



WATERFRONTToronto

**Waterfront Design Review Panel
Minutes of Meeting #49
Wednesday, April 13th, 2011**

Present:

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair
George Baird
Paul Bedford
Peter Busby
Peter Clewes
Claude Cormier
Brigitte Shim
Greg Smallerberg

Designees and Guests:

Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

Regrets:

Betsy Williamson
Jane Wolf

Recording Secretary:

Melissa Horwood

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the Panel and provided an overview of the agenda. The 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.

Don River Park

- Construction has resumed on the pavilion and landscaping

Underpass Park

- Construction has officially begun with excavation currently underway

The Chair asked the Panel if there were any questions or comments.

One Panel member stated that they have heard the rumblings that some of the waterfront land is being considered for other uses. The Panel member stated that they should take it seriously, and that the Panel should have a strategic discussion about this. The Panel member also stated that the Mayor has not been down to Waterfront Toronto nor has he met with John Campbell, the CEO of Waterfront Toronto to learn about what is going on.

The Chair spoke to what is being talked about in the media regarding waterfront development. The Chair stated that the Mayor wants to cut spending to fund subways.

One Panel member suggested that Waterfront Toronto offer constructive ideas on how to accelerate revenue generation for the City of Toronto. Mr. Glaisek stated that there are two concerns. First, the Waterfront Toronto approach is to invest public money to develop areas like the Lower Don Lands to get a return later, rather than starting with private sector investment. Second, the Mayor has been told the land is worth a lot of money in its current state despite the flood risk and soil contamination issues

Another Panel member asked how much of East Bayfront and West Don Lands is already committed. Mr. Glaisek stated that for East Bayfront, virtually everything south of Queens Quay is under contract, and most of the north side is privately held. Mr. Glaisek stated that ¾ of West Don Lands is taken up by Pan Am and River City.

Another Panel member asked if there is there a baseline to find out what the premium is; it builds a great city and creates value. Mr. Glaisek stated that there are a lot of other requirements for the area, such as LEED gold and affordable housing. There are social benefits we are expected to deliver on, not just financial ones.

One Panel member asked if there was a timeline for public transit along Queens Quay in East Bayfront, speculating that the value of the land may be decreased without it. Another Panel member stated that this issue was brought up a few meetings ago, noting that the demand will rise for public transit in that area yet there is no provision for it. The Panel member stated that they must find someone to discuss this issue with the Mayor.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Chair then asked if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Greg Smallenberg declared a conflict of interest with the West Don Lands Underpass Park Public Art presentation as he is the designer.

The Chair then moved to adopt the minutes from March 2011. The minutes were adopted.

There being no other comments, the Chair moved to the Project Review portion of the meeting.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 WDL Public Realm: Underpass Park Public Art

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: Paul Raff Studio

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Three

Presenter(s): Paul Raff, Paul Raff Studio

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek, Vice President of Planning and Design, introduced the project noting that it is the last scheduled review of the Public Art component of Underpass Park. Mr. Glaisek stated that Underpass Park is currently in construction on two of the three blocks. Mr. Glaisek stated that nothing can be permanently attached to the overpass structure but the team has developed a removable system that the City of Toronto is comfortable with. Mr. Glaisek also stated that the fabrication of the piece should begin soon.

1.2 Project Presentation

Paul Raff, Principal with Paul Raff Studio, presented the art piece and thanked the Panel for the ability to have a discussion about art. Mr. Raff stated that three things have changed about the project since it last came to the Panel; the City of Toronto maintenance department has approved the design, any one panel can be removed, if necessary, and the size and weight of the panels has decreased. Mr. Raff also stated that the design is within compliance of the FLAP standards for migratory birds.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked for more information on pigeons. Mr. Raff stated that research shows that any surface with a slope of less than 60° will not deter pigeons. He also stated that there are already a lot of opportunities for pigeon roosting in the area and this will be no more a problem area than any other. Mr. Raff stated that the artwork will be installed without any specific pigeon deterrents but steel tabs will be placed on the edges of the piece to accommodate future pigeon deterrent provisions such as mesh, should they prove necessary.

One Panel member asked if there was any consideration put forth regarding the angle of the mirrors, as this may help to deter pigeons. Mr. Raff stated angling the mirrors does not fit the concept. He also stated that the artwork may become too close to the ground if it is angled. The Panel member also asked for clarification on how the tabs work in relation to the possible mesh netting used as a deterrent. Mr. Raff stated that the tabs allow for the attachment of the mesh, exactly as you see on the underside of bridges but sloping inward. The mesh would be very difficult to see from the ground and that it would be part of the maintenance of the piece.

One Panel member asked if there was any concern about wind and uplift on the piece. Mr. Raff stated that the entire piece is connected to each other, so it would have to move all together.

One Panel member asked Mr. Raff if he knew of any precedence where mirrors are placed under bridges. Mr. Raff stated that he was not aware of any.

Another Panel member asked if there are any other ways to deter pigeons. Mr. Raff stated that yes, there are lots of other ways to deter pigeons and that they have been seeking the simplest way. Mr. Raff stated that they believe in the shadowed conditions that visually, the netting is going to be a non-issue.

Another Panel member asked if any consideration went towards using electricity to deter the pigeons. Mr. Raff stated that the art piece will be equipped with an isolator, should the need for electricity occur in the future.

One Panel member asked how the piece will be maintained. Mr. Raff stated that the art department at the City of Toronto is not worried about the piece, as highly reflective surfaces are relatively easy to maintain. Mr. Raff stated that there is a department at the City of Toronto who maintains all artwork for the city. Mr. Raff also stated that the Underpass Park is being equipped with power and water for the area.

Another Panel member asked what the material of the piece will be. Mr. Raff stated that the piece will be mirror-polished steel. Mr. Raff also stated that there may be some condensation that occurs in the morning, but that he believes it will add to the beauty of the piece.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that the project must have pigeon deterrence, as the artwork will be ruined by pigeon droppings. Many Panel members stated they thought the easiest way to deal with the pigeons was the mild electrical current. One Panel member stated that the solution to the pigeons must be imbedded in the piece itself, as there is never more money available for the project than at the time it is commissioned.

One Panel member stated that the project is very innovative and somewhat of a risk, but a great place to start. The Panel member also stated that the piece will open people's eyes to potential of the underpass structure. Another Panel member stated that, by simplifying the project from the last presentation, it has gained power. The Panel member also stated that the project was very beautiful. Another Panel member stated that they did not feel inclined to hold up the project any more.

One Panel member stated that they really like the project, especially the floating quality it has. The Panel member stated that they were concerned that the proposed netting would take away from the appearance of the piece. The Panel member suggested that the artist look at other alternative solutions.

One Panel member stated that Underpass Park is a very important link between the waterfront and the rest of the city. The Panel member stated it is an invitation to the waterfront and the park must ensure it is an inviting threshold.

One Panel member stated that it is hard to achieve the level of flatness required for the project. The Panel member stated that, with enough time and effort, it can be achieved. The Panel member suggested that a mock-up of the design be built on the site, if possible.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Make sure the level of flatness required is achieved
- 2) Pursue pigeon protection now

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Raff thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Acting Chair then asked that Panel for a vote of support, conditional support or non-support for the project. The Panel voted unanimously in support of the project moving into implementation.

2.0 West Don Lands Development Proposal: River Square Neighbourhood

ID#: 1028

Project Type: Buildings/Structures

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

Proponent: Urban Capital Property Group

Architect/Designer: Saucier + Perrotte Architectes with ZAS Architects

Review Stage: Design Development

Review Round: Four

Presenter(s): Andre Perrotte, Saucier + Perrotte Architectes; David Leinster, The Planning Partnership

Delegation: Paul Stevens, ZAS Architects

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Derek Goring, Director of Development for Waterfront Toronto introduced the project. Mr. Goring noted that the project last came to the Panel in November 2009. Mr. Goring stated that the project is no longer on District Energy which has required a redesign. Mr. Goring also stated that this is the only project being built on top of the flood protection landform and therefore has no basement for mechanicals. Mr. Goring also stated that site plan approval is expected shortly.

2.2 Project Presentation

Andre Perrotte, Partner with Saucier + Perrotte Architectes, presented the changes to the building since November 2009 noting that the focus of the presentation will be to provide the Panel with an updated response to the flood protection landform. 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.

2.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked what the white material is in the renderings. Mr. Perrotte clarified that it is concrete.

Another Panel member asked what the effect is on the project from the flood protection landform. Mr. Perrotte stated that the quick answer would have been to lift everything, but they have spent months to take the ground floor and try to break it in to many terraced pieces. Mr. Perrotte stated that the ground floor of Block 3 is done this way. Mr. Perrotte stated that the lobby feels at grade while the loading area needs to be level, noting that they broke everything in to small plates as much as possible.

One Panel member asked what the Panel was here to approve. Mr. Kuabara stated that the adjustments related to the flood protection landform require approval.

One Panel member asked what is happening on the south elevation. Mr. Perrotte stated that there are trees lining the elevation, but it is also covered with vegetation. Mr. Leinster stated that green from the courtyard will spill over the side of the poured concrete and that planting is coming from below up with aggressive Boston Ivy.

One Panel member asked how the garage is being vented. Mr. Perrotte stated that louvers along the north woonerf will provide the ventilation required.

One Panel member asked what material was at the end of the building. Mr. Perrotte stated that it is poured concrete. The Panel member then asked why that material was chosen. Mr. Perrotte stated that concrete was the desired material choice.

One Panel member asked the Chair if the Panel was OK with the materials in previous presentations of this project. The Chair member stated that it was previously approved by the Panel although one Panel member stated that the heat island affect was of concern based on the use of black cladding.

One Panel member asked what the energy performance was for the building. Mr. Perrotte stated that the building does meet the Waterfront Toronto minimum green building standards.

The Panel member stated that there needs to be a discussion on how the Panel approves energy performance but that the discussion should happen outside of the Design Review Panel presentations.

One Panel member stated that they would like to see the energy model for the building, noting that a lot of buildings in North America that are “green” have high energy requirements. The Panel member also noted that when you submit for a permit in Berlin, for example, you must submit your energy numbers and, if they don’t work, the permit is denied. Another Panel member stated that there needs to be something in place to make sure that the energy model works. Mr. Glaisek stated that if the Panel would like to engage in that issue, proponents can be asked in advance to provide the types of information the panel wants.

Another Panel member asked what the depth of the bridge piece is. Mr. Perrotte stated that the bridge is tapered and varies between 5’ and 8’. The Panel member then asked what the soffit height is at the east side of the tower. Mr. Perrotte stated that it is 3.5 m.

One Panel member asked if the wall element that separates the private from the public is a low concrete wall that steps. Mr. Perrotte confirmed that yes, this is the case.

One Panel member asked if you are looking south from the woonerf, is the façade like the south façade? Mr. Perrotte stated that it is the same as the wrap of the green element coming down to grade. Mr. Perrotte stated that there is a planted section and the stair going up to the amenities space.

One Panel member asked if the shaping on the roof is done with a parapet. Mr. Perrotte confirmed that the roof is done with a parapet to conceal the mechanicals.

2.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that they were not concerned with the concrete walls on the north and south elevations. The Panel member did state that they were concerned about the poured concrete steps.

Many Panel members stated that they generally did not like feathering steps. One Panel member stated that by grouping all of the steps close together and using a retaining condition, a café would be able to use the outdoor space better.

One Panel member stated that they were concerned about the blank concrete walls on the north and south, nothing that the woonerf condition should be more pleasing and warm. The Panel member also stated that they were concerned the concrete walls would take away from the special quality of Underpass Park. The Panel member suggested that a more robust treatment be applied to the blank walls. Another Panel member stated that this is an amazing project that should celebrate the woonerfs more.

Many Panel members stated they were frustrated with the presentation of the project, as it is difficult to understand the drawings.

One Panel member stated that they would like ongoing monitoring of the MGBR to ensure the requirements are maintained. The Panel member stated that documenting the improvements will be a valuable resource to have.

One Panel member stated that the porches on River Street should be elevated, as it is preferable to have a veranda than a sunken space. The Panel member also stated that semi-private transitional space needs to be created.

One Panel member stated that it would be interesting to see if the roofs can be sloped. The Panel member also stated that the idea of a black building is powerful and suits the context. Another Panel member stated that the project was very compelling and beautiful.

One Panel member stated that the building is very strong and they support it, although some aspects of the building may be challenging. The Panel member stated that the concrete make sense, given the context of the building, but it needs to be exceptionally high quality to look good.

One Panel member stated that iconic architecture needs to be created in this project.

Another Panel member stated that there is a difficulty in the ability to read the drawings and that it is up to the presenters to create a presentation that can be understood. The Panel member also stated that it is frustrating not knowing where the context is in the drawings. Another Panel member wondered why a typical handrail detail was included in the presentation that does not relate to the aesthetic of River City at all. One Panel member stated that this presentation presented a combination of the worst and best images of a project.

One Panel member stated that the woonerfs will work well but sections through the street would be beneficial in understanding the relationship between public and private. The Panel member also stated that the end elevations for the woonerfs will become the litmus test to see if it should happen again in the future.

One Panel member stated that further developments of the concrete wall condition need to be addressed to ensure the woonerf is celebrated and works, especially in the winter.

One Panel member stated that understanding the sections between public and private is key to this project. This needs to be a successful story. We need to celebrate what is great about this project.

One Panel member stated that they loved the project when it was first presented and they still do. The Panel member stated they were not worried about the conditions at the ends of the building. The Panel member also stated that there is a strong street tree presence along the street and it may read better if the landscape of the green reads as a volume.

One Panel member stated that the most successful townhouses are the ones with elevated outdoor space. The Panel member stated that a lot of space is taken up by stairs when the outdoor space is sunken. Another Panel member stated that currently there is not a standard for townhouses in Toronto

One Panel member stated that the tip of the tower is convincing. The Panel member also stated that perhaps louvers on the south elevation would allow for more light and natural ventilation.

One Panel member stated that the project is so good that the designer should be concerned about these few important flaws identified today.

One Panel member stated that this project is too good to be considered “fine” at this stage. Another Panel member stated that they do not think the architects should be penalized for being too good.

One Panel member stated that there is a level of confidence that if Saucier and Perrotte are involved in the project, it will be great. The Panel member also stated that all of the issues are known to the Panel and that the Panel needs to decide if the project is good enough.

One Panel member stated that there is a lot of pressure on this project as it is the first one and because Toronto does not know what a woonerf is so this will set a precedent.

One Panel member stated that everyone understands the timelines and there is a lot of love for the project. The Panel member stated that there has to be a way to refine the issues with the project. The Panel member suggested that perhaps the project come back to the Design Review Panel, or that we trust in good faith that our comments will be addressed. The Panel member also suggested that the City of Toronto only give Site Plan Approval if the issues have been addressed.

One Panel member stated that the team is implicated in the act of making the city and that it is in the interest of the developer, Waterfront Toronto, and condo owners to make it right.

One Panel member stated that there is general approval for the project but there are 4 issues with respect for the edge conditions and the Panel should see the project one last time before final approval. All of the Panel members agreed with this. The Panel member also suggested that Mr. Kuwabara and Mr. Glaisek delegate a sub-committee for this project if tight timeframes require it.

One Panel member stated that, in the future, they would like be able to visit the building and love the entire thing, not just most of it.

2.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Review the courtyard landscape and detailing further
- 2) Create a more positive relationship with the woonerfs that sets a great precedent
- 3) Consider a different approach for the townhouse outdoor space
- 4) Modify the terraced stairs

2.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Perrotte thanked the Panel for their feedback.

2.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Chair then asked the Panel for a note of support, non-support or conditional support for the project. The Panel stated that, although they reaffirm their general support for the project, they would like to see the project one more time regarding the key issues stated prior to giving a final approval.

CLOSING

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