



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #22 Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
Paul Bedford
Tania Bortolotto
Peter Clewes
Renee Daoust
Peter Halsall
Siamak Hariri
Anne McIlroy
Greg Smallenberg
Charles Waldheim

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek

Regrets:

George Baird
Janet Rosenberg
Don Schmitt

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Panel, thanking them for their participation in the Design Review Panel re-visioning session the previous evening. He provided an overview of the agenda and then invited John Campbell to provide his report.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

Mr. Campbell, Waterfront Toronto's President and CEO, began by thanking the Panel members for their hard work and persistence in championing design excellence.

Mr. Campbell announced that at the December 7th Waterfront Toronto Board meeting, the Board unanimously endorsed and supported the Panel's recommendations regarding Project Symphony, as described in the November 30th letter from Bruce Kuwabara. The Board voted to withhold its financial support of the project, for nine million dollars, until sufficient changes are made to the design to receive Design Review Panel support. Mr. Campbell reiterated that this was a strong endorsement of the Panel and thanked them for their detailed assessment in the letter.

Mr. Campbell then stated that the Developer Proposal Call for the River Square neighbourhood in the West Don Lands had been sent out to the five short-listed developer teams. Waterfront Toronto hopes to have a developer selected by March.

Mr. Campbell announced that a Request for Qualifications will be sent out for commercial development in the East Bayfront, and that Waterfront Toronto is considering institutional tenants for the west side of Sherbourne Park, south of Queens Quay.

Mr. Campbell concluded by stating that 2008 will be a big year for construction along the waterfront, representing years of hard work, planning and design. Projects that will be starting construction will include: the Martin Goodman Trail through Ontario Place, Don River Park, the West Don Lands District Energy Centre, Spadina Bridge and Sherbourne Park.

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

Several Panel members expressed concern that the Panel work to avoid a repeat of Project Symphony in the future. One Panel member felt that the reason Project Symphony got so far off track during the process was because conditional approval was repeatedly given, and no firm position was stated by the Panel earlier. Several Panel members felt that this had been a hard lesson but an important one for the Panel going forward.

The Chair then 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 brief report, noting that Mr. Campbell had comprehensively covered the major events of the past month.

Spadina Head of Slip

- A ground-breaking ceremony was held on November 30th, and construction is now well underway on the project, with the geo-fibre membrane being laid and fish compensation being installed. The target date for substantial completion is June 21st, 2008, after which time work will begin on the Spadina Bridge.

Queens Quay

- Work continues on the Environmental Assessment for the revitalization of Queens Quay, and the first public meeting will be held in January.

The Chair then asked if there were any questions or comments. There being none, the Chair moved to General Business.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair announced that the Design Review Panel By-laws, Protocols, and Procedures will be formally adopted at the next meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, January 16th, 2008, and urged the Panel to submit any feedback on the document prior to that date.

The Chair then asked the Panel if there were any questions or comments on the last month's meeting minutes. The Panel noted a few typos and some necessary clarifications to the text, and requested some additional time to review the minutes and provide feedback in writing to Waterfront Toronto. The approval of the minutes will be held until the next meeting.

PROJECT REVIEWS

I.0 Sherbourne Park

ID#: 1020

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Area bounded by Sherbourne Street to the West, future development to the east, and from Lake Shore Boulevard South to the water's edge.

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg (PFS)

Review Round: Two

Presenter(s): Greg Smallenberg, PFS; Jill Anholt, Jill Anholt Design; Stephen Teeple, Teeple Architects Inc.

Delegation: Jennifer Nagai, PFS; David Leinster and Mike Tocher, The Planning Partnership

I.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto's Vice President Planning for and Design, introduced the project, noting that this was the second time the project has come before the Panel.

The main issues on which the advice of the Panel was sought included:

- The overall design proposal for the park;
- The resolution of the interface between the Water's Edge Promenade and the south end of Sherbourne Park;
- The resolution of the interface between the revitalized Queens Quay and the middle of Sherbourne Park.

I.2 Project Presentation

Greg Smallenberg, Partner with PFS, began by introducing the team, noting that Jill Anholt would be presenting the public art component of the scheme, and that Stephen Teeple would be presenting the park pavilions.

Mr. Smallenberg then reviewed the Panel's key recommendations from their last presentation including: 1) The notion of a "Green Slip" is very interesting and the design team should be exploring this idea formally and materially, 2) The edges of the park need to be studied further and strengthened, looking especially at how the Park might intersect Lakeshore Boulevard, 3) The idea of water should be more fully utilized on the site and in all seasons, and 4) Study how Queens Quay bisects the site with an eye towards maintaining the sense that the park is one continuous open space. Mr. Smallenberg continued by describing the interface at Queens Quay and the Water's Edge Promenade, the interactive nature of water filtration on site, the lighting strategy, the rolling green carpet, and options for finger piers.

Jill Anholt, Principal of Jill Anholt Design, then described the three art pieces being proposed for the site including: The Big Smoke, the Light Beacon, and Life Rings. Ms. Anholt described the Big Smoke as a series of mist-creating structures triggered by children's play, the light beacon as a maritime reference, and the Life Rings as a series of curvilinear seating elements designed as a counterpoint to the orthogonal edges of the park.

Stephen Teeple, Principal with Teeple Architects Inc., outlined the plans for pavilion buildings in both the north and south halves of Sherbourne Park, noting that the pavilions are not intended to

be objects in the park but rather to frame views and create axial relationships to the lake. Mr. Teeple then described the north pavilion as a smaller structure which can act as weather protection, and the southern pavilion as being larger and housing restroom facilities, storage and a cafe, noting that both structures are intended to be constructed of folded Cor-Ten steel with a polished aluminum inner surface.

1.3 Panel Questions and Comments

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

One Panel member enquired if Queens Quay could dip under Sherbourne Park to make it one continuous space. Mr. Smallenberg said it could, but that this might be problematic for the rest of Queens Quay as the portals would create obstructions at the intersections.

One Panel member asked what the rationale was for extending the park beyond the double row of trees along the water's edge promenade. Mr. Smallenberg answered that the notion of a "cork in a bottle", or a piece of green wedged into the slip, represents a special moment along the waterfront. Mr. Smallenberg cited the winning scheme for the Lower Don Lands Design Competition as another example of a park striving to reach out into the water.

Another Panel member asked why the continuity of the Water's Edge Promenade had been interrupted. Mr. Smallenberg said they were in one option to open up views, but were largely retained in the other option.

One Panel member asked if the team could speak more to the floating pool idea. Mr. Smallenberg noted that floating pools are becoming more and more popular throughout North America, and if there is going to be a pier projecting out into the water, the pool could offer something unique at the end. He noted, however, that the pool is a larger idea for Waterfront Toronto to think about, and Sherbourne Park may not be the driving reason to pursue it.

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that Waterfront Toronto needs to fix the locations for the streets east of Sherbourne Park, as they will have an impact on the design. Another Panel member urged Waterfront Toronto to obtain clarification from the Port Authority on the long piers, as their ultimate form will also have an impact on the design. Several Panel members agreed that the continuity/discontinuity of the West 8 + DTAH design was an important consideration.

The Chair then conducted a poll to gauge the Panel's opinion as to the importance of maintaining the continuity of the West 8 + DTAH designs of Queens Quay and Water's Edge Promenade through Sherbourne Park.

Queens Quay

- The Panel generally agreed that the Queens Quay design should run continuously through the site, with a caveat that the pedestrian linkages across the streets be strengthened.
- One Panel member expressed a continued belief that Queens Quay should run beneath the park, otherwise it will always be seen as two parks instead of one.

Water's Edge Promenade

- The Panel had varying opinions about the importance of preserving the West 8 + DTAH design continuity along the water's edge.
- Two Panel members felt strongly that there should be absolute consistency across the water's edge promenade, stating that no exceptions should be made, and that the trees will not block views of the water.
- Three Panel members felt that the park should open up to the water, as the other slips do along the waterfront, and would prefer the aperture to be as wide possible, as opposed to even the partial aperture shown in one of the options.
- Four Panel members felt that there was some middle ground and did not see an either-or scenario. One observed that Sherbourne Park is already an exception as it extends north of Queens Quay, and therefore could justify some adjustments at the water's edge. A second suggested that a thinning out of the trees could help to demarcate this space as special, open up the views more, yet still preserve the continuity of the treed allee. A third wondered if there was a different type of tree that could drop its leaves earlier, or later, that would also identify this place as different without breaking the continuity at the water's edge. A fourth felt that the continuity of the promenade comes from the boardwalk and the people traversing it, not in the continuous double row of trees per se.
- There was some agreement that a break in the continuity of the water's edge promenade could be considered, but that the design of the park would have to be strong enough to compete with the power of the promenade design without weakening it.

One Panel member expressed strong concern that, overall, the design seemed to lack a strong and clear unifying idea. Another Panel member felt that the scheme miniaturized everything on the waterfront, stating that the ideas need to be bigger. Another Panel member added that it seemed to be trying to recreate an entire waterfront turned sideways. One Panel member agreed, feeling that in its current form, it resembled a miniature golf course. Another Panel member felt that the design was not at the scale of the City, but it should be.

Several Panel members felt that the resources put into the three art pieces should be focused into one larger piece, possibly the light beacon. One Panel member felt that the "reading room" elements were not necessary, and possibly distracted from the other, bolder elements of the park. Another Panel member felt that the "Life Rings" were too small to have an impact at the scale of the park as a whole.

Several Panel members liked the idea of using water, and water treatment, as an organizing idea for the Park. One Panel member stated that typically, UV filtration happens out of sight, noting that the visibility of the process in this scheme is interesting. Another Panel member suggested making the idea of water and purification even larger, noting that it could act as a "science experiment" at a big scale and could be very iconic. One Panel member cautioned that clean water is a novelty now, but in ten years it will, hopefully, be commonplace. Other Panel members felt that the seasonal aspects of water had not been fully explored, such as winter skating.

The Panel generally agreed that the pavilions were well-scaled, noting that their form brought a touch of international architecture onto the site. One Panel member encouraged the team to push the structural potential of the folded Cor-Ten steel and not rely on a secondary system to support the building. One Panel member felt that the pavilions could be even more sinuous and natural.

Several Panel members felt that this park needs to define the Waterfront, and become an international destination in the same way Millennium Park in Chicago has. One Panel member felt that Harbourfront Centre is not currently equipped to handle masses of people at New Years' or even events such as Luminato, noting that Sherbourne Park has the potential to become a new centre on the waterfront, but needs an appropriately scaled vision. Other Panel members disagreed with the comparison to Millennium Park, as the budgets and sizes of the spaces do not allow for a fair comparison, and that the public art has a lot to do with why Millennium Park is great. One Panel member felt that the metaphor of the wave in the rolling lawn was too literal, and that as a form it would be unsuitable for larger public gatherings.

The Chair then asked the Panel how this project review should be concluded. One Panel member put forth a motion to see the project come back "re-conceptualised," but others felt that the initial concept of the "Green Slip" was sound, but the execution of the design needed more work.

The Chair then suggested that the various comments of the Panel be summarized and stand as the overall Panel resolution on the project. Some Panel members agreed, while others felt this could be construed as conditional support, which some members did not feel prepared to give.

Mr. Glaisek then urged the Panel to take a vote, noting that the draft By-Laws and Protocols to be adopted at the next meeting include a formal Panel vote of support/non-support at each stage of project review. Mr. Glaisek also reminded the Panel that the discussion at the beginning of the meeting concluded that a more decisive statement to the design team early on might have avoided the lengthy and difficult review process experienced on Project Symphony.

Mr. Glaisek also pointed out that one of the Panel's key functions is to advise Waterfront Toronto on how to proceed with projects. As Vice President for Planning and Design, Mr. Glaisek explained that he is now faced with a decision as to whether or not to approve Philips Farevaag Smallemberg moving forward into Design Development based on this Schematic Design. He implored the Panel to make his job easier by giving him a clear recommendation, through a vote of support/non-support for the project, as to whether to continue down this path or revisit the design before proceeding.

The Panel expressed discomfort with the notion of a vote of support/non-support for "the project" as they felt that was too broad. Mr. Glaisek then offered to re-frame the question, and asked for a show of hands of those who supported the Schematic Design as presented moving forward into the Design Development stage. There being no hands raised, Mr. Glaisek concluded that the Panel's recommendation to him was to direct the proponent to produce a new Schematic Design for Panel approval before proceeding into Design Development.

1.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. The Panel does not support this project moving to Design Development and would like to see a revised Schematic Design.
- ii. The design should be at the scale of the City, with fewer moves, but bigger moves.
- iii. Queens Quay should run continuously through the site, with special attention paid to pedestrian crossings.
- iv. At the water's edge promenade, the east west movement is more important than the north south, but the two need to be better integrated.
- v. The north-south axis needs to be stronger to connect the two park halves.

- vi. Support for the pavilion designs.
- vii. Resources devoted to the three art pieces should be consolidated and reallocated into a single, larger, more iconic piece.

I.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Smallenberg thanked the Panel for its input.

CLOSING

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

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