



WEST DON LANDS BACKGROUNDER

The West Don Lands will be one of Toronto's next great neighbourhoods - a community that is people focused, family friendly, beautifully designed and environmentally sustainable.

Encompassing a 32 hectare (80 acre) area north and east of the Distillery District that runs from Parliament Street in the west to the Don River in the east, and from King Street south to the rail corridor, the West Don Lands is being transformed from former industrial lands into a mixed-use riverside community. The neighbourhood has already received Stage 1 LEED ND GOLD (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighbourhood Development) certification under the pilot program established by the U.S. Green Building Council.

It will feature 6,000 new residential units, ample space for employment and commercial uses, public transit within a five minute walk of homes and businesses, at least one elementary school and two child-care centres.

Development of the area is being accelerated because it is the site of the 2015 Pan American Games Athletes' Village. Waterfront Toronto originally planned to build the community out over 10 to 12 years in three phases, now more than half of the West Don Lands will be completed for the Games in June 2015. Following the Games, the Athletes' Village will be converted into a range of housing options.

Largely owned by the Provincial Government, the West Don Lands occupies a unique site at the original mouth of the Don River. While the river has been channelized and the shoreline has shifted south, the essence of the site remains a low-lying river delta.

The area is a challenging brownfield site in the flood plain of the Don River, and requires site remediation and flood protection before any development can occur. Since 2007 the Ontario Realty Corporation, on behalf of Waterfront Toronto, has been constructing the area's massive flood protection landform which, when fully completed in 2011, will protect a 99 hectare (245 acre) area, including Toronto's financial district, from flooding.

Parks and Public Spaces

The West Don Lands will feature more than 10 hectares (25 acres) of parks and public spaces.

The dynamic 7.3 hectare (18 acre) Don River Park, which is being built atop the flood protection landform, will be the centrepiece of the community and a destination for the entire city.

Underpass Park, located under and around the Eastern Avenue and Richmond/Adelaide overpasses, will be the most extensive park to ever be built under an overpass in Canada, and the first ever in Toronto. Underpass Park will transform the derelict and underused space under the overpasses into a bright, new, urban neighbourhood amenity with key pedestrian connections and passageways. Site demolition is complete and construction is slated to start in fall 2010. It is scheduled to open in mid 2011.

Unique Features

The West Don Lands will feature a number of striking design elements, and the area will be a stunning mixture of old and new. The five historic buildings on the West Don Lands site, located on Eastern Avenue and on Cherry and Trinity streets, are being preserved and will be adaptively reused and incorporated in new developments.

A new and innovative street design, called woonerfs or living streets, will be used for some of the area's local streets. Woonerfs are pedestrian-oriented streets that erase the boundary between sidewalk and street, and provide a common public space shared by pedestrians, cyclists and low-speed motor vehicles. While they are commonly found in Europe and elsewhere, the West Don Lands will be the first place they will be used in Toronto.

Waterfront Toronto has also developed a Public Art Strategy for the West Don Lands, the first community-scale, comprehensive, art master plan in Canada. Art will be displayed throughout the area's parks and open spaces, creating an outdoor public gallery to provoke, delight and entertain residents and visitors.

The West Don Lands will be a transit oriented community with transit available within five minutes of residences and businesses. The new Cherry Street streetcar line will run on its own right-of-way between King Street and the rail corridor, and will eventually connect to the new streetcar line on Queens Quay Boulevard.

Development

The River City development in the West Don Lands is Waterfront Toronto's first private sector development project. Developed by Urban Capital, the \$250 million to \$300 million project will include more than 900 loft-styled condominium and townhouse units as well as boutiques, stores and restaurants. Designed by Saucier + Perrotte Architects and ZAS Architects, River City will be a LEED Gold carbon-neutral development in keeping with Waterfront Toronto's sustainability objectives. It will be built in the area that runs from King Street in the north, to the new Don River Park in the south, and from the extension of River Street in the west to Bayview Avenue in the east. River City's sales centre opened in spring 2010 and its initial sales launch was hugely successful. Construction is slated to begin in spring 2011 and the first phase of occupancy is planned for 2013.

The West Don Lands will feature a range of housing options for people at all stages of life and income levels, including 1,200 affordable housing units. Toronto Community Housing is developing the first affordable housing complex in the area. The three building development at the corners of King and St. Lawrence streets is being built to LEED Gold standards. The complex will offer affordable housing for seniors and families. Construction of the 243-unit development designed by Baird Sampson Neurt Architects started in spring 2010 and occupancy is expected in early 2012.

Awards

2004: Public Sector Quality Award for Public Consultation.

2005: Award of Excellence as part of the City of Toronto's Architecture and Urban Design Awards.

2010: BILD Best Building Design – High Rise (Urban Capital Property Group, River City)

Quick facts

Boundaries:

From Parliament Street to the Don River, King Street to the Rail corridor

Size:

- 32 hectares (80 acres)
- 6,000 new residential units
- 10 hectares (25 acres) of parks and public space, including the 7 hectare (18 acre) Don River Park
- Proximity: 15 minute walk to downtown, next to the Distillery District

Design teams:

- Precinct Plan and Block Plans: Urban Design Associates and DTAH
- Public Realm and Urban Design Teams: The Planning Partnership, Phillips Farevaag Smallerberg & Co Architects
- Public Art Consultant: Jill Anholt
- Heritage consultants: ERA Architects
- Don River Park: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates
- Engineering Consultants: RV Anderson Associates Limited and MMM Group