

Friends of the Spit

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Inside:
- Planning the
Portlands — again!!!
- Island airport
expansion threatens
the Spit



A perfect gift that lasts a lifetime

The Spit Kit

How to avoid Holiday crowds, give a present that will delight all year — without breaking the bank — and help Friends of the Spit extend their membership? Give a Spit Kit to the favourite people on your list!

The Spit Kit is \$20, and includes: ★ 1-year membership ★ A beautiful Spit poster ★ Spit bird checklist ★ Illustrated Spit plant book

To order, include recipient's name, address, phone number and e-mail, and any special message for the card. Mail to the address on the left with your cheque. To ensure delivery for Christmas, orders must be received before December 16. You can also phone (416) 699-3143. The Spit Kit is gift-wrapped.

To renew membership for Spit Kits given in prior years, send \$10 with recipient's name and address. A seasonal card announcing your gift will be mailed.

NEWSLETTER

Fall-Winter 2002

AS AN EDITORIAL

Think back a dozen or so years ago. At that time the Spit stood as an isolated park, comprising basically the peninsula. The baselands were the subject of various development schemes — industrial parks, office buildings, hotels, etc. Then, in 1996, the 'Golf Academy' (a driving range) was proposed for the baselands. Our opposition to the project led to a downzoning to parkland, which increased the area of the Spit. At the present time, two planning reports (see opposite) acknowledge the opportunity to create more parkland around the Spit. While this is still not enough, official thinking (prodded by numerous citizens) is moving in the right direction. So there are reasons for (guarded) optimism that citizens' wishes may prevail over rampant development.

A rather unusual letter



It has always been known that our membership is an exceptionally steadfast group. This short note received a few months ago proves the point.

"I left Toronto in 1983 for Niagara-on-the-Lake but loved The Spit when I lived in Toronto. Haven't been back on the Spit for 15 years but feel it is important to continue my membership. Keep up the good work!"

It is a policy of Friends of the Spit not to print the name of members, to protect their privacy.

Toronto Waterfront Revitalization promotes 'Lake Ontario Park'

Will citizens' dream come true?

Following a spate of public consultation exercises over the last two years, the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (TWRC) has released another report detailing 'The Development Plan and Business Strategy for the Revitalization of the Toronto Waterfront'

"Lake Ontario Park in the Outer Harbour would be a major new amenity complementing Cherry Beach and the natural habitat provided by the Leslie Street Spit. Within its 250 acres there would be an inlet from the Harbour. This would include a major reforestation program with picnic areas, nature interpretive centres, and other facilities such as aviaries, butterfly pavilions and aquaria allocated along an extensive trail system. Lake Ontario Park would connect to new park land south of the sewage treatment plant, east of Leslie Street, which in turn connect to the park at Ashbridges Bay, providing a continuous open space system from Toronto Harbour to the waterworks at the extreme east end of Toronto Beach."

Sounds like a parkland paradise abutting the Spit, an idea that our group has been advocating for more than a decade. However, the report continues:

"The area north of Cherry Beach and south of the ship channel will become a mixed use precinct with residential apartments looking south over parklands and beaches."

So the condo towers will be marching down, à la Harbourfront, to dominate a narrow strip of 'reforested' land and 'aviaries'. 'Major amenity' indeed!!!

THIS IS NOT ENOUGH, dear TWRC, and definitely not what residents told you time and time again: THE ENTIRE AREA SOUTH OF THE SHIP CHANNEL SHOULD BE PARKLAND!

This is basically what we and many other groups and individuals told the TWRC on November 19 at a public consultation meeting.

'Making Waves', the Secondary Plan for the Central Waterfront

is a parallel plan within the city-wide new Official Plan containing detailed criteria for the waterfront part of the city. A public meeting under the Planning Act is scheduled for December 12. In this case as well, our major misgiving is the limited area allocated to parkland in the Portlands. We will report on this issue in the next newsletter.

Membership support renewal

If your renewal for 2002 has not been received, you will find a renewal slip with your newsletter.

As in previous years, you can renew for both 2002 and 2003, to save time and postage. Just tick the box on the yellow sticker on your renewal slip.

We thank you in advance for renewing. As you know, the only source of funds Friends of the Spit has is members' support. ... **and Thank You**

No getting away from constant noise and impact of busy airport

Spit threatened by Island Airport expansion

Friends of the Spit has joined their voice to that of the citizen groups opposing a fixed link, massive development and increase in the number of flights at the Toronto Island Airport.

The expansion is a serious menace to both human visitors and bird populations on the Spit. In a letter to members of City council, we wrote:



"The Spit is an unmatched refuge for humans... In this car-free waterfront park, people can get away from it all right in the city... The atmosphere of calm and serenity is what attracts thousands to the Spit.

"We are strongly opposed to any proposal that would... increase [air] passenger traffic. Such expansion would have a greatly negative impact on the waterfront, of which the Spit is a key feature. People value the Spit for the rare opportunity to enjoy tranquillity in the city. Airplanes flying low overhead in rapid succession will severely degrade this enjoyment.

"... an expanded airport would pose a direct threat to the numerous species of birds... which have made the Spit world-famous. Of grave concern to us are the bird-abatment measures that would be demanded for airport flight safety. Obviously, birds and planes don't mix!

"...we strongly feel that an expanded Island Airport would be an enormous mistake. Now that people have discovered the pleasures of the Spit... depriving them of this enjoyment would be a grave political mistake as well."

The expansion was approved on October 24 by the Planning & Transportation and Economic Development & Parks joint committee. "The inability of councillors to represent citizens as a whole and the short sightedness of their decision jeopardizes the future of our public waterfront", wrote Community AIR (www.communityair.org), a group of residents leading the fight against airport expansion. The issue will be debated by the full City Council as this newsletter is being mailed.



Meanwhile, the 'perfect solution' is found... yet again

Move the airport to the Spit!!!

It seems to happen about once a year. Somebody has found THE definitive solution to the airport problem. And The Toronto Star dutifully gives it press. The most recent of these 'scoops' was a Letter to the Editor The Toronto Star of October 10.

"In the debate over the island airport, everyone assumes that there are only two choices: close it or expand it. There is a third choice ignored by all the players — move it to the Leslie St. Spit..."

"I am not the first person to suggest this and I do not understand who no one has championed this idea. As is too often the case, there is a lack of vision in this city", said a Letter to the Editor.

The letter prompted concerned calls to Friends of the Spit, from members and from the general public, confirming the widespread love and support for this unique park.

The Star published responses to this 'brilliant idea'. Here are some excerpts:

"The reason no one is championing the Leslie St. Spit as a site for a new airport is because the spit already serves hundred of thousands of fliers each year. [It] is a resting spot for migratory birds, and it provides habitat for a number of species..."

"The community has a very clear vision for the Spit, the Don Valley and the Oak Ridges Moraine — link them all together with a substantial, wild corridor through the middle of the portlands. Sadly, the vision of the Waterfront Corporation and our governments seems to be narrowed significantly..."

"One only can assume that [the originator of the 'idea'] has never actually been on the Spit. How else to explain his total disregard for an internationally recognized nature reserve that is important both ecologically and socially.

"It is ...a glorious refuge to hikers, cyclists, photographers, painters and anyone else fortunate enough to experience its unique beauty

"To have such a treasure within the very heart of our city, with free access to all, is something for all Torontonians to cherish..."

The Spit has always elicited eloquent defenders. This is further proof!

About and around the Spit...

Updates and news

SEWAGE PLANT SITE DESIGN PROJECT

The Ashbridges Bay Site Plan was made public at an open house in September, after three design charrettes, in which Friends of the Spit participated. The purpose of the exercise was to develop a park and interpretive opportunities around the sewage treatment plant.

The plan, to be implemented in 3 phases over 30 years, contains some interesting features we find generally satisfactory for the Spit neighbourhood.

One contentious point is an enormous 'hill' to be constructed overlooking the base of the Spit. Luckily, that is in Phase 3.

TOMMY THOMPSON PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The committee (TTPAC), made of Spit stakeholders, is a sub-committee of the Board of The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. Meetings are held every six weeks.

Work in progress includes: comment and review of Master Plan changes and upgrades, comment and review of habitat and trail issues, and advice regarding operational matters.

SPIT EA IMPLEMENTATION

Recently, the TTPAC commented upon University of Guelph design proposals for entry gates, blinds, shelters, etc. at the Spit.

In the opinion of many members of the committee, the student proposals were overbuilt.

The Friends of the Spit representative continues to advocate the very minimum of building and digging intervention.

HEARN GENERATING PLANT

An announcement was made several months ago that a film company had leased part of the premises. Recently, the province announced in the midst of the Hydro disaster that there were 'exciting plans' in the offing for the plant to generate electricity. The Hearn was mothballed several years ago; it used to burn coal and gas. We have no further details at this time.

Have a great Holiday and a Happy New Year

The Spit is marvellous in winter. It is a totally different experience. Dress warmly, pack a hot drink and a snack, take a friend or family along, and savour the quiet.

