

Ontario Place - Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment - Status Report

Date: March 23, 2023
To: Toronto and East York Community Council
From: Acting Director, Community Planning
Wards: 10 - Spadina-Fort York

Address: 955 Lake Shore Boulevard West
Planning Application Number: 22 233864 STE 10 OZ

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment applications submitted by Infrastructure Ontario on behalf of the Ministry of Infrastructure for the redevelopment of the predominantly Provincially-owned lands at Ontario Place at 955 Lake Shore Boulevard West. The Official Plan Amendment is for the entirety of Ontario Place. The Zoning By-law Amendment is for the whole site but proposes specific permissions for the Therme tourism, entertainment and waterpark facilities on the Mainland and West Island as well as the mainland parking structure serving multiple tenants and uses, including LiveNation, science programming at the Cinesphere and Pods and visitors to the public realm across the Island. These applications were submitted on November 25th, 2022.

The applications envision a large scale redevelopment of the public lands and attractions at Ontario Place. The site is a Provincially-significant heritage and tourism attraction used by visitors from across Ontario, Canada and internationally. Ontario Place closed as a fully operating attraction in 2012, and the existing buildings, bridges, servicing infrastructure and shoreline are understood to require reinvestment to ensure the future viability of the site. Ontario Place today also serves as a waterfront public amenity and a cultural heritage landscape of international significance.

The applications propose the following:

- A Provincially-led Public Realm Master Plan for the free and continuously publically accessible lands on the East Island, Central Waterfront and Mainland;
- Integration and coordination of the public realm designs across the site with Trillium Park, inclusive of continuously and publicly accessible portions of tenanted lands;
- Retention and adaptive re-use of the pods and Cinesphere;

- A 65,000 square metre private entertainment, water recreation and wellness facility with a maximum height of 45 metres on the West Island;
- A 22,000 square metre entrance building at a maximum height of 26 metres on the mainland connecting to the Therme facility and proposed public realm on the West Island;
- Future programming on the East Island and Mainland with details to be determined with land use policy options to be established in the draft Official Plan Amendment;
- A five-level underground parking structure with 2,100 spaces and a surface parking lot with 630 spaces;
- A bicycle parking facility with 680 spaces;
- A single storey building to be built on top of the proposed underground parking facility to host Science-based programming potentially in partnership with the Ontario Science Centre;
- Creation of new continuously publicly accessible lands and outdoor amenities on the West Island;
- Shoreline stabilization works for the entire site and approximately 36,000 square metres of lakefilling above water plus approximately 25,200 square metres of lakefilling below water on the West Island.

The Official Plan Amendment, which may include amendments to the City of Toronto Official Plan and the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan, is intended to guide the long-term land use direction of the lands and provides policy direction for the entirety of Ontario Place. An Official Plan Amendment is required to support the proposed land uses; provide specific guidance around the relationship of buildings to heritage buildings, structures and landscape and the public realm; and to appropriately address the existing and proposed parks, green space and natural heritage policies.

The Zoning By-law Amendment seeks permissions for land use, height and other development standards for the entertainment, water recreation and wellness facility on the West Island and associated public realm. The Zoning By-law Amendment also seeks broader permissions that will apply to the entire site, including a proposed shared underground parking structure on the mainland. Future Zoning By-law Amendment applications are anticipated for an entertainment venue on the East Island (Live Nation Amphitheatre) and the additional structures on the mainland (potential building to accommodate Science-based programming).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Director, Community Planning recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications arising from receiving this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

On February 2, 2022, City Council adopted EX29.5 Ontario Place Redevelopment - Priority Areas for Collaboration and Development Approvals Process, which directed staff to report back on:

- A status update on the review of the development applications, which were submitted to the City on November 25, 2022;
- A general update on the Ontario Place Redevelopment; and
- Continuing outreach to Divisions and Exhibition Place, as well as a robust public consultation and stakeholder engagement process to inform the City's review of the Ontario Place redevelopment.
- [Agenda Item History - 2022.EX29.5 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

On June 8, 2021, City Council adopted EX24.3 Ontario Place Redevelopment Update, which directed staff to report back on:

- A formal Toronto-Ontario agreement on priority areas for collaboration on the Ontario Place redevelopment; and
- The process that will be utilized for Planning Act and Ontario Heritage Act approvals for the Ontario Place redevelopment.
- <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX24.3>

On September 30, 2020, City Council adopted TE18.42 Exhibition Place Master Plan - Phase 1 Proposals Report which directed the City Council to rely on the findings of the Phase 1 Proposals Report to: a) inform future conversations with the Province regarding the joint revitalization of Ontario Place and Exhibition Place, and b) inform future consultations with Metrolinx regarding the Ontario Line.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.TE18.42>

On May 14, 2019, City Council adopted EX5.1 Ontario Place/Exhibition Place Revitalization which directed City staff to engage the Province in developing a joint strategy to plan the future of Ontario Place and Exhibition Place in a collaborative, cooperative, and consultative manner with all stakeholders, and adopted 5 Guiding Principles for the revitalization of Ontario Place.

http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EX5.1_Ontario_Place_Redevelopment_-_Collaboration_and_Development_Approvals

On May 14, 2019, City Council received information TE5.27 Ontario Place Revitalization - Results of Subcommittee Consultation, Guiding Principles and Next Steps which considered feedback from the public that came through the Subcommittee on Ontario Place established by the Toronto and East York Community Council.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.TE5.27.6>

On May 14, 2019, City Council adopted PB5.4 Inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register - 955 Lake Shore Boulevard West - Ontario Place, which added Ontario Place to the City's Heritage Register in accordance with a Statement of Significance outlining the reasons for inclusion.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.PB5.4>

PROCESS AND TIMELINES

The City of Toronto will continue in its role as approval authority in accordance with the Ontario Place Redevelopment Agreement. The process will follow City Planning's established review process, while considering the high-profile and complex nature of these development applications. City staff will provide comments to the applicant based on technical reviews, as well as input from community consultation and stakeholder advice.

Infrastructure Ontario is acting as the applicant and project manager on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure and their private sector tenants. The applicant team have been engaging with City staff on the redevelopment and are currently exploring design changes in response to City feedback. It is understood that the applicant team will continue to engage and collaborate with the City during the development approvals process to ensure that project milestone dates are met.

The applicant team is anticipated to respond to City comments with design changes to come forward in a resubmission package following public consultation in the spring 2023. The resubmission will benefit from feedback in this report, technical comments on the application materials as well as from community consultation and stakeholder engagement. City Planning will provide a final report to City Council for consideration by the end of 2023.

Ontario Place is a provincially owned property that was identified as a Provincial Heritage Property of Provincial Significance as a Cultural Heritage Landscape. As such, Ministry standards under the authority of Part III.1 of the Ontario Heritage Act apply. The Province approved a Strategic Conservation Plan dated November 24, 2022, which details how the property will be conserved in accordance with the required Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties. Separate municipal approval under the Ontario Heritage Act is not required for the proposed developments at Ontario Place.

Subsequent Zoning By-law Amendment applications will be submitted for other components of Ontario Place at a future date. Site Plan Control applications will be submitted at a later date, should the applications for the Official Plan Amendment and the Zoning By-law Amendments be approved. The proposal represents a significant alteration to the site, which will require a thorough construction management plan to be provided as part of the future Site Plan Control applications. Proposed land transactions related to City-owned land at Ontario Place will be reviewed in a separate staff report to an upcoming Executive Committee meeting.

A final report on the Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment applications is targeted to be presented to Toronto and East York Community Council and City Council by the end of 2023.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Provincial Land-Use Policies: All decisions of the Council in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, and shall conform to provincial plans.

Official Plan: Green Space System on Map 2, Urban Structure; Natural Heritage System on Map 9 and; Other Open Space Areas on Map 18, Land Use Plan.

Central Waterfront Secondary Plan: Parks and Open Spaces Areas Maps C and E.

Zoning: The existing lands of Ontario Place are zoned 'Gm' under former City of Toronto Zoning By-law 436-86. The new lands proposed to be added to Ontario Place are not zoned and will require zoning under City-wide Zoning By-law 569-2013.

Key Policies and Planning Guidance

The draft Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment are being assessed for consistency with Council approved policies and guidelines that guide how the City grows. Key policies from the Official Plan speak generally to providing a comfortable public realm, how buildings will frame and compliment public spaces and the integration of land use and transportation. The Official Plan offers specific guidance around public use and enjoyment of lands in *the Parks and Open Space* system along the water's edge (Section 2.3.2.6). The Central Waterfront Secondary Plan provides waterfront specific guidance for this site and is foundational to the review of the application.

Key policies in the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan speak to prioritizing the pedestrian experience, improving waterfront access, ensuring public access to outdoor areas within the *Parks and Open Space* system and organizing and designing buildings to support the public realm. The Central Waterfront Secondary Plan also has an Ontario Place specific policy that speaks to improved public access, tourism uses and the celebration of innovative architecture and landscape design. There are policies in the Provincial Policy Statement, the Growth Plan, the Official Plan and the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan that speak to the evaluation of development and its impact on the natural heritage system, including woodlands, endangered species, fish habitat and other impacted natural heritage areas. There are also specific policies in Official Plan and the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan regarding lake filling activities to support development and the required evaluation for impacts arising from such lakefilling activities.

Provincial documents informing the review include the Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan and their direction around optimizing transit investments and integrated infrastructure planning to achieve sustainable and cost-effective development patterns. As Ontario Place is a Provincial Heritage Property of Provincial Significance, a

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value and Strategic Conservation Plan are intended to provide direction.

Design Guidelines

The following design guidelines have been used in the evaluation of this application:

- Best Practices for Bird-Friendly Glass;
- City's Complete Streets and Pedestrian Priority Guidelines;
- Toronto Multi-Use Trail Design Guidelines;
- Best Practices for Effective Lighting; and
- Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines.

The City's Design Guidelines can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/citygovernment/planning-development/officialplanguidelines/design-guidelines/>

Toronto Green Standard

The Toronto Green Standard is a set of performance measures for green development. Applications for Zoning By-law Amendments, Draft Plans of Subdivision and Site Plan Control are required to meet and demonstrate compliance with Tier 1 of the Toronto Green Standard Version 4. The TGS can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/citygovernment/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/toronto-green-standard/>

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Community and Stakeholders

A number of comments from community members have been submitted via email to staff. These comments touch on a range of issues and challenges, including:

- Appropriateness of the size and location of the proposal;
- Impacts to the existing naturalized and park-like setting, including the extent of tree removals and the need for calm green spaces in this area of the City;
- Proposed parking amount and related transportation challenges;
- Perceived loss of public spaces to private interests;
- Impacts to heritage; and
- Loss of habitat and collision risk to migratory birds.

A Stakeholder Advisory Committee was convened to offer additional perspectives to City Staff in their review. This committee has met five times to date and will continue to inform comments on the application.

Staff meet with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation bi-monthly on the proposed redevelopment. A strategy for the engagement of other Indigenous communities including urban Indigenous communities is in progress.

Consultation in spring 2023 will take a variety of forms, beginning with an in-person community consultation meeting scheduled for April 15th at the Beanfield Centre, Exhibition Place. This will be followed by a weeknight virtual community consultation meeting on April 18th. An additional meeting is planned for mid to late May and will focus on potential design changes. Indigenous engagement activities will take place over the spring and summer.

JOINT DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

The Waterfront Toronto Design Review Panel together with members from the City of Toronto Design Review Panel hosted an Issues Identification meeting for this application on July 27, 2022. This meeting focussed on identifying issues and potential design directions for the public realm master plan. Meeting minutes can be found here; [Waterfront Design Review Panel Meeting Minutes - July 27, 2022 \(waterfronttoronto.ca\)](https://www.waterfronttoronto.ca/2022/07/27/waterfront-design-review-panel-meeting-minutes-july-27-2022/).

On March 22, 2023 members of the panel hosted a second Issues Identification meeting for this proposal. This meeting considered evolving designs for the public realm master plan as well as designs for the rezoning application on the West Island (Therme). Key matters raised by the panel include:

- The proposed entry building and bridge elements act as barriers, obscuring heritage views to Ontario Place, the pods and Cinesphere and integrated landscape as well as sight lines to water; these detract from the public sense of arrival to the West Island;
- The height, massing and scale of the main building overwhelms the public realm, heritage features and overall size of the West Island landform;
- The need for a closer integration of public and private experience as it relates to movement in and around the West Island in order to achieve porosity;
- Environmental impacts including terrestrial habitat, aquatic habitat, tree loss and sequestered carbon are recommended to be measured in the existing as well as the proposed conditions in order to be properly evaluated;
- Bring forward the concept of Ontario Place as a showcase for innovation as it relates to Indigenous place-keeping, climate resilience, landscape and heritage preservation and new building design;
- Sustainability and transportation priority issues in relation to the extent of proposed five level subsurface parking structure; and
- Noted strengths of the proposed designs in the public realm master plan on the East Island, including the renewed Forum, children's play area, and opening up the "eastern gap" for paddlers along Lake Shore Boulevard.

Future Joint Design Review Panel dates are being scheduled for Schematic Design.

COMMENTS

City Staff have completed the review of the first submission of the application. The application contains a number of desirable elements that further the city building objectives for the site and Toronto's waterfront. Encouraging aspects of the proposal for the West Island include:

- Proposed land uses that are supportable and build on the history of uses on site (tourism, entertainment, attractions);
- The establishment of continuous water's edge public access;
- Proposals for boardwalks, beaches and plaza offerings for all season public use;
- Shoreline rehabilitation; and
- Better access to a range of amenities such as boat rentals, public washrooms and food and beverage offerings.

Desirable elements contained in the proposal for the entire site include:

- Public Realm Master Plan design directions;
- Integration with Trillium Park;
- Shoreline rehabilitation and improved access to the water;
- A range of park amenities, including all weather options;
- Children's play areas and educational programming;
- Indigenous place keeping elements;
- Improved trail network; and
- Improved park-like condition on mainland and water's edge condition.

Staff comments, augmented by stakeholder and community feedback (via electronic correspondence direct to staff) have also identified a number of issues with the proposal.

The following is a summary of the key issues as they relate to the planning policy guidance described above. The issues described below have been raised with the applicant. The applicant is considering these issues in anticipation of a late June resubmission. A number of other detailed matters will also be raised in the written responses to the applicant.

West Island

The current proposal lacks a site responsive design that builds on the integrated approach to architecture and landscape architecture in the original design.

The location of the proposed entrance building on the mainland does not create a legible public and inviting gateway to the publically owned lands at Ontario Place. Staff have identified issues with its location, height and massing. The entrance building as proposed is the predominant feature one would see upon arrival at the west entrance of Ontario Place. The current location of this building prioritizes private uses and access and acts as a barrier to a direct pedestrian path for the non-paying public accessing the waterfront. The proposed bridge connecting the mainland to the West Island is a multi-

level building which significantly impacts the approach view from the west to the Cinesphere and pods and integrated landscape.

The main building proposed for the West Island is large and is not scaled appropriately to the size of the island, diminishing the relative prominence of the Cinesphere and pods. The proposed building requires the removal of the majority of the Michael Hough designed landscape heritage attributes on the West Island, including removing original water features and their shoreline typologies, removing all mature trees and naturalized surroundings and the localized microclimates which they create. The building is designed as a single, inwardly oriented structure that does not adequately integrate landscape and pedestrian connectivity through the site.

The extent of the proposed public realm around the perimeter of the building is insufficient in some areas and is not in proportion to the tall abutting building walls. This condition overwhelms the public realm and does not provide for a comfortable pedestrian experience in some areas.

It must be understood how the architecture of the new construction relates to the original vision for Ontario Place, in particular along the eastern edge that will be located within the core area. (The core area features the Cinesphere and Pavilion, as well as the crystalline forms of three village clusters set within the prominent naturalized landscape, canals, lagoons and a centrally-located marina.) The design should be compatible with, yet distinguishable from, the Cinesphere and pods. The massing and siting of the proposed main building will diminish the relative importance of the Cinesphere and pods. The circulation paths of six metres in some areas may not accommodate large volumes of people, including transit users, concurrent large events, Therme customers, and regional park users. The paths as proposed may create conflicts and safety issues as they do not include demarcated cycling areas.

Overall, in their current form, the applications do not adequately respond to key policy directions of the Official Plan and the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan.

Shoreline Work and Lakefilling

Significant lakefilling activities are proposed on the West Island. In order for the proposed shoreline work, lakefilling activities and the related development that necessitates the lakefilling activities to conform with the requirements of the City's Official Plan, City staff have advised that Infrastructure Ontario should undertake an Environmental Assessment.

The City of Toronto's Official Plan (3.4 Policy 17) and Policy 28 of the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan speaks to a number of policies specific to lakefilling activities and related impacts. The Official Plan states that lakefilling projects in Lake Ontario will be supported only where:

- a) the land created will be used for natural habitat, public recreation or essential public works;
- b) the project has been the subject of an Environmental Assessment which ensures that water quality and quantity and terrestrial and aquatic habitat will be protected or enhanced; and

c) the project does not create new or aggravate existing natural hazards.

A number of studies undertaken as part of an Environmental Assessment have been, or will be, completed such as a natural heritage review, a species at risk assessment and survey, a fisheries and aquatic survey, a Strategic Conservation Plan, a Heritage Impact Assessment, geotechnical studies, a stormwater management report, a coastal assessment study, and an Environmental Site Assessment.

Further key components of the Environmental Assessment process, such as a public consultation program and the identification and evaluation of alternatives that best prevents, mitigates or remedies the effect on the natural, social, cultural, economic and built environments, and their interrelationships, have not been undertaken.

Through an Environmental Assessment process, both positive and negative effects are identified and assessed and impacts on the natural, social, cultural, economic and built environments, and their interrelationships are identified and considered and mitigation measures and their likely effectiveness in dealing with adverse effects, at all stages of the undertaking, are described and the "net" effect is predicted. The results of the public consultation process are incorporated into the effects analysis and a preferred alternative is selected. The proposed redevelopment of the lands would be required to comply with and implement the preferred alternative.

Sustainability and Resilience

As part of Therme's application the applicant has noted that the project is aiming to meet: LEED Platinum certification, Toronto Green Standard Tier 2, and CaGBC Zero Carbon Standard.

The City may require additional information regarding flood protection, grading and associated strategies to support the resilience of public and private areas on the West Island.

Further consideration for the long-term resilience of the building is anticipated, given its size, massing, purpose-built design and projected attendance.

Public Realm and Mobility

Beyond the West Island, this section speaks to issues related to the proposed non-tenanted public realm, trail and intersection changes, surface and structured parking, and areas subject to future rezoning proposals (e.g. Live Nation and future Science-based programming).

The overall approach to transportation does not prioritize transit and active transportation. The planned Ontario Line subway station at Exhibition Station, GO Transit service enhancements and TTC streetcar service improvements, together with an improved Martin Goodman Trail and supporting network, suggests the mobility emphasis should be shifted to non-automobile modes. Planning policies for the waterfront outline the transportation strategies that reduce car use. The Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan includes several policies that direct land use

planning approaches to optimize transit infrastructure investments and to ensure transit-supportive development patterns. The proposed five level subsurface parking structure, surface parking and resultant 2,700 space parking supply does not meet these policy objectives.

Issues emerging from the Public Realm Master Plan include the need to integrate significantly more tree plantings in the proposed Forum area, the rationale for creating a culvert over the lagoon near Live Nation, and grading changes as it relates to a comfortable walking experience. The wind study provided for the West Island identifies challenging conditions for pedestrian comfort and may need to expand its scope. Public realm designs and programming for both the East and West islands require further integration with the findings of the wind study to optimize comfortable conditions where possible.

Consistent public realm features with an Ontario Place brand identity should be implemented across the whole site that reflect the vision of Ontario Place as a centre for recreation, education, entertainment and public gathering and the importance of Ontario Place as a cultural heritage landscape.

Transit Connections and Integration with Exhibition Place

Metrolinx is actively exploring options for a connection between Ontario Place and the new Ontario Line station that will be integrated with the GO station at Exhibition Place to address connectivity between Exhibition Place, and Ontario Place. Public and stakeholder information sessions will gather input through the planning and development process for the Ontario Place redevelopment.

In collaboration with City staff, Exhibition Place has commenced an operations, logistics and multimodal transportation study which will build upon the direction provided in the Exhibition Place Master Plan - Phase 1 Proposal Report. The study will help inform the design and experience from the Ontario Line Station, and surrounding neighbourhoods, through and within Exhibition Place and connecting to Ontario Place.

The design of major intersections requires careful consideration to minimize conflicts between pedestrians, cars and bikes along the Martin Goodman Trail. Safety concerns arise from the current intersection design and the high volumes of current and future users. Staff are working with the applicant towards intersection design that appropriately prioritizes pedestrian and cyclist movements.

Infrastructure and Servicing

Adequate water and sewer servicing capacity is required to accommodate the proposed land uses. The City, through the Ontario Place Redevelopment Agreement, has committed to the review of the servicing design packages through a process independent of, and ahead of the development approval process.

Submissions reviewed by the City to date have not yet identified a solution for providing capacity for either water or sanitary servicing provided as part of the redevelopment of

the site. Staff will continue to work with the Province to ensure the site servicing provides capacity for water and sanitary servicing.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The public lands and attractions at Ontario Place are a Provincially-significant heritage and tourism attraction used by visitors from across Ontario, Canada and internationally. Despite closing as a fully operating attraction in 2012, Ontario Place today continues to serve as a waterfront public amenity. Its shorelines and landscape are mature habitat that are important components of the City's park and natural heritage system.

Reinvestment in Ontario Place is a generational opportunity to celebrate the history of the site while better connecting it to the surrounding City and supporting its future success as a destination and also a natural heritage landscape. Staff will continue to work with provincial partners, the public, and stakeholders to support this vision. Consultation in spring 2023 will take a variety of forms, beginning with an in-person community consultation meeting is scheduled for April 15th at the Beanfield Centre, in Exhibition Place. This will be followed by a weeknight virtual community consultation meeting on April 18th. An additional meeting is planned for mid to late May and will focus on potential design changes. Indigenous engagement activities will take place over the spring and summer.

City staff will provide further written comments to the applicant on the first submission in April 2023. Staff will continue to work with the applicant team with the expectation that designs will evolve in order to address the issues described above.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Site Geographic Areas
Attachment 2: Context
Attachment 3: North Elevation
Attachment 4: East Elevation
Attachment 5: South Elevation
Attachment 6: West Elevation
Attachment 7: Application Data Sheet