

Tommy Thompson Park Update

Date: May 10, 2021
To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee
From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards: Ward 14 - Toronto-Danforth

SUMMARY

Tommy Thompson Park (the Park) is the largest component of the broader Leslie Street Spit (the Spit), located at the base of Leslie Street where it meets the shore of Lake Ontario; all components of the Spit will ultimately be consolidated as Tommy Thompson Park (see Attachment 1). The Park is designated in the Official Plan as an Environmentally Significant Area and is recognized internationally as a Canadian Important Bird Area for supporting the conservation of birds and their habitat. The Park is owned by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and managed in partnership between TRCA and the City of Toronto. The Park demonstrates that nature can flourish in cities and contribute to the well-being of city residents; only minutes from downtown, the Park is an escape from the city, and a place to marvel at the force of nature. It is a pet-free urban wilderness that exists as the result of decades of careful management and stewardship of natural succession and habitat restoration processes by TRCA with the support of the City, community groups, and other partners. Its significant and diverse aquatic and terrestrial environments provide habitat for at-risk species who are otherwise challenged by the interrelated impacts of habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, urbanization and climate change.

The Park's evolution into an urban wilderness can also be attributed to the work of advocacy groups like the Friends of the Spit, founded in 1977 by naturalists advocating for the Spit to grow naturally, without development and the privatization of uses. Their determination and persistence resulted in the selection of the natural area option as the basis for the approved Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan. Friends of the Spit, along with the previous TRCA-established Natural Area Advisory Committee (1987-1992), Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee (2002-2011) and Tommy Thompson Park User Group (2011-2020), continue to be important advocates for the Spit and the Park.

The Park has grown in popularity as it has matured into a natural landscape, attracting residents and tourists wanting to share in the unique experience of visiting an Ontario wilderness within sight of the downtown skyline. As the city continues to grow and intensify, and as precincts of the Port Lands are revitalized as new mixed-use communities as per the Port Lands Planning Framework, the Park will play an increasingly important role as a space for passive and active recreational uses.

However, in order to maintain the Park's ecological integrity, which is what attracts many visitors in the first place, the Park's role as both a unique wilderness and a signature waterfront park must be balanced. Ensuring this balance is a core objective of the City, TRCA, and advocacy groups. Together, the City, TRCA, and other stakeholders all have a role to play in ensuring that the Park continues to be a place not only for native flora and fauna to call home, but for the thousands of residents and visitors to use as their escape to nature within the city; estimates of annual visitors to the Park are currently 250,000-300,000 people per year. TRCA have also offered Community Learning and Education programs at the Park with an emphasis on program growth in recent years. Between 2016 and 2019, over 20,000 participants were engaged through on-site programming.

The purpose of this report is to recommend the establishment of a Joint Management Committee for the management of Tommy Thompson Park and the rest of the Leslie Street Spit: the "Outer Harbour East Headland and Endikement" component that is currently owned by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) and managed by PortsToronto; as well as the "Baselands" component that is owned and managed by CreateTO, the City and PortsToronto, as shown in Attachment 1. The proposed Committee will include management-level staff, be co-chaired by Parks, Forestry and Recreation and TRCA, and will include representatives of PortsToronto, CreateTO, and MNR. The Committee will ensure that there is a coordinated and comprehensive approach to operations, maintenance, by-law enforcement, and visitor experience across the Park and the rest of the Leslie Street Spit. The Joint Management Committee will also be responsible for coordinating the process of consolidating the three components of the Spit into a singular entity which will collectively use the name Tommy Thompson Park once integrated.

To that end, the Joint Management Committee will develop a property transfer plan with the MNR and PortsToronto for the Outer Harbour East Headland and Endikement (see Attachment 1) to ensure that the lands are transferred to TRCA and incorporated into Tommy Thompson Park. The property transfer plan will include a detailed work program with a timeline addressing the path to the resolution of longer term issues including: property transfers, integration of the Baselands and the new Ashbridges Bay Landform into the Park, the long-term use of Cell 3 for the deposition of dredgeate, shoreline safety, stabilization, remediation, and restoration, and associated costs for City divisions and agencies. The Joint Management Committee will remain in place until these longer-term issues are resolved.

The Joint Management Committee will also be responsible for updating and advancing the formal execution of a Joint Management Agreement for Tommy Thompson Park. In addition to clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities for various aspects of the Park's operation, the Joint Management Agreement will consider the need to develop and implement coordinated policies that address user issues such as filming, dog walking, recreational interests such as sailing and other boat activity, cyclist/pedestrian conflicts and by-law enforcement. The Committee will also develop and implement a clear communications strategy that helps the public understand how the Park is managed and how public concerns can be raised and addressed. The Committee will work with TRCA staff on a process for securing community input related to decision-making on potential new projects and programs. City staff will report to the appropriate

City Committees in future years on the resolution of the longer-term issues that will facilitate property consolidation, address shoreline stability, remediation, and restoration, and collaboratively develop a permanent operating and maintenance model for the Park. Staff will also report through future year budget processes on future operating and capital budget needs. The ultimate goal of the proposed Committee's activities will be to ensure that Tommy Thompson Park's user experience befits its unique and signature status as a regional destination where visitors can experience an urban wilderness on Toronto's waterfront.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, and the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation, to work with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, to establish a Tommy Thompson Park Joint Management Committee in 2021, and to include representation from CreateTO, PortsToronto and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, for the purpose of integrated management of the three existing property components that comprise the Leslie Street Spit, and will be collectively known as the future Tommy Thompson Park, comprised of:

a. Tommy Thompson Park: currently owned by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and managed in partnership with the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division;

b. lands referred to as the "Outer Harbour East Headland and Endikement" currently owned by Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and managed by PortsToronto; and

c. lands referred to as the "Baselands", currently owned by CreateTO, the City and PortsToronto.

2. City Council direct the Staff-level Tommy Thompson Park Joint Management Committee in Part 1 above, to prepare a three-year work program that will address the following matters:

a. develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the operations, and maintenance and visitor experience across the lands;

b. create a visitor experience plan that strikes the balance between public access and ecological integrity;

c. undertake a community and stakeholder consultation process, including engaging with the broader Indigenous communities, to inform the visitor experience plan; and

d. develop coordinated policy and enforcement approaches related to filming, dogs, trail conflicts, and similar issues.

3. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in coordination with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and CreateTO, to report back to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee, prior to the incorporation of the lands currently owned by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and managed by PortsToronto, and including the integration of the Baselands and the new Ashbridges Bay Landform into Tommy Thompson Park, with recommendations related to the long-term governance and management of Tommy Thompson Park.

4. City Council request the General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, to develop a budget request for the management of Tommy Thompson Park and implementation of the recommendations above, to be submitted through the 2022-2031 Capital and Operating Budget process.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with the recommendations in this report.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation has absorbed the interim maintenance on the City-maintained portion of Tommy Thompson Park through the annual operating budget. Interim maintenance has ranged between \$0.100 million and \$0.250 annually between 2016 and 2020 for general maintenance.

The 2021 Council Approved Capital Budget for TRCA includes annual funding of \$0.354 million for the Tommy Thompson Management Program including Cell 2 capping and Waterfront-Moraine Migratory Bird Corridor activities. TRCA will also continue working with the City and senior levels of government to secure funding for capital shoreline and restoration works at the Park as opportunities present themselves.

Future year operating and capital budget submissions (2022 and beyond) for Tommy Thompson Park will be necessary for programming, operating, improving and maintaining the park, as well as implementing the recommendations addressed in this report, and will be subject to consideration and approval by Council. Future year budget submissions may also include requests for capital funding.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the financial impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

On March 7, 2019, City Council requested the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer and the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to consider, as part of the 2020 Budget Process, increasing the City's funding for Toronto and Region Conservation Authority by \$130,000 to fund the operation of a public shuttle service in Tommy Thompson Park. City Council requested that, as a part of those considerations the General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation, in conjunction with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, review other sources for these funds, including

requesting financial assistance from the PortsToronto for this public shuttle service, and provide an update on these efforts to the September 9, 2019 meeting of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee. This proposed budget increase was denied as part of the 2020 Budget Process.

At the same meeting, City Council requested the Chief Executive Officer of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, in consultation with the General Manager, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards and the local Councillor, to develop a transition timeline to identify the operating costs associated with the transfer of the property adjacent to Tommy Thompson Park for consideration as part of a future year budget process in accordance with the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan as approved by a Provincial Order-in-Council.

COMMENTS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Ownership and Management of Tommy Thompson Park and Adjacent Lands

Tommy Thompson Park, the TRCA-owned urban wilderness park, is located on the Leslie Street Spit (the Spit), a five-kilometer-long constructed landform extending into Lake Ontario at the foot of Leslie Street.

The Leslie Street Spit, which includes Tommy Thompson Park, is owned and managed by TRCA, the City, and MNR as shown in Attachment 1 and described in the table below. The Spit measures approximately 500 hectares (ha) of combined land and water, and is comprised of:

Land Component	Size (hectares)	Ownership	Management
Tommy Thompson Park	247	TRCA	TRCA / PFR
Outer Harbour East Headland and Endikement	216	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	PortsToronto
Baselands	37	CreateTO / City	CreateTO / City

The lands that are now Tommy Thompson Park (247 ha) were transferred to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) by the Province in 1984. Since 1976, a portion of Tommy Thompson Park (9 ha) has been under licence agreement to the Aquatic Park Sailing Club (APSC).

The Outer Harbour East Headland and Endikement (216 ha) are owned by the Province through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and are to be transferred to TRCA upon completion of lakefilling activities. PortsToronto currently has a lease

scheduled to end in October 2024 (pending lease execution). The 16 hectares associated with the Cell 1 and Cell 2 Wetlands (restored confined disposal facilities) are functionally managed by TRCA and the City, since PortsToronto activities in these areas have ceased and the City and TRCA recognize the value of wetland creation and public use of this area. PortsToronto continues to operate Cell 3 for disposal of sediment removed during annual dredging operations in the Keating Channel.

The Baselands (37 ha) are located south of Unwin on the north side of the Spit and are owned by CreateTO and the City of Toronto with an easement granted to PortsToronto. The 100-car parking lot that services the Park is located on CreateTO property under licence agreement to TRCA. The new Entrance Pavilion with public washrooms and potable water is located next to the parking lot on land owned by the City and CreateTO. The Central Waterfront Secondary Plan and Port Lands Official Plan modification designates all lands south of Unwin Avenue as Parks and Open Space Areas - Natural Areas, inclusive of the Baselands, in recognition of the environmental significance of these areas.

Additional background information can be found in Attachment 2.

Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan

TRCA undertook a multi-year process starting in 1985 to develop the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan and Environmental Assessment which was approved by the Ministry of the Environment in 1995. This plan focuses on maintaining the ecological communities that were established on the Spit while providing recreational opportunities in a car-free environment.

The four main objectives of the Master Plan are:

- Preserve significant species;
- Protect environmentally significant areas;
- Enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat; and
- Enhance public recreational opportunities.

The Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan will come into full force following the transfer of the Outer Harbour East Headland and Endikement to TRCA.

Interim and Joint Management Plans

As the Master Plan is not yet fully in effect, TRCA has undertaken interim park management with financial support from the City since 1977. This interim management arrangement continues to be the operational model. In 2012 PF&R and TRCA initiated the development the Joint Management Plan. The Tommy Thompson Park Joint Management Plan reinforces the vision for the Park as set out in the Master Plan, identifies priorities, defines the roles and expectations between the City and TRCA, and defines the principles and practices for park management. The Joint Management Plan still requires approval and execution. TRCA leads the natural heritage management, communications and environmental programming of the Park. PF&R provides

maintenance of the buildings, parking lot, and addresses public inquiries that are made through 311 with the assistance of TRCA.

A summary of TRCA and PF&R responsibilities is shown in Attachment 2.

Former City of Toronto Official Plan

The former City of Toronto Official Plan remains in force in the Port Lands and designates the Tommy Thompson Park a combination of Open Space, Natural Areas and Environmentally Sensitive Areas, as shown on Map 1: Generalized Land Uses.

Policy 2.3 Protection of the Environment specifies that it is the policy of City Council to protect and enhance Natural Areas, Environmentally Significant Areas, and Ravines, as well as promote protection and conservation measures through an approach to the planning process which recognizes the complex inter-relationships among the human, and natural communities and the physical environment (an ecosystem approach). Policies 2.30, 2.31, 2.32 and 2.35 specify that Natural Areas and Environmentally Significant Areas are to be protected, preserved, maintained and, where possible, enhanced.

The Official Plan Parks and Open Space policies provide policy direction on the retention, expansion and development of parks and Open Space Areas in the City. Policy 4.5 prohibits the disposal of City-owned Open Space.

Tommy Thompson Park is in Toronto's Waterfront and Section 14: The Waterfront policies are applicable, including integrated and comprehensive parks planning in the Waterfront, exploring opportunities for public access to water's edge lands in Environmentally Significant Areas, and the Outer Harbour Headlands (Policy 14.42), which includes Tommy Thompson Park.

The lands are designated Parks and Open Space Areas within the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan (CWSP).

Former Metropolitan Toronto Official Plan

As the guiding document for the former City of Toronto Official Plan, the former Metropolitan Toronto Official Plan remains in force in the Port Lands. The Plan locates Tommy Thompson Park within the Metropolitan Green Space System on Map 5.

The policy objective for the Metropolitan Green Space System is to protect and rehabilitate the integrity of the natural features and ecological functions, improve physical connections to other green spaces and meet recreational and leisure needs of the increased City of Toronto population.

City of Toronto Official Plan

The City of Toronto Official Plan identifies the Spit as part of the Green Space System, the Natural Heritage System, an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA), and is

designated Natural Area on Maps 2 (Urban Structure), 9 (Natural Heritage System), 12A (Environmentally Significant Areas), and 18/21 (Land Use) respectively.

Official Plan policies regarding the Green Space System indicate that it will be improved, preserved and enhanced by improving public access and enjoyment of those lands while also restoring, creating, and protecting those landscapes which are part of it. Objectives for promoting the public use of lands along the water's edge also speak to the need to balance public access with the maintenance and enhancement of the natural heritage value of those lands by protecting existing habitats and, where appropriate, restoring and enhancing habitat. The Official Plan recognizes a joint role in stewardship of ESAs with public and private landowners, institutions, and organizations such as TRCA.

The policies underlying the management and use of Tommy Thompson Park identify a nature-first approach in which the Park's ecological integrity takes priority over its recreational use. However, the Park's unique natural heritage value and the public's enjoyment of its landscape and wildlife are mutually reinforcing; the Park attracts visitors because it is an urban wilderness that cannot be experienced anywhere else on Toronto's waterfront. Striking the balance between the need to protect and enhance this area as an urban wild while managing the growing public use of this site and enhancing its visitor experience will continue to be a priority for the Joint Management Committee.

More information about the Park's ecological value can be found in Attachment 2.

Central Waterfront Secondary Plan

The Central Waterfront Secondary Plan (CWSP) was adopted by City Council in 2003. The principles of the CWSP provide a framework for waterfront renewal over the long-term and focus on removing barriers/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. Tommy Thompson Park is designated Parks and Open Space Areas within the CWSP.

The CWSP policy B12 identifies Tommy Thompson Park as part of a larger park system within the Port Lands, with upgrades to the Martin Goodman/Waterfront Trail system, the expansion of parkland south of Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant, and diverse recreational opportunities for new residents and visitors.

The CWSP calls for the transformation of the Port Lands into a number of new urban districts amid the activities of a working port and the parks and open space network, including Tommy Thompson Park.

Former City of Toronto Zoning By-law No. 438-86

The former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 438-86 is the in-force By-law for the Port Lands. Tommy Thompson Park is zoned Gr. The Gr Zone has very few permitted uses, which include a bathing station and conservation lands.

CURRENT ISSUES

Increased Use and Awareness of Tommy Thompson Park

Proactive planning and co-management with TRCA has and will continue to be required to maintain a balance between increased recreational use and the ecological integrity of the Park while enhancing the visitor experience.

Recent initiatives, including the Leslie Street Greening project, trail improvements, and the soon to be opened Entrance Pavilion, which includes public washrooms, a water fountain, bike racks, outdoor gathering spaces, and storage for park programs, are all responses to the increased use and profile of the Park and are amenities that support and encourage visitors to explore and linger. Increased awareness of the Park has also resulted from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's "The Nature of Things" 2020 episode "Accidental Wilderness: The Leslie Street Spit", the release of "Accidental Wilderness" a book by Walter Kehm who worked on the original design of the park, social media and the desire for outdoor recreation activities as a result of COVID-19. In 2020, trail counters were installed at the park to provide updated estimates. The total number of visitors recorded between February 28, 2020 and February 26, 2021 was approximately 286,500.

With the implementation of the Port Lands Flood Protection project, coupled with the East Harbour development, public use in the area is anticipated to increase significantly. The Port Lands Planning Framework projects a net-new residential population between 16,500 and 30,000 and anticipates the creation of 75,000 jobs as these areas are redeveloped. With this future influx of people working, living, and recreating in the area, the public use of the Park is expected to increase. As such a management plan with increased funding is required to address this future growth and change in the area and its anticipated pressure on the Park's ecological integrity. The Joint Management Committee will be responsible for bringing forward these and other priority initiatives in order to enhance the user experience of the Park while maintaining the Park's unique role as an urban wilderness.

Park user engagement and consultation has provided valuable insights to TRCA and the City in the past, and a commitment to continued engagement remains. The Joint Management Committee will seek input from a broad range of park users including recreational groups, such as the Aquatic Park Sailing Club and other stakeholders, to inform the visitor experience plan. This will also include engaging with the broader Indigenous communities in order to identify and integrate opportunities for Indigenous place-making and place-keeping within the Park.

Park Enhancements

TRCA received \$8 million in federal funding through Waterfront Toronto to implement Phase 1 of the Master Plan between 2006 and 2012. Extensive public consultation (see Attachment 2) guided the process, which can be classified into three major components: natural area enhancements, trails, and infrastructure. Additional provincial and federal grants and private funding have been secured by leveraging capital funds to further

implement habitat restoration and wildlife management projects between 1995 and 2005, and 2013 to present, totaling \$5.75 million.

Natural area enhancement projects have resulted in the enhancement of 70 hectares of the Park's terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including conversion of two of the three confined disposal facilities (CDFs or cells) to wetlands. This habitat gain on the central Toronto waterfront is contributing to meeting the delisting targets of the Toronto and Region Area of Concern, specifically for the wildlife populations and wildlife habitat Beneficial Use Impairments. Furthermore, TRCA has been successfully managing invasive plant species such as dog-strangling vine and common reed across more than 12 hectares of the Park.

The Park's Trail Master Plan was developed and partially implemented by TRCA in 2007, featuring 16 kilometers of trails, including a paved multi-use trail that extends from the entrance to the lighthouse at the landform tip, gravel pedestrian trails, and natural surface nature trails. Cycling is permitted on the multi-use trail, whereas the pedestrian and nature trails are designed for foot traffic only.

A Baselands Trails Master Plan was developed through public consultation in 2015 and included formalization of the Martin Goodman Trail along Unwin Avenue at the north end of the Baselands, a Link Trail along Outer Harbour Marina Road (to connect the Martin Goodman Trail and the Park's Multi-use Trail) and Baselands Nature Trails. The Link Trail was constructed in 2016-2017 by PF&R and the Martin Goodman Trail was constructed in 2018-2019 (by Transportation Services). The remainder of the Baselands Trails Master Plan projects are yet to be implemented.

The infrastructure components of the Phase 1 Master Plan implementation included three small buildings that were opened in 2012: a Nature Centre (including a small staff office), an outdoor classroom at the Cell 1 Wetland, and an Ecological Research Centre on Peninsula D to house the Park's Bird Research Station. The final infrastructure component is an Entrance Pavilion consisting of serviced washrooms and a small utility block. The Entrance Pavilion is a PF&R Capital Service Improvement project with a project cost of \$3 million, including \$400,000 for soil remediation. This work included revitalized pedestrian and cyclist access points into the Park. Construction began in mid-2019 and is scheduled for completion in spring 2021. The pre-existing 5,000 square metre car park and bus turnaround, adjacent to the revitalized entrance, is slated for future renovation. Amenities within the Park are rustic, with stone seating at lookouts, five portable toilets located along the Multi-use Trail, and seasonally operated vault toilets located at the Outdoor Classroom at the Cell 1 Wetland.

To the east of the Spit/Tommy Thompson Park, TRCA, in partnership with Toronto Water, is constructing the Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant Landform. The purpose of the project is to address sediment accumulation, manage shoreline erosion, and enhance the aquatic habitat. Landform construction has been underway since early 2020 and is expected to continue through to 2024. A portion of the new landform will be owned by TRCA and ultimately integrated into the Park. Landscape design for this area is expected to begin at the end of 2022 or early 2023. It is anticipated to include habitat naturalization features and a public use element along the shoreline.

Capital and operating impacts as a result of these park enhancements, in addition to any future enhancements, will be addressed in future reports.

Public Safety

There are only two land access points to the Park, both located at its north end, creating conditions that increase the likelihood of park by-law infractions including open-air burning, camping and parties, particularly on weekends during the summer months. Furthermore, despite official trails leading away from the informal shorelines, park visitors frequently forge their own trails to explore the shoreline, damaging the natural landscape and putting themselves in danger. Without regular by-law enforcement patrols and a team of dedicated park staff, these activities are becoming more popular, especially with the increased use of the Park. Greater awareness, public education, and/or signage would help address the proliferation of these unsanctioned activities, mitigate their cumulative impact on the Park's ecological integrity, and improve the overall visitor experience by reducing conflict between park users and the native flora and fauna.

Natural coastal processes have an ongoing impact on the east shoreline structure of the Spit, necessitating ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the shoreline. Exposed rebar is a hazard, and, as a result, the shoreline is not safe for public use. The shoreline system will continue evolve and erode over time, especially in the context of more extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change until there is a consistent shoreline system. Despite official trails leading away from the informal shorelines, park visitors frequently forge their own trails to explore the shoreline, damaging the natural landscape and putting themselves in danger. Given the demonstrable desire of visitors to explore the uniquely-formed shoreline for photography or simply to satisfy their natural curiosity, some element of shoreline access may need to be accommodated to support enhancing the visitor experience while maintaining user health and safety.

There are also increasing concerns regarding inappropriate trail use by park visitors on bikes and dog owners. Despite posted signage regarding the city-wide 20 kilometre-per-hour speed limit and the prohibition on dogs in the Park, visitors are disobeying these restrictions and compromising the ecological integrity of the Park. There are also concerns regarding park visitors using bicycles inappropriately along the gravel pedestrian and nature trails, creating safety risks and conflict with other park users. These conflicts degrade the user experience and without further education, enforcement, and/or intervention, the onus of addressing friction between the Park's diverse visitors will fall to them. As such, part of the role of the Joint Management Committee will be to coordinate and address such conflicts.

Solutions to some of these public safety matters are being pursued by TRCA and the City, and will be reported on in future reports.

Operations and Maintenance Costs

The operating and maintenance costs for the City-maintained portion of the Park have been absorbed within the existing Parks, Forestry and Recreation budgets in recent years and have not yet been formalized as a separate budget item. These costs, which have ranged between \$0.100 and \$0.250 million annually between 2016 and 2020, cover items such as general maintenance, by-law enforcement, building utilities and maintenance, tree removals, parking lot and trail maintenance, garbage removal, life-saving station maintenance, and portable toilets. With the imminent opening of the new Entrance Pavilion, staff have estimated these costs for 2021 at approximately \$0.607 million for the City. Future funding will be required to support the increased use of the Park, protect the existing park infrastructure and its natural areas, and enhance its visitor experience commensurate with the Park's significance.

TRCA receives \$0.354 million through the City's capital budget process to fund interim management, including project management and administration, implementation of the Park's Cormorant Management Strategy, wildlife management and monitoring, invasive plant management, operation of the Park's Bird Research Station, nature interpretation, and community-based education and outreach programs. An additional \$0.020 million is covered through operating budgets to support senior management activities.

TRCA anticipates increased annual operating costs to address growing public recreational use, improve customer service standards, and achieve effective long-term management. TRCA staff have estimated the annual cost to operate and manage the Park at approximately \$0.845 million. This estimate includes an increased staff presence in the Park to improve customer service standards, but it does not include shoreline maintenance, shoreline restoration, or project management costs.

Future year operating budget submissions (2022 and beyond) for Tommy Thompson Park will be necessary for programming, operating, and maintaining the park, as addressed in this report, and will be subject to consideration and approval by Council. Future year budget submissions may also include requests for capital funding.

Future Land Transfers

A total of 216 hectares of land on the Spit is currently owned by the Province through the MNR and leased to PortsToronto for lakefilling activities. The current intention is that these lands are to be transferred to TRCA for integration into Tommy Thompson Park. However, PortsToronto will still require continued long term access to Cell 3 for the deposition of dredged sediment from the Keating Channel and the Lower Don after the completion of the Port Lands Flood Protection project. The property transfer plan will also address any issues related to the incorporation of the new Ashbridges Bay landform and the Baselands into Tommy Thompson Park.

Staff will report on this issue once the details associated with this transaction are better understood. Staff of Real Estate Services and Legal Services will be involved with this report.

East Shoreline Stabilization

TRCA owns approximately 1.4 linear kilometers of the informal east shoreline at Tommy Thompson Park requiring protection. Infrastructure Canada's Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund provides an opportunity to address the issues on this shoreline to enhance its resiliency to coastal conditions and climate change as well as address public safety. Natural processes have an impact on the shoreline structure of the Spit, necessitating ongoing monitoring and maintenance of erosion to ensure the structural integrity of the manufactured shoreline. Exposed rebar is a hazard, and, as a result, the shoreline is inaccessible to the public.

The City and TRCA will work with MNRF and PortsToronto to understand the options and costs associated with installing more formal engineered shoreline for the remaining Spit shorelines ahead of the future land transfer.

Shoreline stabilization costs, operational considerations, and other associated matters will be addressed in a future staff report once more information is available.

Governance and Long-term Management

Although final land transfers from the Province to TRCA remain unresolved, interim management of the Park is sustained by TRCA and City staff. This long-term interim management approach was not anticipated at the time of the Master Plan, which was approved in 1995, and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future until the land transfer(s) can be finalized. The Joint Management Committee will discuss Park management in the interim and formalize the Joint Management Plan to ensure current and outstanding operational issues are addressed.

Multiple landowners, leases, and shared responsibilities between the City, TRCA, MNRF, PortsToronto and CreateTO are complex and unique to the particular context of the Leslie Street Spit. Agreements and discussions surrounding access, maintenance, facilities, future plans, operations, user conflicts, filming, funding, and wildlife management would benefit from a formal management framework. Moving forward, a coordinated approach to managing the Park and the Spit would be best addressed through the establishment of the Joint Management Committee to discuss and recommend management practices, advise on policy issues, and identify any required updates to the Park Master Plan. The Joint Management Committee will also assist in making recommendations related to the long-term governance and management of the Park.

Staff will report on recommendations related to the long-term governance and management of the Park in future reports.

Conclusion

This report provides a summary overview of the current and future work program that will need to be advanced to support both the current Park and its future expansion. Matters that will be addressed in future staff reports include operational and capital

budget impacts, land transfer resolution, shoreline stabilization, and the long-term management and governance of the Park.

CONTACT

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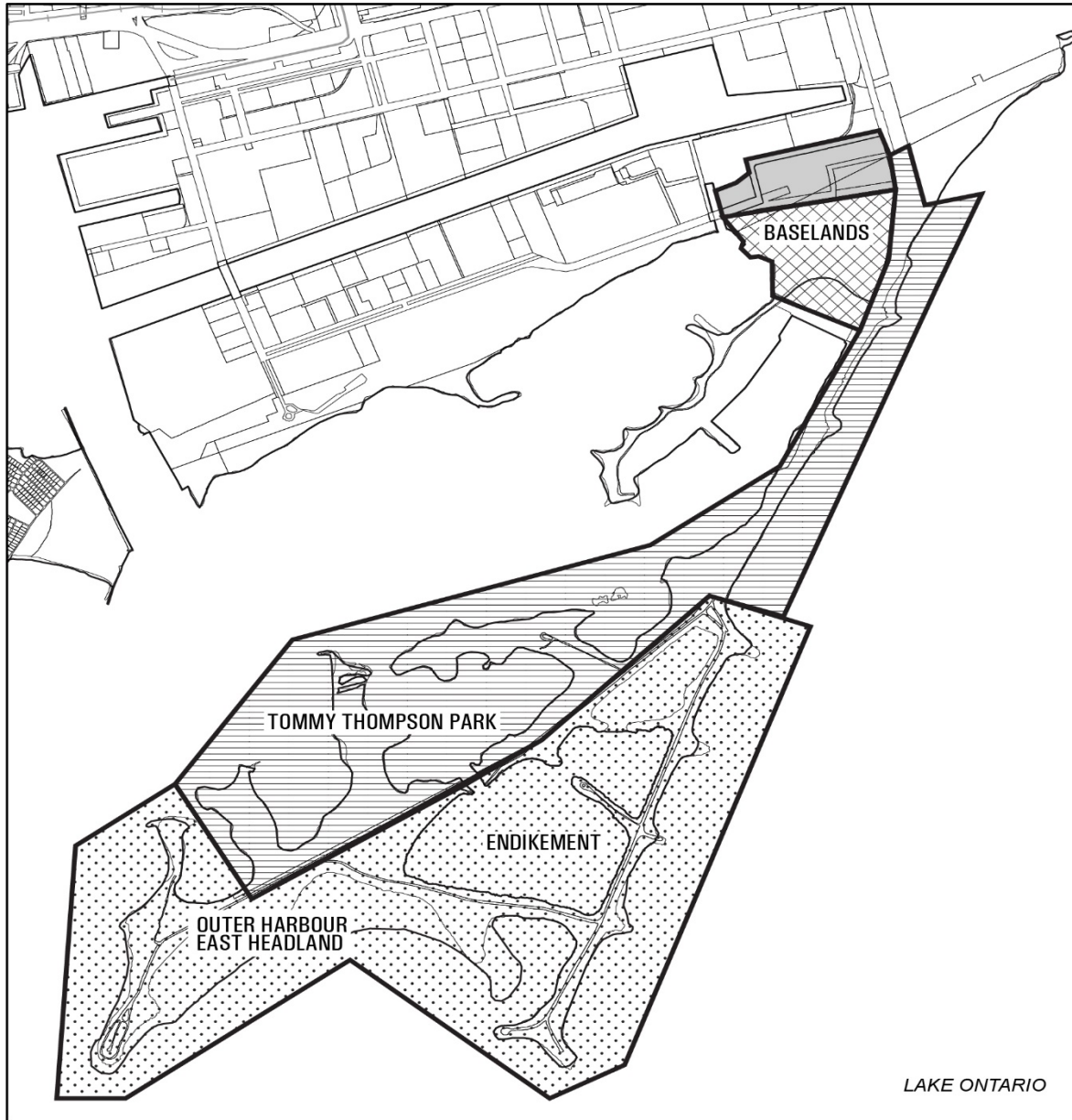
SIGNATURE

Gregg Lintern
Chief Planner and Executive Director
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Janie Romoff
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ATTACHMENT 1

Leslie Street Spit Ownership Map



1 Leslie Street

Leslie Street Spit Land Ownership

- CreateTO
- TRCA
- City of Toronto
- MNRF leased to PortsToronto



Not to Scale
05/06/2021

ATTACHMENT 2 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Landform Creation

In 1959, the Toronto Port Authority, operating as PortsToronto (previously Toronto Harbour Commission) began construction of the landform by lakefilling in order to create the Outer Harbour and expand port-related facilities in anticipation of an increase in shipping coinciding with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway. By the early 1970s, although it became apparent that there was no need for additional port-related facilities, PortsToronto continued construction of the landform, including the creation of four peninsulas constructed via hydraulic dredging, and the creation of three confined disposal facilities to hold sediment dredged from the Keating Channel. This work was ongoing until 2015, with no additional lakefilling having occurred since that time, apart from the dredged sediment that continues to be deposited in Containment Cell 3 from annual Keating Channel and Don River. These operations are expected to continue past the construction of the Port Lands Flood Protection project.

The existing east shoreline consists of an anchor-type beach system consisting of artificial beaches retained by hardpoints constructed primarily from varying sizes of reinforced concrete and brick rubble. Through natural coastal conditions and erosive forces, this rubble material is broken down over time resulting in exposure of rebar in reinforced concrete. More formal engineered shorelines along more recent waterfront parks (Humber Bay Park, Colonel Sam Smith Park, etc.) have been designed to be stable within a dynamic coastal environment and are constructed utilizing quarried stone material that is more resistant to weathering and displacement.

The composition of the west shoreline of the Spit is sand, and as such it does not have the risks associated with reinforced concrete rubble shorelines like on the east side of the landform. The west shoreline is also protected within the Outer Harbour, so there is less impact from dynamic coastal processes than on the east side open to Lake Ontario.

Ecological Value

As a result of the process of natural succession on reclaimed land and the critical habitat enhancement work undertaken over the last 30 years, the Spit has grown into a landscape complex of different habitats that include wetlands, woodlands, grasslands, hard and soft shorelines, and various aquatic habitats. Over 150 flora species have been recorded at the site.

The substantial size of the Spit and its habitat diversity, along with its location on Lake Ontario, make it a biodiversity hotspot. A total of 323 bird species have been recorded at the Spit, with 73 of these species having been recorded using the site as breeding grounds. In 2000, the Leslie Street Spit was designated as a globally significant Important Bird Area by BirdLife International due to the large waterbird colonies (notably the continent's largest breeding colony of Double-crested Cormorants), overwintering waterfowl, and landbird migrants. At least 21 species of native mammals have been recorded at the site ranging from small mammals like meadow vole and eastern

cottontail to coyote and river otter. The site is also known for its herpetile populations, with at least 12 species recorded, including breeding Northern leopard frog and common snapping turtle, which nest at the site. The Spit's many aquatic features provide habitat for a wide range of fish including emerald shiner and Northern pike. Many invertebrate species have also been recorded, including migratory butterflies and dragonflies.

The ecological value of the Park will continue to increase as the habitat communities mature, and as the lands are enhanced through new and continuing restoration and enhancement projects.

Public Advocacy and Engagement

Public advocacy has been a major factor in determining the use of the Park as an urban wilderness park. Friends of the Spit was founded in 1977 by naturalists advocating for the Spit to grow naturally, without development and privatization of uses, and it was their determination and persistence that ultimately resulted in the natural area option as the basis for the approved Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan. The group continues to be important advocates for the Leslie Street Spit.

Extensive stakeholder engagement guided the development and phase 1 implementation of the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan, as well as restoration projects at the Park. Original engagement took place with the Natural Area Advisory Committee, which was formed to guide the Master Plan development from 1987 to 1992. Following Master Plan approval, the Natural Area Advisory Committee met infrequently through the 1990s and primarily in an ad hoc manner to administer the Interim Management Program and address issues related to the Park. The group was formalized as the Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee in 2002 to assist with the development and implementation of various Master Plan phase 1 components which were completed in 2011. The group then transitioned to the Tommy Thompson Park User Group in 2011 and met twice annually to guide Joint Management, provide feedback on capital projects and address issues related to the Park. The Tommy Thompson Park User Group term ended in 2020. These committees were comprised of representatives from local interest groups including Toronto Field Naturalists, Friends of the Spit, Toronto Ornithological Club, Toronto Entomological Association, as well as park users such as the Aquatic Park Sailing Club, runners, and cyclists.

TRCA will be working with the City of Toronto to identify new and innovative options for future phases of public engagement for the Park. The goal is to maximize public participation, with both organized interest groups and individual park users, to ensure a broad range of input and increase and foster sustainable stewardship of the Park's ecological features. TRCA has committed to reporting to the Board of Directors at the end of 2021.

JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN - SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES			
ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	MANAGEMENT	
		City of Toronto - PF&R	TRCA
ADMINISTRATION	License agreements, by-law enforcement	By-law enforcement	PortsToronto activity coordination; Aquatic Park Sailing Club licence agreement; access for tours, research, volunteers; commercial film/photography agreements; third party charity events
COMMUNICATIONS	Site interpretation, communications	General inquiries (311)	Nature and site interpretation, outreach programs, special events, education, social media, website, media inquires
RISK MANAGEMENT	Shoreline maintenance, hazards, public safety	Park hazards, hazard tree removal, life-saving stations, potholes, trail inspections	Shoreline management, lakefill quality control
NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT	Terrestrial and aquatic management and enhancements	n/a	Terrestrial and aquatic habitat management and enhancements, invasive species management
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT	Wildlife and nuisance wildlife	Nuisance wildlife including domestic animals	Wildlife management including colonial birds, species of interest, fisheries
UTILITIES	Heating, water, etc.	Heating, water and other utilities for buildings	Ecological Research Station solar panel, wi-fi

JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN - SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

<p>GENERAL MAINTENANCE</p>	<p>Parks facilities, Emergency Services Plan, signage</p>	<p>Buildings, trails and parking lot, garbage, Emergency Services Plan, fencing, graffiti, protests, illegal camping/ encampments, signage maintenance</p>	<p>Regulatory and interpretive signage design, gate access</p>
<p>FLEET EQUIPMENT AND STORES</p>	<p>Service yard, site transportation</p>	<p>Storage bunker and Booth Avenue service yard</p>	<p>On-site building and storage bunkers; coordination of potential future shuttle van service</p>