



Ontario Canada

CONSTRUCTION OFFICIALLY BEGINS ON UNDERPASS PARK

Toronto – May 26, 2011 – Waterfront Toronto together with the Governments of Canada, Ontario and the City of Toronto celebrated the official start of construction for Underpass Park, a significant milestone in the development of the West Don Lands.

Underpass Park is the most extensive park to ever be built under an overpass in Canada, and the first of its kind in Toronto. The unique urban park is transforming the derelict space beneath the Eastern Avenue, Richmond and Adelaide overpasses into a bright and welcoming neighbourhood amenity and a key public space in the West Don Lands community.

"Underpass Park embodies the kind of infrastructure project the federal government stands four-square behind," said Minister Flaherty. "Transforming once derelict lands into inviting parks and open spaces is a direct investment in healthier and greener communities where businesses flourish and families thrive."

"The transformation of the West Don Lands into a vibrant, flourishing community where people will live, work, play and learn is the kind of public infrastructure project that really excites us," said Minister Murray. "Underpass Park is a welcome addition to a renewed waterfront where businesses want to invest, families choose to live and communities continue to thrive."

"What makes Underpass Park so unique is the inspiration came from the overpass structure," said Councillor Norm Kelly, Chair of Parks & Environment for the City of Toronto. "I am looking forward to the completion of the park so everyone in our city can take advantage of what will be a beautiful, open public space," Kelly added.

The imposing concrete structures of the overpasses currently act as a barrier between the north and south parts of the community. Underpass Park innovatively re-engineers the area under the overpasses to create an inviting public space that connects the two parts of the West Don Lands, contributing to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood and the success of the development projects underway in the area.

"Underpass Park embodies design excellence and creativity," said Mark Wilson. "Its design and adaptive reuse of derelict urban land raises the bar for urban space in the city and beyond."

Designed by landscape architectural firm Phillips Farevaag Smallerberg with The Planning Partnership, Underpass Park maximizes the unique site conditions imposed by the massive concrete overpasses to convert a neighbourhood liability into a welcoming and distinct public space.

The park is being built in two phases, with the portion east of St. Lawrence Street adjacent to both the River City private sector development and the new affordable housing complex by Toronto Community Housing, being constructed first. The first phase is expected to be complete by the end of 2011. The second phase of the park, on the western side of St. Lawrence Street, will be built next.

Construction of Underpass Park is another sign of the momentum and progress being made in the West Don Lands, which will be home to the Athletes' Village during the 2015 Pan Am Games. Work is well underway throughout the West Don Lands, both in the area that will be home to the Athletes' Village and the areas surrounding it.

Waterfront Toronto

Since 2005, Waterfront Toronto has opened more than 17 new or improved parks or public spaces including wavedecks, sports fields, revitalized trails and new waterfront parks. Last year the organization opened Canada's Sugar Beach and Sherbourne Common South in the new East Bayfront neighbourhood, and started construction of Don River Park in the West Don Lands. Waterfront Toronto has also finalized development agreements with Great Gulf Homes, Urban Capital and Hines for private sector projects on the waterfront, as well as with George Brown College for the development of their new state-of-the-art Medical Arts Building on Queens Quay.

The Governments of Canada and Ontario and the City of Toronto created Waterfront Toronto to oversee and lead the renewal of Toronto's waterfront. Public accessibility, design excellence, sustainable development, economic development and fiscal sustainability are the key drivers of waterfront revitalization.

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