



**The**

**Western**

**Beaches**

**PUBLIC REALM PLAN**





# Executive Summary

## A long-term plan for Toronto's western waterfront

Toronto's Western Beaches are one of the city's most significant waterfront landscapes. Extending along Lake Ontario between the mouth of the Humber River and Ontario Place, this stretch of parkland, shoreline, trails, beaches, and public spaces is both a regional destination and an everyday landscape for nearby communities.

The Western Beaches hold layered historical, cultural, ecological, and recreational significance. They are connected to the Humber River, the Toronto Carrying Place, High Park, the Humber River Watershed, Lake Ontario, and the broader Great Lakes system. They are also shaped by generations of public use, from swimming, walking, cycling, rowing, sailing, gathering, and quiet reflection to major citywide events and daily waterfront movement.

The Western Beaches Public Realm Plan provides an updated long-term vision for this important landscape.

Building on the 2009 Western Waterfront Master Plan, the Plan responds to current conditions, community priorities, Indigenous perspectives, environmental pressures, and implementation realities. It identifies a set of big moves, ideas, and actions to guide future planning, design, investment, and decision-making over the next 20 years.

The Plan is not a fixed capital program. It is a flexible public realm framework that will help coordinate future work, guide detailed studies and design processes, align with ongoing City initiatives, and support phased implementation over time.

**WHY THE PLAN IS BEING UPDATED**  
Since the 2009 Western Waterfront Master Plan was completed, conditions along the Western Beaches have changed. Some improvements have been advanced, including trail upgrades, boardwalk repairs, park enhancements, naturalization, and public realm investments. Other major initiatives from the 2009 plan remain incomplete or cannot proceed in as expected for the foreseeable future, particularly those tied to large infrastructure projects such as the Waterfront West LRT and the realignment of Lake Shore Boulevard West that remain unfunded.

At the same time, new pressures and priorities have emerged. Rising lake levels, shoreline erosion, aging breakwaters, changing patterns of public use, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced the importance of accessible and resilient outdoor spaces. The adoption of the City of Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan and a growing awareness of the cultural significance of the Humber River mouth have also strengthened the need to centre Indigenous placekeeping and cultural recognition in future planning.

**UPDATED PLAN PURPOSE:**  
The update provides an opportunity to refresh the long-term vision, reassess previous recommendations, identify new priorities, and establish a more implementable path forward.

# Western Beaches Today

The Western Beaches are a rare and expansive waterfront landscape where the city meets the lake. They provide access to Lake Ontario, support major trail connections, contain important historic and cultural destinations, and offer a range of recreational and ecological experiences.

The study area is a culturally significant landscape connected to the Humber River, Lake Ontario, High Park, and the Treaty 13 lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.



## At a Glance

**4 km** of Waterfront Lands

**41 ha** of Parkland

**5** City Parks

(Marilyn Bell Park, Lake Shore Boulevard Parklands, Budapest Park, Sunnyside Park, and Sir Casimir Gzowski Park)

**3** City Beaches

(Sir Casimir Gzowski, Sunnyside, and Budapest Beaches, collectively known as Sunnyside Beach)

**2** Major Trails

(Martin Goodman Trail and Humber River Recreational Trail)

**1** Bike Park

**1** Disc Golf Course

**1** Major Outdoor Pool

**3** Major Heritage Destinations

(Joy Oil Station, Sunnyside Bathing Pavilion, and Palais Royale)

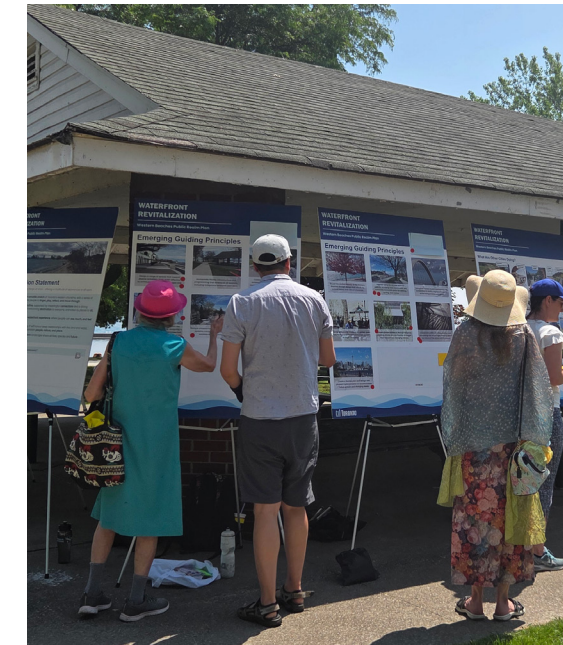
**3** Waterfront Clubs

(Boulevard Club, Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club, and Argonaut Rowing Club)

# A Collaborative Process

The Western Beaches Public Realm Plan was developed through a highly collaborative process that brought together technical input, Indigenous engagement, community perspectives, and broader public feedback.

Engagement was central to the development of the Plan. It helped refresh the vision and guiding principles, identify shared priorities, test emerging big moves, and refine ideas and supporting actions as the work progressed. Feedback was considered alongside technical analysis and policy context to support an achievable plan that can be implemented over time.



The engagement process included:

- » **Technical Advisory Committee:** City divisions and agency partners provided technical guidance throughout the Plan Process.
- » **The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN):** Direct engagement as Treaty partners in the study area.
- » **Indigenous Advisory Circle:** Indigenous leaders, Knowledge Keepers, community advocates, urban Indigenous community members, and design professionals provided cultural insights throughout the process.
- » **Community Advisory Committee:** A representative group of community members provided feedback and guidance at key points in the process.
- » **Broader public engagement:** Pop-up events, online surveys, a virtual public meeting, and project webpage feedback provided opportunities for wider community input.



**Over 2,500 voices contributed through the engagement process, including approximately 1,600 participants in Phase 1 and approximately 900 participants in Phase 2.**

# Vision

The vision and guiding principles provide the foundation for the Public Realm Plan. They describe the desired future for the Western Beaches and establish a shared framework for evaluating ideas, shaping future actions and coordinated work plans towards implementation.

The vision is intentionally aspirational. It reflects the desire for the Western Beaches to be many things at once: a beloved waterfront destination, a connected movement corridor, a place for recreation and reflection, a landscape of Indigenous presence and placekeeping, and a resilient public realm where people, nature, and future generations can thrive.

The 14 guiding principles translate this vision into high-level directions for the future of the Western Beaches.

## Vision Statement

*The Western Beaches will offer a multitude of experiences on land and water, welcoming all users in every season. It will continue to be a beloved and adaptable stretch of Toronto's western shoreline, safe and easy to get to, with a series of parks, paths, naturalized areas, beaches, and waterways that invite people to linger, play, reflect, and move through.*

*Movement will feel easy and intuitive, comfortable for all modes of active transportation, supported by meaningful connections, universal accessibility, and a strong sense of place. The Western Beaches will be a vibrant and welcoming destination for everyone, animated by spaces for quiet reflection, lively gathering, and active recreation.*

***Above all, it will be a sustainable, and resilient landscape where all lives, species, and future generations thrive.***

*More than just a view, it will offer a true waterfront experience, where people can see, touch, and feel the water, and enjoy clean, swimmable shores alongside inclusive opportunities for water-based recreation.*

*Grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, it will honour deep relationships with the land and water, celebrate Indigenous presence, and reflect the Western Beaches' place within a larger living system, connected to the lake, river, and surrounding watershed where people, nature, and place are deeply intertwined.*

# Guiding Principles

The guiding principles translate this vision into high-level directions for how the Western Beaches should function, feel, and evolve over time.

They reflect community priorities and serve as the metrics to guide future decision-making across planning, design, investment, and operations.



## 1 Diverse and Inclusive Spaces

Design a range of spaces that support diverse activities, from quiet reflection to active play, for people of all ages and abilities.



## 2 Indigenous Placekeeping

Celebrate and restore Indigenous presence, values, and teachings through all phases, including planning, design, construction, and operation, through naming, art, storytelling, and cultural interpretation, reflecting the teaching of 'All Our Relations'.



## 3 Year-Round Flexibility

Incorporate flexible programming and infrastructure that embraces all seasons, including Indigenous seasonal calendars.



## 4 Identity and Character

Strengthen and reveal the distinct identity of the Western Beaches through design that reflects its cultural history, natural character, and diverse communities.



## 5 Mobility and Connectivity

Improve safety for all road, trail and watercraft users.



## 6 Access to the Western Beaches

Strengthen connections between communities and the waterfront and improve access to the Western Beaches by active transportation, public transit, and water-based modes.



### 7 Naturalization and Habitat Restoration

Restore shoreline habitats, enhance biodiversity, and protect ecological systems through nature-based solutions and considering Indigenous stewardship



### 8 Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Strengthen resilience to climate change by designing landscapes that can adapt to changing conditions



### 9 Water Quality

Ensure ongoing improvement of water quality is prioritized through measures that protect public health and support safe recreation, contributing to a clean and healthy waterfront.



### 10 Lakefront Access and Recreation

Create immersive lakefront experiences that allow people to safely touch, see, and feel the water, while expanding access to water-based recreation.



### 11 Gathering and Social Connection

Create welcoming places to gather that encourage social connection, cultural exchange, and celebration that reflect Toronto's diversity.



### 12 Food and Beverage Diversity

Enhance opportunities for improved hospitality and food experiences by offering diverse, high-quality, and culturally rich food and beverage options that encourage people to linger and return.



### 13 Cultural Storytelling

Incorporate public art, interpretation, and storytelling that encourages learning about the history of the place and its cultures, including Indigenous, local, and immigrant narratives.



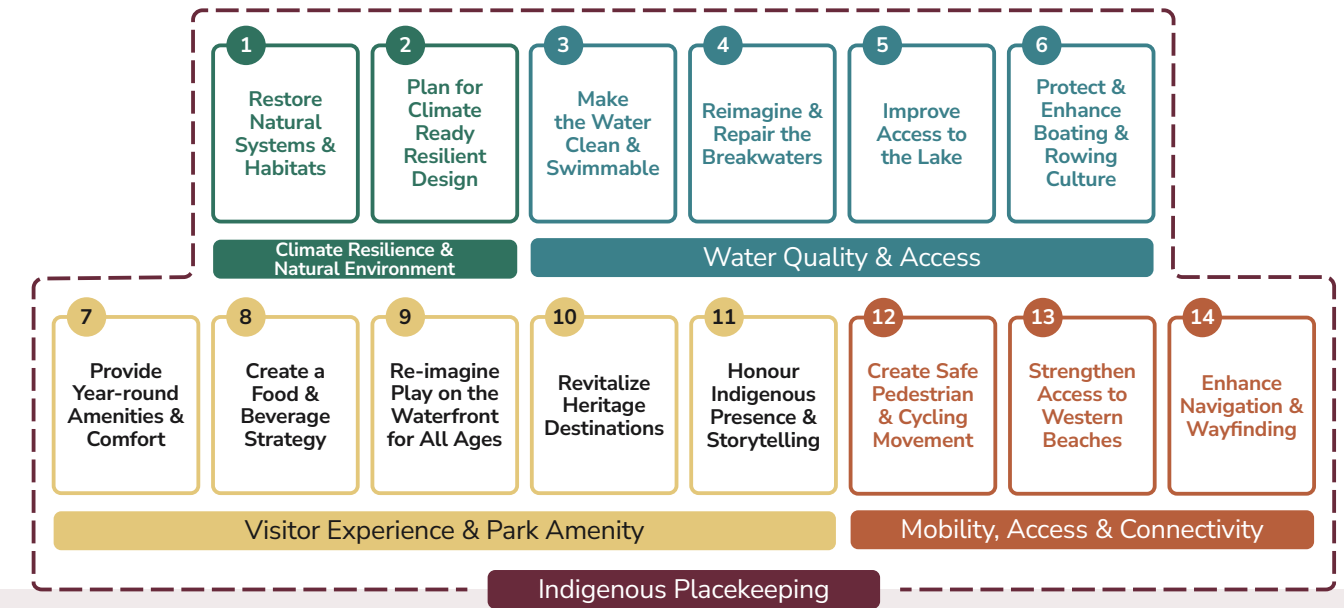
### 14 Flexibility for the Future

Create a flexible plan with phased implementation to accommodate future growth, evolving community needs, and changing environmental conditions.

## Big Moves

The Plan organizes its recommended actions through 14 big moves and 54 ideas with supporting actions. Each big move has been established through extensive engagement, are informed by technical analysis and ongoing initiatives, and build on previous waterfront planning work.

For clarity, the big moves are organized under four themes. Indigenous placekeeping is embedded as an overarching framework across all themes, informing directions related to water, land, ecology, storytelling, movement, gathering, and stewardship.

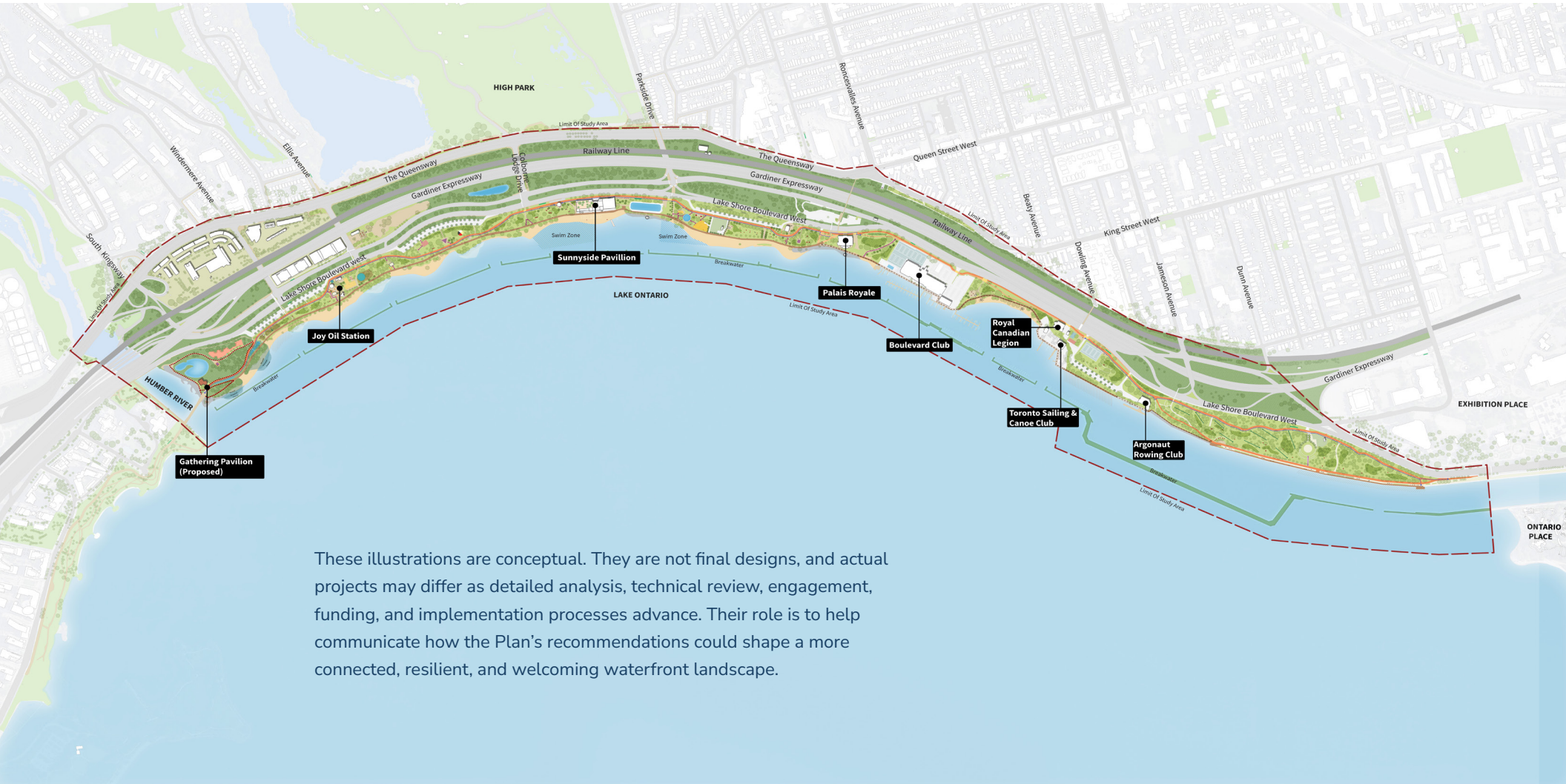


Indigenous placekeeping is not treated as a standalone theme. It is an overarching framework that informs directions related to water, land, ecology, storytelling, movement, and gathering. The Plan identifies the mouth of the Humber River as a primary location for Indigenous presence, storytelling, teaching, and gathering, while also embedding Indigenous placekeeping throughout the broader landscape.

The recommended actions support cultural storytelling and gathering spaces, ceremonial water access, Indigenous teaching landscapes, ecological restoration, medicinal and Indigenous planting practices, and a light-touch approach that works with natural systems and avoids over-building or over-programming the shoreline.

# Demonstration Plan

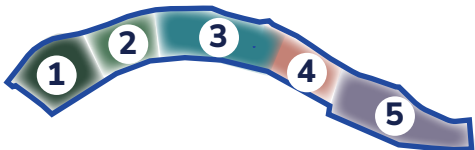
The demonstration plan illustrates how the recommended actions and ideas of the plan may come together across the Western Beaches. It presents one possible future condition and shows how multiple ideas can be coordinated and layered within specific areas while contributing to an improved parkland system and visitor experience overall.



These illustrations are conceptual. They are not final designs, and actual projects may differ as detailed analysis, technical review, engagement, funding, and implementation processes advance. Their role is to help communicate how the Plan's recommendations could shape a more connected, resilient, and welcoming waterfront landscape.

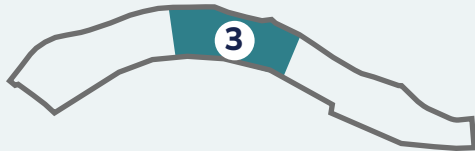
# Park Character

The park character zones help demonstrate how the Western Beaches can evolve as a connected waterfront system while still allowing different parts of the landscape to express distinct qualities. The demonstration plan is described as a series of rooms, each with a distinctive park character. The five park characters are:



## Beachfront

The more active waterfront segment centred on Sunnyside Pavilion, Sunnyside Beach, the boardwalk, family play, beach amenities, food and beverage, and improved pedestrian and cycling movement.



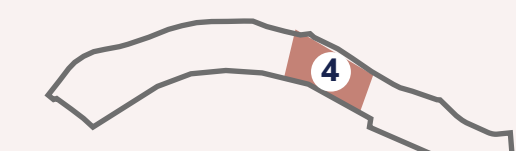
## Mouth of the River

Western gateway is shaped by ecological systems, Indigenous placekeeping, the Humber River mouth, restored habitat, naturalized landscapes, ceremonial water access, and quieter forms of recreation and reflection.



## Active Recreation

A area of the park focused on water-based recreation, existing clubs, active use, improved access, continuous pedestrian movement, and opportunities to enhance the beach between the Legion and Boulevard Club.



## Neighbourhood Park

This area of the park is a transition area where natural systems meet everyday parkland and recreational uses, including Joy Oil Station, picnic areas, play, Indigenous placekeeping, and improved movement connections come together.



## Passive Recreation

A quieter eastern landscape where open space, lake views, passive recreation, ecological enhancement, and contemplative waterfront experiences are emphasized.



# Delivering the Vision

The Western Beaches Public Realm Plan is intended to guide park improvements and will be implemented over the next 20 years. It provides a long-term framework for decision-making, a coordinated approach to investment, and future project delivery.

Implementation will occur incrementally through a range of projects, initiatives, partnerships, and additional studies. Some ideas can be advanced in the short-term, while others will require additional study, engagement, coordination and additional funding, technical analysis, environmental assessment, or alignment with broader infrastructure work.

The implementation strategy is based on several key directions:

- » **Work in a coordinated and integrated way:** projects should be planned and delivered in coordination with ongoing City initiatives, capital programs, infrastructure upgrades, and partner work.

- » **Establish and evolve priorities:** priorities will be refined over time based on readiness, funding, emerging needs, coordination opportunities, and alignment with the overall vision.

- » **Advance projects through detailed planning and design:** each recommendation will require further scoping, technical review, design development, and engagement before implementation.

- » **Undertake supporting studies and approvals:** some projects will require feasibility studies, environmental assessments, technical investigations, or regulatory approvals.

- » **Align funding and delivery mechanisms:** projects will be delivered through municipal budgeting and approval processes, with opportunities to leverage partnerships and external funding where available.

- » **Leverage partnerships and collaboration:** implementation will require continued collaboration with Indigenous partners, community groups, agencies, leaseholders, stakeholders, and other City divisions.

- » **Deliver incrementally and responsively:** the Plan is intended to remain flexible, allowing the City to respond to changing conditions, test approaches, and build on early successes.

- » **Monitor progress and inform future action:** ongoing monitoring and reporting will help track progress, identify challenges, and refine future work.

