

Toronto Island Master Plan

Focus Areas

What is a Focus Area?



Focus Areas are spaces that are used to show potential improvements (both physical and program-based) and demonstrate possible outcomes of the Master Plan in more detail.

Several areas of the park have been identified as key locations for demonstrating the ideas shared through the engagement process. These represent one possible vision for the park and are intended to provide an example of how the recommendations can be considered collectively. The Focus Areas are not intended to represent a built condition and are subject to change.

Once the Master Plan is complete, individual projects within the Focus Areas will proceed through detail design processes with further opportunities to shape the design of the park.

Master Plan Priorities

The Master Plan is a long-term vision that will be implemented over generations. Look for these symbols next to some initiatives to indicate Short-term priorities as well as integration with the Business Plan.

-  Short-term Priority (0–5 Years)
-  Business Plan Integration



Districts

Within Toronto Island Park the Master Plan has identified four districts that define the character and spaces of the Island.

Hanlan's Point

Mostly visited in summer, Hanlan's Point has historically been a vibrant and lively destination. Most visitors head straight for the beach or out to the ESAs for bird watching, but it has also been a place for events. These diverse draws characterize the welcoming identity of the area.

Gibraltar Point

Home to the oldest lighthouse on the Great Lakes, Gibraltar has become a unique destination for art and creativity in the exposed climate of the area. The unique ecologies and habitats in the area make it a destination for nature enthusiasts and it's ideal siting make the point a great spot to watch the sun go down surrounded by nature.

Centre Island

The family destination on the islands, Centre Island has the potential to become a year-round place for fun and exploration. New pathways and the opportunity for winter ferry service mean the existing attractions of Centreville, Franklin Gardens, Avenue of the Islands and the new spaces at the Parks Yard can provide new ways to experience the islands in all seasons.

Ward's Island

The community hub within the park, the year-round residents and community programs already providing opportunities to enjoy a more local experience at the Island. Improvements to facilities will help support existing program and new spaces without over-riding the area's unique and eclectic island charm.

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Hanlan's Point District



Existing Destinations

Today, visitors to Hanlan's Point are drawn to the wide open spaces, quieter park experiences and lively beach culture. Hanlan's Beach is a significant destination and refuge for Toronto's LGBTQ2S+ communities and the Clothing Optional beach is the only designated clothing-optional public beach in the city. Years of erosion and flooding have increased pressures on this popular beach resulting in the need to reconsider the boundaries of the different spaces and opportunities to expand services and amenities to adequately serve this unique space. Beyond the beach, Hanlan's includes a significant ESA and dune ecosystem, a popular mooring wall for watercraft enthusiasts, sport courts, concessions and a temporary festival space.

Future Destinations

In the future, the Master Plan proposes that Hanlan's Point could include a purpose-built, open-air event space for hosting "Island-sized" festivals and cultural events. The mooring wall should get upgraded facilities to support plans to reconfigure the wall and provide opportunities for short-term docking. The Hanlan's Beach ESA will continue to be managed and supported through intentional improvements on both the beach and park sides to help mitigate human impacts within the sensitive ecologies of the dunes and wetlands. Hanlan's Beach should continue to be supported as a vibrant beacon for inclusion and celebration of the LGBTQ2S+ communities and a welcoming space for Toronto's nudist community with reconsiderations of the boundaries of the clothing-optional space.



- Short-Term Priority
- Enhancing Visitor Experience
- Business Plan Integration
- Supporting a Dynamic Environment
- Revealing an Indigenous Place
- Elevating Equity and Belonging
- Improving Access and Connection

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Hanlan's Landing

The Master Plan proposes that Hanlan's Landing be re-imagined to create a new sense of arrival for the Hanlan's Point district. From reconfiguring the arrival plaza to create a welcoming and seamless space that supports movement for pedestrians and cyclists as they start their island adventure, to creating a space that becomes a destination in it's own right. Encouraging visitors to stay and enjoy the view out to the harbour from the redesigned north lake wall, savour unique food from the revitalized pavilion, or wander over to learn about Ned Hanlan (the man and the tugboat).

Re-purposed buildings at the landing could support the creation of a new bike rental node. Refurbishment of the existing pavilion could provide a sheltered space to wait for the next ferry, enjoy a snack and learn about what's happening on the Island from the new visitor information hub.

The new arrival experience could also be supported through unique and meaningful art and placement of cultural markers to not only signal the connection between this space and the Gibraltar Point Arts District, but also create significant visual identifiers for the Island as a whole. These markers should include permanent elements that identify the Indigenous significance of the islands, water and surrounding territories as well as marking Hanlan's Point as a queer friendly space.

A new Island tram service could connect major destinations across the park, traveling between Hanlan's and Ward's Landings to provide more accessible and efficient ways of moving around the park.

Activities at Hanlan's Landing will quiet down in the winter, only served by ferries when weather conditions limit access to the other docks at Centre and Ward's. Facilities should be winterized to ensure they can be used when needed, but planned operations of the businesses and information hub should be optimized for Spring through Autumn.

Key Considerations:

1. Re-imagine Traffic Island + Pathway Connections
2. Revitalize Plaza
3. Restore Concession + Washroom Pavilion
4. New Visitor Hub
5. Restore + Relocate Heritage Elements
6. New Bike Rental + Retail
7. Enhance Water Taxi
8. Access to Water's Edge
9. Gateway Feature + Cultural Markers
10. Wayfinding

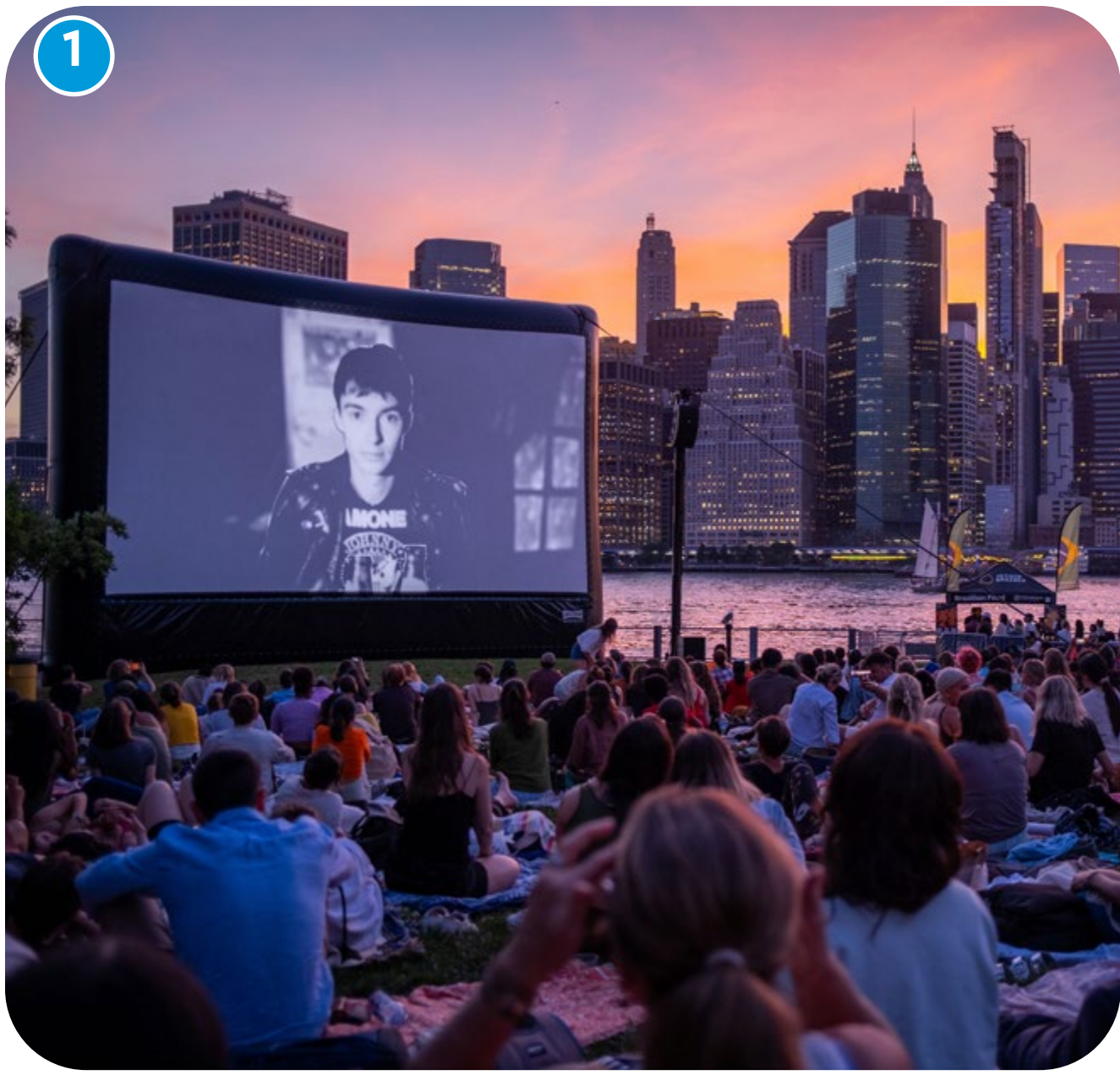


- Short-Term Priority Business Plan Integration Revealing an Indigenous Place Elevating Equity and Belonging
Enhancing Visitor Experience Supporting a Dynamic Environment Improving Access and Connection

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Focus Areas – Hanlan's Point



Festival Space

The Master Plan recommends formalizing the already enjoyed event lawn at Hanlan's, this new sloped lawn will allow for the installation of critical infrastructure to support festivals and events in a sustainable way on the Island. Accessible pathways should be provided to allow for universal access to the viewing area, while flexible plazas could provide spaces that can support events when needed or serve other park functions (sports and play) at other times. Planted slopes could buffer adjacent spaces from event noise and frame views to the stage area. Opportunities for revitalizing the concessions and washrooms of the Mermaid Café, and integrating facilities along the Mooring Wall could balance increased demands during events.

Key Considerations:

General Considerations

- Partner with community-based groups for "island-sized" programs
- Support diverse arts and cultural events
- Share information across all Island communication platforms to help plan visits

Location-specific Considerations

1. Create spaces for free and affordable programming and events
2. Provide accessible viewing areas and pathways to get to and around festival area
3. Support diverse food offerings that can be expanded for special events
4. Create opportunities to embed temporary and permanent art within festival space
5. Use planting to frame and buffer event space



Mooring Wall

The dock wall along Blockhouse Bay is a popular destination for short-term mooring during summers. Through the proposed revitalization of the north pavilion and expansion of more docking options, opportunities to integrate a watercraft rental node could create a space that better serves the needs of park users without significant changes to the existing infrastructure.



Key Considerations:

General Considerations

- Provide mooring options at a variety of price points and durations to make accessing the islands by boat more equitable

Location-specific Considerations

1. Integrate markers to share Indigenous significance of islands along several points on dock wall
2. Provide spaces along wall to partner in the sharing of Indigenous teachings and values
3. Revitalize concessions and washrooms along the mooring wall to expand offerings to boaters and park visitors



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Focus Areas – Beaches + Edges



Hanlan's Beach

Hanlan's Beach should continue to be a vibrant space that embodies a critical space of belonging within the park. It should continue to be a seasonal space, enjoyed mostly in the heat of summer, but with opportunities to enjoy the boardwalks through nature even when the water turns icy. Hanlan's importance as a queer-friendly space and Toronto's only clothing optional beach should continue.

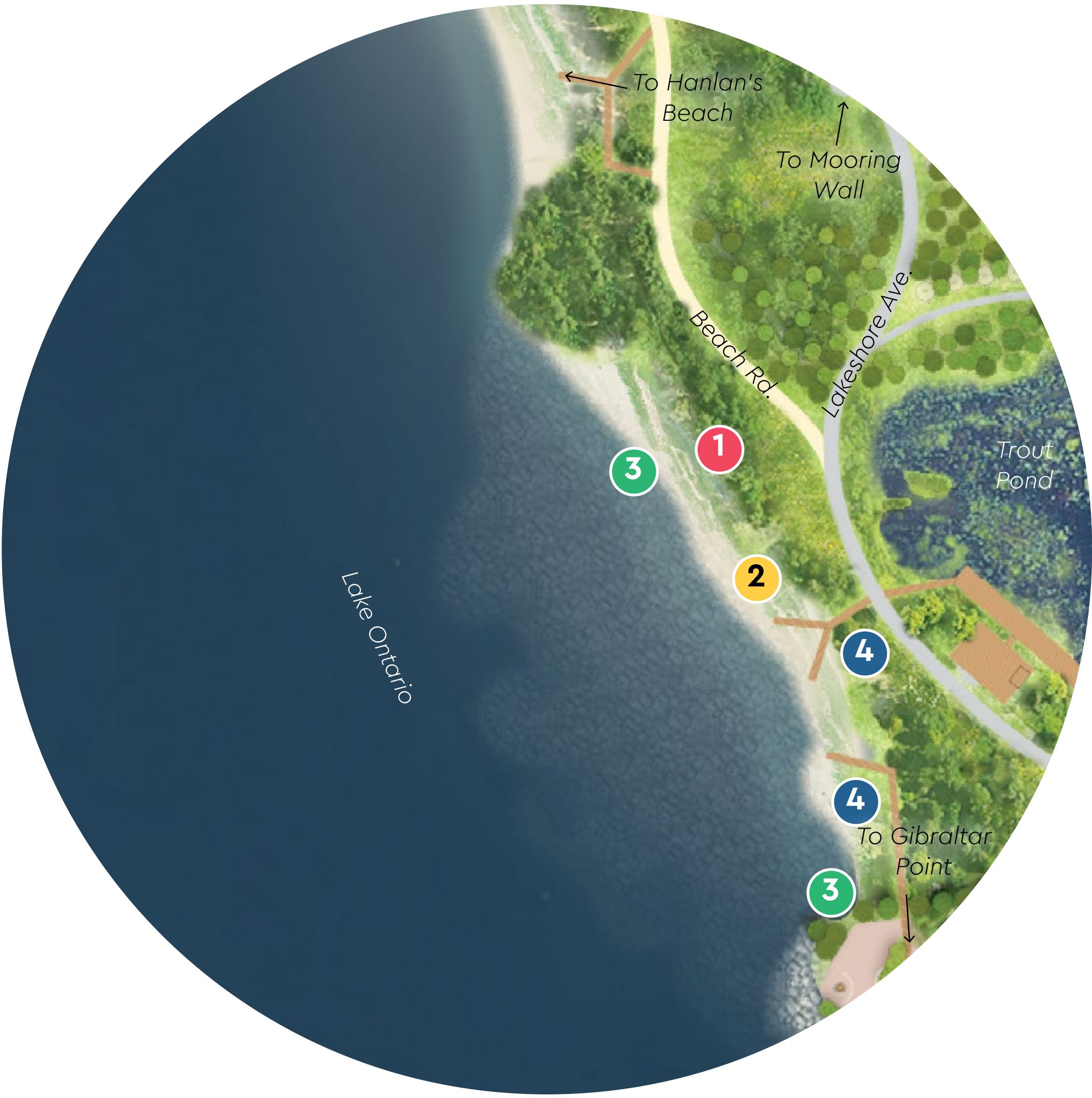
Key Considerations:

General Considerations

- Opportunities for naming & re-naming
- Share the significance of Hanlan's to the LGBTQ2S+ 🟢
- Enhance rentals to improve the beach experience 🟢🟡

Location-specific Considerations

1. Provide accessible routes into water 🟢
2. Improve swim experience
3. Expand clothing optional area 🟢
4. Provide shaded and less exposed areas within the clothing optional permitted area 🟢
5. Provide a permanent marker or flag to identify the beach as a safe space and place of significance for LGBTQ2S+ communities 🟢
6. Identify no-go areas to protect sensitive habitats
7. Provide controlled access through vulnerable natural areas
8. Provide an Island Transportation network that helps get between Ferry Landings 🟡



Near-Shore Reef + Dune Restoration

The Near-Shore Reef and Dune Restoration at Gibraltar Point is the culmination of over a decade of studies, design and planning to reinstate not only a highly unique habitat, but also demonstrates a dynamic and nature-supportive approach to flood mitigation and erosion control on the islands. The Master Plan recommends that this impressive effort be shared and that the resulting space should become a destination for learning about the forces that shape the island landforms and how nature helps to reduce the impacts of those forces when designed effectively.

Key Considerations:

General Considerations

- Opportunities for naming & re-naming
- Provide opportunities for diverse and accessible experiences in nature (including non-sight based experiences)
- Develop interpretation and wayfinding to support themed self-guided experiences

Location-specific Considerations

1. Provide opportunities for teaching and demonstrating Indigenous management practices
2. Share the role of dunes and the reef in protecting the Island's habitat 🟢
3. Demonstrate restoration of unique Island terrestrial and aquatic ecologies 🟢
4. Provide controlled and accessible access through vulnerable natural areas to share the importance of protecting habitat





In the future, the Master Plan proposes that Gibraltar Point could become a place that celebrates art, ecology and provides opportunities for community to come together to share teachings, food, and stories. New walkways could be provided to connect areas around Trout Pond and through parts of the Dune Restoration, to provide visitors with a peak at wildlife while minimizing human impacts on the health and function of the spaces. A new pavilion could replace existing washrooms and provide a space for community events, amenities, and programs to support a wide range of activities throughout the district. The Master Plan identifies an opportunity for Artscape Gibraltar Point to become a part of an expanded Arts District that could provide opportunities to engage with the local Island arts community, and city-wide and regional arts and creative collectives beyond the walls of the old Island School.



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Focus Areas – Gibraltar Point



Gibraltar Point

Envisioned as a new community hub and multi-purpose space, a year-round pavilion has the potential to anchor an event lawn and plaza with fire pit and unobstructed sunset views. In addition, proposed pathway connections to and around Trout Pond will allow for teaching and learning about natural heritage in the area. Considering opportunities for expanded island programs, this space could also serve to provide shelter from wind and rain.

Key Considerations:

General Considerations

- Opportunities for naming & re-naming
- Provide affordable, diverse food options
- Provide opportunities to support permanent and temporary art at Gibraltar Point

Location-specific Considerations

1. Create diverse spaces to share Indigenous knowledge and practices
2. Create flexible space for hosting programing and events
3. Create a new hub to bridge amenities between Centre and Hanlan's with year-round shelter and washrooms to support extended programming and activation
4. Provide seasonal experiences and closures to demonstrate habitat cycles
5. Create interpretive boardwalks to assist in advocacy and education about natural heritage of Trout Pond and area
6. Provide accessible connections to support diverse experiences at the point and around Trout Pond



Arts District

The Master Plan envisions the creation of an Arts District could provide opportunities to revitalize existing buildings at Artscape and the former laboratory building along the fence-line of the Island Water Treatment Plant. This re-imagined area could include spaces that support creative pursuits, expression, exhibition and inquiry. The precinct will embrace opportunities to bring art outside and consider temporary and permanent installations and activations to the Arts District and Island-wide.

Key Considerations:

General Considerations

- Provide access to arts and creative programs at a variety of price points to expand equitable access
- Support partnerships with diverse organizations, businesses and communities to engage with and activate the precinct
- Share information about events and activities through the city's website and communications networks for the Island

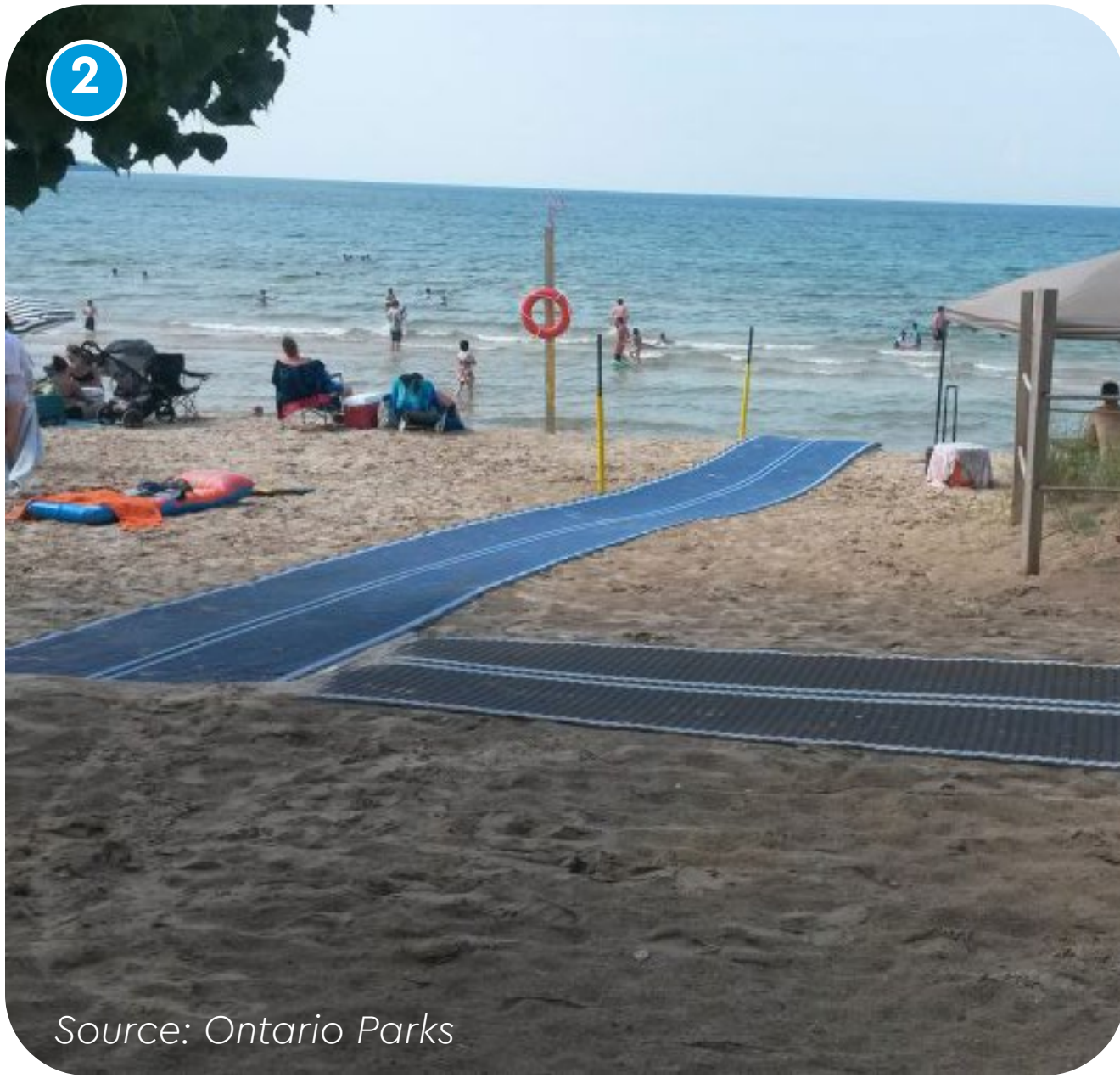
Location-specific Considerations

1. Create diverse spaces to support teaching, learning, and sharing Indigenous knowledge
2. Revitalize and adapt facilities and amenities to support creating, collaborating and exhibiting art as a form of placemaking
3. Engage with adjacent spaces, including beaches, to explore sustainable and low-impact ways to share art and culture through the landscapes of the Island



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Focus Areas – Beaches + Edges



Source: Ontario Parks



Gibraltar Beach

A hidden gem among the Island's beaches, this space should continue to be a cherished Island refuge. The Master Plan proposes improvements focused on strengthening the resilience of the dynamic beach ecology, providing accessible facilities and services to ensure all visitors can enjoy the space safely and with minimal impact on the environment. The beach should continue to rely on adjacent facilities and spaces to support island-wide expansion of key services (rentals, food, washrooms). Any improvements on the beach should prioritize keeping the unique, quiet character of the existing beach, instead of duplicating the experiences already available elsewhere on the Island.

Key Considerations:

General Considerations:

- Create opportunities to teach about the diverse ecologies, habitats and systems of the beach and their roles in the Island ecosystems

Location-specific Considerations:

1. Support teaching, storytelling and interpretation at the water's edge
2. Provide pathways, facilities and equipment to support accessing water with mobility devices
3. Improve access to washrooms and rentals at the beach
4. Explore opportunities to partner with Arts District activities to extend compatible programs to the beach and water's edge
5. Restore and manage dune planting to mitigate human impacts
6. Improve signage to direct visitors to the beach and amenities and keep them on pathways



Centre Beach

Centre Beach is a place to play and explore with family. Located near many family-oriented destinations, the beach includes a break-wall structure that makes it ideal for novice swimmers. The Master Plan proposes that accessibility at the beach should be enhanced through the use of sand mats, all-terrain mobility devices, floating wheelchairs and staff on hand to assist visitors. Expanded beach rentals and enhanced food offerings at the existing concession and washroom areas could provide affordable and diverse options and help reduce the number of things visitors have to bring with them. The proximity to existing play spaces should continue to support opportunities to explore and play near the beach. The pier should continue to be a destination for incredible views, day and night, year-round.

Key Considerations:

General Considerations

- Provide opportunities to share histories, stories and teachings about the Island from diverse worldviews and experiences
- Support continued efforts to minimize waste and human impacts on the beach and lake environments

Location-specific Considerations

1. Expand rental and food offerings and support diverse representation
2. Provide accessible pathways and mobility devices and services to support safe access to the beach and lake
3. Provide opportunities to explore, play and discover at the beach and nearby



Source: Ontario Parks