



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #42 Wednesday, March 10th, 2010

Present:

Paul Bedford, Acting Chair
George Baird
Peter Clewes
Claude Cormier
Renee Daoust
Siamak Hariri
Janet Rosenberg
Greg Smallenberg
Betsy Williamson

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

Regrets:

Bruce Kuwabara
Anne McIlroy
Brigitte Shim

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

WELCOME

Paul Bedford welcomed the Panel, noting that Bruce Kuwabara has asked him to act as Chair this month. The Acting Chair then provided an overview of the agenda and 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 and preview of things to come in 2010.

Sherbourne Park

- The park is 40% complete
- The channel is being constructed, and will play a key role in the storm water management system for East Bayfront.

Sugar Beach

- The park is 60% complete with "silva cell" work well underway and the rock outcrops being assembled on site.

Don River Park

- Don River Park will go out for tender shortly, targeting a June construction start.

River City Development

- The sales office for the first private sector development in the West Don Lands, River City, opened on Saturday, February 27.

- Plans for the LEED Gold development include 850 residential units of condominiums, lofts and townhouses, as well as boutiques, stores and restaurants.
- The first phase occupancy is slated for 2012.

Queens Quay Environmental Assessment

- One Part II Order (bump-up) was received.
- There is currently funding to construct from York street to HTO park

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

One Panel member asked what a “bump-up” or Part II order request was. Mr. Glaisek answered that a common feature of class EA documents is a provision which enables any individual, group or agency that has significant environmental concerns with a project to write to the Minister of the Environment requesting that the project undergo an individual EA, i.e., bump-up the status of the project under the Environmental Assessment Act. Mr. Glaisek stated that the ministry has four options for a decision on a Part II Order (bump-up) request: 1) deny the request, 2) deny the request with conditions, 3) refer to mediation, or 4) grant the request and require the proponent to undergo an individual EA.

Another Panel member wondered if the Provincial Government’s focus on the Pan American Games was diverting funding away from Queens Quay. Mr. Glaisek stated that it was not a factor, noting that it just changes the timing of delivery. Mr. Glaisek added that there is not much Provincial funding for projects outside of the West Don Lands.

The Panel expressed general concern regarding the allocation of funding for Queens Quay as a critical element. The Panel then passed a motion, with one abstention, that “Waterfront Toronto pursues with vigor the completion of the Queens Quay revitalization as a critical project in waterfront revitalization.”

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Acting Chair stated that Toronto will be hosting the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) in June 2010, noting that members include Canada's largest cities, small urban and rural communities, and 18 provincial and territorial municipal associations. The Acting Chair added that this will be a great opportunity to showcase waterfront revitalization.

The Acting Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Greg Smallenberg declared a conflict with Underpass Park as design lead.

The Acting Chair moved to adopt the minutes from January 2010. The minutes were then adopted.

There being no other comments, the Acting Chair moved to the Project Review portion of the meeting.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 West Don Lands Public Realm: Underpass Park

ID#: 1031

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: North of Eastern Avenue, running between St. Lawrence Street and River Street, beneath the Richmond/Adelaide overpass

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg (PFS) with The Planning Partnership (TPP) and Paul Raff Studio

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Three

Presenter(s): Greg Smallenberg, Phillips Farevaag, Smallenberg (PFS) and Paul Raff, Paul Raff Studio

Delegation: Scott Barker, Paul Raff Studio

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Carla Guerrero, Planning and Design Project Manager for Waterfront Toronto introduced the project noting that this is the third time it has come before the Panel and is currently in the Design Development phase. Ms. Guerrero reminded the Panel that the West Don Lands (WDL) Public Art Strategy outlines a comprehensive public art strategy for the neighbourhood with key locations identified for art within the public realm, adding that Underpass Park was a key location for an artwork as a “work of reconnection”. Ms. Guerrero stated that Waterfront Toronto undertook its first open artist selection and received an overwhelming international response from 68 artists, adding that through a 2-stage juried selection process, selected Paul Raff, a Toronto based artist and architect who will be presenting his concepts for the artworks today.

1.2 Project Presentation

Greg Smallenberg, Partner with Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg, provided an overview of the project noting that the design of the park is at the Design Development phase, but that the public art component is at the Conceptual Design level. Mr. Smallenberg stated that the programming for the park came together as a result of consultation with the community and the Parks Forestry and Recreation Department at the City of Toronto. Paul Raff, Principal with Paul Raff Studio, presented the art piece, noting that the preliminary concept of the public artwork component at the River Street Underpass is to use the optics of reflectivity in 3-dimensional space to create resonant connections through a kinetic collage of views.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked what the mirrors of the art piece were made of. Mr. Raff answered that it was mirror-polished stainless steel. Another Panel member wondered how resilient the material was and what degree of maintenance was required. Mr. Raff answered that the team will give maintenance guidelines to the City, but that it is not onerous.

Another Panel member asked for a further elaboration of the lighting strategy. Mr. Smallenberg stated that from a safety point of view there are three types of lighting. Mr. Smallenberg noted that Street lights will be on all night, though lighting for the courts will be restricted, and that lighting for the ribbon benches will wash the edges of the concrete and not light the night sky. Mr. Smallenberg stated that lighting of the columns and the field will have to be worked out with the city who will ultimately dictate the times that the lights are on or off.

One Panel member asked for more information on the “Movebox”. Mr. Smallenberg answered that it’s a moveable, self contained concession that unfolds and is solar operated. The Panel member then asked if the City of Toronto was interested in utilizing it. Mr. Smallenberg replied that they have expressed interest.

Another Panel member asked what size the park was. Mr. Smallenberg replied that it is 3 acres.

Another Panel member asked how the program was established. Mr. Smallenberg stated that it was developed in consultation with the community, the City and the local Councillor.

One Panel member asked what the story or narrative of the park was. Mr. Smallenberg replied that it is a very community oriented space that is about the “everyday”, adding that it is about turning the incidental into something that is quite interesting. Mr. Smallenberg noted that one of the things this does is successfully deals with the conditions of utilizing space under urban infrastructure.

Another Panel member asked about the intended use of this space in the winter months. Mr. Smallenberg stated that their intention was to incorporate flex-space that could be programmed for various uses and events in the winter.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

Several Panel members felt that the design relies too heavily on the uses and program. Another Panel member felt that the design should be “de-tuned”, to make it more robust. Other Panel members agreed, feeling that the design strategy was driven too much by the community programming and could be simplified, adding that it seems to be a reaction to a series of inputs. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that there is something for everyone here.

One Panel member felt that it was a subversive space and that the design could be more subversive. Another Panel member felt that the program was too complicated, noting that it was “domestic” for the site. Another Panel member agreed, urging the team to explore a singular, strong approach. Another Panel member felt that the design could be more “gritty” and actively respond to what the site is about.

One Panel member wondered if people would come to use this space or whether it will be used more as a space to pass through. Another Panel member felt that the park was starting to develop an identity as a pedestrian street. Another Panel member felt that there could be a unique proposition proposed for a use under an overpass. Another Panel member felt the space was beautiful, but in the wrong place.

Another Panel member felt that the art was especially prone to vandalism and abuse, adding that regular maintenance to the pieces would likely not happen. Another Panel member wondered if the art had to be highly polished. Another Panel member wondered if there was a way to treat the steel to take the inevitable abuse and extend the life. Another Panel member felt that the concept of the “optics” art piece was good, but felt that the artist should work with the existing objects/structure in the space instead of adding new objects. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the gestures are too small for this space and needed to be simplified. Another Panel member felt that the fragmenting of the piece did not related to the scale of the site and its presence as a gateway.

One Panel member felt the choice in planting materials was good, acknowledging that it is not a huge budget.

Another Panel member felt that beyond spot-lighting, motion-activated lighting should be explored to enhance safety.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Strengthen the overall idea by embracing the connective link and gateway function
- 2) Clarify the program, it seems overly complex.
- 3) Consider the opportunity for more flex space.
- 4) More objects are not better; consider the opportunity to utilize the existing structure of the expressway for the art.
- 5) Enhance the durability of the art piece.

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Smallenberg and Mr. Raff thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

No vote was held.

2.0 Tommy Thompson Park Structures

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 (MSA)

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Five

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

Delegation:

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek introduced the project noting that this is the fifth time that the project has been presented to the Panel. Mr. Glaisek added that although there was no quorum in July, 2009, the Panel was supportive of the Conceptual Design proposed at the time. Mr. Glaisek noted that the project team has been very receptive to the Panel's concerns raised in the past and has worked hard to address them. Mr. Glaisek stated that the TRCA is aiming to construct the landscape surrounding the entrance gate in summer 2010.

1.2 Project Presentation

Santiago Kunzle, Partner with Montgomery Sisam Architects, provided an overview of the siting of the four structures including the "Gateway", the "Staff Booth", the "Environmental Shelter", and the "Bird Banding Station". Mr. Kunzle then presented the detailing and materiality of each structure.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member wondered if the bollards were part of the design or a found condition at the Bird Banding station. Mr. Toningier stated that they are already there and needed to separate the Sailing club traffic from the children who visit the Bird Banding station.

Another Panel member wondered if there any plans to take the bench canopy idea and utilize it throughout the park. Mr. Toningier replied that the next phase of work will incorporate site furniture throughout the park.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments, apologizing for the lack of quorum in July 2009, when the project was last presented.

Several Panel members commended the design team, noting that the project had significantly improved and really responded to the Panel comments. One Panel member felt that the purity of the forms was compelling. Another Panel member felt that the material selection was more appropriate than before.

One Panel member felt that the structures could still be more integrated into the landscape. Another Panel member disagreed, feeling that the structures were already quite integrated

Another Panel member felt that the Environmental Shelter was the most evocative of the structures, wishing that the others could be as evocative. Several Panel members felt that the Bird Banding station could read more like the other three structures.

One Panel member urged the design team to consider a “reveal” detail where the fascia meets the roofline in all the structures. Another Panel member felt that the raised seam detail of the metal cladding undermined the conception of floating slabs. Another Panel member felt that the Cor-Ten steel cladding could be lifted up from the ground plane even further.

Another Panel member felt that the entry zone into the park felt very exposed.

Another Panel member wondered if there was a way to use landscape to denote separation instead of the existing bollards at the Bird Banding station.

1.5 Summary of the Panel’s Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) The purity of the designs are a huge improvement
- 2) Fine tune the detailing
- 3) Great work on bringing the various structures into a common language, though the Bird Banding station still stands apart from the others.
- 4) Get it built.

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Kunzle thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 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 to Support the project moving to the Construction Documents phase.

CLOSING

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