



TORONTO STAFF REPORT

May 16, 2006

To: Planning and Transportation Committee

From: Fareed Amin, Deputy City Manager

Subject: Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Initiative
Addendum to the West Don Lands Class Environmental Assessment Master Plan:
River Street Extension and Bayview-River Unnamed Road Connection
(Toronto Centre-Rosedale)

Purpose:

To summarize the findings and recommendation of the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation's Addendum to West Don Lands Class Environmental Assessment Master Plan: River Street Extension and Bayview-River Unnamed Road Connection and to seek authority to file the Addendum Report in the public record.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no immediate financial implications resulting from approval of recommendations contained in this report. The City's share of costs associated with revitalizing the West Don Lands is included in the Council-approved Five Year Business Plan/Ten Year Financial Forecast for the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Initiative and subject to the annual budget process. City staff will report on operating cost impacts related to the Five Year Business Plan/Ten Year Financial Forecast in early 2007.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact statement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation be authorized to file the Addendum to the West Don Lands Class Environmental Assessment Master Plan: River Street Extension and Bayview-River Unnamed Road Connection in the public record in

accordance with the amending procedure documented in the approved West Don Lands Class EA Master Plan;

- (2) authority be granted to install traffic control signals at the intersection of River Street and King Street East and at the southerly intersection of River Street and Bayview Avenue, coincident with the construction of the extension of River Street;
- (3) this report be submitted to the Policy and Finance Committee for information; and
- (4) the appropriate City Officials be authorized to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

At its meeting on May 17, 18 and 19, 2005 City Council adopted, as amended, Clause No. 1 of Report No. 5 of the Policy and Finance Committee, entitled “West Don Lands Precinct Plan and Environmental Assessment Master Plan”, and, in so doing, required that further alternative designs be evaluated, and environmental assessment requirements be confirmed, for the River Street Extension.

Comments:

The West Don Lands EA Master Plan is a long-range infrastructure plan that addresses water, sanitary, stormwater, and transportation infrastructure needed to support the West Don Lands area as it is revitalized. The Master Plan was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (the Class EA). It is possible to obtain approval for individual projects using the master plan process under the Class EA provided all of the Class EA requirements applicable to the individual projects are satisfied and documented in the master plan.

The River Street Extension project falls under Schedule “B” of the Class EA. Schedule “B” projects may produce some adverse environmental effects and are required to undergo a screening process, which involves the first two phases of the Class EA process. The first two phases are:

- Phase 1 - Identification of the Problem or Opportunity; and
- Phase 2 - Identification and Evaluation of Alternative Solutions.

The work required to satisfy these two phases has been carried out and documented in the attached Addendum Report in accordance with the amending procedure in the approved West Don Lands Class EA Master Plan.

If City Council endorses this addendum, a Notice of Completion will be issued and the Addendum Report will be filed in the public record for a minimum of 30 days. During this period, members of the public, interest groups or government agencies that have concerns with the project recommendations may request that a Part II Order be issued by the Minister of

Environment. If a Part II Order is granted, the project cannot proceed until the proponent completes an Individual Environmental Assessment Study and receives approval from the Minister. If a Part II Order is not granted or if no requests or objections are received during the filing period, the project is approved under the Environmental Assessment Act and may proceed.

A brief description of the recommended plan for the River Street Extension and the process followed to develop this plan are provided in the following sections.

Phase 1 – Identification of the Problem or Opportunity

The key issue associated with any of the infrastructure identified in the West Don Lands Class EA Master Plan is the need to support the redevelopment of the West Don Lands Precinct as a component of the overall goal of revitalizing Toronto's waterfront communities. Beyond the basic requirement of providing a reasonably spaced road network to provide access to future development sites, issues of connectivity, safety and capacity must be addressed for all modes of travel.

Currently River Street extends northerly from a T intersection with King Street East. The intersection of River Street and Queen Street East is located approximately 50 metres north of King Street East and is controlled by traffic signals. Between these closely spaced intersections, an unnamed, east-west road forms a T intersection on the east side of River Street. This unnamed road provides two-way travel between River Street and Bayview Avenue and has been called the Bayview-River Connection for the purposes of this study. The Study Area for the River Street Extension, bounded by River Street, Gerrard Street East, Bayview Avenue, and Eastern Avenue, is depicted in Figure No. 1.1 of the Addendum Report.

An evaluation of existing and projected future conditions was undertaken to determine the road infrastructure needed in the vicinity of River Street to support the development objectives for the West Don Lands. The conclusions of this evaluation are briefly summarized below:

- the development of the lands south of King Street East between St. Lawrence Street and Bayview Avenue would be enhanced by the introduction of a new City road that would allow the creation of smaller development blocks. This new road could distribute traffic to these development blocks, rather than providing multiple access points on King Street East which would be more disruptive to streetcar operations;
- one of the priority transportation problems with the West Don Lands is a lack of north-south connectivity. Only Parliament Street and Bayview Avenue provide significant north-south access for the West Don Lands, but Bayview Avenue is largely a grade-separated facility offering little connectivity to major east-west routes. An extension of River Street into the West Don Lands would provide north-south connectivity to the major east-west routes between King Street East and Gerrard Street East;
- the increased connectivity that would be provided by an extension of River Street into the West Don Lands would improve public safety for the future residents by improving the accessibility for emergency services to the immediately adjacent developments and to the West Don Lands as a whole; and

- providing an extension of the existing bicycle lanes on River Street would improve bicycle network connectivity into the West Don Lands.

The full details on the evaluation of existing and future conditions can be found in Chapter Nos. 2 and 3 of the Addendum Report.

Phase 2 – Identification and Evaluation of Alternative Solutions

Based on the main issues to be addressed that were identified in Phase 1, it was concluded that a reasonable range of alternative solutions should be developed for a new link for vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian use. Given the basic need to address north-south connectivity for the West Don Lands area, all roadway alternatives connect directly to River Street at its intersection with King Street East. Four alternative solutions were examined as described below and in Chapter No. 4 of the Addendum Report.

Alternative 1: Do Nothing

The Do Nothing alternative is required to be assessed in the Class EA process as a benchmark to compare the other alternatives. This alternative retains the existing street network outside of the West Don Lands and includes the street network within the West Don Lands as identified in the approved Class EA Master Plan.

Alternative 2: River Street Extension and River Square

This alternative was shown in the West Don Lands Class EA Master Plan. It includes a southerly extension of River Street which meets Eastern Avenue to form a square which intersects Bayview Avenue at two T intersections. A park would be located in the square.

Alternative 3: River Street T Intersection with Bayview Avenue

This alternative extends River Street southerly to a T intersection with Bayview Avenue. Eastern Avenue meets River Street at a T intersection west of Bayview Avenue.

Alternative 4: Eastern Avenue T Intersection with Bayview Avenue

This alternative extends River Street southerly to a T intersection with Eastern Avenue, west of Bayview Avenue. Eastern Avenue continues easterly to intersect Bayview Avenue at a T intersection.

Each of these alternatives was evaluated using detailed indicators within the following broad categories:

- Transportation Service;
- Natural Environment;
- Socio-Economic Environment;
- Opportunities for Revitalization; and

- Feasibility and Costs.

These broad criteria and the more detailed indicators are based on those used in the West Don Lands Class EA Master Plan. The results of the evaluation are described in detail in Chapter No. 6 of the Addendum Report and are briefly summarized below:

- the Do Nothing alternative could not resolve any of the accessibility or connectivity issues identified, despite the inclusion of other new roads identified in the Master Plan;
- from a traffic operations perspective, Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 would all be satisfactory if traffic control signals are installed at the intersections of River Street with King Street East and with Bayview Avenue. The one exception, which is true with all alternatives, is poor operations at the intersection of River Street and the Bayview-River Connection;
- there are no significant differences between Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 in terms of the Natural and Socio-economic environmental impacts; and
- Alternative 2 is more consistent with the urban design objectives of the West Don Lands Precinct Plan, and therefore would better support the redevelopment concepts envisioned therein.

Based on the results of this evaluation, Alternative 2: River Street Extension and River Square was chosen as the preferred alternative solution.

Bayview-River Connection

The Bayview-River Connection provides vehicular access between Bayview Avenue and River Street. It has one traffic lane in each direction, is stop controlled at Bayview Avenue and yield controlled at River Street. Old Brewery Lane extends northerly from a T intersection with the Bayview-River Connection located between River Street and Bayview Avenue. Old Brewery Lane also connects to River Street north of Queen Street East, and serves as an access for the Townhouses of Old Brewery Lane, the Toronto Humane Society located at 11 River Street, and as a loading access for the Watt International Building located at 300 Bayview Avenue.

Analysis of future traffic conditions showed that the intersection of River Street and the Bayview-River Connection will experience significant traffic delays and congestion during the morning peak period. Although the traffic analysis also showed the intersections of River Street with Queen Street East and King Street East would operate satisfactorily, these intersections are very closely spaced (approximately 50 metres apart). If the River Street/Bayview-River Connection intersection is experiencing congested conditions, operations at Queen Street East and King Street East will be disrupted. With over 600 westbound vehicles using the Bayview-River Connection in the morning peak hour, it is also a concern that traffic operations on Bayview Avenue could be disrupted due to the short distance between River Street and Bayview Avenue.

In addition to these concerns, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) has advised that the Bayview-River Connection will be impacted by the flood protection landform planned under the Class EA for the Lower Don River West Remedial Flood Protection Project. This project received EA approval in October 2005, and is a pre-requisite to the redevelopment

of the West Don Lands. Although specific approval was not obtained for a closure of the Bayview-River Connection, the Class EA Report did indicate that it would be necessary to place fill on the Bayview-River Connection road allowance as this is the northern tie-off point for the flood protection landform. TRCA has now advised that the detailed design process currently underway has determined that the amount of fill required would result in insufficient vertical clearance where the Connection passes under the King Street East bridge structure. Therefore, a closure of the Bayview-River Connection, or some portion thereof, would be required.

To address these issues, an evaluation was conducted on the following four alternative solutions:

- Do Nothing;
- Closure of the Connection between Bayview Avenue and Old Brewery Lane;
- Closure of the Connection between River Street and Old Brewery Lane; and
- Closure of the Connection between River Street and Bayview Avenue.

The full details on the results of the evaluation are provided in Chapter No. 7 of the Addendum Report and are briefly summarized below:

- the access function the Bayview-River Connection provides is important to the users of Old Brewery Lane and should be maintained as much as possible;
- the current function of the Bayview-River Connection as a route between Bayview Avenue and River Street can be satisfactorily replaced by the extension of River Street from King Street East to Bayview Avenue;
- the satisfactory performance of the flood protection landform requires that it connect to the south-east corner of the River Street and Queen Street East intersection; and
- there is no improvement to the performance of the flood protection landform if the entire Bayview-River Connection were closed.

Based on the results of this evaluation, the closure of the Bayview-River Connection between River Street and Old Brewery Lane was chosen as the preferred alternative. A separate staff report will be submitted shortly recommending the closure of this section of the Bayview-River Connection, in accordance with the provisions of the Class EA and Municipal Act.

Public Consultation

As with the West Don Lands Class EA Master Plan, public consultation for the addendum study was undertaken by the TWRC. A full description of the public consultation undertaken is provided in Chapter No. 9 of the Addendum Report and is briefly summarized below.

Notification of the addendum study was provided via advertisements in the Toronto Star on March 22 and 29, 2006 as well as by the distribution of approximately 6,000 flyers to residents and businesses in the area bounded by Shuter Street, the Don River, Lake Shore Boulevard and Parliament Street. The findings and recommendations of the addendum study were presented at a TWRC West Don Lands Stakeholder Group meeting on March 21, 2006 and at a meeting of

the West Don Lands Committee (a community coalition of approximately 30 residents) on March 30, 2006. Individual meetings were also held with representatives of the Toronto Humane Society and Watt International.

The majority of the comments provided by interested stakeholders centred around the potential impacts of the closure of the Bayview-River Connection. The concerns raised included:

- loss of access to Old Brewery Lane;
- loss of the connection between River Street and Bayview Avenue;
- increases in traffic on River Street north of Gerrard Street East due to traffic redistribution; and
- increases in traffic on Old Brewery Lane due to traffic redistribution.

The evaluation of future operating conditions has concluded that the southerly extension of River Street from King Street East to Bayview Avenue can satisfactorily replace the function of the Bayview-River Connection as a distributor of traffic between River Street and Bayview Avenue. Similarly, although a more circuitous route than today, it will be feasible to access Old Brewery Lane by proceeding south on the River Street Extension to Bayview Avenue and north on Bayview Avenue to the Bayview-River Connection. While it is possible that motorists will divert to River Street north of Gerrard Street East or to Old Brewery Lane due to the closure, the predicted level-of-service on the River Street Extension would make it a more desirable, as well as more direct, alternate route.

Design of the Preferred Alternative

The design of the Preferred Alternative for the River Street Extension and the Bayview-River Connection is shown on the attached Figure No. 1 as well as on the River Street Extension Functional Plan in the Addendum Report. The design includes the following main features:

- an extension of River Street southerly from King Street East to connect with Eastern Avenue and Bayview Avenue, forming a square around a future local park;
- the realignment of River Street between Queen Street East and King Street East such that River Street intersects King Street East at a right angle;
- the closure of the Bayview-River Connection between River Street and Old Brewery Lane; and
- the provision of traffic control signals at the intersections of River Street with King Street East and with Bayview Avenue.

A typical River Street cross section includes a two-lane roadway, dedicated bicycle lanes, and a parking lay-by on the east side of the street. Northbound left-turn lanes will also be provided at the intersections of River Street with Queen Street East and with King Street East.

Conclusions:

A study was undertaken to prepare an addendum to the West Don Lands Class EA Master Plan to develop and evaluate alternative designs for the River Street Extension and the Bayview-River

Unnamed Road Connection. Following the procedures for environmental planning in the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment and the amending procedure for the Master Plan, a Preferred Alternative (Attachment No. 1) was selected which includes the extension of River Street southerly from King Street East to Bayview Avenue and the closure of the Bayview-River Connection between River Street and Old Brewery Lane. The full details on the process followed are provided in the Addendum Report prepared by the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation, copies of which are available the offices of the City Clerk and the Waterfront Secretariat.

In accordance with the requirements of the Class EA and the amending procedures for the Master Plan, a Notice of Completion must now be issued and the Addendum Report filed in the public record for a minimum 30-day review period.

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List of Attachments:

Figure No. 1: Preferred Alternative for River Street Extension & Bayview-River Connection

Figure No. 1 - Preferred Alternative for River Street Extension & Bayview-River Connection

