

Executive Summary

The LeBreton Flats is a prominent and troubled site of some 70 hectares in the shadow of Parliament Hill. The history of the LeBreton Flats - the imbroglio began just after the site was settled in 1818 - is rich in intrigue. The site was expropriated for the construction of a government complex in 1962. The site was cleared but no development took place aside from the construction of the Ottawa River Parkway. In 1996, the Councils of the City of Ottawa and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and the Commission of the National Capital Commission, all owners of segments of the site, approved a land agreement that would finally complete the land assembly.

The intent of this report is to probe the processes that have been followed in four distinct attempts at development on the LeBreton Flats between the expropriation and the assembly of the site. These stages are as follows:

Stage 1: 1962 - 1973: Government Office Complex

Stage 2: 1974 - 1985: LeBreton Flats Phases

Stage 3: 1976 - 1982: LeBreton Flats North

Stage 4: 1985 - 1997: LeBreton Flats Plan

This case study, presented in Chapter Three, focuses particularly on the planning and implementation process. This examination will compare and consider the following in the context of some principles of good redevelopment process:

- the evolution of relations between the principal actors;
- the changing political and economic environment;
- the difficulty with planning in a multi-jurisdictional environment.

Some principles of good redevelopment process are presented in Chapter 2. These are summarized as follows. The redevelopment of urban land near the core of a national capital is a very complex task. The complexity increases when a multi-jurisdictional planning environment exists and when the redevelopment is headed by a risk-averse public agency. Recognizing political and economic cycles will itself contribute to formulating a plan that will endure the long-term nature of large-scale urban redevelopment projects. The management of risk associated with these cycles will further enhance the potential of a given plan.

While the LeBreton Flats has been plagued by a long history of failed attempts at its development, the time is as right as it has ever been for something to happen. The main actors have each evolved in such a manner that they now share a common objective and support the development concept for the site. The land agreement is binding on official plan amendments that are currently underway at the city and regional levels. Once the land agreement is in place there can be no more feuds over ownership of the site.

Subject to the approvals process, what remains is to empower an actor to implement the significant and costly development for the site. That actor should be best prepared not to plan but to act and to make quick decisions in the volatile real estate market. While the NCC is not ideally suited to act in such an environment, the Canada Lands Company, a non-agent Crown Corporation would be well suited to bring the *LeBreton Flats Plan* to fruition and thus close the troubled chapter of planning for LeBreton Flats.