



A Redevelopment Success Story

Through a public-private partnership, Ottawa transforms a cultural landmark

BY GORDON MACNAIR, SR/WA, AACI, P.App

Canada's Lansdowne Park has a proud heritage, having capably served Ottawa and the surrounding region as a major sports, exhibition and entertainment facility for the past 150 years. However, in recent years, this historic cultural landmark had fallen into disrepair, and its aged facilities were no longer able to satisfy the needs of the community or the expectations of its residents.

Through a public-private partnership between Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group (OSEG) and the City of Ottawa, the transformation of Lansdowne is a success story of redevelopment and innovative place making. The important work of restoring this community landmark began in 2009 when the Ottawa City Council directed staff to negotiate a partnership agreement with OSEG for the revitalization of Lansdowne. In 2012, the city council approved a partnership plan that would transform the area into a unique, urban destination while respecting the site's important heritage and cultural significance.

A key objective was to position the site as a unique and iconic place for the city. Lansdowne was centrally positioned to connect the surrounding inner city neighborhoods of Old Ottawa South, the Glebe and Old Ottawa East, which developed around Lansdowne at the turn of the 20th century. This required integrating the site's urban context so that it could become a focal point for the surrounding community that not only satisfies 21st century needs, but recaptures the essence of the past.

Today, the new Lansdowne is considered a jewel at the heart of the city. Located along the Queen Elizabeth Driveway, a scenic federal parkway now links major attractions along the Rideau Canal, which has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It has evolved into something more than just a sports and entertainment venue. With added shopping, entertainment, parks, and residential structures, the area has become a major attraction among visitors and tourists. It is an example of how Ottawa is applying smart growth, sustainability and destination-making principles by incorporating active recreation, mixed uses, as well as green and innovative design to create a showpiece for the city.

The Partnership Plan

In 2009, the City of Ottawa and OSEG formed the Lansdowne Partnership Plan (LPP) and proceeded with a plan to design a 40-acre transformation with three synergistic components. At a cost of \$450 million, it included a revitalized urban park adjacent to the Rideau Canal, a renovated stadium and arena for sports, entertainment and cultural events, and a mixed-use urban village made up retail, commercial and residential space.

The City of Ottawa's contribution to the revitalization was \$167 million for refurbishing the stadium, arena and its designated share of the parking garage. The city allocated another \$44 million for the park for a total contribution of \$211 million. It was built over an aggressive 24-month period. Construction began in late 2012, the stadium and parking garage were completed in Spring 2014, the mixed-use development began opening in Fall 2014 and the urban park opened in Summer 2014. The entire site began its full operations in Spring 2015.

The LPP was based on a closed financial system that captures capital costs and contributions that were agreed upon by both partners. The project agreement set out the financial and other fundamental elements of the relationship between the parties and provided a framework for the development specifics. This included the stadium and retail leases, as well as multiple reciprocal agreements between the components to achieve synergy as one redeveloped site. The city continues to own Lansdowne, but OSEG is leasing the facilities for 30 years at a nominal fee. OSEG is responsible for operating and maintaining the asset as per a lifecycle plan to avoid its degradation over that period.

Planning and Approvals

The overall revitalization plans included a number of detailed technical studies, several of which were centered on developing a comprehensive transportation strategy based on sustainable transportation. One of the key issues surrounding this project was whether the existing transportation network was capable of coping with this incremental demand from all of the new aggregated uses on this site, particularly

during 20,000 person events in the stadium. In these cases, a number of special measures would be needed, such as special bus routes, shuttle bus operations to remote satellite parking lots and other initiatives. Implementing the LPP required significant due diligence to obtain the necessary approvals and will require ongoing compliance monitoring.

In 2010, the Ottawa City Council directed staff to initiate the required planning approval processes. This included a rezoning to allow for commercial and residential redevelopment, site plan approvals, and heritage approvals for relocating the Horticulture Building and amendments to the Ontario Heritage Trust easement. The Ontario Municipal Board approved the zoning changes in 2011. Final heritage approvals were obtained in early Summer 2011, and from the Ontario Heritage Trust in Fall 2012.

The Revitalization Plan Unfolds

To create additional interest and awareness, the city held an international design competition for the urban park. The 18-acre, intricately designed park includes courtyards, a heritage orchard, a farmers market square, outdoor skating rink, water features, a children's play area and two significant public art installations. City staff will operate and be responsible for the park's ongoing programming and management.

In addition to the urban park, the redevelopment project included Aberdeen Square, Aberdeen Pavilion and the Horticulture

Before Redevelopment



After Redevelopment



Located along the Queen Elizabeth Driveway, the 150-year old cultural landmark has become a major attraction, offering shopping, entertainment, parks and residential structures.



A key component of the project's success came from implementing a comprehensive transportation plan that encourages cycling, walking and public transit.

Building. Aberdeen Square is an outdoor space and serves as the site of the Ottawa Farmers Market. The market is operated by the Ottawa Farmers Market Board, and the city staff serve as the liaison to the board on operational, maintenance and event coordination issues.

The Aberdeen Pavilion is a focal point of the park. It will accommodate a winter farmers market and is available for community programming activities such as concerts, receptions, craft shows and activities associated with stadium events. The Horticulture Building was built in 1914 as an exhibition hall with a heritage designation. As part of the project, the building was relocated to the east side of Aberdeen Square.

A major component of the revitalization program was the enhancement of TD Place Arena, a major stadium. New fully accessible and iconic south grandstands that rise out of the natural landscape corridor along the Rideau Canal were constructed. The north grandstands were refurbished, and all existing facilities were upgraded with multi-function program spaces and state-of-the-art technology. The Canadian Football League REDBLACKS and the North American Soccer League Ottawa Fury FC played their first season at the refurbished stadium in Summer 2014. The Ontario Hockey League Team, Ottawa 67's, began playing in the TD Place Arena that fall.

Mixed Use Arrangement

The overall mix of retail tenancies support the goal of realizing the urban village as developed in the council's approved retail strategy. This strategy ensures a dynamic and unique retail experience that compliments and is part of the Bank Street commercial corridor.

The city retains ownership but entered into a long-term lease with Lansdowne Retail Limited Partnership for the 10 acres of retail land and parking garage space. The lease is for 50 years with two 10-year options. The land lease for the initial term is for a nominal amount. The market value of the lease was calculated based on its underlying value as per the zoning for retail property with related covenants. This value was included as part of the city's contribution to



A scenic parkway links attractions along the Rideau Canal, making Lansdowne a unique destination and a showpiece for the city.

the partnership equity. The city is entitled to share financial returns on the income generation of the retail component through a closed financial system beginning in the 30th year, and the city is entitled to 50 percent of the net revenue produced by the retail element.

Under the business terms of the partnership plan with OSEG, the city retains the air rights above the retail space and parking garage. The sale of the air rights for the residential development and the lease of the office were used to partially fund the capital contribution from the city for the stadium refurbishment. The city used a two-stage process that included a Request for Expressions of Interest and a Request for Offers for the air rights element. Following three offers for the residential air rights, the winning net bid of \$11.4 million allowed for 280 residential units based on a per dwelling unit density. As well, the bid also included 280 parking stalls and a podium to create the air rights for \$19.14 million, totalling \$30.5 million, and included the lease of office air rights for 50 years plus a renewal option.

Heritage Designations

As part of the process in securing approval from the Ontario Heritage Trust for the redevelopment, a new heritage easement was established that recognizes the significant improvements made at Lansdowne. It continues the protection that was provided under the initial easement for the Aberdeen Pavilion and added the relocated Horticulture Building as a protected building under the easement. The new easement also defined new and enhanced view corridors



TD Place Arena, a major stadium that holds 20,000 people was built as part of the redevelopment project.

that were established for these buildings. The Ottawa City Council also re-designated the Horticulture Building in Summer 2014 after its relocation to reinstate the municipal heritage designation that was temporarily removed to allow for the relocation and adaptive re-use.

In addition to, and as part of, the municipal planning approvals, federal and provincial approvals were also required for stormwater management. Federal approvals were required due to the site draining into the Rideau Canal, and provincial approvals were required for environmental remediation of the site, which was considered a brownfields property. To achieve this approval, the city worked with the Ministry of Environment to establish a process for addressing the impacted soil and environmental considerations at the site. Contaminated material was removed from the northern portion where the parking garage is located, with much of this soil being used to establish a berm feature to define the eastern side of the stadium. This achieved a key design objective for a stadium in a park. Through this process, the city secured the required Record of Site Condition for the project.

As with many infrastructure projects, there was an initial delay as a result of litigation launched by two local community groups called Friends of Lansdowne Inc. and the Lansdowne Conservancy. There were also appeals to the zoning change approved by council and to the council approval to de-designate the Horticulture Building to allow for its relocation. Fortunately, the delays did not ultimately impact the project completion date.

Lansdowne's redevelopment program has also completed a submission for LEED ND Gold certification. This was made possible through a combination of energy efficiency measures, the conservation of building materials and resources, improved indoor environmental quality, water conservation and

quality efforts, as well as the reduction of light pollution. Other measures included the reliance on alternative, non-fuel dependent transportation methods, the conservation and adaptive re-use of existing buildings, historic structures, and the use of green rooftops.

A Vision Transformed

The transformation of the 40 acres of centrally located land is now complete, offering a destination for residents and tourists that includes shopping, restaurants, residential living, entertainment for cultural events, a revitalized sport stadium and arena, and a magnificent urban park — Lansdowne has something for everyone to enjoy.

The revitalized Lansdowne completes the vision of transforming this historic site through a public-private partnership into a unique and dynamic public place. A comprehensive transportation plan was implemented and now encourages active transportation options such as cycling, walking and public transit. This kind of access played a key role in the project's success. This redevelopment project re-establishes the historic function of Lansdowne within the framework of a 21st century urban destination. ★



Gordon is Director, Real Estate Partnerships & Development Office for the City of Ottawa and the Secretary and Chief Operating Officer for the Ottawa Community Land Development Corporation.