



February 24, 2021

Premier Doug Ford
Minister Steve Clark
Minister Laurie Scott
Minister Lisa MacLeod
Mayor John Tory

Open Letter re: An exploratory concept on how heritage and affordable housing can be used to create a new future for The Dominion Foundry Lands

When bulldozers arrived on January 14, 2021 at the Dominion Foundry site on Eastern Avenue in Toronto's West Don Lands, the first shock wave was the immediate danger to listed heritage buildings. Lost in the immediate controversy was the threat it created to the collaborative development process that has seen the Province, City, Federal Government, community and private sector create one of Toronto's most successful new neighbourhoods.

Our goal is to realize the best public outcome for this site and ***to create a vibrant mixed-income, mixed-used community that addresses our affordable housing crisis and respects and leverages the legacy of the Foundry.***

To that end, we are excited to share the attached exploratory concept developed in good faith and through donated time by members of Toronto's urban planning and design community. We unleashed our collective imagination to illustrate the incredible possibilities for this site that could emerge through a thoughtful, inclusive approach to planning.

This exploratory concept serves as an **invitation to start over. We urge you to collaborate with us and others in a timely and meaningful public engagement strategy** to collectively determine how we celebrate our heritage and create affordable and market housing and community space for this site. Our collaboration would build on the remarkable history of engagement that has shaped the West Don Lands and be guided by development principles that are anchored in the historical context of the Foundry and the ongoing evolution of the West Don Lands community.

Who are the Friends of the Foundry? The events of these past weeks have galvanized a loud, diverse, and passionate group of people from many walks of life with more than 23,000 people urging the government to stop the demolition. Many people shared ideas on what could be done instead. We are residents, active community organizations, heritage conservation advocates from across the city and the province. In sum, we are community-minded people who are invested in local participation in planning our communities and in outcomes that maximize the economic and community benefits of lands under public stewardship.

The Friends want the future of the Foundry to be a source of pride, not a regrettable lost opportunity.

At stake is the immense value that would be gained by strategic conservation of the site's historic industrial buildings.

Let's be inspired by what's been accomplished in the neighbouring Distillery District where, thanks to the intentional strategy and preservation of the distinctive heritage architecture, a dynamic mixed-use community was created where tourists flock and locals work, live and play. Similarly, the Foundry building and Machine Shop provide a unique sense of place with their industrial 'big space' architecture and distinctive and well-loved interior spaces ideal for community programming.

The successful development of the West Don Lands to date clearly demonstrates the benefits and risk mitigation that comes with genuine and regular community engagement and support. After the 2015 Pan Am Games in this area, the Province was able to move quickly to start new development because of the strong consensus reached with the community for the vision going forward. There hasn't been a single Ontario Municipal Board/ Local Planning Appeal Tribunal challenge since.

As Ontario emerges from COVID, the recovery of our urban economies and neighbourhoods that support them are critical. Our skill in forging dynamic partnerships between governments, communities, business, culture and anchor institutions has become part of Ontario's competitive advantage and has played a key role in attracting global talent and investment. As the Ontario Heritage Trust recently and so aptly stated, "Heritage has the potential to inspire, to stimulate creativity, to create communities that are sustainable, diverse and resilient in the face of change."

We know that we need more housing of all types and investments. They are essential for the creation of good jobs and thriving businesses. We have a rare opportunity here to create the housing, the jobs, and the community facilities that position Ontario as a global leader, all while preserving and adaptively reusing irreplaceable heritage assets.

We urge the Province to start fresh and work with us and the City in a meaningful, inclusive public engagement process, and look forward to your responses.

Respectfully submitted,

Members and Supporters of Friends of the Foundry

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