



Concrete and steel, parks and potential,
the dreams are alive when the space
is the size of most city downtowns.

Words by Kristen Smith

Imagine Mississauga as a tourist destination.

Imagine a thriving entertainment district or a cultural hotspot of galleries, gardens and performance spaces. Imagine bustling cafes, bars, restaurants and shops. Imagine walking along a boardwalk or a tree-lined trail, playing volleyball or having a picnic on the beach. Imagine a sports stadium, an aquarium or a college.

Imagine it in Lakeview village. That is what the city of Mississauga asked of its constituents as part of a project aptly named Inspiration Lakeview.

Located south of Lakeshore Road between Cawthra and Dixie, zoned for utility and employment, the 200-acre main study area includes the Ontario Power Generation (OPG) land, site of Lakeview Generating Station and some industrial buildings. Now after the coal plant has been torn down, after the threat of a proposed new gas power plant has passed, what's next?

"The goal of Inspiration Lakeview is to come up with a compelling vision to show what can be done with the site to justify rezoning the area for mixed-use," said Lorenzo Ruffini, Strategic Leader in the Strategic Community Initiatives Division of the City of Mississauga. "The community has spoken. They want to see the waterfront revitalized, not reindustrialized."

Inspiration Lakeview will synthesize ideas generated during the visioning process and present a Visionary Master Plan early this year for a mixed-use waterfront community.

"We're at a point in the project where the community has put forth a number of fantastic ideas and that was all in response to the potential for a future generating station being built on the Lakeview site."

Those fantastic ideas evolved during a two-year "conversation" among the 800 member Lakeview Ratepayers Association, led by their President Jim Tovey and community activist, Citizen of the Year 2009 and the newly elected Ward 1 Councillor in 2010.

When the Lakeview Generating Station closed after 43 years in 2005, Tovey revisited an old idea. With the help of John Danahy, Lakeview resident, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Toronto, Tovey and the ratepayers modelled a new vision for the Lakeview site. Calling their plan the Lakeview Legacy Project, it would be based on six guiding principles: open lake, sky and tree canopy views; architecture that earns the sky; protection of existing neighbourhoods; and a healthy community.

Tovey and Danahy presented the proposal to Mississauga Council on Feb. 27, 2008. Carmen Corbasson, former Ward 1 Councillor for 16 years, brought a motion for support to City Council that received unanimous approval.

Then former Minister of Energy and Infrastructure George Smitherman responded by announcing on July 16, 2008, that "Lakeview's future in power generation is over." Last year in April, Mississauga City Council reconfirmed its commitment to the revitalization of the waterfront. Since then the city has hired consultants, led by Urban Strategies Inc., and has begun the visioning for the OPG lands. In September 2010, Council received a letter from the Minister of Energy, Brad Duguid reaffirming the site would not be used for power generation.

"Somebody's got to come up with how it's going to be used and that's the role of the municipality to do that work with the community," says Bruce Carr, Director of

Strategic Community Initiatives for the City of Mississauga. The consultants met with Tovey and Danahy to find out where they were in their project.

“The principles they’ve established are great principles. I don’t have any problems stealing great ideas from people,” said Carr. “We are a waterfront community,” he continued. “This is about embracing our waterfront and bringing the people back to the waterfront, the hope is that it is important to everybody in Mississauga.”

There are challenges of course. The city doesn’t own the land for one, Ontario Power Generation does. “They’ve been really open so far - talking to us and letting us know what’s happening with the site,” said Carr. According to an OPG spokesperson, its mandate is to act as a commercial agency. Although they sell land all the time, this property is not currently for sale and this situation is unprecedented. Not to mention the site is contaminated.

Ontario Power Generation has restored about 37 acres to brownfield standards and is working to restore the remaining 123 acres through a pump and treat program. The remediation of the brownfield will take between five and 10 years.

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Mississauga South MPP Charles Sousa

“Every study we’ve seen so far says nothing is a show-stopper,” said Danahy, adding there may be a few areas where it may not be clean enough for residential use, but it could be used for - a green industry?

The G.E. Booth Wastewater Treatment Facility is not an ideal neighbour. The Region of Peel might even be competition for the acquisition of the OPG lands.

“The Region of Peel has expressed an interest as a stakeholder for the future use of the OPG lands,” said Ric Robertshaw, director of wastewater at the Region of Peel. Although there has been an expansion to the Lakeview Wastewater Treatment Facility within the decade, population projections for Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon beyond 2031 or potential changes in treatment regulations could require additional capacity and the OPG land is immediately adjacent to the facility, said Robertshaw. He added there is no immediate plan and the region is “trying to keep their options open.” >



THE FALL OF THE FOUR SISTERS.



GOING...



GOING...



GONE...
But the question of replacing them still remains.



FEATURE

The plan will have to address transit solutions and affordability, how to make the site more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly, how to create great spaces and how to address declining Lakeview population by attracting young people.

“There is a whole host of challenges that we’re coming up with right now, but they’re only going to make the end product, our visionary concept, that much better because it’s going to have to test every one of those or it’s going to have to look at every one of those challenges and try to apply some solutions to it,” said Ruffini.

Mississauga South MPP Charles Sousa said the biggest challenge to the revitalization of Lakeview has already been conquered - stopping the power plant. “From here on we can start working,” said Sousa.

Speaking at the October kick-off meeting at the Cawthra Seniors’ Centre, he added that “When this process is complete I want to be able to say the community stands behind it. I want to say that council stands behind it and that the planning experts stand behind it. And I can take that to Queens Park, to the Minister and to the Premier, and say that my community is united behind a single vision for the revitalization and redevelopment of Lakeview.”

“A project like this could take 20 to 30 years...” according to consultant Barry Lyons, who has been working on development projects around the GTA for over 40 years.

Bruce Carr agrees, he expects it to be a few years before any development even begins.

“The vision will not move forward if Mississauga cannot afford it.” said Carr. “Unless the value of the land through zoning can go up enough to clean up the property and develop the infrastructure then it’s going to stay just a dream.”

So add finding the money to convincing ownership, to managing a difficult neighbour, to determining a popular vision.

“In my career at the city, I’ve always found that great ideas always attract money,” said Carr. “There are at least two land speculators out buying properties all around the site for future development. They see the potential, so it would mean working with them.” Lyons agrees money is a challenge, but said the greater challenge was finding someone to lead the charge.

“Every good plan needs a champion, whether that’s a person, or a committee, or a Councillor, or a Mayor, or whatever. There is always a driver, someone who just pushes and gets in people’s faces and makes things happen. So hopefully that champion will emerge because we’ve seen lots of plans die because there wasn’t a champion to take them forward,” said Lyon.

Lakeview has a new Councillor in Jim Tovey, will he be the champion this Inspiration needs?

FULL REPORT COMING IN FEBRUARY

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LAKEVIEW INSPIRATION COMMUNITY BUILDING 101

Dec. 2, 3 and 4



The consultant team identified six emerging themes: link the city and the water; create an innovative model community; open this site with a wealth of accessible public spaces; connect the site with multiple modes of transportation; create a special place with destinations; and ensure viability.



Dorothy Tomiuk, well known Port Credit based citizen activist, said this is an opportunity to showcase Mississauga’s identity and public culture.



Victor Verbitski, 16, presented a creative “green futuristic” design, which included condos, an artificial mountain and beach, waterpark connected by a monorail system to a concert site which also blocks the view of the sewage treatment plant.



John Mondelli, the department head of technology at St. Paul S.S. challenged his Grade 11 class to create model designs of the Lakeview site.