



WEST DON LANDS BACKGROUNDER

The West Don Lands will be one of Toronto's next great neighbourhoods - a community that is people focused, family friendly, beautifully designed and environmentally sustainable. The neighbourhood has already received Stage 1 LEED ND GOLD (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighbourhood Development) certification under the pilot program established by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Encompassing a 32 hectare (80 acre) area that runs from Parliament Street in the west to the Don River in the east, and from King Street down to the rail corridor, the West Don Lands is being transformed from former industrial lands into a sustainable, mixed-use riverside community. It will feature 6,000 new residential units, ample space for employment and commercial uses, at least one elementary school, and two child-care centres - all encircled by 10 hectares of parks and public spaces.

Development of the area is being accelerated because it is the site of the 2015 Pan American Games Athletes' Village. Originally planned to be built out over 10 to 12 years in three phases, now more than half of the West Don Lands will be completed for the Games in June 2015. Following the Games, the Athletes' Village will be converted into a range of housing options.

Largely owned by the Provincial Government, the West Don Lands occupies a unique site at the original mouth of the Don River. While the river has been channelized and the shoreline has shifted south, the essence of the site remains a low-lying river delta.

The area is a brownfield site in a flood plain and site remediation and flood protection are required before any development can occur. Since 2007 the Ontario Realty Corporation, on behalf of Waterfront Toronto, has been working on the construction of the area's massive flood protection landform which when complete will protect a 99 hectare (245 acre) area, including Toronto's financial district, from flooding.

Parks and Public Spaces

The West Don Lands will feature more than 10 hectares (25.5 acres) of parks and public spaces. The dynamic Don River Park which will be built on top of the flood protection landform will be the centrepiece of the community and a destination for the entire city. The seven-hectare (17 acre) park will feature a rich and diverse mixture of landscape experiences. Once complete in 2011, visitors will enjoy the park's many attractions and amenities, including a pavilion and informal amphitheatre, a multi-use sports field, a skating area, and an urban meadow and open lawns in which to play, wander and discover. Construction will begin on Don River Park this summer and it is expected to be complete in late 2011.

Creating beautiful and engaging public space is a significant part of Waterfront Toronto's revitalization plan for the West Don Lands. The public art strategy developed for the area is the first community scale comprehensive public art master plan to be implemented in Canada. The strategy presents a comprehensive vision and framework for the integration of public artworks throughout the West Don Lands. It includes recommendations for a diverse range of art opportunities that will greatly enrich the community.

Underpass Park, located under and around the Eastern Avenue and Richmond/Adelaide overpasses, was identified as a key public art opportunity. The park will be the most extensive park to ever be built under an overpass in Canada, and the first ever in Toronto. It will transform derelict and underused space into a bright, new, urban neighbourhood amenity with key pedestrian connections and passageways. Construction is slated to start in May 2010 and the park is scheduled to open in spring 2011.

A new and innovative street design will be used for some of the small local streets in the West Don Lands. Used extensively in Europe, woonerfs are pedestrian-oriented streets that erase the boundary between sidewalk and street and provide a common public space shared by pedestrians, cyclists and low-speed motor vehicles. The woonerfs in the West Don Lands will be the first in Toronto.

The West Don Lands will be fully served by transit through a new streetcar line on Cherry Street. Initially the line will run between King Street and the rail corridor, but eventually it will connect to the line on Queens Quay Boulevard and into the Port Lands. After extensive community consultation and collaboration with the City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission, a unique street design featuring streetcars in their own right-of way next to the eastern sidewalk of Cherry Street was adopted.

Development

Waterfront Toronto's first private sector development project is River City in the West Don Lands. Developed by Urban Capital the \$250 million to \$300 million project includes more than 900 loft-styled condominium and townhouse units as well as boutiques, stores and restaurants. Designed by Saucier + Perrotte Architects and ZAS Architects, two of Canada's most respected and award-winning design firms, River City will be a collection of bold forms and innovative spaces. In keeping with Waterfront Toronto's vision, River City is a LEED Gold, carbon-neutral development. It will be built in the area that runs from King Street in the north, to the new Don River Park in the south, and from the extension of River Street in the west to Bayview Avenue in the east. River City's sales centre is now open and its initial sales launch was hugely successful. Construction is slated to begin this fall and the first phase of occupancy is planned for 2012.

The West Don Lands will feature a range of housing options for people at all stages of life and income levels, including 1,200 affordable housing units. Toronto Community Housing Corporation is developing the first complex comprised of three buildings of affordable housing.

Construction of the 243 unit development designed by Baird Sampson Neurt Architects will start in spring 2010 and occupancy is expected in early 2012.

Awards

2004: The West Don Lands Precinct Plan received the Public Sector Quality Award for Public Consultation.

2005: The West Don Lands received the Award of Excellence as part of the City of Toronto's Architecture and Urban Design Awards.