



**Waterfront Design Review Panel
Minutes of Meeting #3
Wednesday, December 7, 2005**

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
George Baird
Paul Bedford
Tania Bortolotto
Peter Clewes
Peter Halsall
Anne McIlroy

Regrets:

Renee Daoust
Siamak Hariri
Janet Rosenberg
Don Schmitt
Greg Smallenberg
Charles Waldheim

Designees and Guests:

Robert Freedman
Christopher Glaisek
Bruce Haden

Recording Secretary:

Jennifer Andrews

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair opened with a discussion of proposed operating procedures for the Panel going forward. There was general agreement on the following:

- A large-scale map of the entire waterfront should be displayed at every meeting, with project areas highlighted in different colours to illustrate priority, timing, etc.
 - The Corporation's President or Chairman should provide a 5-minute report at the beginning of every meeting to reinforce the mission/accomplishments of the Panel.
 - The Corporation's Vice President Planning and Design should provide a progress report on all active projects at the beginning of every meeting to update the Panel.
 - Meetings should be held on a regular schedule, at the same time and at the same location so everyone always knows where to go.
 - All agenda items for review should be submitted to the Panel one week prior to the meeting date, to provide members adequate time for advance consideration.
 - A mechanism for publicizing the meetings needs to be developed, in order that the general public and interested individuals have appropriate access to the proceedings.
 - Panel members should read the "news clippings" distributed electronically by the Corporation, to keep informed of the latest waterfront issues.
-

REVIEW OF MINUTES

The Panel made several comments in response to the minutes of the previous meeting. There was general agreement on the following:

- The minutes need to be more of a reference guide to issues and/or decisions made at the meeting, and less of a straight transcription of the proceedings.
- A combination of summary statements and bullet points should be explored to make future minutes easier and quicker to navigate through.
- Minutes should be prepared by the Corporation and reviewed by the Panel Chair prior to being distributed or posted on the Corporation's website.

- Panel members will not have the opportunity to comment on the draft minutes in advance of the regular meetings, but will be able to do so before approval.
- Third-party proponents and/or presenters and/or the public will not have the ability to request any changes to the minutes in draft or final form.
- Draft minutes should be made available one week prior to the upcoming meeting.
- Individual Panel members should not be identified in the minutes, but specific comments can be recorded without attribution.

REPORT FROM THE CORPORATION

The Corporation's Vice President Planning and Design began by noting that some major milestones had been reached since the last Panel meeting, and then reviewed current projects.

East Bayfront Precinct Plan

- At the Corporation's October 27th board meeting, architect Jack Diamond presented some ideas for the Queen Elizabeth Docks prepared at the request of TEDCO, and architect Fred Koetter presented an update of the East Bayfront Precinct Plan.
- Three changes were made to the plan as a result of that meeting: 1) the 40-storey tower at Jarvis Slip was eliminated, 2) the need for continuity along the foot of Sherbourne Park was made an explicit goal of the next phase of design, and 3) the ground floor strategy was revised to focus on "nodes" at the main corners.
- The revised plan was passed by the Policy & Finance Committee of City Council on November 22nd, and the Corporation pledged to involve the Panel in the next phase of design. It was noted that the same presentation was on the day's agenda for Panel review, and that the plan was expected to be passed by the full council by week's end.

West Don Lands

- The block plan and urban design guidelines underwent substantial revisions in response to Panel comments, and it was noted they were on the day's agenda for Panel review.
- The Corporation short-listed three teams for the design of Don River Park: 1) Michael Van Valkenburgh with Ken Greenberg, 2) MBTW with Tom Balsley, and 3) du Toit Allsopp Hillier with Philips Farevaag Smallemberg. Selection of a final team was expected to conclude by the end of the year, and meeting the Panel was considered a top priority.
- Funding for Don River Park was secured recently from the Federal government, but stipulated that construction be completed by March 2008, a tight timeframe.

Lake Ontario Park

- The Corporation received eight responses to the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan RFQ, and was pleased with the quality of the submissions.
- It was noted that an RFP would be issued to short-listed teams in the next few weeks, and a final selection made by the end of January.

Portlands

- The Portlands Implementation Strategy was described as nearly complete, and would call for a phased approach to revitalization over a period of more than 30 years.
- The final document would be presented to City Council for approval soon, and would inform the M.O.U. to be signed between the City and the Corporation.
- Precinct Plans for the western-most districts were expected to start next year to ensure interim uses are consistent with the long-range vision as it develops over time.

Marine Strategy

- The marine strategy was described as a blueprint for enhancing water-dependent uses.
- The schedule was described as anticipating that a draft be completed in the winter, with updates given to the Panel to keep it informed of its progress.

Western Beaches Watercourse

- Construction work was started recently on a new 650-metre protected rowing straight on Humber Bay just west of Ontario Place.
- The major component – a new stone breakwater – was reported to be on-schedule for completion this spring and for hosting the international Dragon Boat races this summer.

Martin Goodman Trail

- It was explained that upon substantial completion of the watercourse, work would begin on improvements to the Martin Goodman Trail through Marilyn Bell Park.
- A draft design for a new boardwalk and pathway to replace the crumbling service road was described, and it was noted the plans were on the day's agenda for Panel review.

The Chair then opened up the meeting for questions or comments from the Panel. One Panel member observed that there has been criticism regarding the physical connection between the downtown and the waterfront, and asked if the City had plans to address the public realm in this zone. The City's Director of Urban Design responded there is no specific plan in place to do so, and that the city-wide budget for this type of enhancement work is \$3.5 million in construction annually.

Another Panel member asked what the City's annual operating budget is, and was told approximately \$8 billion. Several Panel members commented that more than just \$3 million of that should be dedicated to urban design and public realm enhancements, and suggested the Panel advocate for more.

Several Panel members then discussed the pros and cons of taking down the elevated Gardiner Expressway as a way of addressing the connectivity problem, and asked about the status of that project. The Corporation's Vice President Planning and Design responded that a series of studies have been completed exploring its technical feasibility. However, there is no funding currently allocated for the project, and it would require City Council support before any new commitment of resources could be made.

A Panel member commented that funding is not the issue so much as how funds are allocated and asked how the Corporation's \$1.5 billion is distributed. The Corporation's Vice President Planning and Design responded that there is a 10-year plan outlining how the funds are to be spent, but that it will be reviewed every year and reallocations are possible if priorities change.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 East Bayfront Precinct Plan

ID#: 1001

Project Type: Master Plan

Location: Area bounded by Jarvis St., Lakeshore Blvd., Parliament St., and Lake Ontario

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Koetter Kim Associates with Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg

Review Round: Second

Delegation: None

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek, Vice President Planning and Design, introduced this project, noting that he would be giving the same presentation given to the Policy & Finance Committee of City Council. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel is sought include:

- Quality and continuity of the public realm;
- Location and configuration of ground floor uses;
- Involving the Panel in the next phase, including block plans and design guidelines.

1.2 Project Presentation

Mr. Glaisek then gave a detailed presentation of the plan, including the public parks, water's edge promenade, building heights and massing, ground floor treatments, and the mix of uses proposed throughout the district. Significant changes since the last presentation to the Panel include expansion of the three major open spaces north to Lakeshore Boulevard, elimination of all high-

rise towers south of Queens Quay Boulevard, refinement of height regulations along the Lakeshore Corridor, and an increase in the types of public amenities to include family activities.

1.3 Panel Comments

The Chair began by asking Panel members not to engage in a critique of the plan up to now, but rather to focus on the issues the Panel wants to address going forward and in what sequence.

The Panel felt that the recent **revisions** in response to the Jack Diamond plan were positive. Several panel members felt that the Jack Diamond plan was too focused on creating residential neighbourhoods around semi-private spaces, whereas the open space in the East Bayfront precinct plan was more inviting to the public. However, the fine grain and scale of the Jack Diamond plan was considered an important element that is lacking in the East Bayfront precinct plan. This fine grain should be what gives the area its identity, and must be further developed.

The Panel also felt that earlier versions of the East Bayfront precinct plan had too much **retail** on the waterfront, but that the current version dealt with that issue better. However, the Panel remains unclear as to what is the right type of retail, and feels that answering that question is essential to determining where and how much retail space should be built. The Panel also felt that the retail has to be examined in relationship to plans for adjoining areas. Connectivity between urban areas was considered by many Panel members to need much more exploration.

The Panel expressed deep concerns about the **convertible arcades**. There was general agreement that these spaces have proven almost universally unsuccessful in Toronto, and several panel members felt strongly that this proposition has to be proven before it can be adopted. One Panel member suggested building a full-scale mock-up of a section along Queens Quay Boulevard, and then bringing in retailers and retail space brokers for their reaction.

Other Panel members questioned the desirability of the convertible arcades as a public amenity, even if they can be made to work from a retail perspective. Some felt there was confusion in the planner's minds between the lack of public interest in the waterfront and the weather. The problem is not the cold, but the fact that there is not much to do year-round. In other parts of the city, where there are things to do, people are out and about all winter long. The Panel members felt the plan should be driven by creating a great public realm, not fears about the weather. Buildings and other landscape elements can be designed to mitigate wind, creating a more hospitable environment for the public all year long.

The Panel felt the design of **Queens Quay Boulevard** to be a critically important element of the plan. Some Panel members questioned the 38-metre width, noting that there were very few examples of streets with that dimension that are successful in Toronto. The width also poses a challenge in making the retail work along the street.

The Panel agreed that the proposed 19-metre width of the **water's edge promenade** could be made into a very successful space, and that the issue of 15 metres versus 19 metres was not the core concern. The Panel agreed that much will rest on high-quality materials and details.

Several Panel members then debated whether the plan was over-designed or under-designed. Some described it as "boring" while others felt it was "not boring enough." The perceived lack of a more fine-grained level of development was cited as the reason for describing it as "boring." The dominant **diagonal forms** were what led to describing it as "not boring enough," and were felt to be the cause of outside criticism of the plan as "not Toronto." The Panel agreed that in principle, the plan should be simple, the architecture complex.

The Panel discussed the importance of the **design guidelines**, and asked if they would get down to the level of specifying materials. Mr. Glaisek responded that the Panel needs to discuss how much prescriptiveness it feels is appropriate to achieve the goal of architectural quality without stifling creativity and variety. Mandating a consistent palette of materials for every building was

felt by some to be too constraining, but advising on the suitability of specific materials in relation to the larger urban context was seen as an appropriate sphere for the Panel by others. Even issues such as the types and sizes of trees and plantings were thought to be important decisions, as the City has trouble maintaining them and many have died.

1.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the major themes that emerged from the Panel discussion:

- i. The play of diagonal forms results in some awkward development sites that could turn into bad architecture, and their prominence in the plan's identity should be re-examined.
- ii. Connections between the East Bayfront and the rest of the waterfront and the city need to be given substantially more attention in the next design phase.
- iii. A sense of intimacy and enclosure in the public spaces was considered very important by some Panel members, particularly along the water's edge.
- iv. Design guidelines will need to be very precise where they govern the facades of buildings that define the main public realm components.
- v. The convertible arcades are a serious concern, in terms of their desirability as public spaces and their suitability for retail, and much more work is needed to justify them.
- vi. The materiality and detailing of the public realm components are absolutely critical to their success as attractive public places, and should be the focus of intense design effort.

1.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Glaisek thanked the Panel for its input, and reaffirmed the Corporation's commitment to involving the Panel fully in the next phases of design.

2.0 West Don Lands Block Plans

ID#: 1002

Project Type: Master Plan

Location: Area bounded by Parliament St., Eastern Ave., the Don River, and the CN rail corridor.

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Urban Design Associates with Joe Lobko Architect

Review Round: Third

Delegation: Joe Lobko, Tiffany Hale

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced this project, noting that many changes had been made in response to the Panel's detailed comments at the previous meeting. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel is sought include:

- Improvements to the Front Street-Cherry Street intersection
- Reconfiguration of the towers south of Mill Street
- Level of prescriptiveness in the design guidelines
- Connectivity of open space network

2.2 Project Presentation

Paul Ostergaard, Urban Designer with Urban Design Associates, then gave a detailed presentation of the plan, including the urban design guidelines, ground floor treatments along major arteries such as Front Street, building heights and massing along Mill Street and the rail corridor, and the proposed rights-of-way, including roads and sidewalks. Significant changes since the last presentation to the Panel include simplification of the Front Street-Cherry Street intersection, re-orientation of the Mill Street towers to relate better to the street grid, reconfiguration of the ground floor spaces along Front Street to encourage the evolution of a neighbourhood center, and better articulation of building controls relative to adjacent neighbourhoods.

2.3 Panel Comments

The Panel felt generally pleased with the degree to which its input was reflected in the revised plans, although they continued to feel that further refinements are necessary.

The Panel felt the **towers** south of Mill Street performed better with the improved relationship to the street grid, but that the height limits continued to feel arbitrary. The idea of tiering the heights in some sort of progression in relation to the surrounding context was suggested. There was also general concern about the impact of adding several tall towers near the Distillery District, and some Panel members felt they were not necessary. Other Panel members pointed out, however, that the Distillery District itself is planning at least two tall towers near Cherry Street, so that form is going to be rising on this landscape anyway.

The Panel liked the simplicity of the block patterns, but felt that the **connections** with adjacent areas were weak. Several Panel members expressed concern about the resolution of the Eastern Avenue-Front Street intersection. Front Street is articulated as the major public thoroughfare, yet is blocked off by a “stub” at Eastern Avenue. The effect is not only to create an awkward turn for vehicles entering this new neighbourhood, but to make it visually unwelcoming for pedestrians.

The Panel was also concerned about the impact of **above-grade parking** garages on the urban character. Some Panel members questioned the need to go above ground, and suggested that the cost of environmental remediation of soils might be something developers would be prepared to take on if pressed to do so. The above-grade solution with open spaces on the roofs was considered by the Panel an inappropriate way to create public space, but they agreed they could make fine private spaces.

The Panel also raised concerns about the neighbourhood’s **relationship to the Don River**. The Bala rail corridor is a formidable barrier, and creates a “dead” side to the Don River Park. The Panel agreed it was very important that the park design address this issue and find a way to bring the neighbourhood into a real relationship with the river. A structured landscape overpass was suggested, with reference made to the Olympic Sculpture Park being completed in Seattle by Weiss/Manfredi Architects. The Panel asked that connectivity to the Don River be a part of the Terms of Reference for the Don River Park design team.

The configuration of the **TTC turn-around** south of Mill Street continues to be very problematic, conflicting with the desire to extend the pedestrian-scale of the Distillery District alleyway into this neighbourhood. The TTC loop configuration also destroys the street wall continuity along Cherry Street, which is a problem if this is envisioned as one of the main retail corridors in the neighbourhood. Some Panel members suggested exploring the possibility of continuing Bayview Avenue west alongside the rail corridor to Cherry Street.

The Panel felt that a **retail study** should be done for this neighbourhood. The plan proposes what seems like a lot of retail, and it is not clear that this area is expected to become the sort of regional draw that can support it. With 6,000 units of housing, how many square feet can realistically be sustained? What is the expected phasing plan for the retail, and how does it parallel the expected growth of the residential population? Parking was also raised as an important factor, particularly on-street parking in close proximity to the retail storefronts.

The Panel raised concerns about the **integration of sustainability** principles with the planning and design. The issue of stormwater flows was considered an important factor, particularly how/if it will move across the site to the river given the presence of the berm. A topographic view of the precinct plan would be very helpful, and should become a regular part of precinct plan submissions. The Panel also asked about solar shading, and what the philosophical approach is to establishing some sort of “standard” or baseline for light penetration. The Panel asked to see a shadow study drawing presented as part of the plan.

2.4 Summary of Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the major themes that emerged from the Panel discussion:

- i. Connections to adjoining communities remain a big concern. For example, the “stub” at Eastern Avenue and Front Street feels like a barrier.
- ii. The block southeast of Mill Street and Cherry Street needs much more thinking, in terms of the configuration of the transit loop and the building typology.
- iii. Stormwater management and topography need to be better integrated with the overall plan and design, particularly with respect to the “soft” spaces such as parks and yards.
- iv. The issue of above-grade parking in typical blocks needs much more refinement, and underground options should be tested further for feasibility.

2.5 Proponent’s Response

Mr. Glaisek thanked the Panel for acknowledging the efforts of the Corporation to incorporate Panel input at this relatively late stage in the planning process, and stated that the next round of revisions would be brought back to the Panel for comment prior to issuing the developer proposal calls.

3.0 Martin Goodman Trail Phase 1

ID#: 1003

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Linear trail running south of Lakeshore Blvd. from Bathurst St. to Ontario Place.

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Victor Ford and Associates

Review Round: First

Delegation: None

3.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mark Reid, a Program Manager for the Corporation, introduced this project, noting that the work being presented today is the first phase of a much larger plan for improving the trail all along the waterfront. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel is sought include:

- How to think about “branding” the trail in its entirety
- What elements can or should be added to reinforce its identity
- How should the trail relate to the parks/open spaces it passes through

3.2 Project Presentation

Victor Ford, Landscape Architect with Victor Ford Associates, then gave a detailed presentation of the plan, including the consultation process with the community and steering committee, the ten design principles established for the trail, proposed fixtures and furnishings, dimensions, the relationship to the new protected rowing straight, and the need for completing the trail in time for the Dragon Boat races in August.

3.3 Panel Comments

The Chair asked the Landscape Architect if trails are his specialty and what urban waterfronts he has worked on. He listed several, including the entire Pickering waterfront.

One Panel member asked what the **new breakwater** at Marilyn Bell Park would be replacing. It was explained that the existing breakwater was in need of repair, and that the new section would be built out farther from the shoreline to create the new rowing course, and then the corresponding section of the old breakwater would be removed. Another Panel member asked if the resulting flat water area would be usable for swimming, and it was reported that water quality will be the biggest factor in determining that.

The Panel raised very strong concerns with the notion of relying on **distinctive fixtures** and furnishings scattered along the path to give it an identity. While there was general agreement that it should read as “public” and continuous, there was great concern about adding yet another palette of vertical elements on an already cluttered landscape, especially along Lakeshore

Boulevard. Further, each of the areas the trail passes through have an identity already, and the trail may want to feel more a part of those areas rather than alien to or separate from them.

Several Panel members expressed the need for some **variety** along the length of the trail, given that in total it is over ten miles long and passes through many different environments along the way. The minimum width of the path should be generous enough to accommodate strollers and runners throughout its length, but could get wider or different in character at different points.

The **signage** was a related area of concern. Investment in signs – and reliance on them to provide continuity and coherence – can be a dubious proposition, as many get covered with graffiti or disappear entirely. The signage plan should be very economical and easy to maintain.

The Panel felt that the design should focus more on the rendering of the **trail surface** itself, not on the creation of unique types of benches, lightposts, water fountains, and other features. The use of different paving materials, or continuous LED lighting at the edges, or bronze medallions instead of the usual painted stripe down the middle, could all give the trail a unique identity without competing with the surrounding landscape. The Panel felt this focus could also keep costs down while maintaining a very high level of finish.

3.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the major themes that emerged from the Panel discussion:

- i. The design needs to provide for physical continuity and visual identity end-to-end, but from the perspective of the overall public realm system, not as a stand-alone statement.
- ii. The project needs to develop its own language, and this requires a great deal more work be done on the design.
- iii. The plan needs one simple, clear element along its length to give it definition, whether it be bronze medallions, pavement color, etc.
- iv. Treatment of ancillary elements, such as tree plantings and benches, needs to be much more judicious and thought-out, not just a “sprinkling” along the route.

3.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Ford thanked the Panel for its comments.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The Chair then opened up the meeting for a general discussion regarding projects and procedures.

The Panel discussed how to deal with fast-track projects such as the Don River Park. There was general consensus that such projects should be made standing items for each Panel meeting.

The Panel discussed how best to structure its review sessions. Some Panel members advocated for the informal, back-and-forth format that had characterized previous sessions, whereas others felt that a more structured format would allow for more input from each individual. There was a general concern that if a structured format is adopted, that it not lead to each Panel member repeating the same point. It was suggested that each project presentation be preceded by an introduction by a representative of the Corporation, who would lay out what it wants clear feedback on. This could help focus the discussion and provide the most targeted comments to help in revising the proposals.

Several Panel members felt there was real value in discussing projects with the consultant present as well as continuing the discussion once the consultant had left the room. This would ensure Panel members have an opportunity to express their most frank concerns, but raises the question of how those comments should then be communicated to the consultant. One alternative is to have a representative of the Corporation, either the Vice President Planning and Design or a Program Manager, convey those additional comments back to the consultant. A

second way would be to offer a follow-up meeting with a few members of the Panel and the consultant to discuss the additional items.

The Panel then discussed the Martin Goodman Trail in relation to a number of broader issues. First, there was general agreement that at best the proposal was “just alright” but not inspiring. Concern was expressed about the ability of the chosen consultant to produce a truly “urban” trail as opposed to the more rustic examples showed, which the Panel admired but did not feel were appropriate for this setting. The Panel asked that more thought be given to how it might be involved in selecting consultants. The Vice President Planning and Design responded that the Corporation does not feel it would be appropriate for the Panel to be the sole advisor in selecting project teams, as there are many other concerns in addition to design that have to be accounted for in the procurement process.

The Panel suggested that perhaps the scope of the project should be pared down. Concentrating on fewer things could increase the funds available to do the main moves right without increasing the overall project budget. The Vice President Planning and Design responded that, as with the consultant selection process, the scope of work is driven by many considerations, not just design. There are members of the community who want things like benches and water fountains, and they cannot be removed from the project on a unilateral basis.

The Panel concluded that it is essential for all future consultants to be informed that they will be expected to appear before the Panel prior to starting their work, so they understand the level of quality they will be expected to meet. The Vice President Planning and Design noted that the Panel had a valid point, and that the Corporation itself was in the midst of an institutional transition towards a higher standard of design excellence, which it hoped to continue developing in partnership with the Panel.

The Panel discussed the need for presentations to have more “zip” and to be shorter and tighter. Presenters need to be given a set amount of time and held to it, whether by verbal time checks from the Chair or a visible timeclock. Different amounts of time should be allotted for projects of different scales, but none should exceed 30 minutes.

The Panel felt that it should establish the definition of a quorum, and suggested that it be set at a minimum of five out of twelve plus the Chair. Another alternative was adding more members to the Panel. However, the Chair felt that the current number should be enough, and that Panel members have to be committed to attending meetings if they want to stay on the Panel. Out of twelve members, he expected more like nine or ten at each meeting, not four or five.

A related item was establishing a fixed schedule for the year. A draft monthly meeting schedule was handed out, and the Corporation agreed to contact each of the Panel members individually to confirm the general suitability of those times.

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