



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #35 Wednesday, June 10th, 2009

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
George Baird
Paul Bedford
Tania Bortolotto
Renee Daoust
Siamak Hariri
Peter Halsall
Greg Smallenberg
Charles Waldheim

Regrets:

Peter Clewes
Anne McIlroy
Janet Rosenberg
Don Schmitt

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Panel, noting that the Luminato festival was underway with many waterfront-related activities. He then provided an overview of the agenda, and 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.

Long Term Plan

- Waterfront Toronto together with their funding partners are working on revising the Long Term Plan to reflect updated projections on Waterfront Toronto's cash flow and revenue projections from the sale of land.
- This process may impact how projects get rolled out until additional funding or financing is secured.
- The Central Waterfront may be more vulnerable to budget cuts as it is a relatively newer project that enhances the public realm, but does not directly "unlock" development sites.

Gardiner Expressway Environmental Assessment

- The Terms of Reference (ToR) were passed unanimously by the Executive Council at the beginning of June, and will be presented to City Council in July 2009 with submission to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in September 2009 for approval.
- Once the ToR are approved, then design alternatives will be explored. Mr. Glaisek thanked Kevin Bechard from Waterfront Toronto and John Kelly from the City of Toronto for their hard work in moving this project forward.

Queens Quay Environmental Assessment

- The Queens Quay Environmental Assessment was unanimously supported by the City's Executive Council in June, and will be presented to City Council in July 2009 with submission to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in September 2009 for approval.
- WT is working with property owners on the South side of Queens Quay to resolve outstanding issues.
- If there is no "bump-up request", then the project will proceed to Design Development in the fall, and construction in summer 2010.

C40/Clinton Climate Initiative

- C40 is a group of the world's largest cities committed to tackling climate change. Through effective partnership working with the Clinton Climate Initiative, the C40 will help deliver emissions reductions and better energy efficiency. Mayor David Miller has recently become the Chair.
- Former President Bill Clinton is looking for specific applications of sustainable technology, with the Lower Don Lands project being nominated as one of 16 pilot projects around the world.

Tommy Thompson Park

- TRCA and Montgomery Sisam Architects were asked to revisit the program for the park infrastructure elements and are moving forward in a positive direction.
- A bus tour of Tommy Thompson Park will be arranged for the July 2009 meeting in an effort to help the Panel understand the existing context and site.

Lake Ontario Park

- The Coatsworth Cut is being looked at for Phase I implementation of the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan. This will allow for "the transect" to come through at a future date.

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

One Panel member asked if there were any projects that were definitely secure under the Long Term Plan. Mr. Glaisek stated that the parks, including Sugar Beach, Sherbourne Park and Don River Park are secure. Another Panel member stated that Queens Quay was a crucial and symbolic element of the Waterfront's revitalisation, adding that it would be a huge loss to the City if it were deferred. Another Panel member agreed, adding that it is critical that it happen as there is political will and momentum and if it does not happen now, it may never happen. One Panel member added that even if one section of it were completed, then people would be able to see its transformational potential.

Another Panel member commented on a recent news article that stated that Waterfront Toronto was not spending its funding fast enough. Mr. Glaisek answered that there is a Federal funding clause, or "Sunset Clause", to spend Federal funds by March 2011.

The Chair then thanked Mr. Glaisek for his report.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair began by commending Waterfront Toronto on the outcome of the Simcoe WaveDeck, noting that the result was fabulous and has a dramatic impact on the waterfront. Mr. Glaisek then invited the Panel to the formal WaveDeck opening which would take place on Friday, June 12th.

The Chair noted that George Baird will be stepping down as Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto.

The Chair then noted that Charles Waldheim has accepted a position as Chair of the Landscape Architecture Department at Harvard University and will be stepping down as Associate Dean and Director of the Landscape Architecture program at the University of Toronto.

The Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. No conflicts were stated.

The Chair moved to adopt the minutes from April 2009. The minutes were then adopted.

There being no other comments, the Chair moved to an in-camera discussion on Panel operations.

At the conclusion of the in camera discussion, the Chair opened the meeting to the Project Review portion of the meeting.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Gardiner Expressway Environmental Assessment

ID#: 1030

Project Type: Environmental Assessment

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto/City of Toronto

Location: The Gardiner Expressway from Jarvis Street to the Don Valley Expressway.

Review Stage: Terms of Reference document

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Kevin Bechard, Waterfront Toronto

Delegation: John Kelly, City of Toronto; Sameer Chadha, Perkins + Will

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Kevin Bechard, Director of Environmental Assessments for Waterfront Toronto introduced the project noting that the City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto are co-proponents for the Gardiner Expressway Environmental Assessment (EA), and introduced John Kelly as co-project manager.

1.2 Project Presentation

Mr. Bechard began by providing an overview of background case studies, noting that they were the seeds to the approach for the Terms of Reference (ToR). Mr. Bechard stated that the purpose of the study is to address current problems and opportunities associated with the

Gardiner and Lake Shore Boulevard from Jarvis Street to east of the Don River. Mr. Bechard stated that the ToR is a blueprint for the Environmental Assessment to look at the future of the Gardiner, and is approved by the Minister of the Environment (MOE) prior to the actual EA commencing. Mr. Bechard then reviewed the problems and opportunities, project goals, alternative concepts, consultation methods and timelines.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked what the reaction has been to the project during the public consultations. Mr. Bechard answered that the discussion has begun to focus more on the potential opportunities, noting that the e-consultation has been especially successful with over 11,000 hits to the gardinerconsultation.ca website. Another Panel member wondered if there was a difference in opinion depending on which part of the City the public consultation was held. Mr. Bechard stated that there was a difference, noting that that discussion in the central waterfront area focused more around the built form implications and impacts to the community, where as the discussion in other locations focused more on the impacts of getting downtown. Mr. Bechard added that overall, people recognize that the waterfront is a regional asset.

One Panel member enquired as to the lifespan of the expressway if nothing at all is done. Mr. Kelly answered that the individual components of the expressway have different life spans, noting that the structure has a longer life span than the driving surface, but overall, if a strong maintenance regime is maintained then the life span is virtually indefinite.

Another Panel member wondered if the real issue in deciding the ultimate future of the expressway will be financial implications. Mr. Kelly answered that the pro forma will be one of many evaluation criteria, adding that currently weighting for individual criteria has not been established.

One Panel member wondered what the Design Review Panel's role will be in the process. Mr. Bechard answered that he hoped to present design options based on the proposed alternatives to the Panel and get their guidance on the appropriate creative scope and relative weighting.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member felt that the term "barrier" should be clearly defined, noting that the railway berm and many lanes of traffic on Lake Shore Boulevard are as much or more of the barrier than the actual expressway. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that if it is not considered, then it could come back to haunt the project later. Mr. Bechard stated that they had heard this comment during their consultation, noting that the rail line will be explored further in the ToR document. Mr. Kelly agreed that while the berm is more of a physical barrier, the Gardiner does act as a psychological barrier and a barrier to good development adjacent to it. Mr. Kelly added that the railway will not be dismissed, noting that they are ultimately looking at ways to improve the connection to the waterfront.

Another Panel member wondered if there was a missing alternative that looked at using the existing structure for parks or farming similar to the Highline in New York, noting that if a salting regimen was halted, the structure would last indefinitely. Other Panel members agreed, noting that if a tunneling option is being explored, then this one deserves consideration as well.

Another Panel member felt that consideration should be given to a phasing option that looked at reducing traffic lanes over time.

Another Panel member wondered if there was an option of connecting the City to the waterfront in a similar way that Olympic Park did for Seattle. Other Panel members agreed, feeling that there should be a truly creative solution. Mr. Kelly agreed, noting the example of the Lower Don Lands EA in which a design competition resulted in the preferred alternative and where the design intention went beyond the purely infrastructural needs.

Several Panel members stated that a design competition would be a great mechanism to allow big ideas to surface. Several Panel members felt that in the absence of a “big idea” it will be difficult to advance the project. One Panel member felt that ultimately the investment on the waterfront will never be fully realized until all the connections to the waterfront are greatly enhanced as a system.

1.5 Summary of the Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- I) Conduct a design competition for the Gardiner similar to those held for the Central Waterfront and Lower Don Lands.

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Bechard and Mr. Kelly thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

N/A

CLOSING

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