

# **TORONTO** STAFF REPORT

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May 30, 2006

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District

Subject: Liberty Village Area Study  
06-115757 STE 14 TM  
Ward 14 - Parkdale-High Park

Purpose:

To study and provide recommendations about a comprehensive plan for the Liberty Village Area, with particular attention to transportation and parking issues. The Liberty Village Area Study includes the lands bounded by Atlantic Avenue, Dufferin Street, King Street West and the rail corridor.

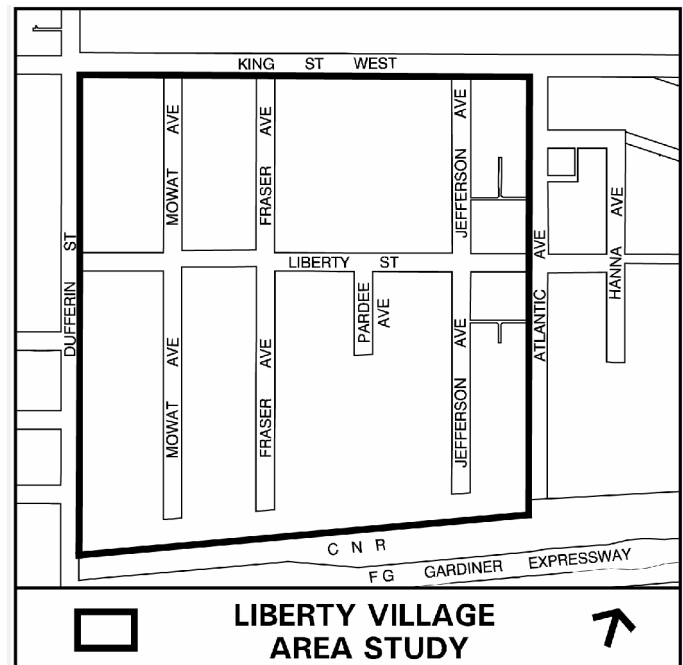
Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that City Council:

- (1) adopt the directions set out in this report to guide future planning for the Liberty Village Area in order to:
  - protect the area for Employment Uses;
  - delete live/work permissions with the exception of “artists live work space”;
  - retain the existing height limit of 28 metres; and
  - amend the permitted density limit of 1.5X for commercial uses to 3.0X to match the



existing permission of 3.0X for industrial uses.

- (2) direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, Planning Division to prepare Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments for the Liberty Village Area to implement the direction outlined in this report and that the Zoning By-law be brought back to Council in the first quarter of 2007;
- (3) direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, Planning Division, in consultation with the Toronto Parking Authority and Transportation Services, to conduct a detailed parking analysis of Liberty Village Area and to make recommendations on maintaining an adequate supply of parking to serve local businesses and visitors to the area;
- (4) request the Toronto Transit Corporation (TTC) to report back on potential service improvements in the area;
- (5) direct the General Manager of Transportation Services, in consultation with the Waterfront Secretariat, other City departments and the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (TWRC), to report on the implementation of a local road from Dufferin Street to Strachan Avenue, as shown in the Front Street Extension Environmental Assessment including the cost of construction and any necessary property requirements, before the 2007 Capital Budget is finalized and the alternative of an independent Environmental Assessment for the local road only;
- (6) direct the Director of Transportation Services to undertake improvements to the operations of the intersection of Liberty and Dufferin Streets, and to identify replacement parking for any loss of boulevard or street parking as a result of these improvements;
- (7) request the Director of Heritage Preservation Services to work with the community on initiating a Heritage Conservation District;
- (8) direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, Planning Division, to develop Urban Design Guidelines for the area to accompany amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning for the area; and
- (9) direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, Planning Division, to take any other actions necessary to implement the directions outlined in this report.

Background:

Liberty Village Area Study

In June 2005, Council approved a motion to carry out an area study for the Liberty Village Area bounded by Atlantic Avenue, Dufferin Street, King Street and the rail corridor. The study was to:

- provide direction for future development in the area;

- review the parking supply;
- review the mix of land uses in the area;
- review the transportation network in the area including a new local street along the north limit of the rail corridor;
- review the adequacy of public transit services to the area; and
- initiate a Heritage Conservation District Study for the area.

The study was to be carried out in consultation with the Liberty Village BIA and the Ward Councillor.

Comments:

Liberty Village

Liberty Village is a significant employment area in the former City of Toronto and is located to the west and within close proximity of the downtown core. Exhibition Place is located south of Liberty Village and to the west is Parkdale. The lands to the north and east of Liberty Village are being redeveloped for mainly residential uses, with a significant number of live/work units being built to the east.

From its previous life as an industrial area, Liberty Village contains a mixture of historical commercial and manufacturing buildings that were built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Today, Liberty Village is transforming into a “creative class” employment centre that is built on the significant number of historic industrial buildings, providing a distinct character. Businesses in Liberty Village are able to take advantage of being close to downtown, yet they also have the advantage of being in a “community” quite different from an office tower in the downtown core. Liberty Village is close to downtown, yet is separate, which adds to its attraction for creative businesses who favour the area’s campus feeling.

The area is one of Toronto’s fastest growing employment districts containing businesses related to design, communications, software development, television, film and the internet. Between 1995 and 2003, the number of employees increased by 30% from 3,346 to 4,356 people.

Official Plan

Liberty Village is designated as “Employment Areas” on the Land Use Plan in the new City of Toronto Official Plan and is designated as “Employment Districts” on the Urban Structure Map 2. The City’s policy is that “Employment Districts shown on Map 2 will be protected and promoted exclusively for economic activity”. Effective March 1, 2005, the Provincial Policy Statement was revised with stronger legislation and policy direction so that lands that are designated as Employment Districts will be protected by the municipality and also by the Ontario Municipal Board.

Employment areas are places of business and economic activity with permitted uses that include: offices, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, research and development facilities, utilities, media facilities, parks, hotels, ancillary retail, restaurants and small scale stores and services that serve area businesses and workers.

### Garrison Common North Secondary Plan

Liberty Village is part of the Garrison Common North Secondary Plan and is identified as an area where existing economic sectors will be reinforced, new economic activities will be encouraged and also that the environment be conducive to future economic growth.

The Garrison Common North Secondary Plan was originally the Garrison Common North Part II Plan that was part of the City of Toronto's Official Plan, and was brought forward into the new Official Plan as a secondary plan. The Garrison Common North Secondary Plan carried forward a live/work permission in Liberty Village, stating that "No residential use other than live/work units will be permitted".

### Zoning

The zoning for Liberty Village is designated as IC D3 N1.5. This is an industrial commercial designation that allows a total of 3 times density of which 1.5 times the area of the lot can be commercial uses. The full 3 times coverage can be used for industrial uses. The permitted height is 28 metres.

Due to an Exception 298 of the Zoning By-law, uses listed under "RETAIL AND SERVICE SHOPS", with some exceptions, are not permitted in Liberty Village. There is also Exception 393 to the Zoning By-law that allows up to 7 times density for a building housing solely industrial uses, where no Industrial Commercial (IC) uses, such as offices, are permitted.

An artist live/work studio is permitted in the IC zoning. An artist live work studio is defined in the Zoning By-law as:

"means a suite consisting of a combination of a studio area used for the production of art and a living area containing not more than one *habitable room*; which the *owner* of the *lot* agrees with The *Corporation* pursuant to Section 5 of the City of Toronto Act, 1975 (No. 2), as amended from time to time, to provide for the purpose of a social housing program; (4250-3)."

Alan A. Lamport Stadium Park is designated as G, which is a parks designation.

### Community Consultations

A staff working group was formed with representatives from parks, engineering, heritage, TTC, transportation, urban design, capital improvements and planning. The working group met with the Liberty Village BIA on December 1, 2005 and went on a tour of the area. The group toured businesses and buildings to get a better understanding of the types of businesses and

organizations in the area and the related issues. Following the tour, the staff working group met regularly to analyze various issues and to test ideas for improvement.

The first Liberty Village community consultation was a workshop that took place on Wednesday, March 22, 2006 and was well attended by approximately 50 people, including some residents from the adjacent Parkdale community. A presentation was made at the workshop by the working group to identify the issues that are part of the study and to discuss what the working group had examined so far. There was a question and answer session and then the session broke out into four workshop groups. Each group then made a presentation of their discussions to the whole group.

The following issues were discussed:

- Discussion about the retail and service uses prohibition. There was general support for allowing retail and service uses in the area. Some groups emphasized that they did not want retail chains or big-box stores.
- There were mixed opinions regarding the potential to allow residential uses in Liberty Village.
- Parking and traffic are considered major problems in the area.
- The community likes the qualities of the neighbourhood including the artist/independent feeling, the campus environment, the industrial heritage architecture, the proximity to downtown and to the lake and the vibrancy of the neighbourhood.
- The community dislikes the dead ends, truck traffic, overcrowded transit, lack of parking, lack of retail, traffic congestion at Liberty and Dufferin, Lamport Stadium's poor condition and lack of amenity, and the unimproved streetscape.
- The group generally agreed that Lamport Stadium needed to be improved, but there was some debate on whether it should be used as a park or redeveloped with parking, small retail and commercial uses along King and as a soccer field or hockey rink.
- Priorities for improvements include: more trees, improved transit, more attractive streetscape, a local road to the north of the rail corridor to complete the road network, maintaining a human scale (low to mid-rise buildings), allowing stores and restaurants, green roofs, mid-block connections and more parking.

The group ended with a discussion about "what we would like our kids to see" at Liberty Village in the future and considered ideas such as energy conservation and thinking about how the area can continue to be special and unique.

A second community consultation session took place on Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 where staff presented directions for land use, transportation and urban design improvements. The draft recommendations were generally well-received. There was, however, a discussion regarding

allowing live/work uses in the area with some members of the community supporting it and others not. There was also discussion regarding the potential permitted density.

### Recommended Directions for the Liberty Village Area

The vision for Liberty Village is that it will be protected and supported as an employment area. Liberty Village will continue to be a leading location for new technology employment where policies will be followed regarding encouraging employment uses and improving the transportation network.

Improvements are recommended to the street network with the priority being to implement a local road at the southern edge of Liberty Village. Improvements are also recommended for the transit network with bus service along Liberty Street.

### Land Use/Zoning

#### Live/Work

The Garrison Common North Secondary Plan states that “No residential uses other than live/work units will be permitted”. It is Planning staff’s position that artist live/work studios, as defined by the Zoning By-law, should be permitted. Artists live work studios are, by definition, affordable units that must include work space. On the other hand, live/work spaces, are defined in the Zoning By-law as “residential” uses where employment use is also permitted. The City’s experience has been that a significant number of these live work units are used solely as residential units with no employment function. Enforcement of the “work” element of these units would be a very complicated and time consuming task for the City. To protect Liberty Village as an employment area and to prevent the encroachment of residential uses, Planning staff are recommending the elimination of live/work permissions west of Hanna Avenue. There are existing permissions for live/work buildings east of Hanna Avenue that will supply a significant amount of live/work space within close proximity to Liberty Village and these permissions will feed future demands for live/work space for some time. As part of this study, in the first quarter of 2007 Planning staff will be seeking to amend the Official Plan to remove the permission for live/work units in “Area 3”.

#### Retail and Service Uses

The Zoning By-law Exception 298 does not permit retail and service shop uses in Liberty Village. High-technology and multi-media businesses are highly mobile and have the ability to locate anywhere in the world. They are attracted to locations based on the quality of the urban environment. Not allowing retail and services uses prevents Liberty Village from being an urban environment where employees can shop and go to restaurants in the immediate area. It also results in Liberty Village being very quiet in the evenings and on weekends. More uses throughout the area would result in “eyes on the street” in Liberty Village in the evenings and on weekends, increasing its liveliness, potentially improving the safety of the area and enhancing its attractiveness to employers. Planning staff recommend that the Zoning By-law be amended to allow retail and service uses that are compatible with an employment area, be permitted at-grade

in Liberty Village. In order to retain the pedestrian and independent quality of Liberty Village, any retail or service uses should be limited in size to not allow large format stores in Liberty Village. Planning staff will also review restricting restaurant sizes. Proposed by-law amendments will be brought forward in the first quarter of 2007.

### Density

As mentioned earlier in this report, exception 393 allows up to a maximum of 7 times density for solely industrial uses. This exception was raised at the community consultation meeting when some members of the community were questioning the density permissions that fit within the 28 metre height permissions. Planning staff are reviewing the density permissions and agree that the zoning should be amended to permit the full 3 times density for either industrial or commercial uses. Staff will further review the permitted density to determine whether more than 3 times can be accommodated within the 28 metres. Further recommendations will be presented to Council in the first quarter of 2007.

### Alan A. Lamport Stadium Park

Lamport Stadium Park is subject to a separate Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify private partners to work with the City to revitalize the site for community and recreation use. This RFP will be reported on independently by the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

### Transportation

The transportation review for the study is focused on three key issues as directed by Toronto and East York Community Council. They are parking, the transportation network (including a potential new local street along the southerly edge of Liberty Village), and transit service to the area. In addition to addressing these issues, the review provides an initial response to the issues raised at the community consultation meetings on March 22, 2006 and May 30, 2006 – some of which overlap with the general study objectives. It should also be noted that, at this stage of the review, there has not been a detailed assessment of the transportation impacts from potential growth in the Liberty Village area.

### Employee Travel Survey

City Planning's Transportation Planning Section has committed to undertaking an employee travel survey for Liberty Village. A similar study is currently underway in conjunction with the Yonge-Eglinton Centre Secondary Plan. This is a confidential survey and the results will provide important information on the travel characteristics of employees in the area. The information collected includes peak travel time during the day, length of the journey to the area, place of residence, mode of travel (walk, cycle, transit, car, passenger, etc.), demand for parking, etc. This information will help to better plan transit service, parking, and define a transportation strategy for the area.

The City generally aims for a response rate of at least 20%, and given a new internet based method of conducting the survey, this should be easily achieved. The survey will be initiated as

soon as it is set up on the City's web site, and notice will be issued to employees via email to the BIA for distribution to area employers.

It should be noted that the survey will not gauge the impact of trips and parking resulting from land uses surrounding the Liberty Village. This information will, however, be captured by an area parking study (see next item).

### Parking Survey

The Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) is currently conducting a parking study of the Liberty Village area. The existing inventory of public and private parking spaces was collected by the TPA in April 2006, and further information on the usage of these spaces will be collected during summer 2006. The TPA also has historical data on parking usage in the area, and this will provide a useful reference for identifying parking trends. The information collected will help to provide the basis for the transportation strategy for the area.

### Local Road at the Southern Edge of Liberty Village

One of the key objectives of this study is to determine the potential for a new local street along the southerly edge of Liberty Village. This issue was also identified by the Liberty Village BIA and various people in attendance at the community consultation meeting, as an improvement to address existing and potential future congestion on Liberty Street.

The Front Street Extension Environmental Assessment (EA) Study, February 2003, identified a new local road running between Dufferin Street and connecting to Strachan Avenue and the Front Street Extension just east of Strachan Avenue. This road was envisioned as accommodating one travel lane and one bicycle lane in each direction. The road, as proposed in the recommended plan for the Front Street Extension, would connect to Jefferson Avenue, Atlantic Avenue and potentially to one of the new north-south streets in the Liberty Village residential neighbourhood. Due to individual property issues, the local road would not connect to Mowat Avenue nor to Fraser Avenue, but the long term intent is to connect these roads.

It should be noted that, in approving the Front Street Extension EA, City Council adopted, among other resolutions, the following: "the approval be subject to the City putting in place suitable measures to minimize the potential for traffic infiltration into Parkdale at a cost not to exceed \$300,000.00".

Staff are working to finalize the Front Street Extension EA and it has not yet received final approval from the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). This work is not affected by Council's further decision to approve a "freeze" on spending any funds on the project until a decision is made on the future of the Gardiner Expressway. Once the EA is MOE approved, the local road could be designed and built independently, regardless of the Front Street Extension. The proposed local road could be considered as a phased project. In order to identify a more definitive strategy and an estimated cost to proceed with the local road initiative, staff will have to undertake consultation with the City's Waterfront Secretariat office and the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation, and report back on options at a later date.



It should be noted that the key benefits of the local road would be to improve neighbourhood connections to Liberty Village, improve development opportunities at the southerly edge of the area, animate the dead ends that exist today, address city building and network connections in the area, and also improve traffic operations on Liberty Street. In terms of addressing existing traffic concerns on Liberty Street, the City has developed a plan to replace approximately half of the existing boulevard parking in the City right-of-way on Liberty Street (between Dufferin Street and Mowatt Avenue) with on-street parallel parking and create two eastbound lanes to Dufferin Street. This improvement can be undertaken independently of the local road. It should, however, be done in conjunction with a strategy to address the shortfall in parking created by the change to the right-of-way. Liberty Street is the key road that serves the area and is the spine of the Village; this is not likely to change with the implementation of the new local road.

#### Transit Service to the Area

The issues that have been raised concerning transit service to the Liberty Village area are the congestion on the King Street streetcar service, and the lack of direct transit service into the area. The TTC has indicated that, although the general area is well served by transit, they are contemplating potential options to improve the reliability and congestion issues on the King Street line. Potential solutions that are being considered include coupling single streetcars and operating a short-turn downtown service between the Dufferin Street loop at Springhurst Avenue and possibly a location in the new West Donlands neighbourhood at Cherry Street and Mill Street. The TTC will also be assessing the results of the travel survey to identify specific service needs and potential improvements to better serve Liberty Village. Potential solutions might involve rerouting the Dufferin Street or Ossington Avenue bus, or both, into the Liberty area.

In terms of long-term improvements, the TTC is initiating an environmental assessment for a streetcar service between Exhibition Place and the Roncesvalles area. This EA is an addendum to the 1993 Harbourfront West LRT Extension EA. One possible concept is to extend the streetcar from the Manitoba Drive loop, along the northern boundary of Exhibition Place, north on Dufferin Street to the existing loop at Springhurst Avenue as the first phase. The second phase could extend the service along the southerly edge of the Parkdale neighbourhood to Roncesvalles Avenue and Queen Street West. This is one potential routing and the study will assess an appropriate range of options. The EA is anticipated to be completed by January 2008.

At the first community meeting, a question was raised regarding the possible routing of the streetcar extension from the Manitoba Drive loop, across the Gardiner Expressway and the Lake Shore railway corridor to Liberty Village and westward to Dufferin Street. This suggested alignment would be quite difficult due to the crossing of the corridor, and given the elevation of the Gardiner, may mean that the crossing would have to take place quite close to Dufferin Street anyway. The upcoming EA will be addressing appropriate alternative alignments for comparison.

#### Liberty Village HUB Network

The City's Moving the Economy group, in conjunction with its project partners, recently established the New Mobility HUB at Exhibition Place and Liberty Village. The purpose of the

HUB is to take advantage of the convergence of existing GO Transit, TTC service and the pedestrian/bike connection under the railway corridor at the Exhibition Place GO Station by adding multi-transportation mode services and facilities. These include a nearby Carshare service, taxi hotline, bike share, bike lockers, bike racks, wireless connection, maps, etc. These services and facilities could be further expanded to add a discovery map display to highlight the Liberty Village neighbourhood, and other efforts to integrate the HUB with the surrounding area.

#### Other Transportation Issues

The City, in conjunction with Transport Canada, is currently assessing the feasibility of establishing a Transportation Management Association (TMA) for the Downtown Area. This is part of the Smart Commute program which is a new partnership between the cities and regions in the GTA and Hamilton. Smart Commute helps local employers and commuters to explore different commuter choices like carpooling, tele-working, transit, cycling, walking or flexible work hours. There could be a potential opportunity for Liberty Village as a whole or large individual employers.

#### Heritage Conservation District

Liberty Village's unique character is drawn from the concentration of historic warehouses in the area. Alone, many of these buildings are not architecturally significant; however, together they form a distinct community. New development should respect the character and the scale of the existing buildings without mimicking them to complement the heritage of the area.

City of Toronto Heritage and Planning staff met with the Liberty Village BIA to provide information on the potential for Liberty Village to study designation as a Heritage Conservation District. The group was informed that in order to designate Liberty Village as a heritage conservation district, the community would first hire a consultant to conduct a study that would examine the historical, architectural and character defining features that make Liberty Village unique. This would be done through a public process that is led by the community. Heritage character statements and design guidelines for future development would be developed for the area.

Planning and heritage staff would recommend that the Liberty Village community consider pursuing the designation of the area as a heritage conservation district, and would provide the staff support to work towards achieve this goal.

#### Civic Improvements

##### Capital Improvement Plan

In May of 2000 the City of Toronto's Economic Development Division and the Parkdale/Liberty Economic Development Committee hired the firm of Rodger Todhunter to provide a Capital Improvement Plan for liberty Village. Liberty Village was identified as lacking in public amenities such as sidewalks and pedestrian lighting. Since the study, the City of Toronto and the Liberty Village BIA have been working on a phased implementation of the Capital Improvement

Plan. Atlantic Avenue and Liberty Streets were refurbished with lighting. Pedestrian improvements have been made at pedestrian crossings along Liberty Street and pedestrian safety features have been added throughout Liberty Village. There have been improvements made along the southern edge of Lamport Stadium Park with a retaining wall and landscape improvements including trees and plantings. Additional improvements are being made to the southern edge of Lamport Stadium Park this year to create a linear plaza with decorative paving, additions trees and plantings, seating areas and accent lighting.

### Urban Design Objectives

As part of the community consultation sessions, some members of the community expressed the desire to implement urban design guidelines for Liberty Village. Urban design guidelines would further work towards enhancing the appeal of Liberty Village as a pedestrian oriented neighbourhood and a thriving employment centre. Staff have conducted a preliminary review of the urban design features of Liberty Village and recommend the following objectives:

#### (1) Linkages

- Create and enhance midblock connections which are part of the character of the neighbourhood from east to west to subdivide the blocks.
- Create gateway features at main intersections of the Liberty Village community.
- Improve north/south linkages through the neighbourhood
  - to the rail corridor and new local Front Street
  - to the Dufferin bridge and the Go station
- to the development to the north and the potential rail bridge to the West Queen West neighbourhood

#### (2) Parks, Streets and the Spaces Between Buildings

- Create a linear park along the edge of the rail corridor including a continuous bicycle path.
- Develop a set of streetscape design standards with the BIA.
- Create incentives for conversion of boulevard parking to landscaped open space.
- Develop and enhance the landscape quality of existing and proposed midblock connections and internal courtyards.
- Redevelop Alan Lamport Stadium Park (which is undergoing another process).

(3) Built Form

- Develop built form guidelines which support the unique qualities of the building stock in the area.
- New buildings should respect the scale and industrial character of the existing building stock while expressing the high tech identity of Liberty Village.
- Maintain the existing zoning height in the neighbourhood and enhance the by-law with criteria which are supported by the design guidelines.

Conclusions:

In order to further support Liberty Village as a leading employment area for technology-based businesses in the City of Toronto, this report recommends improvements to Liberty Village including parking, transportation and improvements to the street network with the priority being to implement a local road along the southern edge of Liberty Village. This report further recommends changes to the Zoning By-law and Official Plan, with the development of urban design guidelines, which will be presented to Council in the first quarter of 2007.

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