

Villiers Island Precinct - City-Initiated Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment - Supplementary Report on Maximizing Housing on the New Island

Date: June 10, 2024

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services and Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: Toronto-Danforth (Ward 14)

SUMMARY

This Supplementary Report responds to MM18.26, City Council's request to review key numbers and figures related to redevelopment of the new Island, currently known as Villiers Island. The report addresses questions related to maximizing of housing on the new Island, including the provision of affordable housing on non-City owned lands, heights and densities, development blocks, road rights-of-way and the public realm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services and the Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. The Planning and Housing Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The City Planning Division confirms that the resources required to complete any current year activities associated with the Public Realm and Infrastructure Design Study, can be accommodated through the 2024 City Planning Division and Waterfront Revitalization Initiative Capital Budgets. Any additional financial impacts would need to be identified and submitted for consideration through future budget processes.

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

DECISION HISTORY

On May 22, 2024, City Council adopted MM18.26 - Maximizing Housing on the New Island. This item directed City staff to provide a report on key numbers and figures related to redevelopment of the new Island.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.MM18.26>

COMMENTS

Achieving Affordable Housing Targets on the Island

Ownership of the Island's development parcels is as follows:

Figure 1 - Approximate Area of Development Blocks by Ownership Type

Ownership Type	Approximate Area
Public (Total)	8.5 hectares (21 acres)
• <i>Federal</i>	1.3 hectares (3.1 acres)
• <i>Municipal</i>	6.7 hectares (16.5 acres)
• <i>Waterfront Toronto</i>	0.6 hectares (1.3 acres)
Private (Total)	2.1 hectares (5.1 acres)
Total Blocks	10.6 hectares

Waterfront development is a collaborative effort involving the City, Provincial, and Federal governments. Reaching the 30 percent affordable housing target will require both financing and grant funding contributions from the Federal and Provincial governments. Detailed plans for securing affordable rental housing will be outlined in an update report on the Next Phase of Waterfront Revitalization, which is anticipated to be presented to the Executive Committee in Q4 2024, and in a Business and Implementation Plan for the new Island, anticipated to be presented to Executive Committee in Q4 2024 or early 2025.

For private lands, the City will use all available tools and programs to secure new affordable housing, although existing mechanisms are limited to what is enabled by legislation and City Council-approved policies.

The City has supported eligible private and non-profit organizations in creating affordable rental housing through the Open Door Program which has provided capital funding and financial incentives (which are not otherwise exempt through provincial legislation), including waivers of planning application fees, building permit fees,

development charges, CBCs and parkland dedication fees, and property tax exemptions, in return for securing a minimum 20% residential gross floor area as affordable rental housing at 100% average market rent and below for 40-99 years. The fee waivers apply to the affordable rental housing component and the property tax exemption is provided for the duration of affordability. A report to be considered by the Planning and Housing Committee at its meeting of June 13, 2024, will consider the new Rental Housing Supply Program, which outlines an enhanced framework for the city to support a range of rental homes including rent-geared-to-income, affordable, and rent-controlled homes. The report can be accessed here:
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.PH13.8>

Through the Rental Housing Supply Program, it is proposed that projects must dedicate at least 30 per cent of their residential gross floor area as affordable rental housing, and maintain affordability for at least 40 years, to be eligible to participate in the Program. Subject to the approval of the report by City Council, anticipated on June 26-29, 2024, the Rental Housing Supply Program will launch immediately to support rental housing projects on public, private and non-profit lands.

The Council-adopted Inclusionary Zoning framework does not apply to Villiers Island since it is not located within a Protected Major Transit Area (PMTSA). The City has requested provincial approval for city-wide Inclusionary Zoning to secure affordable housing alongside new zoning permissions, including areas outside of PMTSAs such as Villiers Island.

Height Restrictions Due to Federal Aviation Regulations

The Federal government has sole jurisdiction over airspace and aerodrome operations, including limiting the height of buildings and structures within flight paths for the purpose of protecting airport operations. Airport Zoning Regulations, enabled under the Canadian Aeronautics Act, restrict building heights near airports for this purpose. These protections are based on the standards that must be met for an airport to be certified for commercial operations.

The new Island is outside of the existing Airport Zoning Regulations (SOR/85-515) established in 1985 for Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. This is because the outer surface of the Airport Zoning Regulation does not include the area north of the runway approach surface. As a result, the northern boundary of the Airport Zoning Regulations generally aligns with Commissioners Street and, except for a very small portion of the western blocks, does not apply to future development blocks.

Beyond surfaces protected by Airport Zoning Regulations, airports have instrument flight procedures, published or approved by NAV Canada, that guide flight activity under certain conditions, such as bad weather. These instrument flight procedures are designed in accordance with federal standards known as TP 308, which require safe separation between aircraft and obstacles.

Several flight instrument procedures overlay the Island. The area of airspace protected by Airport Zoning Regulations does not always adequately protect instrument flight procedures. This is a national issue and is under review by Transport Canada.

While municipalities have limited authority to provide protections to airspace, the City encourages the review of building heights against instrument flight procedures as an ongoing part of the development approval process. The City, undertook a due diligence exercise, and engaged an independent aviation consultant to provide advice on the in-force instrument flight procedures. The consultant's analysis provided City staff with a better understanding of existing procedure and guidance on airspace considerations related to building heights. Based on available information on instrument flight procedures over the Island, the City will require its development partners to submit their detailed plans for NAV Canada and PortsToronto to review and assess impacts to the instrument flight procedures, and if necessary, coordinate appropriate responses. This review will also be necessary for the temporary erection of construction cranes.

Right-of-Way Widths

The widths of the rights-of-way for streets serving the Island have been determined through a series of Environmental Assessments associated with the Port Lands Flood Protection project, the Villiers Island Precinct Plan process, and the Port Lands and South of Eastern Transportation and Servicing Master Plan. Two of the rights-of-way (Cherry and Commissioners) have already been built through the Port Lands Flood Protection project.

The rights-of-way space on the Island is, on all future streets, at least fifty percent allocated to generous sidewalk and planting areas which people can move through, as well as gathering space. This space has been designed as an important livability aspect of the high-density environment of the Island. Given the opportunity to create a new community, and in recognition that people in high-rise apartment units often live in smaller private spaces, the need for generous and comfortable outdoor spaces is important.

The rights-of-way also include allocations for multi-modal movement, with cycle tracks, transitways and a limited amount of drive path space for servicing and private vehicles. A Vision Zero lens has guided street design here, seeking to create safe spaces for vulnerable road users. Green infrastructure is also embedded in the streets, with plant zones doubling as stormwater management infrastructure.

1. Right-of-Way Widths for Transit, Cycling Infrastructure

The transit right-of-way width is 7.0 meters, with additional variable space for transit stop platforms. For cycling infrastructure, the widths are set at 2.0 meters per cycle track with a buffer, or 3.6 meters for a multi-use pathway with a buffer. The transit right-of-way design will be further refined through the Waterfront East Light Rail Transit detailed design process; local road and cycle infrastructure designs will be refined through the Public Realm and Infrastructure Design Study.

Figure 2 - Typical Right-of-Way Allocation of Conceptual Street Types

Type of street*	Right of Way Width	Roadway Allocation	Parking Lane Allocation	Dedicated Bike Lane Allocation	Sidewalk Allocation	Buffer	Public Realm, Planting
Multi-Modal Streets and Transitways	40 metres	17%	N/A	10%	15%	4%	34%
Local Streets	20 metres	33%	12%	N/A	35%	N/A	20%
Pedestrian Priority Streets	20 metres	15%	12%	10%	35%	5%	23%
Non-Vehicular	19 metres	31% (fire route)	N/A	N/A	45%	N/A	24%

*The streets not yet built are subject to further design.

2. Right-of-Way Widths for Automobile Use

For automobile use, including service vehicles and private automobiles, the rights-of-way are proposed at 6.6 meters, consisting of two 3.3-meter-wide lanes, with parking areas at specific locations measuring 2.2 meters wide. On pedestrian priority streets, such as Centre Street, a single-direction drive lane of 3.0 meters is provided. The design of local roads, including areas designated for automobile use, will be further refined through the Public Realm and Infrastructure Design Study. The allocation of the rights-of-way to roadway varies but generally constitutes between 33 percent (for local roads) and 17 percent (for multi-modal streets). Approximately 12 percent of the rights-of-way for local streets are for on-street parking.

3. Right-of-Way Allocations for Public Realm and Planting Areas

Land dedicated to plantings will be for street trees and landscaping; it will also function as part of the Island's infrastructure system and be designed to help manage storm water, consistent with the City's Wet Weather Flow policy requirements. The allocation of the rights-of-way to public realm and planting areas varies but generally constitutes between 20 percent (for local roads) and 34 percent (for multi-modal streets). Beyond serving a working infrastructure role, these areas support urban heat island reduction and biodiversity objectives, ensuring that the public realm is integrated with environmental sustainability goals.

Options to Expand Development Blocks by Reallocating Right-of-Way Space

The potential to expand development blocks by reallocating space from the proposed right-of-way will be explored through the Public Realm and Infrastructure Design Study. This study will aim to optimize the local road right-of-way widths while maintaining necessary space for cyclists, pedestrians, plantings, and stormwater management. The Zoning By-law allows for reconsideration of road right-of-way widths, with final street network and block dimensions to be defined by a draft plan of subdivision or an equivalent mechanism.

The policy and zoning recommended to Council results in a density of 7.7 the area of the Island's publicly-owned development blocks overall, with densities of 9-10 times developable area on the western blocks and 7 times developable area on the eastern blocks. These densities are calculated based on the entire area of each development block, including open spaces such as mid-block connections, courtyards, and POPS. This density compares with downtown and transit-supportive communities across the City, and represents an appropriate level of density on the new Island.

Feasibility of Including Additional Housing on the Essroc Site (312 Cherry Street)

The feasibility of incorporating additional housing on the 312 Cherry Street site would require a review based on consideration of the Official Plan policies, specifically land use, heritage preservation, parkland and built form direction.

The Lake Ontario Portlands Cement Company Silos (Essroc Silos) are Designated heritage structures, and the area around the Silos is designated as Parks and Open Space within the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan. Through Official Plan Amendment 687, the area around the Essroc Silos was exempted from the Official Plan's policies which prohibit disposal of City-owned land in the Green Space System or Parks and Open Space Areas, provided that lands will continue to be included in the Green Space System. Identified as Silo Square within the Villiers Island Precinct Plan, this area is intended to house a Catalytic/Destination building, which could include a range of uses such as event spaces, cultural, entertainment, or sports facilities, institutional uses, or community hubs.

The inclusion of residential permissions would require a change in land use designation, from Parks and Open Space Areas to Regeneration Areas, as well as a review of cultural heritage and built form policies to allow a taller building in close proximity to the Essroc Silos, including minimum separation distance.

CONTACT

Abigail Bond, Executive Director, Housing Secretariat,
Abigail.Bond@toronto.ca, 416-338-1143

Carly Bowman, Director, Community Planning, City Planning,
Carly.Bowman@toronto.ca, 416-338-3788

David Stonehouse, Director, Waterfront Secretariat, City Planning,
David.Stonehouse@toronto.ca, 416-906-8247

SIGNATURE

Jag Sharma
Deputy City Manager, Development and Growth Services

Kerri A. Voumvakis
Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning