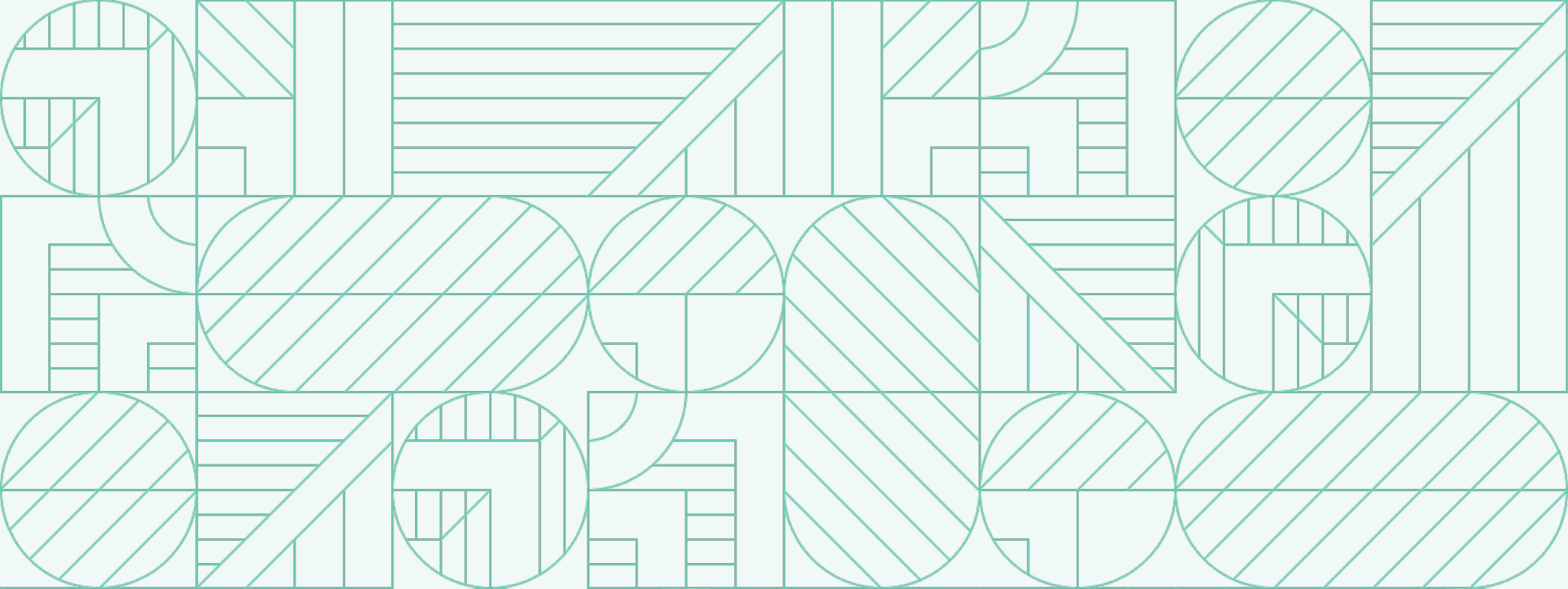


Vision and Opportunities Report

March 2024

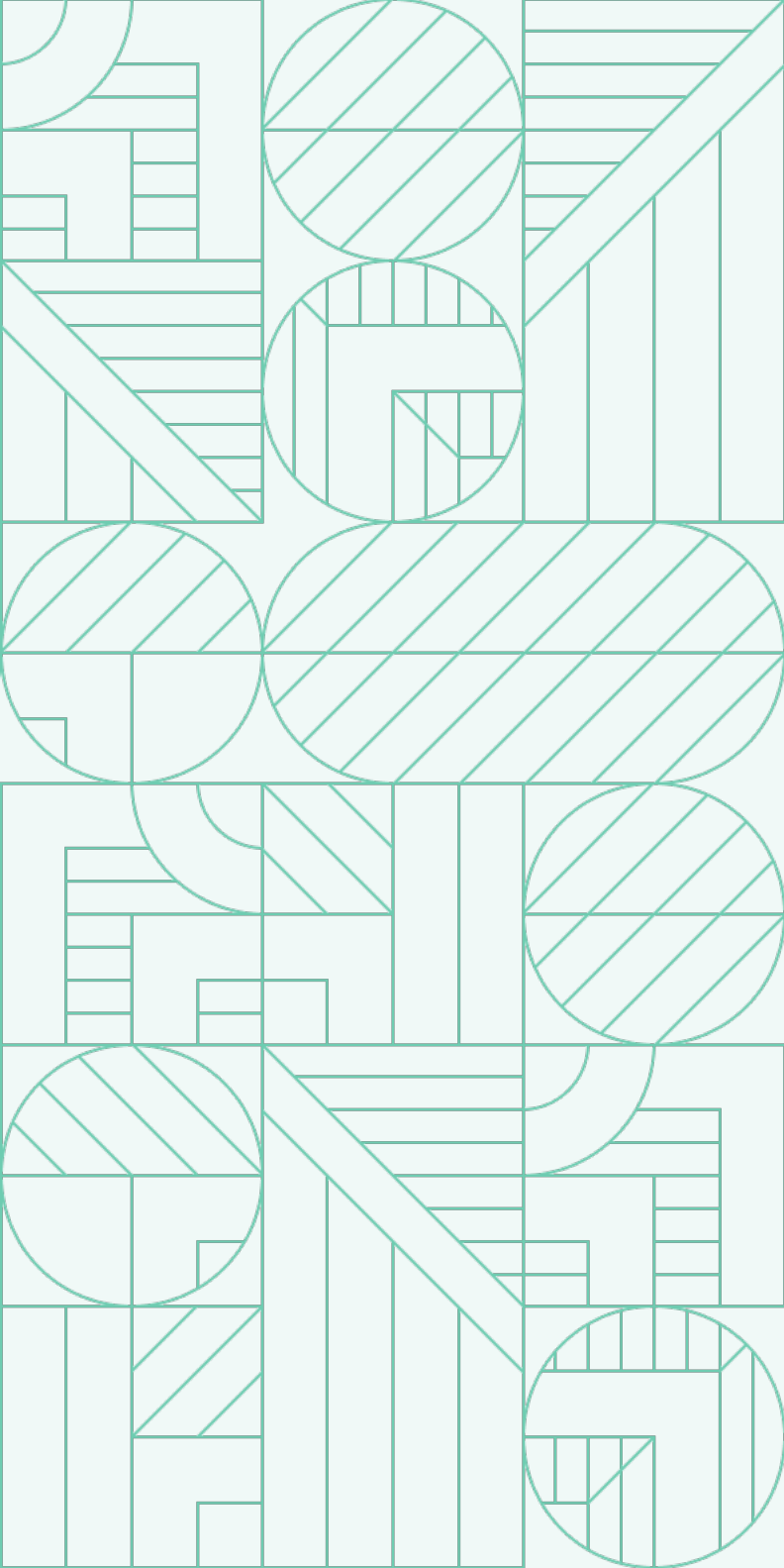




Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that the Gardiner Expressway occupies the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit and the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, the Métis, and many other Indigenous nations.

Toronto, a name which originates from the Mohawk (Kanien'kehá:ka) word Tkaronto (meaning "place in the water where the trees are standing"), is now home to many diverse Indigenous peoples. We recognize them as the past, present, and future stewards of this land. We would like to pay our respects to all who have gathered and will continue to gather in this place. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work together to care for this land and act as stewards of these spaces.



Equity Impact Statement

As a city-building project, the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan recognizes that urban planning practices, particularly those associated with major infrastructure and industrial development, are historically entrenched in and perpetuate settler coloniality, which has excluded, displaced, and harmed many communities and cultures, particularly Indigenous communities, Black communities, and low-income and unhoused communities. The net result is an ongoing environment of distrust between formal planning policy and city-building processes and members of these communities.

The Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan recognizes the critical nature of establishing positive, supportive, and ongoing relationships with unhoused individuals, to ensure that their experiences are acknowledged and inform the outcomes of this plan. Throughout the research, consultation, and planning phases of developing the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan, the project team remains committed to meeting community members where they are at.

This work reflects ongoing trust-building based in fostering positive relationships with the communities within and around the Gardiner Expressway. This commitment works to respect the treaties that govern this land, including the Dish With One Spoon Wampum, the Two Row Wampum, and Treaty 13. Working with urban Indigenous community members and Treaty Rights holders is just the beginning of a relationship-building process and represents a perpetual commitment to mutual exchange and understanding in the stewardship of the under Gardiner spaces.

See Section 1.6: Key Learnings From Consultation (pg. 21) for a summary of engagement activities.



Image 1: Aerial view, looking west from Lower Simcoe Street, of the Gardiner Expressway and Lake Shore Boulevard.

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Executive Summary

In 1964, on the eve of the completion of what would become known as the Gardiner Expressway, the man responsible for this piece of major infrastructure (Frederick G. Gardiner) was quoted as saying:

“I’ve looked at this darn thing from one end to the other and I can’t think of anything I would like to change.”

To state the obvious, Toronto and its waterfront have changed considerably since Frederick “Big Daddy” Gardiner made his fateful claim. The active industrial port of the mid-century has transformed into a thriving metropolitan core, home to tens of thousands of residents and host to many more employees, tourists, and visitors of all descriptions. Densification has resulted in demand for new services and mobility choices and a renewed urgency to respond to the climate crisis and better balance the impact of human use and activity. In light of these changes and the city’s incredible, continued growth trajectory, the following report attempts to “take a look at the darn thing” once again and reveal the opportunities for improvement and innovation that recognize the complex and interconnected realities of ecology, economy, culture, and community.

The work to reimagine the space under the Gardiner began in earnest in 2016 based on a visionary proposal for a 0.75-kilometre stretch of land, a landmark philanthropic gift from Judy and Will Matthews and a unique public-private partnership with the creation of the Bentway Conservancy. The Bentway Conservancy was created to steward, program, and maintain this revived stretch of land on behalf of and in partnership with the City of Toronto. At the time, the prospect of transforming a section of the Gardiner into a vibrant public space was met with a mix of excitement, curiosity, and even scepticism. Today, The Bentway’s provision of critical neighbourhood amenities, sustainable landscape improvements, community programming, and connective routes for active transportation hold key lessons that can be extended along the under Gardiner corridor.

This plan builds on the success of this unique partnership established between the City of Toronto and The Bentway Conservancy, and their shared goal of unlocking the Gardiner’s public-realm potential at street level. The collaboration leverages the City’s expertise and institutional knowledge alongside The Bentway’s creative character and practical experience working under the Gardiner.



Image 2: View west toward Strachan Avenue from The Bentway Phase 1 site.

The **Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan** (Under Gardiner PRP) is founded on the premise that the under Gardiner corridor has the potential to better serve the public. It aims to reposition the under Gardiner corridor as an essential part of Toronto's downtown public realm, establish new public space conventions, and set priorities for investment and improvement that help transform a mono-functional highway into a contemporary, forward-looking piece of hybrid infrastructure. The Under Gardiner PRP:

- Prioritizes landscape as infrastructure and **seeks to restore balance** with natural systems and ecological processes;
- Improves the experience of under Gardiner spaces through **new physical and visual connections** to ensure all road users are safe and welcome;
- Embraces a holistic understanding of climate change and **promotes the resilient urban spaces** that enable outdoor activity all year round;
- Removes barriers to **facilitate improved connectivity** and active transportation;
- Guides the design of exceptional, **publicly accessible spaces that enable a diversity of uses** and contribute to thriving neighbourhoods; and
- Supports the development of **sustainable maintenance and upkeep processes** that help to address the Gardiner's fiscal, environmental, and social impacts.

Simply put, the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan sets forth a vision to activate the spaces under the elevated expressway through improved pedestrian and cycling connections, more resilient rainwater management strategies, and an increased number of community amenities.

The Under Gardiner PRP presents a range of recommendations that support the continued stewardship of public space under the Gardiner Expressway. United through a suite of corridor-wide systems and informed by ongoing stakeholder input and community consultation, the recommendations are grounded in a landscape-first approach and aim to strike a new balance between competing factors. These recommendations fall into two complementary categories:

- **A new baseline** of streetscape standards for the consistent performance and identity of the public realm below the Gardiner Expressway;
- **Site-specific opportunities** that deliver on much-needed community amenities, result in connectivity and new productive ecologies, and support enhanced public programming along the corridor.

Continued transformation of the under Gardiner spaces will require ongoing collaboration between multiple public, private, non-profit, and institutional sectors. Working together presents exciting opportunities to leverage planned investment and introduce new amenities.

The recommendations of the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan will be implemented incrementally, over time, and their phasing should closely follow major civic investments and leverage planned private investment along the corridor in the coming years.

Major infrastructure projects along Toronto’s waterfront — including the Gardiner Expressway Strategic Rehabilitation, Lower Yonge Precinct, East Bayfront, Keating Channel, Quayside, the Port Lands Flood Protection Project, and the Ontario Line — will bring significant change to the under Gardiner corridor. The implementation of the improvements captured in the Under Gardiner PRP must be carefully coordinated with the many other projects and developments unfolding in the area, and the practical realities of working with active, functional infrastructure.

As such, the plan identifies both long-term projects and near-term interventions, which can be used to test design strategies and showcase how Toronto’s waterfront and the under Gardiner spaces can be reimagined. Examples of near-term pilot projects include the Waterfront ReConnect design interventions at York Street and Lower Simcoe Street, and the upcoming “Staging Grounds” installation at the Dan Leckie-Lake Shore Triangle.

The Under Gardiner PRP is not a prescriptive document, but rather an aspirational vision, one that reimagines the under Gardiner corridor as an integral feature of Toronto’s downtown waterfront. Today, 75 years after the highway first opened, the City of Toronto has committed to the continued investment, maintenance, and upkeep required to keep an elevated expressway in safe and operable condition for the coming decades. The Under Gardiner PRP outlines how strategic investment in the Gardiner’s future will allow it to fulfil its ongoing regional mobility objectives while living up to the promise and potential of public life, fulfilling the need for dynamic public space through hybrid infrastructure in the heart of downtown Toronto.



Image 3:
View west from Lake Shore Boulevard toward Bay Street, under the Gardiner Expressway.

Dufferin Street

Strachan Avenue

Bathurst Street

Spadina Avenue

Simcoe Street

York Street

Yonge Street

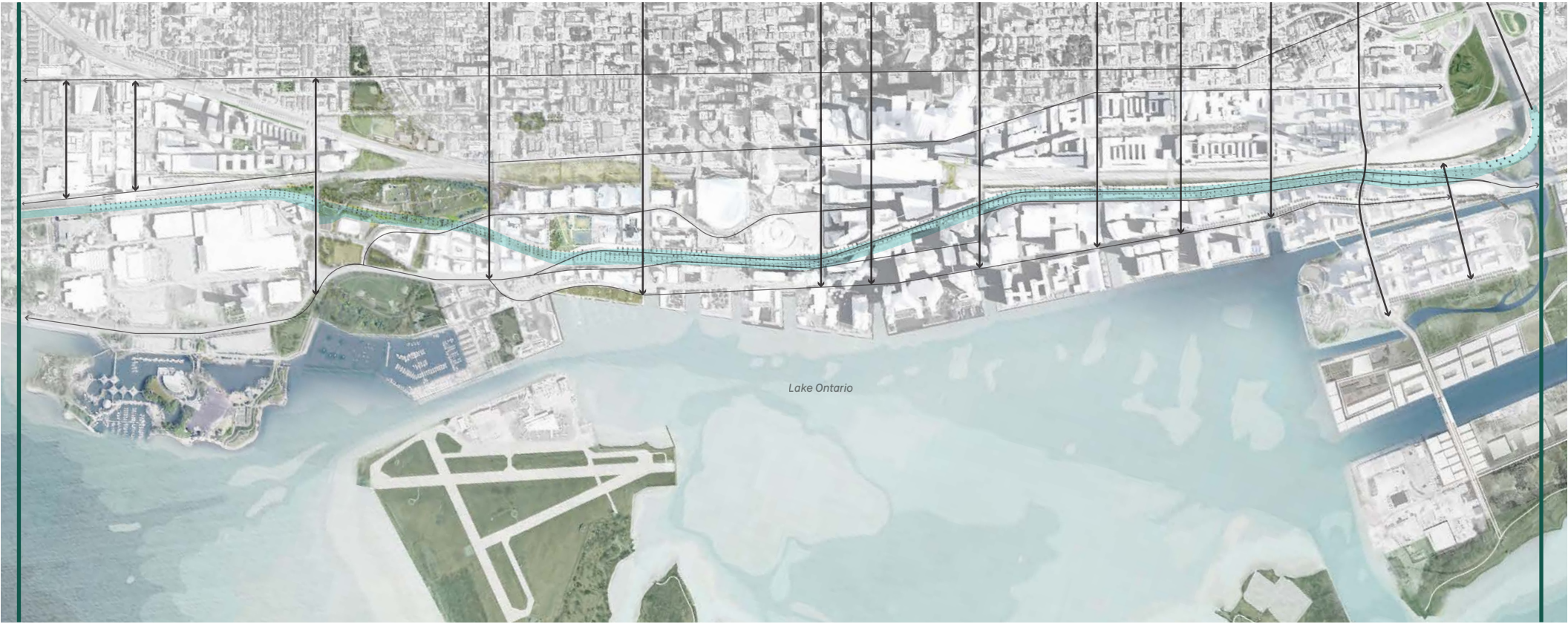
Jarvis Street

Sherbourne Street

Parliament Street

Cherry Street

Don Valley Parkway



Dufferin to the Don Valley: Extent of Elevated Gardiner Expressway

Figure 1: Context map of the extent of the under Gardiner corridor, from Dufferin Street to the Don Valley.

Part 1: Introduction

- 1.1 Project Partners
- 1.2 Design Team
- 1.3 Problem Statement
- 1.4 Objectives and Tactics
- 1.5 Project Principles
- 1.6 Key Learnings from Consultation



1.1 Project Partners

The Under Gardiner PRP is a collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and The Bentway Conservancy that brings together asset owners, subject matter experts, diverse perspectives, and practical experience in planning, programming, operating, and animating the public realm. This project advances the strategic goals of removing barriers to the waterfront and making new connections, building on the success of initiatives such as Underpass Park, Waterfront ReConnect, the Lake Shore Boulevard East Public Realm Plan, and The Bentway.

The Bentway Conservancy

The Bentway Conservancy is an independent not-for-profit and registered charity founded in 2016 to drive a reimagining of the Gardiner. The Conservancy currently operates, programs, and animates The Bentway Phase 1 site (located just west of Bathurst Street) and The Bentway Studio (facing Canoe Landing Park). The Bentway is an internationally recognized exemplar of active reuse and hybrid infrastructure.

The City of Toronto

The City of Toronto, as a partner, is represented in this project by a wide range of City divisions, providing needed public services while building a great city. A series of working groups and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) informed the development of the Under Gardiner PRP. This included senior leadership and staff from the Economic Development and Culture, Transportation Services, Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, Corporate Real Estate Management, and Urban Design departments and the Waterfront Secretariat.

Design Team

The Under Gardiner PRP is supported by a design team comprised of subject matter experts and the following industry leaders:

Public Work

Public Work is an urban design and landscape architecture studio focused on the intelligent evolution of the contemporary city. The studio aims to produce transformative works that invigorate the public realm, optimize and enhance the performance of urban systems, and support public life by adding new layers of experience to the city.

Two Row Architect

Two Row Architect is a 100% Indigenous-owned and operated firm from the Six Nations reserve in southern Ontario. Two Row Architect focuses on guiding the realignment of mainstream ways of thinking on their journey toward Indigenous ways of knowing, being, design, and architecture. Their ultimate goal is to promote architecture that has a positive impact on nature, humanity, and our current sense of civilization.

Transsolar KlimaEngineering

Transsolar KlimaEngineering is a diverse team of engineers focused on creating climate-responsive built environments. In partnership with the world's leading architects, Transsolar's unique approach has led to numerous breakthrough projects, including the most energy-efficient office tower in North America. Transsolar has been operating for more than 25 years, with offices in Stuttgart, Munich, Paris, and New York.

Third Party Public

Third Party Public specializes in making large, complex multi-stakeholder projects constructive and manageable. Established in 2004 under Swerhun Inc., the team works exclusively with governments, public agencies, and occasionally non-profits working to serve public interests. Third Party Public is advising and supporting the Bentway-led public stakeholder consultation process that informs the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan.

Frontier

Frontier designs big stories — brave, imaginative, and guiding stories — that help organizations thrive. Its Purpose Design methodology connects brand strategy with business strategy. Frontier works on projects in branding, storytelling, strategy, digital design, and team engagement.

1.3 Problem and Opportunity Statement

Since 1964, the Gardiner Expressway has been a major transportation artery for the city, and continues to be so today. As the City of Toronto continues to grow and we reinvest in our infrastructure systems, there is an opportunity to reimagine how the whole of the Gardiner, can connect, perform, and inspire.

The Under Gardiner PRP outlines how the spaces under the Gardiner can work to better serve our communities and our city.

With Toronto's rapid growth, the Waterfront neighbourhood is supporting more and more residential, commercial, and cultural activities. In anticipation of a rehabilitated road deck resulting from the City's state of good repair efforts, the under Gardiner lands must be recognized as spaces in need of investment and integral components of Toronto's evolving public realm.

The Under Gardiner PRP provides guidance for the spaces under, and adjacent to, the Expressway's central elevated section between Dufferin Street and the Don Valley Parkway. Working with communities, leveraging the value of existing assets, and aligning with large-scale infrastructure projects, the Under Gardiner PRP provides direction to improve the experience for pedestrians, cyclists, commuters, tourists, and all inhabitants of these lands.



Image 4: Aerial view south of the skate trail at The Bentway Phase 1 site.

Why Now?

The City of Toronto is undertaking a major [Strategic Rehabilitation Plan](#) to keep the entire Gardiner Expressway in a safe and operable condition, now and into the future. To date, this state-of-good-repair has included replacement of road deck and girders where needed and essential repairs to the supporting concrete bents. This reinvestment will revive the aging and deteriorating elevated expressway, providing opportunities to leverage a renewed highway as a backdrop and canvas that support long-term transformation of underutilized spaces below. The Under Gardiner PRP is also underpinned by existing City plans and guidelines such as the [Vision Zero Road Safety Plan](#), [TransformTO Net Zero Strategy](#), and [Complete Streets Guidelines](#). Collectively, this represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to set direction toward a new future for the elevated roadway.

The vision articulated through the Under Gardiner PRP represents an inventory of ideas, opportunity sites, and potential interventions for ongoing study, and will be implemented on a decades-long timeline. The neighbourhoods adjacent to the under Gardiner are continuing to rapidly develop, creating new residential-commercial mixed-use communities. This increased densification is changing the landscape of the city's waterfront, from industrial rail yards to a collection of vibrant and growing communities. This urban change presents an opportunity for innovation and a chance to address unmet and evolving needs. As the remaining available properties along the under Gardiner corridor are built out, an integrated and interconnected public realm is essential for public life and the ongoing prosperity of Toronto's downtown core.



Image 5: Maintenance operations on the Gardiner Expressway.

Working toward [the City's stated climate goals](#), the Under Gardiner PRP presents an exciting vision which builds upon the larger waterfront revitalization efforts, with attention paid to new active transportation routes, public space, and parkland investment. The Under Gardiner PRP provides a long-term roadmap for a series of improvements to benefit these emerging neighbourhoods, including provisions for pedestrians, cyclists, neighbours, and drivers. The plan informs the development of a cohesive identity and a more welcoming environment, repositioning the under Gardiner corridor as an essential part of Toronto's downtown public realm.

Objectives and Tactics

The objectives of the Under Gardiner PRP are:

1. To establish guidelines to support a cohesive vision for the Under Gardiner as a key component of the '[Shoreline Stitch](#)' (as described in the TOcore: Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan);
2. To set specific parameters and priorities for infrastructure investment and improvements; and
3. To allow for effective implementation and coordination between private sector, government, and community-based initiatives.

Project Tactics:

Identify and solve infrastructure challenges such as stormwater management, cycling and pedestrian safety, and ongoing operational and maintenance needs.

Recommend short, medium, and long-term opportunities for public realm and mobility improvements that align with future work by public and private partners.

Establish a cohesive sense of place for the under Gardiner corridor through enhanced wayfinding, material palettes, approaches to planting and vegetation, and more.

Support the advancement of pilot projects and prototypes that highlight shared interests between municipal efforts and local stakeholders.

Develop the scope and timeframe for various initiatives impacting the under Gardiner corridor, in order to facilitate investment and promote engagement in the process of transformation.



Image 6: Members of the project team gathering feedback and insights from participants at the 2022 Street Summit consultation pop-up booth.

Project Principles

To realize the full potential of the Gardiner Expressway as civic infrastructure, the Under Gardiner PRP is anchored by the following key principles and tactics, informed by project stakeholders.

From Obstacle to Connector

Create inviting physical and visual connections that link neighbourhoods, community assets, transportation hubs, and public right-of-ways in order to address concerns around the safety and accessibility of the under Gardiner spaces.



Image 7: Underpass Park, Toronto, Ontario.

Prioritize the Public Realm

Guide the development of distinctive and exceptional public and semi-public spaces to support a diversity of use, fostering unique gathering places for civic engagement and activity.



Image 8: The Underline, Miami, Florida.

Harness the Gardiner's Unique Character

Enhance the identity of under Gardiner spaces through design and programming strategies that celebrate its uniquely urban quality, built heritage, layered history, and adjacent distinct communities.



Image 9: The Bentway, Toronto, Ontario.

From Highway to Hybrid Infrastructure

Identify opportunities to support an efficient and coordinated approach to Gardiner Expressway maintenance and upkeep, leading to new and innovative ways of reimagining the public realm along the under Gardiner corridor.



Image 10: The Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal project, Melbourne, Australia.

Advocate for Equitable and Sustainable Growth

Support the development of socially and economically resilient public infrastructure that addresses long-standing environmental and public health concerns along the Gardiner Expressway.

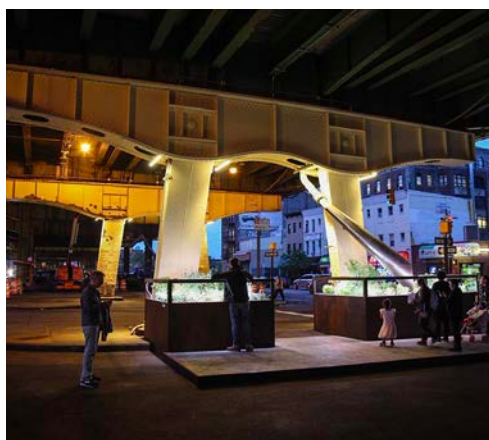


Image 11: El-Space irrigation planter in Sunset Park in Brooklyn, New York, New York.

Resilient Economic Development for Toronto's COVID-19 Recovery

Work toward Toronto's economic recovery by repurposing underutilized public infrastructure, investing in downtown neighbourhoods, and developing creative programming for residents and visitors alike.



Image 12: The Bentway, Toronto, Ontario.

1.6 Key Learnings From Consultation

In the summer (Q3) of 2022, an initial round of public consultation was conducted in support of the Under Gardiner PRP, including both in-person and online engagement. The objective for this round of engagement was to seek stakeholder and community feedback about what people liked or disliked about the existing conditions under the highway and ideas for how to improve the under Gardiner spaces.

A second round of public consultation, in the winter (Q1) of 2023, centred on a series of four public open house sessions. Specified stakeholders, community members, and the broader public were invited to join an interactive exhibit at The Bentway Studio (55 Fort York Blvd.), to (a) confirm what was heard during the initial round of consultation, and (b) provide feedback on preliminary site-specific opportunities and proposed baseline recommendations for improving the under Gardiner spaces.

In the summer of 2023 (Q3), a third engagement session will be held in order to report back on the Under Gardiner PRP's conclusions and recommendations.

The following is a high-level summary of the key learnings that were identified during the first two rounds of consultation. The [Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan Consultation Summary report](#) includes a detailed breakdown of consultation approaches, strategies, and outcomes, highlighting the specific focus given to communities that have unique and continuous connections to the area, such as unhoused communities and Indigenous peoples.

Activity (2021 - 2023)	In Person	Online
7 technical advisory meetings	✓	
10 district-specific stakeholder consultations	✓	
2,000+ website visits, an online survey, and an interactive map (150+ unique comments)		✓
Street Summit consultation pop-up	✓	
Open houses (120+ participants)	✓	
Outreach and engagement with Indigenous communities (ongoing)	✓	
Outreach and engagement with unhoused communities (ongoing)	✓	

Figure 2: Summary table reflecting both Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultation and engagement activities.

Consultation Phase 1: High-Level Takeaways

From the first round of the consultation process, many respondents positively referenced the creative and adaptive use of space The Bentway has produced under the Gardiner, a previously underutilized space. Specifically, community members and visitors enjoy the animation of public space for recreational, active, and artistic uses. Stakeholders highlighted how they would like to see these same visions and aspirations expanded throughout the under Gardiner spaces.

Consultation participants underscored the poor connectivity and unpleasant environment in the under Gardiner spaces as contributing to a lack of safety in the area. Other safety-related concerns included pedestrian crossings that are too short, worn

street markings, and flooding. Specifically, stakeholders identified conflicting uses of space and a lack of obvious separation of different uses of space as a major challenge under the Gardiner. Stakeholders mentioned that the environment feels dominated by fast-moving cars, high noise levels, and dirtiness, thus dissuading hybrid uses of space.

However, many participants saw the opportunity for change and improvement in the under Gardiner spaces. Stakeholders urged the improvement of safety, accessibility, and comfort overall, improving the public realm via the beautification of the space and improving active transportation infrastructure in the area, as well as adding more public art and opportunities for cultural expression.

“ I’d like to protect the access to the lake from the north side of the Expressway and Lake Shore Boulevard. The covered area seems uniquely suited to many mixed uses for people living and working in the area, as well as an area that might appeal to tourism if developed properly.”

— *Participant comment from Consultation Phase 1*

Consultation Phase 2: High-Level Takeaways

During the second round of consultation, interventions and opportunities in rainwater management excited many participants, specifically as they pertain to reducing water pollution and managing rainwater runoff. Participants highlighted the potential to reuse rainwater to support plant life, reduce flooding, and improve pedestrian experiences in the area.

Stakeholders responded well to suggestions of increased amenities along the under Gardiner corridor, among other aspects of the safety and comfort features of the new baseline. Consultation participants underscored the need for more public seating and thoughtfully designed furnishings to help increase the usability of public space for rest, socializing, and recreational activities.

In regard to predictable amenities, many participants commented on a need for public washrooms that are clean, reliable, inclusive, and accessible along or adjacent to the under Gardiner corridor.

“ At least 50% of space should be earmarked for bioswales and vegetation to detox Gardiner runoff throughout all areas. The issue of flooding affects a lot of people. We also have to better manage our water and waterways.”

— Participant comment from Consultation Phase 2

Part 2: Context and Study Areas

- 2.1 Under the Gardiner: Dufferin to the Don
- 2.2 Defining the Districts: Primary and Secondary Study Areas
- 2.3 Environment, Economy, and Comfort



2.1 Under the Gardiner: Dufferin to the Don

The elevated Gardiner Expressway stretches seven kilometres along the waterfront and through the heart of Toronto. The Under Gardiner PRP focuses on a primary study area under the Gardiner between Dufferin Street and Yonge Street. Five districts emerge within this area, each bounded by distinct neighbourhoods, civic assets, existing

public realm networks, trails, and landmarks, and each having their own unique relationships to the Gardiner. The secondary study area covers the portion under the Gardiner from Yonge Street to the Don Valley Parkway, with approved Environmental Assessments and public realm plans.



Figure 3: Rendered map indicating the extent of the primary and secondary study areas.

Within the primary and secondary study areas, a district-specific approach further reflects geographic contexts, local priorities, and driving factors influencing development along the under Gardiner corridor.

A series of opportunity sites and projects have been identified in each district, which build on the key learnings and successes of existing under Gardiner spaces. The following section will introduce each of these districts, the map below is provided to help orient the districts in relation to each other.

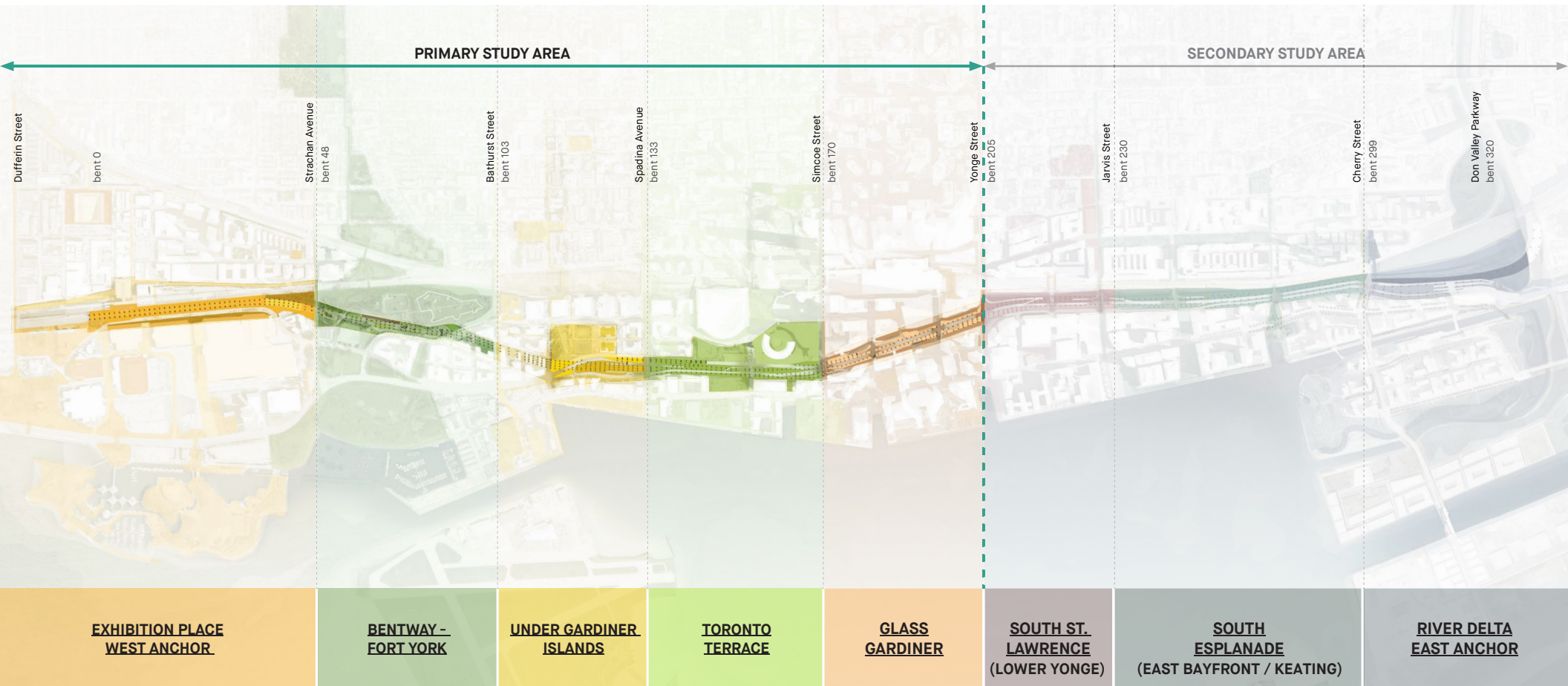


Figure 4: Key map indicating the extent of the primary and secondary study areas and identified districts.

2.2 Defining the Districts: Primary and Secondary Study Areas

Exhibition Place West Anchor

Dufferin Street to Strachan Avenue: Bents 1-46

Primary Study Area

Exhibition Place West Anchor is bordered by Dufferin Street to the west and Strachan Avenue to the east, with the Gardiner Expressway and rail corridor acting as a barrier between Liberty Village to the north and Exhibition Place, The Bentway Phase 1 site, Ontario Place, and other waterfront destinations. This district is characterized by linear spaces, including Manitoba Drive, a TTC streetcar loop, a GO Transit station, a long, straight under Gardiner space, and large enclosed municipal storage rooms under the Gardiner. With the introduction of the Ontario Line terminus station, the Exhibition Place West Anchor district will play a critical role in enhancing connectivity for transit users, local residents, tourists, and event-goers.

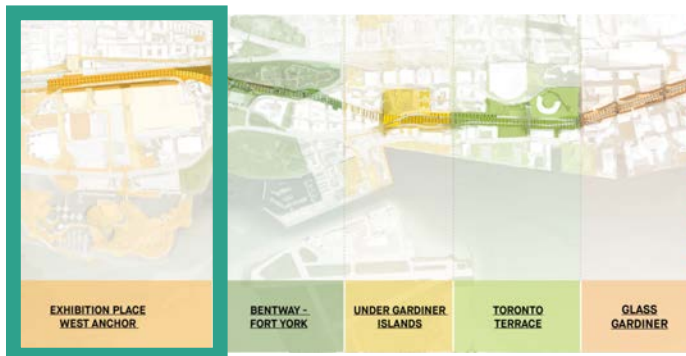


Image 13: View looking east under the Gardiner Expressway from the TTC streetcar loop north of Manitoba Drive.



Image 14: View looking west of The Bentway Skate Trail and bioswales.

Bentway-Fort York

Strachan Avenue to Fort York Boulevard : Bents 46-96

Primary Study Area

Located between Strachan Avenue to the west and Bathurst Street to the east, Bentway-Fort York is home to The Bentway Phase 1 site on the grounds of the Fort York National Historic Site. These two sites tell complementary stories about the history of Toronto. Year-round indoor and outdoor programming of these cultural spaces has demonstrated what is possible for the under Gardiner spaces.



Under Gardiner Islands

Fort York Boulevard to Spadina Avenue: Bents 96-132

Primary Study Area

As the name suggests, this district contains a series of disconnected under Gardiner spaces, in varying states of development. Situated between Bathurst Street to the west and Spadina Avenue to the east, these spaces are either privately owned public spaces (POPS) supporting commercial and residential access to adjacent developments or expansive medians between lanes of traffic on Lake Shore Boulevard under the City's jurisdiction.



Image 15: View looking east from the central traffic medians, or under Gardiner Islands, between Dan Leckie Way and Spadina Avenue.



Image 16: View looking east from Rees Street and Lake Shore Boulevard West of the Roundhouse Park retaining wall (Wall of Toronto)

Toronto Terrace

Spadina Avenue to Lower Simcoe Street: Bents 133-170

Primary Study Area

Between Spadina Avenue to the west and Lower Simcoe Street to the east, this district is marked by a cultural and tourist plateau to the north of the Gardiner Expressway, and a low-elevation waterfront neighbourhood to the south. Here, the Under Gardiner PRP will prioritize people, safety, comfort, rainwater management, and inspiring access points to one of Toronto's greatest assets, Lake Ontario.



Glass Gardiner

Lower Simcoe Street to Yonge Street: Bents 170-204

Primary Study Area

In this hyper-urban stretch of the under Gardiner corridor between Lower Simcoe Street and Yonge Street, the presence of Lake Shore Boulevard West below the elevated expressway forms a double-stacked highway with high-speed automotive traffic on both levels. At the ground level, a mix of residential lobbies, enlarged traffic medians, and back-of-house conditions creates a dynamic and lively streetscape. This streetscape supports vertical communities and connects the city to its waterfront.

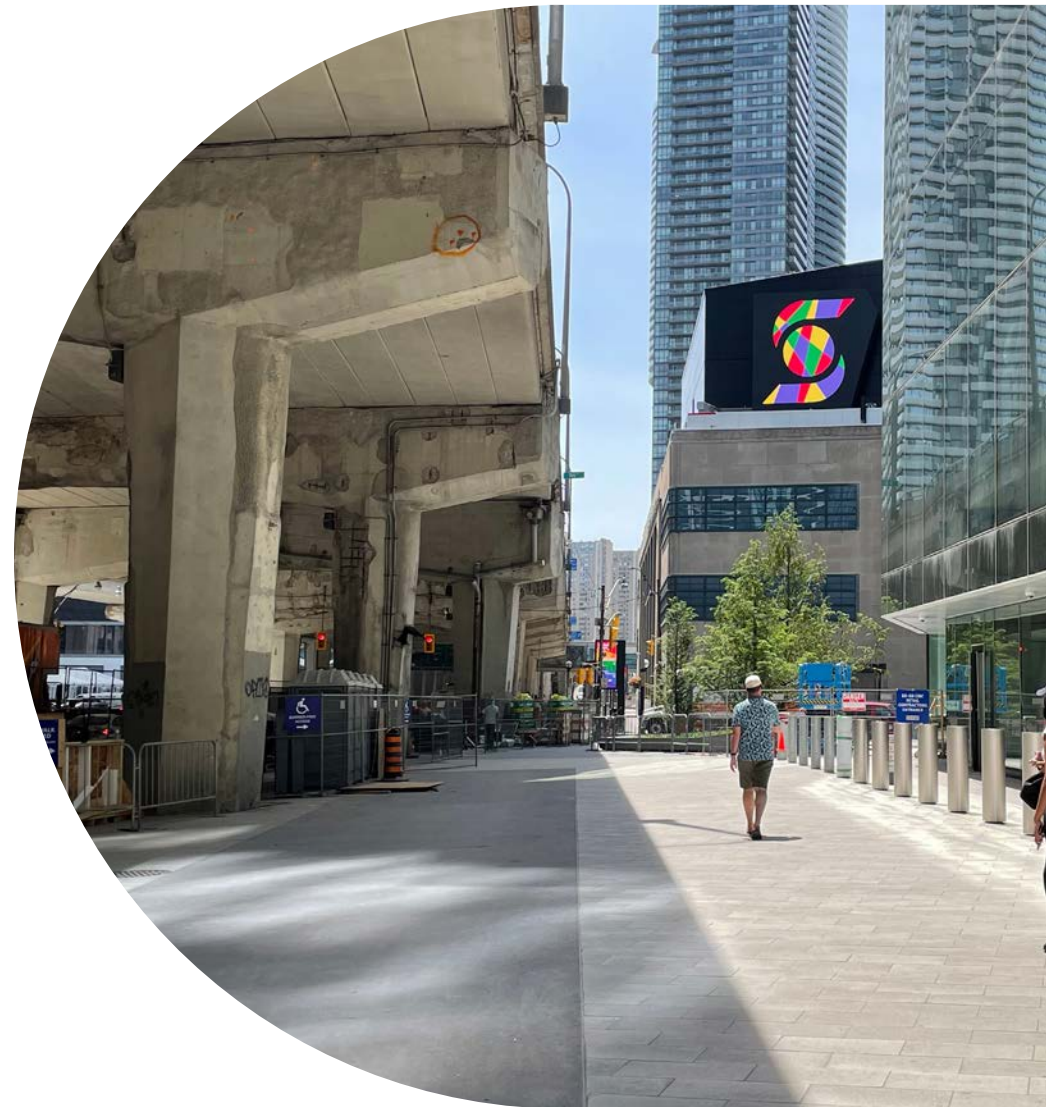


Image 17: View looking west from the Union Station Bus Terminal.

Secondary Study Area

A secondary study area covers the portion of the under Gardiner corridor from Yonge Street to the Don Valley Parkway. Corridor-wide systems and consistent baseline elements are recommended to be implemented in the secondary study area, to support existing projects with approved environmental assessments such as the City's [Lake Shore Boulevard East Public Realm Plan](#). The Under Gardiner PRP is intended to be complementary and reinforce the direction established in the Lake Shore Boulevard East Public Realm Plan, Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, Transform TO Net Zero Strategy, and Complete Streets Guidelines.

	Primary Study Area	Secondary Study Area
Corridor-wide system approach and recommendations	✓	✓
District-level recommendations	✓	
Identification of key priority sites and opportunities	✓	
Strategies for implementation and governance	✓	✓

Figure 5: Table summarizing the distinction between primary and secondary study area objectives. District-level and site-specific recommendations are out of scope for the secondary study area.

The Under Gardiner districts within the secondary study area include:

South St. Lawrence (Lower Yonge)

This district is bounded by Yonge Street to the west and Jarvis Street to the east and is undergoing large-scale transformations through the coordinated efforts of various City agencies and private landowners. Anticipated parks, expanded pedestrian and cycling connections, major roadway improvements, the Gardiner Expressway Rehabilitation Strategy, and an influx of residential and commercial offerings make this one of the city's most critical and exciting public realm projects.

South Esplanade (East Bayfront / Keating)

Bounded by Jarvis Street to the west and Cherry Street to the east, this district contains a number of pilot projects and long-term improvements, as highlighted in the Lake Shore Boulevard East Public Realm Plan. With the completion of the Gardiner rehabilitation and the continued development of new residential neighbourhoods, public realm enhancement under the Gardiner will contribute to essential connections and amenities for residents of new communities and trail users.

River Delta East Anchor

On the east end of the corridor, from Cherry Street to the Don Valley Parkway, this district is impacted by a number of the City's ongoing efforts, including the Gardiner Expressway Realignment, Ontario Line, East Harbour, Portlands Planning Framework, and Lake Shore Boulevard East Public Realm Plan. Improvements to the under Gardiner in this area will enhance the experience of accessing these emerging destinations and the existing network of north-south and east-west trails.

2.3 Environment, Economy, and Comfort

Context of Intensification

The evolution of Toronto's waterfront, including the introduction of the Gardiner Expressway in the 1960s, is an integral part of the city's history and identity. [The Under Gardiner PRP background report](#) highlights how following the infill of Lake Ontario, from the former 1850 shoreline at Front Street down to the newly formed Lake Shore Boulevard (1920), Toronto saw decades of industrial development along the waterfront. This increased Toronto's capacities for transport and shipping, but drastically impacted the natural landscape and access to the waterfront.

Like many major cities in North America, the mid-1900s were marked by significant investment in large-scale transportation infrastructure to support increased widespread automobility. In response to suburbanization and urban sprawl in the Greater Toronto Area major roads and highways have been constructed around the city and through the downtown core. In the subsequent decades, development projects along the Gardiner corridor and across the waterfront have attempted to reconcile the city's industrial heritage with the lake, to varying degrees of success.

The ongoing development of communities adjacent to the under Gardiner corridor continues to densify, bringing with it the need for new services and public spaces, as well as the compounding issues of a warming climate, the urban heat island effect, and decreased comfort and safety for pedestrians.

According to TOcore, the city's downtown core and central waterfront supports approximately 250,000 of the city's total residents and 500,000 jobs, with density having increased by 30 per cent from 2006-2016. The land in this area accounts for only three per cent of Toronto's official land area while containing 38 per cent of its residential units and 40 per cent of its non-residential gross floor area (GFA).



Image 18: Then-and-now perspectives of development along the Gardiner Expressway: 1969 (left) and 2022 (right).

Along with this growth and density comes an increased need for social amenities and infrastructure that can accommodate everyday civic activities and large influxes of visitors for city-based events and stay resilient in the face of extreme public health, safety, and climate events that strain the public realm.

In the 2050 climate scenario projected by Transsolar KlimaEngineering, Toronto will experience an increase in extreme daily minimum temperatures by 13 °C, and more overall precipitation in the summer months. It is projected that the number of “heat waves” (i.e., events with more than three consecutive days of temperatures greater than 32 °C) will increase from an average of 0.57 occurrences per year to five occurrences per year. Addressing these pressing concerns through design is not a problem for 2050, but for today.

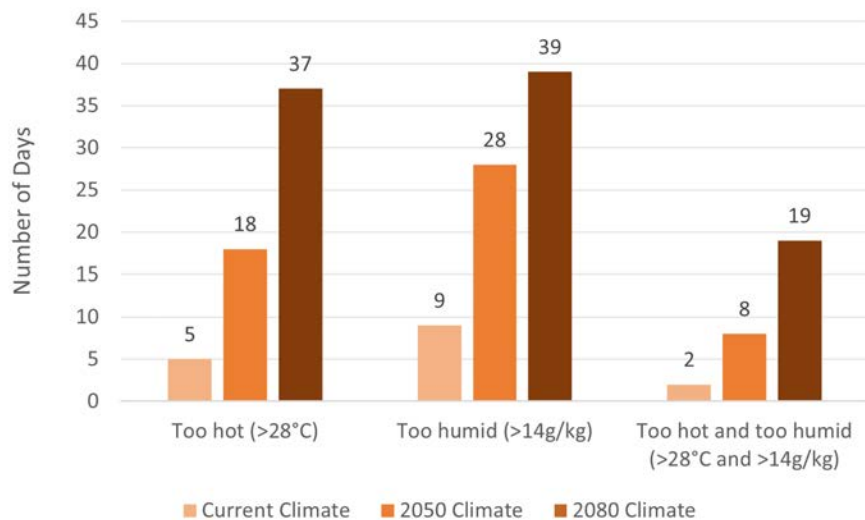


Figure 6: Climate projection indicating expected changes in weather patterns. Preliminary analysis conducted by Transsolar KlimaEngineering in 2022.

Prioritizing Climate and Environment

With the climate crisis growing increasingly urgent, the window to make significant and lasting change is closing, and immediate action at scale is required to respond to this environmental change. This involves setting new standards for the performance of our built environment (including landscape and infrastructure), shifting toward low-carbon transportation options (including walking, biking, public transit, and electric vehicles), reducing our demand and impact on existing utility infrastructure (including waste and stormwater management and the electricity grid), and embracing new forms of renewable energy that contribute to a resilient, carbon-free grid. To achieve these aims, the City of Toronto has issued over \$625 million in Green Bonds, an innovative financing tool which supports a range of key climate resilience and mitigation projects, including, but not limited to, improvements to the city’s cycling infrastructure network, energy-efficiency retrofits in social housing, and flood protection efforts.

The Under Gardiner PRP builds on and reinforces the City’s ambitious targets of achieving net zero greenhouse emissions by 2040. According to the City’s TransformTO Net Zero Strategy, 36 per cent of Toronto’s overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions can be attributed to the transportation sector, primarily from cars, trucks, vans, and buses. It is critical that every effort is made to encourage active transportation as an alternative and ensure that it is comfortable and safe.