



Meeting Summary July 13, 2016

Attendance

Panel Members:

Hank Alinger, Chair
Don Taylor, Vice Chair
Phil Engelke
Bob Gorman
Sujit Mishra
Julie Wilson

DPZ Staff:

Valdis Lazdins, Randy Clay, George Saliba, Yvette Zhou

Columbia Lakefront Bell Tower– #16-12

Owner/Developer: Columbia Association
Architect & Planner: Muse Architects, PC
Civil Engineer/Landscape Architect: DS Thaler & Associates, Inc.

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Chair Hank Alinger opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, calling for introductions of the panel, staff and project team.

2. Review Columbia Lakefront Bell Tower #16-12

Mr. Dennis Matthey, Director of Open Space & Facility Services for the Columbia Association, introduced the project by showing a video about the history of the bell tower. Columbia's lakefront bell tower was an original feature of Town Center's outdoor community space located at the end of the Lake Kittamaqundi pier. The carillon bells were installed after its construction in celebration of Columbia's 10th birthday. The tower was dismantled in 2010 due to deteriorated and unsafe conditions. The site plan proposes to relocate the bell tower at the water's edge of the terrace area between the fountain plaza and pavilion terrace. Proposed site improvements introduce lawn panels, a walkway, seating, plantings, and ADA access to the dock and lakefront plaza areas. The project schedule proposes to complete the bell tower and site improvements by summer of 2017 in time for Columbia's 50th anniversary celebration.

Mr. Bill Kirwan, Principal of Muse Architects, presented the details of the new bell tower location. Mr. Kirwan referred to the Downtown Wide Design Guidelines (chapters 4 & 6) stating the space is a symbolic gathering area with a culturally and historically significant landscape and features. The proposed revitalization includes updating and expanding amenities to encourage greater activity and use. Mr. Kirwan also noted the proposed accessibility and sustainability improvements of the project. According to Mr. Kirwan and Mr. Matthey, the step terrace was determined to be an optimal location for the new bell tower due to the prominence of the site, proximity to the Rouse brothers' statue, good visibility from multiple vantage points, and integration with the geometric pattern of surrounding hardscapes and architectural features. The proposed improvements would reduce impervious paving by remove existing concrete and replacing with lawn panels. Three existing trees will be removed and replaced with six flowering trees.

Existing ADA access is limited but a new walkway from the existing ramp will extend ADA access to the pier.

The tower's architecture recalls the timber elements of the original tower but will utilize contemporary steel instead of wood. There are 18 inch "C" channels bundled in pairs to form the four corners of the tower. It will sit on a new 24x24 foot brick base and the tower will have a height of 52 feet. The tower can be topped with 4 flag poles. The new tower will have 16 bells (2 more than the original) giving an ideal tonal range (4 tiers of 4 bells each). The bells will be controlled by a digital automated system for preprogrammed rings or manual rings by musicians during special events. The design includes optional ground mounted LED lights as well as LED lights on the structure as potential added design features.

Mr. Alinger directed staff to present their comments on the project. Mr. Randy Clay, DPZ stated that the proposed site improvements introduce lawn panels, walkway and plantings and include ADA access to the dock and lakefront plaza areas – enhancements which are consistent with the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines. Slides of the bell tower were presented for additional context to identify how the tower had evolved before being dismantled. DPZ recommended the DAP discuss and further consider the amenity improvements as proposed.

Mr. Alinger asked the applicant how the location was selected and if the original location at the end of the pier was evaluated. Mr. Matthey stated that using the original site at the end of the pier would cause environmental disturbance to the lake and be more costly.

DAP member Bob Gorman asked if new pilings were put in during the recent building of the pier. Mr. Matthey stated they were the original pilings. Mr. Gorman inquired about the two year dredging project at Lake Kittamaquidi. Mr. Matthey said without dredging, the lake would have turned into a wetland or swamp. Mr. Gorman questioned what environmental issues there would be by using the original location of the bell tower considering all of the construction that has recently occurred in and around the lake. Mr. Matthey suggested that the issues would be more disturbance to the lake, the difficulty in obtaining permits, and unknown factors such as the size of the original foundation. Mr. Gorman asked if new pilings could be drilled in or around the existing foundation to support the bell tower. Mr. Matthey did not think this was feasible due to cost and schedule considerations regarding Columbia's 50th anniversary.

Mr. Al Edwards, Director of Construction for the Columbia Association, stated the original bell tower was built in the 1960's when there were no wetland regulations and it would be difficult to obtain a permit to work around the existing foundation. Mr. Gorman stated the original location should be grandfathered-in since it's a historical element. He also stated the proposed location will clutter other features and points of interest on the site. Mr. Gorman stated that it is important to complete the project the right way regardless of the timing of the 50th Columbia anniversary.

DAP member Phil Engelke stated if the tower were in its original location, the lighting at night would illuminate out in the water with reflections rather than having it cluttered in the midst of other surrounding buildings. Mr. Engelke commented that the tower would also appear larger and have more presence at the original location rather than the proposed.

DAP member Sujit Mishra stated moving the tower away from its original location is not in keeping with principals of preservation. Mr. Mishra added that the tower will have its own identity and will not compete with modern surrounding buildings or the plaza's many horizontal lines if it's restored back in its original location.

DAP member Julie Wilson stated the new tower has a natural feel that blends in with the surrounding trees but installing it in the proposed location will compete with other buildings. Ms. Wilson noted that the new tower would be visibly imposing as compared to the old tower that sat on the lake as a "little gem."

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor noted while he liked the terrace location, the ADA access, the plaza for people to sit, and view the tower, its location should be the focal point when looking from the top parking lot down

to the water. The original location allows the tower to be a folly in the distance and helps orient the view. Mr. Taylor reiterated the tower's importance to the history of the community.

Mr. Engelke noted the original tower location was in alignment with the top plaza steps from the parking lot but the proposed location would throw the balance off. Its visibility would also be lost by tucking it into the cove.

Mr. Alinger stated the pier had so much more significance with the tower on it and suggested the proposed location might be better for the stage located on the fountain plaza.

Mr. Matthey, from the Columbia Association, explained that the funding for the project was driven, in part, by the desire to have the project completed in time for Columbia's 50th anniversary celebration in the summer of 2017. Mr. Matthey noted the Columbia Association's Board suggested locating the tower across the lake at the Kennedy Gardens. Mr. Gorman said the location would be better than the current proposed location but not as optimal as the original location at the end of the pier.

DAP members discussed the potential Kennedy Garden location before unanimously agreeing that everything possible should be done to locate the bell tower in the original location at the end of the pier.

Ms. Wilson asked how the lightning design was studied. The architect stated a lighting designer came up with the design, including the in-ground locations and color options coordinating with music.

The DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Board for consideration during its project review.

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

1. "The tower design is fine but every effort should be made to re-explore its location with a preference for the end of the pier." Seconded by DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

2. "The flags be incorporated into the tower design. They're part of the historic tower and they should not be optional." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

DAP member Sujit Mishra made the following motion:

3. "Include lighting design as part of the overall design, not as optional but a main design feature. It would be great to see its nighttime effects in the rendering as well." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

4. "Consider eliminating the double row of trees; it does not add anything and blocks views of the water, especially if they're flowering trees that will never get high." Seconded by DAP Chair Hank Alinger.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

3. Other Business:

DAP Chair Hank Alinger voted to accept the amendments to the DAP Rules of Procedures. Seconded by DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

4. Call to Adjourn

DAP Chair Hank Alinger adjourned the meeting at 8:19 pm.