



WATERFRONTToronto

Don Mouth Naturalization & Port Lands Flood Protection Project Environmental Assessment

Public Information Centre

Meeting Notes

January 27, 2010

PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE
Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project
Thursday, January 27, 2010

Toronto Fire Academy
895 Eastern Avenue, Toronto

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

SUMMARY NOTES

The purpose of the Public Information Centre was to:

- Provide an overview of Waterfront Toronto's Lower Don Lands area to provide the context for the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project Environmental Assessment (DMNP EA);
- Provide an update on the DMNP EA;
- Remind the public how this project started back in 1989, where we are now, and what more needs to be done to see the project proceed;
- Identify the project benefits as it relates to the original Goal Statement developed during the Terms of Reference Stage;
- Present the idealized Construction Phasing Strategy;
- Summarize the potential effects that will occur during construction and their mitigation strategies;
- Introduce the monitoring and adaptive management program; and
- Identify "next steps".

70 people signed in at the meeting, and the following points summarize the feedback received:

- The general response from the public was positive, and many indicated their support and enthusiasm towards DMNP project. Numerous comments focused on the need for community engagement and city councillors for this project to get funded. Discussion about developing a community lobby group was made.
- Participants had a number of questions for members on the project team during the Public Information Centre, ranging from the functionality of weirs and the greenway, to the water contaminant concerns for the Keating Channel and the possibility of facilitating a natural curling ice for community events.
- There was a suggestion to include funding estimates on life-cycle costing principles including adaptive management in the Environmental Assessment report.

Please refer to remainder of this report for more detailed notes.

1.0 Public Information Centre

The Open House portion of this event began at 6:00 p.m. Members of the public were invited to sign in and view display boards showing:

- Overview of the Lower Don Lands area;
- Benefits of the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project;
- Overview of the Project Phasing Strategy;
- Summary of the project effects and mitigation strategies; and
- Next steps.

Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA), Waterfront Toronto (WT), AECOM and SENES staff members were on hand to answer questions throughout the event. All participants received the following information and were asked to fill out the Participant Workbook with comments on the materials presented at the meeting as they signed in:

- Meeting agenda and Participant Workbook
- Don Mouth Naturalization and Portlands Flood Protection Project Newsletter Volume #8, January 2010.

All of the meeting materials listed above are available on the TRCA website at:

<http://trca.on.ca/protect/environmental-assessment-projects/don-mouth-naturalization-and-port-lands-flood-protection-project/whats-new.dot>

Display boards and laptops were also available during the Public Information Centre to depict the Regulatory Flood Modelling output for the existing conditions and Concept Design.

Copies of the Poster boards are found in **Appendix A**. A copy of the presentations are available in **Appendix B**. A synopsis of public comments submitted as part of the Workbooks is available in **Appendix C**.

2.0 Welcome and Opening Remarks

Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator, Swerhun Consulting, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. She stated that this Public Information Centre (PIC) is the final PIC for public comment on the DMNP EA prior to submission for Ministry of the Environment (MOE) review. The PIC would start with an overview summary of Waterfront Toronto's Lower Don Lands to set the context for the DMNP EA. The second presentation would then focus on providing an update for the DMNP EA, including a summary of benefits, phasing strategy, construction effects and their mitigation, the monitoring and adaptive management program, and next steps.

Nicole went over the contents within the Participant Workbook and invited the participants to fill out the forms and provide thoughts and comments.

3.0 Lower Don Lands Presentation: Waterfront Toronto

Chris Glaisek, Vice President Planning and Design, Waterfront Toronto, identified that the Lower Don Lands design focuses on a sustainable planning strategy that creates a balance between the urban form and the naturalized Don River. The fundamental elements of the Lower Don Lands design are to relocate the mouth of the river to the heart of the new River Precinct; retain the Keating Channel to

both celebrate its industrial heritage and create a new urban public realm as part of the Keating Precinct; and to intensify the community and business development in the area.

Key sustainability components were highlighted for the Lower Don Lands design. These included:

- Greenroof stormwater harvesting to be used to irrigate street trees, provide circulation to the Keating Channel and possibly support seepage wetlands in the naturalized areas;
- Carbon neutral neighbourhoods;
- Daylight penetration to be maximized within the precincts and natural areas;
- Convenient transit system layouts;
- Effective trail network for multi-users; and
- A mixture of passive and active recreation.

Chris indicated that this project is necessary for the city, not only for the naturalization and enhancement of the Don Mouth, but also to provide flood protection for approximately 1,000 homes and businesses currently at risk of flooding within the Port Lands, Leslieville and South Riverdale areas, and allows for the proposed redevelopment in the Lower Don Lands to proceed.

4.0 Final results of the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project EA Presentation: Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA)

Paul Murray, Vice President, AECOM Canada Limited, on behalf of the DMNP EA team, presented a summary of the planning process to date (since 1991), the Project Benefits, Construction Phasing Strategy and Effects, the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan, and Next Steps for the DMNP EA (**Appendix B**).

Paul started by reminding the audience that the first concept for a naturalized mouth of the Don, was suggested by the Task Force to Bring Back the Don in 1991. A revised vision for a naturalized Don Mouth was later presented in “Unlocking the Port Lands” in 1999. These grassroots planning initiatives resulted in a naturalized Don Mouth being incorporated in Toronto’s Central Waterfront Secondary Plan in 2001. Once recognized in the City of Toronto’s Official Plan, TRCA was identified by Waterfront Toronto to undertake the DMNP EA in late 2004. TRCA’s Terms of Reference for the DMNP EA was approved by the Province in 2006. In 2007, Waterfront Toronto undertook a design process to revisit how the built form and natural areas are integrated for the entire Lower Don Lands area. The winning vision of the design competition was incorporated into the DMNP EA as one of several alternatives to be considered in 2007, which ultimately led to the development of the preferred alternative as presented to the public in 2009.

Paul then identified the project benefits offered by the Concept Design that specifically met the three main elements of the project goal:

1. Flood protection to the Regulatory Flood level;
2. The creation of high quality habitat; and
3. A high level integration between the river and urban environment.

Computer generated hydraulic models indicated that the concept eliminated the risk of flooding from the Don River to over 200 hectares of land which included hundreds of households, commercial businesses and industrial sites that are currently at risk from flooding.

It was also shown that over 13 hectares of high quality of wetlands, 12 hectares of high quality aquatic habitat, and 12 hectares of terrestrial habitat and open space will be created through this project; recreational boat uses in the area will be enhanced; and the trail systems will not only be maintained but enhanced.

Due to the large scale of the project, the construction will occur in phases (**See Appendix B**):

Phase 1: Promontory

Phase 2: Ship Channel Wetland (Reach 3a)

Phase 3: Creation of the Mouth (Reach 4 and South Promontory)

Phase 4: Reach 3 & 2

Phase 5: Reach 1

Phase 6: Reach 2a

Once constructed, this project offers huge benefits for the City of Toronto. However, like all construction projects, there are some potential negative impacts that need to be identified and managed.

- Existing low quality aquatic habitat will be lost due to lakefill into the Inner Harbour as part of the construction of the promontories. The loss of this poor quality habitat will be more than compensated for by the construction of the extensive high quality wetland and aquatic habitat proposed by the DMNP project;
- Shipping use of 2,700 m of dock walls will be lost due to lake filling and changes in land use. These losses will be offset by the creation of several thousand more linear metres of shoreline being made available for small recreation vessels by the DMNP EA, and through ongoing discussion between Waterfront Toronto and the Port Authority.
- Removal of two heritage buildings – The Marine Terminal Building at Polson Quay and an old maintenance shack on the Keating Channel will either be relocated or commemorated. The design avoided all other heritage structures in the area which will be incorporated as part of the urban form through the Lower Don Lands Precinct Planning process.
- Disruption or relocation of two private land owners – Lafarge and Unilever will either be relocated or compensated. A private grocery store on public lands will also need to be relocated as part of the Precinct Planning activities. All other private landowners in the Lower Don Lands area can be accommodated in the area.
- Management of soil and ground water from construction will adhere to Waterfront Toronto's soils and groundwater strategy.
- Disruptions to traffic and servicing may occur during construction. These impacts will be mitigated by providing alternative access routes and maintaining existing servicing while construction is underway.
- Cost of construction: this will be an expensive project to implement (hundreds of millions of dollars). However, to unlock the billions of dollars of potential investment to the Lower Don Lands and Port Lands area, this work must be undertaken.

To accommodate changes in environment, regulations and uncertainty, a robust monitoring and adaptive management program is being incorporated into the EA approvals to ensure that the EA remains valid over time, to ensure that the design continues to meet the project objectives, and to ensure that the project functions as desired once completed.

Paul identified the next steps of the DMNP EA is to:

1. Receive City Council approval of the draft DMNP EA;

2. Release the draft EA to stakeholders and the public for review and comment prior to submission to the Ministry of the Environment
3. Submit the DMNP EA to the province for approval in summer 2010, and the CEAA Screening to the federal government for approval in fall 2010
4. Receive approvals of the submitted EAs in Spring 2011 (if all proceeds according to expectations); and
5. Initiate detailed design once funding is made available to proceed. Once funding is available, it is anticipated that the construction will take approximately 10 years to complete.

5.0 Feedback on the Presentation

Questions and comments are noted below in italics, followed by response from the project team.

C: I really believe that this project will be successful in getting funding and proceeding into the next stage. But we need to keep the focus on enhancing nature, natural process and enhancing the ecosystem a priority, and not lose it to the development of roads and structures. I believe that keeping this as a priority will assist in getting the public support, the councillors support and generate funding for this project. We, as the public, need to approach councillors and illustrate our interest in this project.

Q1. It was not a good idea to have a design competition for this project, it should have been done through a negotiated process where ideas and comments discussed in the previous meeting be applied; if this were so, the plan would have more green space and less development. I have concerns regarding the development: Triangular area near Filmport should act as wetland and greenspace, the height of the buildings needs to be reduced, the Keating Channel should incorporate some form of naturalization and the developments in the area should not have court yard type of space that are only visually pleasing.

The design competition provided tremendous vision of what this area can be. Without the design competition, we would have only worked on the basic concepts of naturalizing the river and the flood protection; we would not have focus on the development of the lands that hold such economic opportunity. There are natural enhancements being proposed to the Keating Channel for improved aquatic habitat and over 20 acres of public space that ties to other amenities (Distillery, Abercrombie Park, St. Lawrence market and the Don River).

C2. This plan far exceeds anything I've seen, and I am very pleased and in support of it. The people within the neighbourhood will have access to the river, the bay as well as the lake; but I would like to see more bridges and easier access to the new area. It would be great to have a pond that would freeze in winter so we can have curling matches.

C3. It has been a huge privilege to be a part of this project and to see this project evolve to this "gift to the city" very fulfilling. There were many issues and problems identified in previous meetings, but it seems that they all have been addressed and I would like to thank the efforts of the staff involved in this project. A large portion of the presentation focused on the environmental aspects, but I think will be great to identify the lifestyle and leisure enhancements this project will bring. Let's be more passionate and celebrate this project.

Q2. As a resident in the area, I feel that the design demonstrates a "corporate feel" and not enough community elements. I don't want this area to be like downtown Toronto where the weekdays

are packed with cars while weekends become ghost towns. What kind of corporate and residential uses were you thinking in the design process?

The fundamental principle is the amount of density as illustrated by the City of Toronto Secondary Plan. This is predominantly thought of as a residential community, and not a corporate business park. There have been efforts to create a more community-like feel to the area by incorporating sidewalks and more lighting on the sidewalks and buildings.

A factor that creates a lively neighbourhood is having people living and working in the same area at all times of day and week. The challenge in doing this is not developing residential buildings but getting the employment in the area; to accommodate this, the plan demonstrates a mixed land use that promotes residential housing and employment within the area.

Q3. Can you explain more in detail the daylight and shadowing elements of the plan? Illustrations from tonight and what I've seen previously are different.

Sun penetration into the plan was taken very seriously in our designs. To accommodate this, taller buildings will be strategically located to provide maximum sunlight to ground levels with a minimum of 5 hours of sunlight per day during critical year and minimum 7 hours along the public spaces.

Q4. Is the lake water quality better than the river water quality? Can you explain the purposes of weirs?

Currently, the lake water is better quality than the river. The enhancement of river water quality will be based strongly upon its water management systems and treatment facilities upstream. However, the weirs do not influence the quality of water; they are placed to separate the river flow from the Keating Channel. We recognize that it is important to have a steady flow of water in the Keating Channel to provide aeration and healthy habitat.

Q5. There were talks about the Ship Channel Wetland being a recreational land. Please elaborate on the decision making process.

A public workshop was held to discuss the "greenway". The overall opinions from those engaged in this process were that the greenway should not be for active recreation, but for habitat creation. There are numerous recreational areas imposed in the plan elsewhere.

Q6. What is the standpoint on the Toronto Port Authority? Are they supportive of this plan? Do they have issues?

Toronto Port Authority (TPA) is a significant stakeholder in this project and has been consulted diligently by Waterfront Toronto and the TRCA. If you'd like to know their opinion, you would have to wait for their response and comments on the EA. Previously, TPA raised an issue regarding the promontory and its potential risk of navigation of their boats. A navigation risk assessment was considered to ensure this project does not impact the boat movements in the inner harbour.

Q7. Is there possibility of raising private funding through elements such as naming rights of the river?

There were talks about naming rights and raising revenue for the ongoing capital and maintenance of parks. It is something that the City is looking into, but no definitive decision has been made as of yet. However, looking for private funding is an option being considered.

- C4. I think the construction staging is very well laid out. The development of the wetland first hand will create awareness and public support for the project.*
- C5. I'd like to congratulate the team for coming this far into the project and hope that this project will move forward. Can you clarify how residents using the public transit would get to downtown? It makes sense to me that the Light Rail Transit needs to be available during the construction phase in the area.*
- C8. I'm very glad that there is a definite wetland and aquatic habitat associated with the plan and you are to be congratulated on that. I think it would be wonderful to create and allow access for boats, vessels and yachts to enter the Keating Channel.*
- Q8. What process was undertaken in removing or relocating privately owned heritage buildings? What kind of outreach has been done?*

We have a list of heritage buildings in the study area and have worked closely with Heritage Toronto regarding their involvement in the project. The private owners of these heritage facilities were consulted through numerous meetings and were updated on the scheduling, process and how they will be affected by this project.

- C9. We need to gain public engagement on this project and address our interests to the city councillors. Messaging such as: "Many rivers embedded within cities are in poor condition, this project could put Toronto as a leader in river restoration" and creating local community groups to create awareness is an important factor for this project to receive funding.*
- C10. Although the design of the river mouth imitates a natural form, it is a man made structure. Are there any other projects around the world that have done similar to this that so that we can confidently say, this will work?*

Detailed surveys have been conducted on other river mouths in effort to mimic the function of other coastal wetland. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the integration between ecology and channel form; how they are influenced by watershed discharges; and the relationship between ecology, hydrology and general shape of the mouth. There were considerable efforts to apply findings that best imitate a real natural river mouth. This process is closely watched by a group called "Aquatic Habitat Toronto", which includes members from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), and TRCA ecologists and other consultants sponsored by Waterfront Toronto. The data retrieved by the surveys of natural river mouths are being applied to other smaller projects to test its dependability.

- C11. Citizenship participation and communication is a very important factor. There are community groups such as the Don Watershed Regeneration Council, Task Force to Bring Back the Don, and West Donlands Committee who are very active. There is also a Facebook group "Rise of the New Don" that is an opportunity for people to gain more access to this project and provide comments and feedback.*

6.0 *Closing Remarks*

Adele Freeman thanked and congratulated the public, staffs and consultants that contributed to this project. She indicated that the individuals who are interested in providing feedback and comments can request a copy of the DMNP EA report.



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**Appendix A
Poster Boards**

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**Appendix B
Presentations**

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**Appendix C
Public Workbook Response**

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Summary of Answers from the Participant Workbook

Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project
Public Information Centre, January 27, 2010