



**WATERFRONT**Toronto

## **Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #41 Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

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### **Present:**

Bruce Kuwabara, Chair  
George Baird  
Peter Clewes  
Claude Cormier  
Renee Daoust  
Siamak Hariri  
Janet Rosenberg  
Brigitte Shim  
Greg Smallenberg  
Betsy Williamson

### **Designees and Guests:**

John Campbell  
Christopher Glaisek  
Robert Freedman

### **Regrets:**

Paul Bedford  
Anne McIlroy

### **Recording Secretary:**

Margaret Goodfellow

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## **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed the Panel, wishing everyone a happy new year. The Chair then provided an overview of the agenda and invited Christopher Glaisek to provide his report.

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## **REPORT FROM THE VP PLANNING AND DESIGN**

Christopher Glaisek, Waterfront Toronto's Vice President for Planning and Design, provided a summary of project progress and preview of things to come in 2010.

### *Queens Quay Environmental Assessment*

- A "Notice of Completion" was issued for the Queens Quay Environmental Assessment on December 18<sup>th</sup> 2009.
- After Ministry of the Environment (MOE) Approval, Design Development will proceed on Phase One which will be Spadina to York Street

### *Water's Edge Promenade*

- The Water's Edge Promenade from Sugar Beach to Sherbourne Park is currently under construction to be completed for when the parks and Corus open this summer.

### *District Energy*

- A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued for an integrated design team to design a district energy plant within an existing heritage building at 153 Eastern Avenue. This plant will be completed and ready to serve the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's first building as well as the River City development.

#### *Gardiner Expressway Innovative Design Completion*

- Stemming from comments received by the Design Review Panel, an Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was issued on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Six teams will be shortlisted based on this RFQ to compete in the Innovated Design Competition.

#### *Central Waterfront Master Plan - Bridges*

- The latest Long Term Plan does not currently carry any budget to construct the bridges.

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

One Panel member asked if the Parkside development would be coming to the Design Review Panel. Mr. Glaisek stated that it would.

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## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

The Chair welcomed Claude Cormier to the Panel, noting that Mr. Cormier is Principle with Montreal based, and internationally esteemed firm Claude Cormier Architectes Paysagistes Inc.

The Chair then commended Waterfront Toronto on the number of projects currently under construction including; Sugar Beach, Sherbourne Park, George Brown College, and Corus, which will be complemented with the developments of Parkside and Bayside in the near future. The Chair added that projects are being completed here that are not seen anywhere else and thanked the Panel for being of great support to the overall vision.

The Chair asked the Panel if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. No conflicts were declared.

The Chair moved to adopt the minutes from December 2009. The minutes were then adopted.

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

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## **PROJECT REVIEWS**

### **1.0 Central Waterfront Development: York Quay Revitalization Phase II**

*ID#: 1032*

*Project Type: Building/Structure*

*Location: York Quay, located between Simcoe Street and York Street, south of Queens Quay*

*Proponent: Waterfront Toronto and Harbourfront Centre*

*Architect/Designer: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Landscape Architects (MVVA) with designer/artist James Carpenter, Beyer Blinder Belle Architects (BBB), Young & Wright Architects, GHK International and ARUP.*

*Review Stage: Conceptual Design*

*Review Round: One*

*Presenter(s): Gullivar Shepard, MVVA*

*Delegation: Nate Trevethan, MVVA*

#### **1.1 Introduction to the Issues**

Christopher Glaisek introduced the project noting that the York Quay Revitalization project is being completed in close partnership with Harbourfront Centre. Mr. Glaisek stated that the Federal government has dedicated \$25million towards the completion of an underground parking garage and “Canada Square”. In 2008, a feasibility study was completed which looked at the financial feasibility of replacing 3.5 acres of surface parking with a vibrant mixed-use urban park and cultural and retail cluster on top of a new underground parking garage – all viewed through the lens of the 2000 Harbourfront Centre master plan and 2006 Central Waterfront master plan. Mr. Glaisek stated this feasibility study formed the basis of the York Quay Revitalization project, of which Phase I (York and John Quay Promenades) had been completed. Mr. Glaisek stated that on December 7<sup>th</sup>, MVVA was hired as the successful proponent of an Request for Proposal (RFP) issued for Phase II, which includes the design of a 300 stall parking garage, Canada Square and planning work necessary to permit the future retail and cultural development, or Cultural Village.

### 1.2 Project Presentation

Gullivar Shepard, Senior Associate with MVVA, provided an overview of the project noting that it is fast-tracked for completion by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011. Mr. Shepard stated that they are striving to improve the experience users have when moving from the car to the city by linking the design of the surface landscape with that of the parking garage, adding that bringing sunlight and nature into the garage are critical to creating a beguiling urban experience. Mr. Shepard noted that they are designing to existing and future conditions including maintaining HFC’s operations, and accommodating the future design for Queens Quay and the cultural village, which will not be built in this phase.

### 1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked for clarification on what is paved, versus what is “urban square”. Mr. Shepard replied that there would be subtle clues in the landscape including bollards, noting that it was envisioned as one shared space.

Another Panel member asked where the design scope extended to. Mr. Shepard replied that it extends to the property line of Harbourfront Centre. Another Panel member asked if the design scope included the Queens Quay Terminal (QQT) driveway. Mr. Shepard replied that it did not, though they were conscious not to turn their back to their neighbours.

Another Panel member asked if an underground connection to QQT had been contemplated. Mr. Shepard replied that they would not rule it out, but that it would likely be cost prohibitive unless paid for by the Queens Quay terminal buildings. Mr. Shepard added that there are no below grade connections contemplated for any of the Harbourfront Centre buildings either.

Another Panel member asked if there was a way to access the site from the QQT driveway intersection. Mr. Glaisek stated that it is private property, noting that the Queens Quay Environmental Assessment established the Simcoe Street intersection as the main entrance to the Harbourfront Centre site.

One Panel member asked what the extent of the project was now. Mr. Shepard answered that the parking garage is the critical piece to start now while the overall planning and design work for the site is progressing.

### 1.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

Several Panel members commended the design team for their thorough, articulate presentation of the parking garage. One Panel member stated that it was an interesting way to tackle the project, noting that way-finding and safety in parking garages is important.

One Panel member wondered if the design of the parking garage had been overthought in the absence of the larger idea on the design of the public space. Another Panel member wondered how far the team should go in striving to make parking in a garage a great experience. Another Panel member wondered if the approach should be to make a more neutral parking garage. Another Panel member appreciated the consideration given to making the usually banal experience of an underground parking garage into something more special, but felt that the Panel needed to see a great public space as this is such an important site in the Central Waterfront.

Another Panel member thought it was too early to present this concept, noting that the design team had been working for just three weeks. One Panel member felt that they were being asked to comment on the project in the absence of what the full picture of the project is. Another Panel member felt that the size of the aperture was too much of a determining force on the surface.

One Panel member noted that a pedestrian's first interface with the site is the garage ramp, feeling that in its current position and relationship with the pavilion, it blocks off the square. Another Panel member wondered if the ramp condition could be mitigated in a more simple way. Another Panel member felt that the elevated position of the pavilion set up an awkward relationship to the public space. One Panel member expressed discomfort that the orientation of the building was being driven by the angle of the garage ramp. Another Panel member felt that the Pavilion should have more of a relationship to Queens Quay.

Several Panel members felt the aperture to the parking garage disconnected the future cultural village buildings from the adjacent public space. One panel member questioned whether the size of the aperture needed to be that large in light of the dramatic impact on the public space above.

Several Panel members wondered if there was a way to combine the design of the aperture, the garage ramp, and the pavilion into one gesture. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that the complexity of the functional requirements should be normalized.

Another Panel member expressed discomfort with the structural grid of the parking garage dictating the grid above and wondered if a structural slab could be considered in order to create maximum flexibility for the future cultural village.

One Panel member expressed discomfort with the term "Cultural Village". One Panel member felt that the cultural village buildings should be pushed north on the site to have a presence on Queens Quay. Several panel members expressed the desire for more information on the nature of the cultural village to understand the context in which the public space will be.

Another Panel member felt that the purpose of the project should be to formalize the structure of the urban square, feeling that the design of the buildings should take on more of an explicit form and frame the space. Another Panel member wondered if there should be a more typical edge condition expressed on the urban square to delineate where traffic and pedestrians should occupy. Another Panel member disagreed, feeling that the designers should design the public space so that the school busses are guests.

Several Panel members questioned the rationale for the distribution of the budget which is currently configured to complete “Canada Square” at the southern end of the site, while the remainder of the site is left in an “interim” condition. Another Panel member agreed, feeling that “Canada Square” should be completed once the Queens Quay Terminal building is potentially on board as it seems like a missed opportunity. Another Panel member felt that the program given to the designers did not make sense, feeling that the urban square adjacent to Queens Quay should be finished first.

One Panel member felt that temporary versus permanent could be an interesting idea, adding that the designers could investigate ways to “project” the future build out of the site in advance of its construction.

One Panel member noted that the Power Plant gallery had always had an identity crisis because of its lack of ‘front door identity’, and urged the panel to consider the design of the public space to address both the Power Plant and Enwave theatre as they are currently lost in a sea of parking.

#### 1.5 Summary of the Panel’s Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) A concept for the landscape design is needed now
- 2) The design of the public space should drive the project, not the garage design
- 3) The aperture is far too large given the scale of the urban plaza
- 4) The built form needs a normative relationship to Queens Quay
- 5) Clarify the locations of the “fronts” and “backs” of the proposed buildings
- 6) The ramp needs to be concealed at the very beginning
- 7) The QQT laneway should be considered more than a service alley
- 8) Circulation needs to be rethought and improved
- 9) Show the final Queens Quay condition more clearly on all the drawings.

#### 1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Shepard thanked the Panel for their feedback.

#### 1.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Chair then asked the Panel for a vote of support or non-support for the project. The Panel voted not to support the project at this time and asked that it come back at the Conceptual Design phase.

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### **CLOSING**

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