

## Dockside Lands Redevelopment Project Summary

Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

### Introduction

The Dockside Lands project was initiated in September 2001 to redevelop 12-acres of environmentally contaminated, under-utilized land within the City of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Adjacent to the Upper Harbour and Downtown in the Victoria West neighbourhood, the project vision called for a mixed use, sustainable development based on triple bottom line (social, economic and environmental) principles. The site was to meld together the marine industrial uses along the working harbour to the east and the residential commercial areas to the west and north, through a mix of light industrial, commercial and residential uses.

Occupancy of the first 98 new condominium residents occurred in March 2008, and in July, this first phase was awarded the highest LEED™ point total in the world – 63 of a total 70 points. The second phase of development in 2009, containing residential, commercial office, commercial retail and light industrial uses was awarded the highest LEED™ point total in the world for the new Neighbourhood Development program and the commercial Core and Shell program – a tie in points with the first phase. With connection of the biomass heating system to a neighbouring hotel site in 2011, the project is Green House Gas negative from this sale of heat energy off-site. All wastewater is treated by a state of the art underground plant and reused on site through a waterway amenity, grey water toilets and green roof and space irrigation – the only sewage treatment done in the region. The project also contains \$3 million in social housing and will plant over 400 trees. The project has won over 20 international to local sustainability awards, including the overall 2005 Canadian Brownie Award from the Canadian Urban Institute, 2005 Canadian Institute of Planners Award for Planning Excellence, a 2006 Smart Growth BC award, and a 2006 national architectural award. Kim Fowler, M.Sc., MCIP, was the project manager for the City from the project initiation in 2001 through the successful land sale in 2005. She is now a resident owner at Dockside Green.

### Project Concepts

Several unique planning tools were used for this project, including:

- New Urbanism
- Development Concept
- Minimum Break Even Policy
- Triple Bottom Line and Sustainability
- Community Involvement at key project stages

Dockside exemplifies a “**New Urbanism**” type of community, as reflected in its mix of uses, people friendly streets and open space and innovative, environmentally conscious design. The area is distinctive with its mix of working and residential environments, and employs creative design complementing its urban location. Its open spaces and amenities blend in overall harmony with the unique character of the location overlooking Victoria’s historic harbour front. A mix of structure

heights provides the area with landmark buildings as high as 10 storeys complemented by 3-6 storey buildings. Residential settings encourage a diversity of residents and income groups which co-exist with light industrial workplaces, restaurants, licensed premises and retail services to create a unique mix of neighbourhood and gathering places. Residents, neighbours and visitors flock with the resident mallard ducklings to the organic bakery, organic coffee shop and other sustainable site amenities.

Most of the available lots provide harbour views and are enhanced with public spaces, the existing Galloping Goose cycling and pedestrian path (part of the TransCanada Trail) and new pedestrian pathways through the site. The integrated mixed uses, high quality public spaces, and consistent design theme define the 'new urbanism' of this community. As a feature part of the core of the city and its historic waterfront, Docksider is a collage of many uses that attract and appeal to those who choose to live there, work there or simply visit. The Docksider Lands have created a distinctive area within the mosaic that makes Downtown Victoria and its harbour front one of the most sought after in the world.

The Harbour Plan, adopted by the City in 2001, states strong support for a working harbour, including the 110-year old Point Hope Shipyard located directly adjacent to the Docksider Lands. The integration of heavy industrial activity on the waterfront side with increasing densification of residential and commercial development on the upland side would have been traditionally viewed as conflicting land uses. New Urbanism demands the integration of these uses to form a true inner city living opportunity, including launching a kayak or stepping on to the inner harbour ferry from the public dock.

The **Development Concept** synthesized the environmental remediation options, physical site assessments, public consultation process, design guidelines and market risk analysis. By responding to the broad land-use, density, design guidelines and community amenities, developers and design teams were able to create innovative, viable development proposals for the Docksider Lands. Standard zoning approaches were viewed as being too detailed and prescriptive, resulting in all proposals appearing the same due to the lack of flexibility. A true partnership with the development proponent was sought, wherein the comparative advantages of the City and proponent were utilized. The development concept was also used as a marketing tool for the project.

Council adopted a **minimum break-even policy** for the project. This meant the land sale had to recover all costs incurred by the City, which were estimated to exceed \$6.7 million (including site remediation, previous servicing agreements and additional community amenities). Critical determinants to achieving this policy were land use, density, and expected community amenities. As part of a Business Case, adopted by Council in September 2002, an initial financial pro forma showed the existing site density ratio of 1:1 would not achieve the policy, so the next project stage detailed potentially viable land use, density and community amenity options through community involvement. The options were then subjected to a detailed pro forma analysis to verify market viability, both for the City selling the land and the proponent successfully developing the land.

The **Triple Bottom Line** (TBL) approach was used to select the successful proponent through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Scoring was divided equally (1/3 each) between social, economic and environmental criteria derived from the Development Concept. The traditional approach of selling the land to the highest cash bidder was viewed as being imbalanced and not in the community's interest. Within each of the TBL categories, a minimum score of 50% was required for proponents to move to the next RFP selection stage, which was a public presentation. The community feedback, both written and verbal was considered by Council along with the recommendation of the RFP selection panel consisting of a cross section of City financial, engineering, planning, legal and environmental staff. In addition, a fairness auditor and a community advisor were appointed by Council to monitor the RFP process and ensure a fair and accountable process for development, community and City interests.

A customized **community involvement** process was designed for this significant City project. The first stage consisted of a Dockside Advisory Committee, two open houses and three workshops. The Dockside Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from the residential and development community, drafted the vision and planning principles through consideration of numerous factors, such as a cost-effective approach to environmental remediation, sustainability and liveability. The Advisory Committee's draft vision was that within 10 years, Dockside would be an area with buildings and facilities of innovative design standards, integrating visually and functionally with its industrial and residential neighbours. The land use comprises a mix of light industrial, residential and commercial. Open space and community amenities would increase the area's appeal and result in a colourful and interesting place to work, live or visit. The ten planning principles to guide future development are: safeguard nearby industry and housing; encourage activity and employment; a mix of land uses; integrate with near neighbours; encourage innovation in design and sustainability; recognize relationship between remediation & density; minimize visual impact of parking; ensure public open space and amenities; take advantage of near-harbour setting; and provide a basis for implementation.

The public then reviewed the draft vision and planning principles through a series of open houses and workshops, and also provided direction for the urban design guidelines and community amenity priorities. The next step was to conduct a market and risk analysis, which incorporated the vision; planning principles; current and projected market conditions; environmental remediation costs and consideration of the City's break-even policy. This analysis determined that an average density ratio 2:1 would provide adequate land sales revenue to provide for some additional community amenities, sub-surface parking and higher design criteria. Of note, the City committed to providing high-quality public open space as the paramount community benefit from the site redevelopment in addition to environmental site remediation.

Following adoption of the Development Concept by Council in May 2004, the City opened the RFP process for the first time to include a public presentation and public feedback of the finalist proponents. Public feedback through written

submissions, available through the City's web site and in hard copy, and through verbal comments at the public presentation, was a critical component of Council's final consideration of the successful proponent. Community experts were also consulted on the RFP triple bottom line matrix. A community advisor, appointed from the neighbourhood association, monitored the RFP selection process. This enabled a community member to passively participate in a traditionally closed, confidential process, and thereby understand the process, previously viewed as a "black box" by the community.

### Conclusion

The unique individual components of the project, described above, were integrated into the overall project management, which resulted in one of the most innovative redevelopment proposals by a local government. And unlike many programs, the project was achieved without any federal or provincial assistance programs. On December 16, 2004, Council selected the development proposal of Windmill Developments Ltd. and VanCity Enterprises. Their \$600-million proposal contained 1.2 million square feet of mixed use development, including townhouses, apartments, affordable rentals, seniors housing, a boutique hotel, a commercial village, and offices and lofts in a commercial/light-industrial precinct along Harbour Road. The proposal was particularly favoured for its innovation in sustainability, including on-site heat cogeneration, wastewater treatment and reuse, and a biodiesel facility produced from local waste cooking oils. The recycled wastewater from all building sources will feed creeks and ponds along a greenway running the length of the project. Cycling, walking and mass transit are proposed as the main forms of transportation and all building and site irrigation. Community amenities offered for this project, estimated at approximately \$5 million include:

- o \$3 million affordable housing fund using 31% market affordable and 20% rental
- o \$400,000 Sustainability Centre for ENGOS
- o \$187,500 for public art
- o 400 trees, public dock and small boat launch
- o Several parks, trails and a community square with outdoor amphitheatre
- o Construction of a community sustainability centre
- o Historical, First Nations and environmental information programs

The developer renamed the site to Dockside Green and has a website at: [www.docksidegreen.ca](http://www.docksidegreen.ca)

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