



Artist's rendering of the waterfront at Southeast False Creek showing Habitat Island (far left), the "Canoe" bridge (centre), and mixed shoreline including seawall, boardwalk, and areas for pedestrian water access.

INNOVATION – THE IMPERATIVE OF OUR GLOBAL FUTURE

Within a relatively short period of history, we have settled into an often unquestioned framework of community building, especially in North America. Against this comfortable but failing paradigm, we must spur ourselves to vigorous innovation – reaching out beyond the traditional practices and bylaws to set new precedents for generations to come. Facing and overcoming the fear of change and challenging the established protocols within which planners, engineers, designers and builders have become so constrained, is critical to developing a new framework – the dense, livable, resource-efficient and socially robust sustainable community.

Driven by a recognition that change is both essential and urgent, those who would remake our community models are searching collectively for the new paradigms in which community life can flourish in the context of a changing environment and the rapid diminishing of the earth's limited resources. Beyond mere survival, these innovators also embrace new societal structures that reflect an emerging commitment to equity and social balance within our community relationships.

Southeast False Creek (SEFC) has offered the opportunity for such innovation. Led by an emerging vision of a "better way", the City Council of the day provided the challenge and the designers, authorities and builders found themselves exploring planning principles and approaches to neighbourhood and infrastructure development that are in some ways

completely new, and in others, cast backwards to a richer earlier time – reminiscent, as Mike Harcourt mused in Chapter Two, of the medieval city.

Given what was an almost vacant waterfront site, encumbered only by the past devastation of its environment, the SEFC precinct provided its designers and builders the opportunity to explore new approaches and multiple innovations. They evaluated and refined the integration of public space infrastructure with the sustainable character of the neighbourhood. They sought to develop a community that would address social and economic issues as well as protect the environment. They challenged established protocols of road design, parking, amenity allocations, child-friendly environments and the relationship between social well-being, density, livability and public amenities. They celebrated the immediacy of the transportation connections to the heart of the city while creating a village community clustered about its own commercial centre with animated public spaces to encourage social interactions and inspire a sense of serendipity. They aimed to foster spontaneous neighbourly exchange and build social relationships across a broad spectrum of cultures and life interests.

SEFC challenges us to adopt a significant shift in vision and to rework our conventional "textbook" solutions, for we are in a world where conventional solutions will not provide a future for our children. Our new world lies where collaboration and innovation command the day to ensure sustainability is the precedent of tomorrow.

"Southeast False Creek has a view of the future... of future generations living and working in a truly sustainable urban village."

Striking a balance between past and future is the particular challenge facing those who attempt to create landscapes and amenities that will inform and create community. Too much of the past and the space may feel museum-like, failing to inspire new thinking. Too little, and the place may be flat, inauthentic, neutral.

In this chapter, we explore the question of place and its particular relevance in building sustainable communities. From questions of heritage to solutions coupling stormwater management with play space, from the way the land is treated to the way people interact, this chapter brings forward stories about public areas, infrastructure and heritage. We also learn of the phenomenal effort required to ensure the new community's environmental integrity by cleaning up the toxic residue of its past.

Chapter Three of The Challenge Series sits at the transition from plan to process, from discussion to design and development. If the people who come to live in the new SEFC community will ultimately "deliver on the promise of the place," this Chapter explores how the promise has been made.

The story is one of commitment – to history, collaboration, to pride of place – and to designing with an openness that recognizes the place will ultimately be made by those who live there. This idea is best captured by the SEFC Art Master Plan:

Southeast False Creek has a view of the future. A future of sustainability is all its contexts – social, economic and environmental. It's a view of future generations living and working in a truly sustainable urban village. It's a viewpoint shaped by urban planners, politicians, public and private developers, scientists, engineers and artists. Ultimately it is a view shaped by each and every person that will call Southeast False Creek their home. Each day they will deliver on the promise of the place. – SEFC ART MASTER PLAN 2007