

The Potential for Culture-led Regeneration in Toronto's Port Lands: Lessons from HafenCity, Hamburg

A Master's Report submitted to the School of Urban and Regional Planning in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning.

Julia Sjaarda
School of Urban and Regional Planning
Department of Geography and Planning
Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
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Executive Summary

The Potential for Culture-led Regeneration in Toronto's Port Lands:
Lessons from HafenCity, Hamburg
By: Julia Sjaarda

The Port Lands are one of the most significant urban regeneration opportunities in North America and present a unique opportunity for culture-led regeneration in the City of Toronto. This cross-national case study compares the culture-led regeneration project in HafenCity, Hamburg, to the existing built environment in Toronto's Port Lands and the current plans for redeveloping Toronto's Port Lands.

Research Question

This report seeks to answer the following question: "How does HafenCity's culture-led regeneration project compare to the existing built environment in Toronto's Port Lands and the plans for redeveloping Toronto's Port Lands?"

Methods

The research methods used to conduct this qualitative case study included an observational analysis and site evaluation, document analysis, and semi structured interviews. The three case studies were compared using an evaluation framework created by the researcher, based on indicators of 'good' culture-led regeneration and sustainable waterfront redevelopment (see Table Exec-1 below and Appendix A).

Case Studies

HafenCity was selected for the case study because it has been identified as one of the most extensive urban revitalization projects in Europe (Sepe, 2013) and the redevelopment won the Urban Land Institute 2013 Global Award for Excellence (Urban Land Institute, 2013).

The Port Lands was selected for the case study because it is also located in close proximity to the downtown core and is located on the waterfront, making it a prime location for redevelopment. There are currently plans to increase the presence of creative firms in the area, making this research relevant and timely.



Figure Exec-1&2: Scale comparison, HafenCity, Hamburg (top) and Port Lands, Toronto (bottom).

Table Exec-1: Summary and evaluation of all criteria

Criteria	HafenCity	Port Lands	Port Lands Plans
Built Form and Urban Design			
Mix of primary uses			
Intensity of built form/human scale			
Mix of buildings			
Dense concentration			
Adaptability of building stock			
Transparency/active frontages			
Amount and quality of public space			
Place-making and area branding			
Cultural Activity			
Variety of cultural venues			
Cultural animation			
Availability of workspaces for artists and low-cost cultural producers			
Presence of arts development agencies and companies			
Arts and media training and education			
Art in the environment			
Complementary day-time/evening uses			
Ten Principles for the Sustainable Development of Urban Waterfronts			
Secure the quality of water and the environment			
Waterfronts are part of the existing urban fabrics			
The historic identity gives character			
Mixed use is a priority			
Public access is a prerequisite			
Public-private partnerships in planning speeds up the process			
Public participation is an element of sustainability			
Waterfronts are long term projects & Revitalization is an on-going process			
Waterfronts profit from international networking			

Results

After assessing the built environments, cultural activities, and principles of sustainable waterfront development in HafenCity, the Port Lands and the plans for the Port Lands, this research finds that the HafenCity culture-led regeneration project cannot be compared to current state of the built environment in the Port Lands (see Figures Exec-3&4). However, this research has shown that HafenCity can provide a model for sustainable and creative waterfront redevelopment that the Port Lands can learn from during plan implementation. The current state of the Port Lands closely resembles the state of HafenCity in the late 1990's, when a plan was being approved and funding was being secured. Today, in 2017, the HafenCity project has been deemed 'successful' by scholars and professionals throughout Europe and North America. Thus, going forward, the Port Lands redevelopment plans put forth by Waterfront Toronto can be strengthened by implementing the lessons learned in HafenCity.

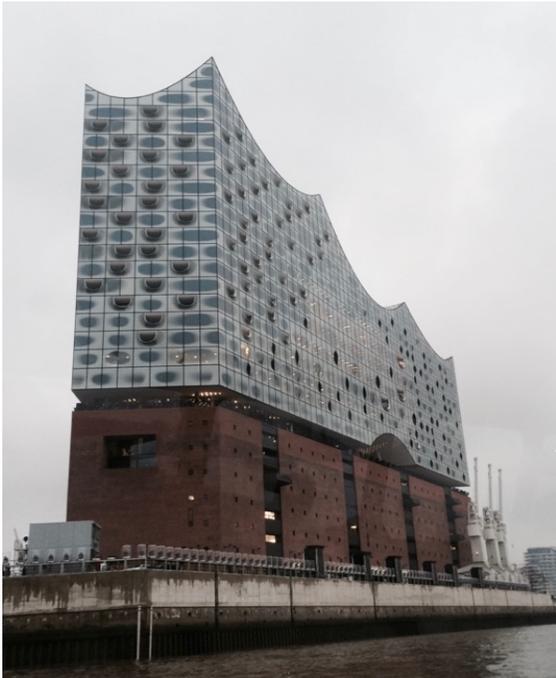


Figure: Exec-3: Elbphilharmonie Concert Hall. Hamburg, Germany. Photo: Sjaarda, 2017.



Figure Exec-4: The Hearn Generating Station, Port Lands, Toronto. Photo: Sjaarda, 2017.

Recommendations

This report concludes by putting forward six recommendations to guide future planning within the Port Lands.

Recommendation #1: Flexible master plan

Recommendation #2: Adapt industrial buildings for creative/cultural purposes

Recommendation #3: Use area branding to promote and enhance local identity

Recommendation #4: Plan to retain most of the current industrial uses

Recommendation #5: Reduce 'jurisdictional gridlock' between government agencies

Recommendation #6: Public space for the public, not a heavy focus on tourism