



**WATERFRONT**Toronto

## **Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #33 Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

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### **Present:**

Paul Bedford, Acting Chair  
George Baird  
Tania Bortolotto  
Peter Clewes  
Renee Daoust  
Anne McIlroy  
Janet Rosenberg  
Don Schmitt  
Charles Waldheim

### **Regrets:**

Peter Halsall  
Siamak Hariri  
Bruce Kuwabara  
Greg Smallenberg

### **Recording Secretary:**

Margaret Goodfellow

### **Designees and Guests:**

John Campbell  
Christopher Glaisek  
Robert Freedman

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### **WELCOME**

Paul Bedford welcomed the Panel, wishing everyone a happy new year, noting that Bruce Kuwabara had asked him to act as Chair in his absence. He provided an overview of the agenda then invited John Campbell to provide his report.

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### **REPORT FROM THE CEO**

John Campbell, Waterfront Toronto's President and CEO, began with an update on the Gardiner Expressway/Lakeshore Boulevard corridor.

Mr. Campbell reminded the Panel that on July 15, 2008, Toronto City Council approved Waterfront Toronto's proposal to undertake an individual environmental assessment to remove part of the elevated Gardiner Expressway, from Jarvis Street east, and replace it with a lakefront eight-lane boulevard. Mr. Campbell noted that an earlier report had recommended the teardown begin at Spadina in conjunction with the Front Street Extension. Mr. Campbell noted that as the Front Street Extension project was no longer planned, the funding would be reallocated towards the proposed dismantling of the Gardiner.

Mr. Campbell stated that the approach is consistent with Waterfront Toronto's vision to reconnect the city to its waterfront, develop better north/south pedestrian connections and improve the quality of place in the new communities under development in East Bayfront and the West Don Lands. Mr. Campbell added that the approach balances public and waterfront benefits

with financial viability, adding that there exists a potential impact of only two minutes to travel times from the west. Mr. Campbell stated that the Terms of Reference for the environmental assessment will be completed for the July 2009 Council meeting.

One Panel member wondered if the new connection between the Lake Shore corridor and the Don Valley Expressway would be at grade. Mr. Campbell stated that the intention is to have it at grade all the way to Jarvis, acknowledging that it would have to cross the Don River at an appropriate elevation.

Another Panel member asked if the proposal takes into account the proposed removal of the centre lane of Jarvis Street. Mr. Campbell stated that the EA process would look at all the potential impacts.

Mr. Campbell then announced that the West Don Lands had been identified as the preferred site for the Athletes Village as part of the Greater Toronto Bid for the 2015 Pan American Games. Mr. Campbell noted that the build out would be according to the approved West Don Lands Precinct Plan, adding that it could be an interesting opportunity to build at a time when the markets are slow. Mr. Campbell stated that the winning bid team will be announced in August 2009.

One Panel member asked how much of the West Don Lands would be built out to accommodate the Athlete's Village. Mr. Campbell stated that there will be two to three thousand residential units with approximately eight thousand beds occupying lands from Cherry Street east, noting that construction would begin in 2012.

The Acting Chair then invited Mr. 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.

### *Spadina WaveDeck*

- The Spadina WaveDeck has been nominated for the prestigious *Brit Design Insurance Awards*, the first Canadian project to ever be nominated, a nice nod to Toronto.

### *Spadina Bridge*

- Although the design of the bridge is complete, the timeline for its delivery has slowed down due to concerns raised by the residents of 401 Queens Quay, the building adjacent to the site. The residents have issues with the design of the bridge and although multiple public and stakeholder meetings were held, they continue to have concerns. Waterfront Toronto has been working with the residents to address their issues and concurrently the team is working on getting the Class Environmental Assessment (CEA) approved.

### *Simcoe and Rees WaveDecks*

- Construction for both the Simcoe and Rees WaveDecks is well underway, and they are on track to be open in Summer 2009. The Panel input was well received and appreciated.

### *Martin Goodman Trail, Ontario Place Segment*

- Construction has been suspended for winter but will resume in the warmer weather when asphalt can be laid.

#### *Canada Square Feasibility Study*

- The Canada Square Feasibility Study has been completed and a business plan is currently being crafted which could see the future development of the site and an associated underground parking facility. A pre-concept design for a cultural village has been proposed by the West 8+DTAH team.

#### *Lake Ontario Park*

- Waterfront Toronto would like to take the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan, which was completed in November 2008, to City Council this year to give it statutory standing as the future of the park. A phased approach to development is being looked at as there currently exists funding for a Phase I only. Synergies with Waterfront Toronto's Soil Strategy could see the capping berms, or dunescape, being built with remediated soil from other developments without an enormous capital investment.

#### *Lower Don Lands*

- Waterfront Toronto is working with land owners who own property north of the Keating Channel to establish a coordinated precinct plan, with good progress being made.

#### *West Don Lands*

- The Phase 2 Plan of Subdivision and the Mill Street package have been submitted to the City of Toronto.
- As part of the West Don Lands Public Art Strategy, and with strong support from the community, the first piece of public art has been designed and is as an integral piece of the public realm. The City and Waterfront Toronto are working through regulatory issues and developing a formal technical review process as public art does not usually reside in the public right-of-way.

The Acting Chair asked if there were any questions or comments.

One Panel member asked if the residents of 401 Queens Quay have the power to actually stop the bridge from being constructed. Mr. Glaisek answered that the residents are concerned that the bridge will compromise their building and their views, noting that they could request a "bump-up" through the CEA process, noting that CEA screenings usually focus more on environmental factors.

Another Panel member asked what the status of Lake Ontario Park was, wondering if the project had been cancelled. Mr. Glaisek answered that Lake Ontario Park is a 30 year, \$300 million dollar project of which \$7 million is currently funded for a Phase I. Mr. Glaisek stated that Waterfront Toronto is in the process of deciding on what that Phase I will be.

The Acting Chair thanked Mr. Campbell and Mr. Glaisek for their reports.

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## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

The Acting Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Ms. Bortolotto stated that she was conflicted on the West Don Lands District Energy Plant, noting that Bortolotto Design Architects are Associate Architects on the design team with Steven Holl Architects Inc.

There being no other comments, the Acting Chair moved to adopt December's minutes. The Panel then adopted the minutes.

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## **PROJECT REVIEWS**

### **I.0 West Don Lands District Energy Plant**

*ID#: 1024*

*Project Type: Building/Structure*

*Location: East of Cherry Street, north of the railway corridor, south of Mill Street*

*Proponent: Waterfront Toronto*

*Architect/Designers: Steven Holl Architects Inc., Bortolotto Design Architects Inc., and Michael Van Valkenburgh Landscape Architects Inc.*

*Review Stage: Schematic Design*

*Review Round: Two*

*Presenter(s): Chris McVoy, Steven Holl Architects Inc.*

*Delegation: Tania Bortolotto, Bortolotto Design Architects Inc.; Olaf Schmitt, Steven Holl Architects Inc.*

#### **I.1 Introduction to the Issues**

Brenda Webster, Planning and Design Project Manager for Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project noting that this is the second time it has come before the Panel. Ms. Webster noted that although the project received unanimous support in July 2008, the project scope and budget had changed resulting in some redesign, which is why it has come back to the Panel at the Schematic Design Stage. Ms. Webster stated that at the last presentation the Panel asked the design team to consider the North elevation of the building and how the streets terminate at it, as well as to resolve any potential accessibility issues.

#### **I.2 Project Presentation**

Chris McVoy, Partner with Steven Holl Architects Inc., provided a brief overview of the evolution of the project since July 2008, noting that the redesign had allowed a period of reflection resulting in an intensification of the project as opposed to a compromise. Mr. McVoy stated that programmatically, the building had changed with the removal of the storm water quality facility, the future phasing of COGEN, and budget adjustments. Mr. McVoy noted that the budget had been reduced by \$2.6 million resulting in the reduction of the size of the pond and pergola, the changing of the south curtain wall to weathered steel, and various other landscaping and skin alterations.

#### **I.3 Panel Questions**

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

One Panel member wondered if the space between the building and the crash wall was accessible to the public or not. Mr. McVoy answered that the focus for the public will be on the Distillery walk and the roofscape, noting that the use of the service lane had yet to be defined.

Another Panel member noted that trains do not go very fast at this portion of the tracks and wondered why GO Transit and CN Rail were requiring the crash wall now. Ms. Webster answered that it was incumbent upon Waterfront Toronto to protect the District Energy Centre in the event of a derailment as it will provide heating to so many citizens. Mr. Campbell added that

it was highly debated internally and externally, adding that the likelihood of an accident is low, but that potential impact to the neighbourhood is high. Mr. Campbell noted that the crash wall will be modest, acknowledging the fact that it is located on the inside of a curve and trains will not be going fast, but that overall it seemed like a reasonable trade off. Another Panel member wondered if consideration had been made for the incorporation of the crash wall into the design of the building itself. Mr. McVoy stated that it had been considered early on, but that the clearances needed actually created the space for the service lane and simplified the design of the crash wall.

Another Panel member wondered if the design for the bosque of trees in the TTC turn around loop had changed from the previous design. Ms. Webster noted that the space is currently being designed in collaboration with the West Don Lands public realm designers and had not yet been set.

One Panel member enquired as to the pavement type in the Distillery Walk and the Cherry Street crossing, noting that the bricks used in the Distillery District are very worn and cobbled, and the design for the public space seemed very refined and sculpted. Mr. McVoy stated that their original intention was to use a similar brick to the one used in the Distillery District, but are currently looking at samples more applicable to this use that would still be complementary. Ms. Webster added that in terms of the Cherry Street crossing, that was still being worked out with the City and the public realm team.

Another Panel member requested a further description of the weathering steel proposed for the exterior of the building and the steps. Mr. McVoy answered that the steel has a higher copper content that creates a deeper orange as it oxidizes, adding that at the stairs, the steel is  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick with a rounded nosing as it has to retain some soil. Another Panel member wondered how much the CorTen steel would leach. Mr. McVoy answered that the material they are specifying stabilizes quicker than other weathering steels limiting the extent of leaching.

Another Panel member wondered if there were any openings in the North façade of the building. Mr. McVoy answered that a majority of the façade is the ramp which helps to break up the elevation, adding that they will look at the elevation in even more detail through detailed design.

One Panel member asked what the relationship between the mound and the east end of the building was. Mr. McVoy answered that there was currently a railing between the two and it was not intended for one to traverse between the two, noting that the mound is quite steep. Another Panel member wondered if it was such a bad thing for people to climb the mound, noting that it was accessible from the other side.

Another Panel member wondered if the mound was structurally stable and could hold plant materials. One Panel member stated that it is possible, but if people climbed the mound, it could undermine the planting structure.

#### 1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

Several Panel members stated that it was a wonderful project. Several Panel members felt the design had been clarified and intensified.

The Panel agreed that it was appropriate for the roof to be accessible to the public and designed with that intention in mind, acknowledging that the decision will ultimately be that of the building's

operator. Mr. Glaisek asked the Panel how important public accessibility was to the project. The Panel generally agreed that it was important but not fundamental. One Panel member cited the R.C. Harris filtration plant as an example of a utility that is very accessible to the public and designed with that in mind.

One Panel member felt the crash wall was not necessary, feeling that Toronto was gripped by the “tyranny of safety”.

Several Panel members felt that the lane should either be designed to be publically accessible and made safer with appropriate lighting and security, or established as an area of controlled access only. One Panel member urged the design team to take control of designing barriers if they are needed for the service lane instead of someone else designing them for you after the fact.

One Panel member felt that a visual connection to the Distillery District will likely be strong enough, adding that a connection across Cherry Street may not be necessary, especially if different types of brick are to be used and are experienced right next to each other.

Another Panel member felt that the team should play more of a role in the shaping of the transit loop area.

Another Panel member felt that the pergola is more of an object than a definer of space, feeling that it should be decreased in volume, but increased in surface area. Another Panel member felt the pergola as designed was amazing and could be a very beautiful element.

Another Panel member asked the team to consider planning materials that would be resilient to Canada geese. Another Panel member felt that geese would likely not be a problem unless the roof was planted with just grass.

Another Panel member felt that the mound seemed different than the rest of the landscape typology, feeling that it was just an add-on, but could be a really interesting sculptural element. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the mound was given prominence because of its difference. Another Panel member felt the mound was powerful and primordial, noting that it could be quite a draw for people. The Panel member acknowledged that there were likely technical issues of stability that had to be worked out regarding its occupation. Another Panel member agreed, feeling there was an opportunity to use remediated soils. Several Panel members urged the design team to consider what the connection could be like to the school and to Don River Park. One Panel member felt there could be interesting educational opportunities on the roof of this building.

Some Panel members felt there would be a lot of orange in the project with the steel and the brick. Other Panel members felt the colours could be fine, feeling that there is a lot of grey in our world and a bit of colour would be nice.

### 1.5 Summary of the Panel’s Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. Overall support for the project and work completed to date.
- ii. The Panel supports the proposed changes to the project, feeling that budget reductions have forced even more innovation and creativity.
- iii. Support for public accessibility of the roofscape.
- iv. Proactively establish whether the service lane is entirely accessible and made safe, or closed off entirely to the public with enclosures of your design.

- v. Refine the landscape design and response to areas with heavy traffic
- vi. Continue to refine and study the shape of pergola,
- vii. Continue to refine the east west connections from Cherry Street to the school
- viii. Continue to study the colour palate of materials

#### I.6 Proponents Response

Mr. McVoy thanked the Panel for their feedback.

#### I.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Acting Chair then asked the Panel for a vote of support or non-support for the project, The Panel voted unanimously in support of the project to move to Design Development.

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### **CLOSING**

With no further business, the Acting Chair adjourned the meeting.