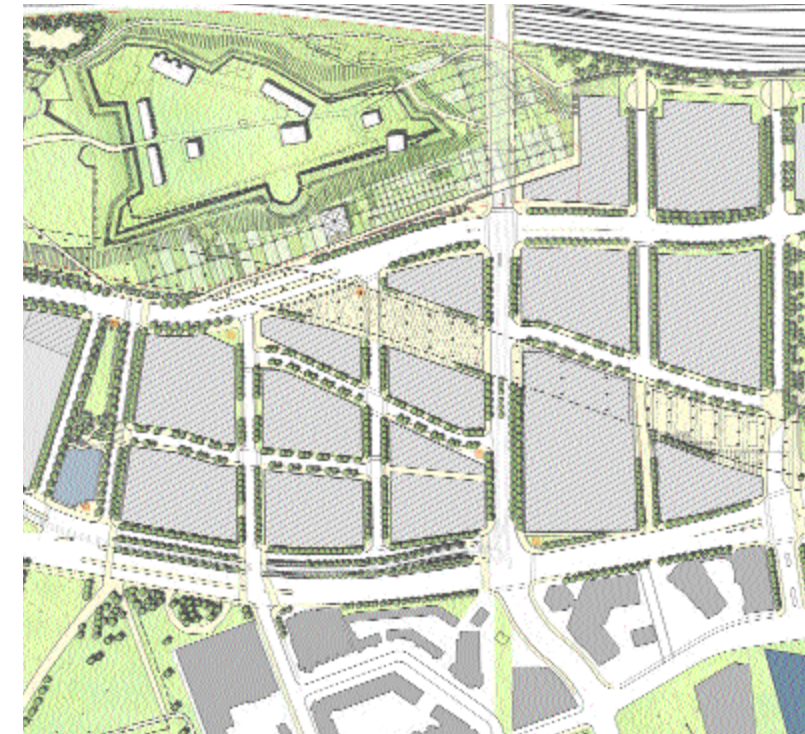


FORT YORK NEIGHBOURHOOD

PUBLIC REALM PLAN

du Toit Allsopp Hillier
February 2004





F O R T Y O R K N E I G H B O U R H O O D P U B L I C R E A L M M A S T E R P L A N

A N D A R C H I T E C T U R A L D E S I G N G U I D E L I N E S

Prepared by:

du Toit Allsopp Hillier

For:

Wittington Properties Limited

Plazacorp Investments Limited

Malibu Investments Inc.

Participants:

Wittington	Bronwyn Krog, Andrew Dales, Blair Wolk
Plazacorp	Leslie Yager
Malibu	Robert Hirsh, Mark Reeve
du Toit Allsopp Hillier	Robert Allsopp, Catarina Galbraith, Bryce Miranda, Peter Smith, Yvonne Mazur, David Dennis Design
BA Group	Alun Lloyd, Tim Arnott, Doug Hall
Quadrangle Architects	Brian Curtner, Susan Ruptash, Leslie Klein, Roland Rom Colthoff
Page + Steele Architects	Vladimir Losner, Sol Wassermuhl
IBI Group	Jordan Struk, Matt Giuliano

City of Toronto:

Planning	Lynda Macdonald, Melanie Melnyk, Nigel Tahair
Urban Design	Robert Freedman, Eric Pedersen, James Parakh
Fort York	Jo Ann Pynn
Parks	David O'Hara
Development Engineering	Tim Dennis, Nhat-Anh Nguyen

With the Collaboration of:

Councillor Joe Pantalone (Ward 19)
 Councillor Olivia Chow (Ward 20)
 Concord Adex Developments Corporation
 R. Avis Surveying Inc.
 The Friends of Fort York
 Toronto Transit Commission

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INTRODUCTION

Vision for a New Community

The Fort York Neighbourhood presents a unique city-building opportunity for Toronto. It will be a vibrant new community developed on a major brownfield site near the Central Waterfront in the west downtown. The distinctive character of the neighbourhood will be informed by, and respond to, its historically rich setting immediately south of the Fort York National Historic Site, the Garrison Creek and the original Lake Ontario shoreline.

With only four landowners holding most of the development blocks in the neighbourhood, the City has seized the chance to establish a collaborative, comprehensive approach to the buildout of the community. This Public Realm Plan defines the principles for liveable and pedestrian-friendly streets, parks and open spaces in this emerging Toronto neighbourhood.

The Fort York Neighbourhood is planned as a high-density, primarily residential community, with a range of building types including stacked townhouses and mid-rise buildings along the street edges, as well as slender point towers in specific locations. In all of these cases, the buildings will be grade-related and address the streets. The bases of buildings will be designed with pedestrians in mind, through such elements as multiple entrances, appropriate setbacks/step-backs, landscape development, architectural detailing and animating uses at street level.

The area will also be served by a wealth of parks and open spaces, including the Link Park - as a central focus for local neighbourhood activities, Gore Park - as a heavily planted green space, and the Fort grounds. The streets of the neighbourhood will also be important public open spaces, designed with sidewalk setbacks, tree plantings, and front yard landscaping. Pedestrian and cycling connections will form an easily accessible network between these green spaces and the areas surrounding the neighbourhood.

The Public Realm

Simply put, the public realm consists of the spaces between buildings. While architecture can be appreciated from a distance or from within a building, the public realm is experienced primarily close-up, at ground level. It includes streets, building frontages, sidewalks, front yard landscaping and plantings, as well as larger open spaces such as parks and publicly accessible courtyards or pathways between buildings.

The review of any development application should take into consideration the building's relationship with and contribution to the public realm. This Public Realm Plan seeks to achieve a high quality, well designed and liveable environment for people living in and passing through the Fort York Neighbourhood.



Purpose of this Document

This Fort York Neighbourhood Public Realm Master Plan and Architectural Design Guidelines, referred to here as the "Public Realm Plan", is the next step in the planning and design process. This document forms a set of guidelines, endorsed by City Council, which outline the principles and overall vision for the emerging neighbourhood. It builds on the approved policies of the Official Plan and the zoning by-laws that set out the location of public spaces, density, height and built form envelopes, and will inform the City's review of development applications in the area by setting a benchmark for the best possible design of the streets, parks, pedestrian and cycle connections, and public and private open spaces throughout the neighbourhood. The completion and approval of the Public Realm Plan is required prior to Site Plan approvals in the new neighbourhood.

The guidelines set out in the Public Realm Plan, including the Building Profile Guidelines, may be modified or refined as specific buildings are designed and brought forward for approval through the City's Site Plan Approval process, if changes are generally consistent with the Plan's overall vision and principles.

Role of the Public Realm Plan

The role of the Public Realm Plan is to guide the development of the public streets and parks and adjoining private open spaces including the following:

- the relationship to adjacent neighbourhoods and the public space linkages;
- the conceptual streetscape plans for the various types of streets;
- the relationship between the public open spaces and the private open spaces; and
- the conceptual design of the principal neighbourhood parks: Link Park and Gore Park. Also, illustrations of possibilities for the Fort York grounds and Mouth of the Creek Park are included.

The Public Realm Plan also includes architectural design guidelines including the following:

- the location of build-to and setback lines;
- the location of step-backs for taller buildings;
- the relationship of towers to base buildings; and
- the treatment of building projections as they relate to the character and quality of the public streets and open spaces.

Planning Context

The Fort York Neighbourhood (previously known as the Bathurst/Strachan Area) is a new high-density, mixed-use community. It will be built over approximately the next ten years at the western edge of Toronto's Central Waterfront. Planning of the neighbourhood began in the early 1990s.

The current planning and design process began in late 2002, punctuated by a landmark "design initiative" (charrette) in January 2003. This 3-day charrette involved the three landowners (Wittington Properties, Plazacorp Investments, Malibu Investments), City staff, community and Friends of Fort York representatives, and professional planning and design consultants. The conclusions reached in the charrette and subsequent discussions resulted in the adoption of an amended Fort York Neighbourhood Secondary Plan and Zoning By-laws by Toronto City Council in September 2003.

Blocks 1 & 2A (H&R Developments), at the western end of Fort York Boulevard, are included in site-specific Secondary Plan provisions, which were adopted in 2001 and 2002. H&R Developments have already submitted a Public Realm Plan as part of their site-specific rezoning process.

The planning and design of parks and public spaces in the neighbourhood builds on the *Fort York and Garrison Common - Parks and Open Space Design and Implementation Plan* and *Fort York: Setting It Right*.

Other planning and design initiatives provide context and guidance for the development of the open spaces. These include the City of Toronto's *Waterfront Secondary Plan* and the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation's *Central Waterfront Public Space Framework* (June 2003).

The Site of the Neighbourhood

In this Public Realm Plan, the Fort York Neighbourhood is taken to be the area extending from the north boundary of Fort York to Lake Shore Boulevard at the south, and from Dan Leckie Way (Portland Street) at the east to Strachan Avenue at the west.

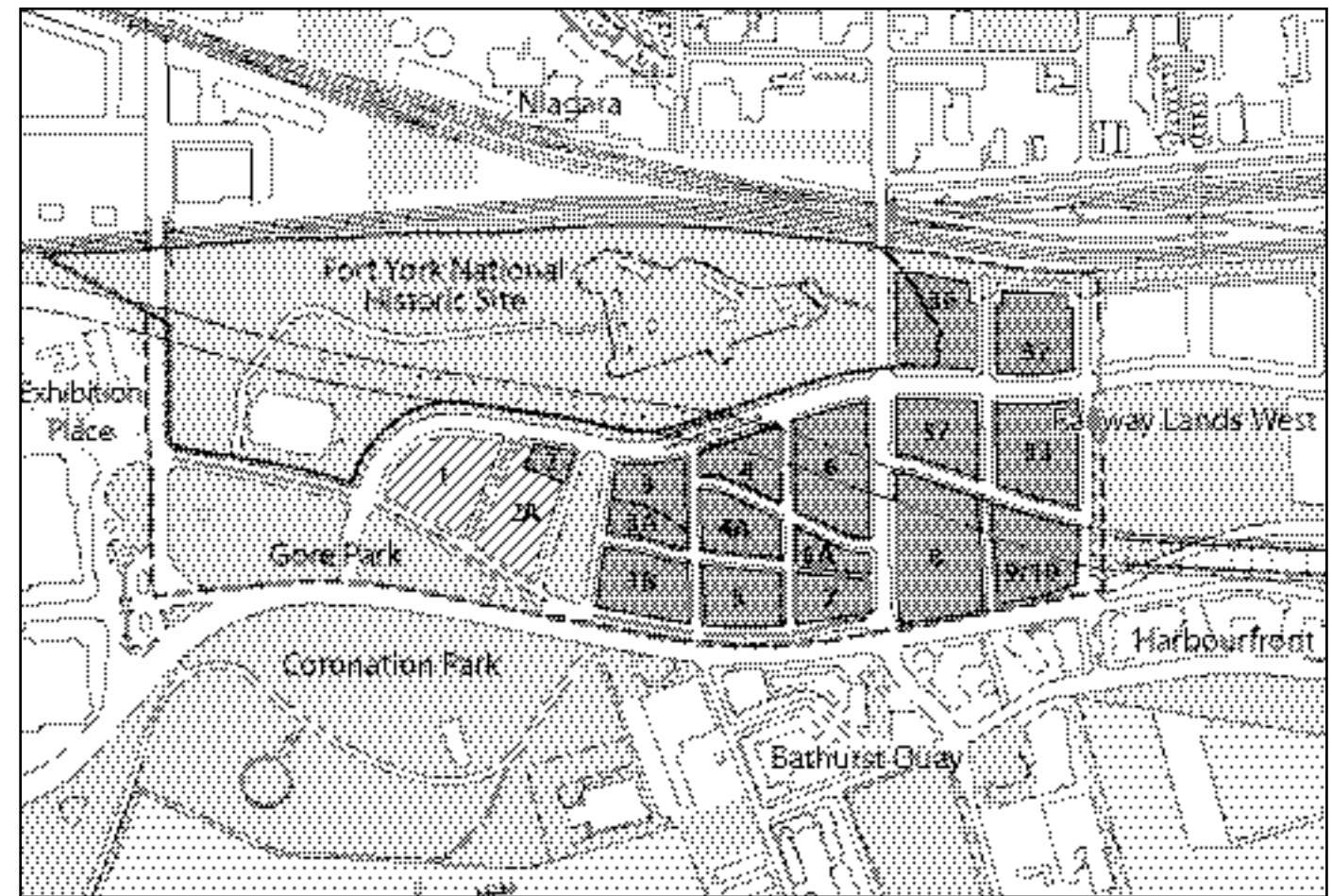
Blocks 32, 33, 36 and 37 are part of the Railway Lands West planning district. These blocks and the related public spaces are included in this public realm study in order to achieve a coordinated approach to the design of the public spaces. Blocks 32 and 36 are owned by the City of Toronto.

The Fort York Neighbourhood is bounded to the south by Lake Shore Boulevard, and crossed diagonally by the elevated Gardiner Expressway. These roads and the rail corridor to the north act as strong barriers, physically, visually and perceptually, between the City to the north and the waterfront to the south, which the Public Realm Plan attempts to alleviate. Strachan Avenue and Bathurst Street cross these corridors, although neither accommodates pedestrians and cyclists adequately and their intersections with Lake Shore Boulevard are particularly unfriendly.

In 2002, Fort York Boulevard was built, extending from Bathurst Street to Lake Shore Boulevard approximately on the alignment of the original lake shoreline, the first major step in the revitalization of the neighbourhood. It establishes a new frontage and visibility for the Fort, provides improved vehicular, pedestrian and cycle connections to the waterfront, and demarcates the northern face of the neighbourhood buildings opposite the Fort grounds.

The northern half of the area is the Fort York National Historic Site (and proposed enlarged Heritage Conservation District). The development sites are on lake-fill lands, immediately to the south and east of the Fort.

Block 36 of the Railways Lands West, owned by the City, overlaps with the Fort York National Historic



- Fort York National Historic Site
- - - Fort York Neighbourhood Public Realm Plan Boundary
- Fort York Neighbourhood Public Realm Plan Development Blocks
- ▨ Block 1/2A Site-specific Public Realm Plan (2001)

Site, as well as the proposed park at the Mouth of the Garrison Creek. The shape of the development on this block, shown diagrammatically throughout the report, addresses the presence of the park and the extension of the existing path under the Bathurst Street bridge. This shape is conceptual only and will be subject to further review.

History and Significance of the Fort York Neighbourhood

Fort York, birthplace of the city, was established in 1793 and rebuilt in 1816 following the Battle of York. It remained in military use until the 1930s. In 1909 the Federal government transferred the Fort to the City of Toronto. The City restored the Fort and opened it as an historic site in 1934. Today the defensive walls of this City-owned and operated museum surround Canada's largest collection of original War of 1812 buildings.

Fort York and its surrounds comprise the richest archaeological site in the City of Toronto. Deep, stratified and well preserved archaeological remains exist both inside and outside the ramparts.

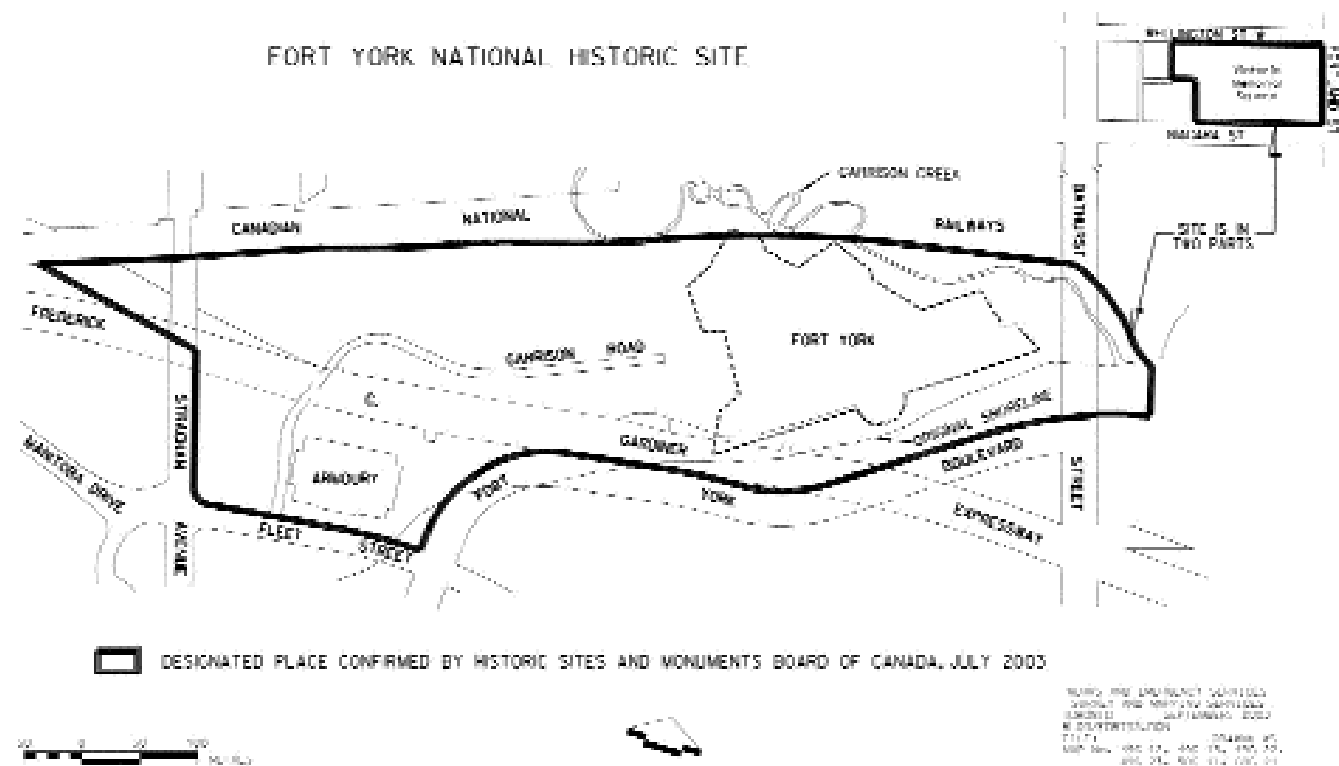
The prior uses of the redevelopment sites in the Fort York Neighbourhood were industrial operations and railways, which surrounded and almost enveloped the Fort for much of the twentieth century. The main railways have now been consolidated in a broad corridor to the north of the Fort; most of the industry has gone and the associated rail spurs removed. A concrete batching plant and a medical gas distribution facility are the only remaining active industrial uses in the neighbourhood and their respective relocations are currently being planned. A number of the industrial buildings remain in the Fort York Neighbourhood. The most architecturally distinguished, the Loblaws warehouse (facades on Bathurst and Lake Shore), is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, and the rest are slated for demolition.

Any proposal regarding the redevelopment of Block 8 shall have regard for the policy contained in the Secondary Plan.

The National Historic Site

Fort York has been recognized as a site of national significance by the Historic Sites and Monument Board of Canada (HSMBC) since 1923 and was designated as a Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (1980) in 1985.

Based on the considerations of a greater understanding of the extent of the cultural landscape and the archaeological resources, the boundaries of the historic site have recently been reviewed. As a result, in July 2003, HSMBC approved expanded boundaries for the National Historic Site, as illustrated below, and included Victoria Memorial Square as a separate but related part of the site. Toronto City Council, in consideration of the expanded area of the National Historic Site, is expected to approve similar amendments to the boundaries of the Heritage Conservation District (amended by-law) in the spring of 2004.



Official Plan Goals for the Fort York Neighbourhood

The Fort York Neighbourhood Secondary Plan (Section 2.1 - 2.4) sets out the major goals for the development of the neighbourhood:

- The Fort York Neighbourhood will be developed as a vital, primarily residential, mixed-use neighbourhood taking advantage of large areas of existing public open space and its unique waterfront setting. It will be served by the appropriate range of community services and facilities.
- The significance of Fort York and the Fort York Heritage Conservation District will be recognized in the redevelopment of the Fort York Neighbourhood. Building heights increase in a southerly direction from the Fort with lower buildings established along the southern edge of Fort York Boulevard. North-south streets and public open spaces will be oriented to improve the visibility and accessibility of the Fort.

- The Fort York Neighbourhood will be served by improved transit, and the design of the street system will also support improved bicycle and pedestrian routes. This will connect the new community to the surrounding areas and help to reduce the negative impact of east-west transportation corridors which now dominate the area.
- The Fort York Neighbourhood will be integrated with the Garrison Common Area and Railway Lands West, to create a larger system of linked public open spaces.

Waterfront Revitalization Vision

The Fort York and Garrison Creek parks system is an important open space component in the Central Waterfront revitalization strategy. The vision for this area, set out in the Central Waterfront Public Space Framework is:

The Fort York Public Space District offers an opportunity to create a nationally significant waterfront heritage park ensemble as a prominent gateway to the downtown core by consolidating and integrating historically significant open spaces anchored by Fort York. These improvements will create the centrepiece to one of the City's newest waterfront communities, the Fort York Neighbourhood, while also greatly improving access to the waterfront for communities to the north.