TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY PORT CREDIT VILLAGE, Mississauga, Ontario



Figure 1—Port Credit Village waterfront development with rail corridor and GO Transit station in background

Project data

Project name	Port Credit Village (phase 1)
Developer	FRAM Building Group and Slokker Canada (FRAM/Slokker)
Date completed	2005
Site area	10.5 ha (26 acres)
Number, type, size of	410 units total
residential units	225 condominium apartments ranging in size from 68 to 310 m² (730 to 3,340 sq. ft.)
	167 townhouses ranging in size from 126 m ² (1,350 sq. ft.) to 600 m ² (6,500 sq. ft.); average size 233 m ² (2,500 sq. ft.);
	18 live-work ground-oriented townhouses ranging in size from 42 m ² (450 sq. ft.) retail + 186 m ²
	(2,000 sq. ft.) residential or 60 m ² (650 sq. ft.) retail + 209 m ² (2,250 sq. ft.) residential
Other land uses on the site	Approximately 1,400 m ² (15,000 sq. ft.) office and 3,700 m ² (40,000 sq. ft.) mixed retail
Gross residential density	39 uph (units per hectare)
Maximum height	Six storeys, average of three storeys
Parking	70 commercial spaces, plus 3+ spaces per townhouse unit and 1.5 to 1.7 spaces per condominium apartment unit
Unit selling prices (2004)	\$300,000 to \$1,150,000
Type of transit	GO Transit (commuter rail) and Mississauga Transit (Local Authority)
Distance to GO Station	400–800 m (1,300–2,600 ft.)
Pedestrian connectivity	Excellent residential to retail connections in and around the site. Connections to the GO station are along a major arterial (Hurontario St.) or through residential street sidewalk. ¹

¹ Phase II of the project should greatly improve connections to the station with the proposed mid- and high-rise mixed use development by FRAM/Slokker along Hurontario St. The redevelopment of the north site (Phase II) is anticipated to include a significantly improved pedestrian environment and further extension of retail frontage. Details are to be finalized by FRAM/Slokker and the City of Mississauga.





PROJECT SUMMARY

PORT CREDIT VILLAGE

The award-winning Port Credit Village (Phase I) is a 410-unit, mixed-use project along the City of Mississauga's Lake Ontario waterfront. The project includes 225 condominium apartments, 167 street-fronting townhouses and 18 live-work townhouses. Port Credit Village is within easy walking distance of the Port Credit GO Station (commuter rail) and market area of the historic Port Credit community.

Port Credit Village is located on the former St. Lawrence Starch lands, which from 1889 to 1990 functioned as a heavy industrial site for the manufacture and distribution of starch and glucose products. The plant prevented public enjoyment of the waterfront and separated the town's residential and market areas. The redevelopment of the site as Port Credit Village linked the East and West Villages of Port Credit via a main street and once again opened the waterfront to the public.

A gathering space and market area defined by public plazas, restaurants and other small-scale retail shops and office spaces complements the project's well-designed townhouses, live—work units and low- and midrise apartment units.



TRANSIT SYSTEM OVERVIEW AND PROJECT CONTEXT

Port Credit Village is a five-minute walk from a major commuter rail station and the terminus of a major express bus service. The GO Transit commuter rail line runs northeastsouthwest along Lake Ontario, taking most riders to downtown Toronto. The line was developed in 1967 by the Province of Ontario. Today, the system includes commuter rail and bus service covering 8,000 km² in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). GO Transit's official name is the Greater Toronto Transit Authority. It is a Crown agency of the province of Ontario.

GO recovers almost 90 per cent of its operating costs through fares, giving the system bragging rights as one of the best financial performers of any transit system in the world. GO runs 181 train trips and 1,662 bus trips daily, carrying about 190,000 passengers on a typical weekday— 160,000 by rail and 30,000 by bus. Ridership growth has continually exceeded expectations; starting from 2.5 million passengers in 1967 to a combined rail and bus system handling 48 million riders annually.²

At least 96 per cent of GO rail ridership is to and from Union Station in downtown Toronto.³ Union Station is a highly integrated multi-modal transit hub connecting GO Transit, Via Rail (intercity rail) and the Toronto Transit Commission's (TTC) extensive regional subway, streetcar and bus system.

² GO Transit *What is GO*? English, retrieved January, 2007 from http://www.GOtransit.com/PUBLIC/aboutGO/whatisGO.htm#Background ³ Ibid

2



Reverse commuting or inter-station travel on GO Transit is negligible, accounting for only four per cent of ridership. Most users get to GO stations by automobile at stations where GO owns and maintains extensive "park-and-ride" facilities.

System-wide, 66 per cent of riders arrive by car, 10 per cent walk, 10 per cent use local transit, 13 per cent carpool or get dropped off, and one per cent bike. In Port Credit, 53 per cent of riders arrive by car, 23 per cent walk, 12 per cent use local transit, 11 per cent carpool or get dropped off and one per cent bike.⁴ The number of riders who walk to the Port Credit Station is one of the highest for all GO stations.

The existing rail corridor, settlement patterns and available land near the rail corridor combined to make the location of the Port Credit station viable. The station also includes a major bus terminal, which is used extensively by local Mississauga Transit services, including an express bus service along Hurontario St., a major north-south corridor. Approximately 25,000 transit users travel along the corridor every day.

Densities and land uses in Port Credit Village generally support public transit use. Densities between the station and the waterfront are transit-supportive with some high- and mid-rise building stock from the 1960s and 1970s. To the north of the station, residential areas are primarily lowdensity, single-family neighbourhoods.

While GO riders in general primarily originate from lower density suburban communities, the Port Credit GO service attracts many riders originating from higher density units. It is City of Mississauga policy to encourage transit-supportive densities and land uses near GO stations, along Hurontario Street and especially in Port Credit. But the City recognizes the need to balance many factors that influence urban development, such as community concerns, traffic and architectural character.

⁴ Michael Wolczyk, Transit Planner, Go Transit, Nov. 14, 2006.

The Port Credit area in particular is different from many other parts of Mississauga in that the older urban fabric (rectilinear grid) is much more amenable to residential intensification and transit and pedestrian connectivity. Intensification in this area has been occurring since the mid-50s and remains the focus of intensification efforts by the City and the development industry.

DEVELOPER'S PERSPECTIVE

FRAM/Slokker purchased the property from the St. Lawrence Starch Company in 1998. In purchasing the land, it not only acquired a large waterfront site, but also inherited an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) ruling which provided a framework for negotiations with the City about density, form and use.⁵ More detail on how this process unfolded is provided in "Municipal process."

Once the community and the City worked out a detailed master plan, the OMB approved the proposed development and supporting planning documents in 2000. Construction started in 2001 with completion and occupancy in 2005.

The proximity to the GO station was a consideration for the developer, however, the lake frontage and location within historic Port Credit were the main drivers for acquiring the site. Marketing literature and the project website promoted proximity to transit and to surrounding amenities.

In addition to the residential and commercial components of the project, the developer was required to develop the waterfront as a public park. The City of Mississauga encouraged many innovative features, including alternative street design standards and live–work units. The developer and the City shared a vision of creating a high-quality, well-designed showcase project. Port Credit Village has achieved recognition for the planning, urban design and project implementation from the Urban Land Institute (ULI).



Townhouses with well-landscaped open space in Port Credit Village. Lake Ontario is in the background.

Parking

The developer provided 3+ parking spaces for each townhouse. This was a choice made to satisfy market demand, since townhouse buyers were mostly early empty-nesters with two cars and a "toy" car (sports car) or a motorcycle. The developer provided 1.5 to 1.7 spaces per condominium apartment in the low- and mid-rise buildings.

Most parking is underground. In addition, 70 at-grade parking spaces are provided for commercial facilities. There are indoor bicycle spaces in all apartment buildings and each townhouse.

The City arranged for the developer to build another 20 public parking spaces below the mixed-use block as the developer preferred not to provide on-street parking along the waterfront road next to the residential townhouse development. As well, there was a City-owned, unopened road allowance on the mixed-use block The developer could have purchased the allowance at market value or provided an additional 23 public parking spaces; it chose to provide an additional 23 parking spaces.

5 Ontario Municipal Board Order #0919, June 22, 2000.

Transit-oriented design considerations

The project is 385 m at its closest and 850 m (2,788 ft.) at its furthest point from the Port Credit GO Station, making the station a convenient five- to 10-minute walk. This was a factor in the developer's investment decision, knowing that GO Transit is very popular with commuters to downtown Toronto. However, the target markets for this project (empty-nesters and affluent professionals) are not necessarily primary users of GO services.

The developer was not required to improve pedestrian connections to the station from the edge of the site as part of the development of the Phase I lands. Pedestrian connectivity and the pedestrian environment are both excellent internally. Connections to the station are along a major arterial (Hurontario Street) or along sidewalks in residential areas. Phase II should greatly improve connections to the station with the proposed mid-and high-rise mixed use development along Hurontario Street. Phase II is anticipated to include a significantly improved pedestrian environment.

The waterfront was rehabilitated to include a pedestrian trail and park. The City and developer worked together to create a high-quality park, recognizing that the site would be a regional destination since it is one of the few locations in Mississauga offering public access to Lake Ontario.

Project success and costs

The developer's target market was empty-nesters and affluent professionals. FRAM/Slokker estimates that buyers were generally older, more mature and had higher incomes than average. Prices for townhouses averaged \$500,000; the 2004 average price for condominiums was \$350,000 to \$500,000. Resale values have been significantly higher, with a noticeable increase in townhouse values, selling for over \$1 million along the waterfront. In the Toronto CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) the average price for new condo townhouses in 2004 was \$260,473 and for new condo apartments, \$212,309.⁶ The developer considers Port Credit Village very successful and profit expectations were met. Pre-sales were very strong, with virtually all units sold by completion. The availability of transit allowed the developer to sell the units for a slight premium (about five per cent). There were no unusual financial or liability issues and government financial assistance was not used.

TABLE I	Summary of costs
Land	\$15.5 million
Construction	\$107.4 million
Soft costs	\$36.2 million
Infrastructure	\$7 million
Site clean-up	\$4.5 million
Total	\$170.6 million

Municipal support

Before FRAM/Slokker's involvement, the City and the landowner were at odds about the form and density of the development. Once the OMB issued a ruling on the form, density and other features for the site, the Mississauga planning department supported the planning process with the developer by coordinating public input. The City did not provide any incentives for the development.

Barriers and obstacles

Before FRAM/Slokker's involvement, the project encountered major opposition from local residents, mainly over proposed densities and building heights. As a result of the community opposition, which was supported by City Council, there was a lengthy OMB hearing and the OMB ruled that building heights and densities should be reduced. When FRAM/Slokker became involved, public consultation included ratepayer association meetings, workshops and public open houses to present and discuss the plans and the final design.

⁶ CMHC, Ontario Market Analysis Centre

Since FRAM/Slokker purchased the property as is, it carried out extensive soil tests which defined contaminated areas. For the most part, the contamination was fly ash backfill containing heavy metals. There was also a limited amount of hazardous material from a leaking oil tank. All contaminated material was removed from the site. As well, all the underground foundations were still in place and had to be removed. Total clean-up costs were approximately \$4.5 million.

Key success factors and lessons learned

The developer attributes the success of the project to the architectural and urban design quality, the mix of amenities in and around the project and to a strong residential market for this location, despite the presence of higher density and smaller living accommodations in the immediate Port Credit community.

The developer estimated that the convenient access to the transit station provided roughly a five per cent premium on the selling price; however this is difficult to discern when factoring in the waterfront location, high quality housing and proximity to amenities. The developer also emphasized that the support from the City planner who coordinated the community input was key to the success of the project.

MUNICIPAL PLANNER'S PERSPECTIVE

Planning objectives

The decommissioning of a large waterfront brownfield site presented numerous opportunities for innovative urban planning and design concepts. The City envisioned that the property would be redeveloped, providing an opportunity to:

- reclaim the waters edge and provide continuous public access along Mississauga's waterfront;
- link the east village with the west village of Port Credit, previously separated by the industrial plant that occupied the main street frontage;
- introduce a mix of land uses including innovative live-work units;

- realign public streets and introduce new public streets throughout the site;
- emphasize the architectural and urban design elements in the historic Port Credit settlement area; and
- ensure that all components of the master plan were addressed and effectively implemented through the official plan, zoning bylaw and development and servicing agreements as well as through the use of site plan control.

Municipal process and support for project

Applications for amendments to the official plan and zoning bylaw, together with a draft subdivision application, were filed with the City in 1993 by the owner, the St. Lawrence Starch Company. St. Lawrence proposed a mixed-use development consisting of high-density and high-rise apartment development, retail, commercial and park uses. While reviewing the application, the City also initiated a district plan review that resulted in a great deal of interest and participation by residents of Port Credit and the surrounding communities.

Of primary concern for the community was the proposed high-density development, ranging from 1,500 to 1,850 dwellings with building heights from three to 20 storeys.



Public square with commercial uses and condo apartments in Port Credit Village.

Mississauga planning staff initially recommended approving the desired land use, density and urban design elements without changes. In reviewing the plans for the development, Mississauga Council also considered several planning reports. Because of public concerns about the proposal, council directed planning staff to present and finalize the district plan before the St. Lawrence site plan was considered.

The resulting district plan proposed lower density, building heights and floor-space indexes. City Council retained a planning consultant to develop a new site plan satisfying the new requirements in the district plan. Consequently, St. Lawrence Starch's application was referred to the OMB, which gave an interim decision in 1997. Rather than choosing a plan (either St. Lawrence Starch's plan or the City's plan) the OMB established ground rules for negotiating a new master plan, including density, building heights, urban design elements, site layout, retail commercial development, public square and parkland.

Judging the OMB ruling too constraining and an obstruction to the viability of redevelopment of the site, St. Lawrence Starch solicited requests from developers to purchase the site. FRAM Building Group, with its partner Slokker Canada Corp., bought the land and began preparing conceptual drawings for submission and review. The new master plan and supporting planning documents were presented to the OMB, which approved the proposed development in 2000. Construction started in 2001 with completion and occupancy in 2005.

While the developer was required to finance the development of the waterfront park at a cost of \$1.2 million, Mississauga invested another \$3.4 million in the park; a clear demonstration of its commitment to a high-quality, publicly-accessible waterfront.

Public consultation

Public interest in the development of the site was motivated primarily by the initial high density site plan proposed by St. Lawrence Starch Company. Council's initial lack of support is primarily attributed to the lack of community support for these plans.



Following the OMB ruling, a long and involved public process to create a plan that worked in the context of Port Credit ensued. When FRAM/Slokker became involved, it held several workshops, open houses and meetings with the community until a final plan was developed and supported.

Two community associations were primarily involved in the consultation. The ratepayers association for the area immediately adjacent to the site became supporters of the plan and continues to support FRAM/Slokker's vision for Phase II (north of the Port Credit Village site), which includes higher-density, taller buildings. The ratepayers association for the area north of the rail corridor generally oppose development in this area due to concerns with increased traffic.

Today, although the development of Port Credit Village is largely viewed as a successful and sensitive infill project, community concerns are mixed regarding the densification of the broader community of Port Credit. New development in surrounding areas remains contentious due to proposed building heights. This opposition lingers despite a long history of high-rise buildings in the area.

Challenges

Developing higher-density communities in largely singlefamily districts is a challenge in any part of the country. This project demonstrated the compromises all parties must consider to make a project of this scale viable. While a public waterfront and improved shopping district are attractive amenities, finding the delicate balance between how much density is needed to make a project viable and how much local residents will accept remains a significant challenge.

While this project was successful in terms of enabling residents to walk more for shopping trips, repairing the urban fabric and creating an inviting public waterfront park, it is uncertain that this project will attract residents who must travel to downtown Toronto for work and would use commuter rail. This is largely because the development attracted a demographic with above-average income and age.

Success factors

The City considers the engagement of all stakeholders in the planning, design and development of the project as a key factor in the success of the project. There was a shared commitment to creating a special place and the resulting project has delivered on the municipality's expectations for the site. This medium- to high-density, mixed-use project has now become a powerful example of a well-planned, welldesigned infill development in the greater Mississauga area.

RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Thirty-two residents from the project were interviewed in the summer of 2006 to learn about their motivations for choosing a home in that location, their level of satisfaction and their transportation choices.

Reason for choosing that location

Proximity to amenities and size of unit were the main reasons for purchasing in this location most frequently cited by respondents, with 22 per cent choosing the location mainly because of the proximity to amenities, 13 per cent because of size of unit and nine per cent mainly due to proximity to transit.

TABLE 2 Reasons for Choosing Port Credit Village		
Reason for choice	Main reason (%)	Some influence (%)*
Proximity to transit	9	34
Proximity to work	3	9
Proximity to school	0	3
Proximity to amenities (for example, shopping, parks, trails)	22	72
Price of unit	3	6
Size of unit	13	13
Architectural features (for example, layout, look of building)	9	22
Other or don't know	41	72
* More than one response allowed se total may not equal 100 per cent		

* More than one response allowed so total may not equal 100 per cent

As a separate question, residents were asked to what extent the building's location near public transit influenced their decision to live there. Overall 75 per cent said that being near transit had a strong or some influence on their purchase decision.



Overall, respondents were very satisfied with the quality of the project, with 94 per cent who were satisfied with the amount of parking provided for their personal use and 91 per cent who were satisfied with parking provided for visitors. All were very or somewhat satisfied with the character of the neighbourhood, that is, the style and type of housing, landscaping, shops and so on that contribute to the atmosphere of the area.

Further, all respondents were satisfied with the amenities in the neighbourhood, such as shopping, services, schools and recreation. Most (81 per cent) respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with the overall cost of living in this location, even though for 53 per cent, the unit price was higher than that of their previous dwelling. Fifty-three per cent said that they accepted this higher cost primarily because of design features, 35 per cent because of the location close to transit and 29 per cent because of neighbourhood amenities.

The design and appearance of the buildings was very popular with respondents: 97 per cent said they were very or somewhat satisfied. Ninety-four per cent said they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the size of their unit.

Travel to work, shopping, school

Fewer residents surveyed take public transit, walk or bike to work than the Toronto CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) average and more drive to work. More respondents own a car than the Toronto CMA average, while ownership of two cars was about the same for the development compared to the Toronto CMA average. Six per cent said they use transit daily and 13 per cent use it at least once a week.

All transit users surveyed walk to the transit station and walk from the transit station to work. They rated the trip from home to the transit station as either very or somewhat pleasant and convenient. All respondents felt the streets and sidewalks were safe, there were trees along the route, walking paths were separate for the street and buildings along the way were attractive. The average trip length from home to work was just under 30 minutes compared to the Toronto CMA average of 79 minutes round trip.

TABLE 3 Comparison of travel patterns of residents surveyed to Toronto CMA		
Travel variable	Port Credit Village	Toronto CMA*
Mode of travel to work	69% motor vehicle as driver 8% car pool 15% public transit 8% Don't know or refused	65% motor vehicle as driver 6% motor vehicle as passenger 22% public transit 5% walk 1% bike 1% other modes
Households with vehicle(s)	97%; 31% two or more cars	78%; 33% two or more cars†
Average time of trip to work	30 minutes (one way)	79 minutes (round trip)‡

* Source: 2001 Census, Statistics Canada

+ Source: Spending Patterns in Canada, 2001, Statistics Canada

 \ddagger Source: General Social Survey on Time Use: Cycle 19, The Time it Takes

to Get to Work and Back, Statistics Canada (by Martin Turcotte), 2005

Nine per cent said they take transit to get to work more often since moving to this location and none take it less often. Convenience was cited as the primary reason for this change.

Of those residents making shopping trips, 20 per cent walk, none take transit, and the rest drive (50 per cent as a driver, 30 per cent with others in the vehicle). When asked if they had made any changes in their travel patterns since their last location, 31 per cent said they walk more for shopping trips than they did in their previous home location and none said they were walking less or taking transit less. Again, convenience was cited as the major reason. One person was driving more. Most (94 per cent) do not make regular trips to school or day care.

TABLE 4 Change in travel patterns from previous home		
Change from previous home	Work trips (%)	Shopping trips (%)
Use transit more than before	9	3
Drive less than before	3	6
Walk more than before	0	31
Own one less car	0	0
Other	12	8

Demographics

The surveyed residents have fewer people per household, are older and have higher household incomes than the Toronto CMA average. Only 31 per cent had previously lived in a multi-family building, and 59 per cent had previously lived in a single-detached dwelling. In this project, 56 per cent of the dwellings are multi-family (low- or high-rise) units and the rest are townhouses or ground-oriented live–work units, indicating a general willingness of purchasers to shift to a denser form of housing in exchange for other benefits.

TABLE 5 Demographic comparison of survey respondents to Toronto CMA			
Demographic variable	Port Credit Village	Toronto CMA*	
People per household	1.6	2.8	
Age range†	3.1% under 35 62% 35–65 31% over 65	19% under 35 63% 35–65 18% over 65	
Household income (pre-tax)	6% under \$50,000 3% \$50,000 to \$100,000 44% over \$100,000 19% Don't know or refused	42% under \$50,000 25% \$50,000 to \$100,000 23% over \$100,000	

* Source, 2001 Census, Statistics Canada

+ For Port Credit Village, average age of survey respondents and for

Toronto CMA, average age of household maintainer(s)



SUMMARY AND LESSONS LEARNED

Port Credit Village is a high-quality, medium-density, mixed-use project. Through extensive public consultation and OMB hearings, the developer and municipality worked together to ensure that the form of development was compatible with the existing neighbourhood while maintaining a financially viable project.

Both FRAM/Slokker and the City of Mississauga were heavily committed to developing a high-quality project that included many innovative design measures. FRAM/Slokker attributes the success of the project to delivering a product that met market demand for empty nesters, singles, and affluent professionals. They also provided a significant public amenity by creating a complete urban experience and community revitalization.

Generally, the density, form and mix of uses are considered transit-supportive, however, the demographic profile of residents is generally not that of commuter rail users. Respondents had slightly higher rates of car ownership and lower rates of trips to work by transit than the Toronto CMA average. Proximity to transit was the primary reason for purchasing a home in that location for only nine per cent of respondents, although 75 per cent said it had at least some influence on their purchase decision. The main reason most frequently cited for purchasing in this location was proximity to amenities. Many residents now walk more than they did in their previous home location due to Port Credit Village's mix of uses and convenience. The developer used the location to attract purchasers wanting a waterfront location near an established transit node and retail area.

Fifty-nine per cent of respondents had previously lived in a single-detached dwelling, and now none do, indicating a general willingness of purchasers to shift to a denser form of housing in exchange for other benefits. Respondents were generally very satisfied with their purchase decision.



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DOCUMENTS

The Corporation of the City of Mississauga Bylaw Number 0513 – 2000 (St. Lawrence Starch Limited: South Property)

Official Plan for the City of Mississauga Planning Area – Amendment No. 85

Giannone Associates, 2006 Urban Land Institute Awards for Excellence Application, 1.11.06

City of Mississauga and FRAM Building Group/Slokker Canada, Ontario Professional Planners Institute Excellence in Planning Awards 2005 Submission.

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