



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #18 Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Present:

Paul Bedford, Acting Chair
George Baird
Tania Bortolotto
Renee Daoust
Peter Halsall
Don Schmitt
Greg Smallenberg

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Robert Freedman
Christopher Glaisek

Regrets:

Peter Clewes
Bruce Kuwabara
Anne McIlroy
Janet Rosenberg
Charles Waldheim
Siamak Hariri

WELCOME

Paul Bedford welcomed the Panel, noting that Mr. Kuwabara and Mr. Glaisek's had asked him to serve as Acting Chair this month.

The Acting Chair then invited John Campbell to provide his report.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

Mr. Campbell, the Corporation's President and CEO, began by thanking the Panel Members for their hard work in getting Project Symphony on track.

Mr. Campbell announced that Waterfront Toronto is currently working on a revised set of Corporate Objectives intended to help align various department's and consultant's work with Waterfront Toronto's sustainability mandate.

Mr. Campbell stated that conflict of interest guidelines, intended to establish clear protocols for both Panel members and Proponents, are being developed and will be discussed at the next Panel meeting. Mr. Campbell reiterated that it is in the best interest for Waterfront Toronto to have top talent in the city both advising and working on projects at the waterfront.

Mr. Campbell explained that Waterfront Toronto as a whole is working with the City, the TRCA and the Ministry of the Environment to streamline development approvals in anticipation of the large volume of work that is coming down the line.

Mr. Campbell stated that on June 25th, Waterfront Toronto broke ground in the West Don Lands for the flood protection landform and interceptor sewer. Mr. Campbell noted that the Corporation is proceeding with the Developer RFP for market units for District 3. Waterfront Toronto is also actively pursuing projects with affordable home ownership groups Miziwe Biik and Habitat for Humanity, for a mix of market and affordable housing.

Mr. Campbell then announced the transfer of the public lands in the East Bayfront, south of Queens Quay, from TEDCO back to the City and under the Corporation's jurisdiction, simplifying the development process. Mr. Campbell noted that demolition was about to begin on the Cinespace building, making way for the construction of Project Symphony. Mr. Campbell then reiterated the Corporation's desire to pursue commercial development on the majority of the lands south of Queens Quay, as residential development will likely predominate the private lands north of Queens Quay.

There being no questions, the Acting Chair then asked Christopher Glaisek to provide his report.

REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN

Mr. Glaisek, the Corporation's Vice President for Planning and Design, provided a summary of project progress over the past month.

Lower Don Lands

- The Michael Van Valkenbergh Associates (MVVA) team together with the TRCA and the Environmental Assessment team are moving forward to re-naturalize the mouth of the Don while formal approvals for the project are being negotiated with the City.

West Don Lands

- There is support from the City of Toronto to move forward with developing the new "pedestrian street" typology, that prioritizes pedestrians over cars, but still allows items such as utilities to be put in the Right of Way.

Lake Ontario Park

- While the phasing of Lake Ontario Park is still being determined, Toronto Water is adapting their Coatsworth Cut Environmental Assessment to allow construction of the expanded wetland and break-water bridge proposed by Field Operations.

Central Waterfront

- The Traffic Feasibility Study for Queens Quay Boulevard has gained endorsement from City Transportation Staff to move forward with the E.A. process .
- The construction tender for the Spadina Head of Slip will go out in September.

Administration

- The Corporation's Planning and Design Department is now fully staffed, bringing all the Planning and Design project management capabilities in house.
- Margaret Goodfellow will now be taking on the support of the Design Review Panel from Pina Mallozzi.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Acting Chair began by stating that attention should be paid to maintenance issues in HTO Park, in particular, the number of broken Muskoka Chairs leant to the City from Waterfront Toronto, that are lying derelict in the sand. The Acting Chair noted that after a discussion with Ms. Rosenberg, the designer of the park, and Mr. Campbell, a plan to replace the chairs with ones from storage would be implemented. The Chair also noted the need for a longer term strategy to design a more durable beach chair, possibly with the Parks department.

The Acting Chair reinforced the importance of addressing the new City of Toronto Development Infrastructure and Protocol Standards (DIPS) when the Public Realm component of the West Don Lands comes before the Panel.

The Acting Chair then asked the Panel that in order to conduct the meeting in a timely matter, every effort should be made by Panelists to follow the protocol of asking questions of clarifications first, and when all questions have been answered to then proceed to general comments.

The Acting 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.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 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: Three

Presenter(s): Adriaan Gueze, West 8

Delegation: Mark Ryan, West 8; Adam Nicklin, DTAH

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Pina Mallozzi, Waterfront Toronto's Planning and Design Project Manager for the Central Waterfront Public Realm, introduced the project noting that the final presentation of Construction Documents to the Panel will be in September. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel was sought included:

- The species of wood for the decking, structure, and water's edge bench
- The treatment of the transformer vault
- The location and materiality of the handrail
- The anti-slip treatment

1.2 Project Presentation

Adriaan Gueze, Principal with West 8, presented the project describing the study of the water and ice levels, the sectional qualities of the slope, the structural system, the accessible pathway, the carborundum anti-slip measures and liability, the selection of timber, the bench-as-toe-rail design, the treatment of the transformer vault, the handrails, and the proposed lighting effects of the water under the slip.

1.3 Panel Questions and Comments

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

One panel member asked where the different types of wood would be used. Mr. Gueze clarified that it was the intent to use a treated Douglas Fir for the structure and the bench, and use Ipe or Cumaru for the decking. One Panel member enquired as to the dimensions and details being considered for the decking. Mr. Ryan produced a robust section of the decking stating that they had been working with an 88mm thick section when using Douglas Fir and noted that even the hardwoods will require extra thickness because of wave action. Mr. Nicklin stated that the dimension is based on an exposed condition, noting that the sheltered condition of the Spadina head of slip may enable them to go slightly thinner. Another panel member cautioned against going too thin, and also suggested investigating Yellow Cedar as a possible Canadian option for the decking.

Another panel member asked if there was a precedent of handrails being used anywhere else along the waterfront. The Panel agreed that there was no such precedent, noting that HTO Park and Harbourfront Centre utilize a toe rail only. Another Panel member asked what the intention behind using the handrail was. Mr. Nicklin stated that the handrail was placed to prevent people from slipping and actually falling into the water, and noted that it was part of their due-diligence rather than being a building code issue.

Another Panel member enquired about the dimension between the bench and the edge of the deck. Mr. Gueze stated that it was 550mm. Several Panel members asked if it was the intention that people walk along the water side of the bench. Mr. Gueze said it was not for walking, just a place to rest one's feet while seated.

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to comments.

One Panel member felt that the relationship between the bench and the end of the deck was actually more dangerous than just having a toe rail because it was big enough to invite people to try to walk on it. Another Panel member stated the bench and hand rail are already "signifiers" of the edge and felt that an additional toe rail was not necessary. Another Panel member stated that there was discrepancy with the design intention, noting that the location of the handrail actually prevents people from accessing the bench from the land side, and would leave them no alternative but to walk around the front. Another Panel member agreed that accessing the bench from the waterside seemed tenuous. Mr. Ryan stated that the dimension was meant to actually discourage travel along the waterside and warned that if the space is increased too much, then it runs the risk of becoming a path. Mr. Gueze added that the handrail would be located only at the steeper slopes, and would not run the complete length of the bench. One Panel member stated that the simplicity of the design came both from its form and its materiality, and cautioned that the hand rail seemed to be a foreign element in the design. One Panel member added their acceptance of the hand rail to achieve the 8.3% slope. Another Panel member stated their reluctance to go back to the 5% slope, but wanted to make sure that the 8.3% does not cost the design its simplicity and grace.

Another Panel member stated that the current proposal magnified the presence of the transformer vault, and suggested that it be left alone until such time that it can be re-located. Mr. Glaisek noted that it would be relocated as part of the larger Queens Quay Rebuild, but that it is not in the Spadina Head of Slip scope. Mr. Gueze agreed that more attention should not be drawn to the transformer, noting that their intention was to simply clean it up with a power-wash

and a fresh coat of paint. One Panel member suggested that the transformer could be used as a signage opportunity to promote Waterfront Toronto in the interim.

The Panel generally agreed that the maple-leaf pattern of the anti-slip measures was successful, but encouraged the designers to maintain the simplicity of the design to the degree possible, and not to obscure the simplicity of the design with too many surface elements.

One Panel member asked how the slip would be treated in the winter. Mr. Glaisek stated that the Slip will be closed during the winter months altogether, as is already done on the wooden boardwalks at Harbourfront Centre.

1.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. The design solution for the transformer vault should be implemented as part of its ultimate relocation, not an interim decoration.
- ii. 8.3% is the preferred slope for the Spadina Head of Slip, but there is strong concern about setting a handrail precedent along the waterfront.
- iii. The bench should not invite people to walk along the edge of the deck.
- iv. Consider the anti-slip measures further and be cautious of them taking away from the simplicity of the overall design.
- v. The selection a Canadian wood for the deck structure could pose a challenge with durability, and treatment should be studied further.

1.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Gueze thanked the Panel for their comments.

2.0 Don River Park: Public Art

ID#: 1006-A

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Don River Park; west of the Don River, north of the rail way.

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: Meg Webster

Review Round: two

Presenter(s): Laura Solano, MVVA and Meg Webster, Artist (via conference call)

Delegation: Rob Gilmore, MVVA

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

James Roche, Waterfront Toronto's Planning and Design Project Manager for Don River Park, introduced the project, noting that since the last presentation, the design proposal has changed in form, material and function. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel was sought included:

- The form of the public art piece
- The appropriateness of the material chosen
- The siting, context and integration of the piece with the surrounding landscape design proposal

2.2 Project Presentation

Laura Solano, Principal with MVVA, started the presentation by apologizing for Meg Webster's only being available by conference call as her flight was cancelled due to weather. Mr. Solano then described the evolution of the art piece. Originally conceived of as a paving design in the pavilion

structure, Ms. Solano stated their desire to create a singular piece of art that was even more site specific, and now propose separating the pavilion and the public art. Ms. Solano went on to describe the form and location of the “Perch”, with Meg Webster describing the materiality and citing local precedents for rammed-earth projects. Ms. Solano outlined their thinking on issues including vandalism, durability, and opportunities for revealing the geology of the site through the piece. Meg Webster concluded by speaking to the tactility and physical properties of the material.

2.3 Panel Questions and Comments

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

Another Panel member asked how the termination point for the “Perch” was selected, and why it did not look toward the city skyline. Ms. Solano stated that the spiral form of the piece offered many views as the occupant traversed it, but ultimately, the terminus would look over the prairie and marsh elements of the park.

One Panel member asked if there was a view of either the river or the lake from the Perch. Ms. Solano stated that even though the art piece was located on the highest point of the park, views of either the river or the lake are not possible. One Panel member asked if there were sight lines between the art piece and the pavilion. Ms. Webster noted that the perch shape was intended to reference the soaring roof of the pavilion, and acknowledged the desire to have some sort of dialogue between the two.

One Panel member asked if the intention of the form was to be more closed or open ended. Ms. Webster answered that the intention was to create a perch that looked out, versus creating a gathering space that was more introspective. Ms. Webster wanted to re-iterate that this was a piece of art rather than seating. One Panel member urged the team to consider the quality of the space inside the art piece, and cautioned against creating a space that would make people feel closed-in.

Another Panel member asked what the elevation was of the perch compared with the flood protection landform. Ms. Solano stated that the piece was at elevation 88.0 with the crest of the flood protection landform being around elevation 80.0 to 81.0, making the piece quite a bit higher.

Another Panel member asked whether there was a lighting strategy for the piece. Ms. Solano stated that the design is still preliminary, but that lighting will be considered.

One Panel member asked if there was a strategy for preserving the rammed-earth from the effects of this northern climate. Another Panel member asked if there was a “plan b” consideration in case the rammed-earth as a building material proved not to be feasible. Ms. Solano agreed that climate poses a challenge, but that extensive research has been done and that they feel confident in their choice of materials, noting that their engineers are investigating possible additives including fiberglass or cement mixed into the earth. One Panel member cautioned against substituting concrete for the rammed earth because the inherent warmth of the materials are so different.

Another member asked what the pathway slope inside the piece was. Ms. Solano answered that it ranges between 3-5% and will follow accessibility guidelines. Another Panel member asked if public art has to follow the building code at all, and whether or not handrails would be necessary. Ms. Solano agreed to get back to the panel with an answer to that question.

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated their appreciation of the spiral form, but expressed uneasiness with the terminus where it turns back in on itself, looking back towards where you have already been. Another Panel member stated that at the highest point of the piece, it should be oriented toward the city skyline. Another Panel member encouraged the designers to investigate viewing opportunities all the way along as you move through the sculpture, and not just at the end.

One Panel member cautioned against simply making the art piece a terminus to a path, noting that one would arrive at the terminus and look up the Bayview Extension.

One Panel member appreciated the spiral form, but encouraged the designers to look at Frank Gehry's spiral stair in the new Art Gallery of Ontario as an example of how one can do a complex, yet elegant spiral form.

One Panel member stated that the scale of the piece should be studied in relation to the size of the park, noting that there was currently an uncertainty of scale in the project. Another panel member agreed stating that they thought the scale is overly modest at this point. One Panel member stated that the project did not engage the landscape enough, noting its position in an awkward realm neither emerging from, nor being dependant on, the landscape. Another Panel member cited Machu Picchu in Peru as a successful example of a landform merging elegantly into architecture.

2.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. Present a strong case for the viability of rammed earth in Toronto's climate.
- ii. Investigate the appropriate scale of the piece for the site.
- iii. Investigate opportunities for further integrating the piece into the landscape, as it currently feels like an "add on" to a successful park design.
- iv. Study the implications on safety and possible entrapment issues with the form.
- v. Consider the views along the path and what views the terminus will have.

2.5 Proponent's Response

Ms. Solano and Ms. Webster 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 Smallemberg and &Co.

Review Round: Three

Presenter(s): David Leinster, The Planning Partnership, and Greg Smallemberg, Phillips Farvaag Smallemberg

Delegation: Rob Gilmore, The Planning Partnership

3.1 Introduction to the Issues

Carla Guerrero, Waterfront Toronto's Planning and Design Project Manager for the West Don Lands, introduced the project, noting that since the last Design Review Panel presentation, the City of Toronto has agreed to view the West Don Lands as a demonstration project, allowing the

creativity of the design to be pushed further. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel was sought included:

- The design of Front Street in relation to parkland dedication and programming, functionality of the intersections as well as traffic and pedestrian safety considerations.
- The design of the pedestrian streets including reduced road widths, pervious surface treatments, and possible other locations where these principals could be used the West Don Lands.

3.2 Project Presentation

David Leinster, Partner with the Planning Partnership, began by introducing the team and walking the Panel through the street types and hierarchy. Greg Smallenberg, Partner with Phillips Farvaag Smallenberg then described the ecological and aesthetic considerations behind the planting strategy. Mr. Smallenberg then reviewed precedents of pedestrian lanes, or “Woonerfs” that illustrated paving, drainage and painting strategies, before describing their design for the pedestrian lanes in District 3. Mr. Smallenberg continued by outlining their design options for Front Street, including the central median, symmetrical street promenade, or asymmetrical street promenades. Mr. Smallenberg concluded by outlining details that they are considering using including wide curbs, saw cut concrete, wooden sidewalks and raised parking.

3.3 Panel Questions and Comments

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

One Panel member asked if bicycles had been accounted for in the lane widths, noting the strong advocacy that cycling has in Toronto. Mr. Leinster noted that bicycle lanes were planned for Mill Street and River Street.

One Panel member asked why Front Street changed from being a stately residential model similar to Commonwealth Avenue in Boston to being retail-oriented. Mr. Glaisek stated that retail was originally intended to be scattered throughout the precinct, but that it was amalgamated into one residential strip on Front Street.

One Panel member asked if the proposed dimensions of Front Street were similar to Las Ramblas in Barcelona. Mr. Smallenberg stated that it was of comparable size.

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member expressed concern with all the options except the central median because of the awkward connection at Cherry Street. Another Panel member agreed, stating that “the jog” looked like an afterthought or mistake in the plan. One Panel member countered that there were no stunning examples of medians in Toronto, but conceded that this could be an opportunity to do it well.

Another Panel member expressed a desire to select the central median option for Front Street as it was consistent with both the precinct plan and parks dedication amounts, and noted their uneasiness with departing from the approved precinct plan the Panel had previously endorsed. Mr. Smallenberg interjected that the Panel originally approved the West Don Lands precinct plan with a caveat that the street layout would be looked into further by the designers.

Another Panel member agreed with maintaining the central median option, but moving away from the neo-classical division of street and park, suggesting that the entire right of way be treated like

a European piazza with streets, sidewalks and public spaces finished with similar materials to create a single, more homogeneous space.

Several Panel members then weighed-in on the symmetrical versus non-symmetrical options. One Panel member expressed a preference for the asymmetrical option, but also agreed that the approved precinct plan should not be second-guessed. Another Panel member felt uncomfortable with the asymmetrical option as it privileges the north over the south side of the street.

One Panel member suggested that the “piazza” treatment could be used on any of the options shown, not just the central median. Another Panel member agreed that this uniform treatment would benefit the asymmetrical option, noting that it would be less about how the vehicular traffic moves through, and more about the people and activities moving through the space.

One Panel member expressed concern that the City may not allow this treatment, noting that at this time, the City prefers asphalt painted with zebra stripes instead of concrete pavers for the crosswalks. Mr. Campbell then suggested that although the City is uncomfortable with the pavers at the crosswalks, it was worth suggesting that the pavers could be used for the entire street as part of a larger public realm strategy. Mr. Smallenberg noted that it was worth having a preliminary discussion about applying different treatments to the roads with City departments such as Parks Forestry and Recreation, Works, and Transportation before finalizing the design.

One Panel member stated that there were no successful models where retail frontage is set back far from the curb in Toronto, and worried if the asymmetrical streets options put one side at more of a disadvantage than the other. One Panel member countered that Queen Street West, just east of Spadina, is a local example of an asymmetrical street with a wide sidewalk with successful retail on both sides. Another Panel member suggested engaging a retail consultant to offer their perspective on the relative merits of each scheme. Another panel member agreed that bringing in a retail consultant would help the Panel make a more informed decision. One Panel member stated their concern with retail consultants, however, preferring a format where all the pros and cons of each of the options are explicitly stated and weighed in relation to one another. They agreed that the functional traffic issues are also important and it would be great to see if one option was more successful at addressing these than others, as right now its still not clear.

One Panel member then asked a representative of the City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR) who was present if they could speak to the different options. Sean Harvey, Parks Planner - South District & Waterfront, stated that in general, PFR prefers that park space is consolidated and can act as a functional park piece, as opposed to more fractious parcels, like collections of sidewalk widenings. Mr. Harvey then stated that the PFR is looking to the panel to provide their opinion on the design direction this space should take, and that the City will figure out the technical issues.

The Acting Chair then stated that there appeared to be no consensus amongst the Panel members for a preferred Front Street option, and recommended that the design options be further verified and brought back for further consideration.

3.4 Summary of Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. No consensus was reached either for or against any of the options. The Panel would like to review the project again after the design team further consults with traffic and retail consultants.

- ii. A landscape architect should be present at the next meeting to review this project.

3.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Leinster thanked the Panel for their feedback.

CLOSING

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

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