



West Don Lands Committee

Citizens for the Old Town /
Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

Corktown Residents & Business
Association

Distillery Historic District

Dixon Hall

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse Foundation

Friends of Corktown Common

Goederham & Worts Neighbourhood
Association

Little Trinity Anglican Church

St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA

St. Lawrence Neighbourhood
Association

Task Force to Bring Back the Don

May 31, 2017

Councillor David Shiner, Chair
and members of the Planning and Growth Management Committee

Re. PG21.4 – Port Lands Planning Initiatives – Interim Report

The OPA for the Port Lands is taking shape, but in our view needs further refinement. In the portions of the Port Lands where development is anticipated to occur in the coming decades it is too proscriptive with regard to mixed use development.

The OPA must be flexible enough to provide guidance over a long-term build-out. We have been involved as public advocates on this file for 20 years. We understand thoroughly how challenging it is to conceive of the Port Lands Regeneration as a legacy project to be realized decades in the future.

In another 20 years the social, ecological, environmental, economic and political conditions under which the Port Lands will be developed will be unrecognizable. In particular the conditions of life-work balance are in great flux – but the trend line is strongly correlated with merging work and home life. There is less and less need to create inviolate employment zones. Toronto's experience with the inclusive planning regime for the Two Kings should help us understand this fact.

The OPA seems to be tying down decisions on the details of the mix between employment and residential uses that are best addressed in precinct planning, when build-out is imminent.

Particularly we are concerned that we will not get the bang for the buck for the cost of flood protecting the Port Lands. The City is asking senior orders of government to commit, with us, to spending \$1.25 B on naturalizing and flood protecting the Don River Mouth, but we fear that the exclusive employment zones anticipated in Media City, Turning Basin and portions of McCleary District will perpetuate the Port Lands as back-of-house, underutilized lands to be consumed with parking lots, utility structures, material piles, trailers and equipment storage – in other words, what much of this area is currently used for.

That's not going to provide adequate return for the investment we are asking from senior orders of government in the naturalization and flood protection of the area.

The public consultation on the planning framework for the Port Lands has included a full day charrette and consultants' report on the outstanding potential of the Ship Channel to be a central feature of the new Port Lands. The OPA draft pays almost no attention to delivering this potential because the Ship Channel and the precincts on its north side are being held in perpetuity in their current utility condition.

Employment districts around the world are changing as new economies populate post-industrial landscapes. We need to future proof the Port Lands as a place for Toronto to evolve by maintaining a more flexible Official Planning regime for those areas closest to the city and first to develop – the precincts north of the Ship Channel, west of the Turning Basin.

We totally get it that we will for the foreseeable future need to store salt and aggregates in the south and east parts of the Port Lands. We are not concerned with south of the Ship Channel or east of the Turning Basin. The time horizon on those areas transforming is very long – although transform they eventually will.

But for now, Villiers Island and the northern portions of the McCleary District – the only portion of the Port Lands where mixed-use is clearly anticipated – look to be set up as isolated thumbs of urban growth jutting into large, exclusive district that's being held in amber in close to its current condition to fulfill a single-minded economic paradigm that will likely need changing even before the flood protection is complete, and certainly before build-out is complete.

We ask you to direct staff to apply inclusive and flexible designations and descriptions to McCleary, Turning Basin, Media City, River South and Polson Quay districts until such time as precinct planning for these districts proceeds.

Yours truly,



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