

# **Bond Case Briefs**

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## **In the Covid Era, the Relationship Between Cities and Megadevelopments Makes Even Less Sense.**

Sidewalk Labs' Waterfront Toronto project was the first high-profile megadevelopment to be undone (at least in part) by Covid-19, and it may not be the last. The project, battered by years of controversy over the Alphabet-affiliated company's desire to turn a 12-acre (and later a 362-acre) Quayside area into the world's first neighbourhood "built from the internet up," gave up the ghost in early May, with Sidewalk CEO Dan Doctoroff citing "unprecedented economic uncertainty" for the withdrawal.

Unprecedented economic uncertainty is, improbably, an understatement. With a coronavirus vaccine unlikely to emerge until 2021 at the earliest, there remains no way for the economy to come fully back to life without significant loss of life, a reality that has already disproportionately hurt lower-income communities of color. In this environment, large-scale projects like Quayside appear increasingly untenable, laying bare many of the criticisms brought against such developments: speculative by nature, they make even less sense in an economy decimated by the virus.

Although both are still active, I think of two similar megadevelopments currently planned for Chicago, where I live: Lincoln Yards and The 78, projected to cost \$6 billion and \$7 billion, respectively. Lincoln Yards, located adjacent to the wealthy Lincoln Park and Bucktown neighbourhoods on the city's North Side, originally promised the construction of a Major League Soccer stadium and three Live Nation-owned performance venues, but both of those aspects were eventually scuttled, leaving a mixed-use residential and retail district built on the banks of the Chicago River. Meanwhile, The 78, so named as a proposed addition to the city's existing 77 community areas, also offers a river-centric, mixed-use plan, with a technology and business incubator and towers reaching nearly 1,000 feet. It's slated for construction just south of downtown, served by the addition of a new train station on the CTA Red line.

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