



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #162

Wednesday, June 21st, 2023

Meeting held in-person, hybrid

Present

Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel

Paul Bedford, Chair

Betsy Williamson, Vice Chair

George Baird

Gina Ford

Pat Hanson

David Leinster

Janna Levitt

Nina-Marie Lister

Fadi Masoud

Emily Mueller De Celis

Brigitte Shim

Kevin Stelzer

Eric Turcotte

Regrets

Matthew Hickey

Representatives

Chris Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto

Emilia Floro, City of Toronto

Recording Secretary

Leon Lai

Overview of Review Agenda

The Chair opened the meeting by providing an overview of the agenda, which included reviews of:

1. Villiers Island Density and Massing Study – For Information
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GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair noted that today is National Indigenous Peoples Day, Waterfront Toronto's Land Acknowledgement Statement, and that Panel members had a meaningful discussion in-camera on today. The Chair asked the Panel to adopt the meeting minutes from last month. The minutes were adopted.

The Chair asked if there were any conflicts of interest for disclosure. No conflict was declared.

The Chair then asked Chris Glaisek, Chief Planning and Design Officer, and Leon Lai, Manager, Design Review Panel, with Waterfront Toronto, to give an update on last month's projects.

Design Review Panel Updates:

Mr. Lai noted the consensus comments for **Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm** have been shared with the Proponent team and the City. The Proponent is coordinating Parliament Plaza with QILP, and received City comments on the 30% submission. Mr. Lai noted the design work continues to advance to 60% submission, and Parliament Plaza is expected to return for Schematic Design review later in the Fall.

Mr. Lai noted the consensus comments for **1-7 Yonge Phase 2+3** were circulated with the Proponent team and the City. Waterfront Toronto will meet with City staff on the corner open space, and schedule a follow-up debrief meeting with the Proponent team.

Waterfront Toronto Updates:

Mr. Lai noted Love Park's Official Opening Event is scheduled on June 23rd and invited all to come enjoy the new green space in the community and celebrate the beginning of summer with live music, special guest speakers, family-friendly fun activities, free snacks, and an exciting surprise for attendees.

Chair's remarks:

The Chair concluded the General Business segment and motioned to go into the project review sessions.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Villiers Island Density and Massing Study – For Information

<i>Project ID #:</i>	1039
<i>Project Type:</i>	Precinct Plan
<i>Review Stage:</i>	For Information
<i>Review Round:</i>	One
<i>Location:</i>	Villiers Island
<i>Proponent:</i>	City of Toronto + Waterfront Toronto
<i>Presenter(s):</i>	Anthony Kittel, Project Manager, City of Toronto

Delegation:

Sonja Vangjeli, Senior Urban Designer, City of Toronto
Rei Tasaka, Senior Urban Project Manager, Waterfront Toronto
Yuxuan Lin, Assistant Urban Designer, Waterfront Toronto
Scott Pennington, CreateTO
Kendra Barkman, CreateTO
Raymond Tung, City of Toronto
Eric Sehr, City of Toronto
James Parakh, City of Toronto
Josh Hilburt, Waterfront Toronto
Jed Kilbourn, Waterfront Toronto
Kristal Tanunagara, Waterfront Toronto
Mira Shenker, Waterfront Toronto
Aaron Barter, Waterfront Toronto

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Anthony Kittel, Project Manager with City of Toronto, introduced the project by noting that changes to the Villiers Island Precinct Plan built form are being contemplated, including height and massing, with the goal of increasing density by at least 30% above 2017 Plan. Mr. Kittel noted the key principles of the Precinct Plan, key policy priorities from OPM, and the ongoing due diligence work. Mr. Kittel summarized the density study preliminary outcomes including three massing concepts that deliver densities between 40% and 60% increase, and the project timeline.

Sonja Vangjeli, Senior Urban Designer with City of Toronto, continued the introduction by noting the site context, including the network of waterfront parks, Keating Channel, Silo Square, Old Cherry Street, the existing and future vision of the Channel. Ms. Vangjeli then noted the areas for Panel consideration, including deployment of height and density, increased densities along the Keating Channel, and key view corridors.

1.2 Project Presentation

Rei Tasaka, Senior Urban Designer with Waterfront Toronto, began the presentation by noting the greater context including the overall waterfront, eastern waterfront, built and planned development context, precinct access, art and cultural sites. Ms. Tasaka noted the key elements on Villiers Island, development blocks, street grid, heritage resources, through-block connections, internal network of open spaces and connections, and sun access to key public realm areas.

Yuxuan Lin, Assistant Urban Designer with Waterfront Toronto, presented precedents of tall mid-rise precedents including Bayside, West Don Lands, Bjorvika Precinct in Oslo, and specific architectural examples including West Don Lands Block 13, Bevel Lic. Building NYC, Via Oslo, and Cockle Bay Park. Ms. Lin noted the team explored density along Keating Channel, the concept of framing the channel as an urban living room, and studied Chicago Riverfront, Wijnhaven City in Rotterdam, and Paddington Basin in London.

Ms. Tasaka presented the three massing approaches to increasing density: increased density focused on Keating Channel & North Blocks, increased density focused on Western Blocks, and increased density focused on Central Blocks. For each approach, Ms. Tasaka noted the overall massing, the location of the additional density and heights, changes in skyline, and the shadow impacts. Ms. Tasaka noted the three approaches as seen from key views, summarized the distinct features of the options and provided their approximate density increase percentage from the 2017 Plan.

1.3 Panel Questions

One Panel member asked for more information on the height cap as related to the Billy Bishop flight path. Mr. Glaisek noted there is no simple answer, Billy Bishop has a series of operational parameters. Eric Sehr, Project Manager with City of Toronto, responded that the team is working with Billy Bishop through Ports Toronto to establish clarity. Mr. Glaisek added that it is not about flight paths, or what we can observe, but emergency routes. The team will try to come up with the best case and show Ports Toronto what they can or cannot accommodate.

Another Panel member asked for more information on the limitation on the wetlands and the impact from towers. Mr. Kittel noted that TRCA provided advice to limit shadow to the area, it is important for the team to avoid casting shadow on the wetland. The Panel member asked for the density on the private block in the precinct. Mr. Glaisek noted they are already asking for more than approved.

One Panel member asked for the width of the Keating Channel. Ms. Lin noted the width of the water way is 36m.

Another Panel member asked if the street structure is set and why they are all vehicular streets. Mr. Glaisek noted they were determined in the precinct plan and Centre Street is pedestrian. The Chair noted that the Panel should assume that the blocks, streets, and public spaces are set. The Panel member asked if there is any flexibility on these elements. Mr. Glaisek noted nothing is built but there is an intention to not change them from the precinct plan.

One Panel member asked for clarification on one moment in the shadow study. Ms. Tasaka noted the shadow difference comes from one tower at the northwest corner.

Another Panel member asked for the status on the Keating Channel development and the area south of the Don River. Mr. Kittel noted the area south of the Don is owned by CreateTO, the study is showing a notional development as a placeholder until work is created. Mr. Kittel noted the area north of the Keating Channel is subject to the precinct plan because it is related to the Gardiner ramp relocation and realignment of Lake Shore. Mr. Kittel noted there will be an updated Keating Channel East precinct plan, the RFP has been release; Keating Channel west has already been approved. Mr. Kittel anticipated that Keating Channel East will start construction in 2027 and occupancy in 2029-2030.

One Panel member asked for more information on the disposition of buildings along the lot lines of Keating Channel. Mr. Glaisek noted there aren't clearly defined blocks

there, the team will determine a good building footprint, and what is outside will be a public promenade.

Another Panel member noted the precinct appears to adhere to car focused streets, and asked if the degree of porosity through the pedestrian area can change to meet the demands of increasing density, i.e. a finer street grid, increasing porosity and pedestrian movement. The Panel member recommended studying precedents built earlier in the century, create a dense urban form that is oriented from the river valley, and be less rigorous with maintaining the grid.

One Panel member asked if there is any discussion with TRCA and PFR on parkland impact from the increased density and shadowing. Mr. Kittel noted there has not been a great deal of increased shadow on Villiers Park, and discussing with TRCA is part of the due diligence work.

Another Panel member asked for the FSI of the 2017 Precinct Plan. Ms. Tasaka noted it was about 5.

One Panel member asked if the FSI is gross or net. Ms. Tasaka noted 5 is the net FSI of the development. The Panel member asked if there are more sites that are privately owned. Ms. Tasaka noted there is old Munitions Street Factory which has not indicated a desire to redevelop. The Panel member asked if the team is working with a target density increase or just looking at built-form, and if work has been done to understand the infrastructure capacity relative to the additional density. Mr. Sehr noted the team has completed a stress test on the infrastructure, the conclusion is that the PLFP infrastructure will not limit density – the team is looking at ways to introduce more infrastructure to accommodate density. Mr. Kittel noted beyond phase 1, LRT connectivity is needed for the district to function because there are few ways to access the island.

Another Panel member asked if studies were done related to building form to understand which option is more amenable to net zero-carbon buildings, and if the team studied taller mid-rises. Ms. Tasaka responded that the team looked at many built-forms, increasing the base height of the podiums greatly impacted the shadowing unless one begins to carve them to step down to decrease shadow impact. Aaron Barter, Direction of Innovation and Sustainability with Waterfront Toronto, noted that the precinct plan looked at a few key focuses: passive solar gain to reduce mechanical load, the buildings will be required to have 0 GHGI, and also opportunities to generate on-site energy.

One Panel asked for the estimated population difference from 2017 Precinct Plan with the density studies being presented. Ms. Tasaka noted at an FSI of 4.9, the 2017 Precinct Plan was estimated to have 4800 units, and the studies are anticipating an increase to 6000-7000 units.

1.4 Panel Comments

One Panel member felt that increasing density along Keating Channel is not preferred. In Chicago, the taller buildings are further back on the south side, and there is no

public space on the north side which you would not build in the same condition now. The Panel member felt that mid to low rise buildings in options 2 and 3 would allow reasonable sun exposure on Keating Channel public realm, and explore how a combination of these two strategies can reach 60% increase in density. There will need to be a substantial density increase at this site to convince the “density masons” that this is the right level of development – the Panel member does not oppose the previous Precinct Plan, but felt that minor adjustments will not be enough. The Panel member suggested a ring of taller buildings around the west, south, and east edge while meeting the shadow limitation on the east side, and noted the adding towers to the south do not create additional shadow on the park.

Another Panel preferred option 3 and supported density on both sides of Keating, knitting the island back with the city, and preferred higher, hybrid, podium typologies. The preferred lower density along Cherry Street to allow for a unique arrival experience. They suggested exploring more towers with smaller than 750sm floor plates as the shadow impact from towers do not last as long as thicker mid-rises. The Panel member supported breaking down the blocks with another layer of pedestrian network to achieve a more granular block pattern, explore alternatives to Toronto’s lane widths, curb profiles, etc. The Panel member felt this site is where the streets are not as wide.

One Panel member supported approaches 2 and 3, and recommended that a new pedestrian circulation network should be explored because the blocks still feel very car centric. The Panel member felt that the building footprints should encroach more into the streets, there is an opportunity for a second layer of POPS and open space network, creating opportunities for microclimate conditions. Referencing to the Oslo precedent, the vehicular circulation is located on the perimeter, the interior of the blocks have spaces that are intimate and full of microclimate conditions where public realm elements blend in with each other.

Another Panel member felt the built form should focus on controlling climate, allow access to sunlight, and responding to the climate by the lake. The Panel member felt that in order for Keating Channel public realm to be successful it needs as much sunlight as possible.

One Panel member appreciated the presentation and noted that the timing is very appropriate because even though 2017 wasn’t that long ago Toronto has changed a lot. The Panel member asked for more north-south and east-west sections to understand the context, vision for the public realm, relative density and heights, and widths of the key rights-of-way. The Panel member felt that the Keating Towers look very “chunky” in perspective, and is supportive of towers but encouraged them to have smaller floor plates. The Panel member asked the team to imagine some of the streets to have no cars to create a truly special part of the city. The Panel member encouraged the team to tie climate and public realm together to re-think a new way of development and community.

Another Panel member appreciated the work and the reminder of what the Island will feel like when developed. The Panel member felt the planning had a typical Toronto character typical “shrink-wrapped” massing, and encouraged the team; to re-examine the nature of the public realm given the unique context of the island – the

neighbourhood should have the presence of being lake side, and asked the team to include the public realm design as part of the next presentation. The Panel member felt that the footprint of buildings and FSI can be high as long as the public realm is special.

One Panel member noted this is a major city building initiative, felt that it needs a point of human density to enliven the space, and suggested to maximize density. The Panel member noted the south side Keating Channel public realm will always be shaded in any of the options, especially in winter months, and recommended bringing uses such as restaurant programs be put as close to the water as possible to capture the sunlight – the promenade here should be unique and leverage water activation. The Panel member noted that the Chicago River has tall buildings on the north side right up to the water, and the southern buildings are shorter with a larger setback, yet the public realm on the south side is always in shade. Despite that, it is jammed with life because of the access to water and programming – sunlight is just one of the components that make a public space successful. The recommended that prioritizing human beings should be the priority at Keating Channel.

Another Panel member recommended to focus on enhancing the public realm, embrace the porosity at the site, and consider the built-form impact in shaping the microclimates. The Panel member commented that it is important to ensure that there is not too much shadow created to make Villiers not functional as a neighbourhood park. The Panel member noted the plans do not show the design of streets and asked the team to provide this context at the next review, including sidewalks, trees, bike paths, etc.

One Panel member appreciated the informative presentation and suggested to include a study on how intensification will impact on-site generation of electricity because on-site generation is very important for net-zero. The Panel member noted that tall buildings tend to be bigger embodied carbon carriers, compared to shorter buildings because of weight and volume of materials, and suggested to explore timber hybrid structures with a timber core that can allow large elevators. The Panel member supported deep geothermal and asked the team to provide more information on infrastructure capacity of the site because it will impact livability.

Another Panel member felt that understanding the transit capacity here is crucial, noting that servicing needs for each block will impact the network of midblock pedestrian connections, and encouraged the team to consider loading and servicing when designing the blocks. The Panel member asked for more information on land use to help evaluate the size of ground floors. The Panel member felt that while sunlight is important, it needs to be balanced with other needs such as density – the site is unique and encouraged the team to not be dogmatic with limited shadow because some shadow at certain times is okay. The Panel member suggested to focus density at transit stops and recommended a landmark building on the northwest corner site to mark the unique district. The Panel member recommended more density along Commissioners, and the Panel member asked the team to not complicate the rules when it comes to the Cherry Street views and recommended approach 1.

One Panel member appreciate the incredible amount of work and the beautiful presentation that is very easy to understand. The Panel member noted that typical Toronto block forms will have difficulty achieving a unique relationship with the public realm. On density, the Panel member supported 60%+ increase, skinnier towers, and writing development guidelines to ensure the buildings meet the ground well. The Panel member noted that the Chicago riverfront is a very comfortable place – you will be in shadow on the south side - but it is possible to figure out a way to embrace density and make that area a great place. The Panel member felt the plan should indicate to developers how best to design here. On heritage buildings and visibility of the landmarks, the Panel member felt that they do not need to be visible from all views, instead consider creating a significant open space around those elements to elevate the experience at those unique sites.

1.5 Consensus Comments

General

- Appreciated the detailed presentations and options for discussion.
- Support for higher density, at least 60% increase.
- Support for more affordable housing.
- Provide the Villiers Island Public Realm design and details as context for the next review. The Panel would like the team to explore opportunities to re-examine the public realm design given the exercise on increasing density.
- Provide Villiers Island proposed land uses as design context.
- Provide information on transit capacity as it relates to the density options.
- Consider all opportunities to increase the affordable housing being delivered at Villiers.
- Provide a comprehensive set of section drawings, including north-south sections from the City to Villiers Island.

Massing and Density

Intensification of Keating Channel and North Blocks

- Some Panel members felt that Keating Channel area should not take on too much additional height because it would reduce sunlight on the public realm.
- Some Panel members felt density is crucial in activating the Keating Channel and density there should be maximized, especially when the public realm at Keating is shaded most of the day anyway.
- For this option, further study the Chicago waterfront: the setback on the south side, height of buildings, water and other activation programs - ensure comfort and uses at the public realm are prioritized over limiting shadow, and fully maximized to allow for great density.

Intensification of Western Blocks and Central

- Some Panel members preferred combining Options 2 (intensification of Western Blocks) and 3 (intensification of Central Blocks) to achieve 60% density increase – the towers would form a sort of ring around the precinct except along the north Keating Channel edge.

- Other Panel members support combining Options 1 (Intensification of Keating Channel and North Blocks) and 3 (intensification of Central Blocks), preserving lower density on Cherry to create a distinct arrival experience while creating higher density along both sides of Keating Channel, knitting the precinct with the rest of the city.

Intensification on Commissioners Street Blocks

- Some Panel members supported increasing the height of buildings along Commissioners to create a denser, more urban, experience along the edge of the park.

Other

- Some Panel members felt that the density can be greatly increased if the public realm is unique.
- Identify built-form typologies that can introduce more porosity at each block with a second layer of public realm spaces, such as mews and POPS.
- Some Panel members supported a finer block pattern and recommended more numerous small floor plate towers that create less long-term shadow impact than larger footprint mid-rises.
- Some Panel members felt that preserving sightlines to heritage buildings is not the most important priority if it comes in the way of good density distribution and recommended to instead focus on creating an interesting public realm around these heritage buildings to mark their significance.
- Continue to explore other topologies outside of tower and podium to ensure the buildings will have a unique relationship with the public realm, such as higher podium mid-rises and other hybrid more porous typologies.
- Provide more clarification on the site height cap and how that will impact the density allocation.

Public realm

- Some Panel members felt that the built form should focus on controlling climate and respond to sunlight.
- Leverage the public realm to create unique microclimate.
- Along the Keating Channel, consider putting the dining closer to the water to maximize sun exposure, and maximize opportunities for water activation – this area can become a different type of water’s edge promenade.

Sustainability

- Provide more information on the various massing options’ impact on sustainability performance, in particular on-site generation of electricity.
- Ensure the built form will support a zero-carbon neighbourhood and minimizing embodied carbon emission.

1.6 [Vote of Support/Non-Support](#)

No vote was taken as the project was reviewed For Information.

The Chair then asked if the proponent would like to provide a brief response.

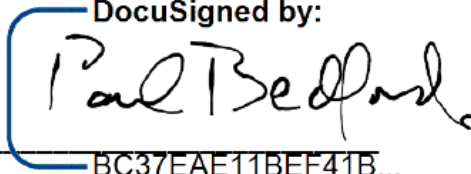
CLOSING

There being no further business, the Chair then adjourned the public session of the meeting after a vote to go into a brief in-camera session.

These Meeting Minutes are formally adopted and approved by Panel on September 27th, 2023.

Signed--

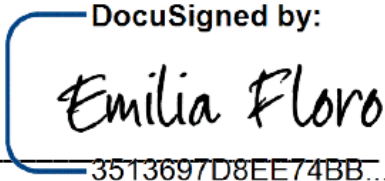
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Paul Bedford, Waterfront Design Review Panel Chair

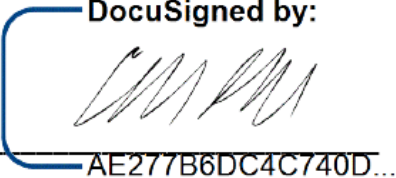
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Chris Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto Chief Planning and Design Officer