



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #173

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Meeting held in-person hybrid at Waterfront Toronto

Present

Paul Bedford, Chair
Pat Hanson
David Leinster
Janna Levitt
Nina-Marie Lister
Fadi Masoud
Pina Petricone
Eric Turcotte

Regrets

Betsy Williamson, Vice Chair
Matthew Hickey
Emily Mueller De Celis
Brigitte Shim
Kevin Stelzer

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. Bentway Islands – Stage 1: Issues Identification
 2. Update on Waterfront Accessibility – For Information
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GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair asked if there were any conflicts of interest for disclosure. There was no conflict of interest for any Panel members.

The Chair then asked Waterfront Toronto to give an update on last month's projects.

Design Review Panel Report Back:

Leon Lai, Design Review Panel Manager with Waterfront Toronto, noted the consensus comments from January 2025 for **10 Lower Spadina** have been shared with the design team. A community consultation meeting was held earlier this month and the City has issued formal comments to the team. For **Waterfront East LRT 2A Yonge Slip**, the consensus comments have been shared with the team, a design workshop was been held last week and the team is addressing WDRP comments.

Waterfront Toronto Updates:

Chris Glaisek, Chief Planning and Design Officer with Waterfront Toronto provided an update on the next phase of waterfront revitalization, that the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the City of Toronto, announced \$975 million to accelerate the delivery of Waterfront Toronto's revitalization plan. The plan will help create over 14,000 new homes, including affordable rental housing. Once complete, this investment will create an estimated 100,000 jobs on Toronto's waterfront and add \$13.2 billion to the economy.

Chair's remarks:

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

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 Bentway Islands – Stage 1: Issues Identification

<i>Project ID #:</i>	1149
<i>Project Type:</i>	Public Realm
<i>Review Stage:</i>	Issues Identification
<i>Review Round:</i>	One
<i>Location:</i>	Central Waterfront
<i>Proponent:</i>	Bentway Conservancy
<i>Architect/ Designer:</i>	Brook McIlroy, Field Operations
<i>Presenter(s):</i>	Robert McKaye, Senior Manager, Bentway Conservancy Isabel Castilla, Associate Partner, Field Operations Cal Brooke, Principal, BrookMcIlroy Ryan Gorrie, Principal, BrookMcIlroy
<i>Delegation:</i>	Alejandro Vazquez, Field Operations



Ilana Altman, Bentway Conservancy
Josh Harskamp, Bentway Conservancy
Cezanne Ilagan, Bentway Conservancy
Trish Clarke, BrookMcIlroy
Heather Inglis Baron, Waterfront Secretariat, City of Toronto
Liz Trenton, City of Toronto
Sonja Vangjeli, City of Toronto
Katie Black, City of Toronto
Anna Ingerbrigtsen, Waterfront Toronto
Yvonne Monestier, Waterfront Toronto
Josh Hilburt, Waterfront Toronto
Corey Bialek, Waterfront Toronto

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Heather Inglis Baron, Senior Project Manager, Waterfront Secretariat with the City of Toronto, introduced the project by noting the site context, project background, the recommended program in the City of Toronto Facility Master Plan, and the adjacent community uses including key public realm and bike lane network. Ms. Baron noted the existing site conditions as seen from Dan Leckie and Spadina Ave. and explained that the project is here for Stage 1: Issues Identification review and is expected to return for Stage 2: Schematic Design later this year.

Ms. Baron noted that in Nov. 2023 the Government of Ontario and City of Toronto agreed to the “New Deal” which included the upload of the Gardiner Expressway to the Province, and the proposal assumes management and maintenance of the proposed Bentway Islands facilities by the Bentway Conservancy. Ms. Baron then summarized the areas for Panel consideration, including distribution of program and site organization, site circulation and access, sustainability targets, site challenges including the Gardiner structure, pavilion structures, and mitigation against pollution and noise. Ms. Baron then introduced Robert McKaye, Senior project manager with Bentway Conservancy, to present the design.

1.2 Project Presentation

Mr. McKaye began the presentation by introducing the design team of Field Operations, Brook McIlroy and their Indigenous design studio. Mr. McKaye provided the vision for the Bentway as a vital public space, the roadmap for future under-Gardiner work, growing the Bentway’s impact, and summarized the Bentway Islands programs.

Isabel Castilla, Associate Partner with Field Operations, reviewed the project context, site plan, sections showing the Gardiner structure, opportunities and constraints including setbacks and sun exposure. Ms. Castilla noted access opportunities and existing stormwater downspouts. Ms. Castilla noted the proposed organizing principles: site circulation, buffers and topographical edges, landscapes, blue-green infrastructure, active recreation opportunities, and pavilions.

Cal Brook, Principal with BrookMcIlroy, described how the pavilions enhance safety and add permanence to the project, and that there will be approximately 15,000sf of mass timber buildings spread across the site contrasting the industrial character of the Gardiner. The team is investigating how to design the pavilions to allow continuous access to the Gardiner columns. Ryan Gorrie, Principal with BrookMcIlroy, noted the Indigenous design narratives and how they can be integrated into the design. Ms. Castilla then concluded the presentation by showing the 3D views.

1.3 Panel Questions

One Panel member asked for more information on strategies for improving east-west connectivity. Mr. McKaye noted there are plans in place to create a sense of continuity between Phase 1 and Phase 2 Bentway, such as wayfinding systems on the bents, vegetation, etc., all of which will flourish at the Islands.

Another Panel member noted the need to ameliorate impact of the surrounding roadways and asked if the current drawing shows proposed curb cuts, and whether the team has coordinated with the City on the “circle” bridge, the leisure trail, and other elements that are vital to the project. Ms. Castilla noted the project is in the early concept phase, sidewalks and curbs are being adjusted, there are on-going conversations with transportation services, and they already have agreement on things that are easier to shift and will continue to work with the City on other changes.

One Panel member noted the project will require flexibility from the City and Province, i.e. distance from the bents, and asked if they have discussed with various parties how the Islands will be maintained in the future. Mr. Brook noted the team is testing and trying to demonstrate a new maintenance regime and solve the necessary requirements. Mr. McKaye noted the team had early conversations with Transportation Services regarding maintenance, the relationships built in Phase One are a great starting point, and they will work together on an issue by issue basis. Liz Trenton, Senior Project Manager, Transportation Services with City of Toronto, noted that there is support from the City in concept, and the City is working closely with the team on finding alternative solutions and exploring how requirements can be satisfied.

Another Panel member asked about the closing of the Lake Shore Boulevard turnaround. Ms. Trenton noted if a traffic consultant can demonstrate that cars can go to other routes, then there’d be support from Transportation Services.

One Panel member asked if any lessons learned in Phase One are informing Phase Two. Ilana Altman, Co-Executive Director of Bentway Conservancy, responded that one of the key lessons is accommodating service, storage access, and finding space to provide other support areas. Another is adding complimentary retail spaces to make the place “stickier”. Ms. Altman noted the team is trying to respond to all these lessons.

Another Panel member asked who the team spoke with for Indigenous engagement and how the discussions were documented. Mr. Gorrie noted the team worked with Bob Goulais and his team to form connections and develop more formal partnerships,

presented the aspirations and gained their insight within the urban fabric, such as retail opportunities, sharing artisan workshop elements, environmental stewardship, and representing stories from an Indigenous perspective. Mr. Gorrie noted that there is a sky realm blocked by the Gardiner and the team is asking how to take advantage of that from a storytelling perspective, such as talk about migration, seasonality, and relationship to pets and animals.

One Panel member asked if there is a need for phasing. Mr. McKaye noted the team is far away from implementation because the timeline for Gardiner rehab completion is 2030 – the team will learn a lot over the next several years and some of the requirements around interfacing with the Gardiner bents may change as part of the rehab work. Mr. Brooke noted the design is easy to phase. Ms. Castilla noted there is a baseline of functions such as ensuring the site has safe access, and there are add-ons that will have even more benefits to the site. Alejandro Vazquez, Director with Field Operations, noted the Bentway has a strong identity, and the colours and materials proposed for Phase Two will recall Phase One and tie the two identities together. The Panel member asked if strong winds can be mitigated. Ms. Castilla responded that wind and acoustic studies are next, the team is currently prioritizing sun and light exposure studies.

Another Panel member asked for more information on the bridge. Mr. Brook responded that it is an important connection to Island C because the at-grade connection at the tip of the Island by itself is not sufficient on its own to support the expected pedestrian flow. There is high traffic from City Place and given the available headroom under the structure, the team would like to provide a fully accessible way for people to cross.

One Panel member asked for lessons learned from the previous bridge proposal. Ms. Altman noted the bridge project is on hold until rehab at that section of the Gardiner is complete, there has been lessons learned on how the bridge bears on existing structure and how to balance pedestrian movement modes – the project is feasible and did not reveal any issue with the Gardiner but it is a different location along the Gardiner from Phase Two. The Panel member asked if there is any information on the retail operator. Mr. McKaye noted the team is currently exploring with City PFR the relationship between vendor and The Bentway, more modelling will be completed to determine the type of tenant. Ms. Altman noted that Bentway Phase One has seasonal retail, learned a lot from the pilot projects and will bring successful ideas to Phase Two. The Panel member asked if there are any anticipated limitations on the design coming from Ministry of Transportation. Ms. Inglis Baron noted MTO is aware of the project but no restrictions or requirements have been put forward so far.

Another Panel member asked if there is any study on air quality and how that will inform the design. Mr. Brooke noted the team will look at how buildings can play a vital role in providing shelter, microclimate, and bring positive impact on things like architectural finishes and an air filtration systems. Mr. Vazquez noted not much can be done on airborne pollution but one of the best tools is trees and vegetation so the team will try to maximize landscaping. Ms. Castilla noted the team has observed what species are thriving at Phase One and intend to maximize that at Phase Two.

1.4 Panel Comments

One Panel member asked the team to consider quantifying the visitor count for the project at special events, and emphasized the importance east-west connections to ensure the Islands are an integral part of the broader public realm. The Panel member commended the collection of stormwater, appreciated Mr. Gorrie's comments and felt there is an opportunity here to be exemplary in integrating Indigeneity in a meaningful way. The Panel member felt the bridge is very important as it signals the pedestrian connection to a place that is typically prohibited – caution to not value-engineer this early on.

Another Panel member asked the team to present more context on Indigeneity and felt this will provide a frame of reference for sustainability and connectivity, allow biophilic benefits to be highlighted. They suggested enabling other species to cross the Islands. The Panel member felt the water retention and bioswales have a lot of potential and asked the team to consider making the dog park serve more than one purpose.

One Panel member supported the pavilion buildings and felt they are critical for activation year-round and suggested considering modular design and design for disassembly for them to be moved for maintenance. The Panel member is concerned that single use sport fields are so central to the Islands and asked the team to consider flexibility and porosity in the design so every surface can be adaptable and accommodate multiple uses.

Another Panel member asked the team to take stock of the great diversity in users, including those that will use this space after hours. The Panel member noted the pavilions will create blind spots and will be attractive as after-hours shelter, and suggested considering their impact on safety for different uses and constituents.

One Panel member commented that the two phases should be integrated as a whole, there should be more consistent elements that help ground the new phase and build on the success of the first segment. The Panel member asked the team to further develop the programming to accommodate both everyday use and special events. On multi-seasonal retail, the Panel member noted it is very difficult and the team should study what is required to create a successful retail environment. The Panel member asked the team to demonstrate the experience from both within the park and outside looking in, such as the drivers' perspectives.

Another Panel member asked the team to leverage the deep talent of the Indigenous team to “de-silo” the project, there is an opportunity for Indigeneity to drive more of the design than simply be woven in. Continue to build relationships, leverage knowledge keepers, and keep design teams more integrated.

One Panel member suggested establishing a hierarchy of storytelling elements based on order of magnitude and the level of required buy-in from stakeholders. The Panel member recommended a more scenario-based pedestrian loop, demonstrate how different users will use the project, and create a retail rationale to deal with pragmatic issues such as the lack of back-of-house spaces for the retail.

Another Panel member felt the area will be noisy with bad air quality, and the team needs to focus on addressing these issues. The Panel member asked the team to provide more information on the integration of public art, understand the bridge in terms of sightlines and safety, as well as consider winter use and access.

One Panel member felt the project is a unique opportunity to create success due to it being managed by a conservancy. The Panel member noted the site could be tied to Canoe Landing park and is excited to see how the environmental solutions will unfold in the next phase of work.

1.5 Consensus Comments

General

- Supported the project for reinforcing the core values of the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan by removing barriers and creating connections.
- Consider the project as both a connector and destination, and continue to strengthen the project's east-west connections with the city.
- Supported the bridge as it creates an additional robust connection with Canoe Landing Park and the rest of the city.
- Ensure programming will succeed year-round and provide more information on multi-seasonal strategies.
- Continue to meaningfully integrate Indigeneity into the design, explore all possibilities in the programming, design, and landscape strategy.
- Work closely with the Province to ensure all constraints are known.
- Given the project's timeline, consider the programs and elements in a hierarchy to inform decisions and futureproof the delivery of the project's core ideas and values.
- Provide more information on public art opportunities.

Design

- Support for the pavilion structures, continue to develop their designs and configurations on site to ensure they can operate year-round and not impact safety.
- Avoid single program spaces by considering how the designs can provide flexibility in use, i.e. not adding barriers such as fencing between programmatic uses.
- Leverage materials, colours, and other wayfinding elements to reinforce the Bentway identity and strengthen the connection to Bentway Phase One.
- Provide more information on the experiential quality of the design from both inside and outside the Islands, ensure it is desirable for both.
- Focus on the micro-climate experience and consider all strategies to buffer pollution, improve air quality, and reduce undesirable levels of wind and noise.
- Provide more information on the overall lighting strategy and consider year-round safety.

1.6 Vote of Support/Non-Support

No vote was taken as the project was reviewed at Stage 1: Issues Identification

2.0 Update on Waterfront Accessibility – For Information

<i>Project ID #:</i>	1150
<i>Project Type:</i>	Planning Policy
<i>Review Stage:</i>	For Information
<i>Review Round:</i>	-
<i>Location:</i>	-
<i>Proponent:</i>	Waterfront Toronto
<i>Architect/ Designer:</i>	-
<i>Presenter(s):</i>	Pina Mallozzi, Senior Vice President of Design, Waterfront Toronto
<i>Delegation:</i>	Vail Zerr, Waterfront Toronto

2.1 Project Presentation

Pina Mallozzi, Senior Vice President of Design with Waterfront Toronto, began the presentation by noting Waterfront Toronto is working to create a waterfront for everyone, and that vision is only possible through a strong commitment to accessibility. Ms. Mallozzi noted the Waterfront Accessibility Design Guidelines build on existing guidelines and fills in gaps specific to the waterfront. The guidelines provide specifications and requirements that are unique to the waterfront sites, and the development is a collaborative process. Ms. Mallozzi provided details on the guiding principles, corporate implementation commitments, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and how AAC feedback will be shared with the WDRP when projects are reviewed by both bodies. Ms. Mallozzi noted the AAC has members with cross-disciplinary representation.

Ms. Mallozzi showed a sample guideline on water access for canoe and kayak launches and recapped the AAC's 2024 year-in-review including six projects reviewed and their recurring feedback themes. Ms. Mallozzi noted the next steps including updates to the guidelines and bring those to the WDRP, and commencement of AAC feedback summary updates for the WDRP.

2.2 Panel Discussion

One Panel member commended the progress and appreciated this update.

Another Panel member asked for more information on winter climate impact on accessibility. Ms. Mallozzi responded that climate in general, not just winter, has a big impact on accessibility, and the team will consider this in the guidelines.

One Panel member asked if there are any countries or cities that stand out as best practice. Ms. Mallozzi noted Australia and British Columbia both have strong relations with water and their ADA policies are more advanced than Ontario.

Another Panel member noted post-occupancy review is very important and asked if this is being considered in the thinking. Ms. Mallozzi noted the AAC completed a tour of East Bayfront and the lessons will be brought into our projects.

One Panel member felt the accessibility guidelines can be implemented in a similar way as Waterfront Toronto's Green Building Requirements – as a core mandate of the corporation. Ms. Mallozzi noted this is something our CEO firmly believes in so there is great leadership here.

Another Panel member appreciated the variety and depth of experience on the AAC panel and expressed that lived experience is invaluable.

CLOSING

There being no further business, the Chair then adjourned the public session of the meeting.

These Meeting Minutes are formally adopted and approved by Panel on March 26th , 2025.

These Meeting Minutes have been signed by Paul Bedford, Waterfront Design Review Panel Chair, and Chris Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto Chief Planning and Design Officer. Waterfront Toronto has on record a copy of this document with their DocuSign signatures.