Urban Waterfront Redevelopment: A Case Study of Toronto's
Harbour Square

Executive Summary Joseph P. DeLeo

This report examines the events that have transpired during the 1960s surrounding the redevelopment of Toronto's central waterfront.

The process of redevelopment began in the 1960s. The decline in port-related operations resulted in large parcels of under-utilised vacant lands along Toronto's waterfront. For the City of Toronto and the Toronto Harbour Commission, the public agency with responsibility of these lands, this posed a difficult planning problem. Should these lands be developed for other uses than those related to port operations? The City's Planning Board, with the THC's support, established a plan entitled The Core of the Central Waterfront plan.

The process of redevelopment became complicated in May of 1962, when Marvo Construction announced it had purchased lands that were owned by Canada Steamship Lines. As a result, the ownership of land was divided amongst the public and private sector. This made it difficult for the public sector to control and develop these lands according to the Core of the Central Waterfront plan. A public-private partnership between the City of Toronto, Toronto H~bour Commission and Marvo Construction to redevelop the lands between Yonge and York street, south of Queen's Quay was created. The $100 million development was called Harbour Square. The waterfront was going to be redeveloped for commercial, residential, office, retail and recreational uses.

The parties had entered into a three way land exchange agreement that was consummated
in September of 1965. However, by this time Marvo Construction had experienced
financial difficulties and was not able to begin construction. The company was forced to
sell its rights to develop the project to Campeau Corporation in 1968.

The case study research methodology was employed to gain insights into how the
Harbour Square project on Toronto's waterfront evolved. The objectives of the paper
were to document the history of the development of Toronto's waterfront, representatives from the City

of Toronto and
Marvo Construction who were involved in the project. Finally, the political, financial,
planning and implementation aspects of the project were examined and analysed within
the framework established by David Gordon. He studied the difficulties of implementing redevelopment in New York, Boston, London and Toronto and found:

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I) Financial: Assembling the financial resources to get development started and the private sector involved is difficult. Private investment in real estate is dominated by the swings in the local property market.

I) Political: Start-up process of urban waterfront development is dominated by the politics of development. A pro-growth coalition is