



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #20 Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
Renee Daoust
Peter Halsall
Anne McIlroy
Janet Rosenberg
Greg Smallenberg

Regrets:

George Baird
Paul Bedford
Tania Bortolotto
Peter Clewes
Siamak Hariri
Don Schmitt
Charles Waldheim

Designees and Guests:

Robert Freedman
Christopher Glaisek

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Panel wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. He provided an overview of the agenda and then invited Mr. Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto's Vice President for Planning and Design, to provide a summary of project progress over the past month.

REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN

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

Project Symphony

- Waterfront Toronto would like to see Project Symphony come back before the Panel. A letter of invitation will be drafted.

Martin Goodman Trail

- Janet Rosenberg and Associates has been selected to design the Ontario Place section of the Martin Goodman Trail. Construction on this section of trail will begin in Spring 2008.

Spadina Head of Slip

- The contractor has been selected to construct the slip. Construction is scheduled to begin by the end of October.

West Don Lands

- The Lower Level Interceptor (LLI) is progressing with most of the piles already in the ground.
- 5 developers have been shortlisted to submit for the Developer Request for Proposals for market units in District 3. 18 submissions were received for the original Request for Qualifications. The shortlisted teams all have a strong design component and it is hoped that the working relationship between the developers and architects will be a focus of the Request for Proposals.

The Chair then asked the Panel if they had any questions or comments, there being none, the Chair then moved to General Business.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair began by sharing some thoughts on the tree canopy in Paris, noting that Front Street, for example, may benefit from a tighter grid of trees.

The Chair expressed a desire for the Re-Visioning session to be scheduled for sometime before the Christmas holidays, noting that topics for discussion could include Panel members rotation, as well as the overall purview of the Panel.

The Chair then requested that Waterfront Toronto compile an image that shows all the projects that have been discussed at Design Review to date.

The 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 Sherbourne Park

ID#: 1020

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Area bounded by Sherbourne Street to the West, from Lake Shore Boulevard South to the Lake.

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: Phillips Farvaag Smallemberg

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Greg Smallemberg, Phillips Farvaag Smallemberg

Delegation: Jennifer Nagai, Phillips Farvaag Smallemberg

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

James Roche, Planning and Design Project Manager for Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project, noting that the team will be presenting two design concepts and is looking for input on the both concepts rather a decision on which option to proceed with.

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

- The relationship of the park to it's edges, including the roads and the water's edge
- The hierarchy of spaces

- The organizational structure
- The park's response to future adjacent projects

1.2 Project Presentation

Greg Smallenberg, Partner with Phillips Farvaag Smallenberg, began by introducing the overall goals of the design including beauty, detail, play, serenity and life. Mr. Smallenberg then described various elements, including art, architecture, structure, light, memory, trees and sustainability, which layer onto the park. This was followed by a description of the context, site analysis and precedents which helped to inform their designs. Mr. Smallenberg then described the two conceptual schemes they are working with, “the pier” and “crib and fill”, noting the various components of each.

1.3 Panel Questions and Comments

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

One Panel member asked what the different elements were that extend into the water. Mr. Smallenberg explained that in the Pier concept, a long pier extends the length of the park out into the water and encompasses a pavilion structure at the end, in the Crib concept, crib structures form elements such as lawn spaces out in the water.

Another Panel member asked how water was specifically being used in the design and what the intentions behind its use would be. Mr. Smallenberg stated that in both options, storm water collection and use is being looked at. Another Panel member asked if the blue elements in the Pier concept plan were water. Mr. Smallenberg stated that they were lighting elements. Another Panel member felt that the opportunities of using water as a winter element should also be considered further.

One Panel member asked Mr. Smallenberg if he could elaborate on the intended uses of the park north and south of Queens Quay. Mr. Smallenberg explained that although they have always envisioned the park to feel and operate like one space, their intention was to give “Sherbourne Park North” a more neighbourhood park feel as it would be adjacent to future residential development, noting that this could be a place for a children’s play area, passive recreation, and could act as a community gathering point. Mr. Smallenberg then stated that their intention for “Sherbourne Park South” would be for those larger city-wide events that would draw people from across the City and give them a venue on the lake.

One Panel member enquired as to the use of the open space west of the park in the Pier option. Mr. Smallenberg explained that it was intended as a car turn-around that could also function as an urban square. Another Panel member stated that the car turn-around/urban square took away from the powerful wedge shape that the park has, noting that greater control should be given to the Western edge of the park. Another Panel member agreed, noting that there should be a more clear intention about how we border the public space, but that it is acceptable to have cars in the area, if it is done right.

One Panel member wondered what assumptions had been made about the street pattern in the East Bayfront. Mr. Smallenberg stated they were under the assumption that the new streets would run from Queens Quay south to the promenade, but would not loop back around.

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member wondered whether the methodology employed was sufficient to make a great park, and enquired as to the real “idea” of the park. Another Panel member agreed, stating that there were almost too many ideas, obscuring the one main, overarching idea. Another Panel member agreed feeling that in both options, there are too many variables, and not enough constraints in the design.

Another Panel member stated that they were very seduced by the precedent images shown, but expressed concern that they all felt small. Another Panel member felt that consideration should be given to defining the large scale of the park as well as the small scale, noting that with all the surrounding development, it will be viewed a lot from above.

One Panel member noted that in the Pier option, the reading of the wedge-shape of the park is stronger than the reading of Queens Quay, but in the Crib option, Queens Quay is more defined. Another Panel member agreed, noting that how one crosses Queens Quay should be considered.

Another Panel member felt that the notion of a “Green Slip” was exciting and should be studied further and expressed in a formal way.

One Panel member wondered if a rolling green carpet lawn could survive with the abuse it could get from both large and small groups of people.

Another Panel member expressed concern that heritage elements were not coming through enough in the design.

One Panel member suggested that the future of Lake Shore Boulevard/Gardiner Expressway should be considered in the design, noting that currently, the northern edge of the site is “under-nourished”. Another Panel member felt that it was safe to assume that the Gardiner will stay up for the mean time. Mr. Glaisek suggested that the takedown of the Lake Shore Boulevard/Gardiner Expressway should be considered as a future condition that might emerge, but not to design any specific solutions for that possibility at this time. Another Panel member expressed a frustration with a general lack of consideration of the Sherbourne/Lake Shore intersection, and urged Waterfront Toronto and the City to create a vision for the neglected space.

Another Panel member stated that they would like to see the park design in relation to the larger West 8 public realm and wondered how the two would relate.

One Panel member felt that both the Pier and the Crib options had powerful elements that could be layered together and do not need to be mutually exclusive, noting that the crib reference is very strong in terms of the history of the site, as well as a construction technique that could be utilized. The Panel member suggested that as an organizing plan, the Pier scheme was strong, and that crib structures could act in the 3rd dimension as the pavilions or other structures.

1.4 Summary of Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. The “green slip” notion is interesting and should be pushed further both formally and materially.
- ii. The edges of the park should be studied further and strengthened, especially how the park meets Lake Shore Boulevard.

- iii. Study how water can be more fully utilized on the site, in all seasons.
- iv. Study how Queens Quay crosses the site while maintaining the sense that it is one continuous open space.

1.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Smallenberg thanked the Panel for their feedback.

2.0 West Don Lands: Public Art Strategy

ID#: 1018-B

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

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

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: Jill Anholt Design

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Jill Anholt, Artist

Delegation: David Leinster and Mike Tocher, The Planning Partnership

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Carla Guerrero, Planning and Design Project Manager for Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project, noting that it is the intention of Waterfront Toronto to hire someone to help implement this strategy.

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

- General comments and feedback for the strategy and its implementation

2.2 Project Presentation

Jill Anholt, Principal with Jill Anholt Design, began the presentation by stating what a great opportunity it was to work with the public realm team who see public art as integral to the design of the public realm and not merely an add-on or an afterthought. Ms. Anholt then described the context of public art in Toronto including several precedents, followed by the overall ambitions of the art strategy. Ms. Anholt then outlined the various art opportunities and sites within the West Don Lands including both permanent and temporary pieces. Ms. Anholt concluded by presenting the necessary steps for implementation.

2.3 Panel Questions and Comments

The Chair then asked the Panel for questions of clarification only, there being none the Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated their excitement at the art possibilities that the proposed budget could allow for and asked Ms. Anholt if she were comfortable with the amount of money in the budget. Ms. Anholt stated that she felt comfortable that Waterfront Toronto could attract great artists and achieve great work for what is in the budget.

Another Panel member suggested thinking about the strategy in terms of “art as marker” and “art as markings”, stating that “markers” could mark the waterfront at the scale of the city - the big anchor pieces, and that “markings” could be thought of as the connector pieces that can be smaller, but really create a sense of place.

One Panel member worried if the implications of this strategy would result in a third board in charge of public art in the City. Ms. Anholt stated that they had met with the City to discuss this and they were willing to consider letting Waterfront Toronto take it on as an integrated strategy.

One Panel member suggested that there may be too many targets to try and cover for this budget. Another Panel member agreed, noting that the hierarchy of pieces needs to be strengthened and simplified and to ensure that money is put where it is visible and where it will have the highest impact. Ms. Anholt stated that there were high priority projects listed in the strategy, noting that they were the highly visible projects and ones that had a direct connection with the neighbourhoods. The Panel member then suggested placing the highly visible pieces to create an art node in an area, citing Lyon, France as a precedent where public art is associated with underground parking, which is in turn associated with the public spaces above thus creating a district and an association around the public art. Another Panel agreed, citing Anish Kapoor's "Cloud Gate" in Millennium Park as the scale and profile of work that could be done here. Several Panel members suggested that both architecture and landscape budgets be used to cover some of the public art, allowing some money in the Public Art budget to be spent on larger pieces.

Another panel member stated that lots of money will have to go into the maintenance of these pieces. Ms. Anholt stated that that had been considered in the budget.

One panel member stated that the Public Art Strategy could also tap in to local engines of culture such as Luminato and Nuit Blanch as a way to draw people to the waterfront.

Another panel member suggested that Ms. Anholt have a continued role in the development of public art in the West Don Lands, serving an advisory role to the Panel on Public Art.

3.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. The overall art budget seems low
- ii. Consider landscape and architecture that could contribute to the strategy
- iii. Push the hierarchy of the pieces further to ensure the work draws people to the waterfront
- iv. Ensure that enough budget has been allocated for ongoing maintenance
- v. Investigate tapping into Luminato, Nuit Blanche or other local art groups
- vi. The elements of scale and spectacle should be considered further with key works

3.5 Proponent's Response

Ms. Anholt thanked the Panel for their comments.

CLOSING

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

--