



WATERFRONTToronto

**Waterfront Design Review Panel
Minutes of Meeting #39
Wednesday, November 12th, 2009**

Present:

Paul Bedford, Acting Chair
George Baird
Anne McIlroy
Brigitte Shim
Greg Smallenberg
Betsy Williamson

Regrets:

Peter Clewes
Renee Daoust
Siamak Hariri
Bruce Kuwabara
Janet Rosenberg

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

Recording Secretary:

Margaret Goodfellow

WELCOME

Paul Bedford welcomed the Panel, noting that Bruce Kuwabara had asked him to act as Chair in his absence. 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 preparation for the 2015 Pan American Games which was granted to Toronto on November 6th, 2009. Mr. Campbell stated that the construction of the Athletes Village in the West Don Lands (in accordance with the existing Precinct Plan) will be a boost to both the West Don Lands and the District Energy system. Mr. Campbell noted that the Provincial and Federal Governments have committed \$450 million for infrastructure, \$450 million for housing and another \$100 million for the games "overlay", and retrofitting after the conclusion of the games. Mr. Campbell stated that there will be a mix of affordable rental and affordable ownership units delivered, with the final mix to be decided by the Province.

REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN

Christopher Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto's Vice President for Planning and Design, provided a summary of project progress.

Public Art

- As per the West Don Lands Public Art Strategy, a formal artist selection process is underway for an artist to join the design team for the underpass park. An RFP was issued and closed on Nov 5 with 62 submissions received. A jury will be reviewing and selecting an artist to join the design team for early December.

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

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Acting Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Mr. Smallenberg stated that he was conflicted for both projects as his firm is designing the Underpass Park, and their associate landscape architects in Toronto, The Planning Partnership, are on the River City Development team.

The Acting Chair moved to adopt the minutes from October 2009. 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 Development: River City, Blocks 19, 20, 22, and 24

ID#: 1028

Project Type: Building/Structure

Location: Area bounded by King Street, River Street, Eastern Avenue and Don River Park.

Proponent: Urban Capital Property Group and Redquartz Developments

Architect/Designer: Saucier + Perrotte Architectes with ZAS Architects and The Planning Partnership Landscape Architects

Review Stage: Design Development (Landscape)

Review Round: Three

Presenter(s): David Wex, Urban Capital Property Group; Andre Perrotte, Saucier + Perrotte Architectes; David Leinster, The Planning Partnership

Delegation: Paul Stevens, ZAS Architects; Mike Tocher, The Planning Partnership

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Derek Goring, Director of Development for Waterfront Toronto introduced the project. Mr. Goring noted that two of the blocks of the four-block development are being built on top of a flood protection landform (FPL), eliminating the feasibility of underground parking in those locations. Mr. Goring noted that the Eastern Avenue overpass also bisects the site, adding that this will be the future location for the underpass park. Mr. Goring then reviewed the Panel comments from November 2008, including: Support for the bridge as a unique exception to the City's policy, the need for further explanation of sustainability issues related to glazing and cladding, and the need for an integrated landscape strategy. Mr. Goring stated that the sales office is targeted to open in early 2010, with preview events being planned this month.

1.2 Project Presentation

David Wex, Partner with Urban Capital Property Group (UC), noted that the focus of the presentation will be to provide the Panel with an overview of the landscape strategy, as well as an update on the proposed minor variances from the Zoning Bylaw. Mr. Wex noted that the minor variances being sought are for angular planes instead of the step backs described in the zoning and block plans. Mr. Wex then introduced The Planning Partnership as the firm that will be leading the landscape design after the schematic design phase, transitioning from Stoss Landscape Urbanism. David Leinster, Partner with The Planning Partnership, provided an overview of the landscape strategy including the interface with the public realm and design for the courtyard. Andre Perrotte, Partner with Saucier + Perrotte Architects then presented the changes to the building since November 2008 including increased height underneath the proposed bridge connecting blocks 22 and 24.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member wondered what type of retail was being imagined. Mr. Perrotte stated that it had not yet been determined, adding that the challenging grades had created two smaller commercial spaces rather than the one large one originally contemplated.

Another Panel member asked if there was public access to the courtyard. Mr. Perrotte answered that there is still a debate surrounding this, but noted that there is currently a stair leading from the street to the courtyard.

Another Panel member wondered if there was a lighting strategy. Mr. Leinster stated that their intention was to keep the lighting levels lower - similar to a typical residential street, noting that there is added ambient lighting from the buildings themselves.

One Panel member wondered how garbage was being picked up. Mr. Perrotte answered that there is centralized loading, noting that it is a challenge to balance the needs of storage, bicycle parking, garbage and “type g” loading.

Another Panel member wondered what the materiality of the external cladding was. Mr. Perrotte stated that they were planning to use pigmented precast concrete panels with vegetation used to highlight the courtyard.

Another Panel member asked if the City of Toronto Planning staff were in support of the proposed variances. Mr. Wex replied that they are not writing a letter of objection to the proposal.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

Several Panel members appreciated the level of attention paid to the design of this project noting that it will be a positive addition to the neighbourhood. Several Panel members expressed their support for the proposed variances.

One Panel member felt that the “porch-like” condition described for the street related units would not provide an adequate level of privacy for the residents.

Another Panel member felt there was a very bald condition between the units and the interior courtyard, especially if the intention is that it will be publically accessible. Another Panel member

felt that the courtyard read as private and the ambiguity would not serve any purpose. Another Panel member agreed, feeling it should be made more explicit that the courtyard is not accessible to the public. Another Panel member felt that the pathway could be better integrated into the courtyard. Another Panel member stated that the pool and the floating edges were great, but felt that the pool seemed a bit under-scaled. Another Panel member felt that the proportion between the deck and pool should be studied further.

One Panel member felt that the ground floor elevations at the north and south woonerfs could be finessed and nuanced to feel more like the rest of the building, and less service oriented, adding that the garage and vegetation are not fitting in with how the rest of the block is read.

Another Panel member felt that there was an awkward tension between the angular plane and the projection of the balconies.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Strong overall support for the direction of the project
- 2) Fine tune the ground plane and interface with the public realm, including the materials and landscaping
- 3) Study the depth and relationship of the balconies to the facade
- 4) Study the interface of the units facing the courtyard to maximize privacy
- 5) Make it explicit that the roof is inaccessible to the public.

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Wex, Mr. Perrotte, and Mr. Leinster 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 in support of the landscape proposition and the minor variances proposed.

2.0 **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)

Review Stage: Conceptual Design

Review Round: Two

Presenter(s): Greg Smallenberg, Phillips Farevaag, Smallenberg (PFS)

Delegation:

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Carla Guerrero, Planning and Design Project Manager for Waterfront Toronto introduced the project noting that this is the second time it has come before the Panel at the Conceptual design phase as it did not receive support in September 2009. Ms. Guerrero stated that the underpass area is currently a derelict and underutilized space that once rehabilitated will knit together the West Don Lands neighbourhood north and south and is key to the success of the adjacent developments of TCHC and River City. Ms. Guerrero reminded the Panel that project is federally

funded so has a tight timeline to be completed for March 2011, adding that it has a \$3.5 million design to budget and a total budget of \$5 million. Ms. Guerrero noted that the design includes comments and suggestions for uses from all the surrounding users of this park site, adding that a formal artist selection process is underway to choose an artist to work with the team. Ms. Guerrero then reviewed the Panel comments from September 2009:

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

2.2 Project Presentation

Greg Smallenberg, Partner with Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg, provided an overview of the site context and analysis noting that the park will act as “urban patch” between Don River Park and the community. Mr. Smallenberg noted that the space is everyday but not incidental. Mr. Smallenberg highlighted features of the design including the climbing structures, trees, community gardens, and flexible community space. Mr. Smallenberg then presented a light/shadow study and precedents for design elements.

2.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member wondered about easements maintained for the underpass. Mr. Smallenberg stated that they need to keep areas clear for a bus ramp contemplated in an Environmental Assessment. Another Panel member wondered if any plantings could grow on the overpass structure. Mr. Smallenberg stated that the City of Toronto does not permit any plantings within three metres of the structure, adding that the most they are currently allowed to enhance the columns is with paint.

Another Panel member wondered if the pedestrian ramp is existing or proposed. Mr. Smallenberg stated that it is existing and being upgraded.

Another Panel member asked if the proposed noise-wall was to protect adjacent residents from “play” noise. Mr. Smallenberg stated that that was the intention, adding that they were not yet sure if it would be required.

One Panel member wondered what type of tree was being contemplated for the planting areas. Mr. Smallenberg stated that they are specifying *Robinias*, or Black Locusts, noting that they are native and have the added benefit of allowing ample light to come through.

Another Panel member asked if the public realm adjacent to the Habitat for Humanity development was contemplated for improvement. Mr. Smallenberg stated that that area was not in their purview and lies outside of the West Don Lands precinct.

2.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member commended the team for the research, studies and mapping of the site, noting that it has really helped to inform the project. Several Panel members stated that the scheme was a marked improvement, feeling that all the elements are in the right places. Another Panel

member felt that the project was really moving in the right direct direction, adding that the addition of public art will only enhance it.

One Panel member felt that the park was unrealistically over programmed, feeling that it could be edited still.

Another Panel member felt that some planting should extend beyond the boundary of the West Don Lands in front of the Habitat for Humanity project, feeling that it is an odd piece of suburbia in the middle of downtown that would greatly benefit from some trees.

One Panel member urged the team to continue the unit pavers from River Square, feeling that the connection to the surrounding spaces is an important element that will make it easy for people to navigate the space.

Another Panel member felt that flexibility would be a key attribute to the pavilion, adding that it could be a real destination and could respond to the seasons.

Another Panel member felt that the active elements of the park, including the climbing would be very popular. Another Panel member wondered if the bocce courts might be better suited to the more quiet areas of the park.

Another Panel member felt that the wood lot grove and its relationship to the onramps was a really provocative contrast, wondering if it could spread to encompass the climbing structure within it. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that there should be even more trees than currently proposed.

One Panel member stated that they were not yet convinced by the benches, feeling that they were perhaps too delicate in contrast to the hard nature of the site.

Another Panel member expressed concern over the curation and maintenance of the allotment gardens.

2.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Strong overall support from the Panel, great analysis
- 2) Keep in mind the north-south gateway function of the site
- 3) Temporary kiosks are great
- 4) Sensitivity to over-programming
- 5) Study the possibility of a stronger tree presence

2.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Smallenberg 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 in support of the project moving to the next phase.

CLOSING

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