



**WATERFRONT**Toronto

## **Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #17 Wednesday, June 13, 2007**

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### **Present:**

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair  
George Baird  
Paul Bedford  
Tania Bortolotto  
Peter Clewes  
Renee Daoust  
Siamak Hariri  
Anne McIlroy  
Janet Rosenberg

### **Designees and Guests:**

John Campbell  
Robert Freedman  
Christopher Glaisek

### **Regrets:**

Peter Halsall  
Don Schmitt  
Greg Smallenberg  
Charles Waldheim

### **Recording Secretary:**

Margaret Goodfellow

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### **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed the Panel, noting that the agenda included three big items, and then moved to an *In Camera* session for a brief discussion of protocol.

Following the *In Camera* session, the Chair opened the public session of the meeting, reviewed the day's agenda, and invited John Campbell to provide his report.

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### **REPORT FROM THE CEO**

John Campbell, the Corporation's President and CEO, began by highlighting the major activities of the past month.

Mr. Campbell announced that on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the Corporation launched its new brand and will now operate as Waterfront Toronto, although its legal name will remain Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation. The new branding will allow the Corporation to link its many different parks and precincts to a single brand, as well as to other waterfront initiatives on "the new blue edge". A comprehensive rendering of the revitalized waterfront, completed by Urban Strategies for Spacing Magazine's June issue, was then distributed to Panel members.

Mr. Campbell stated that the developer RFQ for the first phase of the West Don Lands will be issued shortly. It will be for a total of 850 units, adjacent to Toronto Community Housing's affordable housing project. Once a short list has been set, an RFP will be issued in September, giving the Corporation time to complete the Risk Assessment/Risk Management Plan.

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

One Panel member asked whether there would be a conflict for Design Review Panel members submitting for the RFP. Mr. Campbell stated that it would be clarified with the Corporation's ethics advisor. Mr. Campbell noted that the design community is a small world, and it is in the best interest of the Corporation to have the best talent both advising on, and submitting proposals for major waterfront projects.

The Chair then noted that, given the full agenda, the Corporation's Vice President for Planning and Design would not be providing a report this month.

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## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

The Chair then asked the Panel if there were any questions or comments on the last month's meeting minutes. There being none, the minutes were approved.

One Panel member recommended that the Corporation further formalize the design review process, noting that it is unclear for someone trying to navigate their way through the process, and suggesting that stages be outlined and milestones identified as part of the process.

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## **PROJECT REVIEWS**

### **I.0 Project Symphony**

*ID#: 1017*

*Project Type: Building Design*

*Location: Jarvis Street south of Queens Quay on the south-east side of the Jarvis Slip*

*Proponent: Toronto Economic Development Corporation, (TEDCO)*

*Architect/Designer: Diamond and Schmitt Architects Inc., (DSAI)*

*Review Round: Four*

*Presenter(s): Jack Diamond, DSAI*

*Delegation: David Dow, DSAI; Jeff Steiner, TEDCO; John Levitt, TEDCO*

#### **I.1 Introduction to the Issues**

Mr. Glaisek introduced the project noting that this is the fourth time the project is being presented to the Panel. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel was sought include:

- The building's relationship to the north/south and east/west streets
- The evolution of the building's design

#### **I.2 Project Presentation**

Jack Diamond, Principal of Diamond and Schmitt Architects Inc., provided the Panel with an update on the development of the building design, including: the redistribution of the ground floor uses, the public realm interface of the studio, reconfiguration of the roof terraces, public accessibility, LEED target items, and siting and zoning issues.

#### **I.3 Panel Comments**

The Chair began by noting that the materials presented by the proponent bore little relationship to the materials submitted in advance by the proponent for Panel view. Several Panel members agreed that this was not consistent with how other panels function, and agreed to adopt a policy that all future presentations be limited to what was provided in advance, with the exception of physical models.

The Chair then asked the Panel for questions of clarification.

One Panel member asked why the loading was moved from the east/west to the north/south street, and what the implications would be on neighbouring development, especially if it is residential in use. Mr. Diamond noted that the loading docks were moved from the east/west street early on at the suggestion of the Panel, and moving the main entrance to the east/west street was to provide access the two cores equally, and to create a stronger relationship Queens Quay in the interim.

The Panel felt that parking, loading, and servicing should be considered on a precinct-wide level, and one Panel member stated their preference for the building servicing to be on the north-east corner of the site, to the east of the entrance doors. Mr. Campbell stated that the Corporation is focusing on commercial buildings for the east side of the north/south street, and felt that coordinating all the servicing on the north/south street would ensure that the east/west street would be a desirable address. The Panel then encouraged the designers to examine whether the size of the aperture for the parking and loading could be minimized. Mr. Diamond agreed that they would like to consolidate to the degree possible.

One Panel member then asked where the fresh air intakes and exhausts were located. Mr. Dow responded that currently the exhausts are located on the east façade of the building, and that the precise location of the intakes is still being worked out. Another Panel member inquired as to the designer's strategy for concealing the mechanical equipment and elevator overrides. Mr. Diamond stated that they will be concealed on the roof and out of the line of sight from the adjacent sidewalk. Mr. Dow added that because the building will be utilizing district energy, the amount of mechanical equipment will be far less than typical for a building of this size.

The Panel noted that there was an ambiguity in the massing as to whether the building appeared as one volume or two. They noted that the success of the project would rely heavily on the differentiation of the glass between the curtain wall and the atrium. The Panel also agreed that further articulation of the atrium, even a slight recess, would be helpful in breaking down the overall mass of the building. One Panel member thought it was important that the atrium, studios and other parts be further expressed on the exterior of the building.

One Panel member asked about what seemed to be vertical operable windows in the elevations. Mr. Diamond stated that they were not operable windows, but were sunscreens that had now been removed from the design.

One Panel member asked about public accessibility along the west façade of the building. Mr. Diamond noted that the studios on the west side have controlled access and will only be visually accessible, but that the front vestibule will always be publicly accessible, and the south entrance to the atrium contains sliding screens that can either open or close to the public depending on the occasion.

The Panel then requested some general information about the grade relationships to the public realm. Mr. Dow responded that currently the ground floor is set at elevation 77.7, about 600mm above grade. A Panel member asked what implications that would have on the boardwalk and public space. Mr. Dow noted that West 8 had not fixed the elevation of the boardwalk yet, and if they end up building the boardwalk on top of the dock wall, rather than closer to the water as has been done at John and York Quays, it would almost be coplanar with the project's grade. Mr. Diamond expressed a desire to work with the West 8 team to harmonize it. One Panel member then asked if there would be flexibility to adjust the grade once the boardwalk height is fixed. Mr. Diamond stated that would not be possible as they are working with the

water table. The Panel felt very strongly about preserving the quality of the water's edge experience, and noted that West 8 is trying to keep the boardwalk as close to the water as possible. The Panel expressed a desire to see the resolution of the public realm interface at the next meeting and requested more detail be shown.

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

The Panel generally felt that the design was improved since the last presentation, and agreed that the basic position of the building and site strategies have evolved.

One Panel member felt that they saw the south elevation as two horizontal bars aspiring to go over the water, and asked if that horizontality could be pushed further. Another Panel member agreed that they liked the cantilevered effect the building has on the south side, and wondered why it wasn't continued to the other elevations.

Other Panel members stressed the importance of the quality of the space underneath the cantilever, and suggested it be a warm material such as wood. Another Panel member enquired as to the treatment of the exterior columns, noting that cladding them in a material like black granite can minimize the column's appearance and give the building a quality of lightness. The Panel felt that the south façade should be looked at further, especially the planar shift of the atrium wall. The Panel also questioned the introduction of the diagonal wall and suggested it be straightened out to re-enforce the building's clean lines. Another Panel member remarked that the elevations had a strong rhythm of alternating solids and voids, and that this should be continued with the top floor penthouse so as to reduce its visual bulk.

One Panel member wanted to encourage the transparency of the glass, but cautioned that there may be problems with the designer's LEED goals. Another Panel member stated that because of the Corporation's commitment to sustainability, it was important to consider the lighting and reflection of the building in relation to bird flight.

One Panel member felt the weakest part of the building was the south-west corner, particularly how people walking along the west façade turn the corner in relationship to the arcade.

#### I.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. Consider shifting the plane of the atrium façade in a metre or so.
- ii. Model the West façade with more detail at the ground floor.
- iii. Reconsider the location of the loading docks, possibly shifting them to the north-east corner of the east/west street, and/or narrowing the aperture.
- iv. Provide more detail regarding materials, signage, and lighting.

#### I.5 Proponents Response

Mr. Steiner thanked the Panel for their comments.

## **2.0 Central Waterfront: Spadina Head of Slip**

*ID#: 1007-A*

*Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design*

*Location: South of Queens Quay Boulevard at Lower Spadina Avenue*

*Proponent: Waterfront Toronto*

*Architect/Designer: West 8+DTAH*

*Review Round: Two*

*Presenter(s): Marc Ryan, West 8 and Adam Nicklin, DTAH*

*Delegation: John Hillier, DTAH*

### 2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Pina Mallozzi, the Corporation's Project Manager for the Central Waterfront, introduced the project. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel was sought included:

- The slopes, grading, and accessibility of the Head of Slip's undulating surface
- The detailing and material selection
- The progression of the design features

### 2.2 Project Presentation

Mark Ryan, Project Manager with West 8, provided an overview of the existing site conditions and water levels. He then outlined the design of the slip including the structural system, the undulating form and accessibility issues, the addition of surface textures, the proposed detailing of the connections, the fish habitat, and expectation of hearing waves break over the rocks beneath the deck.

### 2.3 Panel Comments

The Chair then asked the Panel for questions of clarification or comments.

One Panel member thought the detailing of the project was very elegant, and would recommend that wood, rather than steel, be used in the handrail. Another Panel member commented that they did not believe that Douglas Fir would withstand the site conditions, and suggested that Ipe wood would be a better alternative.

Another Panel member asked whether urban furniture such as garbage cans had been considered as they can often pollute the elegance of the design, and are often added by the City after the fact. Mr. Ryan answered that they were avoiding the use of urban furniture on the deck itself, except for seating, and are planning on having these types of furnishings incorporated into promenade area instead.

One Panel member then asked the other Panel members what they thought of the treatment of the transformer, and suggested that it did not really make sense to treat it as part of the design. Another Panel Member stated that they liked the idea of wrapping of the transformer, but felt the design team should consider other options that don't read as "wrapping" the slip head up the side of the transformer box.

Another Panel member asked if they were using the same assumptions regarding water levels as in HTO Park. Mr. Nicklin noted that they were nearly identical, with just a bit more clearance being proposed here.

Another Panel member was curious about the “soundscape” of the wave action below, and enquired whether amplification would be necessary to compensate for city noise. Mr. Ryan noted that they have examined similar design applications and felt that amplification was not necessary.

The Panel asked what the connection between the Spadina Head of Slip and Queens Quay was like. Mr. Ryan noted that they are the designers of the slip and promenade and will ensure there is coordination. The Panel then went over to the model and Mr. Ryan explained that the promenade will be granite pavers, and once you step onto the deck, it will be a totally different experience.

One Panel member expressed surprise with the cautiousness of the team regarding the 5% versus 8.3% slopes. There was concern that using the less aggressive design here would set a precedent that affects the entire approach to the other slips. Mr. Ryan stated that their initial strategy was to tackle the Spadina Head of Slip first because it was seemingly the easiest, but in the end the challenge has been its subtlety, because the steeper slopes may appear flatter than they are to the public.

Another Panel member felt that North America tends to be too conservative with water’s edge treatments and expressed amazement at how many cars end up in the canals in Holland every year. They noted the lack of safety rails along the edge, which provoked a general commentary by all on the litigious nature of North America versus Europe.

Another Panel member asked if the 5% slope maximum was mandated by the code in this condition. Mr. Ryan responded that it was not clear, and noted that there was little flexibility when it came to people’s safety. The Panel agreed that the specter of a lawsuit is a scary thing. Mr. Campbell stated that from the perspective of the Corporation, there were many hours spent agonizing over the rail at York and John Quay, but the final decision was that only the low toe rail was required in most instances.

One Panel member stated their comfort with 5% if it guaranteed there would not have to be a handrail, and noted that 5% could still buy a lot of elegance. Another Panel member disagreed, noting that they were uneasy about the secondary and tertiary ramifications on the rest of the waterfront of being too cautious on this first project. The Panel was polled and a majority felt they could accept the 5% option if there were no viable alternative.

The Chair then asked the West 8 + DTAH team whether they were comfortable with 5%. Mr. Ryan stated that Mr. Geuze from West 8 was not satisfied with the 5% slope, but that Mr. Hillier from DTAH was not yet comfortable having to stamp drawings which exceed 5%.

One panel member suggested that consideration be given to exaggerating the curvature of the bench in order to visually increase the slope.

#### 2.4 Summary of Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. The Panel was comfortable with the 5% slope option providing it eliminated the need for handrails and other visual clutter.

#### 2.5 Proponent’s Response

Mr. Ryan thanked the Panel for their comments.

### **3.0 West Don Lands Public Realm**

*ID#: 1018*

*Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design*

*Location: Area bounded by Parliament Street, Eastern Avenue, the Don River and the CN Rail corridor.*

*Proponent: Waterfront Toronto*

*Architect/Designer: The Planning Partnership with Phillips Farvaag Smallenberg and &Co.*

*Review Round: Two*

*Presenter(s): David Leinster, Planning Partnership; Kelty McKinnon, Phillips Farvaag Smallenberg; Mark Sterling, &Co.*

*Delegation: Chris Hardwicke, &Co.*

#### 3.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the project. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel was sought included:

- The design concepts for Front Street, Mill Street, River Street and St. Lawrence Street
- The proposed new pedestrian street concept
- The appropriate number of street typologies proposed for the West Don Lands

#### 3.2 Project Presentation

David Leinster, Partner with the Planning Partnership, began by introducing the team, then walked the Panel through their street precedents and proposed street hierarchy in the West Don Lands. Kelty McKinnon, Senior Consultant with Phillips Farvaag Smallenberg, then presented the planting strategies, and tree forms. Mr. Sterling, Principal with &Co., then presented design options for Front Street as well as Mill Street, St. Lawrence Street, and the pedestrian streets.

#### 3.3 Panel Comments

The Chair then asked the Panel for comments.

There was general agreement that the West Don Lands Public Realm has the potential to have a tremendous impact on the City. It was noted that it represents an opportunity to be a thorough investigation, and possible demonstration project that addresses the design of streets in Toronto. The Panel encouraged the designers to incorporate as much landscape as possible into the designs, and suggested that the team challenge current thought on lane widths and tree spacing and make recommendations on preferred street types. The Panel asked that Waterfront Toronto be sure to give the consultants a broad enough scope to properly investigate this and study alternatives to accepted practices.

One Panel member suggested reducing the number of different street typologies by “upgrading” the “neighbourhood collectors” to “major streets”. Another Panel member pointed out that even with that reduction, in the area close to the Distillery District there will be no doorways onto the street therefore creating another typology. Another Panel member foresaw a conflict with the “neighbourhood street” typology when there is underground parking, and felt that too could lead to more street typologies. There was general agreement that fewer street typologies would help keep the district feeling coherent.

The Chair then asked the Panel members for comments on the Front Street options presented.

Several Panel members expressed discomfort with all the asymmetrical alternatives that were presented for Front Street, stating that they placed differential property value on the north and

south sides of the street. They stated a preference for a straight, symmetrical right-of-way, removal of the median, and distribution of the landscape equally on both sides of the street in widened sidewalks. One Panel member asked if this symmetrical, non-central median version of Front Street had been considered. Mr. Sterling noted that it was one of the original schemes considered, but raised a concern that it would not leave a meaningful public space on either side of the street. However, he agreed that the option should be investigated further.

Another Panel member noted that Front Street was originally envisaged as a very residential street, similar to Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, and expressed discomfort with the commercial character now being proposed as inconsistent with that early vision. There was general agreement, though, that the two wide sidewalks option might better serve a retail oriented street.

The Panel then noted that there were quite a few tree types proposed. Ms. Mckinnon answered that this was the first attempt at tree selection, and that the number of species may be further simplified.

Another Panel member noted that the streets were each proposed to be planted with one species of tree, and wondered whether that was a practice that would be acceptable to the City. Mr. Leinster responded that this approach is also being used by the MVVA team for Bayview and River Streets, where species diversity is being attained on a street-by-street basis, rather than a tree-by-tree basis.

### 3.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. This project should be pursued with a goal of creating new prototypes for streets in the City of Toronto.
- ii. A symmetrical version of Front Street should be fully explored.
- iii. The number of species of trees should be considered further.

### 1.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Leinster thanked the Panel for their feedback.

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## **CLOSING**

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

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