



Central Waterfront Backgrounder

Waterfront Toronto is transforming the most heavily used part of Toronto's waterfront by giving it a bold new look and unified design. Working with a comprehensive plan by West 8 + DTAH, the winners of the 2006 Central Waterfront Innovative Design Competition, Waterfront Toronto is implementing a remarkable vision for the area that will link major waterfront destinations, create new public spaces and give the city the grand waterfront boulevard it deserves. Ultimately, the goal is to create a powerful, world-class identity for the central waterfront that celebrates the Canadian lakefront experience and provides the public with access to the water's edge.

Central Waterfront Innovative Design Competition

Waterfront Toronto held an innovative design competition in 2006 to select the best plan to convert Toronto's central waterfront into a spectacular public waterfront area. The objective of the design competition was to connect and build on existing public spaces like the Music Garden and to provide a distinct and recognizable identity for all public spaces along Toronto's revitalized waterfront.

Thirty-eight teams from 15 countries responded to a Request for Qualifications and five teams were short-listed. Landscape architects West 8 of Rotterdam and Du Toit Allsopp Hillier (DTAH) of Toronto were selected as the winning design team.

The West 8 + DTAH plan features a continuous water's edge promenade and boardwalk, new wavedecks at the foot of major waterfront streets, a series of pedestrian bridges, and a complete revitalization of Queens Quay into a grand boulevard. It also envisioned a vibrant, mixed-use cultural/retail village for York Quay (Harbourfront Centre) which would include a lake-facing square called Canada Square and another urban square bordering Queens Quay.

Waterfront Toronto has received four urban design awards for the central waterfront plan including two Toronto Urban Design Awards and two Canadian Society of Landscape Architects Awards.

Wavedecks

A key feature of Waterfront Toronto's central waterfront design is a series of wooden wavedecks inspired by the Canadian cottage experience and the shorelines of Ontario's great lakes. These urban docks provide generous public gathering spaces in areas that previously lacked access to the lake. The Spadina WaveDeck opened in 2008 followed by the Simcoe and Rees WaveDecks in 2009. The wavedecks, which have become must-see waterfront landmarks, have been honoured with eight prestigious design awards.

Queens Quay Boulevard

The transformation of Queens Quay, Toronto's main waterfront street, into a world-class boulevard is now underway. Construction along the 1.7 kilometre stretch from just west of Lower Spadina Ave. to Bay St. will completely rebuild and revitalize the area both above and below ground. Queens Quay will become a waterfront showpiece and a must-see Toronto destination. A generous granite pedestrian promenade and off-road Martin Goodman Trail will create much-needed public space by the lake. A new

streetcar corridor and traffic lanes with improved turning lanes and signal timing will keep people moving. Sidewalk and landscaping improvements in front of storefronts will stimulate ground floor retail activity and urban vitality.

Waterfront Toronto is leading a coordinated construction effort that integrates improvements to the public realm with much needed infrastructure and utility upgrades. When complete in 2015, Queens Quay will be both a beautiful and functional waterfront street. This work by West 8 + DTAH, is the product of a 2006 international design competition, extensive public input and a comprehensive environmental assessment.

York Quay Revitalization – Canada Square

Harbourfront Centre offers cultural, educational and recreational activities from its four hectare (10 acre site) in the heart of Toronto's central waterfront. In 2000, Harbourfront Centre developed a master plan for the revitalization of its site which encompasses York and John Quays. The master plan was designed to reclaim underutilized spaces and strengthen public access to the water's edge. It also included a vision for Canada Square, an urban plaza at the water's edge.

The York Quay Revitalization Project has been divided into several key phases. In the first phase, which was completed in 2006, Waterfront Toronto and Harbourfront Centre created a favourite destination on Toronto's waterfront by widening the water's edge promenade, adding a wooden boardwalk and constructing two new finger piers at York Quay.

The second phase of work, a new underground garage at Harbourfront Centre, opened in June 2012. The new garage unlocked about a third of Harbourfront Centre's prime waterfront site for the creation three new public spaces – Canada Square, Ontario Square and an interim landscaped area called Exhibition Common. Designed by renowned landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh and Associates, these new spaces work together to give public access to the water's edge and programming options for Harbourfront Centre.

Water's Edge Promenade and Footbridges

The central waterfront design is defined by the creation of a continuous water's edge promenade. In 2006, Waterfront Toronto and Harbourfront Centre made significant improvements to the water's edge at York Quay by widening the promenade and building a wooden boardwalk. In East Bayfront, between Canada's Sugar Beach and Sherbourne Common, a new stretch of granite mosaic promenade opened in 2010. Construction planning is also underway for a 120-metre length of promenade at the Portland Slip.

Future revitalization plans also include five dramatic pedestrian footbridges which will link the gaps in the water's edge promenade. The footbridges, which are currently unfunded, will be located at the Spadina, Police Basin, Rees, Simcoe and Peter slips.

Phasing

Phase one revitalization of the central waterfront focuses on the area between Lower Spadina Avenue and Bay Street and includes wavedecks, the transformation of Queens Quay Boulevard, the revitalization of York Quay, and new sections of water's edge promenade.