



Keeping an eye on development of Exhibition Place lands is the goal of newly formed West Side Community Council

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Communities surrounding Exhibition Place have banded together in hopes of having more say in future development.

The West Side Community Council (WSCC), a newly formed collective consisting of eight local residents associations, is requesting a seat at the table when it comes to deciding the future of the 192-acre site.

“We want to be part of the process, we want community input. We have ideas about how it (Exhibition Place) can be developed,” said Ric Amis, chair of the Parkdale Residents’ Association, one of the eight local residents associations which form the WSCC.

Amis said the WSCC was formed in response to the increased development of the site, with the construction of Hotel X, BMO Field’s expansion and the Toronto Raptors’ BioSteel Centre practice facility which turned a baseball diamond into a parking lot. For Amis and his fellow residents’ associations it was time the community spoke up.



An above-ground parking structure may be coming to Exhibition Grounds.

“We felt those were all indications for us that it’s a loss of park and green space. We didn’t see that stopping,” Amis continued.

“A big red flag for us was when we realized that Exhibition Place wants to change the official plan to re-designate the westerly portion from open green space to redevelopment. We said, ‘look what they’ve done to the Eastern portion, they’re just going to apply the same criteria’, and so we’ll see a loss of greenspace.”

The group’s main concern is the lack of green space in the surrounding communities and to make sure the Exhibition Place Board considers the consequences of such intense development to the neighbouring community.

“We would like to have a role in how the city uses this remaining green space and not turn it to redevelopment,” Amis told The Villager.

He brought the request to form a working group with the board to Dianne Young, the CEO of the Board of Governors, and Ward 19 councillor Mike Layton, a Board member, at the yearly community liaison meeting held at Fountainblu on June 27.

“I think there’s merit in having the local community association have more of a direct line of what’s going on at Exhibition Place,” Layton said. “I think what we should do, through the strategic plan or after, is to determine an appropriate course for the community consultation. We have to figure out how to have a forum that allows the community to talk about their issues that they’d like to address.”

Layton said that while Exhibition Place’s strategic plan encourages community consultations, it hasn’t always happened.

“Most of the work Exhibition Place deals with is about managing the site, it’s about very specifically how buildings get managed and how do we fulfill the core obligations as a business entity,” Layton told The Villager.

“It infrequently deals with large land use matters and it does that in very public fashion, however, there hasn’t been a significant public involvement in that.”

As for the creation of a city-led working group Layton said it’s something the board is considering, calling it a “good starting point.”

However, this isn’t the first time the group has gone to the board to request more community involvement. A smaller group of residents asked for the same seat at the table last year, but didn’t see any outreach from the board.

Amis said this year’s request has more weight with more associations on board pushing for participation and now has been put on the agenda at the next scheduled board meeting. He plans to attend to hear the decision.

“The board seems very autonomous and doesn’t seem to consult with the community unless they want to,” Amis said.

“But we don’t want to lose this space. Before you know it it’s not a 192-acre park anymore it’s a parking lot.”