



Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #8 Wednesday, June 21, 2006

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
Tania Bortolotto
Renee Daoust
Peter Halsall
Siamak Hariri
Anne McIlroy
Janet Rosenberg
Don Schmitt

Regrets:

George Baird
Paul Bedford
Peter Clewes
Greg Smallenberg
Charles Waldheim

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Robert Freedman
Christopher Glaisek

Recording Secretary:

Pina Mallozzi

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the Panel. He reviewed the day's agenda and explained that the CEO's Report was moved to the afternoon to accommodate Mr. Campbell's availability. The Chair noted that five Panel members were absent, and asked if low attendance was related to the density of the agenda.

The Chair congratulated the Corporation on the completion of the Innovative Design Competition and its outcome. He then noted that the Design Review Panel visioning session would take place at the July Panel meeting.

The Chair then asked Mr. Glaisek to provide the project report.

REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN

Christopher Glaisek the Corporation's Vice President Planning and Design, gave a brief update on project progress over the past month.

He explained that the Corporation's offices will be moving on June 23, 2006 to 20 Bay Street. The new offices will have a large boardroom and the next Panel meeting is expected to be held there. He then welcomed the representatives from Spencer Francey Peters, a public relations firm recently retained by the corporation to develop a marketing and branding strategy.

Central Waterfront

- The May Design Review Panel meeting was cancelled in lieu of the Central Waterfront Innovative Design Competition exhibition opening that was held on May 15, 2006. The

event was very successful with a standing room only crowd of approximately 500 people. Media attention was strong, with the Toronto Star reporting that the online poll for a winning design drew the highest participation of any they have conducted.

- On June 2, 2006 the Corporation announced the winning design for the Central Waterfront Innovative Design Competition prepared by West 8 Urban Design and Landscape Architecture from Holland, in collaboration with duToit Allsopp Hillier. The winning design and Jury Report will be presented later in the meeting.

West Don Lands

- The plan of subdivision was approved by the Policy and Finance Committee of City Council. It will now go to the full council for final approval. Demolition of the site continues and it is now largely cleared. Construction of the CN Bridge enlargement is underway.

Lake Ontario Park

- A public meeting was held in a tent on Cherry Beach. The meeting was well attended although the Corporation is still trying to determine how to attract people with interests beyond the local community as the Corporation's objective for is for Lake Ontario Park to be a regional resource.

East Bayfront

- The Corporation and the City of Toronto are drafting the zoning and design guidelines for the East Bayfront. Michael Kirkland who is working with Kotter Kim to draft the design guidelines will make a presentation to the Panel at the July meeting.

The Chair then opened up the meeting for questions or comments from the Panel.

One Panel member suggested that Brenda Librecz, from the City of Toronto Parks Department, would be worthwhile to consult with respect to expanding the Lake Ontario Park outreach beyond the waterfront area. Mr. Glaisek noted that the Corporation has been working with the Parks Access and Equity Department to develop a list of regional stakeholders who may be interested in participating.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair then asked the Panel to approve the minutes, noting their high quality. The motion was moved and seconded and the minutes were approved.

PROJECT REVIEWS

I.0 West Don Lands, Block Plans and Public Realm Framework

ID#: 1002 and 1005

Project Type: Precinct/Master Plan and Park/Public Realm Design

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 Urban Strategies Inc.

Review Round: three

Presenter(s): Melanie Hare, Urban Strategies Inc.

Delegation: none

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced this project, noting that the Corporation's program management team has been working with many individuals to prepare the Plan of Subdivision for the West Don Lands. He noted that this process has required extensive negotiations around the flood protection landform, the creation of the functional plan for River Square, and the preparation of the draft zoning bylaw.

Mr. Glaisek asked for the Panel's feedback on the following:

- Configuration of River Square and Bayview Avenue intersection
- Configuration of Block 20 in response to changes to the landform
- Configuration of the road right-of-way in the Public Realm Plan

1.2 Project Presentation

Melanie Hare, Partner with Urban Strategies Inc., presented a summary of developments in the West Don Lands plans including the Block Plan, preparation of the Zoning Bylaw, the River Street EA, the crest of the landform, and the community centre and school.

Ms. Hare highlighted the major changes to the Block Plan since it was last seen by the Panel including the shifting of the building footprints in Block 20 and Block 24 because of the crest of the flood protection landform. Ms. Hare noted that these two blocks still require additional resolution.

Ms. Hare noted that the goal is to have the plan of subdivision approved by Council next week, and the lifting of the "Hold" zoning bylaw changes approved in July. Ms. Hare noted that the city approved Risk Assessment/Risk Management Plan is scheduled to go to the Ministry of the Environment for approval by the end of June and the Developer Proposal Call is anticipated to proceed upon obtaining that approval.

1.3 Panel Comments

The Chair then asked the Panel to comment. One Panel member asked Ms. Hare to explain the configuration of the open space along Front Street and how it is anticipated that it will be resolved. Ms. Hare explained that the drawings presented are diagrammatic and that an RFP for the detailed development of the Public Realm for the West Don Lands is anticipated to be released in approximately one month. This RFP will include Front Street as a critical design component.

Another Panel member asked for clarification on how the zoning is addressing the mid-rise and high-rise step-backs and setbacks and their visual impact on the street. Ms. Hare explained that the step-backs and setbacks in the block plan will be included in the new zoning bylaw. She explained that in addition to the step-backs and setbacks, penthouses can not exceed 50% of the floor below, and on towers they are required to step-back three meters on all sides.

There was concern among some Panel members that the approach towards setbacks and step-backs taken in the zoning bylaw may be too prescriptive, precluding good architecture. The Panel suggested that other non-traditional strategies which may allow increased creativity and interest in the urban fabric be considered. Another Panel member countered that these zoning parameters simply establish overall massing, and that each architect will respond in a unique way to the diagram. It was suggested that a test architectural design of the zoning be prepared for a typical block.

One Panel member asked Ms. Hare to explain the rationale regarding the location of the towers. Ms. Hare explained that the 24-storey tower on block 20 will strategically mark River Square, the 24-storey tower on block 9 will contain the smokestack for the adjacent district energy plant, and the 24-storey tower on block 1 will frame the western gateway into the West Don Lands in conjunction with the new Distillery District now under construction.

One Panel member noted that the character of the community is still unclear. It was noted that the nature of this new community should feel radically different than anything seen before in Toronto. It was suggested that future presentations discuss first the nature and character of the community and then the resultant form that will create that character. Another Panel member noted that what really defines the West Don Lands is the public realm. It was suggested that the public realm should be driving the architectural form, and that the character developed in the Don River Park design should be expanded and integrated into the rest of the precinct.

One Panel member expressed a concern with the design of the Front Street Boulevard and noted that they did not feel it would work as a park as anticipated. Mr. Glaisek suggested that the discussion of the specific nature of the public realm be put on hold until the public realm designer has been contracted and the planning ideas developed more fully as actual landscape designs. Mr. Glaisek noted that in District 3 it may already be too late to reconsider the public realm but in the rest of the West Don Lands the public realm consultant will be integral to the refinement of the plan. The Panel suggested that MVVA be contracted to design the Front Street right away.

The Panel inquired on what would happen if the market doesn't respond to the Developer Proposal Call. The Panel noted that there is a fantastic park that acts as an anchor on the east side, but suggested that the West Don Lands may need another anchor on the west side, such as the Distillery District. The Panel suggested that when the area south of Mill Street is designed that the Corporation emphasize a pedestrian connection that is powerful and clear linking the Distillery District to the area south of Mill Street. It was suggested that this link could also help connect the school to the community.

One Panel member noted the difficulty in designing architecture for the Block 20 signature site and the Bayview Crescent. The Panel reaffirmed its position on the importance of having sophisticated architects design the key buildings in the West Don Lands. It was also suggested that the West Don Lands represents an opportunity to involve young architects. The Panel suggested that the architecture in the community needs to be "curated" to ensure a mix that is both unique and intriguing.

1.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the Panel's comments:

- The resolution of Front Street is critical and the success of the plan
- Block 20 could yield a unique and interesting building, but would require special design attention to succeed.

1.5 Proponent's Response

Ms. Hare thanked the Panel for its input.

2.0 Don River Park

ID#: 1006

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Area bounded by the Don River, CN Rail Yards, Bayview Avenue, and King Street

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA)

Review Round: Two

Presenter(s): Michael Van Valkenburgh, MVVA; Ken Greenberg, KGA; Mary Anne Thompson, Thompson Architects

Delegation: Emily Meuller De Celis, Melanie Hare

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced Mr. Van Valkenburgh, explaining that it has been two months since his last visit to the Panel. During that time, the project has continued to be positively received by the public. Mr. Glaisek then asked for the Panel's feedback on the appropriateness of the features and program elements in the park, including:

- The pavilion/fire pit
- The topography
- The water feature(s)
- The children's play area

2.2 Project Presentation

Mr. Van Valkenburgh provided a summary of the evolution of the park since the April Panel meeting. Mr. Van Valkenburgh introduced the idea of River Square as a possible ice skating site, the possibility of a storm water retention system for the park that proposes swales along Bayview Avenue and turbines to pump the water as well as a functional marsh that will filter storm runoff. Mr. Van Valkenburgh explained the character of the water features and streetscape as well as the furnishing and play concepts. Mr. Van Valkenburgh then introduced his team members Ken Greenberg and Marianne Thompson, urban structure and park pavilion concepts.

2.3 Panel Comments

The Panel praised the MVVA teams' work. The Panel noted that the idea of creating a connection to the surrounding neighbourhood through the collection of storm water was commendable and asked Mr. Van Valkenburgh how the Panel could support the design team in ensuring that this initiative was implemented.

One Panel member asked if the pavilion and play equipment will be owned and operated by the City. Mr. Glaisek responded that although the terms of the transfer are not fully resolved, the idea is that the City will be responsible for long term maintenance of all the waterfront parks. The Corporation is working to develop a long-range strategy for ensuring the high quality waterfront parks are properly maintained.

The Panel questioned the life of River Square beyond the skating rink as the proposal is that there is no permanent infrastructure for skating but rather that it will disappear in the summer. The Panel was concerned that if it is temporary it will eventually be removed if park budgets get thinner. Mr. Van Valkenburgh explained that the design for River Square establishes a civic quality with an urban frame of trees and that its use will grow and evolve with the development of the community around it. One Panel member lauded the urban design gesture that the

skating rink would create in the West Don Lands and noted that it would provide a great amenity to the community.

The Panel asked for clarification on how the design intends to manage the volume of bike traffic that will come through the Bala Underpass into the Park. Mr. Van Valkenburgh explained that one path will be clearly designated through paving bike traffic while the other paths that lead to the pavilion will use slope and steps to preclude bike traffic at the base of the pavilion.

The Panel liked the pavilion concept. One Panel member suggested that the pavilion represents an opportunity to capture winter use in the park through the creation of a hearth that can be lit at night, which will warm park visitors in the winter months. It was suggested that the pavilion could act as a lantern or light beacon in the park. Another Panel member suggested that the proposed kitchen be enlarged to accommodate larger groups. One Panel member suggested that the design consider shifting the glazing to the north side of the pavilion to keep the building cooler in the summer, while another Panel member suggested that the pavilion be exclusively for summer use to avoid the need for insulating the building.

The Panel asked for clarification on where different programming may occur in the park. One Panel member suggested that skateboarding is a potential summer programming use for the skating rink. Another Panel member noted that a skateboard park is being designed nearby at the park north of the Ashbridges Bay Treatment Centre. It was also suggested that the skating rink could be used for inline skating in the summer and that many precedents for this exist.

The Panel asked about the potential costs of maintaining the park and ensuring it is kept at a high standard. Mr. Van Valkenburgh noted that he is very concerned with the maintenance of the park and wants to ensure that there is a strategy in place for the park's maintenance, because it could make-or-break the project. He explained that parks are living organisms and need care, and suggested that a conservancy for the care of the park be established. Mr. Glaisek explained that a day-long session on park endowment has been arranged by the Corporation to develop strategies for ongoing maintenance of the new waterfront parks.

One Panel member felt that the plan for the West Don Lands is missing soul and character and that the park plan represents a great opportunity to permeate the plan with much sought after identity. It was suggested by the Panel that the narrative of the Don River be integrated into the park design. Mr. Van Valkenburgh explained that it has been a challenge to get information that accurately represents the views of the river from the proposed elevations.

2.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

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

- i. There is tremendous support for the design of the park among the Panel members.
- ii. The integration of the park design into the rest of the West Don Lands public realm is encouraged from the public realm perspective be considered further.
- iii. It was recommended to Mr. Van Valkenburgh that he obtain copies of the minutes from all the Panel meetings he is present at.

2.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Van Valkenburgh thanked the Panel for a great critique.

3.0 Leslie Street Greening Phase 2

ID#: 1004

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Leslie Street, south of Lakeshore Avenue, north of Unwin Avenue

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Envision Group

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Eha Naylor, Envision

Delegation: Karen Pitre, Program Manager

3.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the project, noting that the Leslie Street Greening is part of a set of relatively small projects meant to deliver quick improvements in the Port Lands area. It was noted that the Panel has already seen a conceptual design for this project from John Hillier and that the Corporation has since contracted with the Envision Group to design and implement the project. The main issues on which the advice of the Panel is sought includes:

- Appropriateness of the scale of the designs to its goal as a short-term enhancement.
- Preference among the three options.

3.2 Project Presentation

Eha Naylor, with Envision Group, provided the Panel with a brief presentation of three options noting the challenges with implementing each of the options due to the lack of space on the right-of-way. Ms. Naylor concluded by presenting a preferred design solution which borrows from the public works yard and introduces curb-side parking and bioswales at the edge of the paved roadway. This solution enables greening while providing sustainable storm water management.

3.3 Panel Comments

The Panel expressed frustration about the challenges of obtaining space for the public realm and inquired how they could be of help. Mr. Glaisek explained that while Leslie Street is slated to undergo a complete redesign and rebuild, in the future, at this point the goal is to beautify the street quickly within the existing right-of-way. The Panel felt strongly that it was not a good investment to implement this improvement if it wasn't done fully or with an eye towards the future condition.

The Panel suggested that the design play off the idea of a temporary landscape installation. The Panel recommended that projects that are permanent be done to the highest standards while temporary projects should appear temporary in nature. It was suggested that while the design should still create great gestures where possible, on the west side of the street for example, the rest of the street design should avoid permanent plantings and infrastructure. One Panel member suggested that one small piece of the street where the alignment would not be altered in the future should be completed in full as a "bold dash" while the rest could be designed as temporary.

Mr. Campbell noted that the Corporation has a commitment to great design. He suggested that the challenge is that without public, political and media support for these initiatives it is difficult to make every one a top priority from a funding, regulatory and resources perspective. Mr. Campbell explained that, given the pressure on the Corporation, in order to gain this support, quick successful projects are required that demonstrate things are happening now.

The Panel noted that after almost a year of meetings it is evident that the real challenge is with the width of streets and suggested that after the visioning session they start making recommendations to the city.

3.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

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

- i. All permanent projects be done to the highest design standards.
- ii. Temporary projects be designed to appear temporary in nature.
- iii. Do one block fully and use as a showcase for what's to come.

3.5 Proponent's Response

Ms. Naylor thanked the Panel for its comments.

4.0 Central Waterfront Innovative Design Competition

ID#: 1007

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Water's Edge & Queens Quay Boulevard from Parliament Street to Stadium Road

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: West 8 Landscape Architecture & Urban Design

Review Round: N/A (for information only)

Presenter(s): Brigitte Shim, Shim-Sutcliffe Architects

Delegation: N/A

4.1 Introduction of the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced this project with a brief overview of the competition process, and thanked Mr. Campbell for his support of the process and Ms. Mallozzi and Ms. Shim for their contributions to the success of the competition. He noted that West 8 Landscape Architecture and Urban Design was announced as the winner of the competition on June 2, 2006, at a press conference on the newly constructed John Quay boardwalk.

Mr. Glaisek then provided a brief overview of the West 8 design as a prelude to the Jury Report. The main issues on which the input of the panel is sought include:

- The quality of the selected design
- The Jury's recommendations for implementation

4.2 Project Presentation

Brigitte Shim, chair of the Innovative Design Competition Jury, began by describing the membership of the group and explained their sense of accountability as most have roots in Toronto. She explained the adjudication process and outlined the goals for the competition to create a continuous water's edge and ameliorate the pinch points at the Heads of the Slips along Queens Quay Boulevard. Ms. Shim then proceeded to outline why the Jury selected the West 8 design. Ms. Shim outlined the Jury recommendation for implementation of the design. This consisted of a first phase of work that would encompass Queens Quay Boulevard from Spadina Avenue to York Street, and the water's edge from Rees Slip to Portland Slip. Ms. Shim then explained to the Panel the Jury's proposal for an interim condition that would close the south side of Queen's Quay Boulevard this summer and recommended that the Corporation pursue this as a priority project. This would allow citizens to claim ownership of this territory sooner rather than later, sustaining the momentum of the competition. She then concluded by commending the Corporation for its commitment to conducting a high-quality competition.

4.3 Panel Comments

One Panel member asked the status of the smaller elements in the proposal. Ms. Shim explained the Jury's recommendation to complete the major continuous water's edge and Queens Quay revitalization components as a priority. Ms. Shim noted that while the Jury appreciated West 8's attempt to provide suggestions for street furnishings and installations, given the short six-week period of the competition the Jury report did not dwell on these components of the project. The Panel noted that, since the Corporation deferred the design of park furnishings until after the competition, it would be helpful to get resolution on a waterfront-wide architectural palette.

The Panel asked what the Corporation intended to build with the \$20 million budget. Mr. Glaisek explained that the long-term goal is to produce a master plan, implement the interim condition, build one head of slip and implement the entire first phase. He noted that the Corporation is going to try to get more money to complete this scope of work.

One Panel member asked for clarification on the argument that led to five short listed international competitors which resulted in little Canadian representation. Ms. Shim explained that the Jury spent a day going through the 38 submissions to the Request for Qualifications and did not look specifically for non-Canadians but rather looked to draw from best practices from around the world.

The Panel asked Ms. Shim to explain what elements from the runner-up project by the Port team could be integrated into the West 8 scheme. Ms. Shim explained that their specificity was great but that the Jury was looking for a broader vision. The Jury advised that the clarity of the winning scheme not be compromised at this point but that future projects may integrate some of the ideas the Port team proposed.

The Panel asked how it could help to make projects such as this happen. Ms. Shim advised that the key is to not lose momentum and to make initial progress quickly. She noted that this project is lucky because the stars are aligned – the Jury, public and media all agreed on one scheme. Her recommendation is to implement the interim condition this summer. Mr. Glaisek suggested that the most important role the Panel can play is to hold the Corporation to high standards and to keep them accountable. He noted that when there are projects that meet these high standards, the Panel needs to go out and advocate for them.

One Panel member noted that while the West 8 design started with the image of the Canadian wilderness the final design is a classic European proposal. It was noted that everything the Jury stripped out is Canadian in nature. One Panel member suggested that while some components may have a humorous appeal they carry the design.

One Panel member noted that clarity of the proposed uses of the reclaimed south lanes would help make a convincing argument for this investment. Another Panel member noted that the reclamation of Queens Quay is about creating a great civic cultural space, and that this idea has given the city hope that Queens Quay has the potential to be a great place.

4.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

N/A

4.5 Proponent's Response