



West Don Lands Backgrounder

History

Historically, the West Don Lands were part of the Old Town of York, established by John Graves Simcoe in 1793, and used as public open space until the 1830s when housing and industry replaced the parkland. Until recently, soil contamination and risk of flooding were significant issues in preventing the largely derelict brownfield site from transforming into a successful downtown neighbourhood like the ones Toronto is so well known for. The provincial government took title of the West Don Lands in 1996. In 2001, the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto established Waterfront Toronto to oversee and lead the renewal of Toronto's waterfront including the West Don Lands.

Waterfront Toronto

West Don Lands development is a tri-government and interagency collaboration led by Waterfront Toronto in collaboration with the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) and Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA). Waterfront Toronto's vision for the West Don Lands is the creation of a showcase, modern, sustainable neighbourhood led by planning principles which embrace design excellence and sustainable development. It will also include innovations in pedestrian streets and streetscapes including new approaches to the integration of public art.

The development will be characterized by:

- 6,000 new residences, including 1,200 units of affordable housing
- 25% of community to be parks and public space including the seven-hectare Don River Park
- New public transit within a five-minute walk of all homes
- Two childcare centres
- Community centre
- Elementary school

Community

The West Don Lands are surrounded by several established communities. The area is within walking distance of downtown, next to the Distillery District and has strong connections to the St. Lawrence and Corktown neighbourhoods. Waterfront Toronto has engaged community members in the design and implementation of the West Don Lands precinct plan and in supporting the objectives of high quality design, leading sustainability standards and securing affordable housing as an integral part of the new neighbourhood.

Pedestrian-Oriented Streets

Waterfront Toronto, with support from the City of Toronto, has been developing an innovative design for pedestrian streets within the West Don Lands. These pedestrian-oriented streets introduce a new street typology for the City which erases the boundary between sidewalk and street, to provide a common public space shared by pedestrians, cyclists and low-speed motor vehicles.

Public Art Strategy

The West Don Lands Public Art Strategy was created as part of a multidisciplinary public realm design plan for the new West Don Lands community. The Strategy presents a comprehensive vision and framework for the integration of public artworks throughout the West Don Lands that includes recommendations for the conceptualizing, planning, commissioning and implementing of a diverse range of art opportunities that will greatly enrich the community.

Flood Protection

Flood protection for the West Don Lands, and a significant part of the downtown, will be provided by widening the Don River and by constructing a low-lying berm, which will become the seven-hectare Don River Park, which will be the cornerstone of the West Don Lands.

Don River Bridge Extension and Bala Underpass

As part of the West Don Lands flood protection, Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) has extended the CN Kingston Bridge to widen the Don River. In addition to the bridge extension, TRCA has also constructed a pedestrian underpass that will link the new West Don Lands community to the existing trail system along the Don River and the waterfront.

Soil and Groundwater Remediation

ORC, in cooperation with Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto, is in the process of finalizing a Risk Assessment/Risk Management Plan for soils and groundwater management in the West Don Lands. This work includes analyzing existing soil data, collecting new data and developing strategies to manage the risk of contaminants.

Sustainable Development

Waterfront revitalization will position the city as a leader in creating sustainable communities. Waterfront Toronto is targeting **LEED®** (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) **Gold** as a standard for waterfront development. LEED is an international third-party building assessment and certification tool that is administered in Canada by the Canada Green Building Council.

District Energy

Waterfront Toronto is developing a district energy system to provide heating and cooling to new waterfront neighbourhoods. This efficient thermal energy alternative will reduce construction and operational costs and reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions. Steven Holl Architects has been selected to design the District Energy Centre in the West Don Lands.

Public Transit

The West Don Lands will be serviced by a new transit line. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and Waterfront Toronto have undertaken an Environmental Assessment for public transit. Construction is scheduled to start in 2009 and will be complete in 2010.

Affordable Housing

The West Don Lands precinct plan calls for 25% of residential units to be affordable housing, including both affordable ownership and affordable rental housing. Phase one development will have approximately 1000 residential units, including 850 market ownership and 150 affordable units. The affordable housing built in phase one will be developed by Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC).

Phase I Development (River Square Neighbourhood)

The first phase of West Don Lands development includes flood protection work, Don River Park and the development of the River Square Neighbourhood. The River Square Neighbourhood is generally bounded by King Street to the north, the future Don River Park and re-aligned Bayview Avenue to the east, the future River Square to the south and St. Lawrence Street to the west.

Timelines

The revitalization of West Don Lands will proceed over the next 10-12 years in four phases. The sales launch for Phase One is expected for January 2009, with construction scheduled to begin in 2010, and first phase occupancy in 2011.

Costs

Overall West Don Lands development – estimated \$2 billion over 10-12 years, including:

- Approximately \$250 million public investment in infrastructure, including parks, flood protection and municipal services
- \$1.75 billion private sector investment in residential and commercial development

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