

Executive Summary

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This report examines the events that have transpired during the 1960s surrounding the redevelopment of Toronto's central waterfront.

The process of redevelopment began in the 1960s. The decline in port-related operations resulted in large parcels of under-utilised vacant lands along Toronto's waterfront. For the City of Toronto and the Toronto Harbour Commission, the public agency with responsibility of these lands, this posed a difficult planning problem. Should these lands be developed for other uses than those related to port operations? The City's Planning Board, with the THC's support, established a plan entitled The Core of the Central Waterfront plan.

The process of redevelopment became complicated in May of 1962, when Marvo Construction announced it had purchased lands that were owned by Canada Steamship Lines. As a result, the ownership of land was divided amongst the public and private sector. This made it difficult for the public sector to control and develop these lands according to the Core of the Central Waterfront plan. A public-private partnership between the City of Toronto, Toronto Harbour Commission and Marvo Construction to redevelop the lands between Yonge and York street, south of Queen's Quay was created. The \$100 million development was called Harbour Square. The waterfront was going to be redeveloped for commercial, residential, office, retail and recreational uses.

The parties had entered into a three way land exchange agreement that was consummated in September of 1965. However, by this time Marvo Construction had experienced financial difficulties and was not able to begin construction. The company was forced to sell its rights to develop the project to Campeau Corporation in 1968.

The case study research methodology was employed to gain insights into how the Harbour Square project on Toronto's waterfront evolved. The objectives of the paper were to document the history of the development of Toronto's waterfront, and to use the Harbour Square project to confirm, challenge or extend David Gordon's hypothesis regarding the implementation of urban waterfront redevelopment.

The case study approach was an effective strategy for undertaking this type of research. Archival research was completed and gathered into a chronology of the Harbour Square project. Interviews were conducted with representatives from the City of Toronto and Marvo Construction who were involved in the project. Finally, the political, financial, planning and implementation aspects of the project were examined and analysed within the framework established by David Gordon. He studied the difficulties of implementing redevelopment in New York, Boston, London and Toronto and found:

- Financial: Assembling the financial resources to get development started and the private sector involved is difficult. Private investment in real estate is dominated by the swings in the local property market.
- Political: Start-up process of urban waterfront development is dominated by the politics of development. A pro-growth coalition is needed to get development started. This support must be assembled and maintained overtime by the implementation agency.
- Planning: The planning process is dominated by the struggle for jurisdictional control over the waterfront and the right to establish a program for development. Problems revolving around the type of land uses appropriate, scale and densities of buildings and the availability of public space and recreational facilities cause implementation delays.
- Implementation: It takes a long-time to get urban waterfront redevelopment projects started. Many levels of approvals are required, along with an effective agency to implement the development and manage changes throughout the process.

The analysis of the Harbour Square project revealed that Marvo Construction was unable to get the project started because: 1) the company failed to find backers due to a shortage of capital for real estate development; 2) the planning board's attempt to control the pro-development forces in Toronto at the time; 3) the difficulty of arriving at an appropriate development program for the waterfront and; and 4) the complexity of getting approvals and completing the land exchange agreement.

The major findings of the report indicate that the financial, political, planning and implementation elements of urban waterfront redevelopment affect the start-up stage. The following are the lessons learned from Harbour Square: 1) development will not take place unless the developer has the required financial resources secured; 2) development does not happen in a context of complete political agreement; 3) political leadership is required to keep a project alive during difficult times; 4) development is affected by the struggle for control over the planning and design of development; 5) development is subject to a complex approval process; and 6) an effective implementation agency is needed to get development started.

In conclusion, this report has covered the broader issues regarding the implementation of real estate development, such as the role of financing, the role of politics, the role of planning and the process of implementing projects. It has contributed to the evolving theory of implementing urban waterfront redevelopment. Finally, this study has added to the historical account of the development of Toronto's waterfront.