

November 4, 2009

Southeast False Creek Neighbourhood Highlights

History

Prior to the arrival of the first Europeans in 1859, False Creek was used by the Coast Salish people for fishing. The original shoreline came to what is now West 1st Avenue, but over the years, was developed by industry and businesses that filled in False Creek to create more land for industrial use. At various times over the last 100 years, sawmills, foundries, shipbuilders, rail yards, metalworks, salt distributors and warehouses have crowded the Southeast False Creek shoreline where the Olympic and Paralympic Village is now located.

Southeast False Creek neighbourhood

Southeast False Creek (SEFC) has been planned as a model sustainable development based a vision of a community where people live, work, play and learn together. The SEFC site comprises 80 acres, 50 acres of which are owned by the City of Vancouver, with the remainder privately owned. Southeast False Creek is bounded by Cambie Bridge to the west, Main Street to the east, West 2nd Avenue to the south and False Creek to the north.

The Southeast False Creek development is a pilot project for the LEED™ for Neighbourhood Development program, and all buildings are designed to the Canadian Green Building Council's LEED™ Gold standard or higher. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria.

After the 2010 Winter Games, Southeast False Creek will be a mixed-use community of 1,100 residential units, including market housing, market rental housing and affordable housing options. When fully developed, SEFC will have six million square feet of mixed use development. This will include more than 5,000 residential units that will be home to 16,000 citizens, a community centre with a non-motorized boating facility, up to five child-care facilities, an elementary school, an interfaith centre, five restored heritage buildings and 26 acres of park.

Public spaces

The public spaces in Southeast False Creek include 11 acres of park and the streets running through the neighbourhood. These spaces have been designed according to the award-winning Southeast False Creek Public Realm Plan (2006), which set the framework for beautiful streets, an active waterfront, vibrant plaza and habitat creation in the parks.

Southeast False Creek public spaces are themed as a "shipyards neighbourhood," an homage to the significant amount of shipbuilding that occurred there during the Second World War. This theme is seen throughout the spaces: oversized nautical cleats for benches along the waterfront, ribs from the hull of a ship used as lighting in the plaza; and the boat-shaped inlet bridge.

Other highlights of the community's public realm include:

- **Streetscapes** designed for pedestrians and bicycles first: narrow widths, planted curb bulges, large street trees, pavers that give the neighbourhood its European flavour, attractive beautiful benches, bike racks and white street light.

- **Waterfront** that is a destination park in itself, including: a timber boardwalk, a remediated inlet area spanned by a pedestrian bridge, granite seating blocks at the inlet that step down to the water, beach logs and boulders claimed from on-site excavations, custom designed benches and chairs, solar compacting garbage containers and recycling bins, and white lighting from custom designed industrial styled fixtures. The rehabilitated shoreline also includes a new island to increase the intertidal habitat available for local fish.
- A **public plaza** marks the centre of the neighbourhood and is surrounded by commercial spaces, services and restaurants. Its unique design includes the use of pavers and granite banding that connects the plaza across the streets to its surrounding buildings, granite inlaid with steel words recalling the area's industrial uses of the past, custom designed lighting, playful benches and bistro tables, a stage, facilities to incorporate seasonal markets, and a water feature for youthful enjoyment.
- **Hinge Park** - This park is like no other and includes a wetland that treats the stormwater from the surrounding streets and public spaces. Numerous custom designed bridges, rehabilitated train tracks, original shoreline markers, wooden platforms, timber and stone benches, playground, playcourt and a child's water feature at the top of a large granite block staired mound, make this park wild and playful.

Olympic Village Civic Centre

A new 4,000 square metre civic centre has been constructed along the south shore of False Creek. The civic centre is targeting LEED™ Platinum certification - the highest rated green building design in North America.

After the 2010 Winter Games, the civic centre will be run by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and will include: a full-size gym, games room and arts and crafts room; an aerobics and dance studio; multipurpose rooms; docks for non-motorized boats; 550 square metres of commercial/restaurant space; a 8,000 square foot, 69-space daycare for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers, and three- to five-year-olds, with an outdoor play area.

Net Zero Building

The Net Zero Building, which is designed to be a 64-unit affordable housing block for seniors after the 2010 Winter Games, is a building that produces as much energy as it consumes on an annual basis. The City of Vancouver and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) initiated the SEFC Net Zero project as a pilot project for practical, cost effective and transferable energy efficiency and on-site energy production in buildings. The building's heat will be supplied through the transfer of waste heat from an adjoining supermarket. The roofs of the Net Zero building and an adjacent building will be fitted with solar thermal hot water panels, which will generate heat equivalent to 90 per cent of the building's annual energy consumption.

Salt Building

The Salt Building is a very significant landmark in the Southeast False Creek neighbourhood. It is a heritage building located in the heart of the community at 85 West First Avenue (near Manitoba). The Salt Building, owned by the City of Vancouver, was built around 1930 to refine raw salt and converted in the 1980s as a paper recycling plant. The Salt Building is interesting for a variety of reasons: its history, its location which marks the original shoreline of False Creek, the fact that it is built on exposed timber piles, and its large, open interior, which is supported by elaborate roof trusses. In April 2010, the building will be handed back to the City, so that the Vancouver Salt Company can complete their tenant improvements and prepare the building for its use as a bakery, coffee shop, restaurant and brewpub.

For more information:

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