



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

A Co-ordinated Planning Approach for Ontario Place and Exhibition Place

Date:	August 6, 2014
To:	Executive Committee
From:	City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the work being done by City and provincial staff on a co-ordinated approach to revitalizing Ontario Place and Exhibition Place.

The provincial vision for Ontario Place was outlined in an announcement from the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on July 31, 2014 and is enclosed as Attachment 1 to this report for Council's information. The Province has announced a long term vision to revitalize Ontario Place as an all-season waterfront destination including a large, accessible green space and a variety of recreational and cultural activities, but has no plans for residential development. This plan was developed over the past year and complements the City's planning and economic development objectives for the central waterfront and the Exhibition Place strategic plan.

To ensure consideration of the City's interests during the provincial decision-making process and to make progress on Council's 2013 direction to take a co-ordinated approach, a City/Province staff group has been working together over the past several months. This report seeks Council authority for the City Manager and the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A to work with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a joint planning process and public consultation for the revitalization of Ontario Place and Exhibition Place.

A collaborative process would support the achievement of outcomes of mutual interest to the City and the Province, including new viable cultural attractions that would benefit Toronto and Ontario residents, and spur increased tourism and economic growth for the region. Over the longer term, areas of shared interest and potentially shared investment

include aligning with the City's long term transportation plan for future waterfront west transit expansion, improving north-south connection, undertaking improvements to water, road and public realm infrastructure, and the potential for the City to take responsibility for programming and maintenance of contiguous park land.

This report recommends that City Council request the City Manager to report back with more specific information on the joint planning process and public consultation and to seek further Council direction, as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council communicate to the Province the City's support for the revitalization of Ontario Place as outlined in Attachment 1, subject to the establishment of a joint and coordinated planning process, per Recommendation 2;
2. City Council authorize the City Manager and the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A to work with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a joint planning process and public consultation for the revitalization of Ontario Place, which includes City objectives for the development of the central waterfront, and the Exhibition Place strategic plan; and
3. City Council request the City Manager to report in the new term of Council with more specific information on the scope of a joint planning process and public consultation, and to seek additional Council authorities, as required.

Financial Impact

There are no immediate financial implications resulting from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Any potential financial commitments in the future would require a report to Council for authorization.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of December 16, 2013, City Council directed staff to work in a co-operative and co-ordinated approach to planning Ontario Place and Exhibition Place and made several requests of the City Manager and the Province.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.MM45.17>

In particular, City Council, requested the Province to enter into a formal co-operative venture with the City, to jointly plan and revitalize the Ontario Place and Exhibition

Place Lands, and to work with the local City Councillor in the revitalization of Ontario Place and the scheduling and delivery of public meetings.

Further, City Council requested the City Manager to utilize the current City staff working group to develop the general terms of a draft agreement to guide this co-operative venture, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, Chair and Board of Governors of Exhibition Place, and the local Councillor, and report back to the Executive Committee in 2014 on status and next steps.

The Exhibition Place Strategic Plan, 2014-16, was approved by the Board of Governors of Exhibition Place at its meeting of February 14, 2014.

COMMENTS

The Province's Vision for Ontario Place

The Province has recently announced a long term vision to revitalize Ontario Place. The Minister's announcement in Attachment 1 provides further details. Attachment 2 illustrates the vision for the revitalized site.

Residents and visitors would benefit from an accessible green space within which to experience a variety of recreational and cultural activities, including:

- Creating a music destination that would bring live music acts to the site all year-round;
- Developing a separate major cultural attraction, beyond music facilities;
- Building a new 7.5 acre urban park on the east island (under construction);
- Establishing a new waterfront trail that would connect Ontario Place to the existing Martin Goodman trail;
- Conserving the existing Cinesphere and pods as an important part of the cultural heritage of the site; and
- Creating a waterfront canal district with stores and restaurants.

The vision does not include any residential development on the site.

This report seeks direction for City Council to communicate to the Province the City's support for the revitalization of Ontario Place as outlined in Attachment 1, subject to the inclusion of City interests within a joint planning process.

City Interests in Ontario Place Revitalization

The provincial vision to revitalize Ontario Place could provide significant benefits to Toronto residents and would enable the achievement of key City strategic priorities. Investing in improvements at Ontario Place, if planned and delivered in collaboration with the City, would complement initiatives underway at Exhibition Place, enable further

development of the central waterfront, and incite economic development with the establishment of regional cultural attractions.

Ontario Place, along with Exhibition Place, both sit within the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan, adopted by City Council in 2003. This Plan, while still under appeal in part, provides the overall planning framework for the Central Waterfront through the expression of core principles and specific policies. The Plan's core principles include:

- Removing barriers and making connections;
- Building a network of spectacular waterfront parks and public spaces;
- Promoting a clean and green environment; and
- Creating dynamic and diverse new communities.

The Plan has specific policies that call for Ontario Place to remain a waterfront destination for major festivals and tourism and for the celebration of innovative architecture and landscape design, with better access for the public to enjoy its facilities and attractions. The Plan identifies the primary role of Exhibition Place as a place for celebration and exhibition. It speaks to the potential for housing at peripheral locations which would not detract from its primary role. The Plan speaks to potential realignment of Lake Shore Boulevard that will add land available for development and make it easier to integrate Exhibition Place with Ontario Place.

The Plan highlights the need to reserve the water's edge for public use across the waterfront as renewal takes place, providing a series of parks, open spaces, squares, and plazas of varying types and sizes which are linked back to the city along existing and extended street corridors.

Finally, the Plan lays out implementation policies which seek to integrate planning, financing and infrastructure, all necessary to support waterfront renewal. Precinct planning is the implementation framework which is intended to provide for comprehensive and orderly development addressing issues of public space, heritage, transportation, development and infrastructure among other issues.

Overall, understanding that the details of the Province's conceptual vision for Ontario Place are still being formulated, the direction proposed by the Province is consistent with and aligns very well with the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan policies. What will be important is pursuing collaborative planning, taking into consideration the elements of the proposal that are "fixed", and developing a work plan that incorporates precinct planning for Ontario Place and Exhibition Place, appropriate infrastructure planning for both transportation and servicing and public engagement to the standards followed across the Waterfront. Key planning considerations will include thinking about both areas as a continuous landscape and public space, improving transportation and connectivity and supporting the land uses proposed with needed infrastructure.

Exhibition Place recently approved a three year strategic plan (2014 – 2016). The Plan speaks to several transformational opportunities including the Toronto 2015 Pan/Parapan

Am Games, the opening of the new conference centre hotel, Ontario Place redevelopment, integration with the surrounding community and expansion of facilities on the grounds. With respect to Ontario Place, the Plan says that Exhibition Place must work with the Province to explore possibilities between the two sites to ensure that whatever happens at Ontario Place is optimally integrated with Exhibition Place grounds.

It is also recognized that the substantial growth in population and economic transformation of areas to the north, including Liberty Village, would be well supported by improved north-south connectivity to the waterfront and coordinated improvement of both Exhibition and Ontario Place.

The combined and enhanced Exhibition Place and Ontario Place will significantly improve the recreational, cultural and business experiences of residents, organizations and visitors which will, in turn, add notably to Toronto's vibrancy. This will lead to even more visitors to Toronto and a growth in economic activity for facilities in both Places, including the Direct Energy Centre and the Allstream Centre.

A Co-operative and Co-ordinated Planning Approach

City staff have been meeting regularly with staff from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to exchange information and to prepare a formal co-operative and co-ordinated approach, per Council direction.

To ensure that the City's priorities and interests were clearly understood and considered as part of the Province's decision-making process, City staff provided key information and documents related to the general planning framework for the area including opportunities and challenges related to the urban fabric, transportation, infrastructure, heritage and visitor experience. The Exhibition Place strategic plan was also provided including related strategic goals for business development, public space, and infrastructure.

This report seeks Council authorities for the City Manager and the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, to work with the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport to document the principles for a joint planning process now that the Province has announced its long term vision for Ontario Place. The planning process would identify key interests of the City, including pursuing the objectives of the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan, the Exhibition Place strategic plan, transportation and infrastructure improvements, and viable economic development opportunities of mutual interest. It would also include key principles, terms and conditions for overseeing the environmental assessment and planning process, and public consultations that would involve the Chief Executive Officer, Chair and Board of Governors of Exhibition Place, and the participation of local Councillors in the scheduling and delivery of public meetings

The City Manager will report in the new term of Council with more specific information on the scope of a joint planning process and public consultation, and to seek additional authorities, as required.

CONCLUSION

City and Provincial staff will continue to work together to develop a joint planning process to support local, regional and provincial public interest and to address key issues such as infrastructure, transportation, public realm, heritage, and visitor experience requirements. A coordinated and planning approach will support a beneficial outcome – one that is based on a sound business plan and results in an economically viable cultural attraction for residents of Toronto, the Province of Ontario, and beyond. As part of these discussions, areas of shared interest and potentially shared investment will be considered. These may include, for example, aligning with the City's long term transportation plan / future waterfront west transit expansion, implementing utility upgrades, and looking at the potential for the City to take responsibility for programming and maintenance of contiguous park land.

The City Manager will report in the new term with more specific information on the scope of a joint planning process and public consultation, and to seek any required Council direction and approvals.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Announcement from Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
2. Diagram: Ontario Place Site Illustration