

REPORT FOR ACTION

Parking Solution – Ontario Place / Exhibition Place Foundational Principles

Date: April 24, 2024
To: The Board of Governors of Exhibition Place
From: Don Boyle, Chief Executive Officer
Wards: Ward 10 - Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

On September 18, 2023, Premier Ford and Mayor Chow announced a "New Deal Working Group" with a mandate to make recommendations to achieve long-term stability and sustainability of Toronto's finances.

At its December 2023 meeting, City Council approved the terms of the Ontario -Toronto New Deal Working Group Term Sheet in principle.

The Ontario Place rebuilding project was itemized and defined in the Term Sheet - Core Commitments. Specifically, the Term Sheet clarifies that for the Ontario Place Rebuilding project, the City accepts that the Province has the authority to advance all project approvals and intends to assume ownership of identified City-owned properties necessary to enable site access and servicing for the rebuilding project, and appropriately compensate the City for these lands. As part of the acknowledgement, the Province agreed to change its current planned location for parking at the Ontario Place site, and work with the City to establish an alternative parking solution at Exhibition Place that will improve public access to the shoreline at Ontario Place and could reduce the overall area needed for parking.

In light of the commitment, a technical table (The Ontario Place Parking Solution Technical Table) with representation from the Ministry of Infrastructure, Infrastructure Ontario, City of Toronto, and Exhibition Place has been established to advance discussions on the parking solution options for Ontario Place at Exhibition Place.

This report seeks Board approval for the Foundational Principles as a discussion framework and requests the Board's authority for staff to negotiate with the Province and City on the development of options for a parking solution at Exhibition Place, guided by the Foundational Principles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Executive Officer recommends that:

1. The Board approves the Recommended Foundational Principles outlined in this report.
2. The Board direct the Chief Executive Officer to advance these Principles in any discussion and review of parking solution options at Exhibition Place related to the Ontario-Toronto New Deal Agreement.
3. The Board directs the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Board following discussions with the Province and the City, on any parking solution for the Board's approval.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications to this report.

DECISION HISTORY

In the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, several directional guidelines were established for staff as the Strategic Plan Goals are executed and delivered. One of those guidelines outlines the importance of connections and collaborative planning in revitalizing the site.

At its meeting of December 13, 14, and 15, 2023, City Council approved in principle the terms of the Ontario - Toronto New Deal Working Group Term Sheet. Further, City Council directed staff to execute any necessary agreements and report back to Council to seek authority to implement the Core Commitments.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.CC13.2>

COMMENTS

The Foundational Principles have been developed to provide a framework for discussions and the development of parking solution options. They are aligned with Board-approved planning directions, and operational impacts and implementation approaches will be considered against the principles. The Recommended Foundational Principles can be found in Section F of this report.

A. Business, Operational and Economic Impact

Exhibition Place is a flourishing centre for economic and community activities. The potential opportunity for using the grounds at Exhibition Place and the impact are significant because of the many tenants, clients, events, and cultural and heritage sites across the 192-acre campus. This mixture of commercial, entertainment, sporting

events, community activities, and cultural attractions within a single multi-use site is unique to North America.

These businesses and activities contribute to Exhibition Place's revenue and the City of Toronto's property tax assessments. Further, the financial impact on the region goes well beyond the revenue generated directly; Exhibition Place is an economic catalyst for ancillary financial interests in the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario and fuels the visitor and tourism economy.

Clients and tenants are attracted to Exhibition Place's proposition because of the grounds' broad-ranging and malleable capabilities. The Foundational Principles should not compromise this business-value advantage. This parking solution can enhance Exhibition Place's capacity to drive economic investments and expand capabilities for increased and diverse activation.

B. 2022-2026 Strategic Plan

The Board-approved Strategic Plan establishes a framework to guide the decision-making process at Exhibition Place. The Plan recognizes that the grounds and surrounding areas are in transition, with many current and planned infrastructure projects. The new Ontario Place concept was still emerging during the development of the Strategic Plan.

Central to the Strategic Plan are guidelines that will support staff as the grounds evolve in this complex environment. First among these guidelines is the stewardship role of Exhibition Place, which is to continue safeguarding and ensuring the upkeep of our historic assets for future generations. Further, other criteria highlighted were the need for enhanced connections and the promotion of complementary uses across both sites. New experiences with improvements to digital wayfinding, illuminated signage, upgraded lighting, and the alignment of look and feel linkages rounded out these guidelines.

Moreover, in addition to the above, the Strategic Plan is grounded on six Strategic Goals, which are relevant to framing the Foundational Principles.

- Promote site animation 365-days a year
- Exceed client and visitor expectations
- Solidify position as leading convention and event space
- Ensure competitively priced services and sustainable (green) operations
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- Enhance brand identity and promotion
- Invest in our people and culture

C. Next Place – Master Plan Phase 1 Proposal Report

City Planning and Exhibition Place staff undertook a master planning exercise in 2019. The Board received and confirmed support for the Master Plan at its June 24, 2020, meeting. The purpose of the Master Plan is to provide the overall planning framework to

guide physical change and future usage of the Exhibition Place grounds. The Plan had the following goals for Exhibition Place:

- Support its economic benefits to the City;
- Introduce public realm improvements that enhance the visitor experience;
- Rehabilitate heritage buildings and landscapes as a critical component of the Exhibition Place identity/sense of place;
- Leverage external initiatives that will significantly improve local and regional transit accessibility and connectivity; and,
- Establish City priorities and opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration with the revitalization of Ontario Place.

With a range of historical features and functions over the 192 acres, the Plan proposed a strategy to organize the Exhibition Place grounds according to their prevalent and chronicled program areas. Each of these zones - Relax, Entertain, and Exhibit – would be treated with a distinct public realm approach, generally summarized as follows:

The Relax Zone, at the west end of the site, features the greatest concentration of heritage buildings and landscapes. The focus is passive recreational opportunities and improved connections to Marilyn Bell Park and South Parkdale.

In the central area, the Entertain Zone provides an opportunity to create, and enhance gathering places, multipurpose public plazas, and north-south connections linking the Exhibition GO/TTC/Ontario Line transit hub, Ontario Place, and the neighbourhood to the north.

At the east end, the Exhibit Zone reinforces the formal axis of Princes' Boulevard with the Enercare Centre, Beanfield Centre, and the Hotel to support exhibition, meeting, and trade show functions. Enhanced linkages to Coronation Park, Gore Park, and Fort York/Bentway provide connectivity to the surrounding public realm network.

The Master Plan endorsed linking these thematic zones through a connected network of public realm amenities, wayfinding, green infrastructure, and open spaces.

The following are relevant recommendations emerging from the Plan that will influence the parking solution Foundational Principles and potential options:

- Delineate usage zones (Relax, Entertain, Exhibit) and identify target future infrastructure needs and development opportunities within each thematic zone;
- Identify connectivity between each zone within Exhibition Place, including the nature and type of support services, transportation and parking;
- Identify the linkages to future public transit and road networks;
- Accommodate emerging mobility technologies and innovations that complement transit and active transportation;
- Connecting and enhancing the public realm and maximizing green open space;
- Promote a clean and green environment;
- Create dynamic and diverse new places;

- Ensure that the preservation and interpretation of cultural and historical assets have a predominant position in the planning;
- Consider the future integration of the western waterfront plan, including a redeveloped Ontario Place.

D. Planning Framework / Zoning

Unlike other areas of the City where zoning by-laws govern development, Exhibition Place's development is regulated by the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. Section 406 of the *Act* entrusts its management and operations to the Exhibition Place Board of Governors and outlines the permitted uses. The *Act* directs that the lands will be used primarily for parks and exhibition purposes. It provides for expansion of permitted uses subject to approval by the City.

As an adjunct to the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* – Section 406, Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 63, Exhibition Place, Governance, provides further clarity on matters requiring Council approval. Section 6 clarifies delegated real estate authority. Since this parking solution will be a long-term commitment, section 6.4 (D) requires requisite approval when deliberating the final options.

“Where Exhibition Place wishes to proceed with a transaction that falls outside of the scope of authority delegated by Council pursuant to the Real Estate Approval Process, the CEO shall seek Council approval for such transaction by way of a joint report to Council together with the Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services. [Amended 2018-12-13 by By-law 17-201910].”

Exhibition Place contains numerous cultural heritage resources, including listed and designated properties, identified cultural heritage landscapes, and known archeological resources. On April 10, 2019, the Board received the Exhibition Place Cultural Heritage Landscape Assessment recommendations. The Cultural Heritage Landscape Assessment helps inform decision-making about the site's future development in relation to the conservation and rehabilitation of heritage attributes.

Additionally, several provincial and municipal statutes and by-laws govern any heritage or land-use decisions. The City of Toronto's Official Plan contains policies related to properties on the City's Heritage Register. Exhibition Place complies with these policies, which encourage the adaptive reuse of heritage properties.

These planning policies and legislation will continue to guide potential parking solutions and ensure alignment with the Ontario – Toronto New Deal.

E. TransformTO Net Zero Strategy

Toronto City Council has adopted an ambitious strategy to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions in Toronto to net zero by 2040 – 10 years earlier than initially proposed. The City's 2040 target is one of the most ambitious in North America. A summary of 2030 goals have been established as they relate to the City of Toronto Corporate Goals sector for public lands, as they apply to Exhibition Place include:

- City of Toronto corporate greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by 65 percent over 2008 base year
- All City Agency, Corporation, and Division-owned new developments are designed and constructed to applicable Toronto Green Standard Version 4 standard, achieving zero carbon emissions, beginning in 2022
- Greenhouse gas emissions from City-owned buildings are reduced by 60 percent from 2008 levels; by 2040, City-owned buildings reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions
- Cogeneration energy targets

F. The Recommended Foundational Principles

The above context informs the establishment of the following Foundational Principles. These principles will assist in effectively communicating and deliberating options between the parties to optimize the opportunity for the site from this investment and maximize the benefit to Exhibition Place and the local community.

The parking solution should:

- Be completely underground to ensure highest and best use of land;
- Align with City of Toronto's TransformTO Strategy;
- Provide additional public spaces/connections/community enhancements to the site;
- Include public realm investments that accompany the parking solution investment to enhance guest experiences and retain or expand existing programmable space;
- Demonstrate feasibility, a business case and an agreement with the City of Toronto on capital planning and operational maintenance that are at no cost to the City of Toronto;
- Include consideration of revenue sharing;
- Not materially impact Exhibition Place's short or long-term commercial business;
- Minimizes construction impact on Exhibition Place's business operations;
- Maintains Exhibition Place's existing parking inventory;
- Not undermine Exhibition Place parking revenue sources.

G. The Ontario Place Parking Solution Technical Table – Next Steps

In order to ensure effective alignment, a technical table has been convened between Exhibition Place, City, and Provincial staff. This working group has had early conversations confirming the scope, setting a work plan, and assessing the process. A term of reference has been developed that outlines membership on the committee, objectives / deliverables, scope of the project, and rules of engagement. The Foundational Principles will guide Exhibition Place staff in these discussions.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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