

BUSINESS

Arts-focused complex planned for Queens Quay site

Officials tout 'cultural accelerator' as centrepiece of \$700M project, call LRT service in area 'essential'

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It's time to rethink the costs — and timing — of a proposed easterly LRT line along Queens Quay in light of all the development now slated for the burgeoning East Bayfront area, Waterfront Toronto CEO John Campbell has said.

The TTC has done an impressive job of stepping up bus service to every 15 minutes from Union Station to the easterly waterfront George Brown College and Corus Entertainment buildings, said Campbell.

But an LRT is needed sooner, rather than later, given the amount of residential, office and retail development now planned for the waterfront area between Jarvis and Parliament Sts., including four condo and office towers announced Thursday by Daniels Corp. as part of their \$700-million City of the Arts project.

"We're going to reinvigorate discussions. We have to think about how we move forward on that," said Campbell in an interview Thursday after the Daniels project was announced.

"I think we need to look at how we do it differently to make sure we can provide the results with not such an expensive solution."

Preliminary proposals for the line, which has no funding and no firm commitment but has been a key selling feature to entice developers to build along the once-derelict former industrial lands, price the project at about \$525 million, said Campbell.

That includes improvements to Queens Quay, which are going ahead in the meantime so a tract is ready on the south side assuming that a rail line will eventually get the go-ahead, connecting to the easterly Riverside/PanAm Games site.

"An East Bayfront line is something the TTC would like to build," said TTC spokesman Brad Ross in an email, adding that the exact route has yet to be determined.

"An LRT is absolutely essential," said internationally renowned urban planner Ken Greenberg, who is actively involved in the Daniels project.

"I don't think there is any serious transportation expert who would say that the Scarborough subway line makes any sense. It was a clear case of political pandering. So if you take the amount of money being spent there, you could spread it over a number of projects, including this one, and still give the people of Scarborough better service, sooner."

Without the planned, dedicated LRT line, it will be "extremely chaotic and unpleasant for all the people living and working down there," and dampen plans to revive the area, adds Greenberg.

Daniels' 13-million-square-foot complex, which will feature some 900 condos in a 48- and 38-storey condo tower, as well as a 13-storey and 10-storey office tower, will add about 7,300 people to the area during the day and some 2,500 in the evenings, according to details released Thursday.

Key to the project, which is about a 15-minute walk from Union Station, will be a "cultural accelerator" — a 150,000-square-foot Creative Industries Hub that will be home to the non-profit arts development organization, Artscape, and other arts-and-entertainment-related businesses.



The \$700-million development by the Daniels Corp. will feature a 150,000-square-foot Creative Industries Hub.

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City of the Arts is seen as a critical step forward for the East Bayfront area, a 15-hectare strip of waterfront between Parliament and Jarvis Sts., which has been undergoing a remarkable transformation under the guidance of the City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto.

But it also adds a new level of critical mass on top of other planned projects, also counting on a new rapid transit line to service an estimated 20,000-plus residents expected to live in the area over the next three-plus years.

That includes Hines/Tridel's \$1.1-billion Bayside condo-rental-office complex at the foot of Parliament St. and Great Gulf's \$200-million mixed-use condo project just east of the Sherbourne Common park.

Yet to come are thousands more condo residents now moving in to the Residences of Pier 27 condo project immediately to the west of Yonge St. on the southerly part of Queens Quay where four buildings are virtually finished construction and sales for a 36-storey condo tower adjacent to the defunct Captain John's floating restaurant will be launched this summer.



COLIN MCCONNELL/TORONTO STAR

Mayor John Tory is flanked by Tom Dutton, left, and Mitchell Cohen of Daniels Corp. during the unveiling on Thursday of a condo and commercial project at Queens Quay. Cohen is the development company's president, while Dutton is the senior vice-president.