



Promising Practices

BUSINESSES

Windmill Developments to turn former industrial lands into eco-neighborhood

A 37 acre shoreline area of the National Capital Region is about to improve dramatically thanks to Windmill Developments' plan to revitalize old lands there, previously used for industrial purposes, into "a 21st Century eco-neighborhood".

With a commitment to recognizing the area's Aboriginal history, on designing with ecological systems in mind, on enabling healthy living, and creating complete communities, Windmill's vision for the former Domtar lands on Chaudière and Albert Islands is inspiring.

"Our vision is to create Canada's most sustainable mixed-used community right here in the nation's capital," said Jonathan Westeinde, co-founder of the Windmill Development Group. "We plan to bring new life and energy to this once bustling heart of industry, and give the people of Ottawa and Gatineau a new way to experience and appreciate one of the great rivers of the world, the Ottawa."¹

A sampling of Windmill's development intentions is impressive:

- carbon neutrality from operations;
- increased biological diversity;
- on-site stormwater management;
- 90% Walkscore for all homes upon completion;
- exemplary indoor air quality throughout the built environment;
- 12% of the master planned area dedicated to public space;
- an attractive, safe and cohesive pedestrian and cycle network linking the entire development;
- a seamless and exemplary public transit system;
- upon completion a resident could live for a month without leaving a 1 kilometre radius of the site;
- every residence is within 500 metres of a place of employment;
- balance between number of jobs on-site and number of residences on-site; and
- full mix of housing types/tenure (low-rise/high-rise, free-hold, affordable/market, condo, rental, owned etc).

Each of Windmill's previous mixed use developments



The red-lines, west of the Portage Bridge, indicate the areas slated for redevelopment.

have all been LEED Platinum certified and this should be no exception. "The transformed place will be built on a strategy of ecological urbanism, which can be defined as the re-thinking and re-structuring of the built environment in response to and in collaboration with the natural environment. Urban development and natural systems need not be mutually exclusive, nor should people and their activities be separate from nature," says Windmill.²

The site was most recently used by the Domtar Corporation to manufacture paper but "due to declining market demand for paper announced the permanent closure of the Ottawa mill in 2005 and then the Gatineau mill in 2007. ... Domtar has been actively looking for a suitable buyer for the property since 2008, in recognition of the site's rich past and future potential."

Domtar expressed a lot of confidence in Windmill's ability to deliver a successful redevelopment project. "Windmill's team and track record in successfully revitalizing former industrial and brownfield properties is impressive, and we are confident that they will be able to successfully re-develop this prime property at the very heart of the National Capital Region," said Stewart Marcoux, Vice President Asset Redevelopment for Domtar.

The purchase of the property is not completely finalized (as it hinges on successful rezoning applications to be filed with the municipalities of Ottawa and Gatineau in

spring 2014) but that has not stopped Windmill from beginning the public consultation process to ensure the best ideas for the space are brought to the fore early in the process.

A community consultation event occurred in Dec. 2013 at the Museum of Civilization where people were asked to provide feedback on the initial design intents and on how best to realize those intentions. Consultations have also been conducted by Windmill with the cities of Gatineau and Ottawa, Energy Ottawa, the Government of Canada, the Algonquins of Ontario, the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg band of Algonquins, the National Capital Commission, the Ottawa Riverkeeper, Destination Gatineau, Ecology Ottawa, Heritage Canada Foundation and many others.

Demonstrating sustainability done right

The Domtar redevelopment is a unique opportunity to implement sustainability on a neighbourhood scale. A key element of success will be in creating a diverse mix of uses and a pedestrian-first environment. The developers intend to create a community where people can live, work, and play on-site.

Another key sustainability element is the exploration of a renewables-based smart energy grid. While engineering is just beginning, the developers are exploring combining ultra-efficient buildings with geexchange, EcoLogo certified hydro, solar thermal and photovoltaics to achieve carbon neutrality and act as a demonstration project of responsible energy production and use.

Importantly, Windmill Developments has been active in reaching out to the local environmental community. Ecology Ottawa, the Ottawa Riverkeeper, and CREDDO are just a handful of environmental organizations that have been consulted throughout the process. The developer has planned a sustainability charrette aimed at bringing together the regulatory approvals bodies, sustainability-focused engineers and planners, and the local environmental community to discuss how best to work together to ensure the project meets its' lofty sustainability aspirations.

Windmill plans to extend its community consultation effort to include soliciting public input on what to name the would-be community, so far referred to as The Isles. In early 2014, the developer will launch a website where people can make their ideas known.

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References:

¹ Windmill Development Group. "Windmill Development Group Signs Agreement to Purchase Domtar Gatineau and Ottawa Lands." Press release. 4 Dec. 2013.
www.windmilldevelopments.com/2013/12/windmill-development-group-signs-agreement-to-purchase-domtar-gatineau-and-ottawa-lands. Accessed Dec. 2013.

² Windmill Development Group. "The Isles." Page 15. 2013. Promotional brochure. Available upon request.