



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #164

Wednesday, January 31st, 2024
Meeting held virtually

Present

Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel

Paul Bedford, Chair
Betsy Williamson, Vice Chair
Gina Ford
Matthew Hickey
David Leinster
Janna Levitt
Nina-Marie Lister
Fadi Masoud
Brigitte Shim
Kevin Stelzer
Eric Turcotte

Emilia Floro, City of Toronto

Regrets

Emily Mueller De Celis
Pat Hanson

Recording Secretary
Leon Lai

Overview of Review Agenda

The Chair opened the meeting by providing an overview of the agenda, which included reviews of:

1. 396 Queens Quay West – Schematic Design
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GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair asked if there were any conflicts of interest for disclosure. No conflict was declared.

The Chair then asked Leon Lai, Manager, Design Review Panel, with Waterfront Toronto, to give an update on last month's projects.

Design Review Panel Updates:

Mr. Lai provided an update on **Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm including Queens Quay East from Bonny castle to Street A**, which was reviewed at Detailed Design in October 2023. Mr. Lai noted that Waterfront Toronto is reviewing the 60% design submitted after the October review, coordination with QILP continues and an update will be provided after Quayside returns to the WDRP. The team is in process of engaging the Indigenous community, the feedback will help develop ideas around storytelling elements, and 90% design is targeted for Fall 2024. Mr. Lai noted that the consensus comments for **153-185 Eastern Ave.** have been circulated to the proponent team.

Waterfront Toronto Updates:

Mr. Lai noted on Jan. 24th, 2024, the Cherry Street North and Commissioners Street bridges were opened to the public, marking a key advancement in PLFP. Mr. Lai noted that the wider of the two Cherry Street North bridges carries autos, pedestrians, and cyclists. The Commissioners Street bridge is orange and white, the longest of the new bridges, and the street features a uni-directional separated cycle lane on either side of the street. Mr. Lai noted that the inundation of the PLFP river valley begins today, and the water will rise over a period of two to four weeks.

Mr. Lai then noted the tentative agenda for future February and March 2024 WDRP.

Chair's remarks:

The Chair concluded the General Business segment and motioned to go into the project review sessions.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 396 Queens Quay West – Schematic Design

<i>Project ID #:</i>	1040
<i>Project Type:</i>	Building
<i>Review Stage:</i>	Schematic Design
<i>Review Round:</i>	Two
<i>Location:</i>	Central Waterfront
<i>Proponent:</i>	Waterfront Toronto
<i>Architect/ Designer:</i>	BDP Quadrangle Forrec

Presenter(s): Les Klein, Principal, Co-founder & Studio Head, BDP
Quadrangle
Scott Torrance, Senior Director, Forrec

Delegation: Shehzad Somji, Pacific Reach Properties Development
Ken Brooks, BDP Quadrangle
Ivy Yang, Forrec
Asif Patel, City of Toronto
Joseph Luk, City of Toronto
Kristal Tanunagara, Waterfront Toronto
Josh Hilburt, Waterfront Toronto
Corey Bialek, Waterfront Toronto

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Leon Lai, Manger, Design Review Panel with Waterfront Toronto, began the introduction by noting the site context. Asif Patel, Community Planer with City of Toronto, continued with a summary of the project background, existing uses, existing site conditions, and the application status. Mr. Patel provided a project description for this phase and Mr. Lai noted that the project is here for Schematic Design review. Mr. Lai highlighted previous WDRP comments that have impacted the evolution of the design of phase one, from built form to ground floor access, and provided a recap of the previous consensus comments from Schematic Design review in Sept. 2019. Joseph Luk, Senior Urban Designer with City of Toronto, summarized the areas for Panel consideration, including proposed tower massing and façade design, ground floor interface, base building and parking structure, materiality, sustainability and green infrastructure, street activation at Queens Quay and Lake Shore, and pedestrian connects to TTC.

1.2 Project Presentation

Les Klein, Principal, Co-founder and Studio Head with BDP Quadrangle, began the design presentation by noting property separation for 396 Queens Quay West and the adjacent first phase work. Mr. Klein noted the rationale for the proposed massing, the opportunities for views to the lake, and new hotel suites to screen the parking structure. Mr. Klein noted the site circulation, pedestrian and cycling access, and introduced Scott Torrance, Senior Director with Forrec, to present the landscape design.

Mr. Torrance presented the public realm design and the new trees along Queens Quay, noted the tabletop pedestrian crossing to TTC, and bike parking along the building overhang on the west elevation. Mr. Klein summarized the new design and modifications to the existing ground floor and parking structure to accommodate the new programs. Mr. Klein noted the new elevations, the architectural vision along Queens Quay, the material palette, and 3D renderings of how the full buildout supports the existing and phase one buildings.

1.3 Panel Questions

One Panel member asked if a wind study was completed for this site. Ken Brooks, Senior Associate with Quadrangle, responded that a report was completed, elements can be added to the architecture to improve wind conditions on the outdoor amenity and terrace on the roof of the parking structure. Mr. Brooks noted a canopy has been added on the south side of the tower which decreases the downdraft from the tower; on the west side raised glass panels are provided to screen the parking structure. The Panel member asked for the rationale behind the proposed height. Mr. Klein noted the original proposal had more height, but there were issues with the City and neighbours, in the end the proposed height is more based on having contextual relationship.

One Panel member asked if the two street trees share soil bed. Mr. Torrance responded yes. The Panel member asked if the Gardener structure is shown in the section drawing. Mr. Brooks noted the underside of the Gardener structure is approximately half a meter above the canopy on the north elevation, and setback is maintained to steer clear of the Gardener. The Panel member asked if the street trees and public realm relate to the park on the south side of Queens Quay. Mr. Klein noted that the design is not deeply influenced by the park.

Another Panel member asked about the timing of Rees Street Park. Mr. Lai noted a new design team will be selected and the project is likely to return to DRP later this year.

One Panel member asked for the constraints around the green roof design and the soil depth. Mr. Torrance noted the soil has 150mm deep modules but due to the structural load nothing more intensive is allowed than the average green roof. The landscape essentially matches in detail the roof landscape on the east in phase 1 with primarily succulents.

Another Panel member asked if the existing rental buildings and parking structure will be kept operational during construction. Mr. Klein responded that the tenants would stay, and construction will require carving a hole next to the ramp for the new tower, which will be a challenge. The Panel member asked if there is retail access on the west facade along the covered walkway. Mr. Klein noted that there is access should the retailer want access along that elevation.

One Panel member asked for the percentage of landscaping on the roof. Mr. Klein noted they do not have the exact number, but it appears to be fifty percent – only the amenity area is accessible. The Panel member asked if there is new lighting along Lake Shore. Mr. Torrance noted there are new lights on the south side of Lake Shore.

Another Panel member asked for the location of the surface parking spots and the anticipated traffic intensity. Mr. Klein noted there is convenience parking accessed from Queens Quay, the transportation volume is not known but the team expects low volume from cars of the project with primary drivers being ride share and deliveries.

One Panel member asked for the location of the main retail entrance and the underground infrastructure at Queens Quay. Mr. Torrance noted Shoppers Drug Mart's entrance is at the corner and all the underground infrastructure is shown in the site plan.

Another Panel member asked for the version of Toronto Green Standards being applied for the project and the specification of the mechanical system. Mr. Klein responded that the application was sent in 2019 and will likely follow TGS version 3. Shehzad Somji, Director of Development with Pacific Reach Properties, noted the design for heating and cooling is the same as the first phase – fan coil or heat pump.

1.4 Panel Comments

One Panel member commended the project for ‘digesting’ the parking structure as many of these buildings have pressure for alternative use and commented that hotel suites on Queens Quay is an interesting addition. The Panel member asked the team to provide more information on the experiential condition of the sidewalk and how it relates to the retail strategy, consider finer grain retail that works in unison with the retail along the Basin public realm because Shoppers Drug Mart may not be there forever, and additional elements such as canopy projections to provide shade. The Panel member asked the team to consider a more generous sidewalk along the west elevation to provide residents and TTC goers a better experience. The Panel member appreciated the ‘healing’ strategy for the site, but felt the curved northwest corner is the resultant of a legacy element and recommended something new to create a stronger gateway identity for the project, i.e. a stronger architectural identity, a beacon, that brings people around the corner. At the south elevation, the Panel member felt that no balconies are a great advantage but calls into question the glazing ratio and asked the team to consider more opportunities for solidity on the facade to respond to the southern exposure.

Another Panel member noted while that the built environment is often prioritized when analysing massing and facade, there are opportunities for strengthening natural heritage and relationship with parks and streets and encouraged the team to think about the building’s overall relationship with the natural world.

One Panel member appreciated the thoughtfulness in the design and commended the removal of the canopy on Queens Quay. The Panel member noted there is little opportunity for organic green space on the ground floor and encouraged the team to try to add more. Furthermore, the Panel member suggested to reduce the number of different pavers, consolidate the two ‘tabletop’ crossings into one, and further develop the curve as a public space instead of just an outcome of the driveway turning requirement. The Panel member noted the roof amenity as a fifth elevation and suggested extending the landscape out to the roof edge to embrace the western sun exposure. The Panel member felt that the hotel elevation along Queens Quay is quite large compared to the adjacent existing and new buildings, and since it is quite close to the street more articulation at a finer grain should be provided to better tie building to the street, such as more sun control strategies.

Another Panel member appreciated the Proponent’s perseverance for the project and working on a site that has no ‘backside’, noted that the team has successfully turn the ‘back’ into a ‘front’. The Panel member felt that unlocking the full potential of the Basin public realm will require a joint study by City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto, examine strategies for providing a suitable amount of shade for retail, the width of the

public realm, scale of retail, and tapping into the future connections to Rees Park and Lake Shore Boulevard – this is an important task for the two agencies to work together.

One Panel member appreciated the sustained effect to continue to improve the design and overall development with each meeting. The Panel member noted the public realm is critical for the success of the project, discouraged the filling in of the Basin, and suggested all authorities involved to build a better public realm with water and landscaping, such as terracing down to the water and create opportunities to touch water.

Another Panel member supported the removal of the colonnade along Queens Quay which improves the public realm. The Panel member commented that the residential lobby should be shifted closer to Queens Quay, the number of bike parking along the west elevation should be reduced or distributed elsewhere on the site and add some landscaping to improve the walkway which is a primary movement corridor. The Panel member recommended work with TTC to consider a shared public space that connects pedestrians from Queens Quay to the TTC loop. The Panel member appreciated the surgical approach with inserting additional density, and recommended moving the location of the parking ramp to improve the corner for pedestrian circulation. The Panel member suggested for the northwest corner to step back at the podium, and eliminate the curve in favour of a straight corner to preserve a better view corridor and provide more space at the ground – to recoup the lost areas from this change, consider lengthening the tower in the south direction.

One Panel member appreciated the team's commitment to the project and noted the Basin is a unique element to the site, a catalyst, and suggested the team to think about how it can connect to the rest of the public realm. The Panel member felt it is important to improve the Basin, such as adding some hydroponic plants and letting people engage the water.

Another Panel member suggested to consider one-way traffic, and a curb-less sidewalk, to encourage a more pedestrian-friendly and flexible public realm for all forms of mobility.

One Panel member felt the Queens Quay public realm is bleak in that area and should be the focus of improvement, such as adding another tree or two to create a dialogue between the street and the park on the south side. The Panel member noted soil cells do not have a great history of success in this type of environment and suggested the team look at other tree planting details. The Panel member felt the 2.1m sidewalk feels narrow with the trees, and commented that the tabletop connection should be emphasized to ensure pedestrians are prioritized.

Another Panel member noted the journey to the Basin begins with walking along the Queens Quay elevation and encouraged the team to provide activation opportunities, such as benches and additional retail access, to invite pedestrians from Queens Quay towards the Basin. The Panel member agreed that the precast façade scale is too large on the Queens Quay elevation and recommended a finer grain façade, similar to the phase one buildings, because the hotel program is closed to the street – the entire edge along Queens Quay has a large change in scale and area should be re-examined.

The Panel member felt that the project has strong forms from the existing and phase one towers, and the current phase can do the same by eliminating the curve on the northwest corner and enlarge the public realm.

One Panel member commended the project for adaptive reuse and noted it is very exciting to discuss these strategies. The Panel member asked the team to improve the carbon emission of the project, and suggested to examine how heat pump can reduce carbon intensity, air source technologies that can offer affordable operational scenarios, and consider a small solar or thermal array which would work well since your building has good sun exposure. The Panel member encouraged the team to push hard on finding an efficient heating and cooling strategy that reduces carbon emission, and suggested to implement a central plant that is driven by an air-sourced heat pump or a central ambient loop.

1.5 Consensus Comments

General

- Appreciated the evolution of the project and the strategy of ‘healing’ the site.
- Commended the team for building on the existing parking structure and further infill additional residential density on this site – this strategy of integrating existing parking into a new development is a great example of adaptive reuse in the city.

Buildings

- Strong support for the removal of the podium overhang along the Queens Quay frontage, providing opportunity for public realm improvements.
- Ensure the new phase of work is well integrated with the existing and first phase buildings on site so the entire project feels like one development.
- Further break down the scale of the façade design to a finer grain. In particular, the hotel façade on Queens Quay feels overscale relative to adjacent elements and benefit from more horizontal and vertical articulation.
- Some Panel members felt that the northwest corner curved massing in the tower should be removed or pulled back, and the density redistributed towards the south of the tower, to create a slim tower profile as seen from the north that more aligns with the other towers. A straight corner would also improve the legibility of the project and strengthen the ‘gateway’ quality of the project, as well as increasing the tower’s exposure to natural light.

Ground Floor and Public Realm

- Appreciated the addition of two street trees on Queens Quay and encouraged the team to find opportunities to further add green infrastructure in the public realm.
- Prioritize streetscape improvements, consider adding benches along Queens Quay to encourage activation, which will also help bridge the Peter Slip Basin public realm.
- A finer retail grain along Queens Quay can help bring activation into the Peter Slip Basin public realm, consider implementing smaller retail units in the future.

- The underground parking ramp located at the corner of the site may create friction with pedestrian movement, if possible, consider shifting the entry to the north elevation away from the TTC connection.
- The line of bike parking along the colonnade on the west side of the ground floor retail impedes pedestrian movement, consider relocating them elsewhere on the site.
- The northwest corner public realm is an important pedestrian corridor, recommendation to eliminate the curve on the ground floor and the podium, set the building back, to create a wider public realm with more natural light access.
- Suggestion to shift the residential lobby further south to improve at-grade circulation.
- Encouraged Waterfront Toronto, City of Toronto, and Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, to explore future improvements to Peter Slip Basin, such as strategies for improving the water quality, opportunities to touch the water, and maximizing its impact as a public space.

Landscape

- Appreciated the green roof and rooftop amenity area which serves as a fifth elevation for nearby residents.
- Consider further increasing the area of landscaping on the roof, extend the green area towards the western edge of the building where natural light is abundant.

Sustainability

- Commended the adaptive reuse strategy in building on the existing parking garage structure.
- Provide more information on energy performance and the carbon intensity of the design.

1.6 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Panel voted Conditional Support for the project.

The Chair then asked if the proponent would like to provide a brief response.

Ken Brooks, Senior Associate with BDP Quadrangle, noted that the commentary is appreciated especially on further improving the public realm. Mr. Brooks noted that the buildings have been there for a long time, and will continue to evolve – the team hopes to leave the door open for future opportunities even if something cannot be completed right away.


CLOSING

There being no further business, the Chair then adjourned the public session of the meeting after a vote to go into a brief in-camera session.


These Meeting Minutes are formally adopted and approved by Panel on February 28th, 2024.

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Paul Bedford, Waterfront Design Review Panel Chair

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Emilia Floro, City of Toronto Urban Design Director

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Chris Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto Chief Planning and Design Officer