



WATERFRONTToronto

Waterfront Design Review Panel Minutes of Meeting #54 Wednesday, December 14th, 2011

Present:

Paul Bedford, Acting Chair
George Baird
Peter Busby
Claude Cormier
Bridget Shim
Betsy Williamson

Regrets:

Bruce Kuwabara
Donald Schmitt
Jane Wolff

Recording Secretary:

Melissa Horwood

Designees and Guests:

John Campbell
Christopher Glaisek
Robert Freedman

WELCOME

Paul Bedford, welcomed the Panel, noting that Bruce Kuwabara has asked him to act as Chair for the month of December.

The Acting Chair then provided an overview of the agenda and invited John Campbell and Christopher Glaisek to provide their reports.

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

John Campbell, Waterfront Toronto's President and CEO, provided an update on the review of the Portlands. Mr. Campbell stated that the implementation plan and business plan were not completed initially, which has in part led to this new review process. Mr. Campbell stated that Waterfront Toronto is now working with a number of work streams including market sounding and development and that Waterfront Toronto is now looking at the Portlands as a whole, and not just the Lower Don Lands. Mr. Campbell informed the Panel that the interest is now a city-wide issue and has people engaged, including over 600 people at the public meeting on December 12, 2011.

One Panel member asked if a report would be developed from this work. Mr. Campbell stated that a report will come out in April 2012, after two or three rounds of consultation.

One Panel member expressed enthusiasm that areas such as North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke will be included in the consultation process.

One Panel member felt that it is a tribute to Waterfront Toronto that the public trusts what the corporation has to say. Mr. Campbell expressed gratitude, noting that public trust is one of the largest assets of the corporation and that Waterfront Toronto will not get away from its core values.

One Panel member noted the recently approved plans for removal of the Bonaventure Expressway in Montreal, stating that the funding is not yet in place, but there is a political will to get it done. Another Panel member stated that there is a study underway on the viaduct in Vancouver, noting that the City of Vancouver will be able to pay for the removal with the development proceeds from the surrounding land. The Panel members expressed hope that Toronto could stay committed to similarly big moves, such as the Lower Don Lands.

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

- The park is 90% completed on the dry side, but there is still work left to complete the wet side of the park, but the pavilion is 99% completed. The expected completion date for the wet side is Summer/Fall 2012

Underpass Park

- Play equipment has been installed and funding has been found for block 18

Storm Water Management Facility

- Tunnel construction is underway

York Quay

- Harbourfront Centre recently found funding for the landscaping of the project

Portland Slip

- Dockwall reconstruction is well underway and should provide for the granite mosaic promenade to be completed next year

One Panel member asked if the public can see Don River Park. Mr. Glaisek stated that the public can see the park from the Richmond Street overpass, but it is likely obscured by hoarding from surrounding streets.

Mr. Glaisek informed the Panel that Waterfront Toronto has met with all of the condos that are impacted by the Queens Quay revitalization and they have all agreed in principle to share the cost of extending the red granite on to private land to the building face or column line.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Acting Chair then asked if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Claude Cormier declared a conflict of interest with the Home Depot Lands. The Acting Chair declared a conflict of interest with the Go/Metrolinx Operational building, noting that George Baird would chair that agenda item.

The Acting Chair then moved to adopt the minutes from September and November 2011. The minutes were adopted with an amendment.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 PRV: 21 Lower Jarvis Street, GO/Metrolinx Operational Building

ID#: 1044

Project Type: Building Design

Location: 21 Lower Jarvis Street

Proponent: Metrolinx

Architect/Designer: Reinders + Rieder Ltd.

Review Stage: Concept Design

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Steve Law and Joel Rieder, Reinders + Rieder Ltd.

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Alex Teixeira, Planner, from City of Toronto introduced the project to the Design Review Panel, noting that the location of the project is east of Jarvis Street, between Lake Shore Boulevard and the train tracks. Mr. Teixeira stated that the City of Toronto is looking for feedback on the overall design of the facility, with particular attention given to how the building and site design can better address the street and surrounding public realm.

1.2 Project Presentation

Steve Law and Joel Rieder of Reinders + Rieder Ltd. presented the project to the Design Review Panel. Mr. Law stated that the location was selected due to its direct access to the tracks, the proximity to existing GO Transit facilities as well as the lower number of residents in the area. Mr. Rieder stated that construction is expected to commence in early 2012.

1.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked for an explanation for the need of abundant parking. Mr. Rieder stated that the parking will serve to store GO vehicles as well vehicles for TTR, a tenant that does maintenance. Mr. Law also stated that the facility will be open 24 hours a day and that parking needs to accommodate employees as well as visitors.

One Panel member asked for a clearer explanation of the fence surrounding the site. Mr. Rieder stated that an entrance gate will be on Jarvis Street and that it will surround the entire site. Mr. Rieder also stated that the fence will be industrial, black, galvanized, and high-end.

One Panel member asked why that site was selected. Mr. Rieder stated that the site was the only viable location that could fit the building. Mr. Rieder stated that a feasibility study was executed to establish the site to be the most appropriate.

Another Panel member asked where the bike path was, in relation to the building. Mr. Rieder stated that the bike path is located south of the retaining wall, along Lake Shore Boulevard.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

The Panel generally agreed that there were no major issues with the programmatic elements being proposed.

One Panel member felt that the building was poorly designed, noting that two levels of the building are void of daylight, the material choice is poor and the environmental goals of LEED silver are modest for a public building. The Panel member stated that not a lot of money has to be spent to have great architecture, noting that the unnecessary solar shading on the north side of the building is indicative of how little thought went into the building. The Panel member felt that the sidewalk and pedestrian routes along Jarvis Street are severely impacted by the driveway entrance.

Another Panel member felt that, although the site is a constrained one, there is still a lot of opportunity. The Panel member directed the proponents to look at the Storm Water Management Facility presented to the Design Review Panel by gh3 to see how a sculptural building can help to elevate an entire site. The Panel member stated that the fence and building read more like infrastructure as opposed to architecture.

One Panel member felt that the team has underestimated the opportunity of the site, noting that it is a difficult site, but also highly visible. The Panel member felt that the building had to be better contextualized. The Panel member suggested using the berm to see if there is a more elegant architectural solution. The Panel member also felt that the fence is a major component that needs to be addressed, noting that even a great fence will not fix the building.

Another Panel member stated that the railway embankments are the last places to be conceptualized within the realm of the city. The Panel member stated that Toronto is going through rapid intensification and the current way of thinking about these areas needs to change. The Panel member felt that, in relation to the public realm, the retaining wall and fence are the most important features. The Panel member also felt that the cladding would benefit from further consideration, along with the landscaping.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Improve the environmental aspects of the building
- 2) Bring architecture to a higher level
- 3) Study the building enclosure; develop a more unified design conception
- 4) Develop the landscape of the site

1.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Rieder and Mr. Law thanked the Panel for their feedback.

1.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

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

2.0 LDL Development Proposal: 3C (Home Depot Lands)

ID#: 1045

Project Type: Building/Structures

Location: South of the Gardiner Expressway to the water's edge, from the proposed Trinity Street extension to Cherry Street.

Proponent: 3C

Architect/Designer: Foster + Partners

Review Stage: Concept Design

Review Round: One

Presenter(s): Nigel Dancey, Foster + Partners and Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés Inc.

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Christopher Glaisek, Vice President of Planning & Design at Waterfront Toronto, introduced the project, noting that it is the first time the project has come to the Design Review Panel. Mr. Glaisek informed the Panel that this project is a joint venture between three developers. Mr. Glaisek stated that the original zoning plans allow for two towers with a minimum distance between the two and that the developers are looking for additional height and other changes to the Lower Don Lands Plan.

2.2 Project Presentation

Nigel Dancey, Foster + Partners and Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés Inc. presented the project to the Panel. Mr. Dancey discussed the high zoning, solar studies and architecture. Mr. Cormier presented the public realm and landscaping of the area.

2.3 Panel Questions

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

One Panel member asked who would pay for the connection under the railway. Peter Clewes, Architects Alliance, stated that they are currently in discussions with Dundee, a Distillery District developer, about sharing the cost, noting that they would not expect the railway to contribute financially.

Another Panel member asked if the main plaza was one or two spaces. Mr. Dancey stated that the plaza is meant to be read and programmed as one to tie the master plan together, like the example in Nimes, France that has been successful.

One Panel member asked where access to parking would be located. Mr. Clewes stated that there is a plan for one continuous underground parking structure with limited apertures on the street.

One Panel member asked for an explanation of the cantilevering over the street and sidewalk along the water's edge. Mr. Clewes stated that they are working with the same scale that Hines is working with in Bayside and that the overhang is to allow some protection as well as framing the space.

Another Panel member asked how tall the largest building is. Mr. Clewes stated that it is 50 stories. One Panel member asked where the office use is located. Mr. Dancey stated that they are currently studying the quantity and the location.

One Panel member asked for a description of the changes to the public realm. Mr. Clewes stated that they revised the plan to maximize the public space, daylighting and wind condition.

Another Panel member asked if the proposed Whisky Beach would be funded by the team. Mr. Clewes stated that some of the public spaces rely on coordination with the adjacent property owners, and that the intent is to fund the public spaces through the development of the properties.

One Panel member asked for a comparison in terms of space for the main plaza. Mr. Clewes stated that Dundas Square would be the best comparison.

Another Panel member asked if the team had yet to meet with the City of Toronto. Mr. Clewes stated that they have met with the City of Toronto and have generally had positive feedback. Mr. Clewes also stated that the client is appealing the existing zoning at the Ontario Municipal Board.

One Panel member wanted to know what the status of the silo site was. Alfredo Romano, Castlepoint Investments, stated that they are looking to repurpose them as the foundation for another building, or potentially use them for storage such as heating and cooling.

Another Panel member asked if there are plans for district energy. Mr. Dancey confirmed that they are looking into this option.

2.4 Panel Comments

The Chair then opened the meeting to Panel comments.

One Panel member stated that they strongly support the project, including the underpass from the Distillery District. Another Panel member felt that the connection will be hugely important in the success of the project.

Many Panel members stated that they are in support of putting vehicular access at the water's edge, noting that enabling vehicles to get to the buildings is hugely important. Another Panel member felt that vehicular use of the intermediate streets needs to be further developed.

One Panel member stated they support the main plaza having a street pass through it, noting that the plaza will be better because it has Queens Quay going through it. Another Panel member supported the plaza, noting that the graphic indicates that the square is one larger space but in reality it is two smaller squares.

Another Panel member felt that the plaza is the wrong move and that it is antithetical to the scheme. The Panel member felt that the project may not have the ability to support the plaza and the retail along the water in conjunction with all the many other "destinations" proposed in the plan.

One Panel member encouraged the proponents to engage West 8 and get their support and coordination for the design of the public realm. Another Panel member stated support of the overall public realm strategy.

One Panel member felt that the podiums on the north side of Queens Quay are not large enough, noting that they felt the tallest tower on the lowest plinths is a mistake. The Panel member felt that the podiums should not be less than 6 stories. Another Panel member felt that the density should be swapped from the largest tower back towards the podium levels of the other buildings. Another Panel member felt that the massing is problematic, noting that the distribution of mass and lower podiums need further work.

One Panel member felt that they should not develop a secondary network of streets at the upper level.

Another Panel member felt that the cultural building is better located on the north side of the street than the south side.

One Panel member felt that the terraced buildings look formulaic and that the forms should be more of the formal language of the rest of the site.

Another Panel member felt that the sand strip should be a harder promenade surface, noting that maintenance of the area could become a problem.

One Panel member did not feel as though the overhangs on the buildings at the water's edge were working. Other Panel members agreed, noting that the typology should be studied in a comprehensive manner across the waterfront.

One Panel member felt that it is important that the neighbourhoods proposed actually become neighbourhoods.

One Panel member stated that transit needs to be a priority right now, and that the team needs to discuss these issues now, and not later.

One Panel member felt that the proponents should come up with a hierarchy of retail spaces, noting that they felt the proponents are overly optimistic right now.

The Panel member felt that the north half of the plaza is viable for retail, but the south side is a bit harder to deal with, noting that it is in shadow.

One Panel member encouraged the proponents to consider ground related residential, like brownstones in New York City, on some of the less major streets or the waterfront.

One Panel member stated that they can see the potential of the upper level connections.

Another Panel member felt that the "shear line" between the parcel to the west looks like a connection between the parcels has not happened yet, noting that the north-south streets act as dividers. The Panel member felt that Waterfront Toronto has a role in insuring that the conversation takes place.

One Panel member felt that the Panel needs to better understand the view from the Gardiner Expressway, where hundreds of thousands of people pass every day, noting that it is a very public side.

2.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- 1) Strong support for both pedestrian and vehicular north-south connections
- 2) Strong support for the notion of a plaza, but needs further development/reconfiguration
- 3) Distribution of massing in relation to podiums need further development
- 4) Location of uses, connections above grade, cantilevering of buildings, sand versus hardscaping all need to be reconsidered
- 5) Transit needs to be addresses
- 6) Relationship to the property to the west and silos needs to be further developed

2.6 Proponents Response

Mr. Dancy and Mr. Cormier thanked the Panel for their feedback.

2.7 Vote of Support/Non-Support

No formal vote was taken. The Panel suggested that the team come back to the Panel before moving forward to the next stage.

CLOSING

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