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Daniel Dale

GAIL DEXTER LORD

Co-president,

Lord Cultural Resources

An attempt to dream up an entirely new successful attraction could produce a white elephant, Lord says. Instead, she argues, Ontario Place should strongly consider creating a "science city" anchored by an attraction that is already successful: the Ontario Science Centre.

"When you revitalize something as huge, as major, as Ontario Place, the magnet has to be something that is proven. The Science Centre is already an enormous success from the point of view of science, from the point of view of entertainment, for all ages, all populations, both residents and tourists. . . imagine what happens when you move it to a premier site."

RILEY O'CONNOR

Chairman, Live Nation Canada

"I think everybody agrees that the sort of kiddie park approach that is going on right now is not sustainable and is not going anywhere," says O'Connor, whose company owns the Molson Canadian Amphitheatre. To appeal to a broader audience, and in all seasons, he says the site could host winter sports facilities, such as snowboarding halfpipes; interactive exhibitions on Toronto's maritime history and on the future of mass transportation; and perhaps "a little canal system with storefronts and restaurants" that could cater to, among others, the residents of nearby condos.

O'Connor also says the 16,000-seat amphitheatre could be turned into a 6,500-seat enclosed facility during the winter if funding was made available. "It's not that difficult, actually."

JANE FARROW

Executive director, Jane's Walk.

"We don't need an aquarium, we don't need an indoor ski hill, we don't need a casino," Farrow says. "We need people to live there" — in both a mixed-income, mixed-use high-rise development like the one being built in Regent Park and in a "funky" year-round houseboat community.

She wants visitors to pay only for specific attractions, not merely to enter the grounds. Among her programming ideas: an "enviro-expo" and transit expo showcasing innovative ideas and technologies; free swimming lessons in the lake; outdoor movies. Her most radical pitch: destroy the amphitheatre and replace it with a small outdoor music space that will "encourage people to bring a blanket and hang out" at cheap or free concerts by local artists.

HAROLD MADI

Partner, The Planning Partnership

Unlike Farrow, Madi opposes residential development on the site. Like her, he believes Ontario Place should allow for an all-seasons houseboat community and do away with its general entry fee in favour of charges only for specific attractions. "I personally don't believe that theme parks work in the long-term. By opening the place up, you bring the volume of traffic up, and then the functions that currently exist become more successful."

Pedestrian, bicycle and transit access should be improved to better integrate Ontario Place with the city. "Any plans or visions for Ontario Place must include Lakeshore Blvd.," a streetcar running along the route "would be a phenomenal attraction in and of itself." A ferry connection from central downtown would also make the site easier to reach.

JANICE PRICE**Chief executive officer, Luminato.**

Ontario Place should become known as a home for events that are part of popular festivals like Pride, Caribana, the Jazz Festival and Luminato, Price says. "While I know there is a capital and hardware side to it, I think the real solutions are going to come on the content side," she says. "If they gathered a group of us and said, 'What would it take for us to get you to commit, for example, to use the facility. . . and not change your festivals or rename them, but partner with us, for at least five years, for at least one significant event during your festival, and we would in turn commit to a major marketing campaign.'"

Ontario Place will find it difficult to succeed if it attempts to produce its own content, she says.

DAVE MESLIN**Founder, Toronto Public****Space Committee**

Says Meslin, a community organizer involved in a variety of civic projects: "Maybe part the property could be used as a community meeting space? We have a few large convention centres, but what about smaller groups that can't afford those spaces? Ontario Place is government-owned, so we could create a space that non-profits could use to hold small conferences, retreats, public events and group activities by the waterfront. A planetarium would be cool too though. . ."

ZAHRA EBRAHIM**Principal, ArchiTEXT.**

Elaborate plans that cannot be fully implemented for years and that will cost taxpayers millions, Ebrahim says, should be rejected in favour of the return of the site to the Toronto public as a park — a "gift with no strings attached."

"I think we have enough big plans right now for enough big things," she says. "Why more? There's enough development along the waterfront. There could be tons of plans, but I don't see the need."

KEN GREENBERG**Principal, Greenberg Consultants.**

"Clearly," says Greenberg, a prominent architect and urban designer, "the key to unlocking the value of Ontario Place is doing it in combination with Exhibition Place." In addition, the fences on Lakeshore Blvd. should be taken down in an effort to turn the street into a "real urban boulevard"; access from public transit and waterfront trails, and for small boats like kayaks, should be improved; unsightly surface parking should be made a smaller part of the landscape. And the Ontario Place entry fee should be abolished in favour of public access and single-attraction fees: "The entire site could be thought of as a great park within which you have other uses."

PAUL BEDFORD

Former Toronto chief planner.

Bedford, now a member of the Metrolinx board among other titles, also raises the possibility of “finally” integrating Ontario Place and Exhibition Place. “The fact that both these properties are in public ownership is a tremendous asset that should be appreciated,” he says. “To me, it would be a huge waste of energy to ignore the local context of such an important neighbour.”

He says the two sites could be turned into a unique new major public park unified by a new “blanket of green” and water features and made more accessible by better local and regional transit service.

SHAWN MICALLEF**Senior editor, Spacing.**

Nobody the Star spoke with advocated the destruction of the Cinesphere; several made strong pitches for its preservation. Micallef, the author of the book *Stroll: Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto*, was one of the most impassioned. “It’s not the pods’ and the Cinesphere’s fault that some bureaucrats got lazy over the years and kind of neglected them. Those should be part of whatever happens to Ontario Place.”

He says residential development could inject 24-hour life into the area. As for specific uses: “Hopefully it’ll be small-scale, a whole bunch of small-scale stuff, something that mixes up a whole bunches of uses, rather than one big theme, which is what Ontario Place it was when it opened. . . I don’t think we do that anymore.”