

## Executive Summary

'Greyfields' have become a common presence in the suburban landscape of North American cities. These economically declining or failed commercial sites are most recognized by large parking lots, low pedestrian and consumer traffic, abandoned commercial units, poor building and infrastructure conditions, and lacking integration with the surrounding community. Often planned as long lasting features of the landscape, these ailing commercial sites become a physical barrier for pedestrian activity and a visible blemish on the community. These greyfield sites are located in almost every city in North America and present an interesting and challenging opportunity for infill redevelopment.

This report presents a case study of the Bay Ridges Plaza, a greyfield redevelopment project in Pickering, Ontario. The project will redevelop the 10.6-hectare site of an ailing shopping centre, the Bay Ridges Plaza, to create a mixed-use infill redevelopment within an established community. The redevelopment of the Bay Ridges Plaza, now known as San Francisco by the Bay, is selected as a case study for this report in order to investigate the factors of success and challenges experienced during the redevelopment of this greyfield project.

With the use of the Bay Ridges Plaza case study, it is the intention of the researcher to help inform both developers and policy makers of the relevant issues surrounding greyfield redevelopment in Ontario.

The findings of this report confirm the redevelopment potential of greyfields as indicated by various academic and case study research reports. While not all the challenges, opportunities, and success factors are applicable to every greyfield project, completing a detailed list of these factors with the use of a case study analysis will equip developers and municipalities with the knowledge of what to expect when redeveloping old commercial sites. These factors include, but are not limited to:

### **Location:**

The success of the Bay Ridges Plaza redevelopment was connected to the prime location of the site within the City of Pickering. The project is within easy walking distance to the GO Transit Station, ideally situated just south of Highway 401 for commuters within the GTA, is

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minutes from the downtown of Pickering including City Hall and the Pickering Town Centre, and is located within an already established community with existing servicing and public transportation.

**A Positive Planning Framework:**

Aside from the Official Plan and zoning bylaw amendments that were required to increase the allowable density of the site, the Bay Ridges Plaza Redevelopment follows the general intent and policy aims of both the Growing Durham regional Official Plan and the City of Pickering's Official Plan. The redevelopment of the Bay Ridges Plaza also appears to be a direct implementation of provincial policy in that it is a compact, vibrant, mixed-use, and transit oriented infill redevelopment.

**Communication with the Public:**

There was a large amount of public opposition towards this project from the very beginning. Despite the large amount of public opposition and resulting OMB hearing, the public consultation process can be seen as a contributing factor to the success of the development due to the fact that this process resulted in the project becoming a mixed-use and master planned community.

**Creative Problem Solving:**

The main point of opposition towards the redevelopment of the Bay Ridges Plaza was the loss of the Price Chopper grocery store. In dealing with this, the City of Pickering placed a Hold on the Square Boy Plaza land, the site of Tower C, which will be removed once a new food retail use is established within the commercial units below Tower A and B. This was a creative step taken by the City of Pickering to ensure the mixed-use portion of the development best serves not only San Francisco by the Bay inclusively, but the surrounding Bay Ridges Neighbourhood as a whole.

**Good Design:**

The San Francisco by the Bay redevelopment has committed a strong focus on good design, a factor that has had a large contribution to the overall success of the project. Prospective buyers and community members have enjoyed the attractive building materials, site layout,

mix of uses, and almost three acres of community greenspace that includes both a landscaped park and a children's playground.

**Mix of Land Uses:**

San Francisco by the Bay is a mixed-use development that will incorporate both high and medium density residential with commercial and office uses.

**Range of Housing Types and Prices:**

San Francisco by the Bay incorporates both condominium units and townhomes in the development model. The two housing types, combined with the varying model options and prices, provide an attractive development for a multitude of potential markets. The project has been particularly successful in attracting families and young professionals.

**Targeted Marketing:**

The developer has been successful in marketing the development as San Francisco by the Bay, due to its close proximity to the Pickering waterfront and Frenchman's Bay. The two housing types, townhome and apartment, has also been successful in marketing to both young families and the urban professional.

**Expect a Lengthy Pre-development Period:**

The complexity of Greyfield redevelopment can often lead to unexpected delays during the public consultation and planning process. The Bay Ridges Plaza redevelopment was no exception to this challenge as the pre-development period took nearly three times as long as a standard development application.

**Profitability:**

Perhaps the most contributing factor of the redevelopment was the profitability potential of the site. Had the redevelopment scheme and resulting pro forma not resulted in a notable profit for the developer, the project may have never come to fruition.

**Physical Attributes of the Site:**

Greyfields can often be located on sites that are awkward to work with due to irregular site shape, slopes, heritage regulations, or can be too large or too small to fit a particular

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development model. The site of the Bay Ridges Plaza offers none of these challenges; it is a relatively medium sized and flat site that contained no contamination.

**Master Planning:**

The completion of a master plan was a crucial element in designing a complete community and implementing the full vision of the site. The guidelines provided by the master plan for San Francisco by the Bay will ensure development does not deviate from the approved