wear better than stucco.

One Panel member noted that some of the canopies are “L” shaped and others are not, but asked what the canopies are actually doing. Mr. Eslahjou stated that all of the front porches have the “L” shape canopy and the canopy that is an inverted “C” denotes the main building entrance.

One Panel member stated that the gray brick referred to has a bit of purple in it. Mr. Eslahjou stated that they have recently changed that to a grey black and they are still sourcing the material from a local supplier. Mr. Eslahjou stated that the next time the project comes to the Design Review Panel they will have all of the samples.

One Panel member asked why there is a fence between the courtyard and the seniors housing. Mr. Torrance stated that it is to separate the children’s play area from the vehicular traffic along the woonerf.

One Panel member asked what the difference between the height of the slab and the finish grade will be and how much soil is in the woonerf for the trees. Mr. Torrance stated that all of those details have been defined by the Planning Partnership as part of their public realm design, noting that there are three layers Silva Cells.

One Panel member asked why the beige paving juts out. Mr. Torrance stated that it is a communal planter for the seniors that should be in a sunny location, and there was not enough room for it in front of the pergola. Another Panel member asked why the planters are not aligned with the buildings. Mr. Torrance stated that it has been something they have looked at but because of the proximity to the amenity space for the seniors, they thought the planters could be used to define the space.

One Panel member asked if the senior’s outdoor space has a solid covering, so they can sit outside, even if it is raining. Mr. Torrance stated that it is a light opening, noting that TCHC did not want a solid covering.

2.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that they thought the brick on the lower part of the building is a good option. A few Panel members stated that the architects should use caution when detailing the Hardie Board, as drip marks are easily seen on light colours.

A few Panel members stated that they had major concern with the colour, as it will age quickly. The Panel member stated that the quality of the material is essential to the longevity of the project. Another Panel member stated that it is very important for social housing materials to be durable. One Panel member stated that Swisspearl is a better version of Hardie Board.

Another Panel member stated that they were worried about the coplanar aspect of the two materials in the senior building.

One Panel member stated that the landscaping has not changed much from the previous presentation, and that there is lot of fencing. The Panel member suggested there should be a stronger connection with the seniors building and the fencing should be re-evaluated. The Panel member also stated that the splash pad is very far back in the courtyard and the planter is very small. The Panel member suggested aspects of the design become larger, or remove some entirely, noting that a bold and simple design would be preferred.

One Panel member stated that bigger trees bring shade and that the scale of the trees should be evaluated. The Panel member also stated that by simplifying the tree selection, the experience of the courtyard can be reinforced. The Panel member stated that there must be a minimum of 1.2 meters of soil depth for the trees.

One Panel member stated that the canopies are interesting, but they have to be impeccably well detailed.

One Panel member stated that there is no rhythm of the openings and that the design does not really relate to anything in the surrounding context. Another Panel member stated that picking up the industrial flavour of the surrounding context is necessary, and perhaps using a warm brick will help with that.

One Panel member stated that it should be insisted upon that the seniors outdoor area is covered, noting that even in the winter, it is great to be able to get outside.

Another Panel member stated that the way in which the porches are rendered makes them look layered and that the building has a kind of industrial feel because the first floor is high, but then the canopies change that feeling. Another Panel member felt that the canopies look like ones on strip malls.

One panel member stated that the Design Review Panel wanted to drive the simplicity of the project. The Panel member stated that the strongest view is the one from the senior's porch and that they should focus on strengthening that.

One Panel member suggested that the connection through the courtyard be maximized, perhaps with a glass guard on the ends of the courtyard and metal rails along the side. The Panel member also stated that the hook move of the paving is weak in a strong plan and that overall, the scheme is good, but could be better.

2.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Reconsider White Hardie Board
- 2) Simplify and clarify the hardscape, landscape and railings
- 3) Eliminate the "hook" in the paving
- 4) Cover the porch

2.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Eslahjou and Mr. Torrance thanked the Panel for their feedback.

2.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

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

CLOSING

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