



Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #5 Wednesday, February 15, 2006

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
Paul Bedford
Tania Bortolotto
Peter Clewes
Renee Daoust
Peter Halsall
Siamak Hariri
Anne McIlroy
Janet Rosenberg
Don Schmitt
Greg Smallenberg

Regrets:

George Baird
Charles Waldheim

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Robert Freedman
Christopher Glaisek

Recording Secretary:

Pina Mallozzi

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the Panel and members of the public in the gallery. He thanked the Corporation for the briefing binders and the timely manner in which they were distributed. He then welcomed the Corporation's President and CEO and invited him to give an overview to the panel.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

John Campbell, the Corporation's President and CEO, began with a summary of the Corporation's work over the past month.

- In the West Don Lands, road closure signs have been posted. Upon contract signing, hoarding will proceed to be erected.
- The Request for Qualifications for the Innovative Design Competition for the Central Waterfront was launched on February 3, 2006. An addendum was issued this week to eliminate financial reporting requirements.
- The Memorandum of Understanding with TEDCO was approved by City Council. While it gives the Corporation a stronger role on TEDCO lands, it carves out two projects one the foot of Jarvis Street the other Polsons Quay.
- The City of Toronto has decided to move forward with its bid for World Expo 2015. The focus of the City's proposal is the Portlands area, and the Corporation will be monitoring that proposal as it develops.
- On the Portlands Energy Centre, the Corporation has recommended that the new power generator facility be built within the Hearn building, and that it should include co-generation and conservation measures.

- The Corporation has begun internal review of the 10 year capital plan to set priorities for the coming year. These will help focus the Corporation on what are felt to be the most important issues.
- Proponents for the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan have been interviewed and it is anticipated that a team will be selected soon.
- The Draft Marine Strategy has been completed. A public meeting to get feedback on the Marine Strategy is planned for February 28, 2006.
- A Request for Proposals has been issued for the area east of Parliament. It will include the precinct plan and environmental assessment for the extension of Queens Quay Boulevard
- The Naturalization of the Mouth of the Don River Terms of Reference have been developed to evaluate alternatives as part of the Environmental Assessment process. Steve Willis of Marshall Macklin Monaghan will present this project to the Design Review Panel later in the day.

The Chair then thanked Mr. Campbell for his presentation and opened up the meeting for questions or comments from the Panel. There was general interest in the status of the energy centre proposal. It was explained that an approved EA exists for a new power plant east of the Hearn and that Ontario Power and Gas (OPG) proposal reflects this EA. There is another proposal from a Baltimore based consortium who is working with Toronto Hydro to develop a proposition whereby the power plant could be integrated into the existing Hearn complex. It was clarified that these are two different proposals and only one will go forward.

The Panel was concerned about the impact that this energy centre could have on the waterfront, and several Panel members felt that the design should come before the Panel. The President and CEO responded that he would look into this possibility.

One Panel member asked if any ongoing market retail studies for the Central Waterfront are currently being pursued. Mr. Campbell confirmed that this has been considered and that an animation strategy specifically for the East Bayfront is being developed.

There being no further comments, the Chair then asked the Vice President Planning and Design to give the project report.

VP PLANNING & DESIGN REPORT

The Vice President Planning and Design gave a brief update on current projects. He began by introducing Pina Mallozzi, the new Planning Project Manager and welcoming the Ryerson students in the galleria who are studying the impacts of design review panels on built projects.
West Don Lands

- The development application has been completed and submitted to the City. The Public Realm Plan which was presented last month and will be discussed later in the meeting was developed both as part of the municipal approvals process and to inform another more detailed design for the public realm.
- Road width issues have arisen and it was suggested that a method of including the Panel in such discussions should be developed.
- The design team for Don River Park has initiated the design process.

East Bayfront

- As was mentioned earlier, an RFP has been issued for the transportation EA and Precinct Plan update for the East of Parliament site. This site represents complex transportation issues and the key is integrating the urban design plan and the future road network.

Central Waterfront

- The RFQ for the Innovative Design Competition for Toronto's Central Waterfront was released on February 3, 2006. To date there have been over 200 downloads from around the world.
- The Corporation is in the process of developing a jury for the competition.

Lake Ontario Park

- Three short-listed teams are being considered. All three are led by top quality firms.

Martin Goodman Trail

- Since the December Panel meeting a smaller group was organized to meet with Victor Ford to provide input, and he will be presenting a revised version of the plan to the Panel later in the day.

Portlands

- Working with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) the terms of reference for the naturalization of the mouth of the Don River have been completed, and Steve Willis will provide an overview of that EA process later in the meeting.
- A team has been selected to design Interim Sports Fields in the Portlands. The selected team's first task will be to determine a site and this will be followed by a brief design exercise. Construction is anticipated to commence in the fall of 2006 or spring of 2007.
- The first phase of the Leslie Street Greening has been tendered for construction. Phase two has been slowed down to allow for more site investigation and will be brought back to the Panel when that process has advanced.

The Chair then thanked Mr. Glaisek for his report, and opened by asking how people felt about frequency of meetings. The Vice President Planning and Design was of the opinion that there is value in meeting more frequently because of the speed at which projects are being developed and implemented. It was mentioned that the monthly schedule ensures that projects do not miss having the opportunity for feedback from the Panel because of timing. The President and CEO agreed with this comment and added that he valued having the benefit of the best minds and reinforced the importance of the Design Review Panel's advice to the Corporation.

There was general consensus that the Panel was in favour of monthly meetings, but it was recommended that meetings be condensed to make the morning as productive as possible and to try to adjourn by around 2:00pm.

One Panel member mentioned that in addition to frequency it is really important for the Panel to be involved at the conceptual phase of projects. It was suggested that it is harder for the Panel to make an impact when they come in late in the process. The Vice President Planning and Design agreed and suggested that when the Panel discusses Governance it would be helpful to formalize at what critical points the Design Review Panel would like to provide feedback.

It was suggested that a monthly briefing of the media to demonstrate that there is a rich variety of activity that is underway might create excitement. The CEO and President agreed that there is a need to invest in promotion, because there is in fact a lot going on, and a Corporate commitment to ensure the broader public is aware. It was mentioned that a RFP for branding and marketing is set to be released next week.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair provided thoughts and asked the Panel for their consideration on emerging issues:

The Chair began with an account of the West Don Lands Committee meeting he was asked to attend and provide an overview of the work of the Panel, specifically as it relates to the West Don Lands Precinct and Block Plan. The Chair commented that one can look at the plan and pinpoint at least six to seven components that the Panel has influenced and suggested that a record of these changes be produced. The Chair also mentioned that he welcomed the West Don Lands Committee Members to come to Panel meetings.

The Chair also suggested that he would like to find a way to realize an independent visioning session about the waterfront. This session is conceived of as an in-camera open discussion of the Panel members. It was suggested that this session might reflect on the opinions of Panel members with respect to some of the bigger issues and opportunities. The result is intended to be an orchestrated voice for the Panel on issues related to urbanism and the waterfront. This was viewed as an excellent idea by Panel members.

The Chair tabled the discussion of the formation of sub-committees and suggested that in future all Panel members should be informed about a sub-committee, who is involved and when it is scheduled to take place. There was general agreement on this approach, but it will be addressed in Governance discussions.

The Chair asked the Panel for comments on the minutes. It was felt that they were very complete and provided a good “snapshot” of the proceedings. Panel members did not have comments with respect to content.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Martin Goodman Trail Phase I

ID#: 1003

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Linear trail running through Marilyn Bell Park and along Lakeshore through Exhibition Place.

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Victor Ford and Associates

Review Round: Second

Delegation: Jeremy Craig

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Chris Glaisek, Vice President of Planning and Design introduced this project, noting that it is on a fast track in order to have Marilyn Bell Park ready for the International Dragon Boat Festival this August. The Main issues on which the advise of the panel is sought include:

- Reconfiguration of the plan
- Simplification of the seating

1.2 Project Presentation

Victor Ford, Principal, Victor Ford and Associates, then gave a detailed presentation of the revised plan for the Martin Goodman Trail segment in Marilyn Bell Park. Changes made in response to Panel input included decreasing the asphalt path width from 7 metres to 5.5 metres,

the introduction of linear, low planting areas, ledgerrock seating, and overall simplification of the seating areas and planting plans. He noted that the comments of the Panel had helped strengthen the while still respecting the activities and the viewsheds required for the park's programming. Mr. Ford also suggested ideas for branding the trail, although he noted this was not in his scope of work and that it this was unlikely to get resolved before the project went to tender.

1.3 Panel Comments

The Chair began by stating that he and another Panel member, Renee Daoust, had met separately with Victor Ford to help interpret the feedback from the last Panel review. He also asked the Panel to respect the Corporation's need to get this project into construction as soon as possible. The Panel generally complimented the overall improvements to the plan, although they continued to feel that further refinements were necessary. The Panel stressed that this site represents an opportunity to be a demonstration site for future waterfront revitalization of the trail and water's edge and that it was important to get this piece right.

The Panel suggested that Victor Ford consider other alternatives for lighting beyond the overhead options proposed. One Panel member suggested that lighting should highlight the linearity of the path along the water's edge. Others felt that if an overhead fixture is used its vocabulary in relation to the rest of the project is critical. The Panel recommended installing the underground infrastructure for lighting now, but deferring installation until the Central Waterfront Design Competition had produced a prototype.

The Panel expressed concern with the low rail proposed for the water's edge because of uncertainty in the approval process. The Vice President of Planning and Design noted that this detail had already been approved and implemented at York Quay.

The Panel asked Victor Ford to reconsider the use of catalogue benches if the ledge rock seating was provided. The Panel felt that the 80 percent ledgerrock and 20 percent catalogue bench combination was much less compelling than if it was 100 percent one kind of seating. It was also noted that none of the seating was in the shade.

The Panel expressed a general interest in seeing the boardwalk executed in Epay wood and not the composite Trex that was proposed. It was believed that, although the Panel understood the benefits of Trex, wood has a feeling that is unique and more appropriate for the water's edge setting.

There was general concern with the planter boxes. Some felt that planters should all be flush with the ground. Others felt that the planting zones represent an opportunity to capture site furnishing and to delineate between bicycle and pedestrian areas. It was suggested that the planters be redesigned to integrate seating and alternative programming such as water features. One Panel member felt that the planting proposal was not strong enough and too repetitive to justify such prominent planters and suggested they be removed from the plan.

The Panel remained concerned about the inconsistency of design character. In some respects the plan was simple and linear, but the curved amphitheatre shape of the western terminus was contradictory to this. It was also noted that inconsistency existed in the planting vocabulary which was both formal and informal in nature. The Panel felt it was important to coordinate the vocabulary of plantings, fixtures and materials.

The Panel felt that the design should commemorate and celebrate Martin Goodman and Marilyn Bell in some way. The East and West Gateways were considered appropriate places to try and do this.

Several Panel members suggested that plant material, benches and lighting all be taken out of this contract and be added later as part of another project, once the Central Waterfront design competition was completed. Some Panel members recommended that temporary furnishing be installed until waterfront-wide ones were designed, but others considered this problematic because of the concern that temporary fixtures would become permanent.

One Panel member remained concerned about the width of the pathway. The resolution to 5.5m was considered an improvement, but even still it reads as very wide and great attention must be put into its detailing and materiality.

1.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the major recommendations of the Panel:

- I. The boardwalk decking should be Epay wood, not Trex.
- II. The underground infrastructure for lighting should be installed now but not the fixtures.
- III. The detailing and dimensions of the path elements be further considered and refined.

1.5 Proponent's Response

Mr. Ford thanked the Panel for its comments, noting his concerns about further narrowing the path and not installing the fixtures now.

The Chair then excused himself and appointed Paul Bedford Acting Chair for the next item.

2.0 West Don Lands Public Realm Plan

ID#: 1005

Project Type: Park/Public Realm Design

Location: Area bounded by Parliament St., Eastern Ave., the Don River, and the CN rail corridor.

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: Urban Strategies with Marshall Macklin Monaghan

Review Round: Second

Delegation: Bob Webb, Pascale Dionne

2.1 Introduction of the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the Public Realm Framework, noting that it is intended to serve as a scope of work for an RFP for detailed design and to advance the city approvals process. The main issues on which the advice of the panel is sought include:

- Appropriateness of the scale of streets and sidewalks
- Character of different streets in relation to their context
- Overall acceptability of this as a basis for engaging a landscape design team
- River St and Bayview Ave cross sections

2.2 Project Presentation

Melanie Hare, Partner with Urban Strategies, began by noting that this was really a work in progress. Its primary purpose was to reconcile the functional engineering of below-grade services with the above ground right-of-ways. She then gave a detailed presentation of changes

and developments since the last meeting including the establishment of a 4.75m minimum sidewalk dimension, creating a pedestrian priority network, reflecting a strong pedestrian orientation in the street design, considering details in concept design and integrating with the Don River Park design process.

2.3 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair began by asking if there were any questions of clarification. One Panel member asked if the framework proposed specific treatment along commercial streets. Ms. Hare responded that the development of those typologies would be the role of the future design team. Another Panel member asked if residential doorways opened onto the River Street right-of-way. Ms. Hare explained that they opened onto a 2.2 metre setback, which was indeed a bit tight but a result of constraints on the River Street road alignment.

The Acting Chair asked for Panel comments. The Panel felt that generally the public realm allocation was very generous. However, there was consensus that the roadway widths proposed were generally too wide. One Panel member suggested that the 8.5 metre minimum width for streets be decreased to 6 metres. Others noted that the 8.5 metre minimum reflects the Fire Departments desire to have a 6 metre clear right-of-way at all times, not including parking and bike lanes. The Panel then discussed the importance of challenging traditional approaches and asked how they could help address city standards/engineering with respect to road widths. The Vice President of Planning and Design suggested that perhaps the Panel should consider hosting a workshop on this topic with specialists and city transportation staff.

One Panel member suggested a diagram showing the contours of the site and proposed stormwater flows could help. Decreasing the amount of paving would decrease the volume of storm water runoff which could help make the argument for smaller streets. Another Panel member suggested that smaller size fire trucks be specified to service this area of the city. Another suggested that putting steel studs and sprinkler systems in buildings might be used to negotiate with the Fire Department for smaller streets.

The Panel reiterated their strong belief that road width is an issue and that they would like to approach the city and question these standards. The President and CEO noted that the Corporation would consider going back to the city and discussing these standards.

There was a concern with the nature of the public space allocation. It was noted that aside from Don River Park most of the open space illustrated is surrounded on all sides by roads. It was suggested that this is a European approach to planning and that the future design team should be instructed to take careful consideration of those spaces.

The Panel raised concerns about the spacing of street trees. One Panel member suggested that the city minimum standard of 8 metre on-centre tree spacing should be decreased to 6 metres to allow the critical mass to create something lush. Some felt that the 0.8 metre planted verge was suburban in nature, but another Panel member stated that trees survive much better when there is a continuous space for grass or other soft surfaces below.

2.4 Summary of Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the major comments that emerged from the Panel discussion adding that this was overall an excellent piece of work:

- I. Work to narrow the streets
- II. Refine the overall landscape strategy, including tree spacing and plantings

- III. Develop different characters for different type of streets
- IV. Ensure that public realm including public parks and squares attract all different groups of inhabitants, including families, and be safe, welcoming and usable.

The Vice President of Planning and Design then suggested that the discussion on policy and procedures be deferred to the next meeting since time was short.

3.0 Naturalization of the Mouth of Don River EA

ID#: 1008

Project Type: Environmental Assessment

Location: Don River banks from Lake Ontario to Riverdale Park

Proponent: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Architect/Designer: N/A

Review Round: For Information Only

Delegation: N/A

3.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the project, noting that although this presentation is for information only, the Panel should begin to consider how landscape design will be integrated into this ecological revitalization process.

3.2 Project Presentation

Steve Willis Partner with Marshall Macklin Monaghan provided a detailed presentation of the environmental assessment process surrounding the Naturalization of the Mouth of the Don River. Existing conditions were outlined including river flow, flooding concerns and river alignment. Mr. Willis provided three reasons for undertaking the project: (1) reducing flood risk, (2) restoring a degraded environment and (3) improving development opportunities. The project delivery was outlined including the role of the Corporation, the TRCA, the consultant team and approval authorities. A detailed timeline for the EA process included the creation of Terms of Reference, which has now been completed, as well as the execution of the full EA which will result in recommendations to the Ministry of the Environment. Mr. Willis concluded by explaining that from a design perspective the challenge will be integrating the natural requirements into the urban context and suggested that he will return to the Panel at an appropriate point in the process for their input.

3.3 Panel Comments

The Panel thanked Mr. Willis for a great presentation and one Panel member asked how he imagined water quality would be changed in the future. Mr. Willis explained that several factors influence water quality and that water quality is increasing. He noted that some storm water currently drains into the Don River but in newer communities this was being addressed.

Another Panel member suggested that the Don River and its history could inform the narrative of adjacent site design, specifically Don River Park. The Panel recommended that Steve Willis discuss this opportunity with the design team for Don River Park as soon as possible.

The Acting Chair then thanked Mr. Willis for an informative presentation.

CLOSING

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