



WATERFRONTToronto

**Waterfront Design Review Panel
Minutes of Meeting #62
Wednesday, October 10th, 2012**

Present:

George Baird, Chair
Claude Cormier
Pat Hanson
Gerry Faubert
Brigitte Shim
Betsy Williamson

Regrets:

Bruce Kuwabara
Paul Bedford
Jane Wolf
Don Schmitt

Designees and Guests:

Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

Recording Secretary:

JD Reeves

WELCOME

George Baird, Acting Chair in Bruce Kuwabara's absence, opened the meeting by explaining that Bruce was unable to attend.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Acting Chair provided an overview of the agenda and asked if any Panel member would like to move to adopt the minutes from September 2012 meeting. One Panel member moved to adopt the minutes, and the minutes were unanimously adopted.

The Chair then asked if anyone 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.

REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN

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

- *East Bayfront Transit Implementation Study*: Progressing and considering a variety of transit options. The draft of the report is due next month and will be presented to stakeholders before being finalized in December.

- *Queens Quay Construction:* The construction contract has been awarded, utility locates are underway, and Toronto Hydro has started their construction in front of the Westin Hotel. Demolition work is scheduled to commence within the next couple weeks.

Mr. Glaisek then invited John Campbell, Waterfront Toronto's President and CEO, to provide an update on the Port Lands Acceleration Initiative. Mr. Campbell stated that the final report was recently approved by council and that it had been a useful process working with the TRCA and the City of Toronto on complex issues such as land-use and flood protection while MvVA ensured a great overall design vision. The next step will be to develop precinct plans for Cousins Quay, Polson Quay and the film studio district which will be done over the next year. Mr. Campbell stated they are making good progress.

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

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Private Development Proposal: 43A Parliament (281 Front Street East)

ID#: 1049

Project Type: Buildings/Structures

Location: 43a Parliament St

Proponent: Urbacon

Architect/Designer: WZMH Architects

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Two

Presenter(s): Nicola Casciato, WZMH Architects

Delegation: Ron Carinci, Urbacon

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Willie Macrae, City of Toronto Community Planning, provided a brief introduction to the proposed data centre at 43a Parliament Street and explained to finalize the First Parliament site deal by the end of October, thereby securing the historically significant site which is to become a new two acre public park with a historic interpretive centre.

1.2 Project Presentation

Nicola Casciato, Principal with WZMH Architects, presented an update and explained how the building's designs had evolved. Mr. Casciato stated that they have responded to the WDRP's recommendation, allowing for future developments to use the excess heat generated by the data centre, adding more terra cotta to the façade, reducing the opaque glazing, and lightening the colour of the penthouse louvers.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

The Chair asked if, on the southern elevation, there was a change in grade across the site. Mr. Casciato stated that there is an elevation change and that the site rises going east.

A Panel Member asked if there was any night lighting. Mr. Casciato stated that due to the LEED silver target and the energy required to cool the data centre, it has proven difficult to add external lighting on the façade.

Another Panel Member asked if there was spandrel glass behind the Terracotta “baguettes”. Mr. Casciato explained that they are proposing metal panels behind the baguettes so there is relatively little glass.

Another Panel Member asked what the depth was between the baguettes and the surface behind. Mr. Casciato stated that is approximately 300mm to give a sense of depth and shadow against the spandrel glass. The Panel Member then asked if there was any planned parking below grade. Mr. Casciato stated that there was but very little.

Another Panel Member asked if the proponent tried to reduce the spandrel glass further. Mr. Casciato stated that they had not because they believe the spandrel glass would help break up the façade and provide some visual interest. The Panel Member then asked if there was any spandrel glass on the north façade. Mr. Casciato stated that there was some on the ground floor because it allowed the flexibility to be switched out in the future with vision glass if desired which could help animate that façade.

Another Panel Member asked if building’s core had been moved to the southern exterior wall. Mr. Casciato confirmed that that was the case and the move was intended to address the Panel’s suggestion of using the core to create views back to the City.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

A Panel Member appreciated the efforts made to address the comments from the last presentation but, suggested that less spandrel glass be used and that more vision glass be introduced at key locations to reduce the “black box” effect and bring some additional animation even if the data centre had relatively little activity. Several Panel Members agreed that that it could be interesting to see into the data centre at a few points.

Another Panel Member agreed that the proponent had made good progress, but was glad to see the increase in the terracotta and liked that there was 300mm of depth between the baguettes and the spandrels to create a play of light and shadow on the façade.

Another Panel Member stated that they liked the use of terracotta shown in the Renzo Piano precedent, but this proposal is not dynamic and looks too conventional. The Panel Member continued that the penthouses louvers, which hide mechanical equipment, are not a stand-in for the cornice lines on historic buildings as the proponent suggests. The Panel Members then stated that there is still a lot of time to work on the west and southern façade and hopes that it can develop further.

Mr. Glaisek then stated that, while this project is on a short timeline, the Panel should comment however they see fit within pragmatic and budgetary constraints of this development. Mr. Glaisek continued that he did not want the Panel to have the impression that a different standard should be applied for this building because of the land exchange.

The Chair then asked, given the October 18th building permit deadline, if the Panel could ask for them to return again. Mr. Glaisek stated that they could ask the proponent to return to see the construction level drawings and reiterated that there is still a significant amount of design that can happen after a building permit is obtained, particularly if it is related to exterior façade design.

Another Panel Member stated that the exterior and façade needs further consideration and that they are not sure whether cost prevented the addition of more terracotta. The Panel Members felt that the north façade was more successful and didn't understand the combination of spandrel glass, metal panels, and terracotta baguettes.

Another Panel Member stated that there has been a thoughtful response to the previous comments, but that the Panel would like to see more work on the façade design. The Panel Members stated that there is a crucial pedestrian link across Parliament Street from the park to the south to the future First Parliament Park and then to David Crombee Park beyond. The Panel Members continued that this pedestrian link needs to be a consideration within this project. The Panel Member also stated the discussion on the north and east façades are important because it is uncertain when future development on those sites will occur. The Panel Members also stated the placement of the elevator core is a key consideration for the success of the south-west corner of the building and that placing against the south façade will reduce the amount of animation on the park side. Lastly, the Panel Members encouraged the architect to amplify the sense of depth and plasticity on every façade because that is what the Renzo Piano precedent is all about.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Without being prescriptive, the Panel requested a more "volumetrically articulated treatment" of the skin while re-evaluating the use of vision versus spandrel glass and the use of metal panels behind the baguettes.
- 2) Consider pulling the elevator core away from the facades on the south-west corner to provide additional fenestration for animation and help "turn the corner".

The Chair thanked the Proponent for the presentation.

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 unanimously non-support pending resolution of the issues identified above but, expressed their faith in WZMH Architects' ability to address the Panel's concerns.

CLOSING

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