



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #34 Wednesday, April 8th, 2008

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
Paul Bedford
Renee Daoust
Tania Bortolotto
Siamak Hariri
Anne McIlroy
Janet Rosenberg

Regrets:

George Baird
Peter Clewes
Peter Halsall
Don Schmitt
Greg Smallenberg
Charles Waldheim

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Panel and provided an overview of the agenda. He 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 summary of project progress.

Gardiner Expressway Environmental Assessment

- The first phase of public consultations have been held to present the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Gardiner Expressway Environmental Assessment
- The ToR will be presented to Council in July 2009, and submitted to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in August 2009 for approval.

Sugar Beach

- Sugar Beach will be going out for tender this summer. Though there was great debate surrounding the final form of the Umbrellas, Waterfront Toronto is supporting the final version put forth by Claude Cormier.

Rees and Simcoe WaveDecks

- Rees and Simcoe WaveDecks are ahead of schedule, and set to open together on June 12th, 2009.

Queens Quay Environmental Assessment

- The final public meeting was held on April 1, 2009, with the project gaining strong support. Some small issues related to traffic and signals are close to being resolved.
- The EA report will be submitted to City Council in June, and the MOE in August, with the hopes of starting construction in September 2009.

Don River Park

- Construction of the park is scheduled to begin this fall.

West Don Lands District Energy Centre

- The Site Plan Approval application has been submitted to the City of Toronto.

Sherbourne Park

- A Construction Manager (CM) is being brought on board shortly. The park is ready to be tendered, pending the input of the CM, for July 2009.

Lake Ontario Park

- The LOP Master Plan will go to City Council for full approval once the parameters and funding are established for Phase I. At this time, Phase I will likely include work at the Coatsworth Cut.

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

One Panel member asked if the Sugar Beach team was still looking at using crushed recycled marble. Mr. Glaisek stated they are still looking at all their options.

Another Panel member noted that the recent Metrolinx announcement of funding did not include any funding for the Queens Quay project. Mr. Glaisek stated that the public realm enhancements are part of Waterfront Toronto's city-building budget.

The Chair then thanked Mr. Glaisek for his report.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Ms. McIlroy stated that she was conflicted on the Tommy Thompson Park project.

There being no other comments, the Chair moved to adopt February's minutes. The minutes were then adopted.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Lower Don Lands

ID#: 1008

Project Type: Precinct/Master/Subdivision Plans

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Location: Area bounded by Parliament Street, the rail corridor and the Don Roadway south to the Ship Channel

Review Stage: Schematic Design

Review Round: Two – For Information

Presenter(s): Ken Greenberg, Greenberg Consultants Inc., Mack Scogin, Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, and Michael Van Valkenburgh, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Landscape Architects (MVVA)

Delegation: Gulliver Sheppard, MVVA

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek introduced the project noting that this is the second time it has come before the Panel. Mr. Glaisek stated that the timeframes for the project are tight, noting that a commitment has been made to submit parts of the project to City Council by Fall 2009. Mr. Glaisek noted that this is the first precinct plan where the Design Review Panel has been involved from the very beginning. Kathryn Thom, Senior Project Manager with the City of Toronto, then stated that City Staff are currently reviewing the Precinct Plan including technical issues, sewers, roads, built form and design, adding that the comments received will be shared with Waterfront Toronto and their designers.

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

- the disposition of the built form,
- the layout of the Keating Channel Precinct, and
- the proposed location of the school at Parliament Slip.

1.2 Project Presentation

Ken Greenberg, Principal with Greenberg Associates Inc., and lead urban designer, introduced the project team, and described the Keating Channel and the River Channel Precincts within the Lower Don Lands. Mr. Greenberg then described the open space, neighbourhoods, transit, and connections with and without the Gardiner Expressway. Max Scogin, Partner with Max Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, then presented the built form proposition, designed to maximise daylight in major public open spaces, mitigate wind, and promote sustainability objectives. Michael Van Valkenburgh, Partner with MVVA, then presented the Keating Channel Public Realm, including the proposed infrastructure and neighbourhood aspirations.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked for further information on the distribution of the built form and the overall employment strategy. Mr. Greenberg answered that the plan biased the density and the employment to the north because of the concentration of transit and accessibility for walkers, adding that they are trying to balance residential and employment within the area. Mr. Greenberg added that they were trying to find the highest built form that still allowed at least 5 hours of daylight onto the street.

Another Panel member wondered how the densities proposed compare with other parts of the city. Mr. Greenberg answered that they are targeting densities similar to that of the King/Spadina or King/Parliament areas of town.

Another Panel member wondered if the neighbourhood at the south-western quadrant of the plan should contain any built form, as it could be the site of a signature park. Mr. Van Valkenburgh acknowledged that there are big expectations for the park, adding that they have done a great deal

of work on the park and the new river system to address all the years of community activism around the river. Mr. Sheppard added that there are competing interests for the park, adding that they have also had to balance it with development and transit services. Mr. Van Valkenburgh agreed, adding that the ecological aspects of the park are not always conducive to a high level of active park use. Mr. Greenberg then urged the Panel not to forget the opportunities with Lake Ontario Park as a signature Toronto park, adding that the Lower Don Lands will help to create the “greenway” that will connect LOP to the rest of the city. Mr. Greenberg added that this park space is a category breaker, not fully active or passive, and will be enhanced by the people living and working around it.

Another Panel member asked how the proposed towers relate to the sun studies and massing shown earlier. Mr. Greenberg answered that the team has adopted the City’s standards for towers, adding that the slender towers are located south of the Keating Channel and fit into the envelopes previously described.

Another Panel member wondered what the strategies were to establish this as a midrise neighbourhood. Mr. Greenberg answered that they are putting forward a robust set of guidelines, setting the heights through the Zoning By-law and fixing the GFA, adding that this is also how the courtyards are achieved in the blocks.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that this is one of the most exciting projects the Panel has seen to date, adding that it will be a landmark for the City and North America. Several Panel members commended the team for a tremendous project. Another Panel member felt the project had gotten even stronger. Another Panel member agreed, but felt that the design of the open space had not yet caught up to the planning.

One Panel member stated that Toronto needed a neighbourhood that is strongly midrise, and was uncomfortable with the tower rational proposed. Another Panel member disagreed, feeling that the towers and their orientation were compelling and allowed more porous views to the water. Another Panel member felt that the tower form was more appropriate north of the Keating Channel.

Another Panel member stated that the density derived in the south western quadrant could be shifted to the rest of the site, possibly surrounding the Keating Channel. Another Panel member had some reservations about the lower density on the south side of the Keating, feeling that it should be more symmetrical to create a sense of place at the Channel. Another Panel member stated that the Keating Channel precinct has a huge potential to be the heart of the plan.

Another Panel member felt that with the recreational potential of Lake Ontario Park factored in, that the Lower Don Lands could incorporate even more density.

Another Panel member felt that the scheme still seemed like a collection of islands, adding that the power of Central Park was in the strength of its strong urban edge.

Another Panel member wondered if key sites had been identified for future cultural buildings, feeling that that aspect should be considered and curated.

One Panel member stated that the plan was not yet at a stage where the Panel could comment on the location of the school.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

N/A

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Van Valkenburgh, Mr. Scogin and Mr. Greenberg thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

N/A

2.0 Tommy Thompson Park

ID#: 1027

Project Type: Buildings/Structures

Location: Leslie Street, South of Unwin Avenue

Proponent: Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)

Architect/Designer: Montgomery Sisam Architects Inc. (MSA)

Review Stage: Preliminary/Concept Design

Review Round: Three

Presenter(s): Ralph Toninger, TRCA; Santiago Kunzle, MSA

Delegation: Nancy Gaffney, TRCA

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek introduced the project noting this is the third time the project has come before the Panel in the Concept Design phase of work as it did not receive support from the Panel in either July 2008, or October 2008 to proceed to Schematic Design. Mr. Glaisek reminded the Panel that TRCA is an "Eligible Recipient" of Waterfront Toronto and is implementing a long-standing master plan for Tommy Thompson Park (TTP) which has been accepted and incorporated into the Lake Ontario Park (LOP) Master Plan. Mr. Glaisek then presented some of the guiding principles from the LOP Master Plan including architectural precedents for facilities within the park.

Mr. Glaisek then summarized the Panel's key issues from the October 2008 meeting which were:

1) Support for the idea of found and re-used objects, but in a more straight forward way, and 2) Clarify and strengthen the design concept.

Ralph Toninger, TRCA Project Manager, provided a brief overview of the project, reminding the Panel of the goals the TTP Master Plan, the ecological context, design criteria, and program and budget of the various facilities including; 1) Staff Booth and Interpretive Area, 2) Environmental Shelter, 3) Ecological Research Station, and 4) Self-Sustaining Washrooms. Santiago Kunzle, Partner with MSA, then presented the site specific context and approach to the design of each facility.

2.2 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked what the idea was behind the use of the shipping containers as a primary element in the design. Mr. Kunzle replied that shipping containers are inherently

structural, weather-tight, and sustainable in terms of cost and environment, adding that using a container that has already fulfilled its use in shipping can still be used for 20+ years as a building. Another Panel member asked if there were currently any shipping containers on the Tommy Thompson Park lands. Mr. Kunzle replied that there was one currently on site.

Another Panel member asked what the original purpose of the spit was for. Mr. Toningier answered that the Leslie Street Spit was originally constructed to allow Toronto to expand its port, built with material generated by building projects in the city.

2.3 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that they were not comfortable with the idea of using the shipping containers because they are not a part of the history of the spit, adding their desire to see a stronger use of materials that keep with the natural aspects of the spit. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the shipping containers were too restrictive in their dimension and form.

Another Panel member felt that the proportions, materiality and detailing overlaid onto the containers were too refined for the context. Another Panel member felt that the architectural language had been lost in the berms.

Another Panel member felt the buildings were not consistent with the architectural language proposed in the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan.

One Panel member felt that the “Big Picture” narrative was missing. Another Panel member felt there were too many ideas, and not one larger idea. Another Panel member felt that the facilities had been designed to a program without referencing the architectural idea. Other Panel members felt that the buildings did not relate to their individual or overall site. Another Panel member noted that photographs of the actual sites would help them situate the projects.

Another Panel member felt that there was a lost opportunity in the program for addressing large groups of school children, and dealing with the logistics that come with accommodating that. Another Panel member agreed, wondering where children get their snowsuits on, or where school buses would park. Another Panel member felt that the programming of the site should be considered further, wondering if the fundamentals of the project should be re-visited.

The Chair then expressed his sense that the project was still not strong enough to gain support and proceed to the next phase, then invited the TRCA to respond to the issues raised by the Panel.

Nancy Gaffney, Waterfront Specialist with TRCA, thanked the Panel for the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised. Ms. Gaffney noted that the programming perceived to be missing by the Panel is intended for the future “Gateway” structure which will be located at the entrance to the park, nothing that the timing is dependent on the LOP phasing schedule. Ms. Gaffney added that the program for the staff booth has grown to accommodate the additional program as there is a pent up demand at the site for these amenities, noting that some of it will become redundant when the “Gateway” is built and the program is shifted. Ms. Gaffney added that they are considering how to make the other buildings relevant when the “Gateway” is erected. Ms. Gaffney then stated that TRCA has endeavored to address all the Panel’s comments, but felt that they had not been given consistent direction.

The Chair then opened the meeting to any further Panel comments. One Panel member noted that the additional information was helpful. Another Panel member felt that the narrative of the presentation could have been stronger, adding that a description of one's experience through the site, the programmatic elements and its phases are part of that narrative. Another Panel member stated that the washroom facilities are located at of the most compelling areas of the entire site. Another Panel member felt that the program for the "Gateway" structure should be developed, feeling that it will set the tone and drive the character of the smaller programmatic elements.

The Chair then thanked the TRCA and MSA for their patience and acknowledgment of the challenging task the Panel is asked to perform for Waterfront Toronto.

2.4 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- i. Strengthen the project narrative
- ii. Refer back to a larger architectural idea
- iii. Study the programmatic needs and phasing of the program

2.5 Proponents Response

Mr. Toning, Ms. Gaffney and Mr. Kunzel thanked the Panel for their feedback.

2.6 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Chair then asked the Panel for a vote of support or non-support for the project.

The Panel voted to not support the design of the project at this time.

CLOSING

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