

On your agenda

Friends of the Spit

P.O. Box 467, Station J
Toronto, Ontario M4J 4Z2

January 23 - 10:00 a.m.

MTRCA Board Meeting
Black Creek Pioneer Village
(Visitors Centre)

Thank you!

Thank you to all of you who took the time to attend one or more of the three meetings about the Spit in late November/early December. And to the many members who deputized or wrote letters to the MTRCA and the THC.

Also a big thank you to the devoted supporters who phoned members to remind them of these meetings. Your help was greatly appreciated.

IF YOU HAVE NOT ATTENDED OR WRITTEN

We could have done with your support. Please, now is the time, especially as the boaters are so vocal. Can you make an effort to attend the MTRCA Board meeting on January 23 (see over)?

This is the meeting where the full Board of the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority will vote on whether or not to proceed with the recommendation of its Water Board to devote a large part of the Spit to boating and allow parking lots and car traffic.

You can speak at this meeting, and we strongly encourage you to do so. To be put on the speakers list, call Larry Field at 661-6600 @ the M.T.R.C.A.

If you are unable to attend the meeting and speak, please write to the MTRCA, 5 Shoreham Drive, Downsview, Ontario, M3N 1S4, in time for your letter to arrive before January 23. Ask for your letter "to be read into the record" (which means it will be considered as a deputation in person).

Black Creek Pioneer Village is accessible by public transit. If you want more information, do not hesitate to call our hot line at 699-6442.

Spit plan: boats, cars, parking lots. Cost: \$6 million+

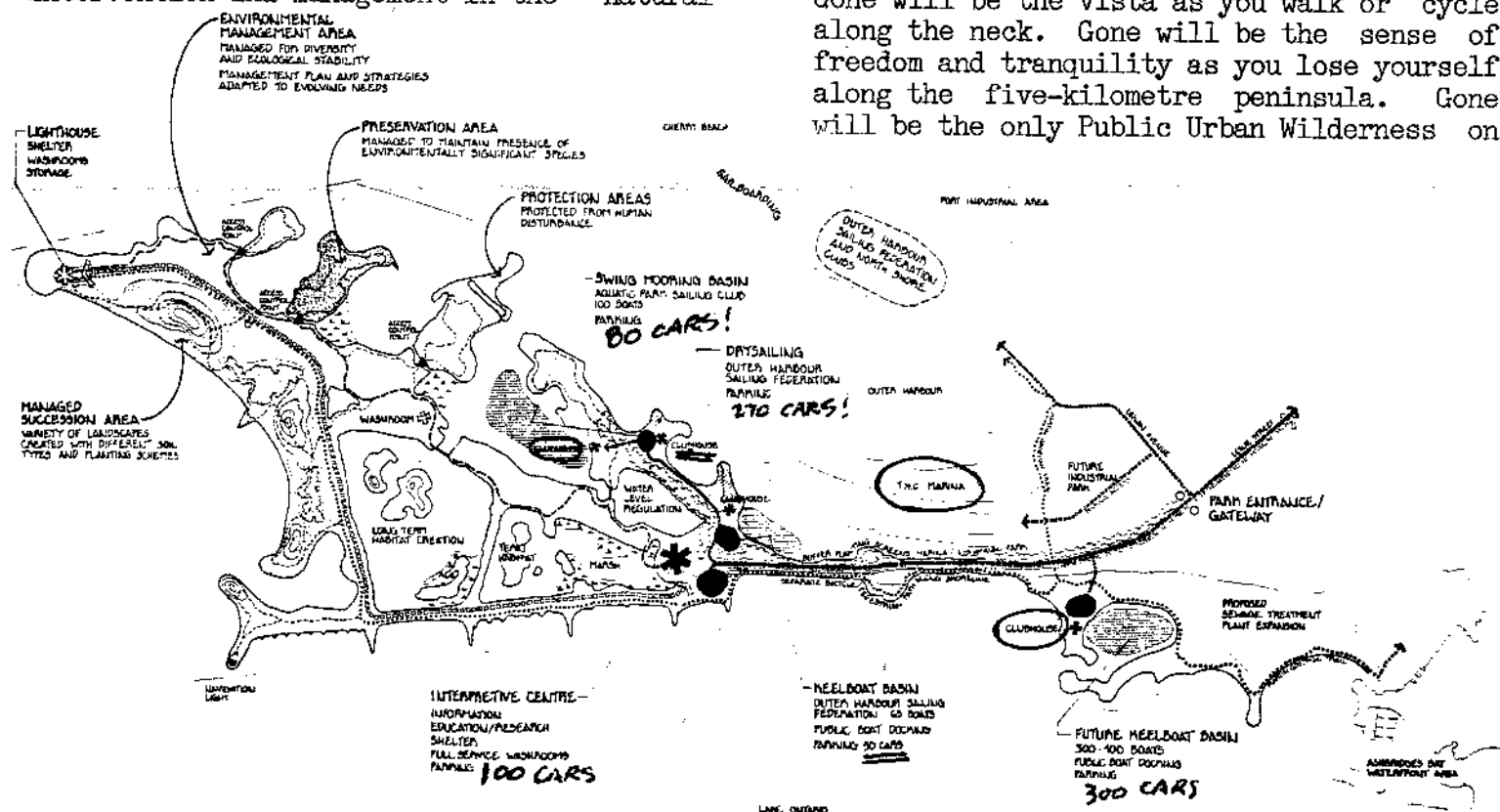
The Concept Plan for the Spit developed by the MTRCA provides for car access to the endikement (see drawing), parking for several hundred cars, facilities for some 700 boats (clubhouses, cradles, docks, etc.), a large interpretive centre and full-service washrooms. Public Access Restricted

The Plan also provides for intensive intervention and management in the "natural

resource area", with public access and use restricted to the eastern part of the Spit (there will not be public access to the embayments on the west side - see drawing)

Boating Use to Ruin the Spit
This plan will toll the death of the Spit as we know and love it.

Gone will be the vista as you walk or cycle along the neck. Gone will be the sense of freedom and tranquility as you lose yourself along the five-kilometre peninsula. Gone will be the only Public Urban Wilderness on



the Toronto waterfront. Gone will be the prettiest spot on the Spit, Dredgers Bay (sacrificed to boating) - and an environmentally significant area. Gone will be the opportunity to give people a unique, unspoiled site to be passed to future generations.

Up will come an unending stream of traffic, noise, fumes, parking lots. Up will come fences, keep out signs, buildings (if you have any doubt, go and see Humber Bay or Bluffers parks). Up will come the hordes of sightseers, drawn by the open road and parking lots. Up will come the Golden Arches or similar establishments. Up will come "created landscapes" and groomed paths. Up will come another controlled, manicured park.

Public Input Totally Ignored

This grotesque plan is being put forward despite the repeated requests from the public to "leave the Spit alone".

Time and time again, survey after survey, public meeting after public meeting, the majority of the public has said it wants the Spit to remain a Public Urban Wilderness. These wishes have been totally ignored by the MTRCA for the sake of political expediency in response to a small, vocal minority which, relative to their number, is more than amply served by facilities along the waterfront.

This plan IS NOT a compromise. It serves the interests of boaters, and the interests of those unable to leave well enough alone.

Even the pitifully small "natural resource area" that will be open to the public (see drawing) is to be provided with facilities that were rejected by the general public during the Phase II public input process. These include full-service washrooms, a large interpretive centre, shelters, planted schemes and storage (?). However, many of these were mentioned in boaters submissions.

Taxpayers to Pay for Privatization

Preliminary budget figures call for capital expenditures of more than \$6 million of public money to implement what amounts to the privatization of the Spit.

On the other hand leaving the Spit to evolve naturally as a Public Urban Wilderness will cost nothing. And annual operating expenses will be very modest.

Contentions Assumptions

The list of "strengths" and "weaknesses" to justify this plan is a classic example of political doublespeak.

For instance, one strength is a "large natural area", but one weakness is a "somewhat smaller natural area". Another strength is "park walking distances reduced" (of course, the park is smaller), and another "broadest scope of benefits to the public" (go and tell that to the 42,000 walkers, cyclists, nature watchers, seekers of peace and quiet, photographers, painters, picnickers, readers, lovers, etc. who enjoy the Spit).

Another strength is "clear gateway/arrival area to natural resource area at endikement" (500 cars and a large interpretive centre can hardly be missed...)

Split Vote

At its December 5, 1986 meeting, the MTRCA Water Board approved this plan by a vote of 7 to 3.

Lois Griffin (Etobicoke), Ron Moran (Markham) and Maureen Prinsloo (Scarborough) voted against the plan.

The plan will be submitted to the full board of the MTRCA (30 representatives from the Toronto watershed area) at a meeting scheduled for January 23, at 10:00 a.m., at the Black Creek Pioneer Village Visitors Centre (see over for details).

Media Reports

The issue of the Spit has drawn a lot of media attention lately.

In November and December, the three Toronto major TV stations and two radio stations featured the issue, and The Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star published several stories as well as many letters to the editor.

Overall, the media reports were fair. However, we deplore that they oversimplified the issue as "boaters vs birders".

The media does not seem to have caught on to the fact that the real issue is one of people vs cars, preserving nature vs development, and public access vs privatization.

Friends of the Spit policy has always been to preserve the Spit as a Public Urban Wilderness for the general population. While birdwatching is the fastest-growing leisure activity in North America, it remains that the majority of Spit users go there simply to enjoy its unspoiled beauty in a car-free environment.

Best wishes
May the new year
bring you peace,
happiness, health
and many beautiful
days on the Spit

The Steering Committee
of Friends of the Spit

Park open in winter

The Spit is now open year-round, every weekend, weather permitting. It is particularly beautiful after a snowstorm or an ice storm. If you go, remember that it can be very blustery there and several degrees colder than in the city. Dress warmly, bring a hot beverage...and enjoy a bracing walk.