



The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common

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Two Citizens Boards Working Together for the Future Of Fort York

The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common is an independent group of over 230 members and volunteers organized as a non-profit corporation and qualified as a charitable organization. The focus of its activities is the preservation and enhancement of Fort York for the benefit of the citizens of, and visitors to, Toronto.

The Fort York Management Board is a citizen board appointed by Toronto City Council and charged by its governing by-law with the management and direction of the operations of Fort York.

In the spirit of the cooperation existing between the two organizations, the Fife and Drum serves as a newsletter for both.

2001 Friends of Fort York Lecture Series

The first lecture of the 2001 series will take place at the Royal Canadian Military Institute, 426 University Avenue (just south of Dundas) at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, January 29th. Gord Laco will speak to us on "Reconciling the Historic Past with Modern Museum Practices". Gord Laco has a long experience with historic sites and activities. He is the founder and currently the Director of Marine Heritage Association which operates the historic vessels, Tecumseh and Bee. He is a previous Executive Director of Toronto Brigantine and has been involved with both Discovery Harbour in Penetanguishine and St. Marie Among the Hurons. Gord is an excellent speaker and we look forward to his talk, which is particularly relevant as we build the Fort York of the future.

Future lectures will also be held at the RCMI. The dates are Wednesday, February 28, Monday, March 26 and Monday, April 23. Topics and speakers will be announced shortly. Please note that the dress code at the RCMI requires a tie and jacket.

Disaster Averted? Good News on the Front Street Extension

Quick action by the Friends of Fort York has led to the development of a third option for the Front Street Extension which will greatly reduce its negative impacts on Fort York.

For 15 years Fort York has lived under the threat of very serious visual encroachment on the north side of the Fort. The threat came from a proposal to extend Front Street from Bathurst to Dufferin. In order to cross the railway tracks north of Fort York this road was proposed to be built on an elevated structure as high as the Gardiner Expressway.

In 1991, concerned about the impacts of this road on the Fort and on other efforts to link parks in the community, the Niagara Neighbourhood Association with Councillor Pantalone brought forward a alternative for the Front Street Extension . This proposal quickly gained the support of the Toronto Historical Board, The Waterfront Regeneration Trust, The Gardiner Lakeshore Task Force, The Garrison Creek Community Project and Toronto City Council. Originally developed by FOFY Director, Catherine Nasmith, the secret to the option was moving the railways out of the way of the road, allowing Front Street to be built as a normal on ground roadway north of the Fort. Unfortunately, the rail relocation option was also considerably more expensive than the original proposal.

The Friends of Fort York have supported the rail relocation option since their formation in 1994. Even though a source of the additional funding needed had never been identified, and the City did not act to purchase the lands needed for its implementation this coalition managed to keep this alternative alive until recently. But when the owners of these lands applied for permissions to develop their lands in the fall of 1999 it became clear that it would be impossible to keep the option open any longer. The local councillors, Joe Pantalone, and Mario Silva agreed that the development of the lands was desirable and that there was no hope of ever funding the rail relocation. Out of respect for the work done by so many over so many years this news was delivered personally by Paul Bedford, Chief Planner for the City of Toronto, at a meeting convened for that purpose, to Catherine Nasmith and to Joe Gill.

Bedford noted that while the rail relocation option had advantages for Fort York, it had very negative impacts on the lands west of Strachan. In reviewing the application Bedford had requested the landowners develop an option for Front Street which would eliminate some of the

negative effects. This had been done, but no solution for the elevated section north of the Fort had been found.

The pressure to construct the Front Street Extension is now greater than ever as it is the first piece of infrastructure needed to allow for the burying of the Gardiner Expressway south of Fort York. Fort York might gain on the south what it was losing on the north, but it is also possible that Front Street might be constructed and the Gardiner could remain in place. That nightmare scenario would leave Fort York circled by elevated expressways, hardly a dignified setting for this national historic site.

The Friends and others were most concerned about having Council agree to the development of the lands needed for the rail relocation before another alternative for Front Street had been found. Even though several community organizations expressed the same concern, the only concession Councillor Pantalone was prepared to consider was to create a Task Force of stakeholders (including The Friends of Fort York) to study ways of ameliorating the negative impacts of the Front Street Extension on the Fort and the Niagara Neighbourhood. This motion was built into the Council decision on the Inglis Lands, and the task force was created and given sufficient funds to retain an outside consultant.

Fortunately, Lady Luck was with Councillor Pantalone on this occasion.

We all held our breath through the first two meetings as John Long of D.S. Lea suggested that it might be possible to take the road under the rail instead. There was a collective sigh of relief at the meeting on November 16, when it was shown that it would be technically feasible, for about the same costs as the original proposal to go under the rail. The task force will continue to meet to see if there are ways to ameliorate the section west of Strachan as well. The Task Force will report to Council early in the New Year. It is never over till it is over, but for the moment it looks like the threat to Fort York from an elevated Front Street extension is over.

This recent success is built on many years of patient organizing and consensus building by several community organizations working with design professionals inside and outside City hall, as well as with politicians and the press. There are far more Friends of Fort York than we realize.

Other Developments on the Fort York Site

Fort York Blvd. – after delays in proceeding, arising from the Waterfront Proposals, it now looks like construction will commence in June 2001 and the road may be completed before the end of 2002. Fort York may yet have an address.

Blue Barracks – the extension of the Blue Barracks is fully enclosed and interior work can begin. It should be open by early spring.

Parks and Open Space Design and Implementation Plan for the Fort York

and Garrison Common Heritage Conservation District. - Du Toit Allsopp Hillier has been chosen by the City of Toronto to develop a Parks and Open Space plan for the Fort York site. FOFY Director, Robert Allsopp will head up the team which will work with Parks and Recreation staff. The design plan will build on the guidelines as developed in "Fort York: Setting It Right". In particular, the consultants have been asked to focus on the lands between Fort York and Fort York Blvd. and on the new park proposed for the lands at 800 Fleet Street, immediately west of the Fort York Armouries.

Working Group on Visitor/Interpretive Centre and Program Support Facilities at Fort York -

This study group with representatives of The Friends of Fort York, The Fort York Management Board and City staff has been meeting regularly since August and is expected to report in the spring. The study group is working closely with the Parks and Open Space Plan consultants.

Thanks to our Members, Supporters and Volunteers

The Friends of Fort York is a volunteer citizen organization that exists and succeeds only through its many members, supporters and volunteers – all of whom believe in Fort York and in the importance of celebrating Toronto's history. The Board thanks you all, for making the publishing of Fort York: Setting It Right possible, for helping present a most fantastic re-enactment of the Landing at Muddy York to celebrate the Millennium and for building an organization that will ensure a meaningful future for Fort York. Many thanks also to the staff at the fort and our supporters in the Culture Department. We hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and wish you all a rewarding and happy new year.

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And to all of our supporters in Toronto City Council, at Queen's Park and in Ottawa.