



WATERFRONTToronto

**Waterfront Design Review Panel
Minutes of Meeting #86
Wednesday, November 18th, 2015**

Present:

Paul Bedford
Claude Cormier
George Baird
Betsy Williamson
Jane Wolff
Don Schmitt
Peter Busby
Brigitte Shim

Designees and Guests:

Christopher Glaisek
Harold Madi

Regrets:

Pat Hanson
Bruce Kuwabara

Recording Secretaries:

Tristan Simpson
Rei Tasaka

WELCOME

Paul Bedford opened the meeting noting that he has been asked by Bruce Kuwabara to act as Chair in his absence. The Acting Chair then provided an overview of the agenda before moving to the General Business portion of the meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The Acting Chair noted that minutes from the September and October meeting needed to be adopted. He requested the Panel members to adopt the minutes from September and October. The minutes were adopted.

The Acting Chair then asked if there were any conflicts of interest to declare. Don Schmitt noted that he might be in conflict with the Innovation Centre project as he was part of one of the teams that submitted a proposal. Mr. Campbell confirmed that this was potentially a conflict of interest as the contract with Menkes has yet not been executed so the proposal call is not technically closed. Mr. Schmitt dismissed himself from the meeting.

The Acting chair provided the Panel with an update on the “Under Gardiner” event on November 17th to announce the new \$25 million donation from a private benefactor to activate space beneath the Gardiner. Mr. Bedford noted that this project has an interesting potential to link the east and west portions of the land beneath the Gardiner. The scheduled completion date is July, 2017.

Mr. Bedford noted the the Gardiner East EA and Urban Design study is to be presented to the public in December. A Panel member asked if the cost of the Hybrid options come in high, whether the previous options will be revisited. Mr. Glaisek explained that the process is not intended to revisit earlier options such as Remove.

Mr. Bedford updated the Panel on the Island Airport runway extension, noting that the discussion of jets appears now to be a 'closed case'. This was confirmed by the local Member of Parliament, Adam Vaughan, however, studies are still ongoing.

The Acting Chair then invited Mr. Glaisek, Vice President of Planning and Design with Waterfront Toronto, to provide a report on project progress.

REPORT FROM THE V.P. OF PLANNING AND DESIGN

Mr. Glaisek presented the Panel with a series of construction photos at Ontario Place which showed that sub-surface works are fairly far advanced. He noted that construction of the landscape components would commence soon.

Mr. Glaisek also noted that the Corktown Common wet side is nearing completion now that the issues regarding the King Street bridge have been resolved.

Mr. Glaisek then gave a brief introduction to the new under Gardiner project noting that Waterfront Toronto will be project managing the project.

The Acting Chair then moved to the project reviews portion of the meeting.

PROJECT REVIEWS

1.0 EBF R3/R4 - Aquavista

ID#: 1054

Project Type: Building

Location: Bayside

Proponent: Hines/Tridel

Architect/Designer: Arquitectonica

Review Stage: Detailed Design

Review Round: four

Presenter(s): Alex Briseno, Craig McIntyre

Delegation: Salvatore Cavarretta, Michael Gross

1.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the project noting that this was their fourth time attending the Design Review Panel and the project has received Support throughout Design Development. The focus of this presentation was to discuss further refinements to the architecture, especially the south podium and artscape wall. Mr. Glaisek then welcomed Alex Briseno to give the presentation.

1.2 Project Presentation

Alex Briseno, Senior Associate with Arquitectonica, began the presentation by noting that they have begun pouring the first ground floor concrete slab.

Mr. Briseno then noted that he would walk through details starting from west elevation and work his way around the building. Details of each elevation were described along drawings and illustrations of the building facades and renderings:

- a) The west elevation showed the main entrance to the condominium and the Artscape entrance. Balconies are to be located at every bedroom to break up the pattern to create better texture to the façade. The main condo entrance uses a 'shadow box' detail above the vision glass with signage hidden behind the glass in a digital band. Canopies are located at primary entrances. The Artscape entrance, similar to the condo main entrance, will also have a canopy with cap-less mullions to maintain the rhythm of the storefront.
- b) The south elevation showed primary and secondary retail entrances with integrated signage banners. The exterior will be lit from the top to illuminate both signage and sidewalks. The corner storefront entrance is curved to mimic the ripple line of the façade above. In between retail entrances, there will be pergola overhangs. The storefront will have operable doors to enable the retail uses spill out to the street in good weather.
- c) The east elevation is treated differently from others due to its adjacency to Aitken Place Park. The secondary retail entrance is simplified in detail because the park is seen as the main feature of this façade. The secondary condominium entrance is the same detail as the main entrance.
- d) The north elevation has two condo entrances and a vehicular entrance with a gas meter alcove with louvres. The service bays are to be similar to that of Aqualina, however the details of the panel doors are still being worked through. The garage canopy will have a slot light to light up the entrance area.

Mr. Briseno then welcomed Craig McIntyre, Vice President of Provident to present the sustainability portion of the project. Mr. McIntyre gave the Panel an update on the targets and mandates for the building, which will be designed to achieve LEED Platinum. He also noted that the energy model is compliant with the MGBR checklist and presented the energy saving breakdown for the building including green roof and PV panel use.

1.3 Panel Questions

One of the Panel members asked what a regenerative elevator is. Mr. McIntyre replied that it is similar to a hybrid car, which recaptures energy while decelerating.

Another Panel member asked who the landscape architect was. Mr. Briseno replied that Janet Rosenberg is the landscape architect for this project.

1.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair asked the Panel for their comments.

One Panel member commented that the brick shown behind the lines of the balconies and glass, is beautiful. The Panel member also advised the proponents to take particular care in figuring out the flashing detail so that it does not have seams or ripples in the metal.

Another Panel member commended the proponents for a fantastic project and for a very comprehensive sustainability program and a beautifully detailed building. The Panel member raised the concern of the use of the baguettes at grade, as baguettes are brittle in cold weather can be broken easily by snow shovels.

One of the Panel members appreciated the gallery space and the design of the double-height balconies. The Panel member suggested being cautious with the execution of the glass balconies, as companies that supply the balcony glass are generally a different sub-trade from those who supply the envelope glass. It was noted that due to this, the glass balcony fronts in many projects do not look good. The Panel member also advised that the flashing should read comprehensively as it is a very visible element in the project.

Another Panel member was appreciative of the thinking of how air vents through the building. The question of the metal screen louvres was raised, whether this was intended to develop a screen with a volumetric component or as a clean façade. It was also noted that in some areas above the canopy the spandrels seemed small. It was advised that this area above the canopy should be simplified. The Panel member felt that the baguettes make the façade too complicated, and asked if the proponents can manage glare through an alternative approach such as the use of fritted glass.

Another Panel member was appreciative of the level of architectural detail and noted that the grocery store opening up on the south facade and to the street was a great addition. The Panel member suggested that as the project progresses, there should be a presentation or update on the landscape detail of the roof terrace by the landscape architects.

1.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel noting that he has heard very strong support:

- Sustainability efforts are excellent;
- Details of the flashing and spandrels are critical to the project;
- Baguettes require thorough consideration for winter conditions;
- Glass balconies should be carefully detailed;
- Follow up consultation with the Landscape Architect regarding details of the landscaped roof.

1.6 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Chair then asked for a vote of Support, Conditional Support or Non-support for the project. The Panel voted unanimously in Support of the project.

2.0 Waterfront Innovation Centre

ID#: 1068

Project Type: Building

Location: East Bayfront

Proponent: Menkes

Architect/Designer: Sweeny & Co Architects, Janet Rosenberg & Studio

Review Stage: Concept Design

Review Round: Two

Presenter(s): John Gillander

Delegation: Joel Pearlman, Sean Menkes,, Jude Tersigni

2.1 Introduction to the Issues

Mr. Glaisek introduced the project noting that this was their second time attending Design Review Panel after a vote of Non-support in October. The project is in the Schematic Design Phase and is being developed by Menkes with Sweeny & Co Architects. Mr. Glaisek explained that the design team underwent a design exercise to address the key issues raised and will present an update with hand sketches rather than a fully polished presentation.

Given that some of the Panel members were unable to attend the October meeting, Mr. Glaisek also gave a brief overview of the general concept, architectural components and program spaces. Mr. Glaisek also summarized the issues raised during the last presentation, which were:

- Lack of porosity of the ground floor;
- Encroachment of the stairs onto parkland;
- Design of the stairs creating a barrier rather than an inviting feature; and
- Architectural identity issues due to the similarity to Ryerson's Snoetta building.

Mr. Glaisek then introduced John Gillander of Sweeny & Co. Architects to give the presentation.

2.2 Project Presentation

Mr. Gillander began the presentation by stating that the team revisited the principal concerns that were brought up at the previous meeting. The team is looking to discuss direction and to gain approval on the main design elements of the building before moving forward with design details. Mr. Gillander noted that they are looking to resolve the issues as fast as possible in order to move forward with the project. Mr. Gillander provided a summary of the issues from the last meeting including: the building identity, confusion with the grand stair, confusion with the building entrance and its relationship to Sugar Beach and Queens Quay.

Mr. Gillander noted that the work is in a sketch form as the purpose was to discuss fundamental design elements. He then described changes made by the design team since the last meeting, including:

- Shifting the entrance from Dockside Drive to Queens Quay and creating a clear diagonal flow into the building;
- Reducing the exterior stairs and moving them to the south to become a secondary access without encroaching on to the park;
- Reducing the size of footprint of the bridge and creating a diagonal connection from Block One to Block Two; and
- Opening up the lower level at Dockside Drive and internalizing the stairs so they go directly into the atrium.

2.3 Panel Questions

One of the Panel members asked the height of the stairs and typical floor to floor ceiling height. Mr. Gillander noted that the stairs are 6 meters and floor to floor is typically 4 metres high, but the atrium height is 8 metres. The Panels member then asked Mr. Gillander to explain what is innovative about the design of the building. Mr. Gillander felt that their intention is to create spaces that people work in a unique way, and that the building is structurally innovative and creates a unique connection through the building. He concluded by noting that the building will be LEED Platinum. The Panel member then asked if there are any precedents on the waterfront of bridges that link buildings. The River City Phase One was raised as an example.

Another Panel member asked whether the two development blocks have to be connected. It was noted that Block One is very small, and its connectivity to Block 2 allows it to function better as a development block. The Panel member then asked what takes place in the main lobby. Mr. Gillander noted that the lobby is a flexible space that acts as a main circulation hub and lobby for the offices.

Another Panel member asked why the proponent chose only one entry to the office and how people approaching from the east will enter the building. Mr. Gillander felt that it was important to provide one principle entrance so that the two buildings are understood as one building. The Panel member asked what the program is for Block One. Mr. Gillander noted that the program has conference centres, retail and restaurant spaces. The panel member then asked what the height of the underside of the lobby is. It was noted that the lobby has 6 metres clearance from the underside.

The Acting Chair asked whether the building fits within the current zoning. Mr. Gillander noted that there will be a minor height variance in Block Two.

2.4 Panel Comments

The Acting Chair then asked the Panel for their comments.

One Panel member felt that the project is moving in the right direction with the bridge now smaller with deeper indent however, felt that it is still very large and could be further reduced as it does not seem to have a rationale for being a tall bridge. The Panel member also felt that the lobby at Richardson along Queen Quay could be larger. The Panel member would accept the bridge feature if it allows for the development on Block One which is important from an urban design perspective.

Another Panel member suggested that the building should be shown in a larger context. The Panel member felt that the entrance is better however, the east side of the block does not receive as much attention as the west side. The Panel member felt that the building still needs to make a bigger 'move' as it feels constrained and reads simply as a rectangular box without a strong connection to Corus to the south or to George Brown College to the east. The Panel member suggested that the elevated lobby could be moved to the 'roof' to the top floor, bringing people from the street to the top of the building to provide views to the lake and to the city. The Panel member was appreciative that the public realm is consistent with the Waterfront plan.

Another Panel member noted that the building layout does not seem to reflect the intent to be a place for innovation. Innovative tenants (such as tech companies, smaller start-up companies) want unusual places to work and meet, to have access to sunlight and outdoors, and an abundance of interconnected, informal spaces. The Panel member suggested that the "mixing space" program be distributed throughout the building volume and not cluster into one area, so that the program enables 'incubator' space that allows flexibility both externally and internally. He noted that there are leasing agents who deal with innovative tenants and suggested that the Proponent team could gain further insights from them. He noted the Emily Carr University in Vancouver as a good precedent. The Panel member also encouraged the bridge to be compressed to make a link at one level, not at each level. The Panel member concluded that the project does yet attain the high standard which Waterfront Toronto has set for design excellence, especially given the high profile of this site.

Another Panel member stressed the importance of identity on this site. The Panel member felt the project does not leverage this great opportunity with its north Queens Quay elevation which will become the 'face' of Toronto's Waterfront. The Panel member felt the blocks need to be more special and more sculptural.

Another Panel member felt that the bridge connection and the lobby sequence do not work in the revised scheme and the five-storey atrium lobby design is an outdated approach. The Panel member suggested that the circulation needs rethinking.

Another Panel member felt that Block One and Block Two have a strange unevenness. An entrance at the east side of Block Two was suggested. The Panel member also felt that the stairs are still not fully functional both programmatically and architecturally.

Another Panel member acknowledged that the project is on a constrained site, however felt that the building's program must reflect innovation and respond to being a landmark. The Panel member noted that in order to attract atypical tenants, innovative components should be introduced also on all levels. The Panel member felt that the mid-block connection from Queens Quay to the water is very important and this link should not be cut off. For the bridge, the Panel member commented that it must be stepped back from the building and ensure that it does not impede views towards the water but celebrate this link. The Panel member concluded that this building has an important responsibility to contribute positively to the public realm.

2.5 Summary of the Panel's Key Issues

The Acting Chair then summarized the recommendations of the Panel:

- Appreciate the sketch process and presentation;
- The reorientation of the large staircase is an improvement as it faces south towards the water and the sun, and does not encroach Sugar Beach's park space;
- The ground level is improved with the relocation of the stair, but it should be pushed further and consider the idea of bringing the park into the site;
- The current design still feels similar to the Ryerson building;
- The design requires a re-thinking to create a unique piece of architecture on this key waterfront site;
- Bridge connection requires technical study to explore its impacts to view corridors to the water;
- Need to demonstrate how the building can be all glass and still meet LEED goals; and
- Suggest team has a debrief meeting with Waterfront Toronto staff.

2.6 Vote of Support/Non-Support

The Chair then asked for a vote of Support, Conditional Support or Non-support for the project. The Panel voted in Non-Support with a strong encouragement to undertake a debrief meeting and a major re-thinking of the design.

CLOSING

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