



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #37 Wednesday, September 16th, 2009

Present:

Paul Bedford, Acting Chair
George Baird
Peter Clewes
Siamak Hariri
Bruce Kuwabara
Anne McIlroy
Janet Rosenberg
Brigitte Shim
Betsy Williamson

Regrets:

Greg Smallemberg
Renee Daoust

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

WELCOME

Paul Bedford welcomed the Panel, noting that Bruce Kuwabara had asked him to act as Chair due to a conflict of interest with one of the projects on the agenda. The Acting Chair then welcomed new Panel members Betsy Williamson and Brigitte Shim. The Acting Chair then provided an overview of the agenda, and invited John Campbell to provide his report.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

John Campbell, Waterfront Toronto's President and CEO, began with an update on the 2015 Pan American Games bid. He reminded the Panel that the West Don Lands (WDL) has been identified as the location of the Athletes Village for the 2015 Pan American Games bid. Mr. Campbell noted that the bid adheres to the approved WDL Precinct Plan, adding that it will provide housing for 8500 athletes - resulting in a healthy mix of affordable housing. Mr. Campbell noted that a key priority for Waterfront Toronto would be to provide infrastructure for the Pan Am Games, with the resulting development providing revenue for future projects.

One Panel member cautioned that with haste design often suffers, wondering what the role of design or the Design Review Panel would be throughout implementation.

Mr. Campbell stated that “BidCo”, the agency responsible for the GTA’s bid, respects the West Don Lands Precinct Plan, adding that Waterfront Toronto’s core principles of design excellence and sustainability would be maintained.

The Acting Chair 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

- Waterfront Toronto supports the direction first proposed by the Design Review Panel to undertake a Design Competition as a means of soliciting design options as part of the Environmental Assessment (EA) process, similar to the Lower Don Lands competition and the Mouth of the Don EA. Waterfront Toronto and its consultant team are currently working through the logistics of how that would be interpreted.

Water’s Edge Promenade

- A mock-up of the Water’s Edge Promenade granite mosaic patterning has been built along the water’s edge in the East Bayfront. Several colours and finishes and of granite have been mocked up for final approval by Waterfront Toronto. The Design Review Panel is invited to review the options at the conclusion of the day’s presentations.

Spadina Bridge

- Waterfront Toronto invited the residents of 401 Queens Quay on a boat cruise to view the site and get a feel for the height of the proposed Spadina Bridge. Several residents have opposed the concept and design of the bridge which would span the opening of the Spadina Slip and create a continuous walkway along the waterfront. Waterfront Toronto is nonetheless continuing to work towards implementing this project.

York Quay Revitalization Project (Phase II)

- The first Stakeholder meeting of the York Quay Revitalization Project (Phase II) will be taking place this evening. Waterfront Toronto and Harbourfront Centre are proposing to replace the current surface parking lot with an underground parking garage, freeing the surface for the public open spaces and a future Cultural Village which would include retail, studio and commercial space in future phases of development.

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

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Acting Chair began by welcoming the two new architects to the Panel. The Acting Chair introduced Betsy Williamson, Principal with WilliamsonWilliamson Inc. in Toronto, and Brigitte Shim, Principal with Shim-Sutcliffe Architects in Toronto. The Acting Chair noted that Ms. Williamson and Ms. Shim are filling the positions formerly held by Mr. Schmitt and Ms. Bortolotto, adding that Mr. Waldheim’s landscape architect position and Mr. Halsall’s Engineering/Sustainability Advisor position will be filled in the near future.

The Acting Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Bruce Kuwabara stated that he was conflicted on the George Brown College presentation.

The Acting Chair moved to adopt the minutes from June 2009 and the notes from July 2009 as there was no quorum in July to formally adopt them. The minutes and notes were then adopted.

PROJECT REVIEWS

I.0 East Bayfront Development: George Brown College Health Sciences Campus

ID#: 1023

Project Type: Buildings/Structures

Proponent: George Brown College

Architect/Designer: Stantec/Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects in Joint Venture (Stantec/KPMB)

Location: South of Queens Quay, West of Lower Sherbourne Street

Review Stage: Concept Design

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Anne Sado, George Brown College (GBC); Lorie Shekter-Wolfson, GBC; Michael Moxam, Stantec/KPMB; Bruce Kuwabara, Stantec/KPMB.

Delegation: Eugene Harrigan, GBC; Terry Comeau, GBC; Nerys Rau, GBC

I.1 Introduction to the Issues

Andrew Gray, Vice President for Development, East Bayfront, introduced the project noting that the GBC campus will generate year-round vibrancy and public access, adding that it is a perfect fit for the City and WT's revitalization aspirations for Toronto's waterfront. Mr. Gray stated that the City as landowner, will enter into a long-term ground lease with George Brown College on blocks 3, 4, and 5 in the East Bayfront, and Waterfront Toronto, as revitalization lead in the East Bayfront, will enter into a Development Agreement with GBC to ensure that the new development aligns with the goals of waterfront revitalization such as LEED Gold certification, and design excellence. Mr. Gray noted that the target date for opening is September 2012.

I.2 Project Presentation

Anne Sado, President of GBC, began by stating that the College was excited to be entering into this partnership with the City and Waterfront Toronto, adding that they had received funding from both the Federal and Provincial governments to make this project a reality. Lorie Shekter-Wolfson, Dean of Community Services and Health Sciences at GBC, then outlined the program, noting that the Schools of Dental Health, Nursing, Health and Wellness, and Health Services Management will be brought together in an "InterProfessional Education" model, serving over 3,500 full time and 1,000 part time students. Michael Moxam, Senior Principal at Stantec Architecture, then described the massing, form and response to the site, with Bruce Kuwabara, Partner with Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects, describing the design aspirations, and sustainability goals of the project.

I.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member requested that the logistics of the ground floor be described in more detail.

Mr. Kuwabara stated that the main entrances will be off Queens Quay and Street “F”, noting that servicing will take place off the Corus Driveway to mirror their condition. Mr. Kuwabara added there will be a book store on Street “F”, with dining facilities overlooking the lake and multiple openings onto Sherbourne Park.

Another Panel member wondered at which point access to the building would be controlled. Mr. Kuwabara replied that in order for the building to be so public it should be monitored at some level, adding that there will be a glazed security booth to monitor the activity on the ground floor and concourse.

Another Panel member wondered if the entire West façade was occupied by mechanical equipment. Mr. Kuwabara stated that it will not be mechanical, but in fact house the classrooms and labs of the “academic loft”.

One Panel member wondered if the massing of the building reflected the massing proposed for the Bayside development on the East side of Sherbourne Park. Mr. Kuwabara replied that an RFP for the Bayside development is still out, adding that the successful proponent will inform its massing.

Another Panel member asked what the materiality of the building was. Mr. Kuwabara stated that the building will have a high degree of transparency, adding that both clear and sandblasted glazing will be utilized.

Another Panel member wondered what the initial response was from the City on the requested variances from the Zoning By-law. Mr. Moxam stated that the early response has been positive, adding that the microclimate in the public realm is being improved by the stepping back the massing from the park and allowing more daylight onto it. Another Panel member asked if there was a similar response to the proposed bridge that would span between Blocks 5 and 3 over the public right-of-way. Mr. Kuwabara acknowledged that that would likely be tougher to sell, but programmatically there is a good case.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

Several Panel members commended the team on their presentation, noting that a clear case was made for how massing of the building was arrived at. One Panel member stated that it was a beautiful counterpoint to the TEDCO/Corus building. Another Panel member felt that there was a level of playfulness to the building that was very refreshing. Another Panel member felt that the program in this location will be a fantastic addition to the waterfront.

Several Panel members supported their rationale for the massing variances and the disposition of the massing, noting that it was an appropriate, contextual response to the site. Mr. Glaisek noted that although seemingly minor in the model, the building varies from the Zoning envelope by as much as 9 metres in some places. One Panel member stated that the building is elegant, adding that the gestures break down the massing of the building. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the transparent nature of the building also helps to break down its massing. Several Panel members felt that the scale of the atrium should be studied further. One Panel member felt that the atrium size and massing was over-scaled.

Another Panel member cautioned the team to pay attention to the zone between the face of the building and Sherbourne Park.

One Panel member felt that the horizontal datum created by the projecting roof canopy could be exaggerated and extend south to favour the water-side of the building more than it is currently doing. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the South and East sides of the building could act as a large porch to anchor the building at this location while opening it up to the water and park.

Another Panel member felt that the West elevation could be strengthened, adding that it was currently rendered in a very institutional language. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that it created a large wall against Corus. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that it could be rendered as a more transparent volume.

One Panel member stated that locating the servicing off of the North/South laneway to mirror the servicing of the TEDCO/Corus driveway made sense, adding that there is no better option to service the building. Another Panel member agreed, but cautioned the team to consider the nature of Street “A” when developing Block 3. Several Panel members cautioned the team to be conscious about the character that is developing on the North/South laneway, and to make sure that this vital link to the water was not all service oriented. One Panel member felt that the termini of the North/South view corridors were important to keep in mind when considering the character of the laneway. Another Panel agreed, adding that an additional strategy could be to activate the lowest 10 feet of the West façade in a way that would make a pedestrian feel like they are still on the public side of the building.

1.5 Summary of the Panel’s Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Support for the overall design concept
- 2) Support for the height variances - it is a specific response to the site and not a precedent
- 3) Consider the experience and character of the North/South streets, while preserving Street “F” as the main address to the facility
- 4) Consider the quality of the pedestrian’s experience of the building on all four façades
- 5) Enhance the relationship and response to Sherbourne Park and the laneway in between.

1.6 Proponents Response

Ms. Sado, Ms. Shekter-Wolfson, Mr. Kuwabara, and Mr. Moxam thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 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 unanimously in support of the project to proceed to the Schematic Design phase.

2.0 **West Don Lands Public Realm: Underpass Park**

ID#: 1031

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Proponent: Waterfront Toronto

Architect/Designer: Phillips Farevaag Smalenberg (PFS) + The Planning Partnership (TPP)

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

Review Stage: Conceptual Design

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Jeff Staates, PFS

Delegation:

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Carla Guerrero, Planning and Design Project Manager for Waterfront Toronto, introduced the West Don Lands Public Realm team lead by Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg and The Planning Partnership. Ms. Guerrero noted that within the West Don Lands' 80 acre brownfield development, this underpass site is a key connection piece and very important to the first two developments; TCHC and River City. Ms. Guerrero added that an artist selection process is underway for an artist to join the team on this project.

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

- The overall design direction and proposed uses for spaces

2.2 Project Presentation

Jeff Staates, Senior Landscape Architect with PFS, began by setting the context for the project within the WDL Public Realm Master Plan including the Public Art Strategy. Mr. Staates outlined the design approach which utilizes an otherwise spatial constraint to development to offer a broad range of experiences for the community. Mr. Staates presented the current condition of the underpass, programming, circulation, plantable areas, activity spaces, public art opportunities, as well as temporary and seasonal programming opportunities.

2.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member wondered what the length of the area was. Mr. Staates replied that the approximate length of the park was 300m.

Another Panel member wondered what the approximate area of land that was covered versus open to the sky. Mr. Staates answered that it was approximately 1/3 open and 2/3 covered. Ms. Davis answered that the site was reviewed from a development viability perspective, adding that it was thought the space could be better utilized by the public.

Another Panel member asked what phase the current project was in. Mr. Staates answered that they were at the Conceptual Design Phase.

Another Panel member wondered if anything would grow beneath the underpass. Mr. Staates answered that it would likely require irrigation.

One Panel member asked what the budget was. Ms. Guerrero answered that the cost estimates had not been completed, but that there was approximately \$5 million including environmental remediation, hard and soft costs, utility work and contingencies.

Another Panel member wondered if there were any precedents of these underpass parks in a climate similar to Toronto's. Mr. Staates replied that the team would investigate this.

2.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member felt that there was not one clear overall strategy, but several smaller ones. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the design was very precious and episodic, but missing a bigger move. Another Panel member stated that the underpass is a very hard space, noting that

it is a challenging design proposition. Another Panel member felt that the hard character of the space should be kept, and have a less precious proposition, especially how to introduce vegetation. Another Panel member felt that an artist should be part of the project team. One Panel member felt that the triangle of land should be treated more as one space instead of segments defined by the ramps above.

Several Panel members felt that a study of light, dark and shaded spaces should be completed in order to understand these areas better, and design according to the level of light it receives. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the light study could form the basis of the conceptual plan.

Another Panel member felt that temporary structures could be erected that house a multitude of programming opportunities. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that these structures would define an edge and create an urban corridor beneath the underpass. Another Panel member agreed noting that in parts of Berlin, some of the best restaurants can be found underneath the viaducts. Another Panel member felt that there could be an opportunity for lantern-like buildings. Another Panel member stated a market would be a great use for the area, noting that the structures could be used for other uses at different times of the year. Another Panel member felt that Waterfront Toronto should consider relocating the market use from River Square to the underpass area permanently, to give some streetwall definition and dignity to River Street in this location. Another Panel member added that part of the solution is the formal design, but part of the solution is also its programming.

One Panel member noted that this area is a threshold to a huge system of parks including the future Don River Park, Lower Don Lands and Lake Ontario Park.

2.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) The Conceptual Plan needs more work
- 2) Complete a light study of the space, let that inform the design
- 3) Consider a more robust solution with convertibility and flexibility in mind
- 4) Consider the space as a threshold to the larger park system
- 5) Consider the community's infrastructural needs.

2.6 Proponents Response

Mr. States thanked the Panel for their feedback.

2.7 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 not in support of the project at this time, and requested it be re-conceptualized and re-presented at the Conceptual Design level.

CLOSING

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