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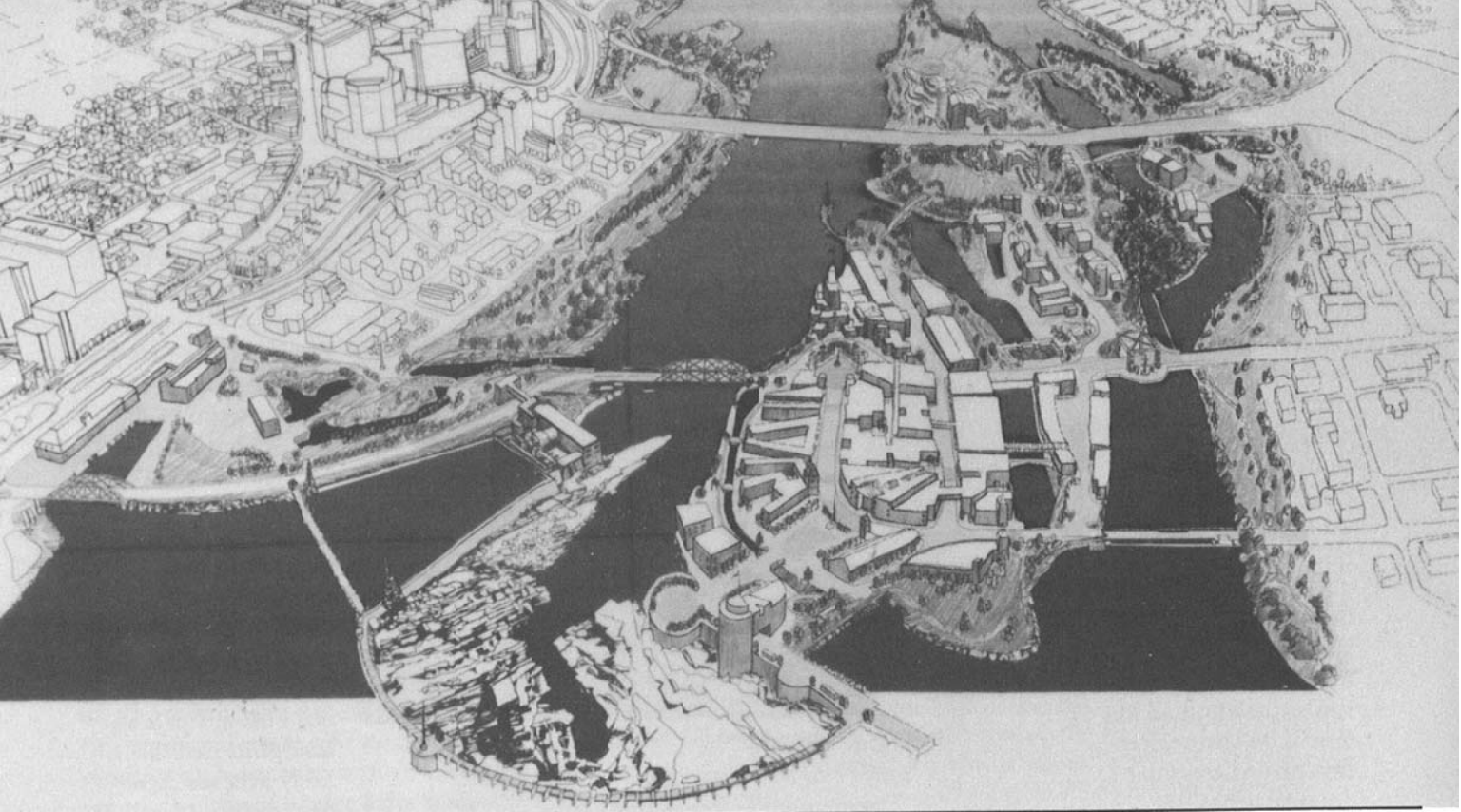
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THE WISE USE OF
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Concept Proposal, Victoria-Chaudière. Industrial Heritage District Redevelopment for the National Capital Commission.
Photo: Thompson Brandt Architects

CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT OF CANADA'S INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

BY MARK BRANDT

HERITAGE & DEVELOPMENT IN EVOLUTION

In the coming decade, Canada is faced with decisions on action regarding its vast industrial heritage property. Many communities across the nation are blessed with now-derelict industrial complexes from the 19th and early 20th centuries. In this "post-industrial" age of the new century, industry has taken different forms, resulting in partial or complete abandonment of these legacies of Canadian heritage, which include structures and infrastructure, artifacts and the fabric of industrial processes. Many of these complexes form significant cultural landscapes that hold important stories of community life and Canadian industrial leadership.

The disintegration and imminent demise of much of this property will force decisions on its elimination or its conservation and redevelopment soon. Both the ICOMOS World Congress 1999 in Mexico and the ICOMOS Canada Annual Congress 1999 in Hull, Québec, provided major theme studies regarding "Heritage and Development: Focus on Industrial." This article is a summary of the introduction to the workshop given by the author at the Hull conference and a brief review of two of the associated presentations.

Like the United Nations' rating system contained within its "Human Development Report" (which has repeatedly placed Canada #1 in the

world), we must judge the criteria for urban and regional development very broadly. For example, in the UN criteria, the personal income criterion is balanced with education, health care and other factors.

The rest of the world has now caught up with and exposed financiers in "ivory towers" who have, until recently, been getting away with evaluating *pro formas* for potential development projects based solely on the use of base numbers of "hard costs." An increasingly comprehensive approach is now considered the more prudent business methodology.

This suggests that, far from being one of the constraints or impedi-

ments to development or redevelopment, heritage will now often be seen as a resource for development, when due consideration is appropriately given. While this is good news for conservationists, the urban planning and preservation fields still have work to do to get the message out in a way that is both understandable and palatable to the financial sector who ultimately control all development.

The message is that an investment in heritage can often improve the bottom line and provide stronger overall returns in the medium and long terms. Just a small sample of some of the resource factors that a heritage-oriented redevelopment scheme offers, includes cost-benefit ratios for:

- life quality indicators
- social indicators, including employment quotas
- energy and environmental enhancements
- sustainability

Also, there is now acknowledgment for inclusion in a development proposal analysis, of monetary factors for such previously non-considered areas as:

- large economic benefits of cultural tourism (usually for private profit)
- savings from usage of existing infrastructure (private & public profit)
- local, regional, national cultural benefits (public profit)

It is not demeaning to a cultural resource to process it through the same set of development review "filters" as mere commodities. In fact, it is the direct comparison of these resources to other potentially-developable, commodity-type properties, that will open more doors to their heritage-sensitive redevelopment. Properties with heritage attributes which have careful planning for the integration and enhancement of these features, will stand on their own merits in a more comprehensive criteria review.

As in all markets, it is not always the cheapest and most basic choice made for a product or service. Often, something of higher quality, craftsmanship or meaning is selected despite it requiring a higher level of resources and therefore higher initial cost. This is usually the case with redevelopment of a property containing heritage resources. But the proposal plan must include sound conservation and adaptive reuse strategies with thorough market analysis and costing. It is now accepted wisdom that, for most built heritage resources, appropriate adaptive reuse is the key to saving the property from the "evil cycle" of disuse, disintegration, demolition and devaluation of the property to decrease taxes and other liabilities.

Canadian Industrial Heritage

Over the last two decades, there has been a fairly high number of industrial heritage properties redeveloped across Canada. From Vancouver's Granville Island (which has a low heritage content) to Toronto's Gooderham and Worts (which has a high heritage content) to Halifax's Historic Properties (which has a mix of authenticity); these projects became mainstream. They benefited from political largesse, which is a rarer commodity today. But overall, these projects represented a microscopic portion of development economic activity. As the financial sector's approach evolves, however, so too will the development community's willingness to look at industrial heritage properties in the light of possibility, especially through partnerships with the public sector.

Most of these properties are initially 19th century complexes on the fringe of what are now urban cores. The general public often sees them as rotting wastelands, and many are, although many have significant heritage value (as mentioned, there is still a way to go to get the message out, but that is an issue for another article). Otherwise, they are usually highly desirable development properties which can benefit from recent advancements

in cost reducing environmental clean-up technologies. Most importantly, they are often situated adjacent to amenities such as waterfronts (sometimes newly environmentally cleansed) and/or railway lands converted to green spaces. In other words, "Location, Location, Location" (real estate mantra for the top three property value criteria).

If we add in (instead of subtracting) the "points" for heritage resources as described above, and, importantly, have an appropriate mix of viable and sustainable urban uses/adaptive reuses with strong market potential (whether it be loft apartments, offices for start-up high-tech companies, badly needed cultural facilities, tourism destinations, etc., and usually maintaining some light industrial uses in the district), then we get the basis sound for redevelopment potential.

Today, this potential is growing, despite the resources required. However, the conservation community must move aggressively forward (to inform and educate about the value of cultural heritage resources, both economic and social) into the established but evolving redevelopment process. This is necessary to ensure both the social legacy of Canada's industrial years, those which formed a nation, and the expansion of the discipline beyond wealthy estate homes and key institutional buildings.

Preservation of industrial heritage has its own unique challenges and opportunities, some of which were illustrated in the two following workshop presentations from the ICOMOS Canada 1999 Annual Congress.

A) THE LACHINE CANAL REVITALIZATION PROGRAMME

- Mark London, Planner and Architect, Lachine Canal Programme, Ville de Montréal, gave an illustrated talk on the evolution of this project from its birth out of the competing visions of the 1970s to its status to-

day. The 14-km long canal was built in 1821-1825, opening navigation for the first time directly between Europe and the interior of this continent. It soon became the "cradle of Canada's industrial revolution" with a whole range of industries built along it. But after the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, the Lachine Canal was closed in 1970 and by 1978, had become a generally derelict area with a federally-owned linear canal-side park. However, the spiral of decline in the surrounding neighbourhoods led to an abundance of empty buildings and vacant lots;

- Over the next 20-year period, a series of circumstances, primarily from 1992 to 1997, brought about action on a revitalized vision for this industrial heritage landscape;
- In conjunction with Montréal's 350th birthday in 1992, the Old Port Corporation restored and rebuilt the entrance to the Lachine Canal as part of the Old Port redevelopment, which attracts more than five million visitors annually;
- This led to several office and housing projects being built right next to the restored canal entrance, despite a deep economic recession;
- Parks Canada began to elaborate a Management Plan intending to spend about \$15 million over 10 years for site repairs and visitor services;
- A new mayor instituted the "Blue Montréal" programme aimed at improving city waterfronts, developing water activities and identifying the reopening of Lachine Canal as a priority;
- Montréal's Planning Department completed a series of urban design studies to show how several problematic urban spaces, including several along the canal, could be improved;
- Several community leaders and civil servants began to meet informally yet regularly to analyze potential for "re-booting" canal district revitalization;

- The City of Montréal and Parks Canada agreed to combine their plans into one overall programme: in April 1997, they announced about \$80 million of public investments to reopen the canal in 2002 and carry out an integrated, multi-faceted programme dealing with heritage preservation, improving residential quality of life and tourism development.

Taking a cue from Lowell, Massachusetts and Birmingham in the United Kingdom, the idea was to use the upgrading of largely abandoned canal and buildings as part of a catalyst strategy for economic and urban revitalization to create a true mixed-use area.

This 1997 announcement committed the Canadian government to \$33 million in 5 years – close to twice the budget in half the time originally contemplated. Funding is shared about equally from Parks Canada and Economic Development Canada. Also in 1997, on recommendation of the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board, Parks Canada created the Lachine Canal National Historic Site. This includes much of the surrounding area and offers public recognition but no legal protection.

For its part, the City of Montréal is investing \$44 million over the same five-year period, focusing on:

- Access to and along the canal to physically link it into the city with a network of promenades, parks and public squares;
- Creating a critical mass of tourism sites and facilities with recreational boating and various kinds of shuttle transportation;
- Conservation and restoration of the remaining industrial heritage in the area;
- Using the above objectives to contribute to the overall goal of stimulating economic development and job creation in the area.

Tellingly, response from the private sector has come faster than expected. In fact, term estimates have

recently been revised upwards to more than \$300 million of private development and at least a 50% increase in residents and visitors to the district.

B) THE VICTORIA/CHAUDIÈRE REVITALIZATION PROJECT

Mark Brandt, Architect, Thompson Brandt Architects, Ottawa, gave an illustrated presentation on the background and vast potential for redevelopment of this 45-acre heritage industrial district in Canada's Capital Region, Ottawa-Hull (refer also to a detailed review in ICOMOS Canada Bulletin, Vol.7, No.2, 1998, pages 39 to 42).

Conference delegates were primed by a presentation earlier in the day by Michel Prévost, Société historique de l'Outaouais, which focused on the importance of industry to the history of Hull, and indeed, it's contribution to Canadian heritage. The Victoria/Chaudière Islands District, which encompasses part of the Ottawa River-front in Hull and Ottawa, figures prominently, then, in Canada's industrial heritage, especially with respect to forest and water-power resources. It also offers very unique additional significance in its splendid physical location, its Aboriginal heritage and in its position figuratively, symbolically and literally of bridging French, English and Native cultures and being part of the jurisdiction of the National Capital Commission (NCC), whose mandate is to promote awareness and unity through the Capital.

Slide illustrations included those from the 1990 report by Thompson Brandt Architects et al for the NCC, which proposed a site-and-heritage-sensitive, mixed-use redevelopment making strong use of public space to provide, encourage and enhance:

- Access to and from the site and the wider city as well as around the site and to the waterfront. This includes land and water shuttles, footbridges, recreational docking facilities, and a pathway system known as the "Walk of Waters;"

- Reuse of heritage fabric, including 30 recommended buildings, structures and sites, combined with an interpretive programme to increase public awareness and enjoyment of the significant Canadian heritage in the Capital;
- Economic revitalization through adaptive reuse and infill construction supporting a wide range of mixed-use facilities, including industrial;
- Provision of extensive cultural and recreational tourism facilities to support these objectives and those of the Capital in general;
- Take advantage of the spectacular physical setting of the site, an archipelago and adjacent shores on a great river, beside a renowned waterfall, below a major escarpment upon which sits the Houses of Parliament.

These principles, being embraced by the NCC in their "Vision for the Core Area of Canada's Capital," June 1998, continue their relevance today as the Commission plays a leading role in pursuing planning possibilities for the district within the context of complex ownership and the various stakeholder agendas.

Recommendations also include the establishment of a viable public-private partnership to guide the creation and financing of the project, following the NCC establishing the planning principles and gaining a degree of consensus.

The current situation includes the new owner of the majority of the E.B. Eddy Co. industrial lands, Doctor, agreeing, after a multi-year battle with the City of Hull and a breakdown in purchase negotiations with the Federal government,

not to tear down some significant stone mill structures in the downtown core which have a good capacity for reuse, although require structural stabilization.

It was acknowledged that the ideal situation for this particular property would be a central authority to prepare more detailed project planning in order to combine all facets, including heritage. Despite its unique characteristics, the typical urban core-waterfront location, the age of the industrial facilities in decline and the array of stakeholders, makes the Victoria/Chaudière District a prime example of Canadian industrial heritage at the crossroads.

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*Canal Lachine.
Photo : Ville de Montréal*