

WATERFRONT EVENTS AND ACTIVATIONS REVIEW

Background and
Recommendations



Prepared by



**WATERFRONT
BIA**

August 2026, v. f1.0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Executive Summary
7	Areas of re-focus in support of events and activations
10	About the Waterfront BIA , and current events mix we are part of
15	Our Current and Evolving Context
17	Confirming our role
20	The Next 10 years
33	Area Context and 2035 Outlook , and recommended priorities by area
34	Queens Quay West
39	Central Waterfront
43	Queens Quay East
46	Western Waterfront Hub
49	Port Lands and Distillery-Ookwemin
53	Downtown Attractions, including north-south connectivity
57	On the Water and Toronto Islands
62	Appendix
63	2025 Visitation Data
66	Literature and Report Summaries
71	History of Waterfront as a Venue
76	Aspirational Waterfront Cities
82	Events Listing for 2025, 2026
84	Acknowledgements
85	Disclaimer

Land Acknowledgement

The Waterfront BIA acknowledges that the land upon which we operate is the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13. In addition, the Waterfront BIA acknowledges that Toronto has historically been a gathering place for many Indigenous people including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples today.



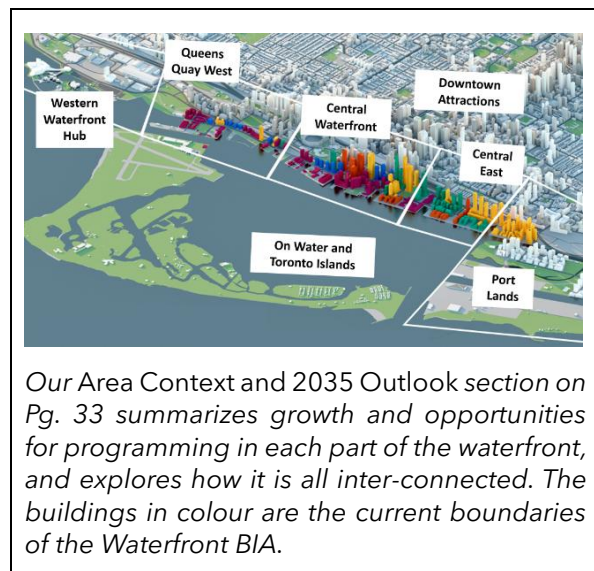
Executive Summary

ABOVE, LEFT: 'Water Wonders' floating art installation as part of Water/Fall Festival, 2025. ABOVE, MIDDLE: The rubber duck, Waterfront Festival, 2017. ABOVE, RIGHT: Singing Ambassadors, a Waterfront BIA program started during area construction in the mid-2010's. BOTTOM, RIGHT: Concerts in Toronto Music Garden by Harbourfront Centre, shown here at Water/Fall Festival, 2025.

Our goal with this review has been to look at the current status and growth trajectory of Toronto's waterfront as a location for events and activations¹, both big and small, and where our Waterfront Business Improvement Area (WBIA) can re-focus to be most supportive as a local partner (Pg.7). Along with many other waterfront stakeholders and members of our business community, we want Toronto to be recognized around the world as a premier destination 'waterfront city' in the future. That will mean being seen as active in all seasons, anchored by major attractions with recurring and community-scale programming in between, exciting things always happening on the water itself, easier to navigate, and supported by a coordinated set of partners who see the waterfront as a shared city-building (and event-building) platform.

The World Cup could be just the beginning for waterfront-wide events in Toronto

As we prepared this summary in early 2026, the various *activity hubs*² emerging along the water's edge in Downtown Toronto showed off their fast-growing potential. Exhibition Place featured the city's six World Cup games while The Bentway's site hosted the main fan festival. The Malting Silos area near the Island Airport on Queens Quay West had light shows and food markets around game days. There were World Cup banners all along Queens Quay and public fan zones at both the Harbourfront Centre and the George Brown Polytechnic campus. Along this waterfront corridor, The Bentway added lighting elements at two north-south underpasses for the first time, a part of their vision for improving under the highway often called a 'barrier to the lake.' On the east side of the harbour, a water shuttle service began dropping off visitors to a dock in Biidaasige Park in the new flood-protected Port Lands for the first time.



Evolving our role to support 'the best canvas in the city for events'

When the best event programmers look at Toronto, they think about the waterfront. If they don't, we should constantly be thinking about how we can help them see it as the best place to locate - to better tell the story about the opportunity, to help make it simpler to cross jurisdictions, or simply to help introduce them to the right people. The WBIA is a small operator on the central waterfront, but because we think so locally, we often see connections or gaps that others may be too big to focus on. In this complex multi-stakeholder

¹ See Pg. 12 for a description of how our organization defines events and activations.

² See Pg. 18 for a summary of how we use the term 'Activity Hub' for current and expected key areas of activation.

environment, we consistently hear that we're most effective as convenors and as barrier-breakers. A role we can continue to expand.

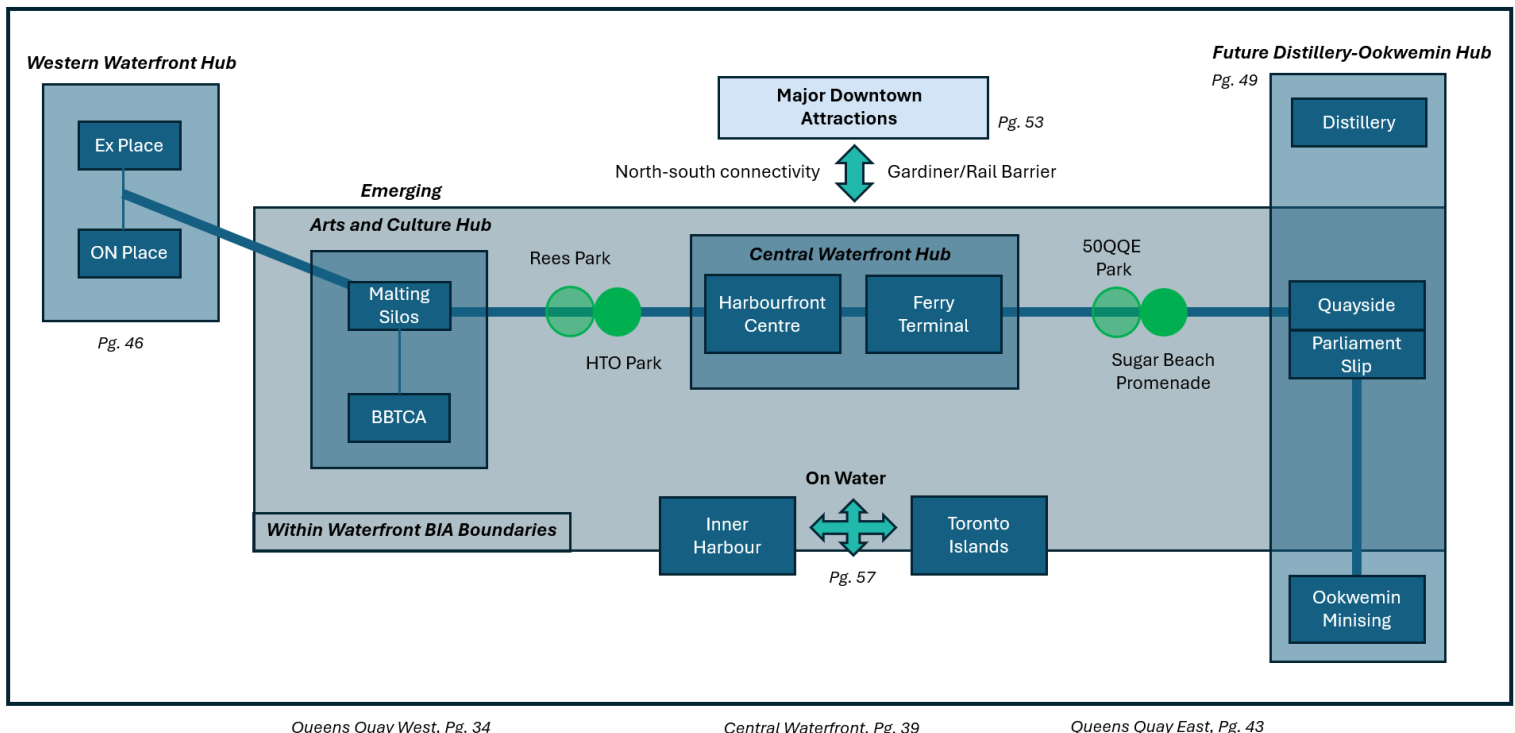
There are a lot of exciting changes coming to the water and this year was a good time for our organization to prepare for an evolution of our role in response to:

- Harbourfront Centre, the area's historic anchor for programming, has been more collaborative and open to working with partners outside its main site in recent years.
- Waterfront Toronto is preparing a Destination Development Strategy that will look at areas for new permanent attractions along the waterfront.
- Destination Toronto's new Master Plan highlights the potential for a 'signature shoulder-season event' across the water – a goal of ours is to have more events that are 'waterfront-wide' and encourage exploration.
- Expansion or modernization of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport could be a challenge, or a benefit, depending on whether its plans are integrated with an arts and culture hub emerging around its entrance where the Canada Ireland Foundation's Corleck Building just opened with programming this year.
- Construction will soon mean disruption along the central and eastern waterfront with the coming addition of the Waterfront East Rapid Transit network expansion. However, its completion will mean a better-connected waterfront-wide experience with the transit line now from Union Station westward to Exhibition Place adding a continuation eastward into the new Port Lands.

From single destinations to seeing the 'Waterfront City' as a system

Too often, Toronto sees its waterfront as one thing or another, and as the city grew that was true. Toronto Islands, Ontario Place, and Harbourfront Centre are all great destinations, all separate. All created or led by different levels of government.

BELOW: We are beginning to see the waterfront as a growing network or 'system' of inter-connected pieces that support events and activation as an ecosystem. Growing 'activity hubs' along an east-west corridor with significant assets north and south that have unique barrier elements between us and them.



With significant growth to date, Toronto's waterfront is no longer a collection of isolated event and activation sites. It is becoming a continuous destination system stretching from Exhibition Place and Ontario Place in the west through the Harbourfront Centre, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Jack Layton Ferry Terminal, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. As well as more than ten parks including landmarks on Queens Quay like Toronto Music Garden, HTO Park, Love Park and Sugar Beach. There are also sites that will still be developed to support a mix of both activations and more permanent attractions, including Quayside's Block 5 site for a 'Signature Structure,' and opportunities to increase the number of 'gathering places' and flexible large sites available for programming in the future, e.g. Rees Park plans and 50 Queens Quay East Park. These should all be considered in terms of how they can complement each other as part of a system.

The WBIA will continue to support 'waterfront coalition' conversations across stakeholders to encourage collaboration and the benefits of working together. In the 2024 report, *Ripple Effect: Unlocking Toronto's Waterfront Potential* by Business of Cities and the Toronto Region Board of Trade, the authors indicated this is often how major economic districts come together. There isn't always a grand plan from the beginning, but as separate entities grow closer to each other, they will all benefit from coming together around a shared vision.

It should also be noted that there has been progress in recent years toward the waterfront-wide events collaboration we aspire to support in this document. In 2024, the City of Toronto's Nuit Blanche had more than 30 installations along Queens Quay with sponsor or programming support from nearly all waterfront stakeholders and programmers. In 2025, the 'Water/Fall Festival' pilot collaboration had more than 15 partners on the water either programming or sponsoring events across two weekends. The aforementioned World Cup saw the waterfront corridor featured for more than a month this year. This is a strong base of collaboration and potential partners all working in the right direction – further growth will require stakeholder alignment that attracts the significant government and sponsor support that world-scale attraction events require (See Pg. 24 for examples).

What all this change means for the Waterfront BIA

"We have the visitors – now what do they do next" – this is what a member business said when we were discussing how we should approach evolving our role in support of events and activation. We'll continue to measure success based on how additional activation can assist in growing the waterfront as a premier destination attractive to visitors around the city and then the world, and how it helps to encourage exploration of the water east-west through our business community as a waterfront-wide experience.³

The strategy recommended here is therefore based on modest but important shifts in what our WBIA does. We are not a primary operator of major events – our advantage is different: we can fund more selectively, convene more ambitiously, encourage for protection and expansion of priority programming sites, improve the business case for funding of activation by others, and advocate for stronger alignment in the network of waterfront partners and stakeholders toward joint investments from governments here.

³ See Pg. 32 for details of how we measure success or track visitation.

AREAS OF RE-FOCUS

for the WBIA in support of Events and Activations

Building Collaboration Waterfront-Wide

Convening and info-sharing

Increase our hosting of meetings and sharing of information about waterfront events schedules and opportunities to collaborate.

More on Pg. 18

Immediate



Waterfront-wide strategy alignment

Encourage all stakeholders and programmers to work together on arts, culture and programming strategy and collaboration whenever possible, even informally.

More on Pg. 22.

Long-term



ABOVE: WBIA brought 150 stakeholders and businesses together to discuss World Cup preparedness along Queens Quay, 2026.

LEFT: The Bentway's 'Lake Story' procession of canoes and coloured flags showcased the potential to use the water for unique and compelling activation, 2025.

Advocacy for Event Spaces and Attractions



[Wiki Commons](#), [Flickr](#), [Marc Dalmulder](#)

VIVID Sydney, a multi-week shoulder-season event with significant government investment each year in Australia is a model our waterfront may follow.

Major shoulder-season event collaboration priority

Work with existing shoulder-season signature event steering committee (Destination Toronto, Waterfront Toronto and others).

More on Pg. 23.

Near-term



Nuit Blanche in 2024 had more than 30 installations across Queens Quay, including 'Closer Together' at Little Norway Park, a usually quiet residential park. For major events like fireworks or Nuit Blanche, it's best to have large 'gathering spaces' available for temporary accommodation of large crowds.

Protection of key sites for attractions and programming growth

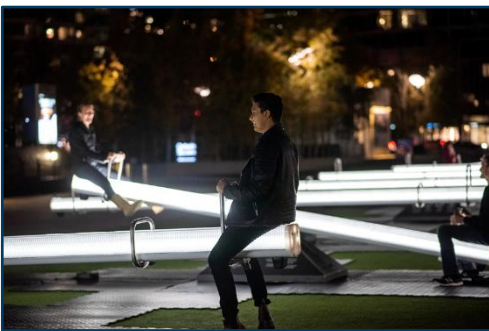
Support development of future permanent attractions and for park sites to maintain 'gathering space' potential for large-scale event opportunities (including toward Waterfront Toronto's Destination Development Strategy).

More on Pg. 26.

Long-term

Funding More Strategically

<i>Direct funding of events</i> BIA direct event sponsorship will decrease as other areas of what we do expand. We will focus on key areas: a few major draws or large audience events, local community events, and 'major event collaborations.' Immediate	<i>Support Harbourfront Centre's growth</i> Continue developing a relationship with Harbourfront Centre that encourages expanded utilization of their main campus, as well as additional events or activation extending from their main campus. More on Pg. 22. Near-term
<i>Priority market area support</i> Create annual funding formula to support priority market and event zones (e.g. HTO Park, Sugar Beach). More on Pg. 25. Near-term	<i>Local event partnerships</i> Support community groups interested in programming events themselves, e.g. office building tenants, residents. More on Pg. 30. Immediate



ABOVE: Three diverse examples of activations that received significant attention and interest on the waterfront in recent years: 1) 'Impulse' interactive see-saws, originally displayed in Montreal, were in Toronto for Winter Stations in 2019; 2) 'Global Convenience,' a Waterfront Toronto floating art project received international press and became a social media staple in 2026, and 3) Harbourfront Centre's Summer Music in the Park at the Music Garden has been a successful recurring event that shows growth potential outside its core season – the event was extended for a series of concerts as part of Water/Fall Festival in 2025.

Supporting Event Recruitment

<i>Location guides and permit playbooks</i> Share location, permit and approvals criteria for priority programming areas to help interested programmers locate here. More on Pg. 23 and 25. Near-term	<i>Highlight business case for large events</i> Support major event applications or bids, including city-wide. May include sharing area visitation data or assisting to host 'showcases' for waterfront events to potential funders. More on Pg. 23. Long-term
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WBIA BUDGET IMPLICATIONS AND MEASURING SUCCESS

The BIA should continue to invest in specific events, but with a tighter lens, fewer isolated one-off sponsorships and more support for activations that build waterfront identity. Our funding and stakeholder support lens should be to maximize the number of appropriate large 50k+ attendance events as well as 10k+ events between the major hubs in 'gap areas' where they can have the most impact. (See Pg. 25).

NOTE ON AREAS OUTSIDE THIS REVIEW

Two significant areas of current and emerging WBIA programs and initiatives are not evaluated in detail as part of this review. *Business promotion, a daily priority, and construction mitigation, an expected priority* as Waterfront East Rapid Transit begins to be built in coming years. Consideration of impacts on these two areas may be re-adjusted after completion of this Events and Activations Review. Our organization tends to re-define our priorities and any new programs or initiatives as part of our annual planning and budgeting process.

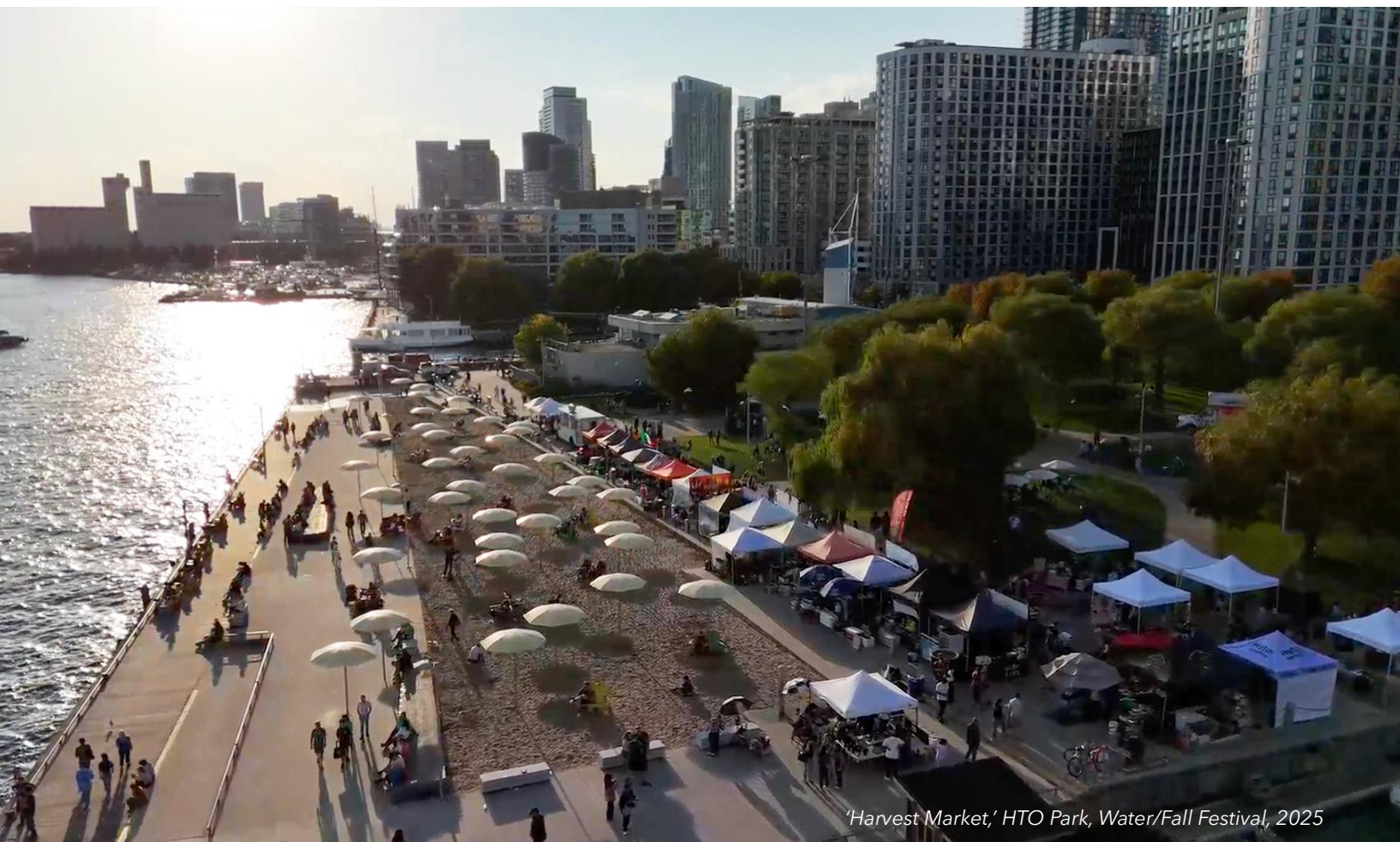
METHODOLOGY

The Waterfront BIA prepared a background document in January 2026 that highlighted the current events and activations status on the waterfront and our organization's involvement. We then summarized what we see as key challenges, opportunities and a list of questions for feedback on the current waterfront environment, its future growth, and where our organization believed we could be most valuable if we re-focused our strategy in support of events and activation. The background document was shared with those we consulted with, including early versions of the Area Context and 2035 Outlook section, and sections now in Appendix including a previous 2024 version of Visitation Data, History of the Waterfront as a Venue, Literature and Report Summaries, and Aspirational Waterfront Cities.

Our template for completing this review was our BIA's 2024 Waterfront Retail Review that our team developed to better understand the current retail situation, and to become better versed in where we could assist to make a difference in the near future. More than 60 businesses, stakeholders and event programmers met with us toward this year's effort, including groups of key stakeholder representatives for the hub areas for each of the Area Context and 2035 Outlook sections of our review on Pg. 33.

A draft of this document was shared with the WBIA Board of Management in April 2026 and the partners and stakeholders consulted have had a draft copy since a distribution for final feedback in June.

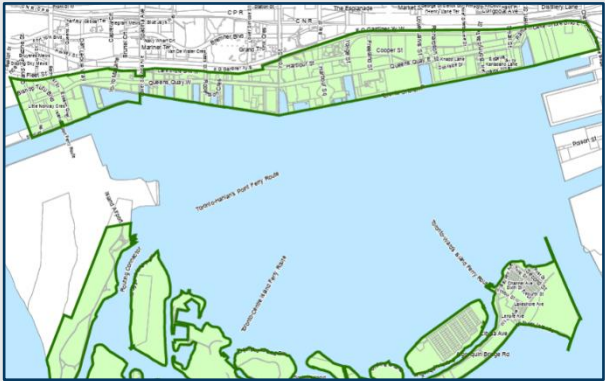
Thank you to all those who assisted with advice, feedback and ideas towards this review.



'Harvest Market,' HTO Park, Water/Fall Festival, 2025

About the Waterfront BIA

and the current events mix we are a part of

Organization	Collaboration
The Waterfront Business Improvement Area (WBIA) is an agency of the City of Toronto with programs and initiatives funded by a levy on all commercial and non-residential property and businesses within its boundaries (<i>below, 2026</i>).  The BIA reports to a Board of Management representing commercial properties and business tenants within its boundaries.	As a small organization, the WBIA's impact is strongest where we can align with and encourage joint support for priorities alongside a great number of 'waterfront coalition' partners operating on the waterfront. • City of Toronto • Waterfront Toronto • Harbourfront Centre • The Bentway • Toronto Port Authority • Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport • Canada Ireland Foundation • George Brown Polytechnic • OCAD
Mandate	
The WBIA supports the development of Toronto's waterfront as a premier destination that is well-connected to the rest of the city and beautiful, clean and vibrant all-year round. Our work is intended to support businesses, engage the community and unify the waterfront.	When these organizations all succeed, the WBIA's business community will succeed alongside them. (This list refers to BIA boundary stakeholders at present. The scope of this review will also include further 'collaboration zones' extended east and west of our core area)

How we currently define events and activations

Events	Activations	Placemaking interventions	Attractions
Specific new things to do for visitors, residents, workers or students <i>Ex/ Single day weekend markets or events, free hot chocolate or skates at a skating rink</i>	Semi-permanent or extended period events or installations <i>Ex/ Extended period markets, Music Garden performances, art installation programs</i>	Improvements in the experience of the waterfront <i>Ex/ Love Park chairs, wayfinding signage, 'World's Longest Pride Flag' walkway</i>	Permanent or multi-year extended-period <i>Ex/ Power Plant Gallery, Ontario Science Centre interim space, Corleck Building</i>
← BIA more likely to take on a role		BIA less likely to have an impact →	

How we currently support events and activation

Funding	Convening and Collaboration		Promotion
<i>Sponsorship of events with a priority on events and activation objectives</i>	<i>Occasional leadership or creation of events</i>	<i>Event collaboration meetings with area stakeholders and programmers to encourage coordination, joint-funding and strategic alignment to increase the overall impact of event and activation investments together.</i>	<i>Online promotion of all events on the waterfront on a daily basis. Media promotion where the BIA is taking the lead on an event or where we can promote 'waterfront-wide' exploration and engagement (rarely just one event).</i>

EXAMPLES: Waterfront events from recent years

Community-scale events

Focus on local residents, workday population, or simply providing more regular programming in more under-utilized areas.



Free skating days, Sherbourne



Paint nights, various parks



Yoga after work, 2024



Earth Day cleanups

Large event support

The WBIA regularly sponsors 'destination-scale' events with potential for significant visitation, as well as events in new parks and under-utilized programming areas.



NYE Fireworks, 1-day, 2023-2026



Dominoes (The Bentway), 2024, one-day



Smorgasburg market, multi-weekend, 2022-2023

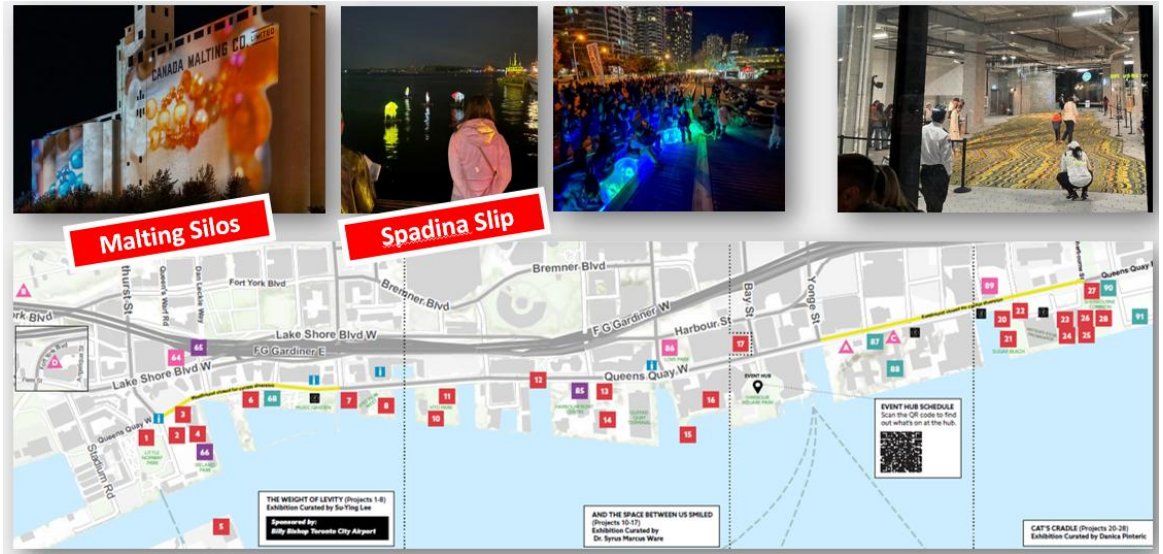


Waterfront Festival (Tall Ships, pictured) 2-days

EXAMPLES: 'Waterfront-wide' events from recent years

Nuit Blanche 2024

The City of Toronto's signature one-night event in Fall 2024 was the largest extended selection of activations at a single time ever seen on the waterfront.



Water/Fall Festival 2025

The WBIA helped with organizing a co-promotion and expansion of Fall programming by 15 area stakeholders and events.

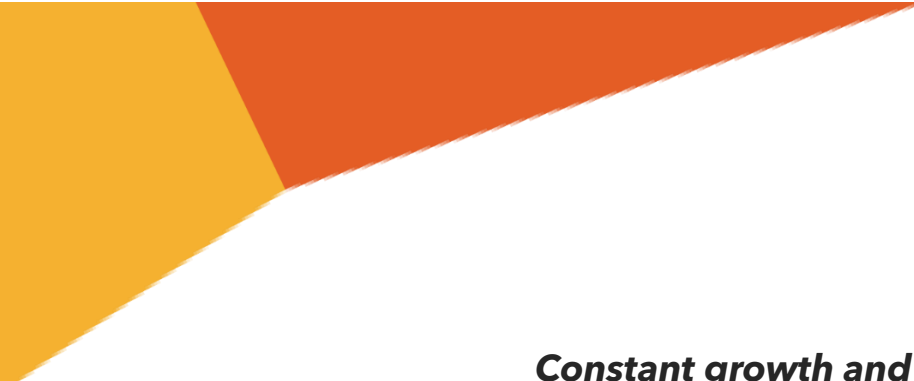
For two weekends, consistent activation was found across the western waterfront. More than 100,000 total visits were tracked.





'Toronto Made, The World in a City Illuminated,' 2026

Our Current and Evolving Context



Constant growth and change in “the most exciting neighbourhood on the continent”

The WBIA is completing this review in response to a number of current factors and conditions that are evolving in and around its core area, Queens Quay.

- Harbourfront Centre has been more collaborative and integrated with waterfront programming and planning in recent years.
- Significant new parks and programming spaces are opening, including in Ookwemin Minising and the Port Lands outside the BIA's current boundaries where our funding levy is received.
- Ontario Place and Exhibition Place areas to the west are expected to grow significantly as attractions.
- Major civic leadership organizations are evolving their own approaches to events and activation:
 - Waterfront Toronto, a tri-level government urban development corporation, is completing a “Destination Development Plan” to identify where additional four-season permanent attractions and destinations may be located in the future.
 - Destination Toronto's new master plan includes a significant focus on the waterfront as an attraction that can bring additional visitors to Toronto, including as a site for a potential signature shoulder-season event.
 - City of Toronto has prepared a Festivals Strategy to better support events.
- A funded plan for the expansion of the waterfront transit to the eastern waterfront and Port Lands will mean multi-year construction impacts, but then lead to a better connected waterfront-wide experience.
- Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport expansion will have impacts to the western waterfront area near it, but may also provide potential for investment and improvements toward retail vibrancy and arts, culture and recreation programming.

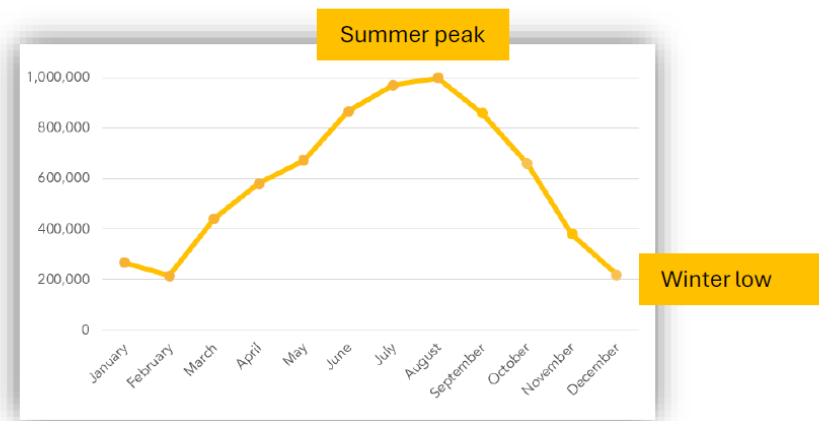
The key question for this internal review for the Waterfront BIA was: ***How can our BIA expand our impact in attracting and supporting an appropriate sequence of all-season activation that maximizes growth in visitation and utilization of the area in future years?***

CONFIRMING OUR ROLE

Our seasonal promotion strategy is considered appropriate

For the past two years, the WBIA has taken a more seasonal approach to thinking about where we can have the most impact in both promoting the area and our businesses, as well as where our support for events can have the most impact in drawing larger audiences. (2025 summarized at right)

In speaking with stakeholders, our seasonal approach to prioritizing ‘shoulder-season’ events was generally supported. One caveat was that we may be too focused on Fall in the last couple years, and possibly too dismissive of Winter programming opportunities.



** Total pedestrian traffic at three counters east-west at York, Simcoe and Spadina. WBIA pedestrian counters.

Current WBIA seasonal events vs. promotion approach, including suggested revisions

	Winter	Spring/Summer	Fall
Current	Limited events support due to difficulty of weather. WBIA focuses on promoting what has proven successful, e.g. NYE Fireworks, skating rink promotion.	Whole area is most active with events and WBIA limits its event support and sponsorship while maximizing our marketing and promotion campaigns.	Season that WBIA believes has the most potential to increase visitation. Currently a large budget item for promotion and staff time allocation for event collaboration.
Revisions	Interest in events-involvement only if city-wide, municipally-supported co-promotions were available.	WBIA move further into staff support for recruitment and location assistance to maximize event partner interest.	Continue encouraging strongest single-season push for a major waterfront-wide collaborative event.
	Overall: Remain focused on shoulder-seasons to directly get involved in recruiting and supporting large-audience events, ideally growing from one large ‘shoulder-season signature event collaboration’ in Fall to also work together with partners toward Spring.		

Expanding our role as convenor and gap filler

A core theme from discussions about the future of events was that the WBIA's efforts to convene stakeholders to discuss events, update each other, and encourage collaboration, are extremely valuable and had been impactful in recent years.

We tend to be the local stakeholder most likely to be "considering the whole map" (*below*) about the full potential of the entire waterfront – both within our BIA boundaries and in the seven to 10 kilometres of waterfront under significant re-development from Ontario Place and Exhibition Place, through our area, and heading east into the new Port Lands. One of our points of discussion with stakeholders towards this review was to explore the future of the implications of this area as a collection of 'activity hubs.' This is presented in significant detail in the Area Context and 2035 Outlook section and maps later in this document.

Overall, the WBIA should encourage all stakeholders to acknowledge that these hubs and their interconnected nature in future planning. The concept of defining activity areas of the waterfront as hubs has been used a lot in recent years, including by Waterfront Toronto in some of their interim use planning for sites along the water's edge.

Current expectations of 'hubs' of activity emerging along waterfront that the WBIA should view as 'collaboration zones'



The WBIA should continue to convene and support collaborative conversations both among these hubs as well as conversations about their connectivity, and how to 'fill gaps' in between them

(Orange, above)

- *Ontario Place and Exhibition Place* are not discussed publicly as a joint entity as they are managed by leadership in two separate levels of government. However, their significant growth potential as a major waterfront activity area would benefit from this collaboration, especially when it's acknowledged that the new Ontario Line subway will have a terminus there. This new transit hub will connect directly with the GO Train, Waterfront LRT and Martin Goodman Trail into downtown and the broader waterfront.

- *Malting Silos area* has already attracted exciting programming from some of Toronto's best arts and culture programmers, including Music Garden performances by Harbourfront Centre, the new Corleck Building that began programming this year by the Canada Ireland Foundation, as well as silos art and activation in recent years by the City of Toronto, OCAD U and The Bentway. The area has significant further potential due to the Spadina Pier/Marina Quay West and Portland Slip area, both envisioned to include expansions or improvements as both parks and programming spaces in the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan. Future expansion of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport will also provide potential funding or investment sources for future activation and vibrancy here.
- *Harbourfront Centre* has been a major hub of activity for 50 years on the waterfront, and as described in its own section below, has significant room for further growth both with larger facilities or activation on its main site, as well as expanding its presence as 'anchor' programmer to other parts of the growing waterfront.
- *Distillery-Ookwemin* refers to an area with major Waterfront Toronto projects both within and just outside the BIA's boundaries - Quayside, Parliament Slip and Victory Soy Mills within the BIA's existing boundaries, Distillery District just north of the Gardiner Expressway, along with the new parks on Ookwemin Minising that will be connected in 2028 by a pedestrian bridge back to Quayside. With the same owner/manager of Distillery District, Dream, also leading development of Quayside and the Victory Soy Mill Silos, it is expected this area will have strong north-south continuity of experience that hopefully builds on the success of Distillery.

Stakeholder conversations also showed significant potential for further collaborative conversations among the following groups ([Blue, above](#))

- *Downtown Attractions (and north-south barrier mitigation)*. We had very positive conversations with representatives of some of the largest attractions in the country just north of us. Attractions such as Rogers Centre, Metro Toronto Convention Centre, CN Tower and Ripley's Aquarium see themselves as wanting to be 'better connected to the waterfront' now that it is seen as an attraction itself. They aren't necessarily a collaborative partner for events due to their already significant scale, but in terms of improving wayfinding, signage and potential co-promotion of the entire downtown as a prime destination for visitors, there will be value for the WBIA to assist and support collaboration with these attractions alongside the other BIAs north of the Gardiner Expressway.
- *Toronto Islands and 'On the Water' businesses* - The WBIA has already convened industry working groups in the last two years to assist in encouraging both Islands businesses and the commercial boat operators to work together where it is mutually beneficial, and also to identify where the BIA can be aligned and most supportive. Events and promotion programs may grow alongside this collaboration.

Immediate goal

Expand our role as convenors or supporters of discussion to encourage programming partnerships and joint funding strategies. This includes encouraging collaboration with these groups:

- Waterfront-wide events planning group (existing)
- Toronto Islands Businesses (existing)
- Malting Silos area stakeholders (proposed)
- East Waterfront programming partners (proposed)
- Ontario Place/Exhibition Place (collaborate and support where possible)
- Distillery-Ookwemin partners (future)

THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Construction impact will be substantial into early-2030's

With the expansion of the Waterfront light-rail network from Union Station to the new Port Lands now funded, this will provide a major improvement to connectivity across the full extent of Queens Quay and beyond.

The late 2020's will be a period of consistent construction disruption.

- Queens Quay East rehabilitation for public realm improvements and transit expansion.
- Union Station to Queens Quay tunnel will be closed for as much as five years.
- Gardiner Expressway Rehabilitation will continue through late 2020's.

Mitigating construction impacts and promoting businesses being open and accessible through these construction periods will become a larger WBIA activation and programming focus this decade.



Gardiner rehabilitation will take place through 2020's.



2014 Queens Quay West construction, (coming again soon for QQ East)

Immediate goal	Near-term goal
Advocate for construction mitigation strategies in terms of retail and operations impacts.	Be flexible to adjust events and marketing to best support "we're open for business" message during construction.

Examples from 2010's WBIA programs and initiatives to mitigate construction impacts (2010's examples below)

- 'Singing Ambassadors' program for additional entertainment and assistance with directions, business promotion.
- 'Member Breakfasts' were hosted more often for information sharing in the past, and may be utilized for communications related to construction impacts.
- Savings card with participating businesses offering retail or service discounts.
- "Open for business" signage and advertising.



Neighbourhood stakeholder success provides new opportunities

Harbourfront Centre should be encouraged to grow its role outside its main site

As an entity created by the federal government in 1975 but made independent in 1990, Harbourfront Centre has focused primarily on its main campus in recent decades as significant development took place around it, including the multi-billion dollar projects of Waterfront Toronto, the tri-level government urban development corporation. They remained the busiest and best programmed site on Queens Quay by a significant measure, but did not consistently pursue opportunities to expand their mandate and geographic jurisdiction for programming and revenue sources. Their primary funding relationship has remained the federal government, and they also have collected revenue from city-owned parking lots that are slated to become parks (Rees and Marina Quay West), while another underground parking expansion was a major early project of Waterfront Toronto in the 2000's.

This is all to say that Harbourfront Centre's ability to expand its presence or jurisdiction to program additional parts of Queens Quay and the waterfront are a major opportunity to encourage and support. Since the pandemic, there has been a significant change and Harbourfront Centre's management approach has been more collaborative with area neighbours. While still needing to ensure success on their main site first, they have been expressing more interest in co-promotion with other events going on (which helps also to limit confusion about what's happening on the waterfront when events and promotion are not aligned). They've also been so successful in 2026 with adding significant sponsor and partner activation during the World Cup period that some of their site programmers from previous years have been displaced. However, this can be a benefit as they grow - if an activation is no longer able to locate on the Harbourfront Centre main site due to space constraints, our BIA or other waterfront stakeholders may be able to help those programmers find other locations, including the new parks nearby. This has happened twice in 2026 where events that were at Harbourfront Centre last Summer had a significant presence in other areas of the growing waterfront - a market re-locating to other park space, and a summer camp now in the Port Lands.

Numerous arts, culture, education, events and community groups to work with

The WBIA has always benefitted from being part of a large group of area stakeholders who we can partner with and support to increase the scale of overall programming in the area. Aside from the anchor Harbourfront Centre, as well as the Island Airport itself, The Bentway, one of the most creative and visionary programmers in the city, has a vested interest in programming along the Gardiner Expressway corridor that they plan to improve as an overall experience. The eastern waterfront has the Daniels Waterfront City of the Arts building with The Remix Project, as well as George Brown Polytechnic, MaRS and the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

The City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto are also key partners to work with to expand on their events presence and strategies, including the City's Economic Development and Culture Department's Special Events Division and the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department who have an interest in activating the Toronto Islands more through their new Islands Park Plan.

Immediate goal	Long-term goal
Continue exploring collaboration with Harbourfront Centre to partner on expanding their programming outside their main site where possible.	<i>Remain open to more formal collaboration with Harbourfront Centre as the 'de facto' tri-level arts, culture and recreation leader on Queens Quay.</i>

Increase engagement of premium activation programmers

With the World Cup being featured just west of our BIA in 2026, one issue we heard regularly is “why isn’t there a strategy to ensure the waterfront regularly features and attracts major events not just once, but over and over.” Events of that scale require government support and coordination, but there isn’t an existing framework to consistently support or encourage this recruitment.

One event that has recently explored a multi-year major event on the waterfront is SailGP, with a Toronto steering committee looking to locate the event over a weekend each Summer in the Inner Harbour. Over the years, discussion around potentially hosting the Summer Olympics or the World Expo in Toronto has assumed that each would require a significant presence along the waterfront, either at the not-yet fully developed Port Lands or in the Exhibition Place and Ontario Place areas.

The waterfront in its whole should be seen as Canada’s greatest canvas for world-scale events. This is another reason to encourage promotion of the waterfront as a ‘10-km waterfront city’ from Ontario Place/Exhibition Place in the west through the central waterfront and into the new Port Lands redevelopment. When you also factor in proximity to the ‘Downtown Attractions’ area of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and CN Tower, Rogers Centre, Ripley’s Aquarium, Scotiabank Arena and Union Station, our area is part of an even larger corridor at the very centre of the Canadian visitor economy.

It should also be noted that events such as the Canadian National Exhibition, or major conventions looking to grow their Toronto presence further around the MTCC, should see expansion along multiple sites along the waterfront as their growth area. Recent examples of this happening include the Shaw Festival locating at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto while their Niagara-on-the-Lake theatre is under renovation, and the Toronto International Film Festival is expanding their presence and looking at waterfront locations. The Ontario Science Centre is utilizing Harbourfront Centre as an interim location for at least five years while they build a new permanent facility at Ontario Place, but have also indicated there may be opportunities to explore a ‘satellites’ approach with multiple waterfront locations long-term, too.

Note on Waterfront Festival



An example of how the WBIA has evolved its events sponsorship and support is that the WBIA assisted to create the Waterfront Festival that is now operated by an independent entity, Water’s Edge Festivals and Events. Over time, the WBIA has been less involved directly with the event with the expectation that large-scale events like this will become more independently funded.

Immediate goal	Long-term goal
- Support Destination Toronto’s ‘signature shoulder season event’ goal on the waterfront in the future. - Location Guides and/or waterfront info packets developed by the BIA could be expanded with waterfront stakeholders for broader recruitment of events.	Track opportunities for major events that may be located along the waterfront and support their organizers or advocacy efforts where possible.

EXAMPLES: Large, world-class event models require significant government investment

Multi-week shoulder-season 'signature event'

VIVID Sydney

Multi-week event each Fall raises more than \$10m from government investors layered with additional corporate sponsors. The event now extends 7-km along their harbour and is utilized to promote visiting the country during their shoulder-season.



Quartiers des Spectacle

Montreal, Quebec: \$200m government investment over 20 years in Quartiers-des-Spectacles in Montreal. City events strategy expands events from this centre outward (e.g. Nuit Blanche, Just for Laughs, JazzFest). Winter lights festival Lumino has \$2m annual government funding.



A canvas for major international events

Sail GP currently has T.O. bid team and is looking to bring the world-wide event series to the Inner Harbour.

World Exposition

Large six-month event every five years with three-month interim events. Any bids would be highly focused on the water's programmable spaces. (Toronto stakeholders have been requesting Canada re-join Bureau International des Expositions). Osaka, at right.



Breaking down barriers to programming in priority areas

As our organization is small and focused on one neighbourhood – really just one street, Queens Quay – our team is able to become expert in ways our specific area functions. This includes assistance for others in events planning, recruitment, funding and operational requirements where our WBIA has historically been involved in events. Since the pandemic when events and activations stopped almost entirely, our current team has become more and more involved again in learning how to program and activate the area.

A few areas we've identified where we believe we can make the most impact in breaking down barriers to better program and increase vibrancy in our area:

"Market and event priority zones" – HTO Park and Sugar Beach/Water's Edge Promenade

Outside of the major activity hubs described already (and identified in yellow below), these two parks have been the most popular with event programmers in the past. Events or markets are very interested in the sites, and our team will become more adept at providing a 'playbook' to event planners to assist them to fulfill requirements for programming here.

The City of Toronto has expressed interest in working with the WBIA to better identify pathways to more regular programming. The City's Nathan Phillips Square and Mel Lastman Square have an events calendar approach where preferred programming periods are allocated first to the City of Toronto's special events, but then are made available to other event or market operators.

This may include the WBIA assisting to oversee an event calendar where certain weekends or key times at these "Market and Event priority zones" are available and the WBIA is available to help with streamlined permits and permissions. In 2025 and 2026, the WBIA set aside funds to sponsor markets for 'priority weekends' including the May Long Weekend, the FIFA period and for the Fall priority season, which we have used to better understand where our team can make the permits and permissions process more straightforward in the future.

With Harbourfront Centre now more collaborative with broader events planning, they have expressed an interest in programming their own events or markets in these priority parks outside their main site, too. They have a market operations team in place that the WBIA has looked to begin working with in 2026.



The two suggested "Market and event priority zones" for the WBIA to focus on programming are selected due to their prime locations in the 'gaps' between major activity hubs.

Immediate goal

- "Market location" funds and permit education assistance for key parks and major weekends.
- Develop 'playbook' or 'event calendar' approach with City of Toronto for key parks to be easy to activate by interested operators (*Sugar Beach and Promenade, HTO Park*).

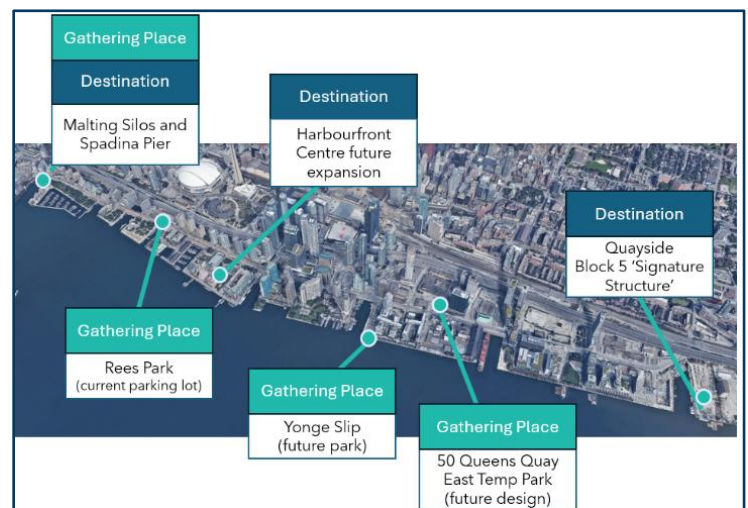
Protecting central waterfront sites as future attractions and as a 'canvas' for events growth

Gathering Spaces for expanding major events along Queens Quay

From what we hear regularly, event producers with great ideas see the whole waterfront as a perfect canvas for events. However, it can be difficult to understand the property ownership complexity, overlap or permissions required on the ground. We also heard that the central waterfront along Queens Quay does not have many actual 'gathering places' of significant size to sustain really large events. For example, NYE Fireworks are so busy at Harbourfront Centre, the City encourages people to view from other nearby parks.

Parks like HTO Park and Sugar Beach, while having designs that are iconic, have limited space for event programming flexibility with umbrellas in sand and hills/berms across a significant portion of their site. While designed to accommodate market stalls along walkways, this is a limited use more akin to community events or as smaller sites within a larger network of sites as part of a larger event.

For this reason, we believe that areas with re-development potential should be protected to have programmable 'gathering spaces' with large areas set aside for potential use in programming for large events in the future. These should be considered at the Rees and Yonge Street parks that will replace parking lots in the future, the 50 Queens Quay East site that is a temporary park awaiting a final design, as well as a part of Malting Silos and Spadina Pier plans.



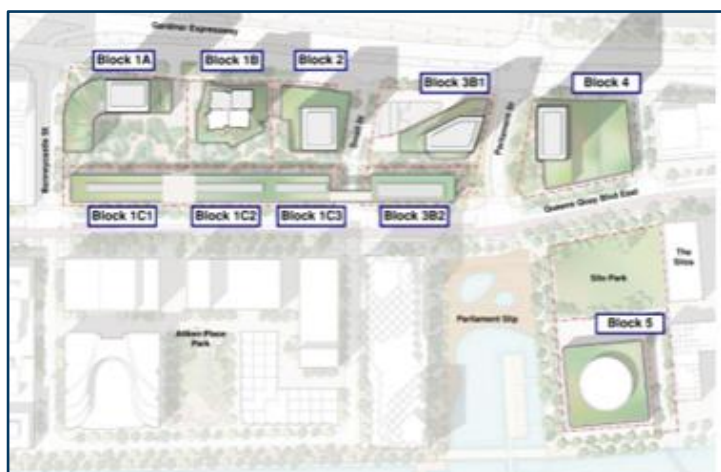
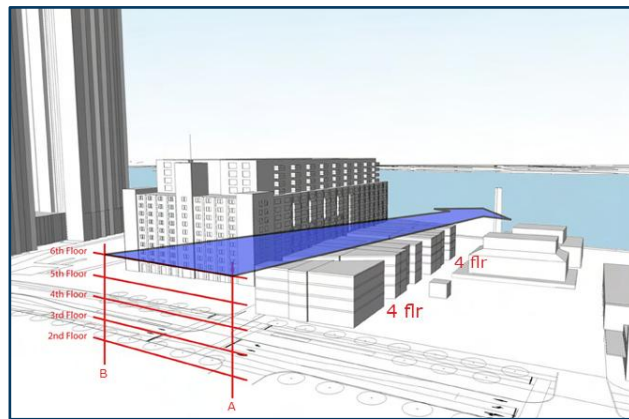
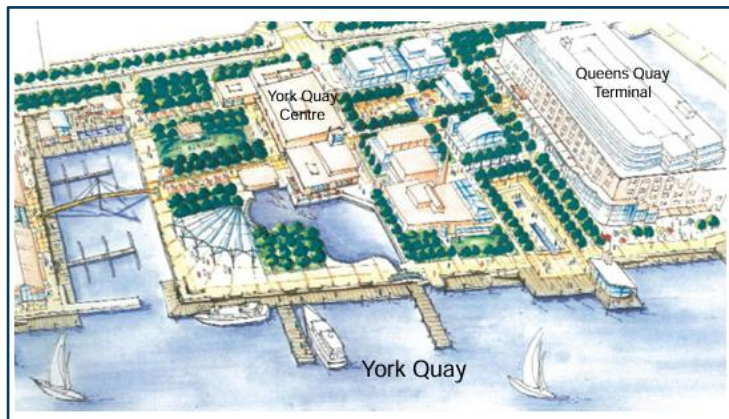
Sites expected to develop as new or expanded attractions or destinations

A welcome initiative this year has been that Waterfront Toronto is preparing a 'Destination Development Master Plan.' They will be looking at more long-term and permanent locations to protect for potential attractions and destinations that could be added to the waterfront.

The map above highlights major sites expected to be held or protected for attractions or destinations, including Quayside Block 5, which has always been held as a potential 'Signature Structure' at the east edge of the harbour. The Malting Silos and Spadina Pier area near the Island Airport may be at risk with significant re-development of the airport expected, and we will advocate for any expansion of the area around the airport entrance to enhance vibrancy of experience and support the area as a modest-sized programming and activation hub in the future.

Harbourfront Centre is also an area the WBIA believes to have significant re-development potential to add density of attractions and destination facilities. In 2026, temporary structures will begin being added for the next half decade for the interim site of Ontario Science Centre. That may be the beginning of a new approach for Harbourfront Centre to house 'travelling exhibits' in flexible spaces on the Harbourfront Centre as Toronto's downtown waterfront anchor. In the mid-2000's, Harbourfront Centre and Waterfront Toronto

explored as part of the York Quay Revitalization a potential four-storey “Cultural Village” facility to go above their then newly-developed underground parking lot.



ABOVE: At left, Harbourfront Centre’s 2000 Master Plan included redevelopment plans for additional structures where the green space ‘Exhibition Common’ is. At right, York Quay Revitalization plans in 2007 included a potential four-storey ‘Cultural Village’ on the site.

LEFT: Quayside plans include Block 5 held for a signature structure, ideally an attraction.

Long-term goal

- Support Waterfront Toronto’s ‘Destination Development Strategy’ for key sites with permanent attraction potential.
- Advocate for protecting Queens Quay ‘gathering space’ potential:
 - Harbourfront Centre further development, increased density
 - Rees Street Park (future)
 - 50 Queens Quay East Park (permanent design)
 - Signature Site at Quayside
 - Malting Silos area

Supporting sponsorship and philanthropy

We benefit from a very high interest environment for sponsors and philanthropy (but that can also create confusion as to what 'the waterfront' is)

There are multiple entities on the waterfront pursuing arts and culture grants, event sponsorships and even long-term philanthropic investments for capital projects. And major events that are city-wide or looking for a prime location are often interested in the waterfront.

This has significant upside. Our business community and BIA benefit greatly from what's already happening here, and for the amount of events funding we ourselves put in, there is a high ratio of additional investment in events beyond our own. As recently highlighted in the [Toronto Star](#), the Spadina-Harbourfront riding receives the second largest amount of arts funding from the Canada Council for the Arts. That's what you'd expect in the downtown core of the largest city in the country.

But there always seems to be a sense that the waterfront could 'be more' and could have more programming, more activations, more events and more attractions...

A lot of competition for funds means some will always be disappointed, and we've seen events that had local sponsorship decline in size due to competition from new exciting events and opportunities also being funded. For the large grants and government investment, there can be political opposition to additional funds coming to the busiest downtown ridings like ours. And there's also confusion as to 'what the waterfront is' when there are a lot of different entities pitching their waterfront projects to the same sponsors and philanthropic interests. To use one analogy we heard, "the waterfront has teams pursuing sponsorship individually, but it doesn't have the NFL managing a strategy for the whole league."

There are tremendous opportunities still to come

Discussions led to a number of positive aspects that the WBIA should encourage toward supporting our 'waterfront coalition' of stakeholders that are fundraising for events as well as more permanent improvements:

- Merging and consolidation of arts and culture entities has been a key theme in recent years as so many have struggled after the pandemic. The waterfront with a number of existing entities and key event sites, as well as the 'canvas' of the waterfront and water's edge has the perfect conditions to inherit the benefits of consolidation.
- "If there's a really big event pitch on the waterfront, sponsors will listen." When discussing the VIVID Sydney concept of a multi-weekend waterfront-wide event, it was indicated that especially if government investment was also secured, major sponsors would be interested. It should be noted that Harbourfront Centre has also had strong fundraising in recent years from both government and sponsors due to their newfound openness to new ideas and consolidation, e.g. Ontario Science Centre's interim site here has meant a significant new Province of Ontario investment.
- Some municipalities have successful programs of packaging their major events (both City-led and independent events) to pitch jointly to sponsors. The waterfront in some ways may evolve in this direction, but our municipality isn't focused only on our one area, and there is no entity managing the whole area.
- Large brands are now headquartered on the waterfront, or nearby, and they're the most likely to want to have a strong brand presence on the waterfront. New events and new ideas may attract their interest. It was indicated that too often the CSR departments are engaged on waterfront events or

initiatives when it's the marketing departments that would be most interested in the large audience potential of the waterfront.

- The waterfront has "removing an irritant" potential, which sponsors are often engaged on, e.g. sponsoring free or discounted access for an event, water shuttles, bike access, or parking.
- 'Celebrity sells' and there will likely be interest from key people expressing interest in the waterfront for their events.
- Our boat industry may become more interested in event collaborations or promotions they jointly fund in the future. This is the most aligned industry, and with the significant growth of water taxi passengers since the pandemic, it's an industry that will grow in both scale and ambition in the future.

New ideas should be welcomed

Multiple signature events in Toronto have struggled to draw or maintain sponsor investment in recent years. We heard regularly that there is interest and excitement for new concepts for events, and the WBIA should encourage and support re-thinking event partnerships and leadership models alongside mergers and consolidations.

Our role to support fundraising for all (without getting in the way too often)

The ultimate goal for the waterfront could be to pursue a waterfront-wide arts, culture and programming strategy, but that also has its own limitations. At present, with so many separate entities pursuing investment in events and activations, our area may actually attract more total investment than if one entity or a single joint-strategy took precedence. There will always be adjustments in who and where funds come from and where they go to, so the WBIA's role should be to remain flexible to support the evolution of what works best for both events programmers and their investors over time.

As a sponsor ourselves, we often look to align with other supporters to maximize our own investment impact, but we'll have to be cautious not to get in the way at times, too. We don't often directly look for sponsorship funds ourselves, unless it's with some of our local partners we have a history of working with. We also don't work directly with one business on large events, but often offer that if multiple stakeholders and/or businesses are working together, that would enable us to contribute funds as it's not one but many stakeholders we're supporting.

Immediate goal	Near-term goal
Continue sharing data on visitation, demographics and visitor profiles that area fundraisers can utilize.	Soft-advocacy for a waterfront-wide arts, culture and programming strategy. Fundraising support for others may include: 'Showcases' or brochures of waterfront coalition partner projects for prospective sponsors or philanthropists.

'A balanced waterfront' with community events, too

The waterfront is a truly mixed-use neighbourhood with visitors, workers, students as well as residents all in large numbers. It's important to remember that while we wish to have more regular programming in all-seasons across the growing waterfront, it's important that events can't fill every day or every weekend in every park. A balance will be required to accommodate the waterfront's role as a great place to live, too.

Another way our organization has been able to build relationships with local residents in particular has been to remain open to sponsoring local 'community-scale' events. This has recently included a community centre movie night, free skate rental days, community clean up days, and free ferry tickets provided to multiple groups organizing beach days at Hanlan's Beach. Ideas we've heard from resident groups from discussions about this review have included: local artist events or art-making parties, children's activities in parks, dance lessons, and live music featuring local musicians.

There are three highly active and engaged resident groups along Queens Quay: the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Association (BQNA), York Quay Neighbourhood Association (YQNA) and East Waterfront Community Association (EWCA). These groups have all expressed interest in programming their own events, and the WBIA should look to sponsor one or two of their ideas per year in order to harness their energy to activate the waterfront more often for residents, too.

While we have already sponsored some resident-led ideas recently, we would look to be equal and fair in supporting each of them more directly in the future. Encouraging them to utilize community-event funds in the area would also further assist the WBIA to reach residents with our seasonal marketing and communication updates.



Skate Days at Sherbourne Common, 2024-2026.



Yoga in the Park, Water's Edge Promenade, 2024



Earth Day Cleanup, 2024-2026.

Immediate goal

Set aside dedicated 'community-scale' event funds for organized residents in East Waterfront, York Quay and Bathurst Quay (\$10k per group).

Supporting our Businesses as part of Events

When speaking with our businesses about events, we often hear questions or concerns about whether local businesses will not just benefit from an event but also whether they'll have any opportunities to participate or be promoted. This hasn't been our focus with events, as we see the WBIA's role as looking to bring events to the waterfront to increase overall visitation that local business can then take advantage of.

We used this review as a way to hear feedback about where we could improve in supporting businesses:

- *Having a brand presence or table set ups at area events is difficult to secure* from organizers as they often look to sell that presence to a vendor or sponsor, but local businesses expressed that even being able to have a brochure or signage about what's nearby would also be of assistance.
- *Instead of food market competition, groups of businesses may take on events management themselves.* The challenge of food market events being seen as competition for local businesses is highest in Queens Quay East, and in their section of this document the WBIA recommends working directly with some of the local restaurants to program markets or events in that area as they are most interested to take a lead.
- *Best practice heard from feedback for business engagement for events.* In advance of events, other neighbourhood business groups or event organizers reach out to local businesses and offer a social media toolkit to promote themselves as part of the broader event. Signage with event branding can also be allowed either on storefronts in advance and during event days. Requests of businesses for gift cards or giveaways to promote as part of the event are also an option.

It should be mentioned the WBIA has other business promotion outlets and initiatives that are outside the scope of this review, including a seasonal strategy to utilize:

- Social media presence with 100k+ followers we promote businesses through.
- Website blogs highlighting various experiences or business categories.
- Media pitches, earned and sponsored, often highlight experiences on the waterfront.
- eNewsletter with 5,000 subscribers distributed quarterly.
- Community communications examples have included store window signage, takeaway brochures or maps to giveaway in stores (sometimes in partnership with Harbourfront Centre).

More long-term or depending on needs through upcoming construction periods, the WBIA may also consider a return to promotion campaigns that have been run before:

- Training for businesses in social media or other new techniques at business promotion.
- Many businesses mentioned 'passport' type systems to promote visitation of multiple experiences or businesses. In the past, the WBIA had a 'Waterfront Wednesdays' promotion was utilized in 2023-24 to encourage Spring visitation, including the ability for businesses to sign up to offer a special experience or discount.

Measuring success

“Did our event have an impact” is a common question for BIAs like ours, and answers are often complicated. Events can sometimes have astronomic visitor counts, but both event organizers and Police may share numbers that appear inflated compared to relatively stable pedestrian counts where we emphasize the importance in tracking east-west exploration. Even with large crowds on a weekend, for instance, our BIA member businesses may shrug as the offices are closed on weekends and local food service retailers may see the event actually drawing people away from their own business if it has a market or food component.

On the more positive side, a park space that is more well-used due to recurring events or activation can increase the perception of safety and encourage longer and more regular visits from customers for our businesses.

Another challenge for the WBIA in particular is that we historically do events when they may not be as popular – during the off-seasons, and in more under-utilized areas of the waterfront. This does allow us to often show an impact when a slower or new park is very easy to quantify as busier when we program it than a location like Harbourfront Centre or the Ferry Terminal where nice weather is going to draw a large audience regardless of an event there or not.

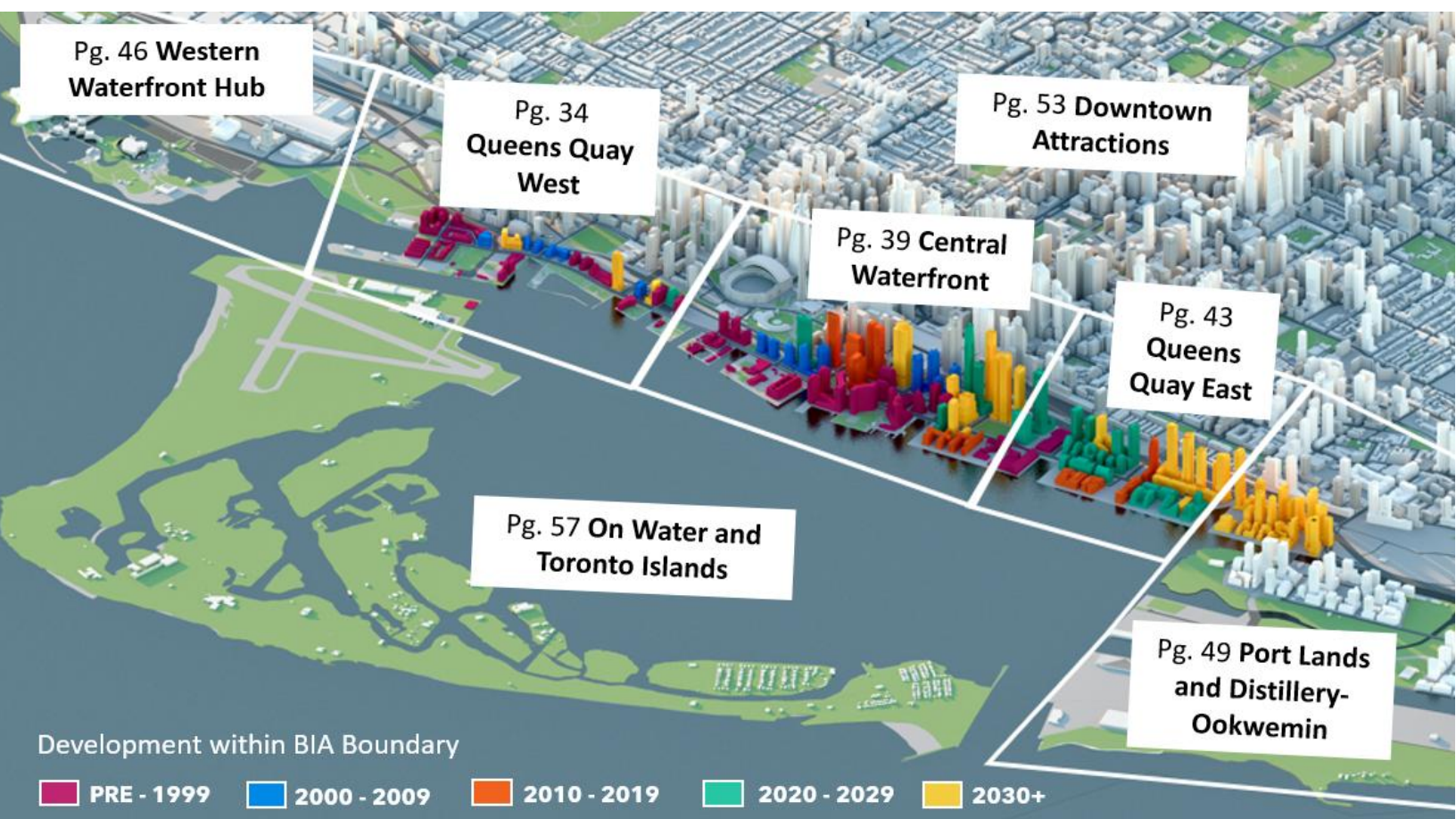
The WBIA does have methods of tracking below, but for more sophisticated data sets (like Environics footfall) we have partnered with other waterfront stakeholders to share costs for information we all benefit from.

Key areas of measurement and evaluation:

*Do our businesses see an impact from events hosted in the area?
Is our investment in events being expanded upon by other investments?*

Current:

- Crowd size estimates:
 - 50k+ destination-scale, 10k+ draws for under-utilized or gap area parks, and even 100+ for local events.
- *Follow on revenue tracking* (WBIA return on investment):
 - Tracking if \$1 of WBIA event funding is matched by at least \$1 from others, which we internally track as follow-on revenue.
- *Pedestrian counters* measuring east-west traffic and exploration on the south side of Queens Quay:
 - (Bathurst, Spadina, Rees, York, Lower Jarvis, Parliament – and Bay Street counts north-south)
- *Surveys (Visitors, or by observation):*
 - Satisfaction (0-10)
 - Visitor Spend
 - Regional and International Visitation
 - Dwell time or number of attractions/sites visited
 - Repeat visitation
- *Surveys (Businesses):*
 - *Did events have an impact on your business: higher/lower than previous weekend, year.*
- *Environics Footfall and Visitor Demographics by area*
- *Brand impact*
 - *Earned media or paid media impressions.*
 - *Social media reach (or Influencers), organic or paid.*



Area Context and 2035 Outlook

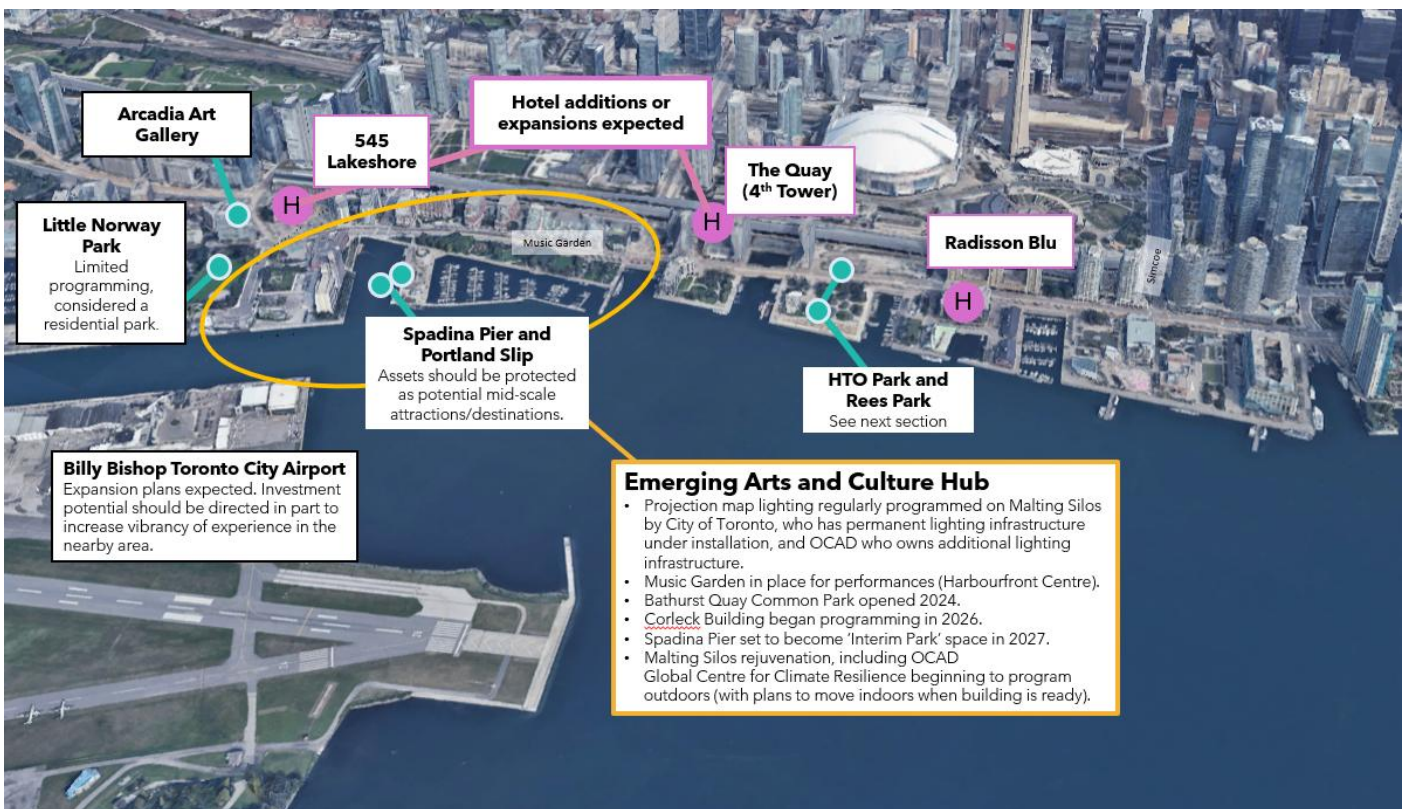
This section includes maps summarizing current and future development or growth factors that will impact events and activations in and around the Waterfront BIA. Recommendations are included for each area where the WBIA should advocate or engage with its programs and initiatives.

QUEENS QUAY WEST

Stadium Road to Rees Street

WBIA Area Priorities for Activation

1.	<i>Convening goal:</i> Support strong programming collaboration interest across area stakeholders.
2.	<i>Advocacy goal:</i> Support for investment in the area as 'emerging arts and culture hub' in City of Toronto and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport planning.
3.	<i>Recurring activation goal:</i> Music Garden performance expansion, independently or as part of #2 above.
4.	<i>Permanent improvement goal:</i> - Spadina Pier and Portland Slip as part of 'emerging arts and culture hub' should be protected as programming spaces or sites open for new attractions, destinations. - Peter Street Basin. (Rees Park considered in next section)
5.	<i>Community-event relationship goal:</i> Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre and Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Association.



Key Challenges

This area is quieter from an activity as well as retail vibrancy point of view than the central waterfront due to its distance from the Harbourfront Centre programming anchor as well as being further from downtown in general. Compared to Queens Quay East that has more remaining development potential, this area in the west has a more narrow band of buildings between the Gardiner Expressway and the water's edge was developed in an earlier era with lower density of not just residential but also commercial and retail space. Queens Quay West is expected to remain the most residential and limited for activation in the future of the waterfront's development along the street as there are limited opportunities for significant new attractions and destinations. However...

Key Opportunities

Queens Quay West has a more quiet but consistent 'water's edge walk' and the highest potential for this neighbourhood is to build on the beginnings of an arts and culture hub here. This already includes the Music Garden Park where there are wonderful music performances programmed by Harbourfront Centre, the Corleck Building with the Canada Ireland Foundation that began programming this year. The Spadina Pier (Marina Quay West), Portland Slip and the Malting Silos are all planned for improvement, and the silos are already rejuvenated and regularly lit up with projection mapped lighting by the City of Toronto and OCAD. The area includes the new Bathurst Quay Common park with moveable furniture. More potential is ready to be unlocked with the Spadina Pier slated to become an 'Interim Park' in 2027 with both Harbourfront Centre and The Bentway interested in programming there.

Another major factor that should be directed to support activation of the area is any further expansion of the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. Changes to the airport's operations will likely include major impacts to the entranceway area in and out of the airport. Any re-development should be utilized and coordinated to support both permanent improvements nearby and long-term dedicated funding streams in terms of the airport's community-impact. Coordination and alignment around a joint vision across multiple stakeholders will be critical.

The area also has potential for increased vibrancy that is aligned with re-development. Two sites west of Rees are likely to include a hotel: 545 Lakeshore at the entrance to the airport, the corner of Bathurst and Queens Quay, and a fourth tower expected with the development of The Quay residential and mixed-use building surrounding the Peter Street Basin (where there is currently a parking lot on the site's west edge). The Peter Street Basin itself, while not likely an area that will have significant activation or events, is a prime site for potential permanent improvements in a creative way, e.g. new walkable docks complimenting the area as a retail/café space, and enhanced greenery.

Note on Waterfront BIA boundary extension possibilities

Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport property does pay a commercial property tax on property valued at approximately \$100 million, and if that amount of new property was added to the Waterfront BIA, it would increase our levy only about 3-4%. The airport provides additional funds in a per-passenger fee to the City of Toronto that our WBIA would not be eligible to collect on at present. As with other potential 'collaborative areas' mentioned in this report, expanding the WBIA's boundaries is not seen as being as valuable as developing partnerships and potential cost-share or joint advocacy goals with nearby stakeholders related to events and activation. The island airport has been a regular sponsor and supporter of events and activations, for instance, which we will further encourage.

Context for area development and activation potential

<i>Little Norway Park</i>	Considered a residential park at present and not regularly programmed. More likely to be utilized by the local resident's association, but also has been seen as an occasional 'gathering place' for larger events, e.g. the City-run Nuit Blanche activation along the waterfront in 2024.
<i>Arcadia Art Gallery</i>	Community-run gallery in apartment building that regularly features art, community workshops and events.
<i>Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre</i>	Includes a basketball court that is something of an event in itself locally. Their property includes programmable rooms and a small outdoor space on a prominent Queens Quay location at the Portland Slip that can compliment other event and activation plans in the surrounding area. The WNC is celebrating their 35 th anniversary in 2026.
<i>545 Lakeshore</i>	This private property, most recently utilized as a parking lot and shelter, is the only significant site with re-development potential that could provide significant increased retail vibrancy. The WBIA expects that a hotel could be part of development proposals, and will strongly endorse and encourage both hotel-use as well as retail and restaurant options here.
<i>Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport</i>	Expansion will have significant impact on the Bathurst Quay area. If re-development of areas around the airport entrance are appropriately coordinated with a plan to enhance the area as an arts and culture hub, there is substantial opportunity to improve area activation, programming and vibrancy of experience (including retail and restaurant improvements nearby). The airport and its key stakeholders have been regular sponsors of events and activation, and have also regularly programmed the airport tunnel and terminal spaces with public art. Their potential impact as a dedicated funding group towards more consistent programming and a dedicated 'area arts and culture hub plan' has been under-utilized to date and should be encouraged with any re-development or expansion. Airport expansion may also open up opportunities for additional 'promotional partnerships' with other cities and their attractions or events over time.
<i>Malting Silos area - emerging arts and culture hub</i>	We will emphasize the importance of thinking of this area as one opportunity by keeping its many elements in one section here. The WBIA's primary goal in this area will be to support convening and collaborating with this group of sites and key stakeholders maximize the potential for the area, and also to encourage the City of Toronto itself to take a lead in supporting a joint vision for the area as an arts and culture hub. The City of Toronto's Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan did highlight the area described here as a "Community and Cultural Hub." • Music Garden Park is already a hidden gem and small-scale attraction, especially when programming with concerts in the Summer by Harbourfront Centre with support from the City of Toronto. This successful recurring series could be expanded or extended to increase vibrancy of the area (as it was for the 'Water/Fall Festival' over two weekends in 2025).

- **Corleck Building** developed and now managed by Canada Ireland Foundation will be a four-season programming site as well as event hosting venue. The site is surrounded by the new **Bathurst Quay Common** park with moveable furniture.
- **Spadina Pier and Portland Slip** were slated to become a new 'Signature Park' including part of the slip being filled in, but that plan from a previous Mayor's term was put on hold. Spadina Pier will become an 'Interim Park' in 2027, which will be a great opportunity to test out and explore programming ideas to learn what works best in the area. Two of the waterfront's top programming organizations have both expressed a strong interest in staying involved with this site: the Harbourfront Centre, who previously operated the now-closed parking lot, and The Bentway who have major sites they already program just north of here along their expanding corridor of improvements and programming heading east from their main site at Fort York.

These sites should be protected as potential sites for permanent attractions or destinations.

In the interim, Portland Slip itself had a private operator developing multiple business and attraction ideas along a dock until 2025. The creative use of the space provided evidence of the higher-potential for the space, including water taxi docking, a pirate-themed boat tour experience for kids and a café with Muskoka chairs. The WBIA should continue to encourage and support the City of Toronto to engage creative and entrepreneurial operators in under-utilized spaces like this.

Canada Malting Silos have been maintained and re-vitalized in recent years by the City of Toronto to be available for better use in the future. Projection mapped lighting has regularly been done by The Bentway, OCAD and the City of Toronto multiple times in recent years. The City of Toronto has permanent lighting infrastructure now installed, and OCAD owns additional projection mapping infrastructure. (The WBIA worked with the City in 2021 to develop a vision for projection mapped lighting around the Silos, including permanent infrastructure requirements to ensure key locations for lighting were protected).

OCAD has an agreement with the City of Toronto to program around the silos with a plan to also program inside once improvements are made.

Long-term, it is often discussed locally that the top of the silos may be an opportunity to create an event venue and/or restaurant.

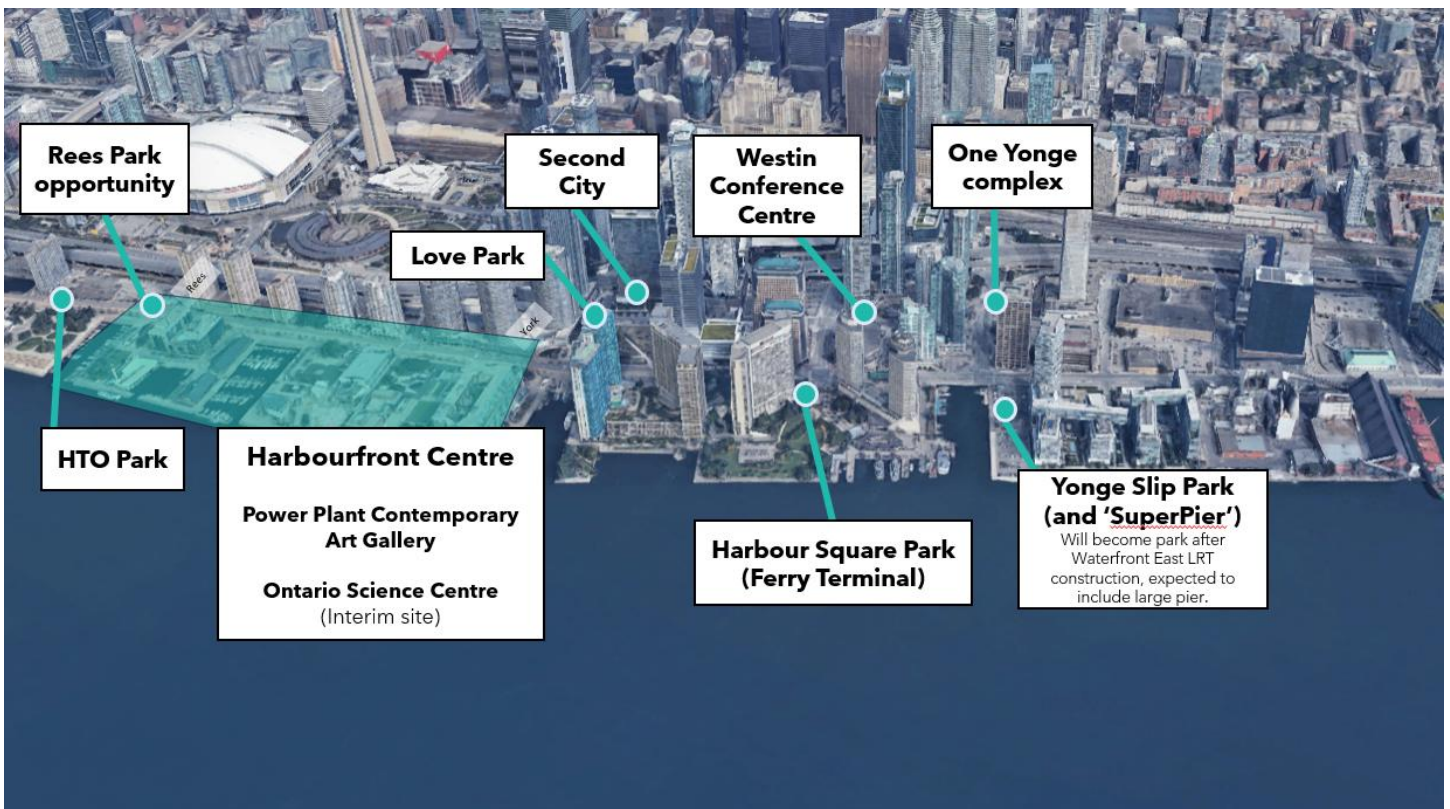
<i>Peter Street Basin and The Quay</i>	The WBIA sees this site not as a regularly programming area for events, but as having potential for more permanent improvements that could complement area activation. This water lot, the only lake water extending north of Queens Quay along the Inner Harbour, has been a challenge due to low interest from all involved stakeholders (The Basin and surrounding walkway are a City of Toronto park, not a private property, and the Toronto Port Authority has jurisdiction over the water). In its 2024 Waterfront Retail Review, the BIA stated that if there was not an appropriate improvement plan for the basin, it should be filled in. However, with redevelopment of the third residential tower and the opening of retail again around the Basin's edge, the private property has renewed interest in maintaining and improving the site and improvements appear more likely. There are also multiple University of Toronto-led cleaning programs for the basin, and this renewed attention has led to other improvements being discussed by a working group of related stakeholders. The WBIA will continue to encourage and support these discussions as needed. This includes the City of Toronto working to improve a work of permanent public art at the site that needs revitalization. It should be noted this site on the north of Queens Quay has an additional 'north-south-barrier' issue where it is not easily visible from the busier south side of Queens Quay. Any re-development or improvements should be partnered with improvements to signage visible from the south side of Queens Quay encouraging a crossing of the street.
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CENTRAL WATERFRONT

Rees Street to Yonge Street

WBIA Area Priorities for Activation

1. **Advocacy goal:**
Encourage and support expansion of Harbourfront Centre both on its own site and in expanding programming to other sites (*ideally as part of a 'waterfront-wide' culture and programing strategy*).
2. **Advocacy goal:**
Protect gathering space opportunities nearby for larger event opportunities that complement major events built around Harbourfront Centre (*Rees Park, 50 Queens Quay East Park*).
3. **Market and event priority zone: HTO Park**
Priority to recruit and support events for the WBIA due to its location between larger hubs.
4. **Community-event relationship goal:**
Love Park and Harbour Plaza as community or tenant-event support areas. Local business tenants and the York Quay Neighbourhood Association have interests in local programming.



Businesses in the area around Harbourfront Centre have the least opinions and suggestions around additional events and activations because they benefit more from that anchor's activity than any individual or separate events the WBIA is more directly involved in. They're usually more interested in crowd management and how they can be better promoted as part of the experience in the busiest part of Queens Quay.

Key Challenges

This area built around the waterfront’s programming anchor Harbourfront Centre and the Ferry Terminal has always been, and will likely remain, the busiest and most active part of the central waterfront along Queens Quay. The greatest chance for success across Queens Quay in general is in better supporting Harbourfront Centre’s continued success and further advocating for the expansion of their programming. At the very least, their programming is an anchor that organizations like our WBIA complements with our timeline for programming and funding of additional events. At best, organizations like ours and others would support Harbourfront Centre in jointly advocating for waterfront-wide arts and culture programming together.

Key Opportunities

Harbourfront Centre historically was a more limited partner in aligning with and supporting activation in new parks and public spaces as Queens Quay had grown, but this has been changing since the pandemic. While they’re still focused on their core site and its success first, they have been increasingly more open and collaborative with other stakeholders. Their success in the last two years has even provided opportunities for other new programming sites on the waterfront – a market company originally attracted to the waterfront by programming Harbourfront Centre is now interested in doing events in other parks, and a summer camp displaced by a larger activation is now located in the Port Lands.

The biggest opportunity will be to encourage a ‘waterfront-wide arts, culture and programming’ alignment strategy, whether officially or just informally, to maximize overall funding potential of the area. This would have to recognize the historical success of Harbourfront Centre and Ferry Terminal as major draws while incorporating the broader concept of growing into the ‘world-class waterfront city’ more broadly across the scope of the waterfront considered in this report overall.

Building on Harbourfront Centre’s success in collaboration with them also includes other areas of the WBIA’s programs and advocacy, including wayfinding and signage, co-promotion and cross-promotion in marketing and social media efforts.

Context for area development and activation potential	
HTO Park (West of Rees, but best to consider as an area to compliment this central activity hub) Smaller HTO Park West we consider a secondary extension of the core HTO Park as a programming entity, not a core area to program.	Market and event priority zone for WBIA to support. Proposed as one of two “market and event priority zone” areas (along with Sugar Beach/Water’s Edge Promenade on Queens Quay East) for the WBIA to prioritize as an event space complimenting activity at the ‘hubs’ of Harbourfront Centre and the Malting Silos east and west of it. The WBIA should also work directly with the City of Toronto to make it as easy as possible for interested events to operate here, ideally as a ‘managed schedule’ of appropriate periods for more regular events. The City of Toronto takes a managed calendar approach to key programming spaces at Nathan Phillips Square and Mel Lastman Square, and have expressed interest in discussing options for waterfront parks with the BIA. This park has proven itself as a high-potential draw for markets and events, including the Harvest Market over two weekends in 2025 with Street Eats as part of the Water/Fall Festival collaboration when it was the busiest event component over two weekends and took advantage of large crowds nearby for Blue Jays games.

	This park is also deemed most likely to support alcohol-permitted events as an area that may be possible to be gated. As an example, Winnipeg's The Forks culture and programming centre's property recently received a blanket alcohol-permit.
Rees Park	Protect as 'gathering place' with large events and activation potential. Currently a parking lot with Harbourfront Centre collecting revenue, but planned to become a park. The WBIA should propose this area be protected as a potential 'gathering space' park with highly-flexible layouts that can accommodate a number of uses. The WBIA has shared feedback with the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department that the area around this park has very limited space for further development or event and activation space, and that an ambitious use of the space for flexibility as part of events and for all-season commercial activation should be considered. The site is very close to some of the largest attractions in the country and seeing the site as a programmable area to compliment them should be a priority with any re-design - Harbourfront Centre, Rogers Centre, CN Tower, Ripley's Aquarium and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre are all within a five minute walk of this site. <i>As of July 30, 2026, an Aquatic Centre for the site was announced by the local Councillor with limited detail. Public or stakeholder consultations have not provided updates or feedback opportunities since late 2024, but comments from the Councillor and PF&R recently have indicated that there may still be room for additional park space with programming potential around any aquatic facilities and that consultations/updates will be shared in Early 2027 about the re-development process.</i>
Harbourfront Centre	By far the most significant and regular programming space on the central waterfront, including the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, an interim site for the Ontario Science Centre, and multiple performance spaces and programming spaces for all-seasons. This is the biggest draw for potential sponsorships and partnerships on the waterfront, and with continued success drawing more ambitious partners, the WBIA encourages Harbourfront Centre to not see the rest of Queens Quay as competition and instead see it as a further canvas to expand on their programming and sponsorship and partnership opportunities, e.g. if a market company or event approaches Harbourfront Centre for a time-period their primary spaces are fully booked, the WBIA or other partners may be able to support finding additional locations nearby. Long-term, it must be noted that the site is under-developed compared with the density in other parts of the waterfront. The Ontario Science Centre's interim five-year presence may be seen as a test for attracting major travelling exhibits in new facilities. The WBIA should encourage and advocate for the re-development of parts of the Harbourfront Centre site to include expanded facilities that can accommodate larger attractions, including potentially on a rolling interim basis, e.g. internationally-known institutions like the Louvre or the Egypt Museum tour exhibits around the world in multi-year timelines, and a flexible exhibition space on the waterfront in Downtown Toronto could be a very attractive location. In reference to the larger role for Harbourfront Centre as the waterfront's 'anchor programmer' with room to grow, a mid-2000's plan to develop on top of the 'Exhibition Common' green space at Harbourfront Centre was to include a four-

	storey arts and culture facility, "Festival Place," that would have been similar to what is mentioned here as a flexible programming space (See Pg. 27).
<i>Love Park</i>	Not considered a site for major events. The City of Toronto discouraged events in the first few years of the park, and it also has limited room for programming. At a busy intersection in the central waterfront, the park is already well used by visitors, residents and area workers. WBIA should look to assist with area office tenants or community organizations looking to program smaller events here, but not to recruit or support larger events.
<i>Harbour Plaza Park and Jack Layton Ferry Terminal</i>	A park that is already very busy as a landing area for the Ferry Terminal and for local residents and workers and won't be a priority for recruiting or programming additional events. Has been utilized as a 'gathering place' complimenting and expanding major City events like Nuit Blanche, or as a floating art location with high visibility by Waterfront Toronto's public art program. The dockwall has also been used to accommodate additional docking during the largest iterations of the Tall Ships Festival that comes to the waterfront every few years. The City of Toronto likes having recurring programming here, e.g. buskers, which the WBIA has offered to support as a community event on occasion. There is also interest from the local residents group to host community events in this park. Long-term, the Ferry Terminal has re-development plans to expand, but they are not fully funded at present.
<i>One Yonge Complex</i>	Le Meridien hotel opening in Late 2026. Additional temporary hotel to take over Toronto Star building in advance of full re-development (which will still include a hotel) to be expected 10 years later. Vibrancy of retail and restaurant experience should be encouraged at street-level as significant public plaza areas will be included.
<i>Westin Conference Centre</i>	Re-development expected to expand as conference centre with commercial or hotel usage expanded above it. WBIA should encourage a strong street-facing presence and retail or experience vibrancy at street-level. Contact Photography Festival has a large-scale frame for art on canvas on the west side of the building that is not currently used. WBIA plans to assist in finding a funding plan to utilize the space for artwork again.
<i>Lower Yonge / Yonge Slip Park (or SuperPier)</i>	The current parking lot here is owned by Waterfront Toronto and is expected to become a park, including a partial fill-in of parts of about half of the slip there once the Waterfront East Transit is expanded. The Toronto Port Authority also has a long-term goal of building a 'SuperPier' here that could accommodate Great Lakes-scale cruise ships and other transit or activation purposes. The WBIA expects to be very supportive of this concept as a major visitor draw. The plan for an extended pier here is included in the City of Toronto's Central Waterfront Secondary Plan (See Pg. 61).

QUEENS QUAY EAST

Yonge Street to Parliament Street

WBIA Area Priorities for Activation

1.	<i>Advocacy and placemaking goal:</i> Construction mitigation tracking and management by the WBIA Operations Team to ensure continuity of business vibrancy and operations through Waterfront East Transit Line construction.
2.	<i>Convening goal:</i> Support strong programming collaboration interest among area partners, in particular with recurring or regular programming partnerships in the Sugar Beach and Water's Edge Promenade area as a 'main canvas' for events in the area.
3.	<i>Market and event priority zone: Sugar Beach and Water's Edge Promenade</i> Priority to recruit and support events for the WBIA due to its location between larger hubs.
4.	<i>Community-event relationship goal:</i> Support office tenant activation goals in 50 Queens Quay East Park, and East Waterfront Community Association local events.
5.	<i>Recurring placemaking intervention goal:</i> WBIA plans for pilot activations with additional furniture at Jarvis Slip, Sugar Beach and Water's Edge Promenade. This area is also where the WBIA sees the most potential for flexible kiosk opportunities.



Key Challenges

Slow growth of retail, events, and activation vibrancy as the area has developed with new parks, residential and office occupancy. This area has 'gap area' risk with the Harbourfront Centre a long walk west and a potential new activity hub extending north from the Quayside site to Distillery District and south into the new parks in the Ookwemin Minising area (what we're calling the 'Distillery-Ookwemin' hub in this report).

Key Opportunities for WBIA

Stakeholder interest in collaborative programming is more extensive here than in other parts of the Queens Quay and the WBIA must increase its support in convening and potentially partnering with this group. This includes George Brown Polytechnic who already programs events in the Summer, the Remix Project in the Daniels Waterfront City of Arts community building, property management teams, local restaurants interested in programming, and a new resident's association eager to both program local events and also collaborate with businesses to help them succeed.

In the last decade, this area has had the highest expression of interest from businesses in sponsoring or working together on local events. We do not partner directly with a single local business for events, but have indicated that if multiple properties and area stakeholders or businesses are aligned with a plan, we would be able to join as a sponsor, too.

Context for area development and activation potential	
50 Queens Quay East (Temporary Park)	Protect as 'gathering place' with large events and activation potential. Temporary park opened in late-2025 will provide opportunities to explore best use for programming in future permanent designs. WBIA should advocate in permanent park planning that this large space be protected as a potential 'gathering space' to complement large, flexible uses when the City of Toronto and others host large events like Nuit Blanche, etc. Not expected to be a major event priority zone for the WBIA while it is temporary park with a dog run and pickleball courts. However, both nearby office tenants and local community groups interested in programming here and the WBIA will look to be supportive.
Larkin Gallery (Art Hub 27)	Gallery not always open, but a potential event space to partner with. Art Hub 27 is also the location of The STEPS Initiative who is a potential local placemaking partner for events.
Redpath Sugar Refinery	Historically a significant neighbourhood event sponsorship partner. Long-term as redevelopment plans for the office complex and site are planned, the WBIA will advocate for improvements to the long public-facing stretch of their building, e.g. utilizing the front of the building for a store, small museum or some business-appropriate usage of the space. Landscaping improvements have been made along their building frontage in the last two years.

<i>Sugar Beach, Sherbourne Common and Water's Edge Promenade</i>	Market and event priority zone for WBIA to support. These park spaces are considered together to emphasize that they should be considered a joint event and programming opportunity. Similar to HTO Park, the corridor around the Sugar Beach corner has proven a popular event and market site, but it has been difficult to recruit a consistent slate of programming year-round. Sherbourne Common has a retail pavilion only used as operations space for the Parks Department at present, but the City has indicated it will eventually be available as a retail or programming space once additional Parks offices and storage space is built in other parks.
<i>Sherbourne Common North</i>	A park that is not very active, well-used or maintained due to being north of Queens Quay where visitors are less likely to go. WBIA does not anticipate events interest here, except for possibly by local resident's groups. Long-term, the WBIA should advocate for permanent improvements at this space, but it will likely remain a more resident-focused park.
<i>Aitken Place Park</i>	Smaller park with playground. Not anticipated to be a location for events at present, but as an extension of the Water's Edge Promenade, it may draw more interest in the future once Parliament Slip and further development improvements are made eastward to the 'Ookwemin-Minising' hub.
<i>Quayside</i>	Construction staging for first phase underway (first buildings will be along Queens Quay) <i>In 2026 it was announced that a new library will be built here by the City of Toronto, which may help grow retail interest in the area as an all-season local draw.</i>

WESTERN WATERFRONT HUB

Ontario Place and Exhibition Place

WBIA Area Priorities for Activation

1. **Convening and advocacy goal:**
Support a holistic vision of Exhibition Place and Ontario Place as an integrated 'hub' of waterfront activation, as described in Destination Toronto's 10-year Master Plan. Advocate for connectivity of this hub back to the central waterfront in terms of: integrated waterfront transit planning; wayfinding and signage continuity; co-promotion or cross-promotion opportunities in marketing and major events - as part of a 'waterfront city' brand for Toronto.



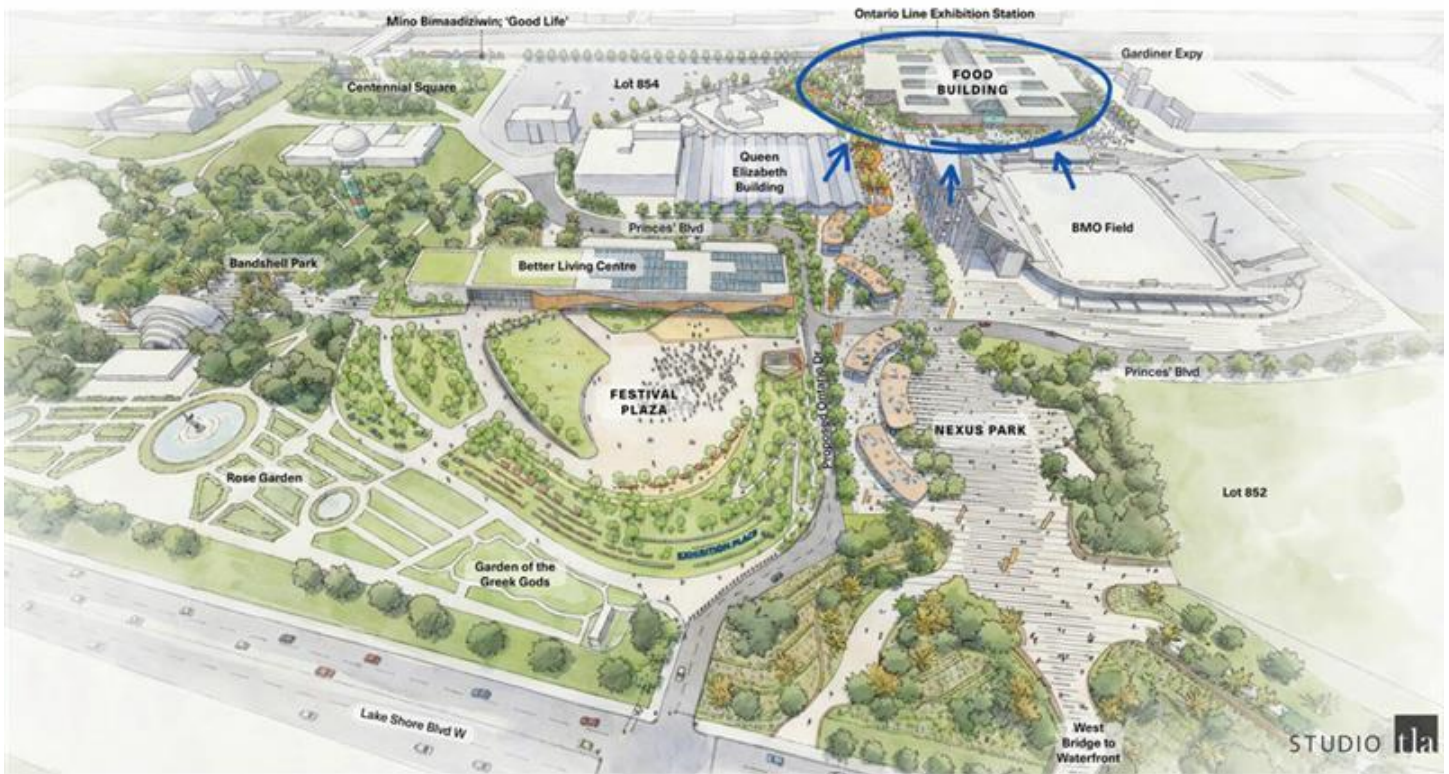
Key Challenges

Lack of joint public planning for the neighbouring sites led by separate orders of government. Together, this area will likely remain the largest hub of destination and attraction experiences on Toronto's broader waterfront and will be vital for the Waterfront BIA to develop a relationship as a collaborative or connective partner. The scale of visitor growth opportunity is significantly larger than in current WBIA boundaries.

Key Opportunities for WBIA

In recent years, major stakeholders at both sites have expressed interest in working with and collaborating with the broader '10-km Waterfront City' emerging, including our WBIA and its business community. This is a tremendous opportunity for future growth of our own area to be connected to and considered as part of a broader waterfront-wide destination along with Ontario Place and Exhibition Place. As mentioned in WBIA priorities for this area above, our organization should remain open to ways we can support and advocate for

further joint planning of this 'Western Waterfront Hub' and look for ways to promote future collaboration and joint planning across the broader waterfront, including our area. This will be possible through 'waterfront coalition' initiatives we encourage and support.



An example of the potential to better align and coordinate with this 'Western Waterfront Hub' - Exhibition Place (above) is proposing a plan to expand a 'promenade to the waterfront' from the transit hub at the north of their site to their south side which is the entrance and bridge to their neighbour Ontario Place. This effort to better coordinate and communicate connectivity between these major attractions is very welcome. Seen in the map, the CNE and Exhibition Place have plans to utilize the Food Building more regularly as its location is right beside the current GO Train and Waterfront LRT stops at Exhibition Place as well as their new Ontario Line station. As this hub area becomes more regularly programmed at both Ontario Place and Exhibition Place, the Food Building and other attractions will become more and more cohesive as a unit. Our Waterfront BIA located more than a kilometre east of here will want to ensure we are as integrated by transit, connected by wayfinding and signage, and co-promoted and cross-promoted as much as possible with the excitement of Ontario Place and Exhibition Place as the new 'Waterfront West Hub.'

Longer-term, the Waterfront BIA should encourage and collaborate with the area's stakeholders on possibilities to jointly pursue events collaborations where the central waterfront can be coordinated or an extension of major events at this new hub. If larger world-class events like the World Cup are to be featured in Toronto again in the near future (e.g. World Expos), it is likely they will look to have a 'waterfront-wide' presence of sites across the waterfront from here to the Port Lands in the east.

Note on Waterfront BIA boundary extension possibilities

Business Improvement Areas collect a levy from commercial and industrial property classes, so adding entities like Ontario Place and Exhibition Place would likely not be an option. The area also is located closer to the Liberty Village BIA and City Place-Fort York BIA. Our goal should be to look to be better aligned and potentially collaborate with this area and those additional BIAs where we can, not to expand the WBIA's boundaries.

Context for area development and activation potential

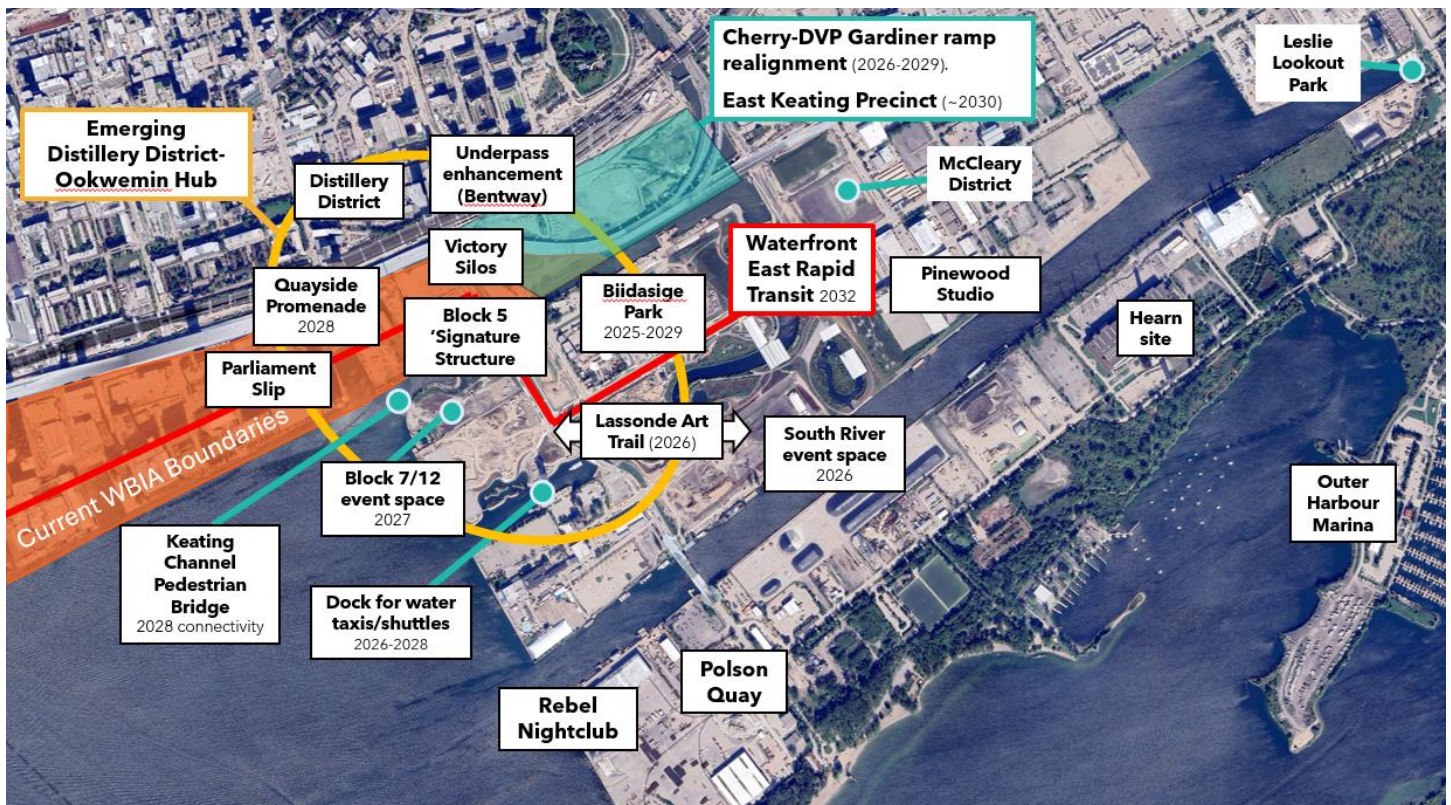
<i>Exhibition Place</i>	Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in late-Summer receives up to 150,000 visitors per day. The CNE and Exhibition Place have been independent of each other since 2013 with CNE still being a primary occupant of the site for their annual event. Leadership at the CNE are currently pursuing plans to partner on the site toward a 365-day activation strategy evolving in future years. Enercare Centre hosts conventions, industry and consumer events in a flexible space that can host 15,000. Home to facilities and games for five major Toronto sports teams: WNBA, CFL, MLS, PWHL and an NBA practice facility. Hotel X second tower expected by 2032 with 400 additional rooms. Live Nation multi-purpose performance venue of 5000 seats expected to host concerts and e-sports by 2023.
<i>Ontario Place Revitalization</i>	Phased construction starting 2026 with opening of public park elements by 2029. To include three all-season destinations by Early 2030's: RBC Ampitheatre redevelopment under construction from Summer 2027 and re-open in 2029 with a larger facility for 20,000 outdoor performances and 9,000 all-seasons indoors. Therme Waterpark and Spa currently under construction with an anticipated opening in 2029. Features a 33,000 sq. ft., campus-style layout with water slides, saunas, pools and large public green spaces. Ontario Science Centre is re-locating to the site and is currently under construction with a goal of opening in 2029. OSC is currently undergoing a strategic review process looking at what a science centre will be in 2050. They also have their interim space at Harbourfront Centre until 2029 and have indicated an interest in looking at a 'satellite campus' approach with multiple locations across the waterfront. Trillium Park, 7.5. acre park opened in 2017.
<i>Coronation Park to the east</i>	Large water's edge parks east and west of Ontario Place extend a beautiful water's edge experience for walking, cycling, rest and relaxation, and are generally expected to remain parks for recreation and local resident use.
<i>Sunnyside Park and Palais Royale to the west</i>	They also would provide impressive 'gathering place' and showcase spaces for large events and activations in the future. However, this would likely only be for major City of Toronto priority events, not as a recurring or regular programming space.

PORT LANDS AND DISTILLERY-OOKWEMIN

East of Parliament and extending into the new redevelopment areas

WBIA Area Priorities for Activation

1. *Convening and advocacy goal:*
Support the emerging 'Distillery-Ookwemin' activity hub as it emerges both within and just outside our Waterfront BIA's boundaries. To advocate for transit, wayfinding, signage and retail as a continuously vibrant experience both east-west and north-south. This may include improving our relationships and area knowledge with businesses near our east waterfront boundaries in the near-term, and in the future consideration of expanding our WBIA boundaries where appropriate.
2. *Advocacy goal:*
Support Waterfront Toronto's 'Destination Development Plan' being developed to highlight locations for potential permanent attractions along the broader waterfront, including this area.



Key Challenges

North-south connectivity and visitor exploration in this area may be prioritized over the east-west Queens Quay due to significant projects in this emerging hub having overlapping ownership and planning. Dream is part of the Quayside Impact partnership and also owns and manages the Distillery District, a major attraction to the north, as well as the site just east of Quayside, the Victory Soy Mills.

The City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto's current focus on the new Port Lands projects has created a challenge for the WBIA. We're a potential partner in activation, events and promotion, but these significant

new developments and parks are not within our current boundaries and we have limited exposure to planning and strategy for this area. If a separate BIA were to be created for the Port Lands or Ookwemin Minising, it would likely create competition and/or confusion that may not help either part of the waterfront reach its full potential. Our approach should be to be informally supportive of connectivity and collaboration across this area overall whenever possible.

Key Opportunities

Despite the challenges above, the development in this area is incredible in scale as a look at the map in this section illustrates. The WBIA does represent and collect its funding levy from the key properties in the middle of this emerging hub area – Quayside, Victory Soy Mills and the 3C Lakeshore site just to their east. We will be active in advocating for further connectivity toward the vibrancy of retail experience and event and programming development as part of those developments.

Proximity to Distillery District to the north and the new destination parks and event spaces to the south will provide benefits to our businesses along Queens Quay as the area builds out. Our role will be to encourage both east-west and north-south connectivity of experience.

Related to events, there are very large event facilities planned for further expansion of Biidaasige Park (Block 7/12) and at least temporarily in the River District for the next decade. The City of Toronto and other major event planners will utilize these spaces, and we will encourage and look to support those events to promote a ‘waterfront-wide experience’ whenever possible.

Developing relationships with the business community in the Port Lands, it’s clear they have a number of diverse experience businesses that would enhance the character of the eastern waterfront within our WBIA, too, and whether the BIA expands into the Port Lands or not, we will look to find opportunities to work together with them to improve our advocacy and marketing of the ‘waterfront city’ overall.

Note on Waterfront BIA boundary extension possibilities

No - Distillery District is a single-owner property in terms of managing activations and event planning at its site, effectively its own BIA and would not likely join a BIA. The Waterfront BIA also would not likely explore expansion that doesn’t align directly with our role as a ‘water’s edge’ business association, and the Distillery District is north of the Gardiner Expressway.

Yes - East Keating Precinct has no commercial property assignment at present as it’s still an expressway at the time of writing. However, as it will be a direct extension of Queens Quay East, we can expect that its future business community will join the WBIA and we should proactively advocate for the area’s inclusion in the WBIA in advance of development to ensure planning is aligned with the characteristics of Queens Quay’s existing business community.

Maybe - Ookwemin Minising and other areas of the Port Lands. At present, there isn’t a detailed precinct plan that applies property zoning, but the area is expected to be heavily weighted to residential which does not fund a BIA. Depending on how much of the new Port Lands joined our BIA, it may also drastically change the characteristics of our programs and initiatives as a ‘water’s edge business association’ – Ookwemin Minising as a new island would be very appropriate to add based on our current services and the continuity of water’s edge experience, but the further Port Lands areas with film studios and industrial facilities would not be appropriate. Another challenge is that the Port Lands is in another City Council ward.

Working in the WBIA’s favour, the ability to raise significant funding toward a wide range of services for a BIA is directly related to how much commercial and industrial property it is able to apply its levy to. The WBIA benefits from having a large area that includes a large amount of commercial property – our levy can be more modest while still raising a significant amount of levy funds spread across that larger value of property. By starting their own BIA for Ookwemin Minising or the full Port Lands, to raise even a modest budget of a few hundred thousand dollars would require a significantly higher tax levy rate than if they joined our BIA and shared services with our organization. As an example, another nearby BIA in the same ward as the Port Lands required a levy of \$1,422 per \$1 million of its members’ assessed property value in 2025 to raise an annual budget levy of \$265,000. The Waterfront BIA raised a \$2.24 million levy with a \$587 per \$1 million levy rate.

Context for area development and activation potential	
Quayside and Parliament Slip	 Parliament Slip plans by Waterfront Toronto with the ‘Signature Structure’ site on the east side of the slip. This area would become the nexus of what the WBIA believes will be an exciting new activity hub for the waterfront as it’s located between the existing Distillery District destination to its north, and just east of this rendering the East Keating Pedestrian Bridge will connect to the Ookwemin Islands and new parks. The area shown in the rendering is within the Waterfront BIA boundaries, and we will advocate for strong consideration of both north-south connectivity as well as east-west on Queens Quay to hopefully benefit and increase visitation for our members in the ‘gap area’ west of here near Sherbourne Common and Sugar Beach. Also seen in this rendering is the potential for the ‘Water’s Edge Promenade’ to continue to lengthen eastward. This experience of continual things to see and along a waterfront is needed to be become seen as more of a ‘waterfront city’ overall.
Quayside Block 5 ‘Signature Structure’	This site is being held for a ‘signature structure’ right at the harbour’s edge. The WBIA should advocate that it is held and protected for a major attraction: museum, art gallery, or some form of major landmark structure as intended.

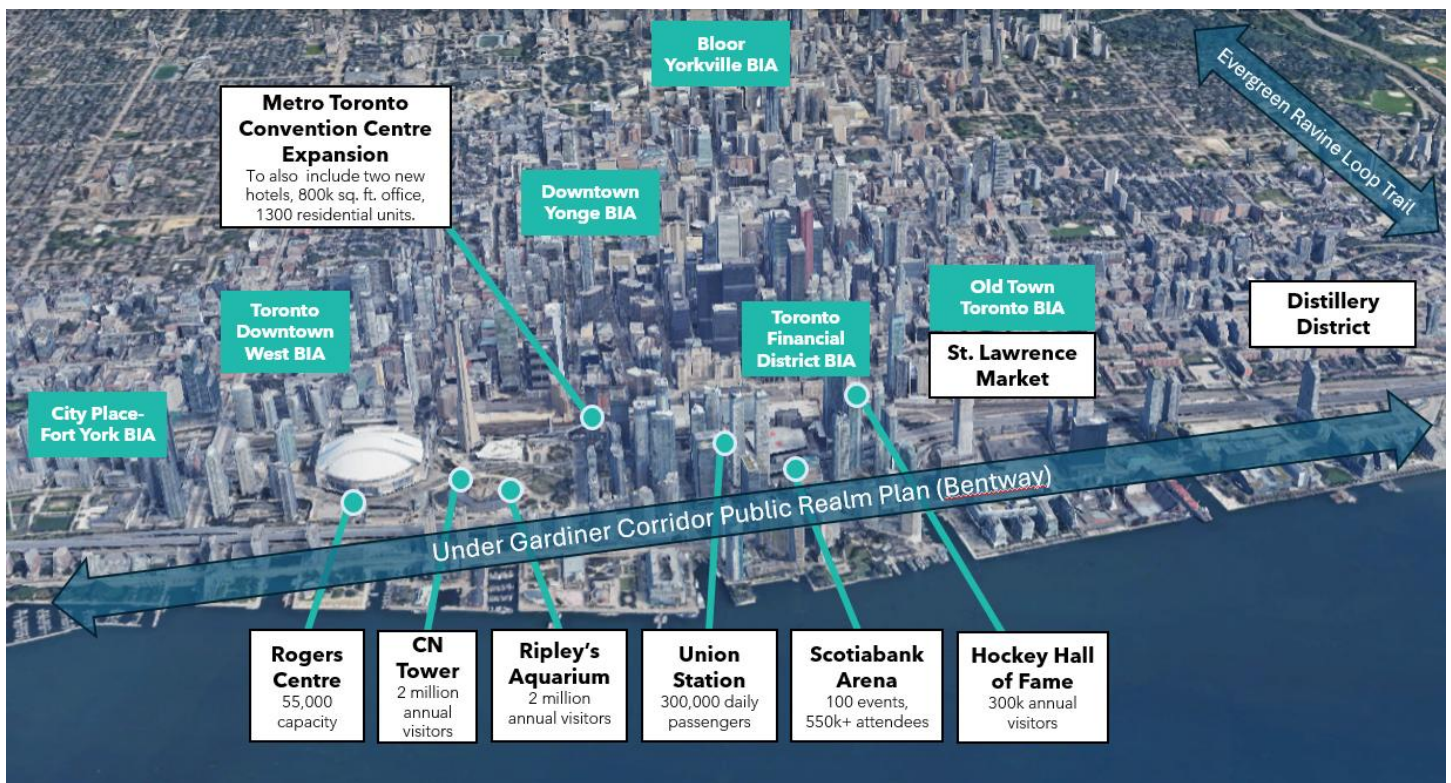
<i>Waterfront East Rapid Transit (WERT)</i>	This transit connection is expected to be in place along the eastern waterfront and Oowkewin Minising (line in red on map) by 2032. This will form a connection waterfront-wide with the existing waterfront light-rail transit line that continues west past Union Station, Harbourfront Centre, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport on to Exhibition Place to meet with the Ontario Line and GO Train - a true 'waterfront-wide' connective experience. Further extensions of the line are expected further east along Commissioners to Leslie Street, north on Cherry Street, and east from Commissioners on Broadview Street to the East Harbour Ontario Line Station.
<i>McCleary District</i>	The next area to be developed, construction in 2030's with first occupancy expected 2035. Expected to be residential focused.
<i>River District</i>	The area as of Summer 2026 is available as a large event programming area as an 'interim use' for the next decade or more, with capacity for 10,000 or more.
<i>Hearn site</i>	Located at 440 Unwin Avenue in the Port Lands, the vision for the approximately 30-acre Hearn site is to build on the heritage of the Hearn Generating Station building. The site is the length of three city blocks and includes the interior space of the Rogers Centre. Plans will be to include a mix of commercial, retail, institutional, cultural community and residential uses. The project is currently in the Official Plan Amendment stage. Due to the scale of the site's development potential, they also plan to have a further extension of the Waterfront Transit Line to connect to it in a loop. Plans also protect for the Don Roadway extension as per the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan. The proposal has also protected for a cycling and pedestrian bridge across the Ship Channel. 

DOWNTOWN ATTRACTIONS

The immediate areas north of the Gardiner Expressway

WBIA Area Priorities for Activation

1. *Convening goal:*
Develop a relationship with broader downtown attractions network where possible.
2. *Advocacy and placemaking intervention goals:*
 - *Under Gardiner Corridor Public Realm Plan:* Continue work with The Bentway, City of Toronto and BIAs to ensure improved safety and experience of movement after the Gardiner Revitalization.
 - *Wayfinding improvements* both east-west on the waterfront (current WBIA program) as well as north-south with broader downtown attractions network.



Encouraging continuity of experience with downtown attractions

One of the most exciting themes of conversation we had while talking to stakeholders about the future of events and activations on the waterfront was that major attractions and destinations north of us in the downtown core are looking to be more associated with the waterfront as it has grown. Not necessarily in terms of collaborating on events, but they see the waterfront's development of a corridor of new parks and experiences as exciting – they would like their large attractions to be seen as near the waterfront and connected to it for the benefit of their own visitors and customers, too.

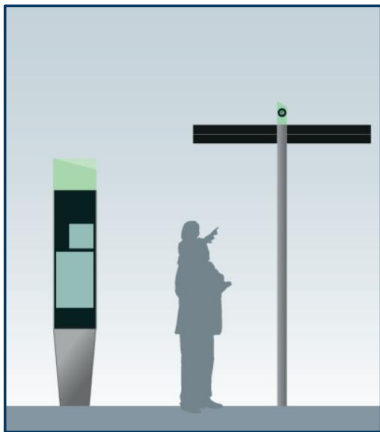
This is a very fortunate situation for our organization and business community. We will look to support and encourage collaboration where we can with the broader downtown attractions network. In recent decades, there has been a trend in other cities to build major stadiums around a 'stadium district plan' that includes

complementary businesses and amenities. Toronto is working backwards in this regard. The largest stadiums and attractions are here, and similar to the multi-stakeholder environment the waterfront has developed, these entities are now in a position to look more broadly about how to expand on their own success by better collaborating with their neighbours. Just as we've looked to support a more broad vision of a 'waterfront-wide experience as a destination,' we may be able to work closer with the 'downtown-wide corridor experience as a destination,' too.

The major attractions do already meet, primarily on security and safety issues through 'Friends of Bremner' meetings, SafeCOMM security groups and its PATHComm network related specifically to the PATH indoor pedestrian network.

Connecting via wayfinding

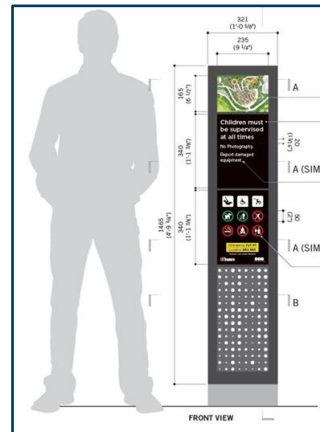
At the most direct on-the-ground level, the entire downtown core and the attractions in particular could benefit from even more integrated wayfinding and signage. A few examples are already in place here:



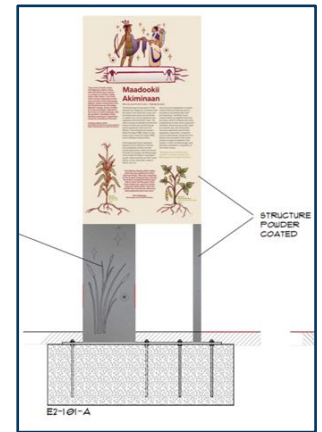
TO360: Since the 2015 Pan Am Games, the City's standard has been rolled out in downtown and a refresh including digital could be encouraged.



The WBIA developed its Queens Quay-only signage focusing on east-west continuity to learn what works.



Parks Department signage standard, expected to be rolled out in Port Lands first



NEW: Port Lands only - Interpretive signage planned for parks in Oowwemin Minising.

Destination Toronto's Master Plan includes wayfinding and downtown attraction connection of experience among its many priorities, and the WBIA will look to be a partner with them when possible.

After completing its internal Waterfront Retail Review in 2024, a primary challenge for vibrancy and encouraging exploration along Queens Quay was a lack of directional signage and mapping. The WBIA created its own three-sided signage as a way to explore how best to encourage east-west exploration (and complimenting the City's TO360 standard that has been rolled out since 2015 Pan Am Games). The WBIA has slowly expanded its own signage to eight posts on Queens Quay, and has also looked for other areas it could add more of the City's TO360 maps. We will continue to be open to expanding on City standards or others developed to improve overall downtown attraction exploration.

Connecting via events and promotion

While the major stadiums and attractions have large audiences already and would not be a direct partner at the scale of BIA events, they may collaborate for co-promotion, cross-promotion or toward wayfinding improvements mentioned above. Opportunities may arise to expand upon downtown-wide promotional plans the City of Toronto has recently taken a strong lead on. Two recent examples include the Taylor Swift concerts in Fall 2025 and the FIFA World Cup in Summer 2026. This included city-wide promotion,

transportation plans and 'game-day' crowd management across departments of the City and other organizations like attractions downtown.

There are also other potential north-south connection event and promotion partners in the future, primarily the City's other business improvement areas. A group of the six most central BIAs called the 'Downtown Toronto BIA Alliance' meets regularly on policy issues but may be open to co-promotion at key times, e.g. the Queen West BIA helped organize a downtown-wide promotion during the World Cup period that others joined.



WBIA's largest winter event was when we worked with Winter Stations to expand on their art installations at the Beaches for multiple years. Branded as 'Ice Breakers,' when it was new artworks, we then used the Winter Stations brand when we switched to renting interactive light-based installations. Ended 2020.

It should be noted that Union Station has an active events, programming and retail vibrancy strategy and their leadership has shown interest in collaboration. In 2025 for the 'Water/Fall Festival,' Union Station was a key partner supporting co-promotion as well as featured as a performance space over the two weekends.

Winter will likely be the best time to work across organizations and BIAs downtown to co-promote or collaborate on events together. As most business areas are slowest in the winter, multiple BIAs have developed independent winter activation programs including holiday lights, interactive art installations or performances to encourage traffic to their parks and public spaces. In the future, it might be best for all of us to boost our promotion of these activities together, and winter would be the time we'd have the most available time and resources all regularly going in the same direction.

Breaking down the underpass 'barrier to the lake' (Gardiner Expressway and Rail Yards)

The underpasses under the Gardiner Expressway and the Rail Yards are the most important barrier to north-south connectivity between our waterfront and the major attractions and destinations just north of the waterfront.

Since 2019, the Waterfront BIA has been working with numerous partners to improve the experience of crossing under the Gardiner Expressway intersections. Multiple intersections under the Gardiner Expressway have been painted in recent years, and in 2026 'lighting pilots' were installed at the Dan Leckie and Bathurst underpasses. These were completed due to work and funding by a number of organizations, including the City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto, The Bentway, Toronto Downtown West BIA, City Place-Fort York BIA as well as our WBIA.

The Bentway and City of Toronto have currently developed an 'Under Gardiner Corridor Public Realm Plan' that has City Council endorsement. The plan (graphics below) calls for a string of improvements and public space enhancements running all the way through downtown and adjacent to the waterfront, including not just improved intersections but greenery, dog runs, public art and other improvements running from Exhibition Place and Fort York (The Bentway's main site) all the way east to the Don River where the Gardiner Expressway is being re-aligned in the late-2020's.

The Province of Ontario is expected to take over the revitalization of the Gardiner Expressway, but the City of Toronto will maintain management of the experience under the highway we seek to continue making improvements.



(above, left)
Waterfront ReConnect intersection improvement pilots (Simcoe shown) by The Bentway, City of Toronto, Toronto Downtown West BIA and Waterfront BIA

(above, right)
Lighting pilots at Bathurst and Dan Leckie underpasses, 2026, by The Bentway, City of Toronto, City Place-Fort York BIA and Waterfront BIA

(at left)
Under Gardiner Corridor Public Realm Plan by The Bentway and City of Toronto

We should also note the WBIA's position that new PATH indoor pedestrian network connections should also be extended whenever possible into the waterfront from the Union Station hub. The Toronto Region Board of Trade's 2025 report, *'The Power of Connection: Unlocking Canada's Most Valuable Waterfront'* includes both the Under Gardiner Corridor Plan and improving PATH connections among its recommendations for a better connected waterfront in the future. Our WBIA also supports these connections and encourages their best use by being above-ground into our area (the typology that is better used south of Union Station as opposed to the broader network of underground PATH in the Financial District). In further developments of the PATH we will advocate for nearby and easy-to-find stairwells that encourage public access beyond those tenants or residents in the buildings being connected.

ON THE WATER AND TORONTO ISLANDS

The primary ingredient of a great waterfront experience, the water

WBIA Area Priorities for Activation

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | <i>Convening and community-scale events goal:</i>
Toronto Islands business and stakeholder working group engaged regarding events planning, in particular for 'shoulder-seasons.' |
| 2. | <i>Advocacy goals:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and encourage major events recruitment that directly activate the Inner Harbour.• Additional and larger boat dock opportunities for commercial boat operations.• No changes to marine exclusion zone with expansion of Island Airport runways in the Inner Harbour. |

One sentiment we regularly hear is that there just aren't enough things happening right on the water itself, or right along the edge of the Inner Harbour that interacts with the water. The signature experience of a great waterfront is having a consistent walk along the water's edge while having a sequence of things to see or do, whether it's a permanent work of art, a recurring event, or a major attraction.

On the positive side, this 'sequence' of things to do has definitely been growing in recent decades. As highlighted in the Toronto Board of Trade and Business of Cities report, *'Ripple Effect: Unlocking Toronto's Waterfront Potential,'* the waterfront has evolved so far as a number of stakeholders all doing exciting things separately – now is the time to start stitching it together and have it seen as one continuous experience and opportunity.

On-water activation includes even regular use of the Inner Harbour that can be beautiful and draw visitors and viewers with regularly movement and transit, including:

- *Yacht clubs that sail regularly in the Summer* from the Toronto Islands (Royal Canadian Yacht Club on Tuesday and Thursday, and the Queen City Yacht Club on Wednesdays).
- *Planes taking off and landing at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport* can be awe-inspiring for visitors, especially when they first visit or while they cross the Inner Harbour via ferry or water taxi.
- *Fireworks and drone shows*, while not as daily as those above, both are activations that programmers tend to prioritize doing over the water. In recent years, the Waterfront BIA has considered annual sponsorships to support fireworks more readily as a staple event, and we will remain open to supporting and assisting the recruitment of drone shows when possible. At present, the most ambitious drone shows have generally been for brand promotion (Drake x Nike, TIFF and New Years Eve private events at Exhibition Place).



LEFT: Drone concept by Capital Drone Show of Ottawa

RIGHT: Drone show by Firefly Drone Shows of Michigan



Limits and challenges for events on-water or at the water’s edge

As this is a true mixed-use neighbourhood with a significant portion of visitors, workers and local residents, to have regular loud and disruptive programming all across the waterfront would not be appropriate. Our WBIA will always look to balance this by encouraging more recurring events in parks not as disruptive to residents.

Events and activations on the water or at the water’s edge can also be complicated and expensive.

Examples from recent years include:

- *The Bentway’s ‘A Lake Story’ procession of canoes carrying flags* for 2025’s ‘Water/Fall Festival’ was designed to run east-west along the full stretch of the Inner Harbour to showcase the growing waterfront. However, the procession’s ability to cross over the Ferry Terminal area was restricted and it featured only the new park area in Ookwemin Minising that the City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto opened that year and were eager to promote.
- *The Waterfront Festival hosted the ‘Rubber Duck’* in HTO Park floating in the water in 2017. Due to risks related to having large crowds so near the water’s edge, the return of the duck was ‘in a nest’ in the Yonge Street slip parking lot instead.
- *The Tall Ships Festival*, hosted as often as every three years in Toronto by the Waterfront Festival, has also become more expensive to bring a sizeable number of vessels as an attraction.

Expansion of the Island Airport may also complicate the size and scale of events and programming available on water. While the runway is expected to expand, public proposals have so far included only new runway extensions that would be within the marine exclusion zone that already acts as a *de facto* edge of the Inner Harbour. The WBIA is opposed to any expansion of the runway in the Inner Harbour that isn’t within the current marine exclusion zone or would expand the marine exclusion zone.

The airport also puts restrictions on the amount of programming such as fireworks and drone shows can be done, as those need to be coordinated to avoid flight timing. These aren’t events that would be run every day, but on special occasions. The SailGP event that has a Bid Team organized in Toronto would be a major on-water event for one weekend per year.

The Toronto Islands have become more of a destination while actually featuring smaller events in recent years. The Electric Island event no longer locates there, but visitation to the islands has increased significantly since the pandemic according to the WBIA’s annual Toronto Inner Harbour Commercial Passenger Vessel Survey.

	2019	2024
Toronto Island Ferry Round Trip Tickets	1,278,505	1,390,358
Water Taxis Passengers	209,952	683,000

The boating industry’s interest in extending visitation into the nighttime may provide partnership opportunities for events with the WBIA in the future. The boat industry are not consistently rate paying members of the WBIA due to many not being tenants of our area, but in recent years we have assisted in organizing with them to align on arising issues and opportunities. This may provide a chance for funding alignment for events or co-promotions together.

Examples of on-water activations in recent years on the Inner Harbour



Sail in Cinema, 2016



Nuit Blanche art projection onto a fountain of water spray, 2023



NYE and Canada Day fireworks



'A Lake Story' by Melissa McGill with The Bentway and Water/Fall Festival, 2025



Waterfront Festival, 2017



Floating art, annual program by Waterfront Toronto in Harbour Square Park

Examples of major on-water events that could be recruited or emulated on our Inner Harbour

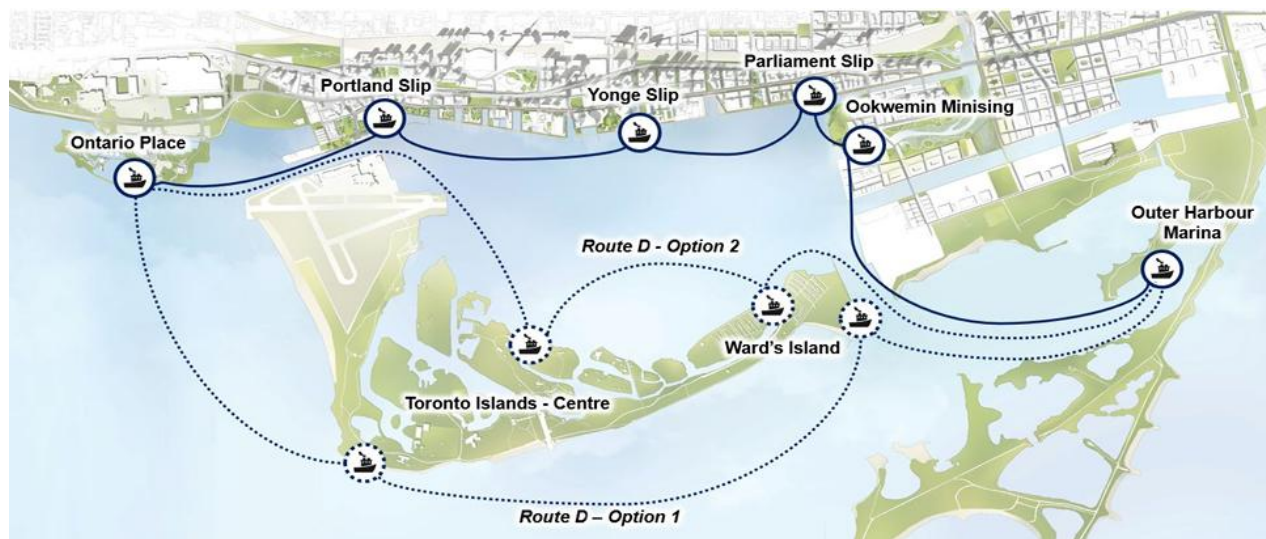


A SailGP Bid Team is active in Toronto looking to recruit the event to host an annual event in the Inner Harbour. The series of grands prix hosted in venues around the world, similar to F1 racing, started in 2018 and currently has Halifax as their Canada stop each year.

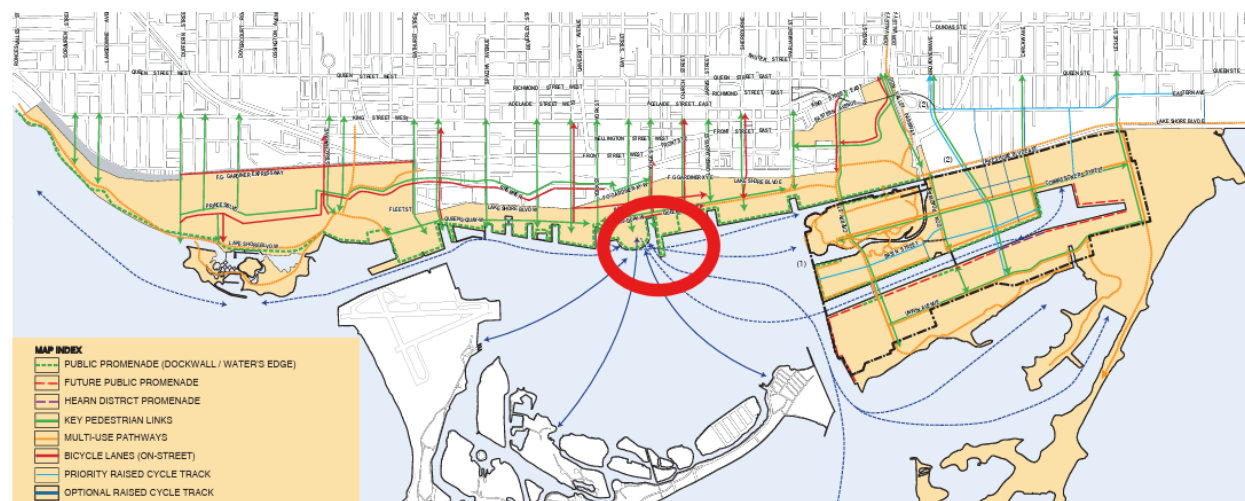


Similar to the Tall Ships Festival featured in some years, "Sail Amsterdam is hosted every 5 years including historic tall ships and up to 1,000 sailboats entering the city together.

The Waterfront BIA expects to continually advocate for additional vibrancy of commercial and transportation options on the water. This includes for examples shown below. Over time, the BIA expects that the significant growth of the water taxi industry (3x since before the pandemic, according to our industry surveys each year) the industry will graduate to larger vessels with success. This will ideally lead to an approach closer to SeaBuses taking people around the Inner Harbour, with more total passengers moving via fewer total boats.



(Above) SeaBus Feasibility Study, 2025, with potential future route options for expanded marine transit



(Above) Central Waterfront Secondary Plan plans for expanded Ferry Terminal and 'SuperPier' at Yonge Street slip



Concept for 'SuperPier' under consideration by Toronto Port Authority for the east side of the Yonge Street slip extending from where a current parking lot is expected to become public space following construction of the Waterfront East Transit extension.

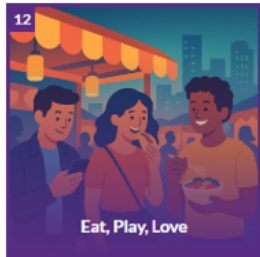
The goal of the Toronto Port Authority is to utilize the pier to attract more Great Lakes-scale cruise ships, of which approximately 40 per year are docking in the Port Lands at present.

[APPENDIX]

The following pages were shared in a discussion document shared with waterfront stakeholders, businesses and programmers in February, 2026.

LITERATURE AND REPORT REVIEW VISITATION DATA Pg. 1 of 3

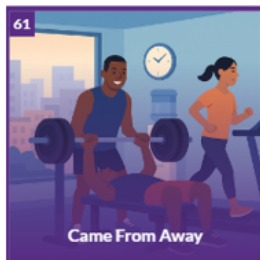
Top Three Visitor Profiles



- **Young, urban professionals**, typically singles or couples living in high-density condos and apartments in major city cores; highly educated with above-average incomes for their age.
- **Experience-driven lifestyle**, prioritize dining out, nightlife, cultural events, festivals, fitness, and travel over traditional material purchases.
- **Digitally connected & socially active**, heavy users of social media, mobile apps, and streaming platforms for entertainment, dating, discovery, and planning their lives.
- **Values diversity, wellness, and authenticity**, drawn to global cuisines, inclusive communities, sustainable choices, and brands that feel local, creative, and culturally relevant.



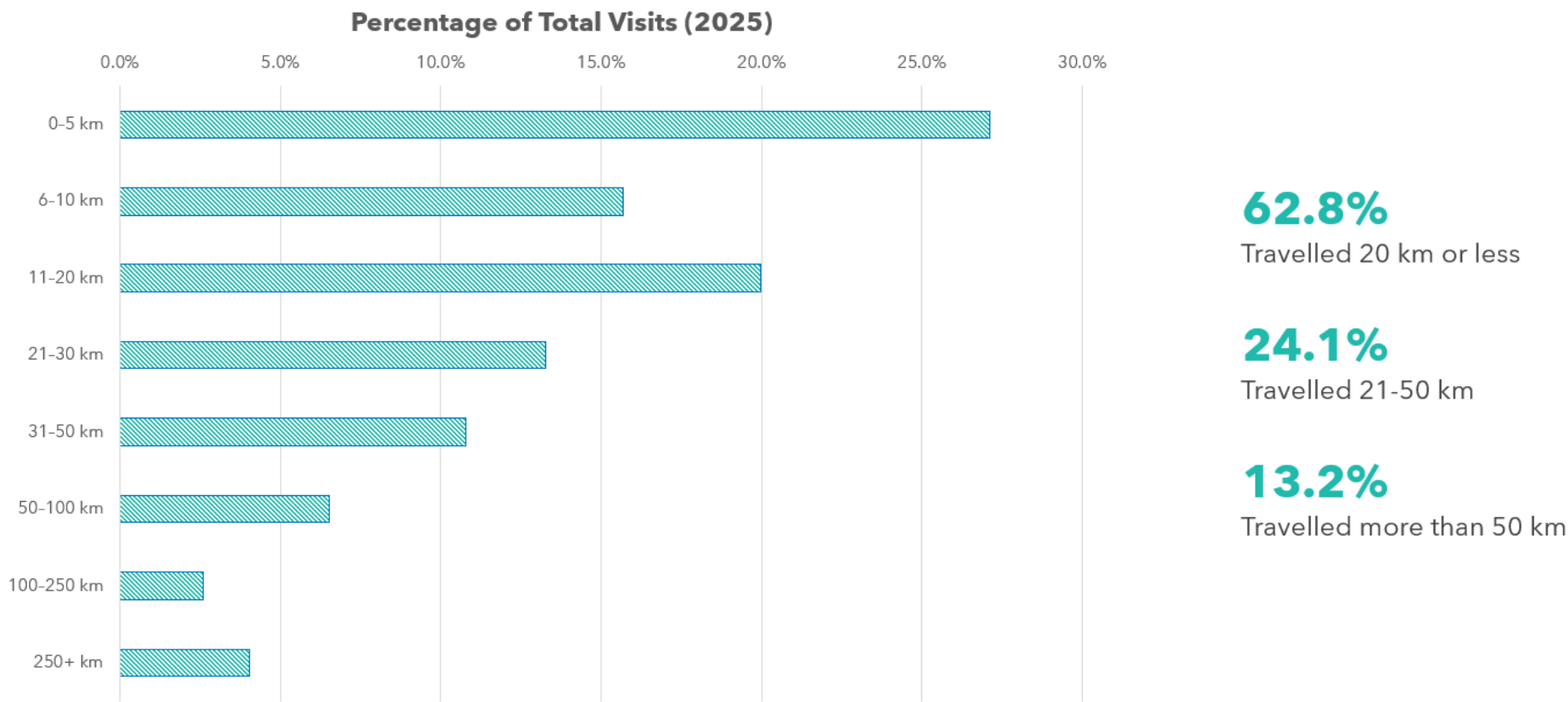
- **Highly diverse, multicultural urban households** living in major city neighbourhoods, representing a wide mix of ethnic backgrounds, languages, and cultural traditions.
- **Broad mix of life stages and household types**, including families with children, multi-generational households, couples, and long-established residents.
- **Practical, value-oriented lifestyles** with spending focused on essentials, family needs, and community-based activities rather than luxury or trend-driven consumption.
- **Strong community and cultural ties**, with everyday life centered around neighbourhood services, local retail, cultural food, faith, and social networks.



- **Multi-ethnic urban renters**, “Came From Away” refers to neighbourhoods with a diverse cultural make-up and a strong presence of immigrants or people from a variety of backgrounds.
- **Middle-aged life stage**, residents tend to be in their middle adult years rather than predominantly very young or older retirees.
- **City-centric lifestyle**, this segment is primarily located in urban cores and inner city areas, often in rental housing rather than long-established home ownership neighbourhoods.
- **Representative of changing Canadian cities**, the name reflects the patterns of newcomers and culturally diverse populations shaping major Canadian metropolitan markets.

LITERATURE AND REPORT REVIEW VISITATION DATA Pg. 2 of 3

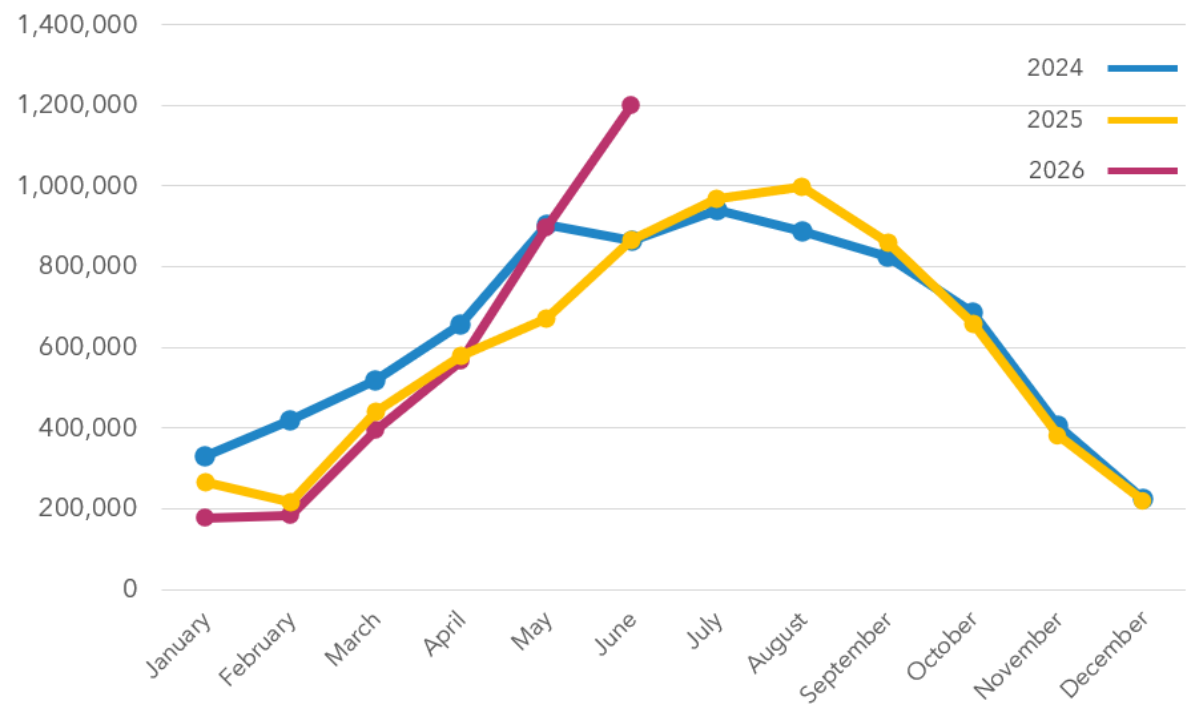
Visitor Distance Travelled



Source: Environics MobileScapes 2025

Pedestrian Counts

Cumulative summary of east-west trips at York, Rees, Spadina



Source: The Waterfront BIA Queens Quay Pedestrian Counters

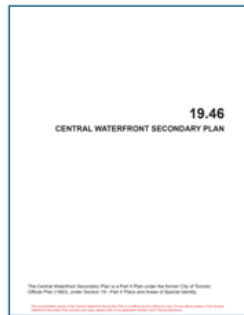
Pedestrian Counter Locations



The Waterfront BIA measures the volume of pedestrians and cyclists traveling through three key east-west intersections using infrared counters that log each pedestrian or cyclist going east/west on the south side of Queens Quay.

Note: This data set should not be used as a 'total visitor' count. It is best for comparisons of visitor volume and east-west exploration along Queens Quay for one period compared with another.

LITERATURE AND REPORT REVIEW ON WATERFRONT EVENTS POTENTIAL Pg. 1 of 5



City of Toronto
**Central Waterfront
Secondary Plan**
1993

Focused on principles including the connection of the city to the lake. Emphasizes 'Building a Network of Spectacular Waterfront Parks and Public Spaces' to attract international tourism, encourage national celebration and local enjoyment. Expects parks to be animated, well maintained, safe and accommodating of experiences, sports, entertainment, and quiet relaxation.

High-value tourism programming to be prioritized, with the goal of hosting international caliber cultural and entertainment attractions.

Calls for coordinated public art strategy to encourage high profile events, festivals, performing arts venues and cultural attractions that draw visitors in large and small numbers.



City of Toronto
**Sidewalks to
Skylines 10-year
Action Plan**
2025

Economic Development and Culture Department plan includes items below under 'Strengthen Toronto's partnerships and capacity to attract visitors and investment,' and 'Enhance Toronto's ability to host and incubate international events.'

Action 27 'Grow the food and dining scene' encourages leveraging Toronto's representation as a top world city for food to attract and drive tourism and talent attraction.

Action 28 'Attract major international events and audiences' in tandem with Destination Toronto and other levels of government on event bidding and hosting partnerships.



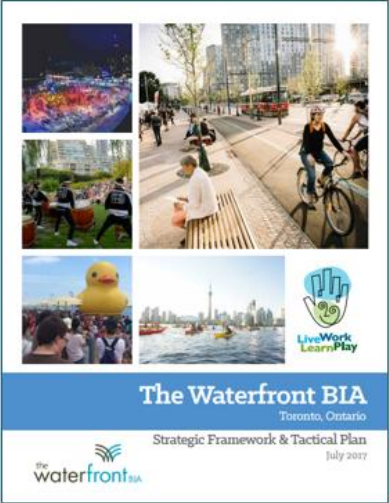
Waterfront Toronto
**Seeing the Future
from the Shore**
2018

Identifies the Top 10 Global Urban Waterfronts and 40 Benchmarking Attributes whereby the Top 10 cities had strength in 15-25 attributes and Toronto fewer, likely 5-10.

Event related attributes to aspire to include:

- Cultural Anchor
- Museum Ships
- Harbour Tours
- Recreation Piers
- Food Markets
- Seafood Restaurants
- Public Art
- Destination Playground
- Waterfront Dining
- Urban Beach

LITERATURE AND REPORT REVIEW ON WATERFRONT EVENTS POTENTIAL Pg. 2 of 5



Waterfront BIA
Strategic Framework and Tactical Plan 2017

Frames seasonal programming challenge with very active Spring/Summer and passive Fall/Winter where programming focus should go.

Due to length of Queens Quay, encouraged separate district-based strategies, not a single waterfront-wide strategy.

Harbourfront Centre highlighted as year-round programming anchor,

Water, nature and marine features encouraged for potential activation infrastructure.

Emphasized need to enhance ‘north-south connections’ at underpasses.



Waterfront BIA
Retail Review 2024

Focused on support for more vibrant retail. Surveys and consultation with businesses emphasized a broad variety of reasons beyond a reliance on events that encouraged them to locate on the waterfront – numerous new parks, density of new residents and office workers, proximity to downtown attractions, transit and stadiums.

Highlighted potential for ‘market-priority zones’ WBIA should focus on (HTO Park, Sugar Beach/Sherbourne Common).

Priority of extending shoulder-seasons and improving year-round performance as opposed to summer-only momentum.

LITERATURE AND REPORT REVIEW ON WATERFRONT EVENTS POTENTIAL Pg. 3 of 5



Destination Toronto
Destination Master Plan, 2026

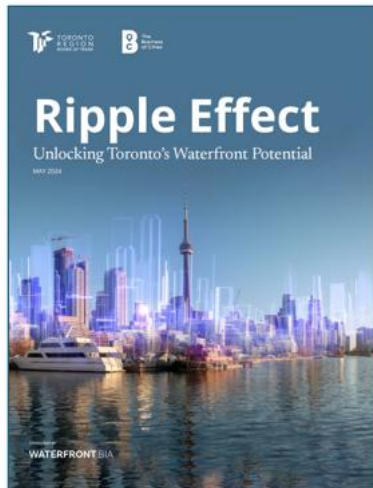
This 10-year plan includes numerous goals and objectives related to expanding the broader waterfront as a year-round destination, expanding marine transit options, supporting the Bentway’s underpass visions, and and also improving on inter-connected nature of all downtown as a ‘Destination District.’ Also supports a “signature shoulder season waterfront event,” a concept that has had a steering committee in recent years.



City of Toronto
Toronto's Festivals Strategy, 2026-2031

New plan about how the City intends to help festivals across Toronto in areas including sector development and resilience and improving processes to support events. With the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA), the City is assisting to create a Toronto Festival Association to identify ways that events can be supported in collaboration with one another.

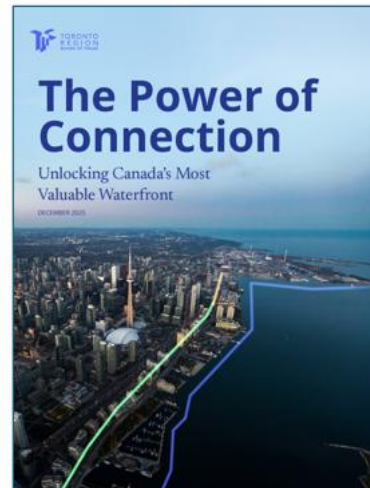
LITERATURE AND REPORT REVIEW ON WATERFRONT EVENTS POTENTIAL Pg. 4 of 5



The Toronto Region Board of Trade
The Ripple Effect:
Unlocking Toronto's Waterfront Potential
2024

Contemplates that fully unlocking the waterfront's value requires moving in a new cycle of development. From mostly single-purpose, short visits and one-off festivals into a true year-round experience destination.

Core principles include 'creating real centres of gravity' with clusters of activity supported to retail, cultural activation and prominent institutions and recognizable brands. 'Become permeable' by presenting the area as a legible, cohesive place where it's obvious where to go, what to do, and how the pieces connection.



The Toronto Region Board of Trade
The Power of Connection:
Unlocking Canada's Most Valuable Waterfront
2025

While not directly related to events, in consultation with the 'waterfront coalition' it focuses on the importance of connecting and integrating the experience from the Ontario Place and Exhibition Place area in the west through the central waterfront, Harbourfront Centre and into the rapidly expanding eastern waterfront, new Ookwemin island and Port Lands.

Highlights The Bentway's Under Gardiner Corridor vision that connects the waterfront east-west, and the FIFA 2026 potential to enhance and promote expanded water transit now to the Port Lands.

LITERATURE AND REPORT REVIEW ON WATERFRONT EVENTS POTENTIAL Pg. 5 of 5



Waterfront BIA
Public Life Pilot
2022

Looking at how spaces perceived as underutilized can be improved through public space interventions. Noting a distinct lack of area elements engaging children, seniors and families, the report highlighted how particular spaces could be better utilized:

- Waters Edge Promenade was seen as a location where social and cultural programming could be put into place
- HTO Park West required more of a quiet, serene approach.
- Sherbourne Common North was seen as needing to be re-designed before utilization.



Moment Factory
Creative Approach and Technical Memo for projection on to the Canadian Malting Silos, 2021

Commissioned for WBIA and the City of Toronto in 2021, the projection mapping design firm Moment Factory developed a creative approach and technical memo to showcase the Malting Silos as a destination identifier for the waterfront. Numerous lighting shows have been completed since 2021 by The Bentway, OCAD and the City of Toronto.

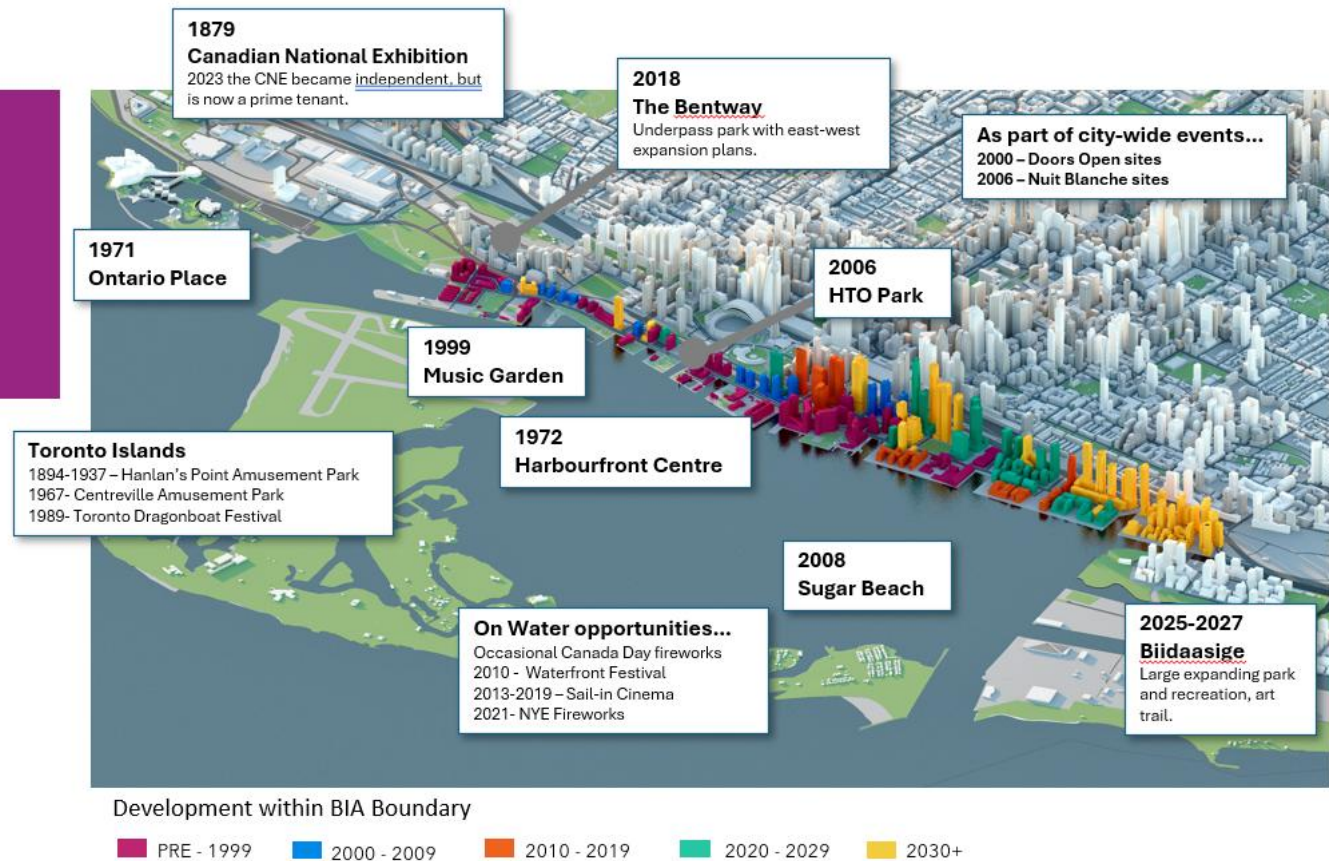
The report highlighted how the silos could be projected on from all sides with permanent infrastructure. Proposals included creative concepts that would reflect the diversity and art of Toronto on the east side, while providing elements of interactivity and play on the west side into Bathurst Quay Common.

UPCOMING REPORT

Waterfront Toronto **Waterfront Destination Strategy**

Expected to be complete in Late 2026, their consultation and report will look to identify opportunities along the broader waterfront for new destination and attractions sites that build on and enhance the major tri-government investments to date.

HISTORY OF WATERFRONT AS EVENT VENUE



EVOLUTION OF WATERFRONT AS EVENT VENUE Pg. 1 of 4

1870's to mid-1900's

ESCAPISM AND ENTERTAINMENT



Canadian National Exhibition, 1879-
Hanlan's Amusement Park, 1894
Centreville, 1967-

Along the waterfront, Exhibition Place has always had some of Toronto's most significant events, including the Toronto Industrial Exhibition which is now the Canadian National Exhibition since 1879, Canadian International Air Show since 1946, the National Trade Centre now called the Enercare Centre that hosts conventions, industry and consumer events, and until last year the IndyCar event since 1986.

The Hanlan's Amusement Park on the Toronto Islands including a hotel, horse diving and a baseball stadium until the 1930's.

Centreville Amusement Park opened in 1967 with a farm and petting zoo, children's activities, miniature roller coaster and railway.

1970's

INDUSTRIAL DECLINE, BUT ARTS AND CULTURE INVESTMENT



Ontario Place opens,
1971-

Provincially created park area. Primary ticket amusement park experience closed in 2012. Current revitalization will add to the Trillium Park with three four-season destination venues, a waterpark and spa, the re-located Ontario Science Centre and a winterized RBC Amphitheatre for concerts.



Harbourfront Centre opens,
1972-

Federally created anchor arts and culture hub, independent since 1990, but primarily funded federally. Very consistent and diverse programming, much of it free, from international dance and music to cultural festivals, outdoor concerts, and summer camps for children. Includes permanent dance theatre, outdoor concert stage, Power Plant Art Gallery, and winter skating rink.

EVOLUTION OF WATERFRONT AS EVENT VENUE Pg. 2 of 4

1990's and 2000's

RISE OF WATERFRONT FESTIVALS



Dragonboat Festival
1989-

Originally running at Ontario Place, the event moved to the Toronto Islands in 2007. A major event each year with up to 60,000 visitors.



Waterfront Festival
2010-

Founded by WBIA and others to activate new parks not serviced by Harbourfront Centre. Signature 'Tall Ships Festival' approximately every three years.

Originally three-days over the Canada Day long weekend, but two days in the 2020's.

2000's to Present

NEW PARKS TO REGULARLY PROGRAM



Music Garden Park, 1999
HTO Park, 2006
Sugar Beach, 2008
Sherbourne Commons, 2012

With the formation of Waterfront Toronto in 2001, **a number of new park spaces have opened providing new programming opportunities without dedicated programming funding.** The BIA (and others) have occasionally programmed these areas, but very few dedicated programming allocations have emerged.

The only space that Harbourfront Centre regularly programs outside its main site is the Music Garden (*above, right*), a concert series with support from the City.



Ontario Square (Harbourfront Centre), 2015
Queen's Quay Revitalization, 2015
Love Park, 2023
Bathurst Quay Common, 2024

EVOLUTION OF WATERFRONT AS EVENT VENUE Pg. 3 of 4

2006

WBIA CREATED TO 'FILL GAPS' IN PROGRAMMING



2006 creation of Waterfront BIA – Queens Quay West
2021 expansion to include eastern waterfront

As three levels of government were now working together to create new parks and improve the waterfront, the Harbourfront Centre remained the main hub without much engagement with the growing waterfront around it.

From 2006, the WBIA supported additional festivals and markets in other parks. To activate less busy parts of the waterfront, the BIA has also taken on programming such as the Summer 'Singing' Ambassadors (2013-2019), member breakfasts, as well as 'community-scale events like paint nights (above, 2024-2025), after-work yoga (2023) and supporting free skate rental days in Sherbourne Common.

2010's-2020's

STRUGGLE TO EXPAND VISITATION TO 'SHOULDER-SEASONS'



Ice Breakers/Winter Stations, 2016-2018
Cavalcade of Lights on waterfront, 2008-2018

In the mid-2010's, the WBIA took a lead in supporting shoulder-season or winter events. In collaboration with the Winter Stations team that had developed a winter event in The Beaches, the BIA brought a similar model of five new outdoor exhibits branded as 'Ice Breakers' here on the central waterfront (*above left*).

In 2019 and 2020 (distanced-only due to COVID), the WBIA re-branded the event as 'Winter Stations on the central waterfront' and moved to renting interactive and lighting exhibits that tour around the world (*'Sonic Runway,' 2020, above at right*).

In more recent years, it was determined that the WBIA would focus less directly on Winter as it was very difficult to draw visitation due to the unpredictable and harsh weather.

EVOLUTION OF WATERFRONT AS EVENT VENUE Pg. 4 of 4

Now PROGRAMMING EXPANDS TO NEW PORT LANDS



2025, Biidasige Park opens
2026, Lasonde Art Trail opens

To promote the further development of the Port Lands, Waterfront Toronto has begun opening new parks in the new flood-protected areas of the Port Lands in advance of new development, including significant residential development. The Bentway's 'Lake Story' (pictured above) was a signature event, highlighting the Port Lands and eastern waterfront as part of Water/Fall (featured at right).

This new area is a challenge for collaboration for the WBIA as it's beyond our current boundaries.

Now COLLABORATION TO DEVELOP 'WATERFRONT-WIDE' SPECTACLES



To shift from Winter as a very difficult time to draw high visitation due to harsh weather, the WBIA more recently shifted along with other programming partners to highlight the Fall as the season we believe visitation can increase most with a collaborative event.

Since 2021, the WBIA has continuously brought together stakeholders, programmers and sponsors to discuss collaboration and the broader waterfront vision.

In 2024, the City of Toronto's Nuit Blanche was heavily focused on the waterfront with more than 40 exhibits along Queens Quay for one night (above, left). In 2025, the WBIA and 15 partners (above, right) collaborated to have multiple programming elements for two straight weekends, a successful pilot the WBIA hopes to build on in future years, and toward future Fall event collaborations over extended periods.

ASPIRATIONAL WATERFRONT CITIES

Highlighting signature events and other waterfront cities that are regularly cited in Toronto as examples our waterfront could learn from and grow toward as a premier destination experience.



Geoff Parmenter, founder of the VIVID Sydney multi-week shoulder-season event in Australia, speaking at the 2024 Waterfront Symposium at the Toronto Region Board of Trade

ASPIRATIONAL CITIES Sydney



Vivid Sydney

Multi-week winter or shoulder-season festival (late May–June, which would be our November–December) that uses the Central Business District and harbour edges as a city-scale event site, anchored by nightly outdoor light installations and projections, plus a program of music, talks “Ideas”, and food events. The event is owned, managed and produced by Destination NSW (the New South Wales provincial government tourism/major events agency).

The City of Sydney is a supporting partner, working with Destination NSW and investing in smaller-venue music activity and local producers that put on supplemental programming rather than overall delivery. **Funding is government-led (State-level, most significantly), layered with corporate sponsors/partners and venue/program partners that help finance parts of the program and extend activation into businesses.**

Australia Day Activities – Jan 26

Australia Day has a variety of waterfront-based events:

- *Dawn Reflection* - A dawn gathering at Circular Quay focused on First Nations recognition, with Indigenous artwork projected onto the Sydney Opera House and viewed from around the harbour.
- *Australia Day Ferrython* - A harbour-based race using four commuter ferries, running from near the Harbour Bridge around Fort Denison and finishing by the Opera House. Designed for shoreline spectators at multiple free viewing points.
- *Maritime Mayhem* - A high-energy water stunt program in Circular Quay featuring jet skis, flyboards and tugboat demonstrations, viewed from land and managed on-water zones.
- *Australia Day Live Concert* - A free, ticketed outdoor concert at the Sydney Opera House combining live music, lighting and fireworks, with a national broadcast for off-site audiences.

ASPIRATIONAL CITIES Chicago



By 2candle at English Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57949477>

Navy Pier

A 50-acre pier off of Downtown Chicago's lakefront that is **managed by a non-profit trust**. The organization coordinates year-round events on the pier, complemented by commercial tenants and permeant destination attractions such as amusement rides, boat operators and galleries. The pier positions itself as a "the peoples pier", a platform for artists and organizations and a venue for audiences around the city, offering 500+ free and ticketed events annually.

The Pier provides the infrastructure and partnership funding that supports a wide range of events, including CHICAGO LIVE!, the Midwest's largest free performing arts festival featuring over 100 Chicago-based artists and companies performing music, dance, theatre, opera, comedy and more.

Navy Pier also hosts 29 fireworks display through the summer, from May to August – with fireworks every Wednesday and Saturday Night.



Riverwalk

A two-kilometer animated pedestrian path along the south bank of the Chicago River in the Loop District. The riverwalk is **programmed through a system of curated, vendor-led concessions and recreational activities that are procured through a Request for Proposal program**. Concessions include kayak and cycle boat rentals, beer and wine gardens, and locally owned food and beverage concessions, and tour boat excursions.

In addition to their ongoing concession strategy, they lean into lightweight, frequent place-based programming that animates the promenade, such as "Sounds of the Riverwalk" - a free weekly music series on Sundays, ART on THE MART, a projection mapping series matched with sound on iconic architecture that is viewed at night from the riverwalk, and family-oriented programming such as hay-mazes and bouncy castles.

The Chicago Riverwalk is overseen by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) and regular operations primarily funded through concession agreements, sponsorships, dock fees, and outdoor advertising.

ASPIRATIONAL CITIES Copenhagen



By Jakub Hafun - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=121462815>



Matyslav Chernov, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>,
via Wikimedia Commons

Kulturhavn Festival

Summer harbour-culture festival that activates Copenhagen's waterfront as a distributed, multi-day public-space experience. **Programming is spread multiple venues around the harbour, canals, and quays, encouraging movement by foot, bike, and boat.** Activities are mostly free and community-led, featuring small- to medium-scale events such as live music, performances, kayaking and swimming, harbour tours, workshops, and family activities on land and water. The harbour itself acts as the main "stage," prioritizing participation over spectatorship. The festival is coordinated through a partnership model involving municipal cultural bodies and harbour stakeholders, with **funding and support coming from the City and partner organizations.**



Guillaume Baviere from Copenhagen, Denmark, CC BY-SA 2.0
<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



Lucia in Kayak (Lucia Kayak Parade)

An annual one-day festival on Copenhagen's canals, running since 2006, featuring **a procession of illuminated, decorated kayaks accompanied by carol singing and a live choir performing from a canal boat.** The day's program, organized by Kayak Bar / Kayak Republic—a floating bar, venue, and outfitter—includes brunch, mulled wine, seasonal treats, kayak decoration and prep, and the evening parade with canal-side singing stops. The night finishes with a DJ-led after-party at Kayak Bar. Spectating is free along the waterfront, and the event is supported by bookable food and beverage offerings.

ASPIRATIONAL CITIES Detroit

Campus Martius

Seen as Detroit's Gathering Place, Campus Martius is a public square that is **purpose-designed to be “event ready”** with the ability to quickly change uses, support food and beverage, and be sponsor ready to support funding of the spaces activates. Operated by the Detroit Downtown Partnership through an enabling organization, the Detroit 300 Conservancy, the DDP also operates the Business Improvement Zone (BIZ).

Funding for events come from a blend of sources, including sponsorships and presenting partners, earned revenue from the concessions and hospitality vendors, special assessment dollars from the BIZ, some and in-kind services from the city, and some income generated through an endowment established for parks operated by DDP.

Winter Programming includes “the Rink at Campus Martius”, “the Big Detroit Tree Lighting”, and Chalet 313, a heated winter lounge overlooking the rink / tree.

Summer Programming surrounds “The Beach at Campus Martius” an urban beach concept running June to October with sand, live music, food and drink. There are also recurring free series held by there, such as “Movie Nights in the D”



ASPIRATIONAL CITIES Montreal

Quartier Des Spectacles (Organization)

Quartier des Spectacles is Montréal's downtown cultural district built around a dense calendar of festivals and public-space animation, centered on signature venues like Place des Festivals and surrounding streets and plazas. The district is stewarded by the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership, a non-profit created with a City of Montréal mandate to coordinate programming, manage and schedule outdoor sites, support organizers with logistics and shared infrastructure, and maintain consistent district branding. Rather than operating as a single festival, QDS functions as an event "platform" that enables dozens of annual events—many free to attend—through an integrated governance model that resembles a BIA-style district manager but with an explicitly cultural focus. The quartier integrates eight public spaces, 80 venues, and 50 festivals a year into a cohesive festival district. Funding typically blends municipal operating support with provincial/federal investments, plus private contributions (member/property-owner dues and sponsorship), and is often directed toward durable, shared assets (lighting systems, staging, equipment pools) that reduce costs and raise quality across the whole festival ecosystem.

Lumino (formerly Luminothérapie) is a wintertime distributed light-art activation put on by QDS from **November to March**. Programming consists of temporary light installations, interactive artworks, projections, and playful urban interventions designed to encourage lingering, movement, and participation in plazas and along pedestrian corridors. Installations are free to experience and are typically paired with simple winter amenities (heated seating, games, sound, or movement-based interaction) that make outdoor space inviting after dark.



<https://www.creos.io/fr/les-tournees-realisees/>



https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartier_des_spectacles

2025 Events and Activations

Event Name	Event date	Visitors	West	Central	East	Islands
The Power Plant, Winter Exhibit	Sept 22, 2024 – Mar 2, 163 days	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit	Nov 9, 2024 – Jan 5, Permanent	10,000+ monthly		X		
Winterfest	Nov 29, 2024 – Jan 5, 38 days	10,000+ weekly		HC		
Ontario Science Centre, KidSpark Exhibit	Dec 4, 2024 – ongoing, Permanent	10,000+ monthly		HC		
The Power Plant, Spring/Summer Exhibit	Apr 11 – Sept 14, 157 days	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Earth Day Community Cleanup	Apr 22	100+ single day	X	X	X	
Jane's Walk	May 2 – May 4, 3 days	1,000+ single day	X	X	X	
International Food Festival – Harbourfront Centre	May 17 – May 19, 3 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Museum of Toronto – Toronto Basketball	May 21 – Oct 12, 145 days	1,000+ weekly		HC		
Doors Open	May 24 – May 25, 2 days	10,000+ daily	X	X	X	
World Congress of the Humanities & Social Sciences	May 30 – Jun 6, 8 days	10,000+			X	
UNDR GRND NGHT MKT (Every Saturday)	May 31 – Aug 23, 13 Saturdays	10,000+ daily		HC		
Farmers Market (Every Saturday)	May 31 – Sept 27, 18 Saturdays	1,000+ daily		HC		
Luminato Festival at Harbourfront Centre	Jun 4 – Jun 24, 21 days	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Dandyism Performance at Love Park	Jun 7	100+ single day		X		
Toronto International Dragon Boat Festival	Jun 14 – Jun 15, 2 days	10,000+ daily				X
Summer Music in the Garden	Jun 21 – Aug 28, multiple days	100+ daily	X			
Community Paint Nights	Jun 25 – Jul 16, 4 Wednesdays	100+ total	X	X	X	
Tall Ships Festival	Jun 28 – Jun 29, 2 days	10,000+ daily			X	
Canada Day Celebrations and Fireworks	Jul 1	50,000 single day	+	HC	+	
Dancing on the Square (Every Wednesday)	Jul 2 – Aug 28, 9 Wednesdays	1,000 + daily		HC		
Fun Philippines Toronto Food & Music Festival	Jul 4 – Jul 6, 3 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
George Brown College: City Sounds	Jul 10 – Jul 31, 4 Thursdays	100+ daily			X	
Free Flicks	Jul 8–Aug 26, 8 Tuesdays	100+ daily		HC		
Caribbean Vibrations Festival	Jul 11 – Jul 13, 3 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Festival of India: Chariot Fest	Jul 12 – Jul 13, 2 days	10,000+ daily				X
Unity Fest	Jul 19	1,000+ daily		HC		
IslandVibes	Aug 2 – Aug 4, 3 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Habari Africa	Aug 8 – Aug 10, 3 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
TAIWANFest	Aug 22 – Aug 24, 3 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Toronto Island Folk Festival	Aug 23 – Aug 24, 2 days	100+ daily				X
Flavours By Fire	Aug 30 – Sept 1, 3 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Canadian International Airshow	Aug 30 – Sept 1, 3 days	10,000+ daily	X			X
Celtic Island Music Festival	Sept 13 – Sept 14, 2 days	1,000+ daily				X
Gibraltar Point Fall Arts Market	Sept 20	100+ daily				X
Water / Fall Festival	Sept 27 – Oct 5, two weekends	10,000+ daily	X	X	X	
Nuit Blanche	Oct 4 – Oct 4,	10,000+ daily	X	X	X	
SOLAR	Oct 16 – Oct 19, 4 days	1,000+ daily	X			
Toronto Waterfront Marathon	Oct 19	10,000+ single day	X	X		
The Power Plant Fall, Winter Exhibits	Nov 6 – Mar 8, 2026, 123 days	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Fashion Week at Bayside T3	Nov 15, – Nov 17, 3 days	1000+ daily			X	
Winterfest	Nov 28 – Dec 31, 34 days	10,000+ weekly		HC		
Harbourfront Skating Rink (+ DJ Skate Nights)	Nov 28 – Mar 1, 2026, 94 days	10,000+ weekly		HC		
Sherbourne Common Skating Rink	Nov 29 – Mar 2026, 100 days	100+ daily		X		
New Year's Eve Fireworks	Dec 31	50,000+ single	+	HC	X	

2026 Events and Activations

Event Name	Event date	Visitors	West	Central	East	Islands
Ontario Science Centre, KidSpark Exhibit	Permanent, expanded	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Harbourfront Centre Skating	Dec 20 - Mar 1, 72 days	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Community Skate Day, Sherbourne Common	Jan 13	100+ single day			X	
Community Skate Day, Play Mobile	Jan 25	100+ single day			X	
Equinox on Toronto Islands	Mar 21 - Mar 22	100+ single day				X
Earth Day Community Clean Up	Apr 22 - Apr 22	100+ single day	X	X	X	
The Power Plant Spring Exhibits	Apr 24- Sept 7	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Janes Walk	May 1 - May 3	1,000+ daily	X	X	X	X
Sugar Shack	Mar 14 – Mar 15, 2 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Festival of Flavours	May 16 - May 18,	10,000+ daily			X	
Bealtaine Festival	May 21 - Jun 7, 18 days	100+ daily	X			
Doors Open	May 23 - May 24, 2 days	10,000+ daily	X	X	X	
Fashion Week: Fashion Art Toronto	May 25 - May 31, 7 days	1000+ daily			X	
Luminato Festival	Jun 3 - Jun 28, 26 days	10,000+ total	X	HC		
Dragon Boat Festival	Jun 13 - Jun 14, 2 days	10,000+ daily				X
Pride House TO Fan Zone	Jun 11 - Jul 19, 34 days	10,000+			X	
Soccer Canada Fan zone	Jun 11 - Jul 1, 22 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Jumpstart Community Pitch	Jun 20 - Aug 30	100+ daily		HC		
Love Park Sails	6 FIFA event days	100+ daily		HC		
Underground Night Market	20 FIFA event days	1,000+ daily	X			
Summer Music in the Garden	Jun 20 - Aug 30, multiple days	100+ daily	X			
Canada Day Celebrations and Fireworks	Jul 1	50,000+ single day	+	HC	+	
Chariot Festival	Jul 11 - Jul 12, 2 days	10,000+ daily				X
Free Flicks	July – Aug, multiple days	100+ daily		HC		
Dancing on the Square	July – Aug, multiple days	100+ daily		HC		
Island Soul	Jul 31 - Aug 3, 4 days	10,000+ daily		HC		
Toronto Folk Festival	Aug 21 - Aug 23, 3 days	1,000+ daily				X
Air Show	Sept. 5 - Sept. 7, 3 days	10,000+ daily	X			X
IDA conference on the waterfront	Sept. 1 - Sept. 3, 3 days	1000+ total		X		
Musical Stairs at Harbourfront Centre	Sept. 18 - Oct 4, 17 days	1,000 + daily		HC		
Gatsby Redux	Sept. 26 - Sept. 27, 2 days	100+ daily		HC		
Biennial of Art Ferry Performances	Sept. 27	1,000+ single day		X		
Culture Days Ontario Interactive Art	Sept 27, Oct 4, 2 days,	1,000+ daily			X	
Music Garden Concerts (Fall Series)	Sept 18-Oct 4, 9 days	100+ daily	X			
Public Pier Programming	Sept 18 – Oct 4, 9 days	1,000+ daily	X			
Harvest Market	Oct 10 – Oct 12, 3 days	10,000+ daily			X	
Stratford Fest at Harbourfront	Oct – Dec	10,000+ monthly		HC		
Big Show at Terminal Theatre	Oct – Dec	10,000+ monthly		X		
NYE Fireworks	Dec 31	50,000+ single day	X	HC	+	

NOTES/LEGEND:

- Many visitor counts are rough estimates by Waterfront BIA if not publicly available.
- HC** for Harbourfront Centre as the most active activation site on the central waterfront compared with other events locating centrally. This listing likely underestimates how active the site is.
- +** indicates that the main site was not in this location, but that it had a significant impact on foot traffic or activation, e.g. Canada Day Fireworks at Harbourfront Centre lead to significant crowds at viewing areas in nearby parks like HTO Park and Sugar Beach.

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Earnscliffe	Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik, Tom Davidson
Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Association	F+H Partners
T1	The Bentway
Toronto Padel Club	Toronto Port Authority
MP Chi Nguyen, Hawa Mire	Ontario Science Centre
RBC	CNE
City Ports	Exhibition Place
East Waterfront Community Association	Therme
The Cortel Group	Live Nation
BATL	Gone Sailing Adventures
Bloor-Yorkville BIA	Island Breeze
East Keating Pub	Old Town Toronto BIA
Canada Ireland Foundation	Great Lakes Schooner
OCAD	Empress of Canada
Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre	Paddle Toronto
Nieuport	Toronto Harbour Nautical Centre
Toronto Downtown West BIA	City Sightseeing
Harbourfront Centre	Pinewood Studios
Ripley's Aquarium	Cherry St. BBQ
CN Tower	Toronto Financial District BIA
Toronto Blue Jays Baseball Club	City of Toronto, Economic Development & Culture
LCBO	CreateTO
Menkes	Dream Community Foundation
The STEPS Initiative	A&C
Redpath	Boxcar Social
George Brown Polytechnic	City Place-Fort York BIA
FAB Restaurants (Simona, IRENE, Goodman Pub, PieBar)	The Remix Project
MaRS	Briarlane
Great Lakes Brewery	Pacific Reach
First Capital	Urban Romantics
SailGP	Porter Airlines
Greater Toronto Hotel Association	Waterfront Toronto
Destination Toronto	Level5 Strategy
Tom Gleason	Glenn Gould Foundation
Northam Property Management	York Quay Neighbourhood Association
Oxford Properties	LCBO
Radisson Blu	Second City
Pinnacle International	Ivy Coffee
Wheel Excitement	Brittney Filek-Gibson

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VERSION SUMMARY

Early drafts were shared with key stakeholders in June 2026 marked as "Draft version for review with stakeholders" and a draft title of 'We're here, what do we do next.'

v.f1.0 Final version released and shared publicly on August 20, 2026.