



May 16th, 2016

To: Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Re: Urban Design Study for Piers 7-8 draft report**

The City of Hamilton and especially core area neighbourhoods are in the midst of significant change. From our vantage point as a neighbourhood association in the North End we are keenly aware that investment in public amenities such as the waterfront trail and parks like Bayfront and Pier 4, as well as calming traffic on our streets, improve quality of life for our residents.

But we are also aware that public realm improvements have made our neighbourhood a desirable place to live and visit. Though we do not wish to overstate the case, being a desirable place to live and visit involves competing pressures and interests, and we'd like to foreground the fragility of urban neighbourhoods like ours.

We support the principles and vision laid out in the West Harbour Secondary Plan (Setting Sail) for our neighbourhood and acknowledge that it specifies that "Piers 6-8 will be the focus of physical improvements and development that combine new civic spaces and promenades with residential, cultural and mixed-use buildings to establish over time a series of linked destinations and a distinct, urban waterfront neighbourhood."

Before commenting on the final draft of the Urban Design Study (UDS) for Piers 7-8 we wish to emphasize that the vision for Piers 6-8 expressed in Setting Sail must be considered in conjunction with the 8 planning principles that are laid out at the beginning of Setting Sail and collectively articulate its overall vision and frame how planning and development related changes in the West Harbour are to be assessed.

Of these principles we wish to highlight the principle "strengthen existing neighbourhoods" and specifically the requirement for the City to "ensure new development respects and enhances the character of the neighbourhoods."

What is the character that needs to be respected and enhanced?

A diverse range of people call the North End home. Some families have lived in the neighbourhood for more than one generation, some people have lived in the neighbourhood for a decade or more, while others are relative newcomers. The North End is a place where renters and homeowners, covering a wide range of incomes and occupations, live together side-by-side.

We feel that being a diverse and friendly, welcoming community is the existing character of our neighbourhood. It has led many of us to devote considerable time and energy to protecting and enhancing what we value in our community.

We are wedged between downtown and the waterfront and Setting Sail envisions important changes to the waterfront portions of our neighbourhood and down its main street, James North. Since Setting Sail was approved by City Council in 2005, provincial investments in transit -- the West Harbour GO Station and an LRT spur down James North -- have further intensified pressures for change in our neighbourhood. For these reasons we have consistently fought to play an active role in determining the pace, scale, and form of changes impacting us.

Our submission to you speaks to both the public engagement process and the final draft of the UDS.

On May 2nd, a public meeting was held to unveil the final draft of the Urban Design Study for Piers 7-8 (UDS).

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

We have had board members in attendance at all UDS related public meetings. In addition at the onset of the study process we attended a one-on-one meeting with city staff and the consultants (Brook-McIlroy) followed by participation in a stakeholder meeting. Starting last fall we have attended the monthly West Harbour Community Update meetings held at 294 James North (the Evergreen Storefront).

At this stage it is possible to make two observations about the public engagement process:

First, that Community Update meetings in the form that took place at 294 James North starting last fall are a significant improvement over the standard Public Information Centre (PIC). We would like to thank Evergreen for setting up and maintaining the Storefront (which it is important to note is used for other city-building and engagement processes) and for liaising with City staff on our behalf. The City should be applauded, particularly City staff, for their participation and engagement with residents using a format that has been more informal and interactive than conventional public meetings in our experience. We believe that where major and long-term impactful changes are being considered that such an approach to informing and consulting with the public is beneficial.

Second, the process of engagement directly related to the UDS for Piers 7-8 was less satisfactory. It was never clear during the process when the public was being informed, consulted, or being asked to collaborate. That is not to say that consultation was lacking, but it made the UDS engagement process less effective and created unnecessary tensions between residents, city staff, and the consultants. As the implementation section of the UDS final draft describes future points of engagement between residents, other stakeholders, and the City, this is an issue that should be addressed in a timely manner. The preceding is not a comment on the quantity of public engagement, but on its quality (i.e. efficacy and perceived impact).

With respect to our second observation, we recommend that the City consider establishing a West Harbour Community Liaison Committee comprised of residents, businesses, third-sector organizations, and other stakeholders to work with Council and City staff going forward on West Harbour issues.

We have reviewed the final draft of the UDS for Piers 7-8

## OPEN SPACE

NEN has consistently supported the vision and principles of Setting Sail, and, overall, we find much to like in the final draft of the UDS. The design concept presented envisions a high-density, mid-rise urban waterfront neighbourhood in keeping with the parameters specified in Setting Sail.

The final draft of the UDS produced by the consultants, Brook-McIlroy, is attentive to concerns expressed during the consultation process that mixed-use development on Pier 8 have variegated, textured look and feel, and incorporate sustainability and good urbanism into the design concept.

With regard to public open space, we are pleased with the overall amount (38% of the total land area) based on what Setting Sail envisions. We note that Brook-McIlroy have provided a range of suggestions as to how this space may be programmed with active and passive uses. Respectfully, we suggest that the City consider establishing a public engagement process to determine in a more specific and detailed way how best to program the public open space, especially the 30 metre perimeter park.

Finally, we'd like to make particular note of the incorporation of street design features that are consistent with those incorporated in the North End Traffic Management Plan (NETMP). Given NEN's longstanding concerns about how traffic and parking will be managed as development proceeds we are pleased that the final draft of the UDS pays close attention to ensuring the urban waterfront community on Pier 8 will have complete streets and de-emphasize automobility.

Moving on to specifics, we are intrigued by the numbers specified on page 99 of the draft report, which indicate at full build out that Pier 8 will have between 1071-1531 residential units, 7740 sqm of commercial space, 6800 sqm of institutional space, and 1422 parking spaces.

## PARKING

Without the benefit of a detailed parking study, these numbers suggest that a considerable portion of future residents and visitors to Pier 8 are anticipated to be users of active modes of transportation (i.e. walking, cycling, and public transit). We strongly support this aspect of the UDS for Pier 7-8 and wish to reiterate that an overall reduction of kilometres driven is widely beneficial to the health and well-being of all residents of Hamilton.

We anticipate, however, continuing efforts to place new parking facilities meant to service waterfront development within the neighbourhood. We continue to strongly oppose these efforts.

With regard to future traffic impacts on the North End, the possible addition of an LRT on James Street North requires special attention be given to the possible impact of changing traffic patterns on other north-south streets that connect the waterfront to downtown: Bay, MacNab, John, and Ferguson. These streets traverse portions of the North End neighbourhood designated in Setting Sail as “stable areas”. As such they are to be accorded greater care and protection with respect to planned development elsewhere in the West Harbour.

We note that recommendations on the phasing of development on Pier 8 call for an incremental build out of both the residential, commercial, and institutional spaces, and the public open spaces. If this phasing is adhered to one of the main public amenities, the Bay facing long-side of the 30m perimeter park along the water’s edge around Pier 8, is set to be constructed as part of Phase 3, which may not occur for some time. This seems to place the timing of this public benefit in the hands of private interests.

## AFFORDABILITY

The UDS does not address inclusion in any detail, especially with regard to affordable housing. NEN’s believes it is vital to the long-term health and prosperity of the North End that it continue to be a complete community that is home to a diverse mix of people and households. Ensuring that a range of housing in terms of type, size, tenure, and cost is maintained is vital. With regard to affordability, Setting Sail includes the following provisions:

- In the event of disposal of publicly owned lands located within West Harbour, Council will consider the desirability of developing such lands for affordable housing, and where appropriate, shall encourage the development of said lands for such housing as a priority - **A.6.3.3.1.10**

- In developing city owned lands for residential purposes; Council may require that at least 25% of the gross area of such lands be provided in the form of affordable housing - **A.6.3.3.1.11**
- The City of Hamilton will partner with the senior levels of government, the private sector and community-based housing providers to promote the development of the City-owned land in the West Harbour for affordable rental and homeownership opportunities through various programmatic initiatives - **A.6.3.8.3.1**

We hope Council will provide strong leadership and ensure that affordable, accessible housing is part of the mix as we go from plan to reality on Pier 8 and other West Harbour developments, especially on City-owned lands.

#### NAVY LEAGUE

Finally, we would like to comment on the situation of the Navy League, who currently occupy lands designated for Phase 1 of development. We believe the Navy League is a valuable community asset and we are concerned that no provision appears to have been made for their continued presence and operation. We support efforts to find an acceptable solution that allows the Navy League to continue its operations.

We appreciate any consideration you might give to our comments and feedback.

Sincerely,

Rob Fiedler, NEN Co-Chair

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