

Friends of the Spit

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for the Portlands
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created

Ken Bryden - A great Friend

It is with deep sadness that we heard of the death of Ken Bryden, on December 16, 2001. A member of Friends of the Spit since the very beginning, Ken could always be relied upon in times of need. Whether giving impeccably logical deputations, handing out flyers at a viewing day or lobbying politicians, he cheerfully pitched in. When an issue arose, he would call and ask if he could help.

A keen birdwatcher and passionate lover of the Spit, he could be seen on many weekends, binoculars around the neck, walking to the lighthouse where he would meet his wife, Marion who preferred cycling for a picnic lunch.

Thanks for all, Ken. We will remember you fondly!

NEWSLETTER

Spring-Summer 2002

AS AN EDITORIAL

Planning the future of a city requires vision and foresight. In the case of the portlands, the new Toronto Official Plan will determine whether present and future generations will benefit from extensive greenspace or witness yet another opportunity handed to developers.

If allowing somewhat more generous greenspace than the Fung report, the new plan still fails to turn all the land south of the Ship channel into parkland. What a missed opportunity!

Have a glorious summer anyway!

FOUR BUILDING PRINCIPLES

1. Removing barriers / making connections / unimpeded access.
2. Build a complete continuous greenspace on the waterfront - a park that will be iconic 100 years from now.
3. Promote a clean and green environment.
4. Create a dynamic, accessible, affordable waterfront without privatization of waterfront lands.

Parkland zoning

G — This is the general park use designation, which permits a host of recreational uses, from wading pools to soccer fields.

Gm — Allows the same uses as G, plus marina/boating uses.

Gr — Is applied to environmentally sensitive areas. Permitted uses are limited to "conservation lands".

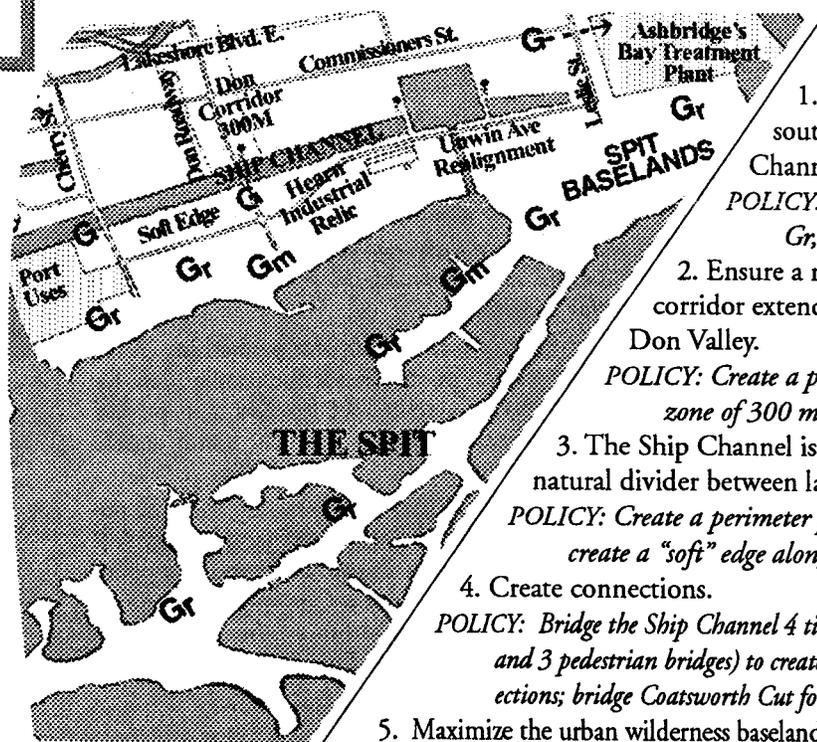
Friends' vision conveyed to politicians and planners

Making greenspace at the Portlands

On February 20, Friends of the Spit gave a presentation to the Waterfront Reference Group, as part of the public consultation process for the new Toronto Official Plan.

During our presentation, we unveiled our plan, which is illustrated below, together with our four "building principles" and our five "big moves" to ensure the waterfront adjacent to the Spit remains public, green, and accessible. "The time is now to create the largest park space possible. This opportunity will never arise again. In 100 years, no one will sing the praises of a council that built out the lands with condominiums. However, create a magnificent park - all the land south of the Ship Channel, and people will celebrate your foresight for centuries", we said.

Our presentation was sent to city councillors, planners and environmental groups.



Map not exactly to scale

FIVE BIG MOVES

1. Declare all lands south of the Ship Channel as Greenspace.
POLICY: Zone lands G, Gr, and Gm.
2. Ensure a naturalized corridor extends north to the Don Valley.
POLICY: Create a protected corridor zone of 300 metres width.
3. The Ship Channel is a logical and natural divider between land uses.
POLICY: Create a perimeter promenade; create a "soft" edge along the south side.
4. Create connections.
POLICY: Bridge the Ship Channel 4 times (Cherry St. and 3 pedestrian bridges) to create North-South connections; bridge Coatsworth Cut for the waterfront trail.
5. Maximize the urban wilderness baselands at the Spit.
POLICY: Realign Unwin Avenue to the north, adjacent to Ship Channel.

Natural Area Advisory Committee reactivated

The Board of The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) has approved recently the creation of a new Natural Area Advisory Committee.

The mandate of the committee is to make recommendations regarding the implementation of the Tommy Thompson Park Master Plan. The committee is comprised of representatives from entities that have been involved with the Spit, in an advocacy, stakeholder or administrative role.

In addition to Friends of the Spit, members include groups such as Toronto Field Naturalists, Toronto Entomological Association, Toronto Ornithological Club, City of Toronto Parks Department, Toronto Port Authority, Toronto Cycling Committee.

The committee, still in its formative stage, has held two meetings up to now.

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Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant Site Design Project



A Landscape in the Works!*

A project to improve the appearance of the site through landscape design is nearing completion. Being the closest 'neighbour' to the site, Friends of the Spit participated in the public consultation project, together with a large number of residents.

Friends of the Spit contributed significant input—we have quite a bit of experience in this kind of undertaking! During three afternoon-long charettes, the site design was discussed, studied, and progressively refined. We are told the resulting plan will include public access to the plant's waterfront area—with good birdwatching opportunities—trails, and educational displays.

One interesting possibility is a shared interpretive centre for the Ashbridges Bay site and the Spit located at the intersection of Lakeshore and Leslie. This could provide cost-savings while preserving parkland.

*This logo was designed by Neighbourhood Liaison Committee Co-chair, Karey Shinn to represent the major features of the site. While its primary function is wastewater treatment, the site also occupies a significant location on the waterfront. It is in itself a significant greenspace for the area. Visit their website at http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/ashbridges_bay/

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Complaints of unacceptable behaviour at the Spit

Inappropriate conduct raises concerns

Recently, visitors to the Spit have reported that their enjoyment was impaired by some people behaving in a manner deemed not acceptable in a public place where individuals of all ages and families go for recreation.

Whether it is rowdiness, nude sunbathing (note we are not against sunbathing in the buff, but the Spit, an area dedicated to the general public, is not the proper place for it), intimidating people or telling them to leave a certain spot because it is 'private' (there are no private areas on the Spit), or indecent acts, you and your family should not be subjected to this kind of aggravation on the Spit.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is cooperating with the police to solve the problem. But the assistance of visitors witnessing such acts is needed. If you witness disturbing behaviour, inform the attendant immediately and the police will be called. Better, if you have a cellphone, call 55 Division Community Response Unit directly, at (416) 808-5519 to lodge a complaint. Do not confront the individuals. You should also write the TRCA at 5 Shoreham Drive, Downsview M3N 1S4

MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT

You will find a renewal slip with this mailing. We hope you will renew and thank you in advance as we brace for another year in defense of the Spit. Thank you also to the many Friends who have renewed already.

On the birding front

This year again, hardy souls set off in blustery weather to count birds and add to the body of scientific knowledge.

77TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

As part of the on-going winter census of birds, the Toronto Christmas Bird Count took place on December 30, 2001. At the Spit, 5 counters observed 4,907 birds of 33 species. Most numerous were Long-tailed Ducks (formerly known as Oldsquaw), with 1,648 individuals and Redheads—1,304 individuals. An exceptional find was an American Pipit on Peninsula D. One Snowy Owl was seen. The count was somewhat hampered by the -5° C temperature, but more so by the high 45 km/h winds, which created large waves on Lake Ontario, with great whitecaps and spray.

LAKE ONTARIO WATERFOWL INVENTORY

Two weeks later, on Sunday, January 13, as part of the inventory of Lake Ontario waterfowl from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Kingston, a team of counters visited the Spit again. Although it was a day with no snow on the ground and minimal ice, the high winds and whitecaps again made the counting difficult. On the Spit, 16 species of waterfowl were observed, for a total number of 5,336. Most notable were 2 Canvasback, 9 Hooded Mergansers, and one White-winged Scoter. The largest numbers were of Redheads (2,138).

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Dogs and the Spit

Our four-footed friends give us much pleasure, but the Spit is off-limits to them.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has always had a strict "no dogs" policy at the Spit. This is for very good reasons.

Firstly, and most importantly, the presence of dogs—even on leash and regardless of how well-behaved—is extremely stressful for wildlife. To a bird or small mammal, a dog looks like a predator.

Secondly, with the large number of people on the spine road, dogs present a danger to humans and, thirdly, dogs may escape and not come back when called—thus creating problems for wildlife.

If you see individuals walking dogs on the Spit, it is better not to confront them as some (who know they should not be there) can be very nasty. Instead inform the attendant.

There is a notice at the gate that no dogs are allowed. However, the sign has been repeatedly vandalized—probably by the irresponsible 'citizens' who insist on walking their dogs on the Spit regardless of the consequences.