

UPCOMING DATES

OCTOBER

18 Brampton Council – Special Meeting, 9:00 a.m. - CANCELLED

NOVEMBER

2 Newmarket Council (final meeting of council term), 1:00 p.m.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Council, 7:00 p.m.

7 Halton Hills Council, 3:00 p.m.

King Council/Committee of the Whole (public meeting), 6:00 p.m.

Oakville Council, 6:30 p.m.

8 Aurora Council, 7:00 p.m.

9 Halton Regional Council, 9:30 a.m.

10 York Regional Council, 11:00 a.m.

15 Caledon Council, 7:00 p.m.

East Gwillimbury Council, 10:00 a.m. (inaugural)

Georgina Council, 7:00 p.m.

Halton Regional Council (start of new council term), 9:30 a.m.

Milton Council (inaugural), 7:00 p.m.

Mississauga Council (inaugural), 7:30 p.m.

Newmarket Council, 1:00 p.m. (inaugural meeting of new council term)

Oshawa Council, 9:30 a.m.

Whitby Council, 7:00 p.m. (inaugural)

NEW RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS TO DRIVE BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT

SPARKING A CATALYTIC EFFECT

Rahul Gupta

A new report authored by **Toronto Metropolitan University** School of Urban and Regional Planning associate director and professor **Christopher De Sousa** for **NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association** analyzes over two-dozen American brownfield sites where sustainable development is occurring successfully in an effort to identify lessons and guidance from these projects that can inform property owners and developers seeking to redevelop contaminated former industrial lands.

The re-development of brownfields — vacant or underutilized lands that have been contaminated mainly through industrial uses — is hardly new. Ontario, which accommodates some 40 per cent of the country's inventory of brownfields, is home to a number of significant brownfield redevelopment efforts, including Ottawa-Gatineau's **Zibi** community and Mississauga's **Lakeview Village**.

And De Sousa — who has

authored a book on sustainable brownfield development as well as numerous academic reports on the subject of brownfields — sees lessons within the American examples for Ontario applicable to environmental remediation efforts, 'green building' and the potential for offering skills-based employment and training for local marginalized and Indigenous communities.

De Sousa also believes that sustainable brownfield development can be achieved through the establishment of more public-private partnerships between government, industry and non-profit associations. He notes that with increasing housing supply identified as a key priority for government and industry alike, there is opportunity in Ontario to establish stronger public-private partnerships to drive brownfields development in a sustainable manner.

"The idea is that if we want affordable housing, green building and green infrastructure, job creation that maybe takes into account

communities that have been underrepresented in certain types of jobs, if we want these public goods — then governments will find ways to work with developers to make this doable," De Sousa told *NRU*.

"In the brownfields sector and other sectors, you definitely hear calls for greater sustainability," De Sousa continued. "Some of that means environmental sustainability, [as well as] social equity and affordability.

"We're hearing more and more people want [sustainability], but we're not hearing about how the sectors are coming together to deliver it."

De Sousa points to the role of the U.S. federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which has provided 'seed money' for cities like Portland, Oregon and Boston to support private brownfield redevelopment. Eligibility for this funding considers environmental as well as socioeconomic factors such as the provision of affordable housing as criteria for a strong

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application. In comparison, funding for brownfield redevelopment offered by Canada's federal and provincial government sources is largely piecemeal and lacking in cohesive strategy.

With the private sector emphasizing greater investments in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives that champion more sustainable and equitable development, De Sousa believes a 'catalytic effect' is possible with greater support from higher levels of government in a manner that could create new opportunities for brownfields redevelopment, such as affordable housing options for historically-blighted lands.

"Over time, it's working to build a better community and you've sparked a catalytic effect in the surrounding area," De Sousa said.

While Ottawa-Gatineau's Zibi mixed-use community has achieved major development milestones, such as the completion of the site's first carbon-neutral rental apartment building last year, the ambitious redevelopment project faced major remediation challenges from the onset.

The project is expected to

be completed within the next decade and will consist of mixed-density housing types, ranging from condominium towers to townhouses. The mixed-use community will also accommodate commercial and office space, as well as public realm improvements such as plazas and squares that take advantage of the site's scenic views of the Ottawa River and

the House of Commons.

After acquiring 15-acres of downtown waterfront lands in 2013 spread across two municipalities — Ottawa and Gatineau, located in two different provinces — Ontario and Quebec, spread across the shoreline belonging to the Ottawa River, Zibi's developer had to overcome significant hurdles for its remediation efforts on the area which was heavily polluted after decades of industrial use.

"There was a real cornucopia of different contaminants that were present on the site," **Zibi Canada** president **Jeff Westeinde** told *NRU*. "And it was a real challenge to try and figure out all of the history of

the site."

According to Westeinde, risk assessment is a chief factor for determining whether a brownfield redevelopment can proceed.

"When you're looking at the history of a brownfield site [environmental remediation] is front and centre," Westeinde said. "It leads to a 'go or no-go' situation that if you can't get your head around to quantify and manage the risk associated with the brownfield component, it doesn't really matter what else you can do from a development point of view."

Complicating matters at the Zibi site was the need to preserve existing heritage-designated buildings dating

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Aerial photograph showing the 71-hectare Lakeview Village high-density development site near Lakeshore Road East in Mississauga following the removal of concrete and other materials that were left over from the former Lakeview Generating Station coal-burning power plant. Remediation efforts on the brownfield site included excavating and transporting concrete and other materials from it for use in a nearby conservation area as well as for in-fill to support for the development of new public waterfront parks.

SOURCE: ARGO DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



Rendering showing public realm improvements planned as part of the Lakeview Village redevelopment project planned for brownfield lands in Mississauga. New plazas and shoreside parks overlooking Lake Ontario are some of the public realm improvements planned as part of the new high-density mixed-residential community which is expected to begin construction in 2023.

ARCHITECT: CICADA DESIGN
SOURCE: ARGO DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

SPARKING A CATALYTIC EFFECT

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back beyond the start of the twentieth century.

Those efforts required the designated buildings to be propped up while excavation of contaminated soil from the site could take place below the foundation. The remediation work was coordinated by **Milestone Environmental Contracting**.

Remediation work for Zibi — an Algonquin-Anishinabe word for ‘river’ — included the involvement of a local workforce belonging to the Algonquin-Anishinabe First Nations located in the area. According to Milestone CEO **Eric Pringle** and founding partner **Barry Grover**, an Indigenous-owned company **Deontie Construction** was hired to carry out much of the remediation work, which included soil excavation and the development of an on-site quarry for crushing rocks found on the site to minimize transport of such materials.

“Our reactivity to the project included bringing in First Nations contractors and introducing them to other construction companies and giving them an appreciation that there is a very competent workforce that is Indigenous

and is part of this project,” Grover told *NRU*, noting that around half of the remediation workforce was Indigenous. “And that proceeded to embed some of our Algonquin staff into some of those other companies.”

Over in Mississauga, construction is set to commence next year on the 72-hectare Lakeview Village redevelopment on former coal power plant lands located just south of Lakeshore Road East. A masterplan for the site was approved by **City of Mississauga** council in 2019, permitting a development consortium known as **Lakeview Community Partners** to establish a mixed-use high-density community.

The mixed-use community

will feature residential and office uses, as well as publicly-accessible areas including an approximately three-hectare waterfront park (see: ‘*On the Waterfront*’, *NRU GTHA Edition*, April 21, 2021).

Around 67-acres of land will be conveyed by Lakeview Village Partners to the City of Mississauga for the purpose of developing public park space.

While the province of Ontario had already coordinated the demolition of former **Ontario Power Generation** coal-fired plant when Lakeview Community Partners secured approval to redevelop it, there still remained a significant amount of ‘sub-surface infrastructure’ that needed to be removed.

With the **Credit Valley Conservation Authority** planning to establish a natural greenspace in memory of long-time Mississauga city councillor **Jim Tovey** in a space adjacent to the Lakeview Village site, the consortium readily agreed to transport over 50,000 tonnes of concrete to use as ‘fill’ for the

new conservation area. More concrete from the site will be used for the construction of new waterfront parks planned as part of the project.

“We were able to form a really great synergy and partnership with the conservation authorities,” Lakeview Community Partners lead and **Argo Development Corporation** vice-president for development **Brian Sutherland** recalled. “As we broke up the concrete, we put it in trucks and hauled it directly next door to set the foundation for the conservation area.”

In developing its masterplan for the area, the intention was to establish connections to the water for area residents long cut off due to the existence of the coal plan, Sutherland said.

“One of the early [considerations] was creating strong connections to the waterfront to draw people back and have a real destination waterfront park system,” Sutherland told *NRU*. “One of the cool opportunities from a

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Rendering showing the Lakeview Village mixed-residential development on former Lakeview Generating Station power plant lands on Mississauga’s waterfront. City of Mississauga approved a masterplan for the new community in 2019. Significant public realm improvements are planned for the site, including the development of new waterfront parks and a linear open space that can be frozen to create a skating rink.

ARCHITECT: CICADA DESIGN
SOURCE: ARGO DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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brownfield point of view was that the province had already removed the power plant. All of the above-grade structures were gone.”

The opportunity to redevelop inaccessible power plant lands into an environmentally sustainable urban community was a chief attraction for interdisciplinary architectural firm **Sasaki**, based in Boston.

The firm is working on designs for new public waterfront park space for the development that will include re-purposing an existing waterfront pier that was originally used for transporting coal and other materials for the plant’s operations.

“We want to bring the parks deep into the [site]plan, so that it’s not just people arriving at the lake front edge who benefit

from the location, but even a few blocks into the site, you feel the presence of the lake and great public spaces in the neighbourhood,” Sasaki principal urban designer **Dennis Pieprz** told *NRU*.

“We’ve spent a lot of time working with our partners on developing a strategy for great urban streets in this space with very forward ideas about streetscape management.”

While it’s easy to focus on the challenges of brownfield redevelopment on the scale of Lakeview Village, Sutherland prefers to look at the opportunities that such a project brings, such as the ability to establish a sustainable new community and

conservation space in an area that was once heavily polluted.

“The challenges are certainly daunting at the start when you take on a project [such as Lakeview Village],” Sutherland said. “But focusing on the opportunities is really what has made our success so rewarding, and we’re excited about where we’re going.”

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