

Historical Setting

Design the neighbourhood to reflect and build upon the history of the area and interpret the evolution of its landscape.

Fort York is the birthplace of urban Toronto. It was established in 1793 on high ground above the shore of Lake Ontario at the mouth of the Garrison Creek, overlooking the entrance to the harbour.

The low lying ground surrounding the high, strategic position for the military defence of the harbour and the Town of York, suited the later construction of railways which began in the 1850s. This led to the eventual circling of the Fort by the railways and industrial activities that were the foundation of Toronto's economic growth. The Fort itself survived these incursions, but its prominent position on the lake front was overwhelmed by lake-filling, industrial development and overlays of railways, road bridges and the Gardiner Expressway.

Much of the area has now been cleared of the industry and local rail infrastructure, though their traces remain. There is an opportunity to establish a new, modern neighbourhood that will be distinctive by being rooted in the history and identity of this place. For the Fort, there is an opportunity to re-establish, literally and figuratively, its original topographic and aquatic setting, and to interpret the traces of succeeding generations of landscape interventions.

The preparation of plans for the restoration and interpretation of historic features and buildings of Fort York is ongoing.

Significant historical features to be represented in new public landscapes include: the early lake shoreline and topography, the Garrison Creek valley, and the dramatic rail cut of the Great Western Railway which was carved through the escarpment (presently hidden under the Gardiner Expressway).



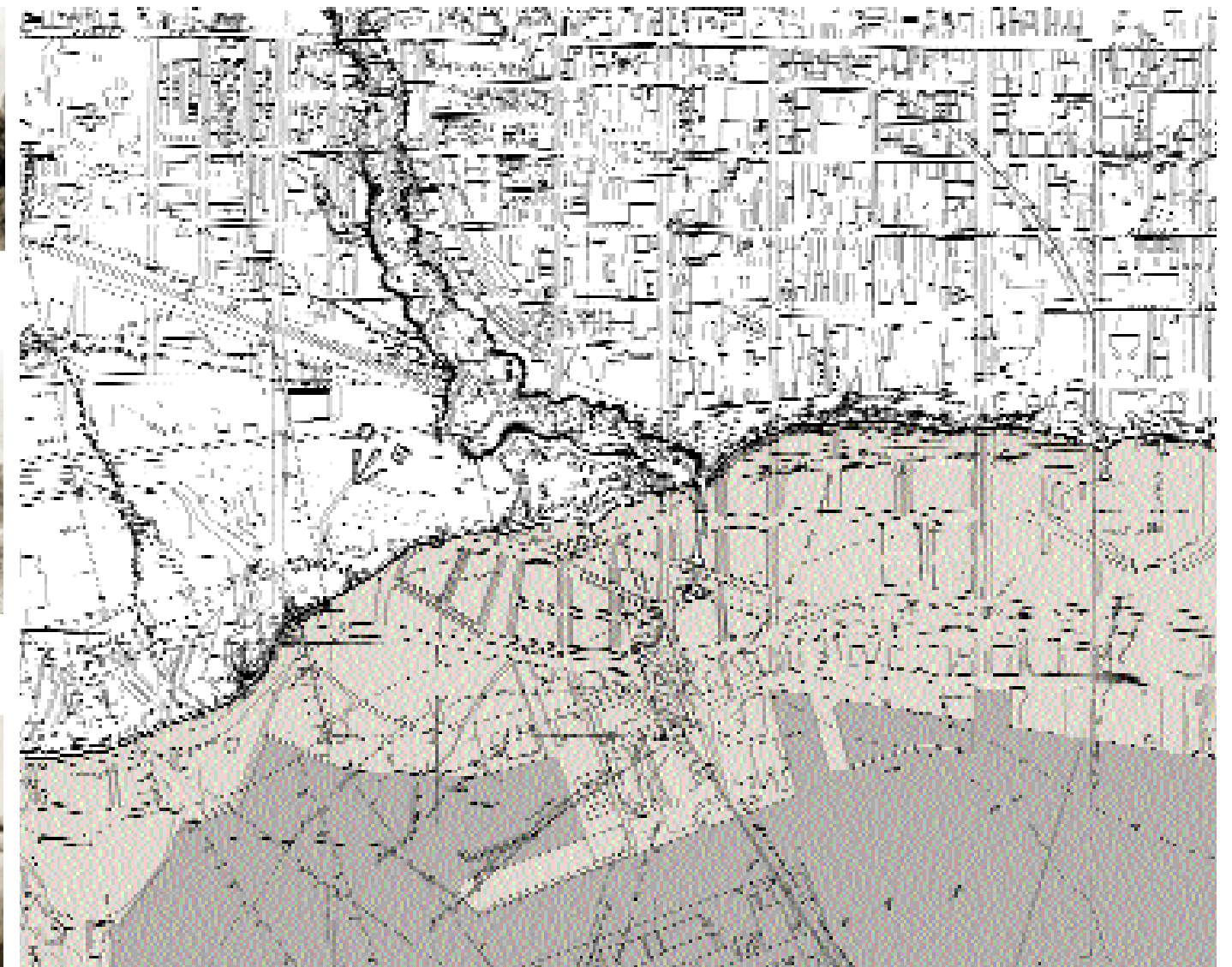
Henry Bowyer Lane, "The Fort, Toronto, Upper Canada, 1842"



Benson J. Lossing, "Old Fort at Toronto in 1860"



John Elliott Woolford, "Fort at York, 1821"



2004 City of Toronto base map with superimposed 1833 map of Garrison Reserve.



1816



1856



1873



1921



1934



2004

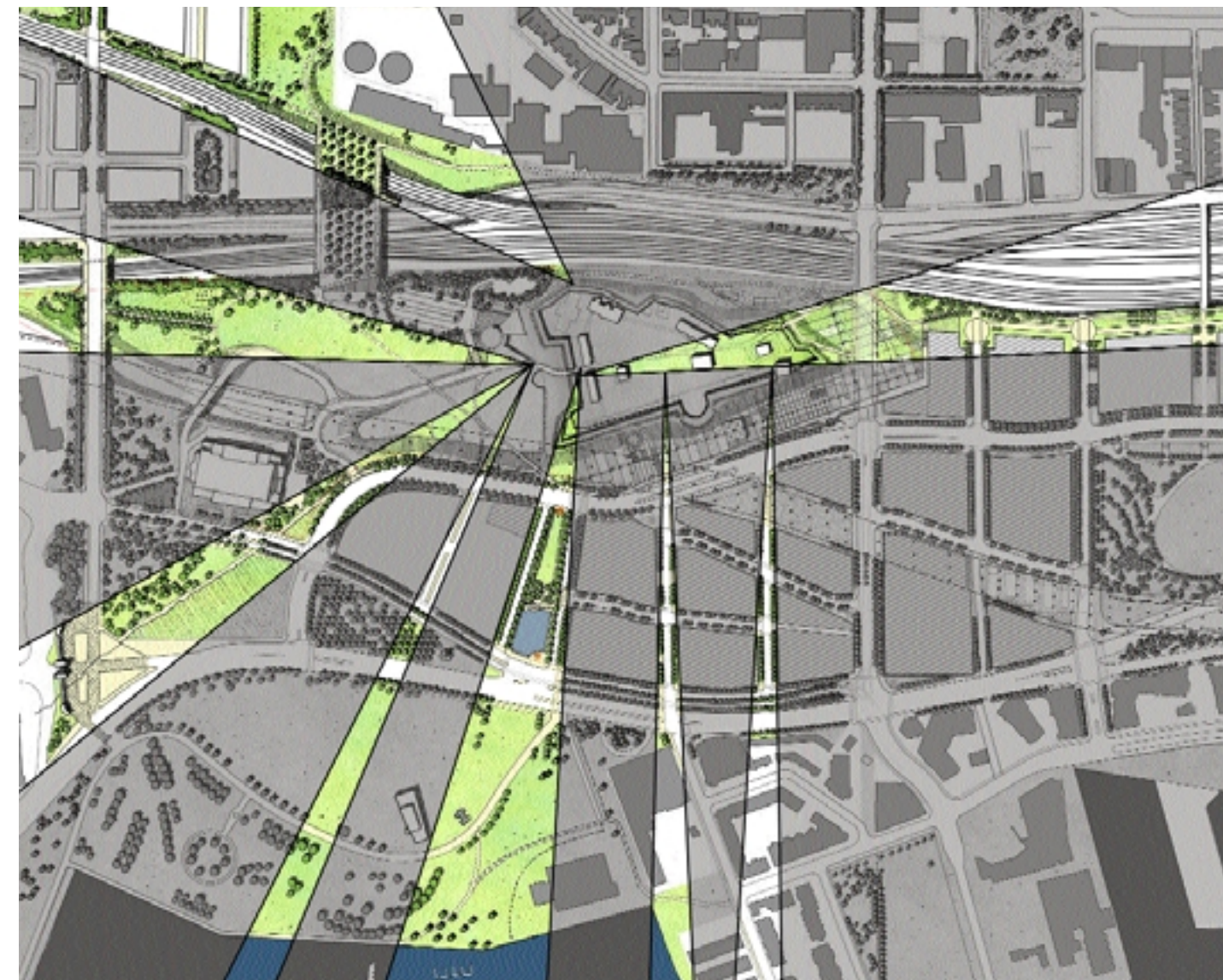
Fort York Views

Protect views to and from Fort York by establishing view corridors on streets and public spaces and by controlling building heights and profiles in important viewsheds.

For decades Fort York has been invisible and the strategic importance of its location has been indiscernible. Redevelopment of the surrounding area offers the chance to visually reconnect the Fort, the city and the waterfront, and to reveal, in a meaningful way, the Fort in its context. This visual reconnection will be achieved by establishing protected view corridors on the streets and open spaces in the redevelopment areas and by guiding the composition of built and landscape form in the important viewsheds.



View from the Fort towards downtown



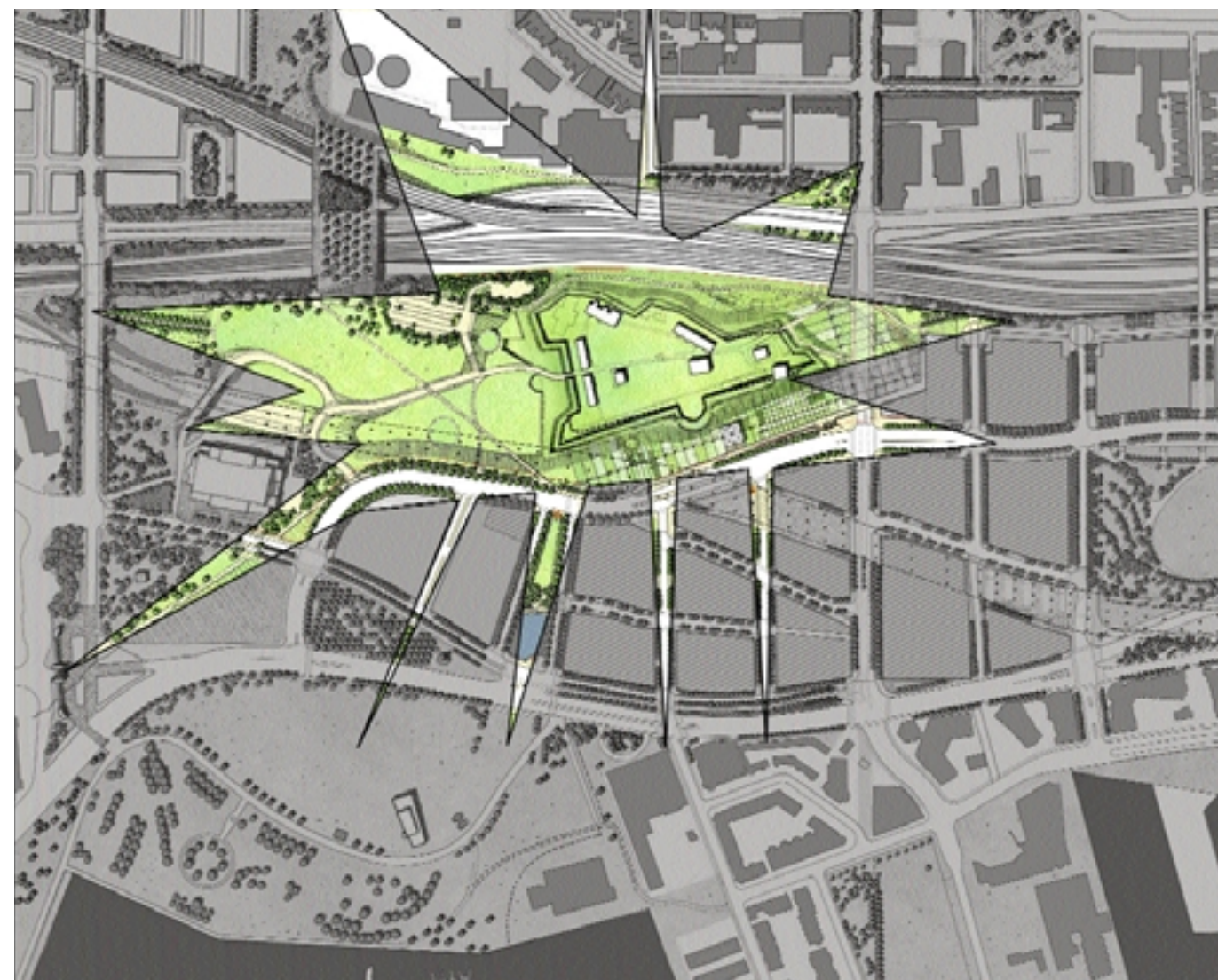
Principal views from the Fort

Principal Views **To** the Fort

The Fort York Heritage Conservation District can be made visible from a number of importance vantage points. These include Stanley Park, Bathurst/Front intersection, Northern Linear Park, Bremner Boulevard, Lake Shore Boulevard (along street and open space corridors in the Fort York Neighbourhood), Princes' Gate, and Strachan Avenue at the Military Burying Ground.

Principal Views **From** the Fort

These corridors and viewsheds also offer long-range views from the Fort, including views towards: Garrison Creek, the downtown skyline, Princes' Gate and Military Burying Ground. Crucial glimpses of the waterfront are made possible through street and open space corridors in the Fort York Neighbourhood.



Principal views to the Fort



View from Strachan Avenue bridge towards the Fort

Archaeological Resources

Archaeological assessments should be carried out in advance of any construction. Archaeological digs in the Heritage Conservation District associated with special projects should be programmed and presented as neighbourhood attractions.

The Fort York Heritage Conservation District is rich in archaeological resources, many of which have been protected by the land filling that has occurred over the last century and a half. Conservation of this resource will allow us to study and interpret the history of the Fort and surrounding region for future generations. Adequate archaeological investigations will be carried out in advance of any new construction to avoid the unintentional destruction of these resources. Particularly important are the land and lake edge areas that preceded the 19th century lakefilling operations. The Secondary Plan calls for each owner to undertake an archaeological assessment and impact study to identify significant archaeological resources and modify development to mitigate potential negative impacts to those resources.

A Public Attraction

Experience, both at the Fort and elsewhere, has demonstrated that archaeological digs are of immense interest to the general public, often drawing large crowds and stimulating wide press coverage. When archaeological excavations occur, the “dig” could be a spectator and participatory public attraction of the neighbourhood which would capitalise on this inherent curiosity.

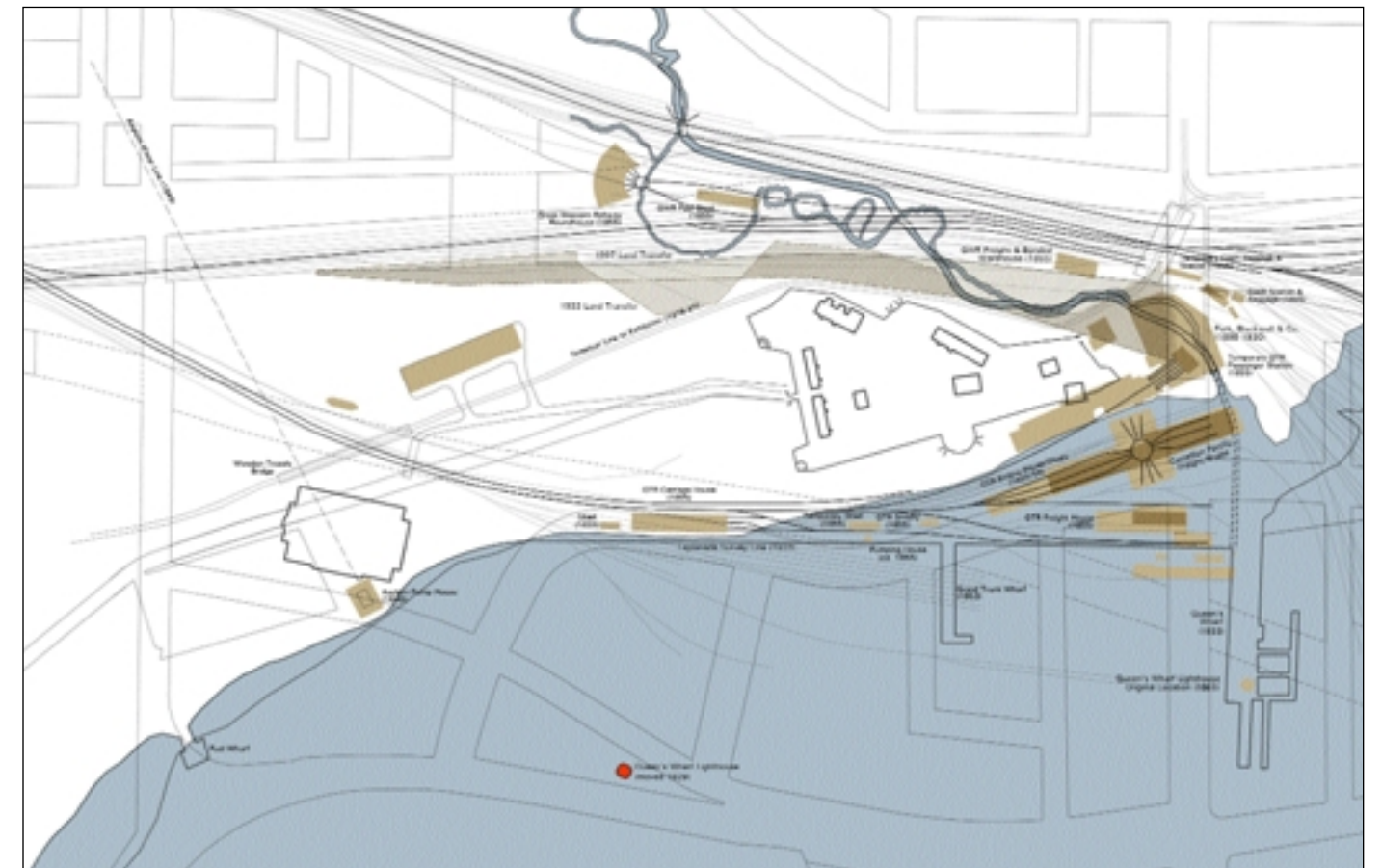
This concept is included in current plans for the Archaeological Landscape in the area below the Fort’s south ramparts and extending to the Mouth of the Creek Park.



Archaeological excavations adjacent to Blockhouse Number 2, 1992



Inventory of existing and demolished military buildings and structures



Inventory of demolished industrial and railway buildings and artifacts

Architectural Language

New buildings should be compatible and complementary to the existing heritage buildings and should seek to maintain an architectural coherency in the neighbourhood through references to the architectural syntax of the existing (and demolished) industrial buildings in the area.

The Public Realm Plan establishes the principle that the identity of the Fort York Neighbourhood – its streets, parks and buildings – should be rooted in, and belong to this specific place.

The architectural design challenge for the new neighbourhood is to:

- build upon and advance the history and identity of this place in the next generation of development;
- respect and fully acknowledge the buildings and artifacts of the past;
- avoid imitating and trivializing the earlier buildings and artifacts; and
- make modern, high quality public places and private buildings which reflect the present times.

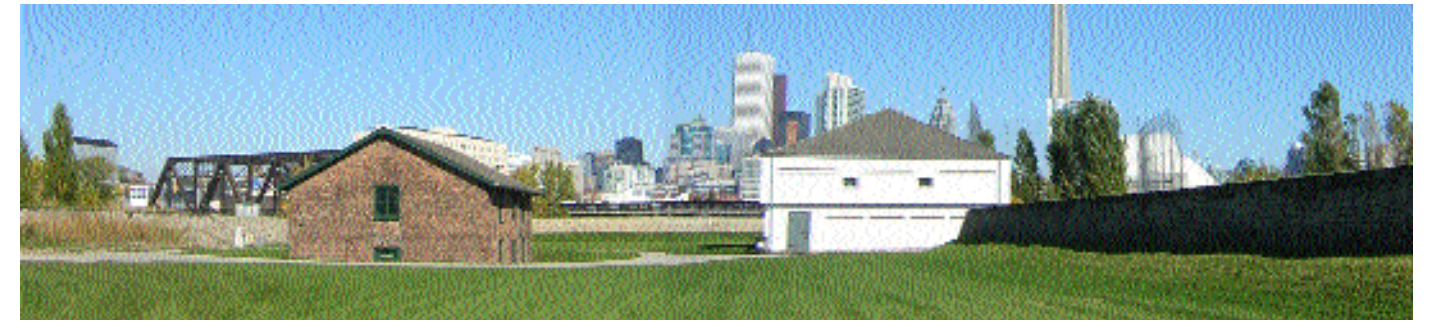
The architectural character of this neighborhood is established by the presence of the historic Fort and the industrial and commercial buildings (art deco) of the area. New development should take into consideration the presence of these buildings and be architecturally compatible with them. Architectural elements of the existing industrial and commercial buildings include:

- Vertically emphasized street wall expression
- Corner emphasis
- Articulation and architectural detail at the pedestrian scale
- Material changes at step-backs
- A rich but restrained material palette (brick/stone/glass)
- Architectural ornament integral to the building's design
- Horizontally proportioned window openings
- Multiple glazing divisions

Interpretations of these architectural elements in new buildings will help to establish an architectural coherency to the new neighborhood.

The architectural neighbours to the Fort York Heritage Conservation District should be compatible in scale, form, materials and articulation with the War of 1812 buildings in the Fort.

The Public Realm Plan recommends that a special architectural design review process be initiated by the City to establish guidelines and to consider the design proposals for buildings facing the Heritage Conservation District. That is, buildings fronting the south side of Fort York Boulevard and on the corner blocks at Fort York/Bremner Boulevard and Bathurst Street.



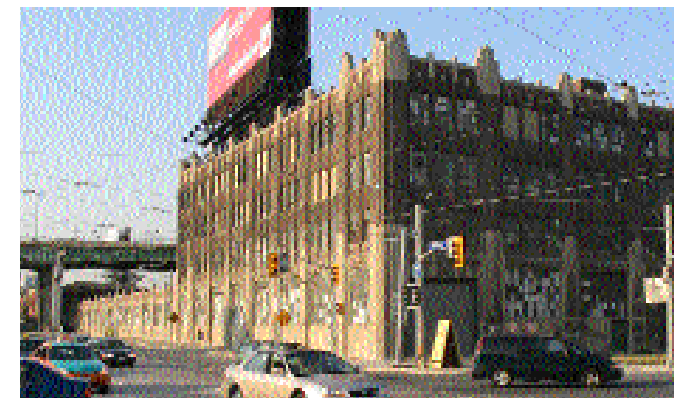
The Brick Magazine and Blockhouse No. 1, Fort York



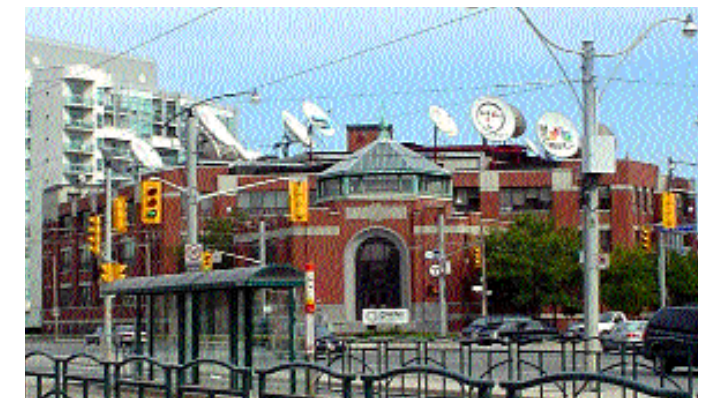
The Soldiers' Barracks behind the west rampart, Fort York



Tip Top Tailors building, Lake Shore Boulevard



Loblaws Warehouse building, Lake Shore Boulevard



Rogers building, Lake Shore Boulevard



Preliminary architectural study of Fleet Street frontage (City of Toronto)



Schematic architectural study of North Mews/Block 6A (Quadrangle Architects Limited)