

Public Sector Land Lease Renewals:

Case studies from around the world

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False Creek South, 2016. flickr/Heritage Vancouver Society

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Executive Summary

This report provides a review of public land development and public land ownership rationales, lease terms, and approaches from around the world. Information provided has been gathered from publicly available websites and publications, including government agencies where available, academic publications, legal websites, news articles, and reports. The intent is not to evaluate the success or relative effectiveness of the different approaches described, but rather to provide insight into the array of mechanisms and strategies that have been established in other jurisdictions with regards to development plans for public lands, including the leasing of public lands for the purpose of residential and related retail and commercial development, public asset management, and the potential role for private investment in this context.

As outlined in Table 1, this review examines examples from jurisdictions in Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America to ascertain the rationales, strategies, types of development, and lease terms and renewal processes in place in other public land lease circumstances. False Creek South has been included as a case study to provide background information and context when comparing it to the other examples. Like Vancouver's False Creek South, the other case studies in this report are commonly centered around repurposing and regenerating derelict industrial land with the specific goal of fulfilling unmet needs and adding attractions and quality of life. Within these rationales, the focus varies from creating opportunity and improving or maintaining quality of life for vulnerable population groups to increasing high-end residential and commercial space, as well as creating attractions for a broader public and generating revenue and growth.

Generally, strategic plans outline development priorities, and a variety of tools are employed to control development and ensure that land-use priorities are realized regardless of ownership of the land base. The priorities regarding land base and government control can be summarized in three approaches: 1) maintaining public ownership of the land base and entering into long-term leases for development; 2) maintaining public ownership and active management of specific public infrastructure; and 3) strategic divestment of public



False Creek South seawall, 2018. flickr/Dylan Passmore

lands to private owners with targeted stipulations for development. Public land lease approaches range from a default lease expiry without options for renewal to options for early renewals and renegotiation of lease terms, as well as flexibility to negotiate individual terms with individual development proponents.

The point in time when regeneration, or the pursuit of public control over the land, was initiated plays a role in considering how British Columbians could learn from other case studies. The older the example of public land leases or redevelopment, the more likely it is to hold lessons in redevelopment and lease renewal as it may be facing infrastructure degradation and/or lease term expiry. Given the lifespan of built infrastructure as well as the fact that public land leases generally are granted for terms of several decades, only the oldest case studies in this report have faced that phase. False Creek South is one of the earliest examples of land reclamation, waterfront development, and public land lease agreements in this context. That makes it difficult for British Columbia to learn from other experiences. However, the breadth of stages of development, development priorities, and land ownership approaches included in this report present an interesting suite of objectives, opportunities, and planning approaches and their execution. The report should therefore be considered a useful tool in defining, or redefining, priorities and developing policy frameworks and action plans.

Table 1: Case Study Overview

Case Studies	Redevelopment Commencement	Strategic Priorities	Lease Terms and Approaches
Singapore State Lands (Republic of Singapore)	1967	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain public ownership • Maximum control • Redevelop according to changing needs • Economic growth, social equity, and equal opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public leases 99+ years • Leases with arms-length government landlords for 30–60 years • Lease expiry without renewal or extension are the norm • Sometimes options for renewal exist
False Creek South (Vancouver, Canada)	1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain public ownership • Public land as financial asset and housing tool • Original vision and existing residents • Current housing needs and the benefit of all Vancouverites • Social equity and support for vulnerable populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 years • Option for City of Vancouver to end or extend at end of lease term • Renewal frameworks only recently addressed
Royal Albert Dock (Liverpool, United Kingdom)	1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving waterfront new purpose • Preserving historic structures • Creating high-end lifestyle area for local residents and visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lands largely sold to investors • Lease agreements, where they exist, are between private investors and tenants
Sydney Olympic Park (Sydney, Australia)	1993/2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World class sporting, recreation, and entertainment venues • Maintain public spaces • Sustainability • Balance natural and built environments • Viable mixed-use, mixed-income, accessible community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting venues and public space to remain in public ownership and maintained and expanded to highest standards • Lands for residential and mixed-use development generally sold to the private sector
Toronto Waterfront (Toronto, Canada)	2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City building • Public good • Innovation and job creation • Financial sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public ownership and investment in public spaces and infrastructure to attract private investment • Mixed ownership • Open to land sales or leases

2.0 Introduction

For decades, governments around the world have supported and encouraged residential and associated retail and commercial development through strategic land use planning and reclamation of derelict industrial areas. While development plans differ, the intent of these initiatives is consistent: to enhance quality of life in the community.

Like the development plans, the approaches to land management also differ, and through this study were found to include: maintaining direct ownership and managing the land and buildings; entering into land leases, thereby ensuring that the land remains a public asset; and selling the land but maintaining overall government control of the development through strategic development plans, zoning, other bylaws, and specific provisions and conditions for project approval. Each of these approaches to land management present opportunities and challenges. In some cases, a hybrid approach including two of more of these approaches can be found in a single development project.

Public land leases, which ensure that the land assets remain in the public domain, maintain a government's ability to adapt neighbourhood designs and land use over time. The False Creek South neighbourhood in Vancouver, British Columbia, a public land development model conceived and built in the 1970s and '80s, is one such example and has generated broad discussions in regional news and Vancouver Council sessions in recent years, as land lease terms for this project are ending in the 2030s and '40s.

In this context, combined with an environment of affordability challenges and housing shortages in Vancouver, there is an interest in BC in understanding what is happening with publicly initiated land development in other jurisdictions. Specifically, there is an interest in exploring the role of the land base, and related decision-making processes, since maintenance of existing infrastructure, redevelopment, lease renewals, and the possibility of land sales all may end up on the table once original land leases expire and original developments and neighbourhood concepts in South False Creek age.

This report introduces a number of case studies to identify how other jurisdictions are handling their public



False Creek South residential and commercial, 2023. S. Johnstone

lands, reclamation and redevelopment strategies, and priorities for their land base, including public land leases and their renewal, public management, and the sale of public land to private investors. The research does not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness or impact of these approaches; rather, the focus is on describing current public land use, strategic development plans and priorities, land sales or land lease arrangements, guiding principles and priorities for the land lease renewal process, how these are applied, and the key players involved. This information provides interested policy makers and decision makers in BC with insights, comparisons, and guidelines for their work.

3.0 Case Studies

Each case study in this report begins with a brief outline of the history and development, available information on the scope and scale of the project, and the overarching vision, guiding principles, and land ownership priorities. Public lease terms and arrangements are introduced where available. The next part in each case study examines information on land lease renewal processes and options, changes to the built environment and the strategic priorities over time, and upcoming, planned, or potential changes. Concluding remarks summarize the main principles of the project and significant findings about priorities and objectives and, where applicable, the renewal processes.



False Creek South, 2012. flickr/La Citta Vita



Lorong 3 Geylang, 2020. YouTube/CNA

3.1 Singapore State Lands (Republic of Singapore)

3.1.1 About Singapore State Lands

Due to its small size and being surrounded by water, Singapore's small geographical area effectively limits development and expansion options. Born from these circumstances, Singapore's policies aim to maximize public land ownership through deliberate acquisition of lands in an effort to exercise state control over the development of its scarce land resources.

Singapore gained independence in 1965, and its Land Acquisition Act (hereafter referred to as the Act in section 3.1) took effect in 1967. The Act enabled the state to acquire lands for its socioeconomic development and regulated compensation granted to private landowners. In 1973, the Act was amended to expedite land acquisition and lower the cost of the process. By 1985, the government had become the largest landowner in Singapore.

Today, public land ownership facilitates urban renewal and planning. According to Haila (2016), "The state land in Singapore is treated as a use value (public housing and industrial space), as an exchange value (leased to private developers) and as a source of public revenue (land leases and property tax)" (Purves n.d.). The focus of public land ownership in Singapore has shifted from the need for land for its resettlement and industrialization to the need to adapt to changing socioeconomic needs and the goal to ensure maximum use value for the land. Land development is controlled through the Planning Act of 1998.¹

3.1.2 Land Lease Approach

Leases in Singapore can be with the government directly or through arms-length government landlords. In charge of managing and regulating public lands is the Singapore Land Authority (SLA), a statutory board



formed under the Ministry of Law in 2001. The default policy is to let leases expire without granting extensions or renewals. The rationale behind this policy is the need to exercise control over land use and development. The ability to re-evaluate the best land use with every lease expiry, and re-allocate the land accordingly, ensures that the state can meet fast-changing socioeconomic needs. However, the SLA considers lease extensions on a case-by-case basis where the existing land use aligns well with updated strategic plans.²

3.1.3 Scope and Scale

Singapore had a 2021 population of over 5.4 million and an area of 733 square kilometres, making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Between 90% and 100% of all land is owned by the state. The SLA manages approximately 110 square kilometres of that land and over 5,000 buildings. Over 80% of the population lives in public housing units but commonly owns a lease on their unit.³

3.1.4 Vision, Guiding Principles, and Priorities

The Singaporean government's vision is to optimize land-use value while fostering economic growth and supporting its population. As noted previously, the highest priority is to maintain government control over the land. This priority is derived from the fact that changing socioeconomic needs must be met within the existing small envelope of available and already developed land. The only other expansion option is that of land reclamation via landfill. The guiding principle is to place public interest above notions of individual land ownership while implementing a public lease system that allows for economic investment and growth resembling free market economies. Aspects of rent and tax revenue, while important considerations, appear to play secondary roles in terms of strategic priorities.

3.1.5 Current Land Lease Arrangements

Public leaseholds typically have lease terms of 99 or 999 years, the latter being very rare. Leases or tenures with government landlords, arms-length corporations, or boards developing and subletting government-owned

lands usually come with shorter terms of 30 to 60 years. The default *modus operandi* is to let leases expire without extensions. The land and any structures erected on it revert to the lessor with the expiry of the lease or tenure. Where current land use and built infrastructure align with updated strategic plans, lease extensions may be granted for up to the length of the original lease or subject to tenure regulations updated as per current strategic plans, whichever is shorter.⁴

3.1.6 Plans for Land Lease Renewal

Where lease extensions are considered, they must be submitted after at least one-half of the existing lease period has passed and no later than three years before the scheduled lease expiry. In densely developed areas with rapid redevelopment cycles, lease extension applications may be accepted before half the original lease period has passed. Approved lease extensions require payment of a land premium based on the increase in land value from the time of the original lease agreements. If structures have been built on the land, a building premium may be charged as well; however, building premiums may be waived for commercial properties, and more recently also residential buildings, to incentivize investment in building maintenance and upgrades.⁵

3.1.7 Changing Visions and Redevelopment

Considering the Singaporean government's overarching priority to maintain control over land use and development to be able to meet changing socioeconomic needs, elements of change and redevelopment—including an uncompromising readiness to resort to demolition and complete repurposing of land, as well as renovation and regeneration of older infrastructure—are built into the vision behind public land leases. Recent real estate and lifestyle publications indicate some of the current shifts in development priorities, in particular an increasing focus on sustainability and a growing importance of lifestyle and recreation considerations.

The example of Lorong 3 Geylang, a public lease that expired in 2020, illustrates the concept and execution of lease property redevelopment. The 191 terrace



houses had been built in 1960 to house some of the 200 families displaced in a fire that destroyed wooden housing in this neighbourhood. An early example of public land acquisition, the new 1960 public housing units housed lease owners—and later, increasingly, their tenants—under a 60-year lease, which has now become the first public residential lease to expire in Singapore. In 2017, three years before the end of the lease period, the SLA announced the upcoming lease expiry and pointed out that this would allow “the land to be rejuvenated to meet the new social and economic needs of Singaporeans” (SLA 2017). Via the SLA, the state is planning a new public housing development on the two-hectare plot and has assisted lease owners and tenants with the transition out of the units that were to be demolished, providing financial compensation and alternative housing options.

Another program exemplifies regeneration and renovation of public residential units to ensure an updated housing stock that meets current and future needs: the Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme (SERS). This is offered and applied in Housing and Development Board (HDB) complexes. HDB is an arms-length government landlord, and residents include tenants and condominium owners. To summarize SERS, the government buys back the housing units aged 50 years and older in an effort to proactively revitalize older public residential estates, via regeneration and renovation. Tenants in these units do not own the land and have no say in SERS decision making; however, they have several options, including acquiring a unit in another HDB development or finding housing somewhere else and taking a market-value payout as compensation. Condominium owners, on the other hand, own a share of the land through freehold or a 99-year lease and get a say in SERS decisions. A total of 80% of owners must agree to SERS to enable the government to purchase and redevelop their building. In that case, owners receive compensation, including a premium.

Singapore constitutes the oldest example of public land ownership and lease agreements included in this report. Having recently reached the time when the first public lease agreements matured, it is the most likely example to provide concrete lessons in lease expiry options. In Singapore, maintaining utmost control over land, land use, and development appear to be the highest priority in designing lease arrangements. The vision behind this

remains the goal of being able to adapt to demographic and socioeconomic needs, including the occasional mention of socioeconomic equity to support vulnerable population groups. Newer principles, like sustainability and balanced lifestyle opportunities, are integrated as they evolve.⁶



False Creek South, 2015. flickr/Allan Harris

3.2 False Creek South (Vancouver, Canada)

3.2.1 About False Creek South

The False Creek South neighbourhood is located in Vancouver, British Columbia, between the Cambie Street and Burrard Street bridges, excluding Granville Island and the Squamish Nation's reserve land Señákw. Following early colonial times, this land constituted Vancouver's main forest and lumber industry area into the 1950s. By the 1960s, much of the industry had moved away or been destroyed by a large fire.

A redesign and development process was initiated and involved the federal government who owned Granville Island. The resulting 1972 Official Development Plan (hereafter referred to in section 3.2 as the Plan) prioritized an accessible waterfront seawall, parks and public green space, a waterfront market, and mixed-tenure housing that included co-op, low-income, and live-aboard marina units. The density of residential development, according to the Plan, was set to 40 units

per acre. In comparison, the North Shore of False Creek underwent higher density development beginning in the 1990s leading to a residential density closer to 100 units per acre.

The neighbourhood was built in the 1970s according to the Plan, and much of it rests on City of Vancouver-owned land under long-term leases. Consequently, not much construction or development has happened since the 1980s. The structures are aging, and priorities and needs in the city may have evolved since the time when False Creek South was designed and developed. The outlook of expiring public leases in the next decade or two has fuelled new discussions about what could and should be done with this public land and its infrastructure in the face of today's priorities and needs. An initial plan to drastically densify the neighbourhood by tripling the number of units while placing greater emphasis on market housing, in an effort to respond to some of Vancouver's current housing challenges, was

ill-received by the public, especially False Creek South residents. This led the City of Vancouver to withdraw initial plans and pursue a public consultation process. Definitive plans for the neighbourhood are on hold to allow time to resolve lease renewal questions and create a new neighbourhood plan based on public input.⁷

3.2.2 Land Lease Approach

The City of Vancouver owns 80% of the land in False Creek South. The rest of the land is owned by other levels of government, including the Squamish Nation and private owners. The municipality defines its role as one of steward over the land on behalf of all Vancouver residents. That land is part of the Property Endowment Fund (PEF) created in 1975 to hold publicly owned lands that are not immediately required for the delivery of City services, but are held for other purposes, such as investment or future civic uses. It is also anticipated that the PEF will generate funds that could support public objectives. A total of roughly 700 properties citywide are included in the PEF, which started out with an estimated value of \$100 million and reached about \$5.7 billion by 2018. The City's current objectives for the PEF are to preserve and increase the value of the fund and increase ownership of strategic sites. This leads to the conclusion that the motive behind sustained public land ownership in this case was both to maintain control over land use and hold on to assets for financial investment purposes.⁸

3.2.3 Scope and Scale

The Plan reveals a breakdown of the land into three areas and proposed development in three phases. The redevelopment of False Creek South to reclaim derelict industrial land was planned and carried out in its entirety within the span of roughly 10 years. Once completed, no new development or scheduled reviews of the development were included in the Plan, and no notable construction or redevelopment has taken place since the mid-1980s.

The City-owned land in False Creek South measures 80 acres and is currently home to approximately 5,500 residents in a total of 1,849 units. The land owned by other levels of government and private owners additionally holds 1,354 residential units. Breaking

down the real estate on City-owned land, there are over 700 leasehold ownership units, including 12 buildings of residential strata leaseholds housing 669 units and a total of 48 commercial units in mixed-use buildings. Furthermore, the rental market on public municipal land consists of two market rental buildings with a combined total of 150 units operated by for-profit businesses, seven co-op buildings with 517 units, four buildings with a total of 319 non-market rental units operated by non-profit organizations, and two care facility buildings housing 140 units operated by non-profit organizations and funded by the province.⁹

3.2.4 Vision, Guiding Principles, and Priorities

The original vision for False Creek South was to reclaim this formerly industrial space for Vancouver residents. The lifestyle considerations and planning guidelines applied to the vision were new and innovative for Vancouver at the time and included a mixed-use and mixed-tenure neighbourhood and an accessible and attractive waterfront, including public spaces, water activities, and commercial use.

Some of the guiding principles are exemplified in the Plan and its design guidelines, which focused heavily on the concept of neighbourhood enclaves. This concept was to ensure low to medium density; diversity in its residents; mixed use, including amenities and small-scale commercial use mixed in with residential areas; transportation objectives, such as pedestrian-centered road design, accessible public transit, adequate parking space, and diffusion of motor vehicle traffic; and ample open space, including green space from parks to balconies.

The priorities evident throughout the neighbourhood design and public debates about the area range from holding on to an asset and maintaining public ownership, to representing the interests of local False Creek South residents and all Vancouverites, to supporting an area with a high quality of life while offering affordable housing and building diverse neighbourhoods.¹⁰

3.2.5 Current Land Lease Arrangements

Current public ground leases in the False Creek South neighbourhood mostly date back to the 1970s and '80s when the neighbourhood was developed and were granted for 60-year terms. Most of these leases will expire between 2036 and 2046. Lease terms, in particular end-of-lease terms, vary according to the type of development they refer to.

Residential strata units are leased at market rates. These units, or rather the leaseholds, can be bought and sold like fee-simple real estate. The end of these lease terms leads to a transfer of building ownership to the City while the leasehold interest in the strata lot goes to the lessees. However, the City has the ability to renew or extend the leases. In the case of a lease extension, lessees would pay market rate land rent to the City. The same lease end terms apply to commercial leaseholds.

At the end of a lease term for market rental buildings, building ownership is transferred to the City at no cost. The same terms apply to co-op-operated buildings, as well as non-market rentals and community care facilities operated by non-profit organizations. Floating co-op units lease the water lots from the province; however, the parkade lot is leased from the City with end-of-lease terms identical to market rentals. In this case, the City also has the ability to renew leases. A citywide non-profit housing lease renewal framework was approved in July 2018, and a co-op lease renewal framework received Council approval in July 2021.¹¹

3.2.6 Plans for Land Lease Renewal

Publicly owned land is viewed as an opportunity to increase the affordable housing stock and is therefore an important step towards responding to the ongoing housing crisis. The City has stated that, going forward in False Creek South, public ownership must be retained, and a future scenario would have to be fair to all tenants and leaseholders in a gradual implementation of new plans that are to respect the original vision for this neighbourhood.

In 2016, the City of Vancouver began its leaseholder consultation to explore and weigh its options regarding lease renewal, extension, and redevelopment scenarios.

This was followed by building assessments in 2017 and resulted in a Resident Protection and Retention Plan in 2018. The main principles in this plan were minimizing displacement, granting a right to return and to relocate, maintaining affordability, mitigating hardship, and providing advance notice and transparency.

A redevelopment plan for the neighbourhood introduced in 2021 referred to modernized lease agreements with reporting requirements. Overall, land lease renewal plans at this stage refer to a 2018 non-profit lease renewal framework and a more recent Council decision focused on co-ops. The framework for non-profit lease renewals applies to a total of 173 non-profit-operated affordable housing sites on public land throughout Vancouver. It prioritizes the preservation and growth of the affordable non-profit housing stock and outlines lease options and guidelines for the valuation of ground rent. The goals and objectives of the more recent co-op lease renewal strategy are consistent with the earlier non-profit strategy in that there is support for maintaining affordable housing. Co-ops that choose not to maintain a focus on affordability will be subject to higher land rent charges. The development of this strategy involved public discussions and collaboration with the Co-operative Housing Federation of British Columbia (CHF BC).

Recent plans and negotiations for co-op lease renewals do not refer to False Creek South co-ops only but rather are to provide a framework for all 57 co-ops on City-owned land in Vancouver. The agencies which traditionally played a role in this, and the ones who are introduced with new roles, include several levels of government and other organizations. The City of Vancouver traditionally provided land at market value but now sees itself offering below-market rates to support the housing model. Co-ops, facing higher maintenance and operations costs, as well as placing an increasing focus on keeping housing costs low, have asked the City for the land rent to be waived. The province is envisioned to take on a new role of facilitating financing. The federal government, as well as private financial institutions, are seen as taking on new roles in supporting lending and financing needs. Finally, the CHF BC has, and continues to be, heavily involved in the process of developing a lease renewal framework. For both co-op and non-profit housing land lease renewals, priority for the City is expressly not

the generation of revenue but support for residents in demonstrated need. Common priorities for the City, non-profit housing societies, and the CHF BC include the preservation of existing affordable housing sites, a renewal of aging infrastructure, an increase in affordable housing supply through redevelopment and densification, security of tenure for existing residents, avoidance of displacement of existing residents, and financial sustainability and well-maintained housing infrastructure for operations.¹²

3.2.7 Changing Visions and Redevelopment

The original vision of False Creek South, and its concept of an accessible and attractive waterfront, was solidified and yet broadened in 1998 when Vancouver adopted a guiding vision as “a waterfront city where land and water combine to meet the environmental, cultural and economic needs of the City and its people in a sustainable, equitable, high quality manner” (Wikipedia).

Throughout the process of exploring future options for False Creek South, two visions have dominated the discourse. On the one hand, there is a repeated focus, particularly by current South False Creek residents, on honouring the original vision of a low- to medium-density neighbourhood, with a mix of uses and incomes and ample open space. On the other hand, the City emphasizes its mandate to manage public lands for the benefit of all Vancouverites. Officials, as well as the public, have expressed a need to adjust the original vision to reflect and consider emerging and urgent housing needs of today. One aspect the City is very clear on is the importance of keeping public lands under municipal ownership where they serve both as assets and as tools in the response to the current housing crisis.

Following the years of assessments and consultation, by 2021 the City had developed a plan for its lands in the False Creek South neighbourhood. Redevelopment of the area would preserve its existing affordable housing while also increasing its capacity to house low-income households. The neighbourhood would continue to be a mixed-income community, displacement of existing residents was to be avoided, and particular emphasis was placed on housing co-ops and their financial viability and building maintenance. In terms of affordability and subsidies, a more targeted, income-

based approach was suggested. As presented in early October 2021, redevelopment according to the plan was to honour the original vision of a mixed-use and mixed-income community and preserve the main park space, but the plan also suggested increased density through infill and new development and the renewal of some of the housing infrastructure, including through demolition, rebuilding, and relocation. This redevelopment would take place in phases proposed to begin within a year and be carried out until 2040. Phase one would see the number of housing units in the area double; phase two could add another 2,875 units. The intent by City staff was to strike a balance between respectful consideration of existing residents and the mandate to utilize public land to the maximum benefit of all Vancouver residents.

However, by late October 2021, public debate and the open question of which vision should be prioritized, or how to reconcile both the original and the evolving vision in one plan, led Vancouver City Council to reject the plan in its current form and request a new process with more public input and transparency in all stages of consultation and planning.

The plan was criticized, among other things, for too much density in in the proposed redevelopment and spatial segregation of low-income households via the relocation of co-op buildings. Low-income housing supply remains top-of-mind in the public debate, as does a need to maintain and support the co-ops in their current location and the priority of Charleson Park to remain in any redevelopment plan. In addition to a more collaborative approach to community consultation, Council asked to further diversify the social mix, including all ages and diverse cultural backgrounds. The ideas of supportive seniors' housing and targeted services integrated in housing developments were added in a further effort to combat homelessness and provide various age groups with housing that meets their needs. The original vision of income distribution was generally supported as a constant going forward, maintaining one-third each of low-income, middle-income, and high-income housing.

This example of public land leases, which was also the catalyst for this report, very clearly prioritizes the continuation of public ownership of the lands; however, at the same time it acknowledges a public right for



input and shared decision making. Vancouver expressly strives to act in the best interest of its residents, but False Creek South demonstrates the difficulty of reconciling original visions with urgent present-day needs and of finding innovative ways of ensuring social equity, housing affordability, housing supply best practices, and maximum benefit to all residents.¹³



Royal Albert Dock, 2018. Wikimedia/Rodhullandemu

3.3 Royal Albert Dock (Liverpool, United Kingdom)

3.3.1 About the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool

The complex now known as the Royal Albert Dock in Liverpool, United Kingdom, originally opened in 1846. It was an innovative structure built of durable steel and stone, making docks and warehouses less vulnerable to fire for the first time. As such, and located in a strategic location, the Liverpool docks dominated global trade throughout the nineteenth century. However, with the introduction of container ships in the twentieth century, the old docks became too small to service trade freighters, and the old warehousing systems were replaced with new transportation and storage vessels. The Liverpool docks finally closed in 1972 and lay derelict for almost a decade.

In 1981, the central government established the Merseyside Development Corporation to oversee the redevelopment of the Albert Dock in Liverpool among other unused dock locations. Two years later, a deal

was struck with London-based developer Arrowcroft, a private-sector investor tasked with the regeneration of the complex. The Albert Dock, later known as the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool, officially reopened in 1984. Today, it is the largest collection of Grade I listed buildingsⁱ in the UK and is the largest restored Victorian complex in the world. The Royal Albert Dock also plays a central role in Liverpool's cultural life and contributed to its 2008 title of European Capital of Culture.¹⁴

3.3.2 Land Lease Approach

Throughout publicly available documentation of the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool and its history and development, land ownership and sales or lease agreements are not generally the focus of attention. Instead, at the forefront of all development considerations and public education and information is the vision of giving this prime waterfront real estate,

which once played a crucial role in the lives of Liverpool residents as much as the regional and global economy, a new and equally important purpose.

In the context of shedding light on various land lease approaches, it is of interest to consider the history of ownership, investment, and strategic regulation and oversight shaping the development of the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool. A key component in the regeneration and redevelopment of the dock is the role played by government in leveraging private investment through development plans and public investment.

In the 1970s, at the end of its lifespan as a trading dock and warehouse, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) owned the dock. The local councils, including Merseyside County Council and Liverpool City Council, and the MDHC found they could not agree on a strategic plan for regeneration and repurposing of the land and structures. During that period, Liverpool City Council decreed the Albert Dock a conservation area. As mentioned above, the central UK government established the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC) in 1981 to guide the reclamation and development process. MDC work began with plans for building and water regime restoration. By 1983, Arrowcroft was secured as a private investor and began the building restoration and development process that continued through the following decades with the last building reclaimed in 2003. In 2016, the Albert Dock was sold to a UK pension fund, making Gower Street Estates Limitedⁱⁱ the freeholders, while Aberdeen Asset Managementⁱⁱⁱ acquired Albert Dock commercial space in the same year.¹⁵

3.3.3 Scope and Scale

Once development activity began, the first priority was the restoration of the docks, followed by structural evaluation of the warehouse buildings and their restoration. Early on, the development vision targeted flagship events and facilities in an effort to give the

Albert Dock significance and gain attention. The first such event was the Tall Flagship Race in 1984, for which the first renovated stack (“pavilion”) was opened. The next steppingstone was the opening of the Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1986. The official full reopening of the dock in 1988 was marked by the completion of the largest warehouse renovation. Dubbed the “Colonnades,” the building was ready for retail on the ground level, office space on the mezzanine, and apartments on all other floors. Interesting to note is that the first 37 finished apartments sold instantly.

Other major additions in the 1980s included the beginning of ITV broadcasting from Albert Dock and the opening of the Tate Liverpool art gallery. Further milestones were the opening of the Beatles Museum in 1990, the International Slavery Museum, the completion of the last remaining space in 2003 with the opening of the hotel in Britannia Pavillion, and the Royal Charter handed over in 2018—making it the “Royal” Albert Dock Liverpool. By 2004, the well over one million square feet of warehouse space, along with close to eight acres of dock basin area, housed two hotels, 240,000 square feet of office space, and 80,000 of retail space. Today, the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool is a multi-use attraction with hotels, bars and restaurants, retail stores, and 115 luxury apartments, including condos and owner-occupied units, in the Colonnades building.¹⁶

3.3.4 Vision, Guiding Principles, and Priorities

The main aspects of the original vision and priorities were the regeneration and conservation of the historic site and attractive location of the Albert Dock Liverpool. After it had lost its central role in the city, region, and global trade, giving this site new purpose and making the waterfront a central part of the city again was the overarching principle behind the restoration and development efforts.

Since the docks could not serve as pivot points of trade anymore, the new economic role assigned to the

ⁱ Grade I and II listed buildings in the United Kingdom refer to buildings of historical value, deemed valuable due to their age and cultural or architectural significance (Concrete Renovations 2019).

ⁱⁱ Private company limited by guarantee; real estate services; museums and institutions company; established in 1997 (for example United Kingdom Government and LinkedIn).

ⁱⁱⁱ International investment management for institutions and private investors; established in 1983; merged with Standard Life in 2017 (Wikipedia).



site was one of visitor attraction. The strategic avenue chosen to achieve this goal was to establish flagship events and attractions. In the process, the strategic value of waterfront property was recognized in this context and led to the decision to restore the dock basins, which had been contaminated and filled with silt while not in use. The designation of Grade I and II status for the buildings and other conservation efforts to recognize and preserve the historic value of the dock site provide continuous guidance, ensuring the structures and their character are preserved in any development taking place.

3.3.5 Current Land Lease Arrangements

Public entities were explicitly interested in handing over the land and structures to private investors while ensuring the preservation of the site. Restoration efforts for the dock basins and early building restoration plans would have been the initial attraction for investors while further guiding development in a desired direction. Since the docks are now listed as freehold, it appears that public lease arrangements are not in place at this time. If any part of the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool is still situated on public land, information and confirmation is not readily available or provided. The luxury apartments in the Colonnades come with 150-year lease terms ending in 2135, with a current ground rent of £150 annually. These leases do not appear to be a public lease situation. It should be noted, however, that the long-term nature of leases for residential units points towards a strategy of long-term stability and focus on maintaining high values for attractive investment.¹⁷

3.3.6 Plans for Land Lease Renewal

Royal Albert Dock is an example of how collaboration between public agencies and levels of government is an important consideration in public land development. It is of interest to reiterate the various parties that have played a role and guided the development at the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool. The transition from industrial use, followed by a phase of abandonment, to restoration, repurposing, and development was influenced by private/industrial owners, local and regional governments, and ultimately taken on and guided by the central UK government. This shows an interest in

developing and realizing the value of the site through all levels of government and a willingness at high levels to get involved if necessary to ensure goals are achieved. The designation as conservation area and Grade I and II buildings are further strategic tools employed primarily by local government to place control over certain priorities in the hands of public entities. This approach illustrates that maintaining public land ownership is not the only way for a government to ensure that its vision is realized.

3.3.7 Changing Visions and Redevelopment

The vision of all levels of government for the restoration and development of the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool primarily focused on restoring and preserving the historic buildings and their character, giving the site a new and impactful purpose while maintaining and capitalizing on the waterfront aspect of the property. Beyond these overarching priorities, the developer and subsequent owners developed a vision for their investment.

As mentioned above, the guiding principle for the development starting in the 1980s was to develop a visitor attraction. Within that vision, strategies changed and were adapted to demand; for example, the focus shifted from aiming to attract retailers to the location to placing greater emphasis on the hospitality sector. With the more recent changes in ownership, a larger general shift in direction was announced, moving away from Liverpool as a destination to focus increasingly on local interests, for example by attracting more large lifestyle retailers.

The strategic shifts and evolving strategies at the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool since the restoration of the site have been focused solely on the use of the buildings. As indicated above, uses have had to change in response to market changes; this is one of the consequences of permitting private sector ownership. However, with regard to the buildings themselves, while some renovation and restructuring may go along with that, the Grade I and II designation of the historic site prohibits demolition and redevelopment of the site on a larger scale. Major structural changes have, thereby, been excluded at this site for the foreseeable future.



The land use and management, and the values seen in the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool site, provide meaningful considerations in showcasing a range of opportunities in reclaimed industrial public lands. Overall, the focus in Liverpool remains on providing profitable high-end space for mixed use, including flagship entertainment, retail, quality hospitality, commercial office space, and luxury residential units. Even without maintaining public land ownership, the levels of government involved in this project have ensured that their vision is acknowledged and adhered to in the largely private development of the site.



Sydney Olympic Park, 2008. Wikimedia/Simon_sees

3.4 Sydney Olympic Park (Sydney, Australia)

3.4.1 About Sydney Olympic Park

Sydney Olympic Park is a suburb in Sydney, Australia, within the municipal area of the City of Parramatta Council. As reflected in the name, the area was redeveloped to host the 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Originally home to the Indigenous Wanggal Clan, colonial claims to the land began with the arrival of Europeans in 1788. For most of the twentieth century, the area was used for the State Abattoir and the State Brickworks, and in later years also other industrial development. During that time, much of the current site was reclaimed via landfill in wetlands and rivers. Beginning in the 1960s, the area was furthermore used as an uncontrolled landfill. In the 1980s, industrial operations came to an end, and the land had become degraded.

In 1993, Sydney was awarded the right to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2000 and began

regenerating and restoring the area. This included dealing with contaminated soil and a fragmented watershed followed by the construction of the venues and accommodation for the Games. The Olympic bid effectively fast-tracked the reclamation, regeneration, and redevelopment of the area, and site design for the Games venues and facilities focused on a legacy beyond the Games by ensuring integration of development in a long-term vision and strategic plan for the area. The overarching focus was on sustainability and balancing the built and natural environments.

Furthermore, housing affordability and wealth inequality are considered central housing issues in Australia and constitute an important context for ongoing Sydney Olympic Park development and strategic planning. The first residents moved to Sydney Olympic Park in 2012. Today, the complex is recognized as an exemplary Green Star Community, continues to be an event destination, aligns with comprehensive housing strategies, and



offers high recreational and lifestyle value to residents and visitors. Management and development are overseen by the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA), a state government agency formed in 2001 and more recently integrated into the organizational structure of Placemaking NSW.¹⁸

3.4.2 Land Lease Approach

As the public body in charge of Sydney Olympic Park, SOPA manages its public assets and land development under the Sydney Olympic Park Act of 2001 (hereafter referred to in section 3.4 as the Act). Public assets include the sporting venues built for the 2000 Games and developed to continue to host sporting activities from regular regional activities to international events, public parklands and green spaces, and undeveloped public land set aside for redevelopment in accordance with the SOPA Master Plan 2030.

Beyond these public assets, however, land appears to be divested to private investors for residential and mixed-use developments. Rather than prioritizing full public ownership of all lands, SOPA employs targeted priorities for its own management role, namely land ownership associated directly with management and expansion of world-class sporting and entertainment venues, while enabling cross-funding for the strategic mixed-use development of neighbouring land bases. Effectively, that makes this case study another example where private investment through the sale of land for specified purposes is part of the development plan. Land sales generate revenue that is available for investment into the public spaces of the area. The private developments are regulated through permitting and zoning measures by SOPA and guided by long-term strategic planning, again showcasing an approach to ensuring a vision is honoured and realized beyond public land ownership.¹⁹

3.4.3 Scope and Scale

SOPA manages 640 hectares, which comprise Sydney Olympic Park with its 430 hectares of public parklands. A 2016 publication outlines the scope and scale of residential and other uses at Sydney Olympic Park at that time, 16 years after the 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games were hosted there. Development projects of

over \$2.7 billion had been approved since the Games. In addition to around 6,000 residents in Newington, a former athletes' village now turned suburb, a total of over 2,000 people were already calling Sydney Olympic Park home, with further new residential and mixed-use developments announced. Developers included Mirvac, Meriton, and Ecove. Research into the developers shows innovative concepts for attractive and sustainable residential development—for example, LIV Indigo, the first “build to rent” property by Mirvac at Sydney Olympic Park. The build-to-rent concept includes features such as renters only, secure lease terms with choice of duration, a cap on annual rent increases, shared amenities, sustainable construction and living features, and maintenance and some appliances included.

Demonstrating the crucial role of mixed-use development, the publication furthermore holds that 220 organizations were located at Sydney Olympic Park by 2016, and 17,000 people had found work there. Over 1,000 students were studying at the Australian College of Physical Education or at SP Jain School of Global Management. In addition, Sydney Olympic Park saw 10.5 million visitors annually coming to enjoy amenities or attend events.

Finally, there was a noticeable value-added component. Sydney Olympic Park reportedly contributed to the revitalization of the surrounding suburbs, reflected in a surge in development activity that was felt beyond its boundaries.

The Master Plan 2030 outlines development targets for the next decade. Residential use is to reach a capacity of 23,500 residents in 10,700 units. Job opportunities are to be doubled from the 2016 number of 17,000 to 34,000. New education sites as well as park space are to be added to services and public amenities. An additional 100,000 square metres of retail space will contribute to continued mixed-use visions. Since SOPA is responsible for public infrastructure, adjustments to the Local Infrastructure Contributions Fund are part of the Master Plan 2030. Public transportation and traffic infrastructure targets aim to make sustainable commutes and travel without personal vehicles an increasingly viable option. New buildings for entertainment amenities are planned to complement existing sports and entertainment venues.²⁰

3.4.4 Vision, Guiding Principles, and Priorities

As expressed in their 2021 Annual Report, SOPA's vision is for Sydney Olympic Park to be an internationally recognized place with world-class events, venues, parklands, and a great place to live and work, built on its Olympic legacy in a sustainable way. The mission is first and foremost the "curation of world-class places and events that deliver exceptional customer experience."

The initial, overarching vision was to create a world-leading example of Olympic legacy with venues and facilities that would continue to be relevant and active in sport and recreation beyond the Games. From there, more detailed elaborations of the guiding principles provide insight into the type of community and infrastructure that was envisioned for Sydney Olympic Park. As per section 1.3 of the Act, the elements of a comprehensive approach to the development include: ensuring that the site becomes an active and vibrant town centre within Metropolitan Sydney; protection of the role of Sydney Olympic Park as the premier destination for cultural, entertainment, recreational, and sporting events; protection and enhancement of the public domain; protection and enhancement of the Sydney Olympic Park parklands; detailed planning and design principles and controls to encourage development that responds to its context and contributes to the quality of the built environment and the future character and cultural significance of the site.

As per the relevant legislation, SOPA's mission on the ground is carried out in the development and use of land and public buildings; the provision of public transport services; the management of roads; the protection, enhancement, and use of waterfront areas, parklands, and areas of natural vegetation; and the use and management of the public domain. The highest priorities are sustainability, balanced built and natural spaces, and to make the best use of the land for the people of Sydney and New South Wales.

The recent designation of Sydney Olympic Park as a leading Green Star Community is evidence of the successful realization of their vision and guiding principles. By 2016, over 110 new environmental sustainability initiatives focused on flora and fauna conservation, leachate management, water conservation, transportation, heritage conservation,

energy efficiency, environmental education, construction, and development had been implemented at Sydney Olympic Park to reduce its environmental footprint. Strategic planning centred around an increase in affordable housing and further provision for accessibility through adjustments to public domain and property development plans demonstrate ongoing commitment to achieve and adapt the vision.²¹

3.4.5 Current Land Lease Arrangements

SOPA is a corporation which represents the Crown as a statutory body. Fee simple ownership to the lands comprising Sydney Olympic Park is vested in SOPA as per the Act. As mentioned above, SOPA manages the development on these lands and is responsible for public lands, infrastructure, venues, and events. As per a SOPA Beneficial Ownership Declaration, SOPA is free to dispose of its freehold interests or offer long-term leases. Beyond that documentation, however, there is little information available about leases and lease terms. Wording in the Act further confirms that SOPA may dispose of its freehold interests via references to land within Sydney Olympic Park that is not owned by SOPA. Development of such land, and of a certain scope, is regulated and requires notification and consent applications to SOPA. Media coverage, as well as developer websites, appear to confirm that plots for large residential and mixed-use developments within Sydney Olympic Park have been sold and re-sold to private or corporate investors. These findings suggest that SOPA was designed to find a balance between maintaining control over public spaces and development activity while also generating revenue and incentivizing investment and development through the sale of land.²²

3.4.6 Plans for Land Lease Renewal

Section 32 of the Act determines the type of leases SOPA is authorized to grant to third parties. Leases, licences, and easements must be tendered and are mainly to be granted for public utilities and for management in accordance with, and authorized by, the official management plan. Lease terms may not exceed 25 years. Furthermore, SOPA can surrender lands back to the Crown for the purpose of public roads, for example.



In terms of other authorities involved in land ownership, management, and leases, Indigenous occupancy since pre-colonial times is acknowledged, and cultural heritage preservation and respect are to be observed and are outlined in relevant SOPA policy Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices. However, this appears to be mainly a matter of ceremonial protocol rather than shared land ownership and management decision making.²³

3.4.7 Changing Visions and Redevelopment

The vision for development and management of Sydney Olympic Park was set out as a long-term goal from the time of its inception with the awarding of the Olympic bid. SOPA composed the Master Plan 2030 to firmly guide the development and management activities and reviews that plan every five years. Going by document reviews and publicly available information about continued development, the overall vision has remained largely unchanged.

In 2020, the government of New South Wales announced a new independent advisory committee for the purpose of more coordinated efforts across the state: Placemaking NSW. SOPA was integrated into this committee with Sydney Olympic Park being a central part of creating new and innovative spaces focused on sustainability and a high quality of life. This more widely coordinated approach centralizes development oversight and streamlines access to, and advice from, experts from the private sector as well as the Ministry for Planning and Public Spaces and its Department of Planning and Environment. First and foremost, that means that SOPA shares its expertise and provides input into the development of other spaces in NSW, but a more concerted placemaking effort may also influence the development of Sydney Olympic Park over time.

In the case of Sydney, there has been, and remains, a strategic focus on high-end sporting venues with recreation and entertainment value, a balance of built environment and natural greenspace, and the opportunity for high-end sustainable lifestyles with mixed-use development. Rather than maintaining public ownership of the land, private investment has been leveraged to realize strategic plans in a timely and economical manner. SOPA employs development plans

to control what is built rather than relying on public land ownership for development control.

While the example of Sydney Olympic Park is too young to provide concrete lease renewal or redevelopment lessons and examples, many of the strategic priorities are similar to Vancouver's vision for False Creek South. Given that the strategic plans, and ongoing development, in Sydney are largely two to three decades younger than the False Creek South Development Plan, elements like new building technologies, architectural concepts, neighbourhood designs, and ecological standards may present a valuable range of examples to look towards in revisiting priorities and developing a new plan for False Creek South.²⁴



Toronto Waterfront, 2017. flickr/Wyliepoon

3.5 Toronto Waterfront (Toronto, Canada)

3.5.1 About Toronto Waterfront

Toronto's waterfront spans 46 kilometres of the lakeshore on Lake Ontario. Historically, trade and transportation happened mainly by boat, and Toronto's waterfront was dominated by manufacturing facilities and railway lines. By the mid-nineteenth century, land reclamation via lake filling created more industrial and trading space along the water. Residential development, especially for the wealthy, moved increasingly away from this area. A major highway, the Gardiner Expressway, was built near the waterfront as motor vehicle transport gained in importance in the mid-twentieth century, further limiting Torontonians' access to the waterfront. With the decline in port traffic and industry focusing inland by the mid-twentieth century, Toronto's waterfront lands lay derelict for decades.

By the 1970s, major cities around the world recognized the value of their waterfronts as lifestyle assets. While

individual redevelopment projects were carried out along Toronto's waterfront throughout the following decades, a comprehensive and coordinated strategic plan was missing until a task force was formed in 1999 in a public-public partnership between the federal government, the province of Ontario, and the City of Toronto to review the use and development of Toronto's lakeshore. The context for this was Toronto's bid to host the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Summer Games. The task force recognized opportunities for development that would address environmental challenges, transportation upgrades, and infrastructure and housing needs, and provide a boost for the local and regional economy and tourism. The potential was such that the three public partners committed to the waterfront development regardless of the outcome of the Olympic bid and established the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation in 2001, now known as Waterfront Toronto, and enacted the Toronto Waterfront



Revitalization Corporation Act, 2002 (hereafter referred to in section 3.5 as the Act) in May of 2003.

Development of Toronto's waterfront is ongoing. Concrete plans and general goals for the area include public transit, brownfield rehabilitation, trail and lakeshore improvements, naturalization of the Don River, and housing developments in mixed-use neighbourhoods.²⁵

3.5.2 Land Lease Approach

According to the Act, Waterfront Toronto was established under the Business Corporations Act rather than the Crown Agency Act and consists of the members of its board of directors. The objectives for the Corporation include the implementation of a plan to develop designated waterfront areas for residential, commercial, and recreational use. Public input in this development is encouraged, and all development must be financially and environmentally sustainable. It is determined in section 13 of the Act that the Corporation may be ordered to wind up on the twentieth anniversary of the Act or, at the latest, on its twenty-fifth anniversary. While the legislation would suggest that public oversight over, and involvement with, the development was not deemed to be permanent, 2022 marks the twentieth anniversary of the legislation, and all indications are that work will continue for years to come.

The Corporation does not have share capital but has been funded with seed capital of \$500 million from each of the three partners. According to the Corporation's website, this has already resulted in \$13.25 billion in private sector investment in the area. As part of the agreement, the City of Toronto hands over waterfront land to the Corporation for the realization of its approved development plans. Asset investment, revenue generation, and borrowing require consent from all three partners. This ensures ongoing direct involvement of all government partners for the planning and development stages.

Private sector investment is an explicit goal, and various documents and plans indicate that, while public space development has taken place on public lands, parts of other lands have been sold for strategic development. For example, one-quarter of revenue for the current

fiscal year is anticipated to come from both land leases and land sales. According to available information, plans for future developments and next steps in the waterfront development also do not exclude either public lease or land sale options. The Corporation aims to invest in public infrastructure in such a manner as to attract private sector investment in residential and commercial development. The utmost priority in these developments appears to be the achievement of the intended strategic development outcomes under the most fiscally sustainable circumstances.

Waterfront Toronto news articles and Requests for Qualifications outline, for example, the land ownership circumstances for the Quayside Parliament Slip area, where Waterfront Toronto owns 4.2 hectares, the City of Toronto owns 0.6 hectares, and Ports Toronto and private owners also make up part of the current ownership map. In this case, the Corporation aims to acquire most of the lands and establish lease agreements with future developers, the details of which are yet to be determined or made public. The only detail available is that the long-term ownership and operation of the Parliament Slip will be determined separately from the neighbouring Quayside project. Statements regarding the negotiation of provisions for housing (market and affordable), cultural uses, attractive ground floor design in line with the vibrant neighbourhood objectives, and environmental sustainability features indicate that the Corporation firmly guides the nature of development and maintains control over land use to ensure the realization of its goals and adherence to its principles.²⁶

3.5.3 Scope and Scale

Development of the area along the lakeshore under Waterfront Toronto's management has been a long-term process. Updated strategic plans show projects that are completed, ongoing, and planned for the future. Media coverage of Toronto's waterfront confirms that the redevelopment of the area has been a lengthy process. However, the magnitude of the area may explain this in part, and a look at completed projects appears to show successful revitalization of parts of the area with mixed-use development in accordance with strategic guidelines.



The designated waterfront area to be developed by the Corporation spans 800 hectares from Dowling Avenue to Coxwell Avenue. This equals roughly the area of Toronto's downtown core. According to Waterfront Toronto, 43 hectares of public space have already been developed, including green spaces and waterfront promenades, and with the Port Lands project, another 32 hectares of public space development are due to be completed by 2024. Realized development to date has created 26 kilometres of waterfront access.

Accessibility and inclusivity are a high priority in the creation of public spaces, ranging from making the lakeshore accessible for people with mobility limitations to ensuring that public art displays are inclusive of many cultures and walks of life. Building on a long history of large-scale donations to create outstanding public spaces in Toronto, philanthropy plays a significant role in creating quality shared spaces in the area. Another aspect of the public space is transit and transportation infrastructure. Public transit and accessibility on foot or bike, as well as personal vehicles, are foundational considerations in the reclamation and redevelopment of Toronto's waterfront. Waterfront Toronto's investment in these areas is a major draw factor for private investment.

Considerations of quality marine habitat play into all Waterfront Toronto plans along the water's edge. Reportedly, 11 hectares of aquatic habitat have been created and 14 are in the works. A flood protection project and the naturalization of the Don River are part of an effort to maintain, or regain, an ecological balance in the area.

Besides creating attractive and valuable public spaces, one objective is to attract employment and innovation to the area. Innovative building methods and materials, as well as sustainable energy systems, on prize-winning projects in the area document the success of this objective. Investment and planning in the area by Waterfront Toronto have attracted major employers and educational institutions to the lakefront. One example, the Waterfront Innovation Centre, an anchor development in partnership with BentallGreenOak, is designed to be a gathering place for leaders in various sectors and business realms and is due to accept its first occupants in 2022/23.

Furthermore, a total of 576 affordable housing units have been achieved in the area. The strategic objective is to ensure that 20% of all residential development is made up of affordable units. While details on the stage of development are yet to be determined or made public, there is an expectation that Quayside residential developments will add another 700 to 800 units to the affordable housing stock. Other future plans include purpose-built rental units in Bayside, which would include 215 affordable units dispersed indistinguishably throughout the development. For the management of affordable rental units in Waterfront Toronto projects, the Corporation seeks to work with the City of Toronto to select operators.²⁷

3.5.4 Vision, Guiding Principles, and Priorities

The stated mission for Toronto's waterfront is "to create a vibrant, connected waterfront that belongs to everyone. As city-builders, we care about delivering neighbourhoods, parks, destinations, and infrastructure that make people's lives better" (Waterfront Toronto 2021).

The process of redeveloping and revitalizing Toronto's waterfront area is guided by four strategic priorities: city building, public good, innovation and job creation, and financial sustainability. City building is implemented by focusing on mixed use development rather than purely residential or business silos. Both mixed use and the public good are to be guided by another principle repeatedly underlined by Waterfront Toronto, a central role for public consultation in the development planning stages. Innovation and job creation, as well as financial sustainability for the area and its development, are to be supported by the goal of attracting private investment through attractive public investment. Finally, great emphasis is placed on environmental sustainability, including building materials and technologies, energy generation and consumption, transit considerations, and the creation and support of marine habitat.

The main priority and objective, as expressed and demonstrated by Waterfront Toronto documents and its development partners, is to reorient the city back to the water, including residential, recreational, and commercial uses to the once industrialized and then fallen derelict areas along Lake Ontario. Highlighting communication



and partnership, all three partners in this project—the three levels of government—collaborate to select development projects and build partnerships with developers to deliver the vision.²⁸

3.5.5 Current Land Lease Arrangements

As outlined in previous paragraphs, publicly available documentation confirms that land leases and land sales are both part of Waterfront Toronto's development activities and plans. Lease agreements, as well as ownership solutions, appear to be developed on an individual project basis rather than following a template for the entire waterfront development.

3.5.6 Plans for Land Lease Renewal

Publicly available information about the nature of land leases in Toronto's waterfront area is limited. Redevelopment in the name of revitalization is relatively recent given that the process only began roughly two decades ago and that many developments are ongoing and currently in their construction or planning phases. Leases, where they were established, are therefore unlikely to come up for renewal yet, and leases for projects currently being planned are yet to be negotiated. As the example of Quayside demonstrates, information on existing short-term leases for older structures or open spaces is reserved for shortlisted or successful bidding partners in the request-for-qualification process. At that time, proponents are expected to make an offer to purchase the ground they propose to develop or propose a lease arrangement.

The three levels of government, partners in this public-public partnership, form the authorities potentially involved in lease arrangements, term negotiations, and renewal processes where applicable. Infrastructure Canada is the federal agency actively participating in Waterfront Toronto. The Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure represents the provincial partner. At the municipal level, the Waterfront Project Secretariat has been established under a Deputy City Manager.

While not reflected in their vision or partnership, there is a stated commitment to Indigenous representation and participation. This is reflected in Waterfront Toronto's

inclusion goals and achievements, in requests-for-qualification documents encouraging Indigenous involvement and the creation of job opportunities as well as representation in the development and operation phases of new projects. It can also be seen in hiring documentation such as a formal call for Indigenous design experts to be added to the Waterfront Design Review Panel. Furthermore, a memorandum of understanding with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation regarding their active participation in Quayside development exemplifies the role Waterfront Toronto aims to give local Indigenous groups. While the integration and representation efforts aim to give a voice, create opportunity, ensure representation, and secure sensitive services, they do not appear to grant decision-making authority or financial shares in development, land ownership questions, and lease agreements.²⁹

3.5.7 Changing Visions and Redevelopment

Waterfront Toronto follows a strategic plan to revitalize the lakefront area of the city and turn it into vibrant residential, commercial, and recreational communities; an attractive, productive, and multifaceted workplace; and a destination for Torontonians and visitors alike. As development and the realization of that vision and strategic plan are still ongoing, the Corporation appears to follow its strategic plan. Regular updates in five-year intervals provide more details about individual development areas. At this time, the vision that was conceived some 20 years ago does not appear to have changed. The details of evolving plans are conceived and designed following the guiding principles, but every update provides more depth about the original intent, the possibilities within that intent, and new opportunities.

The principles are designed in such a manner that interpretation and realization can be adapted as possibilities evolve. For example, technologies in environmentally sustainable construction, or energy generation and consumption, progress and evolve offering new opportunities to achieve the "complete community" development goals with updated environmental standards. It moreover appears that sociodemographic needs and realities are increasingly incorporated. According to available documents, this



includes, for example, a growing importance granted to the principle of inclusivity and an increased effort to meaningfully involve Indigenous groups and individuals. In response to ever-growing housing challenges, Waterfront Toronto has redefined its quota of affordable housing to exceed the 20% originally committed to. In addition, some design plans now explicitly include a recognition of the various stages of life and corresponding needs represented in a diverse and balanced community.

While the possibility of demolition and redevelopment of the new waterfront area is not a topic for consideration at this time, the commitment to this new strategic development includes a clear intention to demolish all existing older structures that do not align with the new vision. Old industrial structures and derelict spaces are uncompromisingly reassigned to make room for the new vision of Toronto's waterfront.

Toronto Waterfront is another example of a redevelopment project that is taking a hybrid approach to land use, one that includes land leases as well as land sales to the private sector. In both instances, the achievement of the vision and strategic plan in a financially sustainable manner is emphasized and pursued.

Toronto's waterfront is the youngest development among the case studies in this report and is still deep in its development phase. How it is balancing land leases with land sales to achieve its goals may provide potential insights for False Creek South as it nears the renewal of its land leases. Furthermore, Toronto's mixed land-ownership approach may include general considerations of interest and examples of modern lease agreements.³⁰

4.0 In Closing

While none of the case studies in this report are identical in their history, approaches, and objectives, there are a number of parallels and shared lessons in commonalities as well as differences. Geographical circumstances, existing built infrastructure, socioeconomic context, development objectives, and design standards and priorities at the time of project inception are all factors playing a role in the approaches applied in these public land development case studies.

As the oldest case study, Singapore provides the most detailed example of public lease agreements, end-of-lease-term policies, renewal and extension practices, and redevelopment frameworks. It is also the example with the strongest emphasis on continued public land ownership and complete long-term government control over land development decisions. Placing Singapore on one end of the spectrum of public land development examples, it takes an uncompromising approach of dismissing notions of private ownership, sense of place, or sentimental ties to decades-old design concepts in a quest to fulfill present-day needs. The Singaporean government, in its public lands policies, reserves the right to revisit priorities and preferences for the sake of staying on top of its ever-changing and progressing sociodemographic makeup and economic development.

Singapore shares with Vancouver the expressed importance of maintaining public ownership and control of the land base. The geographical and cultural contexts are quite different, but the consideration of public land as a tool to be used for maximum benefit for the people, and ultimately as a central piece in responding to evolving housing pressures, is an important commonality between the two locales and makes Singapore an example of interest to Vancouver.

Despite not maintaining ownership of the land, the Royal Albert Dock Liverpool project illustrates how government and the public sector played a leadership and controlling role to ensure that its goals and objectives were achieved. Liverpool demonstrates the opportunity of ensuring a vision is followed in the development, not through public land ownership but rather through regulatory frameworks. That said, it is also important to note that while the buildings and

built environment are protected and remain static, use of the buildings is changing. Now that these lands and buildings are under private sector ownership, government no longer has full control over their use, relying instead on indirect means such as zoning.

The newest case studies, Sydney Olympic Park and Toronto Waterfront, are taking a hybrid approach to land management, selling some of the land to the private sector while keeping other parcels in the public domain, either through direct management or land leases. The decision around which way to proceed is governed by development goals, objectives, and priorities. This approach will allow SOPA and Toronto Waterfront to raise funds through land sales to support their public space priorities.

While maintaining ownership of the land base, as Singapore and Vancouver have done, is the surest way to maintain control over development and use, the other three examples in this report—Liverpool, Sydney, and Toronto—illustrate that development goals and objectives can be achieved through: maintaining public ownership of the land base and entering into long-term leases for development; maintaining public ownership and active management of specific public infrastructure; strategic divestment of public lands to private owners with targeted stipulations for development or a hybrid involving a combination of approaches.

Beyond land tenure and use, these examples provide other interesting considerations for Vancouver as it looks to renew the plans for False Creek South. For example, the two youngest case studies, Sydney and Toronto, hold interesting lessons in updated and further refined standards for urban community development and attractive waterfront concepts, including environmental sustainability in its many facets in urban and waterfront settings. The need for densification while maintaining quality of life is also a common thread. The weight given to open space and greenspace, new and improved energy standards, upgrades to transportation systems, and integration of sustainable building materials and technologies are manifestations of common priorities in today's urban context. Newer case studies also place increased emphasis on amenities and the accommodation of all ages and stages of life, considerations that have matured with the demographic changes of the past decades.



While Vancouver has been very clear about its priority to maintain public land ownership, the financial models employed in newer case studies, where private investment and land sales are actively promoted, and individual lease term negotiations with development proponents offered, might nonetheless showcase interesting financial and long-term considerations. While long-term impacts and development directions remain to be witnessed with these projects over the coming decades, these newer examples also demonstrate how government visions can be achieved through approaches beyond public land ownership. While public land leases remain an option in most cases, and public spaces and venues tend to remain fully under government ownership and management, private sector ownership with tight public controls through strong strategic planning frameworks appears to have gained in importance. Whether the initial level of control can be maintained through subsequent development cycles, especially in Toronto and Sydney, remains to be seen.

As government landowners, Singapore and Vancouver have been able to make their projects attractive to investors without selling and transferring the land base asset. It is to be expected that calls for the sale of the public land base will come up in public discussions in Vancouver. Examining projects where divestment of the land base while maintaining a certain level control is an integral part of strategic planning priorities can help with weighing the potential costs and benefits of each approach when applied to False Creek South.

The three main approaches to land management illustrated in this report—maintaining public ownership of the land base and entering into long-term leases for development, maintaining public ownership and active management of specific public infrastructure, and strategic divestment of public lands to private owners with targeted stipulations for development—each come with opportunities and challenges. This report has presented a range of examples and approaches in order to compose a suite of ideas, concepts, priorities, designs, financial models, and evolving environmental and community development standards.

What sets False Creek South apart is the strong sense of ownership and belonging among its residents brought on by the nature of the development as an attractive and equitable neighbourhood, combined with the

age of the project that has seen several generations grow up. In reconciling local residents' preferences with urgent regional housing needs, and taking into consideration the lessons learned about the original design concepts of False Creek South, the case studies in this report might help arrive at innovative solutions. The different approaches taken to land base and managerial or regulatory government involvement in the various projects introduced in this report point to different possible avenues for Vancouver, all of which should be given attention and taken into consideration as the vision for the False Creek South neighbourhood is revisited and the area's future strategically reconceived.

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