

Re-connect the city to the waterfront and link the east and west  
Core Circle landscapes

# SHORELINE STITCH

**ELLINE**

**H**

## Shoreline Stitch connects the city to the waterfront and links the east and west Core Circle landscapes

Shoreline Stitch will serve to fully and seamlessly connect, enhance, invent and share the network of streets, parks and open spaces between the Downtown and the waterfront and from its western Garrison Creek edge to the eastern Don River Valley ravine, providing opportunities for civic life and recreation and promoting a corridor to significantly improve movement for cyclists and pedestrians.

From the time of industrialization, Downtown Toronto has been separated from Lake Ontario by a wide swath of rail lines, the Gardiner Expressway and Lake Shore Boulevard. Shoreline Stitch includes a series of interventions. Some are ambitious and long-term, such as the decking the rail corridor and others are more modest but highly impactful, such as improving pedestrian crossings on Lake Shore Boulevard.

Shoreline Stitch will connect surrounding communities to their parks and public realm assets. It will connect the Downtown and the waterfront and western and eastern sections of the Core Circle, from Fort York and the future Rail Deck Park in the west to Corktown Common and the Don River Valley in the east. Shoreline Stitch will continue to reinvent under-utilized and forgotten places across the Downtown to support a seamlessly connected parks and public realm system to serve the growing Downtown.



*Looking west from Corktown Common, Toronto, Canada*



*Fork York and Garrison Common, Toronto, Canada*



*Looking east from Exhibition Place, Toronto, Canada*



- 1 *Rail Deck Park*
- 2 *The Bentway*
- 3 *North-South Connections*
- 4 *East-West Connections*
- 5 *Exhibition Place | Ontario Place*
- 6 *Fort York | Garrison Common*
- 7 *Roundhouse Park*
- 8 *Union Station Hub*
- 9 *Station Shared Street*
- 10 *The Esplanade | David Crombie Park | Distillery District*
- 11 *West Don Lands | Corktown Common*
- 12 *Cloverleaf Park*

Three strategies outline general principles and design directions to guide a series of initiatives that reinforce the Shoreline Stitch vision through focused interventions.

### STITCH THE WATERFRONT TO THE CITY



*The Bentway, Toronto, Canada*

Bridge the gaps that have historically isolated Toronto's waterfront by reinforcing north-south connections between the Downtown and the waterfront. Improve north-south connections for pedestrians and cyclists from neighbourhoods north of the rail corridor and Gardiner-Lake Shore corridor by implementing pedestrian priority policies at intersections. Create safe and comfortable pedestrian and cyclist environments through the rail corridor, under the Gardiner Expressway and across Lake Shore Boulevard.

#### *What we heard:*

- Improve pedestrian and cycling routes to provide better north-south connections.

### CONNECT THE WESTERN AND EASTERN SECTIONS OF THE CORE CIRCLE



*Looking west from Corktown Common, Toronto, Canada*

Establish a series of connected parks and public spaces anchored to both sides of the Core Circle, from Fort York and the future Rail Deck Park in the west to the revitalized Union Station in the centre to Corktown Common and the Don River Valley in the east. Imagine the Shoreline Stitch as a Park District that will span the entire core, a series of connected parks and public spaces that draw people to explore the extents of the Downtown, through some of Toronto's best-known civic destinations.

#### *What we heard:*

- Better connect existing parks and public spaces.
- Encourage active transportation connections and linkages between parks and public spaces.
- Improve connections from the city into the ravines.

**ACT NOW, WHILE KEEPING BIGGER OPPORTUNITIES FIRMLY IN SIGHT**



*(left) Rail Deck Park, as proposed; (right) Front Street, proposed sidewalk widening, Toronto, Canada*

“If the Gardiner Expressway is going to stay, Lake Shore Boulevard needs to be re-imagined as a city street.”

– TOcore Consultation

Continue to reinvent under-utilized and forgotten places within the Shoreline Stitch to support a seamlessly connected parks and public realm space to serve the growing Downtown. Prioritize small but impactful interventions that support pedestrians and cyclists, such as sidewalk expansions on Front Street, the northern trail at Fort York and the Mixed-use Shared Street conversion of Station Street. At the same time, continue advancing major transformations, such as the Bentway and Rail Deck Park. Such projects can address Toronto’s park needs, accommodate large civic events and celebrations and elevate the quality of public space design in the Downtown.

*What we heard:*

- Improve the pedestrian experience on our streets (e.g. by widening sidewalks and creating pedestrian-priority or shared streets).
- Support for decking the rail corridor to create a new large park.



Shoreline Stitch is the opportunity to connect the east and west Core Circle, and the Downtown with the waterfront.

INITIATIVES

- 1 *Rail Deck Park*  
Advance Rail Deck Park – Bathurst St to John St  
Assess the Feasibility of Rail Deck Park – Future Phases
- 2 *The Bentway*  
Advance Future Phases – Manitoba Dr to Spadina Ave
- 3 *North-South Connections*  
Improve North-South Great Street Connections  
Improve Smaller Connections
- 4 *East-West Connections*  
Create a Continuous Trail along the Rail Corridor and Northern Linear Park, and under the Gardiner and at Southern Linear Park  
Implement Lake Shore Blvd Pedestrian Improvements
- 5 *Exhibition Place | Ontario Place*  
Advance All Season Public Space Design and Programming
- 6 *Fort York | Garrison Common*  
Implement Parks and Open Space Design
- 7 *Roundhouse Park*  
Implement Capital Projects
- 8 *Union Station Hub*  
Implement Front St Pedestrian Improvements
- 9 *Station Shared Street*  
Assess Potential for Mixed-use Shared Street Conversion
- 10 *The Esplanade | David Crombie Park | Distillery District*  
Advance Capital Projects and Expansion  
Implement Mill Street Pedestrian Improvements
- 11 *West Don Lands | Corktown Parks*  
Advance Corktown Parks Re-development  
Create Eastern Avenue Bridge Connection
- 12 *Cloverleaf Park*  
Create Future Parkland / Absorptive Landscape





Northern Trail at Fort York

Rail Deck Park Future Phases

Rail Deck Park

Front Street Pedestrian Improvements

Station Street Mixed-use Shared Street

Sky Park and East-West Lane Connection

Roundhouse Park Capital Projects

Lake Shore Boulevard Pedestrian Improvements

CityPlace Schools and Community Centre

The Bentway

Eastern Avenue Bridge Connection

Schoolyard

Schoolyard

Mill Street

First Parliament Site Parkland

David Crombie Park Capital Projects

David Crombie Park Expansion

Cloverleaf Park

Cherry Street

Lower Don River Park

Map showing proposed initiatives for the Shoreline Stitch, Toronto, Canada



## 200 Years in the Making

The vision for a connected system of parks and open spaces along the original shoreline of Lake Ontario is as old as the city itself. When John G. Simcoe, with the survey of Alexander Aiken, laid out the town of ten small blocks at the eastern end of the harbour in 1793, he declared that any new development must preserve the waterfront as a place for the enjoyment of nature and collective gathering. The vision for a public waterfront began by preserving two green ‘bookends’ – the Garrison reserve to the west and the King’s Park (between Berkeley Street and the Don River) to the east. In 1818, the 30-acre strip of land connecting these spaces, from Front Street south to the lake, was made into a public trust to protect it from development. The strip of land became known as the ‘Walks and Gardens.’

From their establishment, the ‘Walk and Gardens’ lands were vulnerable to encroachment. In 1852, following substantial reductions to the Garrison Reserve and King’s Park, John G. Howard’s sketch (*right*) still

imagined a series of parks and public spaces from Bathurst Street to York Street, but back from the water behind a new esplanade to which the railways would have direct access. Just one year later, the plan for the route of the proposed railway engulfed the lands entirely.

Today, on the footprint of the ‘Walks and Gardens’ lands, the Shoreline Stitch offers the opportunity to restore this vision and create a new civic spine and connected system of parks and open spaces in the heart of Downtown Toronto.

Here is the opportunity to fully and seamlessly connect, enhance, invent and share the network of streets, parks and open spaces between the Downtown and the waterfront and the west and east Core Circle, providing opportunities for civic life and recreation and promoting a corridor to significantly improve movement for cycling and pedestrians.



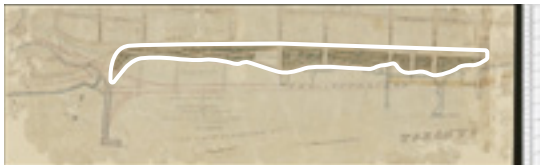
*Part of York the capital of Upper Canada on the Bay of Toronto in Lake Ontario, by Elizabeth Hale, 1804*



*Lurie Garden, a contemporary model for the proposed Front Street ‘Walks and Gardens’, Millennium Park, Chicago, United States*



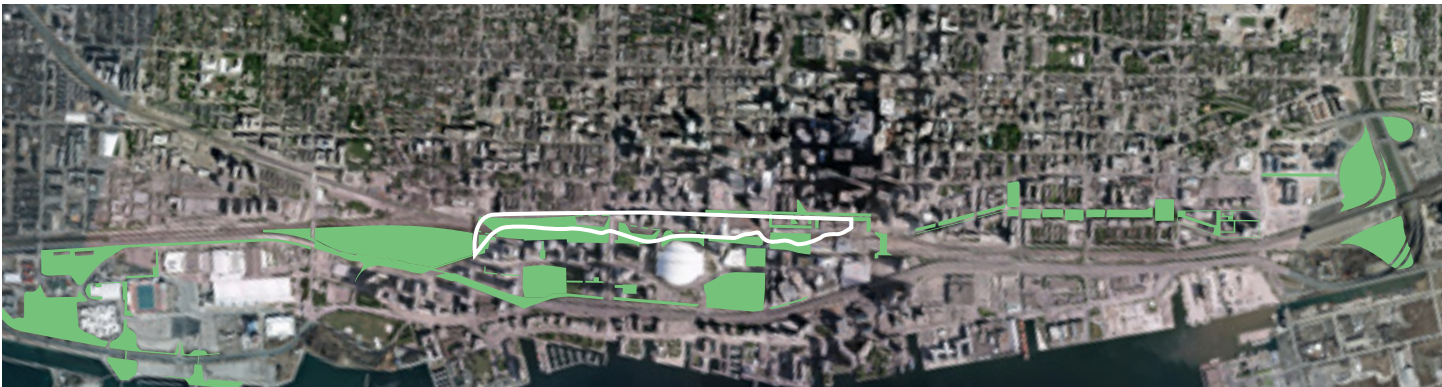
Plan of York, by Lieut. Phillpotts, 1818



Sketch for North Shore of Toronto Harbour, 'Pleasure Drives Walks and Shrubbery for the recreation of the Citizens', by J. Howard, 1852



Proposal for the Grand Trunk Railway and Lands Surrounding, 1853



Location of the 'Walks and Gardens' within the contemporary Downtown, 2018



## Rail Deck Park

CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



*Rail Deck Park, Proposed Concept*

In Fall 2016, the City of Toronto initiated planning for a new major park in Downtown Toronto, to be built over the rail corridor west of Union Station. Known as Rail Deck Park, the project represents a generational opportunity to create a large park in the heart of Downtown, and

realize provincial and municipal growth planning and city-building objectives. Rail Deck Park is a bold and creative solution to the challenges of city-building and is the first of its kind in the city and the country. An innovative deck structure – essentially a giant bridge

(right) A model for Rail Deck Park, Millennium Park, 24 acres in size, is decked over rail lines, two parking garages and a busway, Chicago, United States



CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



Spadina Terrace at Rail Deck Park, Proposed Concept

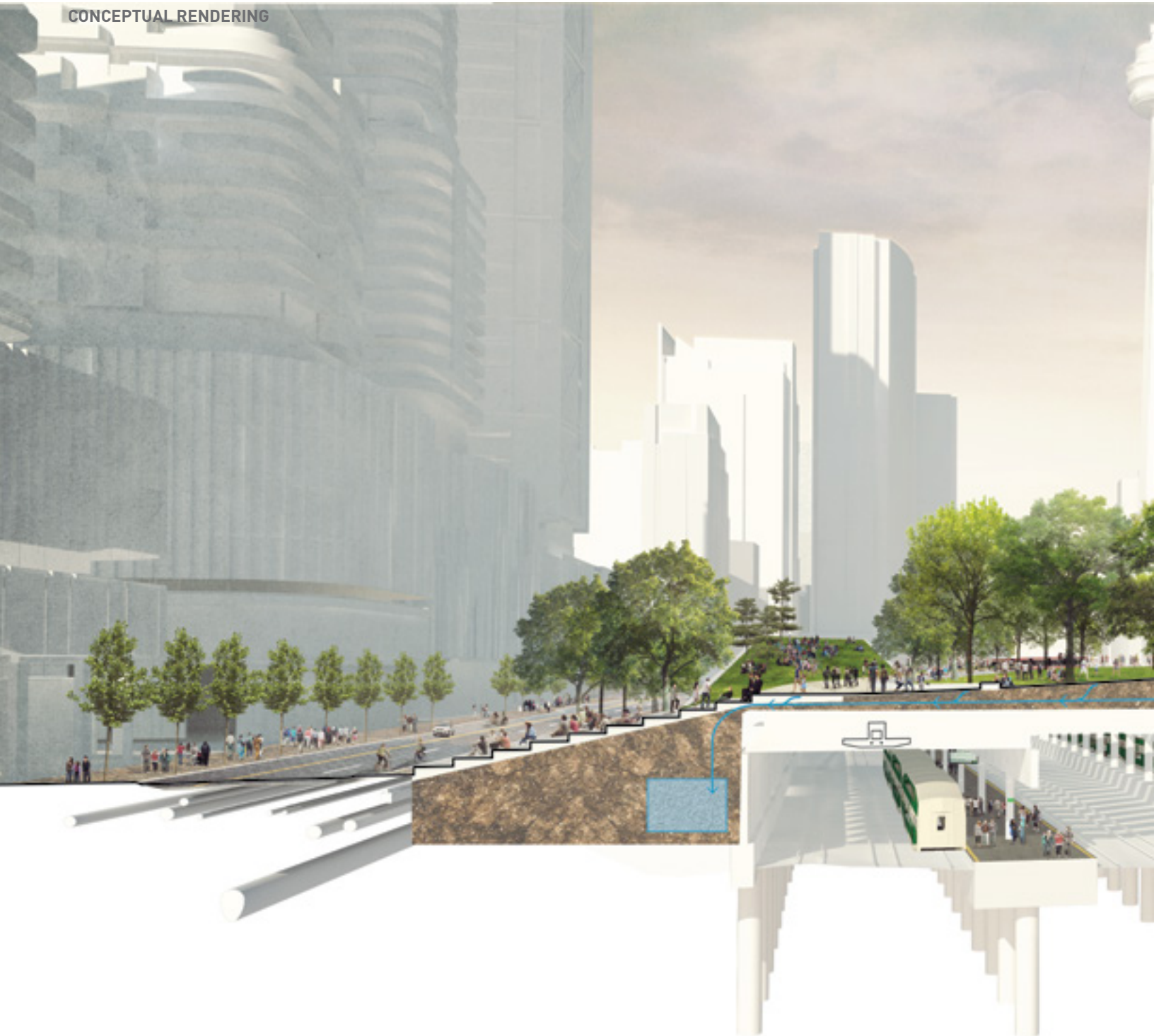
across the rail corridor – will provide the foundation and be designed to minimize impacts on train operations below. It will be engineered to support all the elements of a vibrant and dynamic urban park: lawns, gathering and play spaces, shade trees, water features, public

art and more. It will be seamless and serve as a major connector between the Downtown and waterfront. Rail Deck Park is an opportunity to create the city's next great civic space, where all Torontonians can come to play, relax, connect and celebrate.



TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA 3. SHORELINE STITCH

CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



*Rail Deck Park – Decking Structure Representation*

CONCEPTUAL RENDERING







*Front Street 'Walks and Gardens' at Rail Deck Park, Proposed Concept*





CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



## The Bentway



*The Bentway, Master Plan*

The area surrounding the Bentway is rich with a layered history. The site follows the original shoreline of Lake Ontario and was an important junction for trade, and a hunting and a gathering place for First Nations peoples including the Haundenosaunee and the Anishinaabe, the

Huron-Wendat and the Petun people, and most recently the Mississaugas of the New Credit. The Bentway is a unique public space that will transform more than four hectares of vacant and forgotten land underneath Toronto's Gardiner Expressway into a new gathering



(right) *The Bentway, winter skating trail, Toronto, Canada*



place for our city's growing population. Stretching from Strachan Avenue to Spadina Avenue, the continuous multi-use trail and series of public spaces will knit together neighbourhoods and become a gateway to the waterfront. The dynamic new corridor will activate the

area with access to year-round activities and events, including gardens, a skating trail, recreational amenities, public markets, public art, special exhibitions, festivals, theatre and musical performances and more.





*Strachan Gate at The Bentway*





We're glad  
you made it.  
Welcome to  
The Bentway!

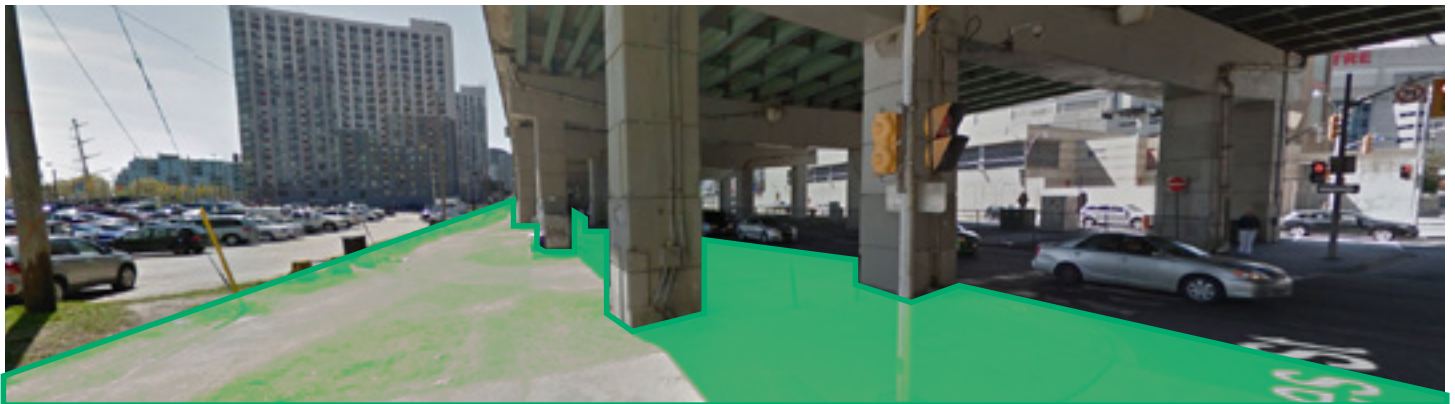
On the north side  
are hints of what  
Toronto has  
the shoreline.  
Nearly a dozen  
from Toronto  
one branch  
like tower.



## North-South and East-West Connections



*Lake Shore Boulevard at Rees Street, proposed area for improvements to pedestrian crossings across Lake Shore Boulevard to better connect the city and the waterfront, Toronto, Canada*



*Lake Shore Boulevard at Rees Street, looking west, proposed area for improvements to east-west pedestrian and cycling connections along Lake Shore Boulevard, Toronto, Canada*

Bridge the gaps that have historically isolated Toronto's waterfront by enhancing north-south connections between the Downtown and the waterfront neighbourhoods. Improve north-south and east-west connections for pedestrians and cyclists through the rail corridor and

under the Gardiner Expressway, and improve the safety and comfort of the pedestrian experience on Lake Shore Boulevard. By improving connections, the Shoreline Stitch will better connect the Downtown with the waterfront, and the west end with the east end.

*(right) Madrid RIO combines 47 subprojects including squares, boulevards, parks, and improved connections between the urban districts along the river, Madrid, Spain*



## Goals

Shoreline Stitch will serve to fully and seamlessly connect, enhance, invent and share the network of streets, parks and open spaces between the Downtown and the waterfront and from its western edge to the eastern Don River Valley Ravine, providing opportunities for civic life and recreation and promoting a corridor to significantly improve movement for cycling and pedestrians.

- Connect the Downtown and the waterfront and the western and eastern sections of the Core Circle.
- Implement Rail Deck Park from Union Station westward to Fort York and beyond.
- Continue to reinvent the underused and forgotten places within the Shoreline Stitch to support a seamless connected parks and public realm space to serve the growing Downtown.

## Actions

- Advance planning and design for Rail Deck Park.
- Prioritize pedestrian comfort on streets and at crossings and identify small but impactful interventions that support pedestrians and cyclists.
- Explore opportunities to advance future phases of The Bentway: west of Strachan; main trail extension to Spadina Avenue; Skating Trail east extension to Mouth-of-Creek Park; and pedestrian and cycling elevated bridge crossing.
- Improve the north-south connections between the Downtown and the waterfront neighbourhoods, prioritizing the north-south Great Streets, but also considering smaller streets such as the crossings at Rees Street.
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety and comfort on Lake Shore Boulevard.
- Improve pedestrian realm on Front Street.
- Consider Station Street as a shared street that supports pedestrian activity near Union Station (UPX station).
- Advance implementation of Council-approved Pedestrian Promenade Plans.