

**Villiers Island Precinct Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Land Owners and Users Advisory Committee
Meeting #3 Summary**

**Monday, September 28, 2015
Waterfront Toronto, Boardroom
4:30 – 6:30 pm**

Agenda Review, Opening Remarks and Introductions

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) and Land Owners and Users Advisory Committee (LUAC) members were welcomed by David Dilks, President at Lura Consulting, and thanked for attending the session. Mr. Dilks introduced the facilitation team from Lura Consulting and led a round of introductions of SAC/LUAC members as well as staff from the City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Urban Strategies Inc. The meeting format and materials were reviewed, and Mr. Dilks explained that the purpose of the meeting was to present and obtain feedback on the preferred Precinct Plan for Villiers Island. Committee members were reminded that the January 2015 meeting summary was circulated to them for comment prior to posting the final version on the project website.

Chris Glaisek, Vice President, Planning and Design at Waterfront Toronto, also welcomed SAC/LUAC members. Mr. Glaisek emphasized the importance of the SAC/LUAC in helping the project team better understand community and stakeholder perspectives. He also conveyed the project team's appreciation for the feedback provided by SAC/LUAC members throughout the precinct planning process.

A copy of the agenda is provided in Appendix A. A list of SAC/LUAC organizations that attended the meeting is included in Appendix B.

SAC/LUAC Briefing – Presentation of the Preferred Villiers Island Precinct Plan

The purpose of the third SAC/LUAC meeting for the Villiers Island Precinct Plan was to present and discuss the preferred Villiers Island Precinct Plan developed by Waterfront Toronto, the City of Toronto and Urban Strategies Inc.

A presentation by Amanda Santo, Director, Development Approvals for Waterfront Toronto, and Melanie Hare and Michel Trocmé, Urban Strategies Inc., reviewed the components of the preferred Precinct Plan, including:

- Vision and Precinct Plan
- Character Areas
- Activity and Uses
- Parks and Open Space
- Mobility and Access
- Cycling Network and Recreation Trails
- Next Steps
- Development Timelines
- Sustainability and Innovation
- Public Art
- Affordable housing

A copy of the presentation will be available online at www.portlandsconsultation.ca following the Fall 2015 community consultation meeting.

Facilitated Discussion – Questions of Clarification, Feedback and Advice

Following the briefing, SAC/LUAC members addressed the following discussion questions:

1. What are the strengths of the preferred plan?
2. What refinements, if any, would you suggest to the preferred plan? Why?
3. The length of the presentation needs to be reduced for the upcoming community consultation meeting. On what areas of the plan should we focus for this community presentation?

A summary of the feedback and advice is provided below, including both oral feedback and written comments submitted via comment forms. A more detailed account of the discussion can be found in Appendix C. Additional written feedback submitted by SAC/LUAC members after the meeting is included in Appendix D.

1. What are the strengths of the preferred plan?

- The proposed active transportation components of the precinct plan (e.g., bike lanes, trails, etc.).
- The Parks & Open Space system around the island's perimeter.
- The precinct plan supports the re-naturalization of the Don River (e.g., benefits to biodiversity).

2. What refinements, if any, would you suggest to the preferred plan? Why?

Streets and Blocks Plan

- Ensure safe and comfortable pedestrian connections from one end of the island to the other (e.g., plan for seasonal conditions, lighting, and different users such as children).
- Enhance connections between Villiers Island and the City (e.g., add another pedestrian crossing or bridge across the Keating Channel on the north-east side of the Island).
- Prioritize moving people over cars.
- **New Cherry Street**
 - Prioritize connections and connectivity along New Cherry Street, particularly to other precincts in the Port Lands as they develop.
 - Ensure New Cherry Street is designed to accommodate the new LRTs.
- **New Munitions Street**
 - Enhance connections between Villiers Island and the City at the north end of New Munitions Street.
- **Centre Street**
 - Concentrate grade-level commercial and retail uses on Centre Street to keep the street animated at all times;
 - Consider including non-retail or commercial uses to help animate Centre Street (e.g., public art, musicians, street performers, etc.).
 - Design Centre Street as a pedestrian mall.

- Support the possibility that Centre Street will be more “active” during the winter months.
- **Villiers Street**
 - Consider making Villiers Street the “water’s edge” street.
- **Keating Channel Promenade**
 - Consider the types of uses and amenities that will draw people and compel them to linger along the promenade.

Built Form Strategy

- Clarify how the built form strategy will support the development of a dynamic mixed-use community.
- Increase opportunities through built form for residents and visitors to enjoy views of the Don River, downtown core and city skyline (e.g., podiums, towers).
- Consider how the proposed built form strategy may be altered if development takes place incrementally over the long-term.
- Establish design guidelines to ensure future developments reflect the character of current buildings (e.g., structures on Old Cherry Street).

Public Realm Concepts – Uses and Amenities

- Establish a central focus that creates a sense of place on Villiers Island, emphasizing its unique location and relationship to the water (e.g., brand, identity).
- Ensure community services are available while development progresses.
- Create more opportunities that enhance connections to the water (e.g., water-based activities, swimming pool, etc.).
- Use the biodiversity framework to guide park and natural heritage planning on the island.
- **School Site**
 - Consider a joint model between the public and catholic school boards for the proposed elementary school.
 - Locate the community centre near the school to support the potential for joint programming and streamlining services.
- **Heritage Structures**
 - Ensure heritage structures are adapted with uses that are interactive, meaningful and engaging.
 - Re-purpose MT35 to attract people to the island (e.g., marina, swimming pool, marine heritage museum).
 - Retain the existing fire hall structure, adding modern facilities adjacent to it.
- **Catalytic Uses**
 - Reconsider the proposed catalytic uses – there is unlikely enough support for another large attraction in the City.

Existing Land Owners and Users

- Identify existing industrial uses on the concept plans (e.g., Lafarge).
- Convey to the public that current industrial uses will remain in the long-term.
- Acknowledge and clarify where compatibility issues are likely to occur in the precinct.

3. The length of the presentation needs to be reduced for the upcoming community consultation meeting. On what areas of the plan should we focus for this community presentation?

- Emphasize how the Villiers Island Precinct Plan supports the re-naturalization of the mouth of the Don River.

Next Steps

Ms. Santo informed SAC/LUAC members that Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto are working together to present the results of the planning studies currently underway for the Port Lands (e.g., Villiers Island Precinct Plan, Port Lands Planning Framework, South of Eastern Strategic Direction and Port Lands and South of Eastern Transportation and Servicing Master Plan) at a community consultation meeting (CCM) later this fall. A series of evening workshops will also be held after the CCM to provide opportunity for more discussion and input. The results of the studies will be presented to Council early in 2016.



Villiers Island Precinct Plan

**Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) and
Land Owners and Users Advisory Committee (LUAC) Meeting #3**

Waterfront Toronto, Boardroom

Monday, September 28, 2015

4:30 – 6:30 pm

AGENDA

- 4:30 pm** **Introductions, Agenda Review and Process Update/Recap**
David Dilks, Facilitator, Lura Consulting
Amanda Santo, Waterfront Toronto
- 4:45 pm** **Presentation of Preferred Villiers Island Precinct Plan**
Michel Trocmé, Urban Strategies
- 5:30 pm** **Roundtable Discussion**
1. What are the strengths of the preferred plan?
 2. What refinements, if any, would you suggest to the preferred plan? Why?
 3. The length of the presentation needs to be reduced for the upcoming community consultation meeting. On what areas of the plan should we focus for this community presentation?
- 6:25 pm** **Next Steps**
- 6:30 pm** **Adjourn**

Appendix B – List of Attendees

SAC/LUAC Meeting List of Attendees:

SAC

- CodeBlueTO
- Cycle Toronto
- Gooderham and Worts Neighbourhood Association
- Toronto Historical Association
- Transit Advocate
- Walk Toronto
- Resident

LUAC

- 33 Villiers Street
- Castlepoint/Kirkland Partnership Inc.
- CRM Canada
- First Gulf
- HydroOne
- Johnston Litavski/Lafarge
- Metro Toronto Convention Centre
- Redpath Sugar
- Toronto Fire Fighters Association
- Toronto Port Lands Company

Appendix C – Questions of Clarification, Feedback and Advice

A summary of the discussion following the SAC/LUAC briefing is provided below. Questions are noted with **Q**, responses are noted by **A**, and comments are noted by **C**. Please note this is not a verbatim summary.

Questions of Clarification

Q. Does the noise study include the night clubs located in the Port Lands (e.g., Polson Pier)?

A. No, the noise study focuses on industrial uses that are expected to remain in the long-term.

Q. Who prepared the pro forma that is used as the basis of the built form strategy? Can the pro forma be shared?

A. The pro forma was completed by a consultant retained by Waterfront Toronto. In light of the OMB appeal, it will not be circulated at this point.

Q. Most of the concept plans presented did not include MT35 in Promontory Park. Can you provide an update on the building – is it not structurally sound?

A. We anticipate more dialogue on its long-term use. MT35 was assessed as part of the heritage impact assessment (HIA) and found to have architectural value. We are working with Waterfront Toronto and the City to understand what that use should be, keeping in mind considerations such as cost, heritage and grading. There are a lot of questions that need to be answered through further study.

Q. Will the school be a public school or catholic school? A joint model between the public and catholic school boards should be considered for this location.

A. The school is planned as a public elementary school. The site is not large enough for a joint model. There are other areas in the Port Lands that the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) is interested in as it requires a larger catchment area to substantiate the need for a new school. The direction for the precinct plan is based on the broader Port Lands Planning Framework.

Q. Is the relocated fire station intended to be a functioning part of community infrastructure?

A. The existing fire hall, which is a listed heritage building, will be relocated just south of Commissioners Street to the terminus of New Munitions Street to accommodate development of Commissioners Street in accordance with the Lower Don Lands EA. There will be a new fire hall to service the emerging community, while optimizing the land and integrating other uses as much as possible. It is worth noting that the new fire hall is being envisioned as integrated building – so there is a different model for that.

Q. Has there been consultation with Toronto Fire Services?

A. We have a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of different service providers. The idea for the integrated facility came from fire services. We understand there are challenges associated with high rise living, which Fire Services is currently reviewing.

Q. How much will the streets be raised through re-grading?

A. Some areas will be raised as much as 2 metres.

Q. Are there programs or incentives to support the restoration of heritage buildings?

A. The City has a program; there is an application process. The work you are proposing to do must be restorative. We can connect you with someone who can provide you with more information.

Q. Will the river freeze over so people can skate on it during the winter months?

A. Currently, the Keating Channel freezes only to about Munitions Street. Whether the water freezes or not will depend on the channel depth and the flow from the Don River once it has been re-naturalized.

Q. Private development is not expected to begin until 2023 – what will prevent developers from acting before then?

A. Flood protection has to be in place before the land use designation can be changed.

Q. Are the proposed building heights an issue in terms of the flight paths to and from Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport?

A. We have been in discussions with the airport, providing them updates of our plans to ensure there are no concerns in terms of building heights. There are height limits but we are within them.

Feedback and Advice

C. I like all the active transportation components presented (e.g., bike lanes, trails, etc.). My concern is that the precinct seems isolated from everything else. Prioritize connections and connectivity along Cherry Street and to the other precincts in the Port Lands as they develop.

C. Munitions Street is an important connection to the north – a lot of work needs to be done to figure out how that connection continues north, especially in the context of the Gardiner Expressway and surrounding road system. It is necessary to ensure those connections are strong. I understand the rationale to concentrate activity around the Keating Channel and New Cherry Street, but I am struggling to understand what Centre Street becomes; right now it feels like a laneway. Will the residential buildings front onto Centre Street?

A. The intent of fronting the buildings on Centre Street is to create a strong pedestrian focus. It is important to ensure frontage on almost all the streets in the street and block configuration given that it is one of the principles of the framework. A comment at an earlier SAC/LUAC meeting suggested concentrating retail and commercial uses on other streets, like New Cherry Street, while strategically locating some of those uses at intersections on Centre Street to help keep it animated.

Q. Where will servicing and loading take place?

A. Centre Street will still be accessible to cars, however, servicing and parking would be accommodated through the laneways and north south streets. Over time there may be an opportunity for Centre Street to become a pedestrian-only street. The transportation network was designed to support that option if it is desired. The other issue is that it is likely not possible to support retail on New Cherry Street, the Keating Channel Promenade and Centre Street simultaneously when development starts, but there may be market support over time. The buildings will be designed to protect for that use/ability.

Q. What is the population projected for the island?

A. The estimate is about 10,000 residents/employees.

Q. The view across the Keating Channel should be emphasized and the fact that this plan supports the re-naturalization of the mouth of the Don River (e.g., benefits to biodiversity). What is the timeline for the construction of New Cherry Street?

A. That would be part of the flood protection and enabling infrastructure work. Any major infrastructure that is needed to support flood protection will be constructed during the timeline presented.

C. The school and community centre should be located closer to each other. Within the timeframe that Villiers Island will be developed, the City or even the country may implement a more comprehensive approach to childcare. It would be desirable to be able to use the community centre for afterschool programming. Connections between the school and community centre should also be considered from a pedestrian perspective (e.g., children walking to after school programs). There is also a need to limit the duplication of services.

A. We are holding two locations as potential sites for the community centre, one of which is in close proximity to the school. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) loves the site, which was strategically chosen. There is a TDSB requirement for a certain number of children to reside in an area before building a new school. This is an ideal location for them as it does not place restrictions on development timing. Villiers Island will not develop overnight; people will live on the island as construction progresses from west to east over 15 years. The Community Centre is located in the first phase of development. We want to ensure community infrastructure is in place from the beginning.

C. There are other issues about walkability (e.g., distance, seasonal conditions, and lighting) that need to be considered to ensure safe and comfortable pedestrian connections from one end of the island to the other.

C. I appreciate the work completed on the greenspace around the island's perimeter and encourage that work to continue with the biodiversity framework mentioned during the presentation. There is potential to do more fine grained work in the park land, while balancing biodiversity and population needs. There is a need for another pedestrian trail or bridge across the Keating Channel on the eastern end of the island (near the school site) to enhance connectivity and the transition between the proposed character areas. This connection would of course have to negotiate the road system to the north (e.g., Lake Shore Boulevard) and the re-naturalization of the Don River.

A. We did consider expanding the boardwalk along the Keating Channel near the school, but the flow of the river through this area is critical and will impact the feasibility of developing any structures. The character of New Munitions Street needs to be considered as we move forward as part of the pedestrian framework. One of the most logical ways to connect further down into the precinct will be along New Munitions Street.

C. My concerns are about the proposed truck route and the results of the noise study – I will save my comments for that meeting.

A. We are in the final stages of that work and will have a meeting sometime in the near future.

C. I am frustrated and disappointed – I have been attending these meetings for about 12 years now and despite consistently conveying otherwise, there continues to be an assumption that Lafarge will go away. Industrial uses were referred to in the presentation as only current or past land uses. This is an active port with industries that will remain in the long-term (e.g., Red Path, Lafarge). There was mention of a noise study, which acknowledges potential compatibility issues and the need to mitigate them. At this time, those compatibility issues are not completely clear. The concern is that the public will view these plans and also assume that Lafarge and other industries on the Island plan to move away.

A. That is a point well taken – the concepts will be updated to include the existing industries. We are very appreciative that Lafarge has been supportive throughout the noise and air quality study. The consultant is in the process of identifying the equipment upgrades that would be necessary to accommodate future residential development in the area adjacent to Lafarge. We acknowledge that there are still some unknowns in terms of compatibility issues.

C. The feedback and ideas captured in the last SAC/LUAC meeting summary have not been integrated into the preferred plan. The plan could be mistaken for a subdivision located anywhere – there is no central focus. The uses and activities that would contribute to a sense of place are scattered throughout the island. My concern is that Centre Street will become a deserted back alley. Commercial and retail uses should be concentrated on Centre Street to ensure it is animated at all times. This is an amazing site – but the plan does not convey its special relationship to the water. The last time Villiers Street was presented, it was shaping up to be a nice waterfront promenade. Now it appears to be an ordinary street between two rows of buildings. This seems like a lost opportunity – what has been emphasized in the SAC/LUAC meetings from the beginning is the need to create a sense of place with vitality, while emphasizing the island’s unique location and relationship to the water. Consider scrapping the catalytic use – the City is unlikely to get a new opera house or art gallery – and re-purpose MT35 as a public marina or pool to draw people to the island.

A. There are three locations on the Island with access to the water. Water access east of New Cherry Street is not feasible due to planned infrastructure and boat use. There is also an opportunity for ferry access on the western dock. We did look at two different options for the north side of Villiers Street, in the end we opted to increase the public space on the north side of the street instead of having a centre median. The intent is to enhance the public realm and connectivity; Front Street in the West Don Lands is a good example of the vision for Villiers Street.

Q. What do you envision along the Keating Channel Promenade?

C. A water’s edge like the seaside in Brighton or the Colonnade des Anglais. With this plan, the water’s edge would be lined with the backs of buildings. Align Villiers Street with the water’s edge.

A. To clarify, the buildings located between Villiers Street and the Keating Channel Promenade have frontage on both streets. We see this as one of the most vibrant streets in the precinct. Centre Street is not intended to be a back lane rather a neighbourhood street. We’re focusing a lot of effort on Villiers Street and the Keating Channel Promenade; Centre Street has an important but secondary role in terms of activity (Île de la Cité in Paris is an example but with inverse uses).

C. Ensure that infrastructure for community services keeps pace with development and the needs of existing land users.

C. I echo the comment made earlier that industry is here to stay.

C. There is a lot of potential for Centre Street to become a vibrant “central” street. I do have some concerns with the massing and land use strategy – I am sceptical that it will lead to a true mix of uses that will support the development of a dynamic place. We have submitted an application for 309 Cherry Street which is not reflected in the plan.

C. This plan has the potential to run into some of the challenges occurring at Fort York (i.e., CityPlace), which was a City generated plan similar to this one. In this plan, there are four 8-10 storey buildings running parallel to each other, one of which looks south to the new river while the others are compromised by the face of next building. All the lessons learned that support the use of podiums and towers are lost in this plan. Centre Street from a built form perspective is a disaster – 8-10 storey buildings on both sides of the street, without public uses at grade and constant shadows will lead to its desertion. I agree the public uses should be located at the periphery, but that leaves Centre Street with nothing. The scheme fails to produce views of the harbour, downtown core or the re-naturalized Don River. I don’t have any problems with the periphery of the plan, but I am concerned about the

built form which I don't think is going to unfold in reality as it is laid out on paper. Centre Street will not be animated and realistically development will be completed on a project by project basis. The commentary from this group at previous meetings is not reflected in the plan.

C. Villiers Island is being promoted as a destination, in addition to being a place to live. However, connections to the island are limited (e.g., one transit access point and two vehicular access points). It's important to consider what will attract people to the Keating Channel Promenade and compel them to stay – this in part depends on the results of the Gardiner East EA and how the surrounding area will evolve over time. I agree you are going to draw people away from Centre Street, unless there is also something there to attract people (e.g., public art, musicians, street performers, etc.) other than commercial or retail uses. The amenities that support active transportation are great; consider creating opportunities for canoeing, paddle boating, etc. where possible. The retention and creative adaptive re-use of the island's heritage structures is excellent – ensure the future uses are interactive, meaningful and engaging. Make sure the large community space near Cherry Street includes a full suite of services (e.g., library, gym, neighbourhood movie theatre). I am uncertain about the viability of catalytic uses such as an amphitheatre or concert hall. The City has a lot of marine heritage – consider adapting MT35 as a museum of marine heritage with views of the waterfront. Overall, there is a need for more creative thinking about the uses that will draw people to the island.

C. Opportunities for people to connect to the water have disappeared. There is no place for kids to play. Centre Street itself should be a pedestrian mall. Any new structures on Old Cherry Street should be designed to reflect what is there now. I am concerned about the transportation corridor – ensure New Cherry Street includes tracks for the new LRTs. Prioritize moving people over moving cars.

C. What you have proposed along the water looks great. There is still a need to give the island a distinct identity (e.g., theme, brand). Draw on the island's history and current uses to give it a sense place that makes an impact on people.

C. There is potential for Centre Street to see more activity during the winter months, when the outer edges of the island are exposed to the cold.

C. I would also prefer to locate the school near the community centre.

Appendix D – Additional Written Feedback

Comments and feedback submitted by SAC/LUAC members after the meeting are included below.

Walk Toronto:

- Needs a swimming pool, perhaps with a retractable roof that relates well to the water's edge with nice decks and refreshment stands, etc. adjacent.
- Every effort should be made to retain and repurpose MT35 or a significant part of it.
- Fire Hall should be retained where it is and modern facilities added adjacent to it.
- Heritage structures lose much of their significance when they are moved.
- Place community centre and school in close proximity to each other to facilitate after school and other programs as well as the efficient use of facilities.
- Improve north-south pedestrian crossing at east end of the island over the Keating Channel and rerouted Don River.