



Backgrounder

Design Competition for Toronto's Central Waterfront

Providing continuous public access across Toronto's revitalized waterfront.

The Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation has selected international design teams to take part in a competition to provide continuous public access across the central waterfront and to create a bold, innovative waterfront identity. The overall goals and objectives of the project are to:

1. Establish a Continuous Public Promenade from Bathurst to Jarvis Streets

The teams will develop a spectacular water's edge that provides continuous public access from the Western Gap to the Parliament Street Slip. This stretch, known as the Central Waterfront, should read and function as an inviting public space. The esplanade should be designed to connect the many existing destinations along the waterfront using a variety of elements, such as boardwalks, floating piers, "get-downs," landscaping, and possibly even lift bridges at some locations.

2. Create Gateways at the Heads of the Slips

The current "pinch points" where the slips meet Queens Quay Boulevard need to be expanded and transformed into major points of arrival from the city's north-south streets. By widening them on the water side, they can become new public spaces that connect the water's edge into a continuous public esplanade, and serve as the "glue" that joins the water's edge with the city street grid. These spaces could be plazas, bridges, or piers, and include elements such as art installations, lookout points, demonstration areas, cafes, and expanded opportunities for marine use.

3. Complete Central Segment of the Martin Goodman Trail

One of the most heavily-used recreational corridors in Toronto, the Martin Goodman Trail is disjointed as it passes through the central waterfront, and its originally proposed route has become blocked at certain points by development. A new concept is needed that will create a distinctive commuter and recreational bikeway and trail on or adjacent to Queens Quay Boulevard, and connecting the eastern and western portions of the Martin Goodman Trail.

4. Redefine the Character of Queens Quay Boulevard

Long considered the "ugly duckling" of the waterfront, Queens Quay Boulevard is Toronto's main waterfront street. The design teams will develop a new identity for this important road and transit way that will transform it into an attractive address and provide a cachet befitting its spectacular waterside location and views. Currently, Queens Quay Boulevard is made up of segments with differing widths, transit infrastructure, street wall conditions, and land configurations that fail to link the waterfront to a cohesive urban environment. A comprehensive plan for the street is needed to guide its redevelopment as a visually consistent gateway to the

waterfront, as a public amenity for strolling, cycling and driving, and as an important transit route.

5. Develop Innovative Public Spaces and Programming

Opportunities exist to innovatively connect public spaces into the linear elements of the continuous waterfront promenade and Queens Quay Boulevard. These opportunities should be explored, particularly at the heads of the slips where space is currently limited. These newly defined public spaces should be creatively programmed to create interest and activity.

6. Create a Conceptual Lighting Strategy for the Central Waterfront

Early planning for the Toronto waterfront called for a series of “light beacons” to serve as markers along the waterfront. Dramatic light installations or other sculptural lighting elements should be designed and strategically located along the length of the site from the Western Gap to the Parliament Street Slip to orient visitors arriving from the city to the north and the water.

7. Propose Architectural Palette of Materials and Fixtures

A consistent body of materials, finishes, fixtures and infrastructure is essential to maintain the sense of a continuous public waterfront. Because differing conditions may call for varying solutions in some places, a “kit of parts” will be needed that can be applied in different configurations at different locations as required, such as sea rails, boardwalks, pavers, furnishings, fixtures and equipment.

8. Expand Opportunities for Interaction with the Water

Opportunities to increase and intensify water-related uses along the shore should be maximized. The water’s edge should not only entice people to the water, but should engage interaction with it. Drawing upon the TWRC’s Marine Strategy, plans should integrate current and future water uses, such as boating, fishing, sightseeing, swimming, and other activities.

9. Promote Sustainability

TWRC is committed to making the city’s waterfront both a national and global model for sustainability. TWRC has developed a Sustainability Framework to ensure that sustainability principles are integrated into all facets of TWRC management, operations and decision-making. TWRC’s Sustainability Action Plan as developed in the Sustainability Framework should be considered in design proposals.

10. Promote the Aquatic Ecology of the Shoreline

The comprehensive master plan should suggest opportunities for habitat improvement, strengthening native biodiversity and improvement in the water quality of the lake. Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) has developed an Aquatic Restoration Strategy which should inform the design and treatment of the water’s edge.