



**TORONTO WATERFRONT  
REVITALIZATION CORPORATION**

# Lake Ontario Park Master Plan Meeting Report - Public Forum #2

January 17, 2007



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## Background

The Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (TWRC) was created by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto in 2001 to transform the waterfront of Toronto into beautiful and sustainable new communities, parks and public spaces. The notion of great public spaces is central to TWRC's vision of a revitalized waterfront, and Lake Ontario Park is a vital part of that vision.

Lake Ontario Park was identified in 2003 in TWRC's Parks and Public Spaces Framework as one of the Corporation's signature projects. The Park, which will stretch from Cherry Beach in the west to the R.C. Harris Filtration Plant in the east, is envisaged as a landmark park that will become a defining destination for the city, much as Stanley Park does for Vancouver.

The development of the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan began in April 2006, with the retention by TWRC of a design team led by Field Operations from New York City. In Phase 1 of its work, the design team developed an understanding of the complex nature of the site, the existing resources and the current uses. This involved extensive review of existing documentation, meetings with partners and key stakeholders, and the holding of a Public Forum on June 8, 2006 at Cherry Beach to gather ideas and future visions for the Park.

A second Public Forum was held on January 17, 2007 at the Radisson Admiral Hotel to present the Concept Plan for Lake Ontario Park. An Open House was held from 6:00 to 7:00 to allow participants to view displays and the formal meeting followed. An estimated 350 (?) people attended the Open House and meeting.

This Meeting Report has been prepared by Joanna Kidd of Kidd Consulting. It provides highlights of the presentations made, the questions and comments made at the meeting and the feedback obtained through the comment forms and other submissions after the meeting. The agenda for the meeting is included as Appendix A.

## Opening Remarks

John Campbell, President and CEO of the TWRC opened the meeting by welcoming participants and then turned the meeting over to the facilitator.

Facilitator, Joanna Kidd of Kidd Consulting introduced herself and briefly reviewed the history of the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan project. She then explained her role as facilitator, and indicated that she would be preparing meeting notes afterwards. She then introduced the members of the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan design team present.

Joanna then reviewed the purpose of the meeting which was to present the Lake Ontario Park Concept Plan and receive people's thought on it, either through comments made at the meeting, or through the comment forms that were included in the Workbooks handed out at the registration desk. She reviewed the agenda, and noted that because of the number of participants, it would not be possible to have roundtable discussions and so the meeting would remain in plenary.

## Presentation

Jim Corner, Principal of Field Operations gave a presentation on Lake Ontario Park. His presentation can be posted on the TWRC website and can be found by going to the following link:

<http://www.waterfrontoronto.ca/dbdocs//45b1277ce7719.pdf>

Jim briefly described the design team and the planning process and then reviewed the defining qualities of the site, which are:

- the large scale of the lands (925 hectares in size);
- the complex nature of the lands (some 40 “rooms” or distinct spaces);
- the predominance of edge (37 kilometres in all) with little interior; and
- the dynamic shoreline.

He then went on to describe the proposed major organizing elements:

- the use of “**transects**” (three long, primary paths that serve as circulation spines) and “**outposts**” (up to 400 secondary paths that allow people to explore and reach shorelines, lookouts, piers and other elements);
- the creation of an undulating, dune-like **Bar** feature that traces the location of the former Fisherman’s Island and would form the western threshold of the park; and
- the re-creation of wetlands in the **Bay** (Coatsworth Cut/Ashbridge’s Bay) to improve water quality in the Lake and provide habitat.

Jim then reviewed the Concept Plan, beginning with overall connections to the city and the circulation plan, the terrestrial and aquatic habitats and areas of active programs. He then outlined the elements and nature of the constituent parts of the whole:

- the **Bar** - an expansive recreation area and greenway connector that tied together the western end of the park;
- **Cherry Beach** - a rustic, wooded beach with a new edge at the Eastern Gap;
- the **North Shore** - a place for water sports and waterfront recreation in a “cottage setting”;
- the **Marine Peninsula** - public water access and views along an active recreation deck;
- the **Spit** (Tommy Thompson Park) - wild successional landscapes and habitats;
- the **Baselands** - accessible natural area centred around a diverse swamp forest and marsh;
- **Ashbridge’s Bay** - a re-designed program hub of Lake Ontario Park and a legible public waterscape that cleans the Lake; and
- the **Eastern Beaches** - new waterfront features and refreshed parks in “beaches” setting.

Jim finished by suggesting that Lake Ontario Park will be:

- a world class signature park for the whole city;
- rough and remote wild lands in the city;
- a generous greenway, a lake filter and wildlife habitats;
- heterogeneous and unsanitized by design; and
- “big nature”, water sports, recreation and culture.

## Feedback Received at the Meeting

### Comments

#### *Support for the Concept Plan*

A number of comments were made supporting the Concept Plan. These included:

- Congratulations on producing an exciting plan.
- Support for a plan that allows diversity and distinctiveness (“nobody wants a generic waterfront”).
- Support for increasing access to Lake Ontario and increasing the opportunities for people to participate in water-related recreation.
- Support for the idea of transects to allow people to move through the park.
- Encouragement to build the park as quickly as possible.
- Support for keeping large parts of the park wild.
- Support for avoiding urbanization of the park (i.e., minimizing traffic, noise and lighting).
- Support for the restoration of wetlands at Ashbridge’s Bay.
- Support for strong connections from the park to the Don River via the Don Greenway.
- Support for a north-south connection from the Don River to the small peninsula (or hook) where the Water Rats Sailing Club currently sits.
- Support for the idea of building natural systems into the park and working with and around them.
- Support for providing public access to the water’s edge throughout the park, including along the north shore of the Outer Harbour.
- Support for the inclusion of sports fields, given the need for such facilities and the increasing problem of childhood obesity.

#### *Issues and Concerns*

There were a number of issues and concerns raised. These included:

- Concern about the traffic impacts of a restaurant or café at the end of the Outer Harbour Marina Peninsula.
- Concern about the inclusion of sports fields in the Baselands.
- Concern about the length of the proposed canoe course. It was argued that the canoe course should be lengthened to make it more useful (i.e., to allow regattas and racing to take place).

- Concern about re-locating the Bayside Rowing Club to the Peninsula. The club would like to remain where it is on the north shore of the Outer Harbour for the time being at least.
- Concern about allowing public access to the water's edge in front of north shore boating clubs. Security, safety and conflicts with people walking by were raised as concerns if the shoreline is accessible to the public. It was also argued that members of the OHSF clubs are the public.
- Concern about lack of consideration of future expansion of the OHSF clubs.
- Concern about lack of leases for OHSF clubs.

## Questions

### *General*

Q: What is the time frame for completion of Lake Ontario Park?

A: TWRC is hoping to build something in the next three years. There is \$24 million available for Phase 1 of the park.

Q: Are the details of the renderings (i.e., of the bridge) fixed?

A: Nothing is fixed at this point. The renderings are illustrative.

Q: How is environmental sustainability addressed in the Concept Plan?

A: Maintenance of the park should be relatively low cost. For example, there are no lawns or gardens planned. TWRC has asked the teams working on all its projects to reflect the TWRC Sustainability Framework that comprehensively addresses sustainability issues.

Q: How are you addressing pedestrian links from the west (e.g., through the new Don mouth)?

A: This is outside the scope of the Lake Ontario Park Master Plan and will be addressed through the TWRC's transit Environmental Assessments and the Lower Don Lands Design Competition.

Q: Where is the site of the proposed Regional Sports Complex?

A: The site is not within Lake Ontario Park.

Q: Have you considered winter uses for the park?

A: Yes, through potential amenities such as a skating pond, cross country skiing, trails and the Adventure Centre.

Q: Why are you proposing decreasing the size of Lake Ontario Park?

A: We are not. We are proposing to increase it by pushing Unwin Avenue north.

### *Bar*

Q: Will the proposed active uses in the Bar impede connections for wildlife between the Don River and the Spit?

A: It is important to connect the water's edge with the river. Although the Bar does have some active recreational uses, about 75% of it is intended to be a naturalized dune landscape with native plantings.

Q: Do you have any information on the recent filling of the circulating channel east of the Hearn plant?

A: TWRC was not informed of the action, and we understand that the agencies involved have agreed not to fill the channel. The matter is still under discussion.

### *North Shore*

Q: What is the idea behind recommending public access to the north shore of the Outer Harbour in front of the boating clubs?

A: The idea is to retain and respect the boat clubs on the north shore but ensure that it is a public landscape. This is one idea that is on the table.

Q: Why are you considering moving the Water Rats Sailing Club to the east?

A: It is important for the Don Greenway to make a strong connection to the water's edge and the little peninsula (or hook) is a logical place to make that connection.

Q: Have you considered the need for security for the north shore boating clubs to protect equipment and boats?

A: We are aware of the need for security including fences and gates. In general, we see that the boating clubs can be integrated into the park rather than isolated from it.

Q: What kind of consultation have you done with the north shore boating clubs?

A: We had an initial meeting with the Outer Harbour Sailing Federation (OHSF) representatives, have had an extensive tour of the Clubs, and have met twice with their representatives as part of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. We will be meeting with them again.

Q: Why are you not considering an outflow from the Don River that exits at the north shore of the Outer Harbour?

A: The Lake Ontario Park Master Plan process is respecting the Environmental Assessments underway on the Lower Don including that for the New Mouth for the Don, which has ruled out this alternative.

### *Peninsula*

Q: Why are you suggesting that the Outer Harbour Marina double its size?

A: We are not suggesting an expansion of the Outer Harbour Marina. We are suggesting moving other existing clubs there and creating some public amenities. The Peninsula where the Outer Harbour Marina sits is not currently parkland.

### *Baselands*

Q: I like the notion of the channel in the Baselands with soft, as opposed to hard edges. How can you ensure that it won't be used by motorized craft?

A: It can be physically designed so that motorboats can't use it (e.g., with weirs). In addition, there would have to be an educational aspect (e.g., signage).

Q: The Friends of the Spit fought against the notion of putting a golf academy in the Baselands years ago. We would like to see the Baselands remain wild. Why are you proposing sports fields there?

A: There is a great need for sports fields in Toronto. We have tried to strike a balance between active and passive recreation.

Q: With respect to the wetlands in the Baselands and the channel, has the team considered how the fluctuations in lake levels will affect its design?

A: Yes. We are aware that some edges are more prone to erosion and others to deposition. The plan reflects this. The channel is designed to allow water levels to fluctuate in the wetland.

### *Ashbridge's Bay*

Q: How soon can the wetlands at Ashbridge's Bay be built?

A: Some at least would be built fairly quickly. The improvement of water quality in Coatsworth Cut/Ashbridge's Bay is a priority for the City, as evidenced by their Environmental Assessment for the Coatsworth Cut Stormwater and CSO Outfalls.

Q: The proposed canoe course is great, but why would you not design it to be 1000 meters in length so it can be used for regattas?

A: It is a cost issue. A longer course can be built. We will be doing a cost to value analysis.

Q: Is there anywhere in the world where wetlands have been constructed on the scale proposed at Ashbridge's Bay?

A: Yes, in many places, including Barcelona and the Los Angeles River Channel. Many jurisdictions have found that constructing wetlands to improve water quality and provide habitat for wildlife is a great way to get parks built and can leverage funds.

Q: Given current concern about West Nile Virus, are you concerned about mosquitoes breeding in the proposed wetland?

A: The type of habitat proposed does not support the breeding of mosquitoes, including the species that are linked to West Nile Virus.

### *Eastern Beaches*

Q: How do you propose to connect the Boardwalk to the R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant, given that much of the land is private property?

A: We are still looking at this. The construction of three rock jetties would increase the depth of the beach.

## Feedback Received After the Meeting<sup>1</sup>

A total of 69 submissions were received after the meeting. A small number of these - five - were from people who hadn't attended the meeting, and therefore did not have the benefit of hearing the presentation and discussion. Most of the respondents were current users of the park and included dog walkers, cyclists, joggers, windsurfers, kite sailors, sailors, canoeists and kayakers. The breakdown of respondents is presented in Table 1. It should be noted that many people of the respondents fit more than one category, being for example, canoeists and local residents, or sailors and local residents.

**Table 1: Type of Respondent (Self-Identified\*)**

Type of Respondent	Number	Percent
Sailor	28	40.6%
Canoeist/Kayaker	12	17.4%
Local Resident	11	16.0%
Birdwatcher/Naturalist	5	7.2%
Cyclist	1	1.4%
Dragon boater	1	1.4%
Not specified	11	16.0%
Total	69	100.0%

\* Table uses the respondents' primary self-identification category.

## General Response to the Concept Plan

The general response to the Concept Plan was strongly positive, with many respondents (63.8%) indicating that they found it exciting and visionary. (See Table 2). Although there were many issues and concerns raised, and many suggestions for improvements or changes to the Concept Plan, there was remarkably little negative reaction to the overall plan.

**Table 2: General Comments on the Concept Plan**

General Response to Concept Plan	Number	Percent
Strongly positive	44	63.8%
Significant reservations	2	2.9%
Strongly negative	1	1.4%
No general comments	22	31.9%
Total	69	100.0%

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that, although numbers have been used in this section of the report, it has been done for illustrative purposes only. Because the respondents were self-selected, any tabulation of results is not statistically significant, as would be the case in a random survey.

### **Some of the Comments Received**

“Impressive in vision and global thinking”

“A wonderful vision for the waterfront”

“The plan is original, thorough and brilliant”

“A wonderful venture”

“Fantastic”

“Well thought out”

“An excellent plan”

“The drawings are inspiring”

“Exciting”

“A comprehensive plan”

“A wonderfully put together scheme”

“A grand plan”

### **Elements with Substantial Positive Feedback**

There was significant support for many of the ideas and elements in the Concept Plan. These include:

- The balance between active and passive recreation.
- The emphasis on non-motorized transport in the park (e.g., walking, cycling and in-line skating).
- The commitment to boating in the plan.
- Improvements in connectivity including east-west (in front of the Ashbridge’s Bay Treatment Plant) and north-south (from the Lake to the Don River via the Don Greenway).
- The increased opportunities for the public to use the Lake for water-related activities such as swimming, windsurfing, canoeing, kayaking and sailing.
- Increasing accessibility to various parts of the park.
- The use of three “transects” and “outposts” to allow movement through the park and access to the edges and points of interest.
- The re-creation of the lost Fisherman’s Island dune landscape.

- The retention of wilderness areas on the Spit.
- Moving Unwin Avenue north.
- Creating wetlands in Ashbridge's Bay to improve water quality and provide habitat. (It should be noted, however, that a few respondents have misconceptions about wetlands as breeding grounds for mosquitoes).
- The elevated bridges at Ashbridge's Bay (because they improve connectivity, provide views and provide calm water for canoeing).
- The proposed canoe course. (However see below - many people feel it should be lengthened and widened to make it more useable).

## Elements with Substantial Negative Feedback

There were three elements of the Concept Plan for which there was substantial negative feedback. These included:

- **Relocation of TH&SC:** Ten respondents had concerns with re-locating the Toronto Hydrofoil and Sailing Club (TH&SC) from Ashbridge's Bay to the Outer Harbour Marina Peninsula. The distance to the new location, cost of re-locating and security were the major issues associated with this.
- **Increasing Use of Eastern Beaches:** Eight respondents raised concerns about increasing usage in the Eastern Beaches, especially extending the Boardwalk to the R.C. Harris Filtration Plant, constructing new groynes (recreation piers), and widening the Boardwalk. The major concerns were the impacts of noise on property owners east of Silverbirch Avenue.
- **Length of Canoe Course:** Thirteen respondents had concerns about the length of the proposed canoe course.

## Elements with Mixed Feedback

There were five elements of the Concept Plan for which there was a split in opinion. These are:

- **Channel in the Baselands:** Fifteen respondents support the idea of a channel through the Baselands because it would re-establish a historic east-west link along the Lake, would provide a resource for recreational and sport paddlers, and would provide a physical barrier that would help control access to the natural areas of the Spit. Eight respondents were against the concept because the channel may be used by motorized boats, presents a barrier to wildlife movement, and would go through contaminated soil.
- **Public Access to Water's Edge on North Shore:** Nineteen respondents had concerns with providing public access to water's edge in front of north shore boating clubs. The major concerns raised included security, safety, conflicts with people walking by, and cost. Four respondents supported providing public access to the water's edge in front of the club.
- **Re-location of Water Rats Sailing Club:** Six respondents had concerns with the proposal to move the Water Rats Sailing Club to the east to allow the Don Greenway to terminate at the

small peninsula (or hook) in the Outer Harbour. On the other side of the coin, there is substantial support for the north-south link from Lake Ontario Park to the Don River via the Don Greenway.

- **Sports Fields:** Five respondents had concerns with the inclusion of sports fields in the park, because of impacts on wildlife and traffic. Four respondents supported the inclusion of sports fields as being needed and appropriate for the park.
- **Adventure Centre:** There was general support for the idea of an Adventure Centre that would provide opportunities for people to learn about canoeing, kayaking and sailing and where people could rent boats. However members of the OHSF were concerned that it would conflict with their programs to teach sailors.

## Proposed Changes and Ideas

Many respondents offered thoughtful ideas and proposed changes to improve the Lake Ontario Park Concept Plan. These included:

- Lengthening the canoe course (to 1000 to 1200 metres) and widening it (to 100 or 120 metres) to make it useable as a regatta/race course).
- Allowing motorized coach boats that accompany paddlers (perhaps with electric engines) to use the proposed channel through the Baselands.
- Including additional docks or launching facilities for non-motorized craft.
- Using strategies to reduce the impacts of motorboats in the Outer Harbour (such as the use of designated lanes for travel or the creation of another channel through the Spit east of the Outer Harbour Marina).
- Incorporating public art installations in the park.
- Separation of pedestrian and cycle trails throughout the park.
- Provision of additional trails on the Spit.
- Consider re-locating the Toronto Hydroplane and Sailing Club in the vicinity of ABYC, perhaps in the area currently envisioned for visitor boat tie-up.
- Ensuring that some parts of Lake Ontario Park are wheelchair accessible.
- Providing a way to access the Toronto Island lagoons from the lake side.
- Providing a pedestrian bridge over the Eastern Gap to link Lake Ontario Park and the Toronto Islands.
- Exploring cheaper ways of providing calm water for canoeing such as a causeway.
- Using the outer (i.e., south) side of the Spit for beaches and other amenities.
- Replacing the lighthouse at the end of the Spit with a larger iconic structure. (“This is the number one outpost”).

- Building the proposed recreational piers west of Silverbirch Avenue.
- Moving the proposed meadow in the Eastern Beaches east of Silverbirch Avenue.
- Marking in some way the entire extent of the original Fisherman's Island.
- Including signage in Woodbine Park that links the ponds with the historical marsh that was lost.
- Exploring the possibility of providing an outpost to the north shore of the Outer Harbour in between two of the boating clubs, rather than making the water's edge publicly accessible.
- Exploring the possibility of raising the lands north of the boating clubs to provide views of the Lake, rather than making the water's edge publicly accessible.
- Exploring ways of providing public access to the small peninsula (the hook) in the Outer Harbour while still accommodating the Water Rats Sailing Club.
- Dedicating a portion of the shoreline to kite sailing at Cherry Beach and/or on the north shore of the Spit to minimize potential conflicts with other users.
- Including restrictions on signage to maintain the visual appeal of the park.
- Providing benches at the ends of some of the outposts.
- Extending the circulation channel from the Outer Harbour into the Ship Channel to allow dragon boats and rowing shells to access both bodies of water.
- Increasing transit access to the park.
- Improving maintenance of existing amenities in the park, such as the washrooms at Kew Beach.
- Developing the Outer Harbour as an environmentally and socially sustainable freshwater park. This would include rationalizing locations of boating clubs to minimize conflicts, reducing the negative impact of the Outer Harbour Marina, reducing water pollution, developing a shoreline management plan and requiring new buildings to meet LEED standards.

## Comments on Consultation Process

A number of comments were received on the consultation process and the meeting itself.

- Many participants found the meeting to be well run and informative.
- Many participants supported the consultation carried out to date with the public and stakeholders and appreciated the opportunities to be heard.
- Some local residents suggested that the Lake Ontario Park planning process was not well advertised in local communities.
- TWRC should hire a consultant to explore the locations for boating clubs in the Outer Harbour.
- TWRC should conduct a water use study to look at the capacity of the Outer Harbour to understand how much expansion of small boat sailing can take place.
- The design team needs to meet with boating clubs again, especially the OHSF and TH&SC.
- The design team needs to meet with the Outer Harbour Dragon Boat Club who have not been involved in the process to date.

## Wrap Up/Next Steps

Facilitator, Joanna Kidd thanked participants for their cooperation and patience and stated that she would be preparing a Meeting Report. She urged participants to fill in the comment forms contained in the Workbook and forward them to TWRC by January 31, 2007.

Jim Corner thanked participants for coming to the meeting, commented on the quality of the discussion and noted that the team would be continuing to meet with stakeholders over the next few months, as the Master Plan is developed.

John Campbell thanked the participants and adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm.

## Appendix A

### Agenda

#### LAKE ONTARIO PARK MASTER PLAN PUBLIC FORUM #2 Radisson Admiral Hotel, January 17, 2007

##### *Meeting Purpose:*

- Presentation of the Lake Ontario Park Concept Plan
- Gather response to the Concept Plan

6:00 pm OPEN HOUSE

7:00 pm WELCOME John Campbell, President and CEO, TWRC

##### INTRODUCTION

Joanna Kidd, Kidd Consulting

- Role of the facilitator
- Introduction of the team
- Purpose of the meeting
- Agenda review

##### PRESENTATION

James Corner, Field Operations

- Site Qualities
- Organizing Ideas
- Concept Plan
- Transects and Outposts
- The Bar
- The Peninsula
- The Spit
- The Baselands
- The Bay
- The Beach

##### QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION

##### ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

##### ROUNDTABLE HIGHLIGHTS AND REPORT BACK

Joanna Kidd

##### NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS

James Corner

9:00 pm ADJOURN