



BAY AREA RESTORATION COUNCIL

ECOLOGY · INDUSTRY · RECREATION

POSITION STATEMENT

Redevelopment of the West Harbour Planning Area with particular reference to Piers 7 & 8

May 2016

“One of the unsuitable ideas about projects is the very notion that they *are* projects, abstracted out of the ordinary city and set apart. ... The aim should be to get that project, that patch upon the city, rewoven back into the fabric—and in the process of doing so, strengthen the surrounding fabric, too.”

—Jane Jacobs, 1961
The Death and Life of Great American Cities

Setting Sail is the City of Hamilton’s Secondary Plan for the West Harbour Planning Area. First adopted in 2005 and formally approved in 2012, it establishes “a framework for public improvements and private development aimed at enhancing the area as a community and recreational destination.”

Changes in industrial and commercial port lands in the West Harbour have created “an opportunity to expand the program of public improvements and attract new types of development for the betterment of the local community and the city as a whole.” With the new GO Transit waterfront train station and the return of Piers 7 & 8 to City ownership since 2005, this opportunity has only increased in significance.

The stated purposes of Setting Sail are to guide detailed planning, zoning and development decisions, and to identify the City’s priorities for publicly funded initiatives. These purposes are expressed in eight planning principles intended to guide development throughout the West Harbour Planning Area:

1. Promote a healthy harbour;
2. Strengthen existing neighbourhoods;
3. Provide safe, continuous public access along the water’s edge;
4. Create a diverse, balanced and animated waterfront;
5. Enhance physical and visual connections;
6. Promote a balanced transportation network;
7. Celebrate the City’s heritage; and,
8. Promote excellence in design.

More recently, two additional issues have emerged and are included in the City's current public engagement on design for Piers 7 & 8: housing affordability and physical accessibility for people of all abilities.

BARC was an active participant in the extensive public consultation process to create Setting Sail. Where our organizational vision is "a thriving, healthy and accessible Harbour," we continue to support the principles of the Plan and take an active interest in its interpretation and implementation. As such, BARC takes the following position on the implementation of Setting Sail:

The Harbour is a natural asset that creates value itself. The value of this asset was for decades measured by its ability to receive industrial and municipal wastes, with other social-environmental values being deeply discounted. Currently, however, those limitations are no longer acceptable and social-environmental values are being recalculated. We have the ability to enhance this natural asset for "the betterment of the local community and the city as a whole" through technology and design.

Current development planning in the West Harbour represents perhaps the most significant municipal opportunity of its kind in western Lake Ontario and its outcomes should reflect that upon completion and as they mature. The West Harbour Planning Area should be considered as a "centre of excellence" for the integration of waterfront commercial, residential and recreational uses. Construction of a built environment that is inclusive, sustainable and inspiring.

New residential and commercial activities would not be possible if not for the tremendous gains in environmental quality in the past 25 years. New development must respect and enhance the interface between the land and water. Best practices for stormwater management should be implemented at the time of development, principally using "low impact development" (LID) techniques. Every opportunity should be taken to enhance aquatic and shoreline habitats throughout the entire West Harbour Planning Area.

The creation and animation of open, public spaces should require a design study of its own. Public spaces and amenities should take opportunities to increase the public's understanding and appreciation of the Harbour and its watershed.

Finally, there should be a substantive public process of continued engagement and evaluation to ensure that the principles of Setting Sail continue to "provide important criteria against which future initiatives and proposals for the area will be evaluated to help ensure the broad public objectives for West Harbour are realized." Effectively, ensure that Principle 8 – *promote excellence in design* – is applied to the first seven.

About BARC

The Bay Area Restoration Council is a registered charitable non-profit organization. Formed in 1991, BARC represents the public interest in the restoration of Hamilton Harbour and its watershed. BARC is responsible for community engagement and educational activities in the implementation of the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan. BARC encourages community action through school programs, volunteer activities, community workshops, evaluative reporting on current issues and opportunities for digital engagement and communications.