

Designers float visions of waterfront to the public

OLIVER MOORE

MAY 13, 2006

Five finalists have been selected in a competition to improve public access to the waterfront, including creation of a continuous promenade from one end of the inner harbour to the other.

The chosen designs will be unveiled Monday evening at BCE Place, one of several public showings before a final decision is made. The winner will be selected May 31 and initial construction is projected to begin in the autumn.

"We are thrilled with the interest in Toronto's waterfront and the creativity and understanding the teams have shown for creating a bold and innovative waterfront identity," said Robert Fung, chairman of the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corp., which is driving the process.

"We want the people of Toronto to tell us what they think. It's their waterfront and this project is about providing them uninterrupted, beautifully designed access to it."

The designs that made the short list -- which include artificial islands and plans to bury the Gardiner Expressway -- were culled from several dozen concepts put forward by teams around the world.

Competitors were given the challenge of working with the water's edge across the entire downtown, from the western gap, the narrow channel adjacent to the City Centre Airport, to a spot at the east end of the harbour directly south of Parliament Street.

They were asked to meet various specific criteria, including:

- {bull} A continuous public promenade;
- {bull} The completion through this area of the now-disjointed Martin Goodman Trail;
- {bull} Improvements to Queens Quay Boulevard, the road along the waterfront;
- {bull} Consistency of construction materials, furniture, boardwalks and railings;
- {bull} A sustainable approach that includes habitat and water-quality improvements.

The five displays will be shown to the public at 6:30 Monday evening in the Allen Lambert Galleria at BCE Place.

They will be displayed there for two weeks and will also be shown at Harbourfront Centre, the Eaton Centre, Fairview Mall, Sherway Gardens and Scarborough Town Centre.

The winner will be chosen by a jury chaired by architect Brigitte Shim and including filmmaker Atom Egoyan, urban designer Ken Greenberg, designer Bruce Mau, landscape architect Claude Cormier and architect Lise Anne Couture.

Before rendering its decision, the jury will receive input from a community stakeholder committee, an advisory team from the City of Toronto, Harbourfront Centre and the Toronto Port Authority.

The final five

The search for a design vision for Toronto's central waterfront has been narrowed to five proposals. A panel of

judges will announce the winner May 31, with construction set to begin this fall.

TOD WILLIAMS BILLIE TSIEN ARCHITECTS (New York) and MARTINEZ LAPENA-TORRES ARCHITECTS (Barcelona)

The heads of Yonge, Spadina, Rees, Simcoe and Portland slips would get roof canopies that shelter streetcar commuters and passersby, forming urban plazas on the water. Tall walls would slide open in the summer months, extending the pavilion into the plaza. In winter months and on windy days, the walls could close, turning the pavilions into self-sufficient microclimates.

Radical idea: The "green edge of Toronto" -- a new island. Made up of a landfill, anchored floating platforms, docks and "floating biomass," the large island would be reached by pedestrian bridges and watercraft. It would contain new marinas for sailboats, small powerboats, kayaks and canoes, and a low-rise, mixed-use development. Along the southern edge, the island would be given over to nature.

FOSTER AND PARTNERS (London) and ATELIER DREISEITL (Uberlingen, Germany)

Aiming to "bring the city to the water and the water back into the city," this design promises to pull the character of different downtown zones -- leisure, business, retail etc. -- toward the water, creating neighbourhoods at the lake's edge. Features would include stepped timber decks on the major slips, narrow waterways and pedestrian paths from the water into the city and, at Portland slip, an enormous aquatic complex with swimming, sauna and spa areas.

Radical idea: The Toronto Lanterns -- sculptural buildings housing "cultural, educational, leisure and commercial facilities" would be at the end of narrow piers extending from the Spadina, Rees and York slips. Also, it would include a scheme for burying the Gardiner in stages.

STAN ALLEN ARCHITECT (Princeton, N.J.) and SARAH WHITING AND RON WITTE ARCHITECTS (Princeton, N.J.)

The head of slips (Portland slip shown) would be home to "culture buoys" that provide a branch venue for city cultural and educational institutions as well as smaller cultural groups or for special events. A second phase would extend from these buoys, south to the water and north toward downtown, building new "places to stop, see, snack, play, buy, listen and learn."

Radical idea: West Island Forest would follow along the Western Channel with canoe storage, dog run, fishing pier, bird habitat and bar/cafe.

SNOHETTA (Oslo, Norway), SASAKI ASSOCIATES (New York), nARCHITECTS (New York), WEISZ + YOES ARCHITECTURE (New York), H3 (New York), BALMORI ASSOCIATES (New York) and HALCROW YOLLES HPA (New York)

Another design emphasizing connections between the downtown proper and the waterfront, this concept for "Toronto's new front porch" includes a huge skating rink extending into the harbour south of the Westin Harbour Castle (York slip). Also included would be public swimming facilities and public spaces framed by "water walls" that become ice walls in winter.

Radical idea: A long narrow gangway would extend out from the foot of Yonge Street, ending at a soaring narrow tower.

WEST 8 (Rotterdam) and DU TOIT ALLSOPP HILLIER (Toronto)

A paved promenade and a double row of maple trees would run along the waterfront beside a boardwalk and floating docks with douglas fir decking (area east of Spadina slip shown). Timber pedestrian bridges would span

the Yonge (shown), Spadina, Rees, Simcoe and Portland slips.

Radical idea: A floating island shaped like a maple leaf would be created with a boardwalk surrounding a water-lily floating wetland. Also, the ferry terminal would be moved to the foot of Yonge Street to anchor a new market area.

Accessing Your Pay-Per-View Articles

This article is available for you through the Member Centre 30 days after it was ordered. Look for “Designers float visions of waterfront to the public” listed within your Member Centre’s Pay-Per-View article archive.

You may also print this article using the **Print this article** link on this page, or through the printing option found within your Web browser.

© Copyright 2008 CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.

CTVglobemedia

globeandmail.com and The Globe and Mail are divisions of CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc., 444 Front St. W.,
Toronto, ON Canada M5V 2S9
Phillip Crawley, Publisher