VISIONS FOR THE
METROPOLITAN TORONTO WATERFRONT, I:
TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING, 1852-1935

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This paper provides a general overview of waterfront-centred or related planning in the Toronto area during the period 1852-1935. Plans were brought forth to resolve a host of problems and to take advantage of opportunities along the lakeshore and in the regional watershed. While these challenges were often considered in isolation, over time the planners adopted a more comprehensive outlook. The topics discussed here include the struggle between the railways and other interests on and near the inner harbour; proposals to develop several major public properties on the waterfront; the systematization of municipal hard services; the emergence of a local planning movement and the development of general schemes for civic improvement; and the creation of a new public port authority, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners (THC), and the nature and evolution of its 1912 plan. The THC's plan was the most ambitious and comprehensive effort of its time. Yet, while it represented a crucial point of departure in the local planning culture, it was thoroughly conditioned by the proposals which preceded it. In turn, the visions of the THC and the other planners set important precedents for later regional thinking and the waterfront activities of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.
This work is based on a heritage study commissioned in 1991 by the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department for its new Waterfront Plan. *Visions for the Metropolitan Waterfront: Planning in Historical Perspective* (February 1992) reviewed the genealogy of planning ideas in and for the Toronto region, from the onset of the railway era in the 1850s to the adoption of Metro's first Waterfront Plan in 1968. The objective of *Visions* was to provide background information on the emergence and changing character of Toronto-area planning, so that Metro's staff could situate their ideas in a long tradition of envisioning the waterfront. The first half of the original study, dealing with the period 1852-1935, appears here in revised form; the second half, which brings the story up to 1968 (after returning to 1913 to examine Metro's institutional origins), is found in Major Report No. 28.

*Visions* complemented another heritage study that I prepared for Metro. *Regional Heritage Features on the Metropolitan Waterfront* (December 1991; revised and published by Metro in June 1992) identified regionally significant structures, sites, and areas on the Metropolitan lakefront and in the lower river valleys. In this discussion of development on Metro’s past and present waterfronts, note is taken of what actually materialized from some of the plans and proposals outlined in *Visions*.

Plans and proposals are not the conventional stuff of "heritage," though an enlarged sense of the field is emerging. To this end, I would like to thank Lynn Morrow at Metro Planning for initiating the study, Glenn Miller and Pamela Leach for seeing it through to completion, and Tom Rando for his technical assistance. *Visions*, however, had its genesis in a paper presented at "Toronto's Changing Waterfront: The Built and Unbuilt Environment," a workshop held in 1990 at the Centre for Urban and Community Studies. I am grateful for the comments tendered by the workshop participants, and for the support of the organizers, Roy Merrens, Michael Moir, and Judith Kjellberg Bell. The assistance given by the staff of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library (particularly the Municipal Reference Library and the Baldwin Room), the City of Toronto Archives, the Toronto Harbour Commission Archives, several University of Toronto libraries (Architecture, Engineering, Government Documents, and Robarts), and the Canadian Waterfront Resource Centre was invaluable. I am especially indebted to Michael Moir of the Toronto Harbour Commission Archives and Ted Relph and Jim Lemon of the University of Toronto for their advice and for reviewing the present manuscript, and to Judith Kjellberg Bell of the Urban Centre for seeing it to publication. The interpretations and errors remain my own.

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INTRODUCTION

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood ..." The American architect-planner Daniel Burnham delivered this famous edict shortly before unveiling his Plan for Chicago in 1909.¹ Burnham's philosophy and his City Beautiful ideas on waterfront design were taken up across North America, and Toronto was no exception. Locally, their grandest expression came in the Toronto Harbour Commissioners' (THC) 1912 plan. Yet while the THC's scheme owed much to the American planning ethos of the time, it was greatly influenced by previous Toronto-based initiatives brought forward "in the public interest."

These initiatives and the THC's early work are the subject of this paper. In bringing together waterfront proposals from the period 1852-1935, my aim is to track the emergence and development of a planning tradition which addressed problems and opportunities on an ever-increasing scale and in a comprehensive manner, building on — and often claiming legitimacy from — earlier ideas. Emphasis is placed on the public record, on the plans and reports commissioned by or submitted to various public bodies, along with annual reports and the minutes of Toronto City Council. These documents are supplemented by contemporary press discussions, a limited amount of archival material, and secondary sources. The analysis is guided by some basic questions. What topics were addressed by the plans? Who were the plan-makers, and what were their objectives? At what scale did they work, and what functions concerned them? What character was the new landscape to assume? What land uses were viewed as desirable? How were competing interests to be accommodated?

This said, I should stress that the idea of planning the "metropolitan waterfront" (broadly defined) usually proceeded on a narrowly focused basis in the years before 1912 [fig. 1]. Most initiatives focused on specific locales, functions, projects, or issues. Along these lines, I discuss the relationship between the railways and other interests on Toronto's central waterfront (1852-1924), proposals for the development of Ashbridge's Bay and Toronto Island (1886-1909), and attempts to rationalize various municipal services into large-scale, independently managed systems (1886-1935). I offer a broad synthesis of this heterogeneous activity, rather than a detailed assessment of the issues surrounding the plans or the nature of their implementation. These subjects, while worthy of study, lie beyond the scope of this paper.²


²For a recent survey of the Toronto waterfront literature, see H. Roy Merrens, The Redevelopment of Toronto's Port and Waterfront: A Selected Bibliography, Working Paper No. 11 (Toronto: Canadian Waterfront Resource Centre, 1992). On general historical works pertaining to the Toronto region, see F.H.
Figure 1. Features along the Toronto-area waterfront from Etobicoke Creek (lower left) to Galloway Road (far right), 1913. The dashed line offshore at Sunnyside and Parkdale (left centre) represents the newly-built hydro-electric transmission line from Niagara. The area labelled "Toronto Harbour" (lower centre) was also called "Toronto Bay" or the "inner harbour." The Don River's outlet into Toronto Harbour is shown incorrectly; in 1909, it was diverted southward to join Keating Channel. The "Dutch Church" (shown about two miles east of its actual location) remains a key geological landmark along the Scarborough Bluffs. [Adapted from Faull, The Natural History of the Toronto Region]
By the beginning of the 20th century, a diverse array of waterfront-related proposals had been placed on the public agenda. Some ideas were implemented in comparative isolation. But this approach was overtaken by a major change in thinking, as attention turned to making the whole public realm more beautiful and efficient (and more economically productive) through coordinated improvements and reformed institutions. The pursuit of this comprehensive ideal was initially apparent in three general city plans from 1906-11. Though centred on Toronto, the plans were also situated in a regional context and paid close attention to the lakeshore’s special character. These ventures were surpassed in many respects by the harbour commissioners’ 1912 plan. The THC then played an important role in the local resurgence of city planning (and the production of a municipally sponsored plan) in the late 1920s. Little came out of the big schemes, save for the 1912 plan, and even it had undergone substantial revision by 1932. Implementation was frustrated — and replanning compelled — by parsimonious governments, by conflict between institutions and between land uses, and by objectives that over time were seen as incompatible with one another, too limited in scope, or irrelevant in the face of socio-economic change. Amid Depression-era retrenchment, waterfront planning in the Toronto area virtually came to a halt by the mid-1930s.3 After mid-century, however, the ideas and achievements of the period 1852-1935 would strongly influence the waterfront plans, policies, and projects of (and in) the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.

The Railways and Other Interests on the Central Waterfront, 1852-1924

Debating the Esplanade

In the 1850s, several railways were constructed in the Toronto region, with considerable impact on the rural economies and landscapes east and west of the city. In Scarborough and Pickering Townships the Grand Trunk’s line hugged the shore between Highland Creek and the Rouge River, blocking the upstream movement of masted vessels and, at Port Union, transforming a shipping terminal into a railway depot. West of Toronto, the Great Western’s line was inserted between Lake Ontario and the locales eventually known as Parkdale, High Park, and Swansea, and a major bridge was thrown over the Humber mouth. The railways, however, all focused on Toronto’s central waterfront. Their physical impact there was combined, far exceeding that in the outlying areas. They also


generated intense debate over access to the lake and the use and character of the waterfront. Controversy raged for decades, yet even today the issues remain unresolved.

The origins of railway activity on Toronto's waterfront date to 1851, when the first sod was turned on Front Street for the Ontario, Simcoe & Lake Huron (or Northern) Railway. This enterprise, though partly financed by the City, went against Council's desire to consolidate rail activity at Ashbridge's Bay, keeping smoke away from the city while fostering the marsh's reclamation. Instead, the Northern laid track across Garrison Common to reach the Queen's Wharf, which it had leased from the Harbour Trust, Toronto's first port authority.

This action precipitated a civic response in 1852. After claiming that the rails on Garrison Common were "injurious to its intended purpose and directly contrary to any objects for which such a public park was granted," Council petitioned the Crown for various waterlots to ensure local public control over the shoreline. In the accompanying documents, John G. Howard, the City Surveyor, showed how the inner harbour frontage might be used. On paper, he laid out "pleasure drives, walks, and shrubbery for the recreation of the citizens" on the land south of Front Street, between York and Bathurst streets [fig. 2]. Howard's scheme embraced non-recreational uses as well, but he was evidently resigned to a measure of railway development on the Common, as he showed tracks leading down to the Queen's Wharf at the foot of Bathurst. Port and military facilities on the inner harbour were also to be maintained.

Howard's scheme was part of a last-ditch effort to retain a significant portion of the waterfront for public use before it succumbed to private development. The first initiative had come, in a time of lesser urgency, some 35 years earlier. In 1818, the Province of Upper Canada patented 30 acres between Berkeley and Peter streets to five prominent citizens of York, "to hold the same for the use and benefit of the inhabitants ... as and for a Public Walk or Mall in front of the Town." This tract was simply "held" and never improved, though City Council occasionally took note of it during the 1830s and 1840s. In the latter decade, a citizens' petition unsuccessfully demanded that a public promenade be constructed on the reserve. Colonial officials were no more impressed with the idea in the 1850s: an anonymous note pencilled on Howard's drawing claimed that the design was "altogether too ornamental and inconsistent therefore with the idea for an Esplanade or a Promenade." The City fathers sold the strip off on a piecemeal basis by 1862, after it had long been subjected to illegal encroachments.

A bayside Esplanade had first been mooted in 1837, when the City was granted a number of waterlots on condition they be filled in for a public walk and a railway venture.

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5 A copy of the patent is in the Toronto Harbour Commission Archives (THCA), SC 26, box 6, vol. 6.
Figure 2. John G. Howard's design for "pleasure drives, walks and shrubbery for the recreation of the citizens" along the north shore of Toronto's inner harbour, 1852. York Street is on the far left; Bathurst Street, Garrison Common, and the Queen's Wharf are on the far right. Neither lakefilling nor disturbance of existing uses formed part of this highly picturesque scheme. [National Archives of Canada, NMC 4974]
When the latter failed, so too did the Esplanade. The City received additional waterfront properties from the Crown in 1840; individual lot holders were expected to partly fill them for a 100-foot-wide thoroughfare. Again, new land did not materialize. Interest in the project revived only after railway fever gripped the city in the late 1840s. By the early 1850s, it was evident that the proper Esplanade "idea" entailed lakefilling to accommodate railway development and promote civic prosperity. At that time, the Northern was not alone in grasping the commercial value of the Front Street area. In 1852, the Toronto & Guelph Railway claimed it was "indispensable that [its] track should be connected with the Lake," and outlined plans for a "future Marine Depot of vast extent, taking in ... the whole navigable front of the City." Strive water-rail connections and extensive lakefilling were featured in Walter Shanly's scheme for the Toronto & Guelph [fig. 3].

Matters came to a head in 1853. The imminent arrival of the railways was widely accepted and much-heralded, but a measure of development control was also deemed necessary. To prevent the railways from taking over desirable land — and especially the water's edge — the City sought to regain the waterlots and rights to Esplanade construction granted previously, but which had since lapsed. This was done through the Esplanade Act of 1853. The Act stipulated that plans for the Esplanade were to be solicited publicly. Those penned by Kivas Tully (superintendent engineer for the Esplanade and for the Harbour Trust, and who had earlier called for a "general plan" to guide waterfront development), F.W. Cumberland (chief engineer for the Northern), and C.S. Gzowski (working on behalf of the Toronto & Guelph, then being acquired by the Grand Trunk) received much attention in the press.

Tully's and Cumberland's plans attempted to strike a balance between various interests and meet a number of waterfront objectives, rather than cater (as Gzowski did) to essentially a single interest — that of the railways. Their schemes suggested that Howard's vision had not been entirely forgotten. One City alderman, for instance, lobbied for the provision of a "healthy and ornamental frontage," which included "reserving space ... for a public terrace and pleasure grounds, with such other ornamental and necessary

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6 Quoted in Mellen, 38.
8 Prior to the Esplanade Act's passage, Tully argued that a "general plan, suitable, and if possible to accommodate all parties, should be drawn up by an experienced engineer, and forwarded to the Governor General in Council, to be approved. By so doing, speculators and conflicting interests of the several railway engineers, will be set at once and forever at rest. The wharfingers and [waterlot] lessees are deeply interested in this matter." Quoted in Mellen, 41.
Figure 3. Walter Shanly’s railway termini plan for Toronto’s inner harbour, as drawn by J.O. Browne, 1852. Extensive lakefilling out to the Windmill Line west of Yonge Street is indicated, as is the use of Garrison Common for western railway entrances to the harbour. Fort York and Garrison Creek are at the left centre; Stanley Barracks is at the lower left. The existing shoreline is also shown. [Toronto Harbour Commission Archives PC 15/3/772]
improvements as the taste, health and requirements of the city may suggest. Tully, who conceived the public interest as the combination of all parties who wanted to use the waterfront, provided tracks, bridges, and a promenade, and called for a trunk sewer to remedy the "increasing evil" around the wharves [fig. 4]. Cumberlard's plan resembled Tully's in addressing both economic and aesthetic concerns. Built adjoining Front Street, the Esplanade offered a public walk approximately at the height of the existing bank. Below, on a filled area, would run railway tracks at wharf level; bridges sloping down from the Esplanade would link city and harbour. All parties would benefit: the railways serving the wharves would be free of level crossings, and citizens could enjoy safe and ready access to the water. Cumberland's proposal was warmly received in the press, though a major defect was also noted. Said the Globe:

This plan is a magnificent one, it combines every advantage except one, that of cheapness. The railways would have space to pass near the wharves, close to the business part of the City. We would have a Public Walk and Drive, unparalleled ... in America for extent and beauty of position. Commanding a view of the beautiful Bay, and free from the dust and noise of the streets, it would be a delightful place of recreation for the people. It would help to purify the air of the whole City, it would be a general rejoicing ground on holiday occasions, the place for processions, for children's sports ... Generations would grow up under its trees to view it with affectionate veneration. A greater ornament to the City could not be conceived. The long line of stone embankment crowned with trees, the massive bridges inclining to the water would give to the outer city such a favourable appearance as is not possessed by any place in America. In another related project, Front Street and the Esplanade were to be combined in a "Front Street Terrace." The Terrace, 120 feet in width, was separated from the lower "Railway Approach" by a retaining wall and parapet, and planted with rows of trees for its entire length [fig. 5]. The project "would be more than an equivalent for the pleasure ground reserve taken from the public for other purposes. From this terrace the fresh breezes from the lake might be enjoyed, the arrival and departure of shipping and the marshalling and moving of trains viewed by the young and old without fear or danger."

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9 Ogle Gowan, quoted in "The Idea of a Waterfront Park in Toronto," 9. This typescript, addressing the period 1818-62 but omitting Howard's work, was apparently prepared for the City of Toronto in the 1970s. I am grateful to Roy Merrens of York University for this reference.

10 Toronto Patriot, 26 August 1853. The interceptor — carrying Toronto's raw, untreated sewage which then flowed directly into the harbour — was to run under the Esplanade from the Queen's Wharf to the Don River, and empty into Ashbridge's Bay.

11 Toronto Globe, 2 August 1853.

Figure 4. Kivas Tully's proposal for the Esplanade, 1853. Grade separation was to be achieved through the use of bridges over the railway tracks, maintaining safe and ready access to Toronto Harbour. [THCA, PC 15/3/743]

Figure 5. An Esplanade proposal resembling Tully's, attributed to Hugh Scobie, 1853. The "Grand Terrace or Paseo" sustained the idea of a waterfront walk first proposed in 1818. [THCA, PD 2/1/10267]
This sense of amenity was lacking in the plan adopted by City Council in 1854. Gzowski’s utilitarian scheme aimed to please the railways and those with a direct economic interest in them (like Gzowski and many Council members). While vague on his own construction details, Gzowski dismissed the idea of a public walk. He claimed that its advantages were far out of proportion to its cost. Instead, a narrow Esplanade roadway was to be lined by warehouses to the north and tracks to the south. The proposal was certainly the most controversial but neither the cheapest nor the most satisfactory to all parties. However, Gzowski’s threats to run the Grand Trunk line north of the City and not purchase a waterfront right-of-way apparently swayed Council’s decision. Amid charges of corruption and mismanagement and continued struggle with the railways, filling for the Esplanade was completed by 1859. In his inaugural speech of that year, Mayor Adam Wilson described the project as a "wild and ruinous scheme," and regretted that it had "been undertaken or cast upon the City." Successive compromises meant the City had surrendered almost all control over public access to the waterfront. As one commentator has argued, the Esplanade "was built for the railways, put under public ownership to provide for payments which no one wanted to assume, and then put back under the control of the railways." 13

The Second Esplanade, the Don Improvement, and the Railway Viaduct

Following years of slow growth in 1860s and '70s, negotiations proceeded during the 1880s to extend the Esplanade southward — largely to accommodate the new Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). In these discussions, the question of providing good access to the wharves and waterlot holders surfaced frequently. Yet City politicians and civic officials usually viewed the railways' interests as paramount. For example, an 1882 scheme by the City Engineer called for filling and the construction of a new southerly street, which would carry additional tracks; pedestrian and cart traffic was to reach the fenced-off harbour through three at-grade gates. Proposals and counter-proposals followed. Five days after a CPR scheme appeared in the press in 1888, the Windmill Line Agreement was struck. 14 This deal, with its street closures and "particulars to be settled by the railway companies," drew adverse public comment.

New plans appeared the following year to relieve train-blocked streets and inadequate terminal facilities, and prevent a complete CPR takeover of the central waterfront. These


14Toronto Globe, 5 January 1888; Mellen, 181. As originally conceived, the Windmill Line delimited the southerly extent of waterlots and wharf development in the harbour. First referred to in 1833, this surveyor's line ran from Gooderham & Worts' windmill at Parliament Street to the site of Fort Rouillé in Exhibition Park. The Windmill Line Agreement was the first step in the second extension of the "harbour front." See Jeffery Stinson and Michael Moir, Built Heritage of the East Bayfront, Environmental Audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area, Phase II, Technical Paper No. 7 (Toronto: Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, 1991), 3-4.
schemes were drawn up for the City by Granville C. Cunningham (Assistant City Engineer) and Villiers Sankey (City Surveyor), for the Toronto Board of Trade by A.M. Wellington (a New York engineer), and for the Citizens' Association by J.H. Armstrong and John Galt. The gravity of the situation was well understood by Cunningham and Sankey:

The waterfront, from the Queen's Wharf eastwards, is barely two miles in extent; of this, at present, nearly one-half is occupied and controlled by the railways to the exclusion of the general public and vessel business, and to permit further purchases and occupation of the water front by railways would have the result of cutting off the City altogether from the Bay.... It must be borne in mind that our waterfront is limited; it cannot be indefinitely extended; and if it is given over to the railways to be occupied and controlled by them, it cannot also be used by lake craft, nor enjoyed by the citizens generally....

There are two ways, and only two, of safely continuing this railway access along the water front and of safely continuing the street access from the City to the Bay. Either the railway must pass over the streets, or the streets must pass over the railways.15

Common to the three schemes were track elevation on a viaduct, a facility to replace the Union Station of 1873, and a central waterfront park. The most elaborate park proposal came from Wellington, who suggested that 26 acres be set aside between York and Yonge streets, with the "rather shabby structures which now accommodate the yachting, boating, Island ferries, and pleasure steamboat[s] [being] replaced by buildings of a more ornamental character, ... [with] pavilions, music stands, etc., for the general use of the public."16 [fig. 6]

Save for a new Union Station, the CPR objected to these proposals on the basis of cost. Its own views were entrenched in the Tripartite Agreement of 1892: new freight and passenger yards by the water, bridges at York and John streets, street closures and the retention of hazardous grade crossings at Church, Yonge, and Bay [fig. 7]. The Agreement was approved in part by a federal order-in-council in 1893, and confirmed — with yet more land given to the CPR — by the City two years later. A second extension of the shore

15Quoted in C.S. Gzowski and Walter Shanly, Report on the Accommodation for Railways on the Water Front of the City of Toronto, and on the Location of the Canadian Pacific Railway Freight Yards (Toronto, 1889), 4 and 6. Cunningham and Sankey's report forms the bulk of this document; their findings were reviewed and concurred in by Gzowski and Shanly, former civil engineers for the Grand Trunk and the Northern.

16A.M. Wellington, Report ... to the Board of Trade of the City of Toronto on the Terminal Facilities of the Port, August 1889 (Toronto: Carswell, 1907), 19. Taking note of Toronto's limited recreation grounds, Wellington claimed (p. 20) that "Toronto's real park is, and is likely to be, its water front and harbour"; his scheme would affirm this, and "afford recreation to those too poor or too lazy to avail themselves of pleasure-boating privileges." The publication date of this text suggests that Wellington's ideas were germane to the later viaduct debate.
Figure 6. A.M. Wellington’s plan for extending the Esplanade southward to the New Windmill Line, 1889. While much harbour property west of York Street was to be allocated to the railways (shaded), a major public park between York and Yonge streets was also proposed. Fort York and the Queen’s Wharf are on the far left; the Don River is on the far right. The original Windmill Line is represented by Lake Street. [Wellington, Report ... on the Terminal Facilities of the Port]
Figure 7. Toronto’s inner harbour west of York Street, as envisioned in the Esplanade Agreement, 1892. To accommodate the new rail yards, several aquatic clubhouses and boatbuilding shops were to be barged south to the new water’s edge (upper left). Among the other proposals were a bridge over York Street (lower left) and an enlarged Union Station (centre right). [Esplanade Agreement]
toward the New Windmill Line began in 1895. It resulted in a huge rail yard from Yonge to Bathurst and a tiny public park near the Yonge Street Wharf. Cunningham and Sankey’s vision of the waterfront as "one of the chief beauties of the City," where "opposing interests should both be satisfied" and "each should have full scope for development" was apparently not to be realized.\(^{17}\)

The CPR was at the centre of another waterfront controversy in the 1880s and early ’90s — on the banks of the lower Don River. As conceived by politicians in the early 1880s and entrenched by provincial legislation in 1886, the "Don Improvement" involved straightening and deepening the river between its mouth and Bloor Street, while reclaiming the old channel and adjacent marshlands for port and industrial use. The statute pointed to "the necessity which exists for improving the Don ... and securing the sanitary condition of the neighbourhood."\(^{18}\) Public health concerns, however, were clearly subservient to those of business. As civic engineers recalled in 1889, the project originally entailed

the opening up of the river to lake craft, so as to afford, practically, an additional stretch of lake front to the City, that might be used by manufacturers and others for business purposes. At the same time it was planned that convenient streets should run along either side of the straightened channel, giving access from the southern to the northern parts of the City, and that the land reclaimed and formed in the work of straightening should be used for building sites for storehouses, factories and buildings of that nature. Railway sidings for commercial purposes would be necessary, and on the first general plan of the scheme ... there is shown on either side of the proposed channel a finished strip 80 feet in width, composed of a railway reserve next to the channel 30 feet in width, and a road reserve 50 feet in width. The railway reserve was intended for sidings that might accommodate cars loading from or discharging into lake vessels, or cars that brought freight to or from waggons on the road reserve.\(^{19}\)

This arrangement was radically altered during a back-room deal in 1887. The esplanades on either side of the river were increased from 80 to 125 feet, adding two "special" railway reserves and two dock reserves [fig. 8]. This reduced the property against which the City was to assess $200,000 of its reclamation costs. As well, one of the "special" reserves was slated for the CPR’s exclusive use, contrary to the provisions of the Don Improvement Act. The dock reserves, laid out "for the unloading of goods, or for a

\(^{17}\)Quoted in Gzowski and Shanly, 5. On the two crucial agreements, see City of Toronto, Grand Trunk Railway, and Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Esplanade Agreement (Toronto, 1892), and City of Toronto and CPR, Agreement to Settle Disputes as to the Esplanade Agreement (Toronto, 1895).


\(^{19}\)Charles Sproatt (City Engineer) and Granville C. Cunningham (Assistant City Engineer), quoted in Thomas Caswell, compiler, Statutes, By-laws and Documents connected with the Straightening and Improvement of the River Don (Toronto: J.Y. Reid, 1889), 103.
Figure 8. The revised Don Improvement project by surveyors Unwin, Browne, and Sankey, 1888. The Don's meandering course was to be eliminated between Winchester Street (far right) and the Grand Trunk Railway bridge (far left), and new dock and "special" railway reserves were to line the straightened river. The Don's outlet into Toronto Harbour was evidently to remain unchanged, unlike the original proposal from 1886. [Caswell, Statutes, By-laws and Documents Connected with the Straightening and Improvement of the River Don]
promenade," became something of a smoke screen. The CPR, the Grand Trunk, and the Belt Railway wanted to lay fenced-in running tracks, not open sidings, on the railway reserves; such tracks effectively cut the river off from the city proper and certainly would not have fostered port activities. As it turned out, shipping on the Don was thwarted by cost over-runs (leaving the City without funds to build the section near the Don mouth) and by the Grand Trunk (which, miffed at the CPR's "unfair advantage," balked at turning its bridge below Eastern Avenue into a swing structure, and refused the Harbour Trust access across its property to shift the Don mouth southward). By 1890, only the sections between Winchester Street and the Eastern Avenue bridge were finished, though the CPR's demands had been fully satisfied. Diverting the Don in a straight line from the Grand Trunk bridge to Keating Channel would have to wait until 1909; and even then, ship access up the river never materialized.

West of the Don, wrangling over the provision of safe, convenient public access to the central waterfront dragged on for decades. From the early 1890s onward, various federal orders and civic agreements with the railways produced neither new terminal facilities nor sufficient bridges to cross the ever-widening band of steel. The issue was revived in 1907, when both the City and the Board of Trade formulated plans for a new Union Station and better waterfront access. Council initially favoured bridges, but soon took the Board of Trade's position that grade elevation, in the form of a railway viaduct, was required [fig. 9]. Bridges would consume too much land for approach ramps, result in street closures, and expose users to the nuisance of railway noise, smoke, and dirt; a viaduct would require much less land, maintenance, and repair. In 1909, the Dominion Board of Railway Commissioners ordered that a viaduct indeed be built, and that grades be separated across the western waterfront as far as Mimico [fig. 10]. The order overturned a previous municipal decision, confirmed in various legal arrangements, to bridge the inner-harbour tracks. As one railway commissioner ruled, "The paramount consideration here is the safety and convenience of the people of Toronto and no town or City Council by any sort of

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20 Caswell, 92.

21 This gave rise to In the High Court of Justice between [the City, the Grand Trunk, and the Canadian Pacific] re York Street Bridge: Documents for Use at Trial (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1899), a useful compilation of waterfront patents, orders-in-council, instructions, licences of occupation, statutes, agreements, specifications, and grants dating from 1818 to 1894.

22 See Report of Engineers on the Separation of Grades in Connection with the Railway Lines along the Water Front, and on the Proposed Union Station, City of Toronto (Toronto, 1907), for the City's study by W. Barclay Parsons, C.B. Smith, and C.H. Rust, and the Board of Trade's study by R.M. Berrian and John W. Moyes. For the area south of the viaduct, Barclay et al. (p. 8) recommended establishing a 125-foot-wide street between Cherry Street and Bathurst. At the latter point, it was to connect with a proposed lakeshore drive running out to the Humber. As a whole, this project would furnish "a great thoroughfare the full water front of the City"; in the central area, its north side would be given over to factories, warehouses, storeyards and "other large terminal improvements which can be served by railroad connections on the one side and water connections on the other."
Figure 9. Detail from the City's "Part 2" railway grade separation proposal for central Toronto, 1907. To give safe and convenient access to the waterfront, a viaduct was to elevate rail tracks and yards between Bathurst Street and the Don River. A new Union Station was also proposed. [Parsons, Smith, and Rust, Report of Engineers on the Separation of Grades in Connection with the Railway Lines along the Water Front]
Figure 10. The "Part 1" railway grade separation project between Exhibition Park and Mimico, 1911. Deviations from the existing centre line of the Grand Trunk alignment are shown. Whether a bridge or a subway should be built at the "Sunnyside X-ing" provoked the greatest controversy in this section. Also proposed is an extension of Queen Street to and through High Park and Swansea. [Toronto City Engineer, Annual Report 1910]
municipal mismanagement, folly or ignorance can stop itself or prevent the Board taking any
step or making any order otherwise within its jurisdiction. "23

The railways opposed the Commissioners' Viaduct Order. Though the CPR's general
manager declared he had "too much respect for the people of Toronto to put a big stone wall
across her face," the press solidly supported the idea and defended the right of Torontonians
to "get down to their harbour."24 Getting down, however, proved no easier in light of the
railways' continued intransigence. They reopened the viaduct question in 1912, citing the
newly formed THC as a party in the dispute. Resolution appeared to come a year later when
another extension of the central waterfront was agreed upon. The shoreline would be pushed
some 1,300 feet south of the 1888 Windmill Line, accommodating the viaduct with little
disturbance to the existing rail yards, while providing for new docks and a rail-free street.
Still the viaduct remained unbuilt, thanks to its steep price, the Great War, and the Grand
Trunk's demise. It took another Viaduct Agreement in 1924 — bringing the cost down to
$28.5 million with two fewer bridges and only five subway streets — before construction
commenced. The new Union Station was officially opened in 1927, but the viaduct and
associated rail structures were not finished until 1931. As it turned out, Metropolitan
Toronto helped tidy up the viaduct's public financing. In 1954, Metro assumed a bridge and
two-and-a-half subways from the City, thereby taking over Toronto's outstanding debenture
debt for these works, incurred as part of the City's $5.5 million contribution to the
project.25

The arrival of the railways, then, focused attention on the waterfront as a planning
problem. A debate was initiated over the relative balance between the interests of the
railways and those more broadly public in nature. But the political, legal, and economic
clout of the railways gave them the upper hand in dealing with the City and the THC. Even
after a federal body stepped in to get the waterfront viaduct built, the railways stalled to get
a better deal. From the 1850s onward, the emergence of a potentially complex landscape
was thwarted, one which might have accommodated a variety of uses and paid attention to
aesthetic and recreational concerns, yielding a place with a strong public aspect. But such
often-intangible values were factored out in the rudimentary cost-benefit analyses of the day.
The space made for the railways lacked a sense of amenity, and rendered public access to
the harbour both unsafe and inconvenient. This, in turn, precipitated a long struggle for
grade separation and a more attractive waterfront.

23Quoted in Mellen, 312.

24J.W. Leonard, quoted in Mellen, 313.

ADDRESSING ASHBRIDGE’S BAY AND TORONTO ISLAND, 1886-1909

Reclamation Proposals for the Marsh

Extending the Esplanade was not the only waterfront issue preoccupying Torontonians in the late 19th century. The problems and opportunities of two other parts of the public domain were contemplated as well. Treated independently, Ashbridge’s Bay and Toronto Island became the foci of numerous proposals during the period 1886-1909. While the Island’s increasing use, potential for generating revenue, and value as a civic symbol brought the implementation of some proposals, those mounted for Ashbridge’s Bay went (for a time) largely unrealized. They nonetheless expressed principles of development which became publicly accepted, and which were taken up in the THC’s plan of 1912.26

Ashbridge’s Bay (some 1,300 acres of land, marsh, and water granted to the City by the Province in 1880) was the subject of at least eight major plans between 1886 and 1909. The schemes were promoted by local bureaucrats, technical consultants, private syndicates (such as the “Toronto & Ashbridge’s Bay Improvement Company”), the railways, concerned individuals, planning advocacy groups, and business lobby organizations. The root idea — suggested as early as 1835 — was to reclaim the marsh to enhance its healthfulness and economic utility. Some proposals were specific to Ashbridge’s Bay, and aimed at providing additional space for industry and shipping, or relieving the unsanitary state of the marsh, or both. Others were mounted as part of a larger program of civic or harbour improvements. In 1886, for example, an interceptor sewer project by William J. McAlpine and Kivas Tully proposed cutting a lattice-like system of channels into the marsh, over which swing bridges and roads would be constructed; dredged spoil from the channels would be used to reclaim 690 acres of industrial land. In 1900, W.T. Jennings and Joseph Roy outlined a general scheme of harbour works with a similar end. They felt that material dredged from throughout the harbour could find "useful employment" by being dumped into the marsh to create factory and wharf sites. As well, the Don’s outlet could be turned into the marsh, with the silty discharge creating some five acres of new land annually.27 In sum, a remodelled Ashbridge’s Bay was to satisfy many ends and accommodate a range of uses.

One scheme partially came to fruition during the 1890s. Between 1889 and 1892, City Council considered development proposals by several business syndicates, and entered into protracted negotiations with two of them [fig. 11]. But it was the foul condition of Ashbridge’s Bay and public health concerns which finally prompted action in 1892. The


Figure 11. Beavis and Browne's reclamation scheme for Ashbridge's Bay, 1889. This privately-sponsored plan entailed filling much of Ashbridge's Bay for dock and industrial development, to be accessible by ferry, railway, and streetcar. However, over half of the lake edge was slated for housing and parks; a commercial hotel was also proposed. Coatsworth Cut is at the upper left. [THCA, PC 15/3/746]
Medical Health Officer, Norman Allen, gave a pungent account of the situation. The scent and general condition of Ashbridge’s Bay and the Gooderham & Worts byres on its north shore were described as

far more offensive than that from a bad sewer. The whole premises are one reeking mass of filth, and it is a marvel that the employes [sic] can exist amidst such surroundings. In warm weather bubbles of gas arise from the bottom of the Bay, especially in the vicinity of the sewer outlets; a green scum forms rapidly upon the water, and in the early morning a dense fog hangs over the weeds and rushes. When this scum forms, the residents in the immediate neighbourhood state that they suffer extremely from sickness, indeed all whom I consulted complained of illness in their families — diphtheria, sore throat, malaria, nausea, loss of appetite, lassitude and inability to work.

The City was threatened with litigation by a ratepayers’ group and, as the prospect of a cholera outbreak loomed, was ordered by the Province to abate the nuisance. City Engineer E.H. Keating responded with a plan to place the Bay in a "sanitary condition." He recommended cutting an 80-foot channel from the harbour to the lake, and which would connect with a southerly diverted Don River [fig. 12]. The channel’s "long and easy curves" would reduce the chance of blockages and take advantage of the prevailing winds to flush material through Ashbridge’s Bay. Most of the marsh would then be filled in and used "for any purposes that may hereafter be decided upon as most suitable and best" — which, for him, meant port and industrial purposes. Keating emphasized that while his was only an interim project, any work done should be of use when "the larger scheme of reclamation is carried out." This, in large measure, proved to be the case. Though Keating’s Channel was completed only as far as Leslie Street in 1893-95, its configuration west of the Don was adopted by the harbour commissioners in their plan of 1912. A revised version of Keating’s plan, registered by the City in 1895, reserved the lake edge for recreation. This too was a principle which would frequently be reiterated, and gave rise to Council’s dedication of "Simcoe Park" in 1906 [fig. 13].

Broader urban reform objectives were also at work in Ashbridge’s Bay. The questions of retaining public ownership of and control over port facilities and the waterfront were raised. Amid stormy debate, it was answered in the affirmative by City politicians, civic officials, and prominent individuals and organizations. As City Engineer W.T. Jennings said of one private scheme in 1890, "if profit is to be derived from its execution, the City should not only get the full benefit, but be always in a position to control its

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28 Norman Allen, Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Toronto, 1891 (Toronto: J.Y. Reid, 1892), 4. Allen recommended cutting a 100-foot-wide relief channel through the marsh from the harbour to the lake, and pleaded fruitlessly for an interceptor sewer system.

Figure 12. E.H. Keating’s first scheme for the sanitary relief and development of Ashbridge’s Bay, 1893. As with Beavis and Browne’s plan, a new channel joins Toronto Harbour and Lake Ontario; reclamation of the marsh would "ultimately" create land for dock-related enterprises. The area between Parliament Street and Woodbine Avenue is shown. [Toronto City Engineer, Annual Report 1893]

Figure 13. Another City proposal for Ashbridge’s Bay by E.H. Keating, 1896. This plan, registered in 1895 showing the Don diverted south to Keating’s Channel (unlike here), made clear Toronto’s intentions for port, industrial, and recreational development. [Stinson, Heritage of the Port Industrial Area]
The Board of Trade’s 1909 plan for the Bay (discussed below) followed just such lines, and it guided the work of the THC after 1911. The large-scale transformation of Ashbridge’s Bay from marsh to industrial district began later in that decade.

Civic Schemes for the Island

From the founding of York (and likely earlier), Toronto Island served many functions. Principal among these became its role as the community’s leading pleasure ground. At first, few contradictions were seen between its use as a summer cottage resort (for which plans had first been penned in 1850 by John G. Howard31), a public park (established 1880), and a commercial amusement area (dating, at Hanlan’s Point, from the mid-1880s). Revenue from residential and commercial leases helped finance public improvements at the Island Park. These improvements were guided by a $120,000 plan presented in 1887 by the Parks Superintendent, John Chambers. Swampy areas were to be filled in or dredged out; a pavilion built; and trees, lawns, and ornamental flower beds planted, allowing the Island to "take its proper place as the most beautiful natural feature of the neighbourhood — most easy of access, and a conspicuous object from nearly every part of the City."32 When the park officially opened in 1888, a private building boom was under way elsewhere on the Island. The growing appeal of the Island and discontent with its ferry service led to a proposal in 1891 to bridge the Western Channel and run streetcars from the mainland. This plan was followed by others in 1893 and 1897 which proved equally abortive.

Residential use of the Island was first questioned by City Council in 1891, when a bylaw prohibiting the renewal of leases was passed. The ban gained support in some quarters, but was repealed — and the leases renewed at higher rates — three years later. The Mail argued that it was a "great advantage to have a good class of residents on the Island; it keeps money in the City; and it gives busy people, who would find it difficult to go away, the opportunity of summer relaxation."33 By the early 1900s, however, City politicians were again viewing the pattern and direction of development with unease. Soon after the Island Committee was struck by Council in 1902, professional help was sought. Repeated efforts to obtain the services of Frederick Law Olmsted, the aging dean of American landscape architecture, were, however, thwarted by municipal parsimony. Plan-making was left to the civic bureaucracy.

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30Quoted in Desfor, 82.

31A detail from Howard’s plan appears in Sally Gibson, More Than an Island: A History of the Toronto Island (Toronto: Irwin, 1984), 56.

32Quoted in Gibson, 97.

33Quoted in Gibson, 110.
In 1903, Chambers issued a very Olmsted-like plan for the Island. It became Toronto's first published park plan, though it appeared — "for the information of the Council and Citizens generally" — two years later. The plan burgeoned with foliage, conferring a naturalistic identity on the Island's public landscape [fig. 14]. The traditional uses of the Island were nonetheless to be maintained. While a strong sense of separation between commercial, residential, and park areas was evident in the plan, Chambers proposed building additional roads and lagoons to better integrate these zones. Water access was promoted by extending the lagoon system, adding ferry landings, and permitting the construction of private boathouses; some 30 new bridges would ensure that no "unnecessary interference" occurred between roads and waterways. An amendment in 1906 promoted both cottage development along the eastern lakeshore and the creation of Sunfish (later Algonquin) Island.35

None of Chambers' bridges were intended to join the Island with the mainland. His successor, James Wilson, had other ideas. In 1909, Commissioner Wilson issued a $100,000 plan which included a tunnel under the Western Channel, a boulevard running out to Ward's Island, and various athletic facilities, including a new regatta course in the lagoon between Hanlan's Point and the Western Sandbar [fig. 15]. Save for eliminating about 50 cottages on the Western Sandbar, the residential community was to remain, though Wilson emphasized that all "available" land at Centre and Ward's would be "turned into public and athletic grounds."36 Council approved printing 2,000 copies of the plan for public discussion, but the matter did not come up again in civic deliberations. Some improvements, like the regatta course, proceeded intermittently as meagre funds allowed; other ideas, like that of a fixed link and vehicular access to the Island, materialized only on paper in later schemes.

The plans for Ashbridge's Bay and Toronto Island reflected a desire to make these sizable public holdings more productive. While public health concerns galvanized the development of Ashbridge's Bay, the work undertaken there was framed in terms of a long-term goal: promoting economic development through land reclamation. Relative to what happened after the THC took control of the area, this goal was pursued at a rather leisurely pace in the late 1890s and early 1900s. After carting east-end ashes, street sweepings, and garbage down to the marsh for years, the City managed to attract a few small manufacturers to the newly made islets. Yet the larger intent remained. It would become visible once the harbour commissioners applied their financing powers and mighty dredges to the marsh. As for Toronto Island, an enlarged public realm was to arise through improved access and


35Gibson, 134. While the City created a sliver of land, much more substantial reclamation work at Sunfish was part of the THC's 1912 plan; it took place during the late 1910s and early '20s.

36Toronto Telegram, 4 March 1909. Also see Gibson, 138 and 146.
Figure 14. John Chambers’ plan of park and waterway improvements at Toronto Island, 1903. Aquatic life was to be enhanced through additional wharves and new boathouses. The existing cottage areas were to be retained, though not expanded; Ward’s Island (upper right) was to be reserved for park purposes. Note also the large number of new bridges. [Chambers, Report ... on the Laying Out and Improving of the Island Park and Island]
Figure 15. James Wilson's plan for Toronto Island, 1909. A tunnel under the new Western Channel allows a "grand boulevard" carrying streetcars to reach the Island from the city (upper left). Other proposals include a running track on Bathurst Quay (where Maple Leaf Stadium was eventually built) and a wide variety of facilities for organized recreation — among them a new site for the Argonaut Rowing Club, and lacrosse grounds, a cricket crease, bowling greens, and tennis courts on the Western Sandbar (left centre). The pattern of residential leaseholds is not altered, except along the Western Sandbar; note the eastern spread of development toward Ward's Island. [Telegram, 4 March 1909]
permanent improvements to the recreational infrastructure. For both the Bay and the Island, the plans of this period were marked by a firm sense of maintaining public control over City lands while increasing their utility and value.

**SYSTEMATIZING MUNICIPAL SERVICES, 1886-1935**

**Water Supply**

Toronto's concern for infrastructure in the late 19th- and early 20th-century went far beyond the site-specific plans devised for Ashbridge’s Bay and Toronto Island. The City contemplated expanding various hard services on a large scale, and rationalizing them into systems usually to be managed independently of one another. In many cases, this approach had pronounced regional implications, for Toronto often found itself eying the resources of its hinterland, especially in adjacent waterfront communities. Securing these resources proved controversial, though success was thwarted more by forces within the City than by regional opposition.

No debate over services was more heated or prolonged than that concerning the supply of water and disposal of sewage. Both issues were high on the public agenda from the 1880s onward. The *Globe* summed up the duality of the situation well when, in 1882, it described Toronto's water as "drinkable sewage." In 1872, the City had taken over the private water franchise and established a Water Works Commission to modernize the system. This entailed relocating the intake pipe from the inner harbour to the lake side of Toronto Island, where filter beds were dug out of the beach. While the Commission greatly expanded the water distribution network, the quality of the product remained low. Poor design and construction led to the repeated failure of the intake pipe, the filter beds, and the harbour conduit, forcing Torontonians to use the polluted water of Blockhouse Bay on the Island's north side.

In 1887, William J. McAlpine and Kivas Tully presented a radical solution to Toronto's water woes. Turning their back on Lake Ontario, they suggested piping water by gravitation from seven lakes on the Oak Ridges Moraine to reservoirs on the upper Don and Rouge Rivers, then bringing it in conduits to Toronto [fig. 16]. The City fathers soon went even further afield, having famed New York engineers Rudolf Hering and Samuel Gray

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Figure 16. A proposal to supply Toronto with water from the Oak Ridges Moraine area, 1887. Water in various lakes and catchment areas would be directed southward through the Lake Ontario watershed via a system of canals, dams, and conduits. [McAlpine and Tully, Report ... on the Proposed Water Supply by Gravitation, from the Oak Ridge Lakes and the Rivers Don and Rouge]
report on obtaining water from Lake Simcoe. In 1889, Hering and Gray rejected using Simcoe and the Ridge Lakes on financial and sanitary grounds, concluding that Lake Ontario represented not only the "best source," but also "the one from which you can at all times have an unlimited supply at the least expense." Taking water near Victoria Park in Scarborough and discharging sewage at Mimico was considered the best scheme, but the cost forced them to recommend simply upgrading the Island plant. Toronto's sewage was left to continue to find its way into the harbour.

By 1893, the state of Toronto's water was viewed as much as an issue of economics as of public health. City Engineer E.H. Keating noted that the typhoid deaths brought on by the harbour's sewage-contaminated water had "not only [caused] the greatest anxiety, but [threatened] the business prospects of the City." Keating reviewed proposals which looked to the surrounding region for a water source of adequate quantity and quality. A gravity-feed or shoreline-based system from the Scarborough Bluffs was dismissed because of high costs, turbid water, and rough lakeshore topography; to the west, Mimico's water was too "riled and dirty" to sustain interest. Drawing new supplies from the Ridge Lakes, the Don, the Rouge, Lake Simcoe, or Erin Township was also rejected. As with Hering and Gray, Keating instead proposed overhauling the Island system.

Perhaps hoping for some magic remedy, City Council hired a British engineer, James Mansergh, to probe the situation again in 1896. Mansergh was initially keen on bringing water from Lake Simcoe, but a $12 million price-tag convinced him that a modified form of Keating's plan was the only sensible approach. His report inspired some minor improvements; not until 1908 would ratepayers approve the construction of a new waterworks system, with its centrepiece being a vastly upgraded Island plant. The scheme adopted included a second intake pipe and a new filtration plant.

Soon after most of the new Island plant had been completed in 1912, City Council pondered two reports recommending a duplicate waterworks. The first came from a board of engineering commissioners, struck after yet another rupture in the old intake pipe. The board concluded that while the Island system represented an investment which could not be

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41These works complemented a high-pressure fire system which had just been completed. Toronto's Great Fire of 1904 — which cleared an open site for a new Union Station — had revealed that the water mains lacked sufficient pressure for effective fire-fighting.
abandoned — and, in fact, should be improved further — it could not be relied upon to meet all of the City's future needs. Urban growth east and west of Toronto would ultimately require extra supply units. The board found that no site within ten miles of the Island presented at all times a safe supply, though there was a "lesser probability" of impure water being taken off Scarborough than off Mimico. Accordingly, the engineers proposed building a second intake plant at the foot of McCowan Road for $5.3 million [fig. 17]. The possibility of a third unit west of the Humber was "admitted but not as yet anticipated."

A year later, these specific findings — though not the general need for a duplicate system — were challenged by Toronto's new Commissioner of Works, R.C. Harris. The McCowan Road project, claimed Harris, would entail "disappointment, poor service, and a very large financial loss."

A more suitable location would have to resolve the tension between two key factors:

It is desirable to keep a safe distance from any large sewage discharge, therefore, having regard for the effluent from the [Eastern Avenue] Sewage Disposal Plant, and the westerly trend of the lake currents, we are forced to the east. On the other hand, the further the distance to the east the more undesirable becomes the location from a distribution standpoint.

The rural McCowan site was not conveniently located relative to Toronto consumers; and a site so far from the sewage outfall at Ashbridge's Bay was unwarranted because all lake water required treatment. Harris dismissed the idea of building the second plant west of the Humber on the grounds of population distribution. Given the existing pattern of settlement, too great a distance existed between where a western plant would likely be built and where its water would first be used — the cost of "unnecessary" pipe was one that could well be avoided. Harris chose Victoria Park for his duplicate waterworks [fig. 18]. Located on the City boundary rather than four-and-a-half miles from it, the site represented a better centre of distribution; its water quality was comparable to points east; and the physical character of Victoria Park and the adjacent lake bottom was satisfactory in every respect.

As of 1912, Allen Hazen's slow sand filter plant at the Island was one of the largest of its type in North America. The plant expansion which occurred there over the next few years was the first large-scale use of drifting sand technology. See Anderson, "Water-Supply," 210-11.

Board of Commissioners [J.G. Sing, Willis Chipman, Isham Randolph, and T. Aird Murray], Report upon the Existing Water Works System and upon an Additional Water Supply (Toronto, 1912), 6. These engineers expected that when this portion of Scarborough urbanized, its sewage would be transported west to Toronto's main disposal works on Eastern Avenue, while its storm water would be carried north to the Don River and Highland Creek. They, like Hering and Gray and Keating, were also charged with considering the long-distance movement of water into the region; and, like their predecessors, rejected the idea.


Harris, 19.
Figure 17. Detail from the Board of Commissioners’ plan to use a Scarborough site for Toronto’s duplicate waterworks, 1912. The proposed reservoirs at the foot of McCowan Road (over four miles from the City limits) were located at the highest shore elevation along Lake Ontario, facilitating the westward flow of water by gravity. [Board of Commissioners, *Report upon the Existing Water Works System and upon an Additional Water Supply*]
Figure 18. Detail from R.C. Harris' plan for a duplicate waterworks at Victoria Park in Scarborough, 1913. Also shown are the McCowan Road intake proposed by the Board of Commissioners, the existing intake at Toronto Island, and the new sewage outfall southwest of Ashbridge's Bay. [Harris, Report ... on Extension of the Toronto Water Works]
Harris, who had become Works Commissioner due to his administrative prowess, was attacked for refuting professional engineering opinion. His stance was vindicated (and his scheme largely adopted) in a 1926 report by H.G. Acres and William Gore. The plan of these two Toronto engineers "provided for the harmonious expansion of the general water supply system of the future Metropolitan area ... for practically all time to come, even to the extent, if necessary in the distant future, of providing additional raw water intake works in the Mimico zone." Such expansion did not include the Island plant, due to the severe physical and bacterial pollution around its intakes. As Harris had proposed, Victoria Park was to host a new intake and filtration plant. Victoria Park’s location and the character of its watershed were crucial to Acres and Gore’s decision [fig. 19]:

It will be observed that one branch of the Don River swings sharply to the east, leaving a very narrow strip of territory parallel to the lake shore. Similarly, one branch of Highland Creek swings sharply to the west parallel to the lake shore, so that the two drainage basins meet behind Scarborough Bluffs. The narrow strip of territory along the shore which lies outside the basins of these two streams [obviously] forms a natural barrier to the hinterland drainage, which can find its way into the lake only through the mouth of the Don River and of Highland Creek. This means that between these two points there lies a reach of about fifteen miles of foreshore which should be singularly free from both classes of pollution. Theoretically, therefore, the ideal point at which to intake a raw water supply would be at mid-distance, at about six miles west of the mouth of Highland Creek. If, however, the reasonable reservation be made that the erosion of Scarborough Bluffs is an appreciable source of physical pollution, the ideal permanent intake location shifts westward to a point about four miles east of the Don River. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact ... that the sub-surface lake currents are mainly from the east, so that even if the effluent from the outfall sewer [at Ashbridge’s Bay] is considered to be a permanent, instead of a transitory source of bacterial pollution, its influence upon an intake location three miles to the east will be greatly modified. 

Toronto ratepayers voted to build the duplicate waterworks in 1927. In 1930, work began on the intake tunnel at Victoria Park and on the filtered water tunnel extending to Sunnyside. Construction of the buildings and the rapid sand filter commenced in 1932. After opening

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46 H.G. Acres and William Gore, *Report on Proposed Extensions to the Water Works System, City of Toronto* (Toronto, 1926), 4. Acres and Gore reviewed proposals to draw water from Lake Simcoe, Scarborough, Toronto Island, and Mimico. Their $14.3 million project for Victoria Park was calculated to accommodate a population of 1.5 million.

47 Acres and Gore, 19-20.
Figure 19. A regional perspective on river-based sources of Lake Ontario pollution, and the best zone for Toronto’s water supply, 1926. The small drainage area of the Scarborough Bluffs (shaded) was seen as a boon by engineers, because of its limited ability to convey pollutants to the lake. [Acres and Gore, Report on Proposed Extensions to the Water Works System]
in 1941, the capacity of the Victoria Park Filtration Plant was doubled by Metro between 1955 and 1958. It remains the most important waterworks in the region.

Sewerage

As with the water supply, obtaining an effective solution to Toronto’s sewerage problem was a protracted affair. In 1886, City Engineer Charles Sproatt set the issue in context:

[Toronto’s] first brick sewers were constructed in the year 1843, John G. Howard, Esq., being at that time City Engineer. Whether any system was adopted in laying down these sewers or not I cannot say; but it is very probable, as these sewers were laid over a small area of the City, that there was none. However that may be, they had one thing in common with the present system, that is, they discharged into the waters of the Bay.

Sproatt did not need to mention that in the 40-odd years since 1843, Toronto had added over 100,000 to its population — and, in the absence of a proper sewerage "system," that the harbour had become a profoundly rank place. This had several implications. Public health, for example, had not benefitted from having the water intake pipe lie adjacent to a sewer outfall at the foot of Peter Street. Even after the intake was moved to the lake side of Toronto Island in 1875, an ineffective filtering and delivery system often forced citizens to rely on fetid harbour water at their peril. Port activities suffered as well. By 1869, sewage had accumulated in some slips to the point that cargo could no longer be discharged or taken on efficiently, and clogged outfall pipes forced water into commercial buildings along the waterfront. By 1891, when Kivas Tully calculated that some 12 tons of untreated solid matter was being deposited in the harbour each day, slip-dredging and outfall-extending had become routine civic activities.

In light of these concerns, the expedient and long-accepted practice of harbour dumping came under attack from the professional class. A consensus emerged among engineers and public health advocates that a large-scale interceptor sewer and sewage disposal system was necessary. Wastes would be collected from the various mains and transported away from the harbour for discharge — treated or untreated — into the open

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48 The plant was renamed after Harris died in 1945. In 1913, he promised to erect "handsome buildings [at Victoria Park], which, in conjunction with the park section and the beach, will constitute one of the most beautiful areas in Toronto." For recent positive assessments and interpretations of this vision, see Market Gallery of the City of Toronto Archives, The Architecture of Public Works: R.C. Harris, Commissioner, 1912-1945 (Toronto, 1982), and the special "Waterworks" issue of Artviews, 14, 2/3 (1988).

49 Charles Sproatt, Report on Main Drainage System (Toronto, 1886), 17.

50 Stinson and Moir, 7. This figure includes only piped sewage; well into the 20th century, many of Toronto’s poorer neighbourhoods relied on pit privies.
lake. Technically, this approach was straightforward; financially, it was expensive. The idea was hardly original in a local sense, for Tully had proposed an interceptor in his 1853 Esplanade scheme. The scheme nonetheless lay dormant until the early 1870s. It was not pursued until the Toronto waterworks became a public utility, and water purity became a public responsibility. Between 1873 and 1909, no less than 12 major reports were issued on sewage disposal.

Due to the regional topography, Toronto’s sewage was invariably sent eastward in these plans. At minimum, this meant east of the Don; more often, western Scarborough was the unwitting recipient. The early schemes proposed using raw sewage to enrich Toronto Island and fill part of Ashbridge’s Bay; carrying the sewage to a southerly diverted Don, where the river would flush material through the marsh into the open lake; or placing the sewage in a conduit which travelled across Ashbridge’s Bay to a discharge point "opposite Scarborough Heights." As it turned out, Victoria Park was popular both as a site for sewage disposal and for water intake.

The system which eventually materialized was outlined by Charles Sproatt in 1886 and confirmed three years later by Hering and Gray [fig. 20]. Sproatt’s plan respected Toronto’s prevailing grade and population distribution. He proposed running high and low interceptors to a deep-water outfall just west of Victoria Park, 6.8 miles from the Island intake pipe’s crib. The "low" trunk sewer would drain all the lands below Queen Street east of the Don, "relieving Ashbridge Bay from the discharge of the [Gooderham & Worts] byres and piggeries, and any other works of a like description which no doubt will be carried on in this district." 53

Another plan from 1886 used the diverted-Don strategy. W.J. McAlpine and Kivas Tully declared that their (relatively) low-cost project would greatly reduce harbour silting while harmonizing with a larger reclamation scheme they had in mind for Ashbridge’s Bay. They were aware that an outfall near the East Gap might contaminate the Island intake, and suggested moving the new lake outlet of the Don “a mile or more to the eastward.” The Victoria Park site was "of doubtful benefit" and simply too expensive. Sproatt dissented, arguing that the westerly lake currents required that raw sewage be kept as far as possible from the water intake. The tussle between Ashbridge’s Bay and Victoria Park continued for another 20 years, though a compromise location for the disposal works — at the east end of Ashbridge’s Bay, where it was ultimately built — was identified as early as 1899.

51 Sproatt, ii. Also see Board of Commissioners, 152-53.
52 It was the New Yorkers who suggested that Victoria Park could serve equally well as an intake or disposal site, though the latter function was preferred. See Hering and Gray, 5.
53 Sproatt, xii.
54 McAlpine and Tully, Report ... on a System of Intercepting and Outfall Sewers, and the Final Disposal of the Sewage of the City of Toronto, 10-11.
Figure 20. Detail from a plan for a high- and low-level interceptor sewer and outfall system for Toronto, 1889. With the aid of pumping stations and gravity, Toronto's sewage was to flow to an outfall off Victoria Park in Scarborough, improving the inner harbour's sanitary state and keeping the slips largely sludge-free. [Hering and Gray, Report on the Extension of the Water Supply and on the Disposal of the Sewage of the City of Toronto]
While the interceptor idea was widely accepted among the professionals, consensus did not exist on the method of sewage disposal. For many civic officials (mainly engineers), the remedy lay not in treatment but in finding a safe, economical site for the outfall. This had been Keating's view in 1893; it was C.H. Rust's in 1901; and, as late as 1906, the discharge of Toronto's raw sewage in the vicinity of Midland Avenue in Scarborough was considered. During these years, various means of waste treatment were studied by the City and rejected on grounds of cost. The Provincial Board of Health took a different view of the situation. Its opinion on the necessity of filter beds and other treatment works eventually gained the upper hand.

Pressure for action continued to mount from many quarters. For some, Toronto's water would get no better until the sewerage system was drastically improved. The two matters were inextricably linked — or a "joint problem," as Hering and Gray put it. The waterworks consultant, James Mansergh, admitted that Toronto's sewerage was outside his "jurisdiction," but felt he should comment on moral grounds:

To discharge all the sewage ... in its crude state into a tideless and practically stagnant harbour is obviously a very wrong thing to do, and every rational man must condemn it.

If Toronto is ever to take the high position as a residential City, which its climate and other natural advantages would justify, this blot must be wiped out.55

The City fathers remained unmoved by such pleas, including one in 1900 which claimed that harbour dumping was "contrary to law and detrimental to the health and commercial interests of the community." Their intransigence was rewarded in 1902 with a refusal by the federal government to undertake any harbour improvements until the debacle was resolved.56

Some political recognition did exist of the connections between the sewerage problem and other urban issues. In his 1902 inaugural address, Toronto Mayor O.A. Howland described the interceptor system as a "great enterprise," one which would bring not only federal monies for harbour improvements, but yield many benefits and relate to other waterfront projects:

The purification of [Toronto] Bay will restore that beautiful sheet of water to its original attractiveness, healthfulness and utility. Old residents of Toronto can remember the playground of Toronto. The training ground for the muscle and blood


56The reprimand is in Jennings and Roy, n.p. On the federal position, see *Annual Report of the City Engineer 1901* (Toronto, 1902), 7; *ibid. 1902* (Toronto, 1903), 5. Ottawa's stance was likely influenced by Jennings and Roy's report, which had been prepared for both City Council and the federal Department of Public Works. Of Toronto's 23 sewers discharging raw material along the waterfront, 11 were in the inner harbour, nine entered Ashbridge's Bay and the Don, and three entered the lake west of the inner harbour.
of young Toronto was not the Island or some distant lake, it was the waters of Toronto Bay. They launched on them without fear and without discomfort from the harbour slips. We know that is now impossible. We know, apart altogether from [port] traffic conditions, that most offensive conditions greet the oarsmen on those waters. With our large athletic population, with the athletic advantages a great water front offers, it is no small object, the purification of that Bay back to its original conditions, while the sanitary necessity is pressing itself upon us continually. We must remember the effect also upon the probable attractiveness of Toronto to travellers and to new residents. They are now greeted in the most offensive way at what ought to be our beautiful and attractive and commodious water front. Remove that, and we have an attractive reception for every visitor, and something that will be remembered by prospective residents. The improvement of the remainder of the water front couples itself with those projects. Part of the harbour project is the creation of a great system of dockage and opportunities for factory development which will be attractive to new industries on a large scale. Plans are being made ... for the railway connections with the east end of the City and the new proposed dockage accommodation. The west end of the water front of our City more naturally offers itself for decorative and recreative purposes, and plans of that kind are being matured, looking forward to establishing one of the most beautiful drives in North America along the shore past the Garrison Commons, the Exhibition Grounds and into Humber Bay.\(^57\)

Despite Howland's plea, the nuisance continued to go unabated. Not until 1908, when the City Engineer reported three to four feet of sludge on the bottom of Toronto Bay, did Toronto ratepayers finally approve the construction of intercepting sewers, pumping and chlorination stations, a primary treatment plant at Eastern Avenue, and a lake outfall southeast of Ashbridge's Bay [fig. 21]. The scheme, which acknowledged the influence of Hering and Gray's 1889 plan, was completed in 1913. Works Commissioner Harris then embarked on a major expansion of the sewerage system in the City's outlying areas. Between 1924 and 1930, this meant servicing the newly made land on the central waterfront.\(^58\)

Sewerage works on a far greater scale were on Toronto's agenda in the 1930s. Soon after the Eastern Avenue disposal works opened, east-enders began complaining bitterly about its foul bouquet. Remedial efforts proved futile, and the plant was scheduled for abandonment. To placate those living east of the Don, Council insisted that the replacement facility not be built on Ashbridge's Bay. An engineering report issued in 1933 complied with this request. "Extensions to the sewage disposal works," opined the consulting engineers, "are required not only because of the need for eliminating the objections that exist


\(^{58}\)Market Gallery of the City of Toronto Archives, 29. One visible result of this which still testifies to Harris' fine architectural sensibility was the Strachan Avenue Pumping Station, built for the Garrison Creek relief sewer in 1924. The lower Garrison Creek had been sewered in 1884-86 because of its polluted state and flushing value.
Figure 21. The City of Toronto’s plans and profiles for an interceptor sewer system, 1912. The east-west axes and grades of the high and low interceptors are shown. The main disposal works were to be located on Ashbridge’s Bay, with the outfall pipe literally ripped through Woodbine Beach. [Toronto Department of Public Works, Annual Report 1912]
in the immediate neighbourhood of the [Ashbridge's Bay plant] but in order to safeguard adequately the City's water supply, bathing beaches, harbour and rivers. The engineers recommended that, for $20.4 million, sewage be pumped 12 miles from Eastern Avenue to a new treatment plant at the mouth of Highland Creek. The Scarborough site was well-removed from the Victoria Park intake, attracted limited recreational use, and would be "a long distance from any existing or probable future residential development." Unlike the existing process, sewage treatment at the Creek would be "complete," involving preliminary sedimentation, activated sludge treatment, digestion and mechanical dewatering. The creation of a "Greater Toronto Sewerage District" for the Don and Humber watersheds was also suggested, given "the complexity and magnitude of the physical problem, the number of municipalities involved and the common interest in the sanitary protection of the waters" in the region. Neither the Highland Creek project nor the Sewerage District idea immediately came to fruition. Ashbridge's Bay again became the favoured site in 1935, given a cost savings of some $5.4 million [fig. 22]. Long delayed by the Depression and World War II, a new plant did not open there until 1951. Further expansion and the addition of secondary treatment at Ashbridge's Bay began soon after Metro's creation in 1953; by 1956, Metro also had the long-anticipated plant at Highland Creek in operation.

For other lakefront municipalities in the region, water and sewerage were provided economically through cooperation. Following a referendum in 1914, the Village Council of New Toronto embarked on supplying a cheap and "inexhaustible supply" of water for all purposes. While the aim was to serve local needs and attract manufacturing to the community, New Toronto's Public Utilities Commission soon delivered water to Mimico, Long Branch, and parts of Etobicoke Township and what is now Mississauga. Mimico and New Toronto also formed a Union Sewerage Commission in 1915. In exchange for New Toronto shipping water to Mimico, the latter took New Toronto's sewage for treatment and disposal. To the east, Scarborough ratepayers in 1920 voted to establish a Public Utilities Commission and build a waterworks at the foot of Kennedy Road. The plant, opened a year

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60 A previous proposal had suggested pumping Toronto's sewage to the Scarborough Bluffs and discharging the waste directly into the lake near the foot of Kennedy Road. See C.H. Rust, *Report on the Disposal of the Sewage of the City of Toronto* (Toronto, 1901), 27. Two decades later, this site was chosen for the Scarborough Water Filtration Plant.

61 Metcalf & Eddy with Gore, Nasmith & Storrie, *Report on Sewage Disposal*, 24. The District was to include all or part of Toronto, North Toronto, York, East York, Scarborough, and Swansea.

Figure 22. Sites considered for a new main sewage treatment plant for Toronto, 1935. Note the preference for waterfront locations. Plants were eventually built — though not by the City of Toronto — at the "rifle range site" (Lakeview, in Mississauga) and at the mouths of the Humber River and the Highland Creek. The "easterly lake shore site" is near the foot of Markham Road. [Metcalf & Eddy/Gore, Nasmith & Storrie, *Report on Sewage Disposal, City of Toronto*]
later, also supplied East York Township by 1928. Toronto entered into a number of inter-municipal agreements as well. 63

Parks

Relative to confronting such issues as water supply and sewerage, the organization and development of park systems in the Toronto region was a low priority. Municipal budgets for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of individual parks were non-existent or minuscule in the 19th century, though a few major waterfront sites — High Park (1873), Exhibition Park (1878), and Island Park (1880) — were established. After 1900, attention increasingly turned toward linking the various reserves in a physical and functional sense, and expanding the public realm on a balanced, rational basis, even if this meant transcending municipal boundaries.

This said, the most important large-scale projects in the early 20th century — a combined seawall and boulevard, and the acquisition of Garrison Common — took place along Toronto’s waterfront. 64 The western seawall, proposed by City Engineer C.H. Rust in 1901, was to extend from Bathurst Street to High Park [fig. 23]. By placing cribwork offshore, the intervening space would afford "a dump for ashes, sweepings, etc., from the southwest part of the City and the savings thus effected would about pay for the work." Once settled, the fill would provide the base for a roadway, part of which would be routed through Fort York. If dedicated by or leased from Ottawa, this "historic spot" could be "beautified and maintained as a park by the City at a very small expense." 65 Acquisition of the Fort and west-end waterlots had, in fact, been pursued by the City’s Assessment Commissioner, Robert J. Fleming. He was rewarded in 1903 when Council voted to buy Garrison Common for $200,000. Fleming had this to say about the 200-acre site:

When one realizes that [the Common] is situated in almost the heart of the City; that it provides the City with over a mile of water-front which will be utilized as the nucleus for one of the finest drives and boulevards in the world; that it will give to the citizens of the future uninterrupted access to the water-front; that it preserves to the people for all time a convenient park almost at their doors; that it gives unlimited room for improving our great Industrial Exhibition, and provides an easy and


65 Toronto Mail & Empire, 7 December 1901 and 25 June 1902.
Figure 23. A treatment of the Sunnyside waterfront by T.G. Greene, c. 1910. C.H. Rust’s proposed seawall and boulevard is sketched out along with a boat livery or aquatic club. The bridge at the intersection of Lake Shore Road and Queen Street and the subway at Parkside Drive reflect proposals for "Part 1" railway grade separation work. High Park is on the far left. [CTA, SC 231-532]
convenient way for allowing the street cars to enter the Exhibition Grounds by way of Bathurst Street; when one considers all these advantages and many more that could easily be enumerated, they will fully realize the advantage to the City of securing this property. 66

The year 1903 was also a pivotal year more generally in the acquisition and financing of City parkland, and pointed toward significant reforms in management and planning. Legislation was passed allowing Council to spend up to one mill on the dollar on the assessed value of Toronto property for parks and playgrounds; as well, the City could permanently set aside lands bought at tax sales for the same end. Toronto's purchasing power expanded geographically as well: from 1910, lands within a mile of the City limits could be bought; from 1916, Toronto could buy property for parks, playgrounds, boulevards, and drives in "any adjoining local municipality." 67

As a 1907-08 judicial investigation of the Parks Department made clear, however, administrative competence lagged far behind the gains made in the City's park acreage. The scandal — one of 14 which plagued the civic service in the decade prior to World War I — prompted an overhauling of the bureaucracy and its managerial ethos. The Parks Department embodied well this drive toward the "City Efficient," where merely grooming a handful of scattered reserves was a thing of the past. The new masters strove to plan for a widely flung recreational network that was well distributed, functionally diverse, and physically integrated. 68 The notion of developing a park and boulevard system, which had figured prominently in the general city plans of 1906 and 1909 (discussed below), took hold under Parks Commissioners James Wilson and C.E. Chambers, and became official City policy in 1912.

The main objective of a boulevard system, which had been suggested as early as 1886, was to connect the City's parklands; as a secondary and long-term effect, it would 66Toronto City Council Minutes 1903, App. "A," 923. Little of the seawall was actually built, though the section in front of Exhibition Park was completed by 1909, and that in front of High Park by 1910. As for Garrison Common, planning and development work did not get under way until the early 1920s.

67Ontario Statutes, 3 Edw. VII (1903), chap. 86; 10 Edw. VII (1910), chap. 135; 4 Geo. V (1916), chap. 96. Toronto also gained the power in 1903 to acquire (such as by donation) lands for park purposes within 20 miles of the city, but no authority was given to purchase such lands. See Toronto City Council Minutes 1903, App. "A," 614.

generally improve traffic circulation within the region. In a 1910 report, Wilson reviewed
the American experience and called for "planning in advance of present needs." The
result, he argued, would be a system "giving a complete circuit of the City, every mile of
which would afford a delightful panorama of varied and interesting scenery, not inferior in
any way to that provided in other places." For the waterfront, an "Island Boulevard" was
proposed, along with the acquisition of additional waterlots in Humber Bay. Securing the
latter would provide the basis for lakefilling, followed by the construction of a seawall and
a recreational drive connecting with a "Humber Valley Boulevard." Wilson's project for the
western waterfront paled in comparison to the THC's later scheme for the area. Most of the
City's filling in front of High Park and the Exhibition was buried as the THC moved the
shoreline southward in the 1910s and '20s.

Another system plan was unveiled in 1912 by Chambers, a leading proponent of city
planning within the Toronto bureaucracy. Besides developing standards for park allocation
and breaking the region up into a number of park districts, he refined Wilson's boulevard
scheme [figs. 24-25]. Again, taking advantage of such natural assets as the waterfront and
the ravines to link individual parks was deemed essential to a proper system. Though no
major additions to lakeshore parkland were prescribed, an "exterior boulevard" was shown
encircling and lying partially outside Toronto. On the waterfront, the drive ran down from
the Humber Valley to the seawall, crossed the old and new Western Channels to Toronto
Island, and then spanned the East Gap to reach Simcoe Park and ultimately Woodbine
Avenue. Despite arguing for parkland acquisitions within Toronto's "probable future
boundaries" to ensure that the "larger class of wooded park" was obtained (as High Park had
been), Chambers seemed uninterested in extending his system east into Scarborough. In
the early 1930s, he lobbied hard for a Don Valley parkway terminating in the Port Industrial
Area, but was stymied by York Township officials. By that time, more of Toronto's park
and boulevard system had been realized on and near the waterfront than anywhere else,
though even there its full implementation had been thwarted by cost factors, neighbourhood
opposition, political intransigence, and piecemeal development.

Regional Transit

While the Toronto area was being surveyed for potential boulevard alignments, a
much different form of regional movement was under study. Beginning in the 1890s, a
waterfront link had been forged between Toronto, Etobicoke, and Scarborough by privately
operated electric interurban lines (or "radials") running on Lake Shore Road and Kingston

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89James Wilson, Report upon a Suitable System of Boulevards and Connecting Driveways for the City of
Toronto (Toronto, 1910), 6.

70C.E. Chambers, Report upon Park Distribution, Parkways, and Main Boulevard System (Toronto, 1912),
8.
Figure 24. C.E. Chambers’ proposed "system of boulevards" for Toronto, 1912. This scheme, drafted prior to the release of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners' plan in 1912, identifies a cross-city boulevard along the lake edge and across the Western Channel and the East Gap. The western alignment suggests a reclamation project, perhaps based on C.H. Rust's scheme. A boulevard snaking up the Humber Valley is also indicated (far left), though the City's agreement with Robert Home Smith has yet to be finalized. Much of the "exterior boulevard" is not shown here. [CTA, MT 00271]
Figure 25. C.E. Chambers' Toronto park system, 1921. The waterfront boulevard now harmonizes with the THC's work. The "exterior boulevard," running through the Humber and Don valley systems, extends north of Wilson Avenue. Park districts within and beyond the City limits are delineated. Also included are the THC's proposals for Ashbridge's Bay, Toronto Island, and the west end (all from 1912), and the north shore of the inner harbour (from 1913). [CTA, DPW 52-910A]
As a publicly owned alternative (and to market surplus energy), Adam Beck of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario began promoting an integrated electric rail system for Southern Ontario in 1912. The system met with widespread support, including in Toronto where the harbour commissioners set aside a depressed radial right-of-way through the Sunnyside area in their own 1912 plan. In 1913, and with the viaduct issue apparently resolved, the THC unveiled a more ambitious $15 million scheme for radial railways and terminal facilities. The latter, enjoining "boat, steam railway and electric railway traffic, both for freight and for passengers," fronted onto the harbour between Yonge and Bay. A radial corridor, which gave much-needed access to the THC's property on the central harbour and in Ashbridge's Bay, ran along the waterfront between Woodbine Avenue and the Humber, linking with suburban and regional radial lines and a subway under Yonge Street.

Neither the radial entrances nor the subway were new to Torontonians. As first proposed in a 1910 rapid transit scheme by the New York engineering firm Jacob & Davies, the Yonge subway had an interesting connection to the harbour. "It would seem," argued Jacob & Davies, "[that] a subway scheme in the case of Toronto should provide for using [the excavation] material in a reclamation scheme on the lake front." The firm also pressed for the standardization of rail gauges across the region, such that interconnections could be made between the existing steam railways, suburban radials, and Toronto's local streetcars, not to mention any future subway routes. Further refinement of the subway idea — expanded to include a line under and radial connections on Queen Street — continued in 1911 and 1912 under the City's auspices and under the supervision of engineer E.L. Cousins [fig. 26].

Cousins had come to the City in 1910 from the Grand Trunk to head the Railway & Special Works Department and take charge of the grade separation project. His tenure in the Works Department was brief, for he became chief engineer of the THC early in 1912.
Figure 26. The City of Toronto’s rapid transit scheme, 1911. A freight and passenger terminal is shown on the waterfront between Bay and Yonge streets. Also indicated are subways under Bay-Yonge streets and Queen Street, the latter having linkages with the suburban radial lines then running along Lake Shore Road and Kingston Road. [Toronto City Engineer, *Annual Report 1911*]
Following the successful launch of the THC's general waterfront plan that year, Cousins drew up the 1913 "solution of the transportation problem of Toronto." Within hours of its release, the plan had become far more of a problem than a solution. The Board of Control, furious that the THC had released the plan to the newspapers before presenting it to the City, attacked it sharply; Mayor Hocken called the scheme "a piece of impertinence." The harbour commissioners was rebuffed for engaging in matters beyond their jurisdiction, and for promoting the real estate interests of one board member.\(^{75}\) It marked the first of many clashes between the two institutions.

Despite being quickly rejected, the 1913 scheme actually paved the way for a much more ambitious regional transit project. In 1915, City Council struck a Civic Transportation Committee to study rapid transit and related matters in detail. The Committee's final report was authored by the City's Commissioner of Works, R.C. Harris, the Hydro's chief engineer, F.A. Gaby, and Cousins of the THC. As part of an $18.8 million plan, they suggested establishing a permanent Transportation Commission that would draw its membership from the City, the Hydro, and, given its crucial waterfront holdings, the THC. "Even cursory consideration," they noted, "will demonstrate the necessity of harmonizing all these interests, if transportation problems are to receive adequate and effective treatment."\(^{76}\)

Harris, Gaby, and Cousins recommended against building a rapid transit system — the region's population and size were then too small — but they did support an outward expansion of the streetcar system and the development of radial railway entrances to the east, north, and west of Toronto [fig. 27]. They felt an integrated radial system would decongest central Toronto, promote suburban development, augment rural real estate values, improve regional marketing, and generally improve linkages between city and country. An elevated radial alignment would follow the original north shore of Ashbridge's Bay and a roadway (now Queen's Quay) proposed by the THC for the central harbour. A western alignment had its "focal point" at the Humber River near Lake Shore Road. Except for a subway through Exhibition Park, its tracks would also be elevated, and it too took advantage of the THC's proposed reclamation work. Together with a northerly radial alignment, the lines were to meet at a central terminal. To realize "economy of operation and utility," this was placed on the "axis of maximum movement" — the area between Yonge and Bay and Queen's Quay and the railway viaduct. (Just as the viaduct was as yet unbuilt, this area had not been reclaimed by the THC.) The 12-acre site would boast a main station within a "combination

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\(^{75}\)Toronto Telegram, 26 November 1913; Toronto Star, 27 November 1913. Robert Home Smith was criticized for marking out a radial alignment through his vast landholdings in the Humber Valley (discussed below).

\(^{76}\)R.C. Harris, F.A. Gaby, and E.L. Cousins, Report to the Civic Transportation Committee on Radial Railway Entrances and Rapid Transit for the City of Toronto, vol. 1 (Toronto, 1915), 14.
Figure 27. A proposed regional system of electric radial railways centred on Toronto, 1915. Note the waterfront alignment of the eastern and western radial "entrances" (heavy dashed lines), the "focal point" at the Humber River mouth, and the existing suburban radial routes along the lakeshore. [Harris, Gaby, and Cousins, Report to the Civic Transportation Committee on Radial Railway Entrances and Rapid Transit for the City of Toronto]
business and terminal structure" facing the new harbour.\textsuperscript{77} Its physical relationship to the new Union Station was clear; its functional connections were not [fig. 28].

Acceptance of the 1915 plan by Toronto ratepayers was implied when they voted in favour of a Toronto-Port Credit-Guelph-London radial line in 1916, and of a system joining Toronto with the Niagara Peninsula in 1917. Both schemes were vigorously promoted by Beck as part of his hydro radial network, which received another boost in 1921 when Toronto voted in support of his "Clean-Up Deal." Under this arrangement, the City took over the Toronto Railway Company’s streetcar franchise and acquired the Toronto & York radial system. A new public utility, the Toronto Transportation Commission (TTC), would run the streetcar and radial lines within the city, while the Hydro would operate the radials outside Toronto. In 1922, debate began on Beck's demand for a six-track, high-speed radial entrance along the western waterfront. Despite being opposed by the THC, the TTC, the Canadian National Exhibition Association, and several key civic officials, the idea gained Council's approval. Toronto's ratepayers took a different view of the so-called "Waterfront Grab," defeating the plan at the polls in 1923. With this key rejection, and with radials losing ground across the continent to motorized transport, Beck's electric dream faded.\textsuperscript{78} Use of the lakeshore as a regional corridor for high-speed mass movement would not occur until diesel-powered GO Transit arrived in 1967.

Besides being focused mainly on the City of Toronto, the various plans for transit, parks, sewerage, and water supply had much in common. Most recognized that great opportunities existed to exploit or protect the natural character of the region. Such opportunities ranged from using topography to drain sewage away from the built-up area or to minimize contamination at the duplicate waterworks, to using lakefill to enhance the City's industrial and recreational prospects, to using ravines as the basis for recreational movement. Other points of commonality were that the individual elements within the plans were invariably large (be it a park or a filtration plant); that the scope of the plans was remarkably extensive (as for the water supply or the radials network); and that many ideas were discussed and reworked for many years — sometimes decades — before action was taken. The grander the scheme, the greater the perceived cost; and, amid such perception, the longer it took to convince politicians and taxpayers of the plan's worth.

\textsuperscript{77}Harris, Gaby, and Cousins, 83. As these men made clear (p. 14), such improvements would commence only "when conditions warrant and finance permits."

\textsuperscript{78}Stamp, 117-27. After assuming direct control of all waterfront radials in 1927, the TTC's new emphasis on motor buses meant cutting radial service back from Port Credit to Long Branch in 1935, and completing its abandonment of the Scarboro Division a year later. Also see Frances Frisken, "A Triumph for Public Ownership: the Toronto Transportation Commission, 1921-53," in Russell, Forging a Consensus.
Figure 28. A proposed waterfront terminal and elevated radial railway entrances on Toronto’s inner harbour, 1915. This is perhaps the earliest expression of how built form on the THC’s new central waterfront might appear. The new Union Station is at the far centre left. [Harris, Gaby, and Cousins, Report to the Civic Transportation Committee on Radial Railway Entrances and Rapid Transit for the City of Toronto]
GENERAL SCHEMES FOR CIVIC IMPROVEMENT, 1906-11

The Ontario Association of Architects

Between 1906 and 1911, efforts were made to bring to the region as a whole a sense of order that was at once efficient and elegant. This combination of utility and beauty harkened back to some of the Esplanade schemes from the 1850s, but was now applied on a greater scale — one extending far beyond Toronto's municipal borders. On the one hand, these new visions established a tradition of setting the lakeshore in a regional context; on the other, they demonstrated that the waterfront could not be treated separately from general city planning.

The first plan, unveiled by the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) in 1906, was intended to improve traffic circulation and give Toronto and its environs a "strong and definite character." Attention focused on a section of the inner harbour, a "circumambient line of parkways" around Toronto, and a series of diagonal thoroughfares [fig. 29]. The architectural cornerstone was a monumental plaza at the foot of York Street, acting as a grand entrance to the City and the southern terminus of a new boulevard running up to Osgoode Hall [fig. 30]. The plaza's simple treatment aimed at avoiding the "scenic impression of a portal, with all the danger of falling into the vulgarity of swaggering pretentiousness." "We have merely tried to give our water front the natural character of such a place — a level place planted with trees," noted the OAA's spokesman. "We have tried to redeem the water front we have lost." 79

The OAA also attended to the lakeshore beyond Toronto Bay. The architects proposed expanding Exhibition Park, treating it in a more ornamental fashion and linking it with the surrounding city by a boulevard east of Strachan Avenue. To the west, building a parkway by the water was described as a mere "filling-in job." "The City," observed Toronto architect W.A. Langton, "wants places to put those desolating ashes. If they put them in the ravines they are spoiling something nature has made for us; but, if they can get a place to put them where they make something, it is a clear gain in every direction. Here, in the Humber Bay, they have a beautiful place to deposit ashes, and a beautiful place is the result of doing so." 80 The proposed drive would continue up the Humber Valley, cross the north side of Toronto through various ravines, wind down the Don, and proceed out along Kingston Road to a proposed park at the Scarborough Bluffs. (The OAA recognized that


80 Langton, 93.
Figure 29. The Ontario Association of Architects’ plan for Toronto and environs, 1906. Note the new diagonal roads emanating from Osgoode Hall, the lakeshore boulevards running west to the Humber (far centre right) and east to a proposed park at the Scarborough Bluffs (far centre right), the eastward extension of Exhibition Park, and the factory-and-park treatment of Ashbridge’s Bay. [Ontario Association of Architects, Annual Report 1906]
Figure 30. The Ontario Association of Architects' proposal for the central Toronto waterfront at the foot of York Street, 1906. From the harbour plaza, York Street was to become a new processional axis leading to Osgoode Hall (top centre right). The scheme is likely by Alfred Chapman. [Canadian Architect and Builder, February 1906]
many desirable park sites would have to be secured well in advance of urban development while they were cheap, available, and relatively undisturbed. The Bluffs, for example, might be "a long way out at present, ... [but this] will not always be so." From the Bluffs, a cliff-top drive was to return travellers to the City and Ashbridge's Bay. Reinforcing previous ideas, the marsh was slated for industry, but the sandbar along its southern border would accommodate a carriage roadway and what within months became Simcoe Park. It remains unclear whether or not the OAA intended to ford the East Gap and carry the boulevard across the Island.

The Toronto Guild of Civic Art

The second scheme was an elaboration of the OAA's work by Toronto's first planning advocacy group, the Toronto Guild of Civic Art (later the Civic Guild). The OAA formally turned its plan over to the Guild immediately after presenting it to the public in 1906. The Guild further studied the diagonals, boulevards, and park system, and released a handsomely packaged plan in 1909 [fig. 31]. Philosophical parallels with the 1906 plan were made evident by Langton, now chairman of the Guild's Plan Committee:

Toronto has a character which in spite of the absence of imposing natural features is definite and pleasing. It is a place that has many attractions and that can be made very delightful to live in, if its attractive points are recognized and developed. The lake shore, the Island, the rivers Don and Humber, the ridge, the numerous ravines, the facilities for outings both by land and water which make the city such a pleasant abode in summer, all these features which can easily be spoiled for want of timely recognition and incorporation in an inviolable plan. There is no beautiful feature in Toronto so salient but that it could be obliterated by speculative building or by such undue commercialism as the establishment of a smelter where there is no real occasion to establish it.

We have kept in view as far as possible, in drawing this plan, the characteristic features of the place, and have endeavoured to incorporate them in the plan, so as to preserve and indeed develop them, and thus to develop the natural character we have and make of Toronto not just a beautiful city, beautiful in a conventional way, after the model of some other city, but to bring out its own beauty. It is character in a town that makes the dwellers in it love it. Toronto should bring to the minds of those who live in it something which is lovely and pleasant in its own way; so that, when we have been away and are returning homewards, we may feel that, though it is good to see other cities, we are glad to get back to Toronto.81

The Guild's proposals for more recreation grounds and connecting driveways recognized that the region's intrinsic character would be lost without deliberate planning. This exposed a

Figure 31. The Civic Guild's plan of improvements for Toronto, 1909. While closely resembling the OAA's 1906 plan, much elaboration of the park and playground system is apparent, including along the lakefront. A new park immediately west of Victoria Park is suggested for the Eastern Beaches. [Toronto Guild of Civic Art, Report on a Comprehensive Plan for Systematic Civic Improvements in Toronto]
double quandary: the identity of "Toronto" partly derived from features lying beyond the City limits, yet Council had few powers to plan for what lay outside or inside Toronto. By the time the outside features had been annexed by the City (or so the Guild expected), their important attributes would have long vanished amid private development. But no immediate program of action to maintain Toronto's "natural character" was advanced. And beyond defining potential park sites and street alignments, little attempt was made to prescribe appropriate uses for specific locales. The waterfront was the only exception. A green strip would link Bathurst Street and the Humber; Ashbridge's Bay was to be used for industry and recreation; the status quo would exist on Toronto Island; a large park reserve was recommended at the Bluffs. But parallels between the plans of 1906 and 1909 did not exist in all respects: given the apparently intractable "railway problem" of grade separation, the decorous entrance at York Street was played down.

### The City of Toronto's Civic Improvement Committee

The third general plan arose from the Guild's lobbying at the municipal level. In 1909, City Council set up a blue-ribbon Civic Improvement Committee (CIC), composed partly of Guild members. Plan, legislation, finance, and statistics subcommittees were struck, and with John M. Lyle as consulting architect, a final report was issued in 1911. Transportation was the key theme. A number of street extensions, widenings, and openings were proposed to improve movement in the city and the region, the scale of which had been enlarged from the 1909 plan [fig. 32]. New approaches to Ashbridge's Bay were contemplated down Logan Avenue and along the Don Esplanade; the latter paralleled the Don (which was slated to empty into the harbour near the East Gap) and an additional railway reservation. Bridges at the end of each thoroughfare gave access to factory sites on reclaimed marshland. To the east, Kingston Road was identified as the spine along which Scarborough's urbanization would take place, though no comment was passed on the value of the Bluffs as a park. In the west end, the seawall and lakeshore parkway had been reconsidered. Two sections of the seawall were to be omitted on grounds of cost; in one section, the drive would now follow the upper terrace and existing streets. Further west, the parkway (as Lake Shore Road) would service three major park reservations along the Humber River, Mimico Creek, and Etobicoke Creek.

In contrast to the OAA and Guild plans, Toronto Island merited considerable attention. The CIC contemplated linking it with the mainland by bridging the old and new Western Channels. The old channel would be retained "for the passage of canoes and skiffs from the harbour to the lake, in order to avoid the danger of their having to pass through the new channel with its traffic of large and swift vessels." Dismissive of previous schemes and cognizant of the "mistakes inseparable from a haphazard way of carrying out improvements," the CIC called for a "competent expert" to prepare another comprehensive plan for the Island. The City's residential policy for this area was also to be reviewed. The CIC's principal Island objective was "the enjoyment of all the citizens," though this was not
Figure 32. Detail from the Civic Improvement Committee’s plan of "diagonal thorofares, street widenings and extensions" for the Toronto area, 1911. Besides the road initiatives, note the proposed "park reservations" along the Humber River, Mimico Creek, and Etobicoke Creek, as well as a west-end seawall, a wharfage scheme at Bathurst Quay, and a new southern outlet of the Don into Toronto Harbour. [Civic Improvement Committee, Report]
inimical to some degree of continued residential use. The CIC was adamant, however, that speculation in leases should cease, and that these should revert back to the City once a tenant left the Island permanently.

The period 1906-11 laid the foundations for a culture of planning in the Toronto region. The activities of the OAA, the Civic Guild, and the CIC raised public awareness of the aims and content of urban planning: thinking about urban problems comprehensively and on a large scale, and dealing with them in a manner that would yield an attractive, prosperous, and healthy metropolis. The waterfront figured prominently in all three schemes. Such features as the Bluffs, Ashbridge's Bay, the Island, the western beaches, and the river valleys were considered to be of regional interest and efforts were made to weave them into the urban fabric. Yet scant attention was paid to implementation, save for calling for a planning commission and a "Metropolitan District." As subsequent events (or lack thereof) indicated, little could be achieved without strong municipal support and a sound legislative basis for action.

REFORMING TORONTO HARBOUR, 1911-32

A New Port Authority

In the two decades after 1911, the regional waterfront underwent massive change. In Scarborough Township, the bluff-top communities of Fallingbrook and Birch Cliff urbanized, and major waterworks appeared at the foot of Kennedy Road (to serve the Township's needs) and at Victoria Park (to serve those of the City). Growth was even more pronounced in the lakeshore municipalities west of the Humber. The rail facilities associated with the Mimico Yard, opened by the Grand Trunk in 1906, fostered manufacturing, and the construction of the Toronto-Hamilton Highway in the mid-1910s (and its upgrading a decade later) also promoted development. Etobicoke Township's shoreline increasingly catered to the needs of motorized tourists; New Toronto, with its public waterworks supplying a wide area, became a commercial and industrial centre; Mimico and Long Branch attracted residential development and some industry. Toronto, however, again experienced the greatest transformation, acquiring an entirely new waterfront in the process. The pivotal events were the creation of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners in 1911 and its release of a major plan in 1912. Yet neither the new agency nor the visions expressed in its plan were unexpected. As much as they marked a new beginning, both represented a culmination of

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82 Toronto Civic Improvement Committee, Report (Toronto, 1911), 20.
83 Toronto Civic Improvement Committee, 21.
reform-oriented activity over the preceding 20 years. In turn, changing circumstances would markedly alter both institution and plan by 1932.

The THC succeeded Toronto’s first waterfront institution, the Commissioners of the Harbour of Toronto. This body, commonly known as the Harbour Trust, was created by federal legislation in 1850 after six years of lobbying by the Toronto Board of Trade. While the Trust was responsible for improving and managing the harbour, a fragmented pattern of property ownership left it unwilling to conceive large-scale plans. The Trust’s activities were mainly paid for out of shipping tolls and the rental of its principal landholding, the Queen’s Wharf, as it lacked independent financing. Its limited powers and meagre resources soon became apparent in light of efforts to keep the harbour navigable. Silt from the Don, the northward movement of the Western Sandbar, and the build-up of sewage sludge around the wharves challenged navigation. As remedies, the Trust frequently resorted to dredging and other works of short-lived utility. Jurisdictional squabbles between it and other public agencies were equally unproductive. By the early 20th century, the Trust was widely regarded as ineffectual.

By 1911, the state of Toronto Harbour was as grim above the water’s surface as it was below. The shipping business had long taken a beating at the hands of the railways, and had deteriorating wharves and freight sheds to show for it. Landward access to the water was impeded by as many as 16 railway tracks, as at Cherry Street. On the harbour side, the new, larger ships were frustrated by the port’s outmoded infrastructure; its short, shallow slips were especially problematic. Civic mismanagement compounded these functional problems. In 1909, City Council sold off part of its Ashbridge’s Bay property to the National Iron Works, though the lands had been improperly surveyed and fetched a price far below market value. The attack on this deal was led by the Telegram’s publisher, John Ross Robertson:

The policy of the civic authorities in the last fifty years has been an absolutely consistent one ... that is to dispose of all Toronto’s rights to the land and waterlots facing the harbour and leave the City without any municipal rights along the whole harbour front.... Toronto cannot afford at any price whatever to alienate one foot more of its waterfront or to dispose of it at any price.

It is quite clear that the time has arrived when this City must evolve a scheme of port design and construction, the main features of which must be permanence and continuity of purpose and large provision for the future.

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85This discussion is based on Michael Moir, "[A Brief History of the Administration of Toronto Harbour, 1850-1912]," Port of Toronto News, 33, 2 (1986): 2-5 and 12.

86Ships in the eastern harbour were sometimes left stranded in the sludge. In 1901, the Polson Iron Works lacked sufficient water to launch two new vessels, or to allow them to leave the plant. Ironically, one was a hydraulic dredge built for the federal government.
Shall we, therefore, begin our reorganization of the whole harbour ... by disposing to a private concern of 1,000 feet of harbour frontage, situated where it must be the key to any possible future development of the great Eastern Harbour area.\footnote{Toronto Telegram, 8 January 1909.}

Despite Robertson's court challenge, the sale was upheld. The harbour's "reorganization" began just as he had gloomily predicted.

Amid this sorry state of affairs, grounds for optimism did exist. A number of waterfront projects were under way, if on a piecemeal and uncoordinated basis. Railway grade separation work had begun in Parkdale, and the viaduct order for the central waterfront remained in place. As the first step toward a lakefront drive, seawalls had been constructed in front of High Park and Exhibition Park. The latter site had been vastly expanded in 1903 and was in the throes of a building boom. The Island was being improved, both in terms of its parkland and its waterworks. Work was nearing completion on the interceptor system and the main sewage disposal works, bringing federal promises of assistance with harbour improvements. The Don had been diverted to Keating's Channel and the reclamation of Ashbridge's Bay was in progress, albeit on a small scale.

These works were joined by a drive for comprehensive city planning and administrative reform. The Toronto Board of Trade, long an advocate for public ownership of the waterfront, led a campaign in 1909-10 to reform port management. Along the way, it promoted its own vision for Ashbridge's Bay \footnote{Roy Schaeffer, \textit{The Board of Trade and the Origins of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners, 1899-1911}, Discussion Paper No. 27 (Toronto: Department of Geography, York University, 1981). Also see James O'Mara, \textit{Shaping Urban Waterfronts: The Role of Toronto's Harbour Commissioners, 1911-1960}, Discussion Paper No. 13 (Downsview, Ont.: Department of Geography, York University, 1984). On the emergence of North American port authorities at this time, see Marc J. Hershman and Robin Scott Bittner, "Historical Perspectives on the Public Port," in Marc J. Hershman, ed., \textit{Urban Ports and Harbour Management: Responding to Change along U.S. Waterfronts} (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1988).} The Board sought an institution with broad powers and unified control over waterfront property, one that was efficiently organized and had a long-term development policy. A select committee of City Council generally endorsed these views and the Board's scheme for the marsh. So did Toronto ratepayers, who early in 1911 approved consolidating waterfront management in an appointed commission and issuing debentures for the reclamation of Ashbridge's Bay.

A federal statute, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners' Act, was passed later in 1911. It provided for five commissioners, three of whom were appointed by City Council, one by the federal government, and one by the Governor-in-Council on recommendation of the Board of Trade. The commissioners were given the power to "acquire, expropriate, hold, sell, lease and other wise dispose of such real estate, building or other property as it may deem necessary or desirable for the development, improvement, maintenance and protection of the harbour," which was defined as the water and waterfront properties lying
A PLAN SUGGESTED BY
THE TORONTO BOARD OF TRADE
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
ASHBRIDGE BAY
Showing proposals for the
entry of all Railways
under city control.

THE BOARD
OF TRADE
OF THE
CITY
OF
TORONTO
F. G. MORLEY
Secretary

ARE YOU IN FAVOR OF THE CONTROL
AND DEVELOPMENT OF ASHBRIDGE'S BAY
AND THE WATERFRONT IN THE CITY'S
INTEREST BY A COMMISSION HAVING A
MAJORITY OF ITS MEMBERS APPOINTED
BY THE CITY?

Yes X
No

SOME REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD VOTE
YES
FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
On JAN. 2nd, 1911

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
And develop Toronto's greatest asset.

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
And make this City one of the greatest Industrial Centres of the Continent.

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
And the neglected Ashbridge's Bay can be made worth many millions of dollars to Toronto.

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
An improved Harbor means more work, more wages, cheaper freight, and a Greater Toronto.

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
And the Harbor will pay for its own development, and regulate freight rates for all time.

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
And secure a wise, business-like and continuous management for Toronto's Harbor.

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
And help yourself and your city.

VOTE FOR THE HARBOR COMMISSION
And make Toronto's Harbor the finest on the Great Lakes.

Figure 33. The Toronto Board of Trade's campaign for a harbour commission, and its proposal for Ashbridge's Bay, 1910. The Board suggested covering most of Ashbridge's Bay with wharves and factories (with water access provided by Keating's Channel and a new waterway to the south), but also reserved the lake edge as parkland. [CTA, 12A, Box 7]
between the east and west City limits, and between lines drawn one mile due south from these limits and from the Gibraltar Point lighthouse. The commissioners were also able to "regulate and control the use and development of all land and property on the water front within the limits of the city, and all docks, wharfs, channels, buildings and equipment erected or used in connection therewith." By the end of 1911, when the City had transferred its properties in trust to the new body, the THC had jurisdiction over 2,026 acres — some 83 per cent of Toronto’s waterfront. Only the central harbour and the shoreline east of Woodbine Avenue remained largely in private hands.

The Toronto Harbour Commissioners’ 1912 Plan

With its powerful mandate and property base, the THC could now proceed to address long-standing problems and opportunities on a coordinated basis. Work on a plan began early in 1912, guided by the five commissioners — Lionel H. Clarke, Robert Home Smith, Robert Gourlay, F.S. Spence, and Thomas L. Church — and the THC’s chief engineer, E.L. Cousins. Ashbridge’s Bay was considered first. After examining previous schemes for the area, Cousins developed 11 alternative schemes for discussion. Once the basic principles had been established there, attention turned to the rest of the waterfront, with Home Smith setting the planning agenda in mid-summer. He argued that the City’s property transfers implied that the THC was "expected to prepare a broad and comprehensive scheme" between the Humber and Woodbine Avenue, not just a port and industrial scheme for Ashbridge’s Bay. Home Smith’s interests centred on a "Lake Shore Drive" across the


90All of the THC officials had considerable expertise in business or waterfront affairs, or both: Clarke, who headed the THC until his death in 1921, chaired the Board of Trade’s Welland Canal and Waterfront Development Committee; Gourlay was president of the Board of Trade; Home Smith, a prominent financier, had extensive landholdings in the Humber Valley; Spence had served on the Harbour Trust in 1897 and 1899 and chaired it between 1904 and 1911; Church was on the Harbour Trust between 1905 and 1908, and like Spence, was a long-time City politician. As resident engineer for the Grand Trunk Railway, Cousins had made plans and studies of Ashbridge’s Bay in 1907; between 1910 and 1912, he was in charge of the City’s waterfront grade separation work.

91An American engineer, F. Kennard Thomson, demanded compensation after claiming that his inner harbour scheme, forwarded to the City Engineer in 1902, had been plagiarized by the THC. "I am quite willing to admit," replied Cousins, "that working on the development plans I carefully searched for any old plans of development of the Ashbridge’s Bay region in order that I might possibly profit by [the] experience and ideas of others." Yet he denied knowledge of Thomson’s plan — or, in fact, any other for the central waterfront — until after his own basic scheme had been developed. E.L. Cousins to C.H. Rust, 2 September 1913. THCA, RG 3/3, box 109, folder 1. A copy of Thomson’s plan is in this folder.

entire waterfront, commercial and recreational development in the west end and on Toronto Island, joint work with the Industrial Exhibition Association, and a seawall-boulevard-resort complex along the southern edge of Ashbridge's Bay. These projects were intended to earn revenue for the THC and be of general benefit to Toronto.

A prominent American planner, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., was engaged to assist Cousins in this work. Olmsted was especially taken with the character and location of Toronto Island, describing it as "a place of public recreation of the kind which is mainly resorted to on holidays and Sundays, corresponding to the larger and more distant park reservations of many cities." (He likened it to Boston's metropolitan park system, Epping Forest, and Versailles.) Olmsted welcomed some proposals — such as improving the ferry service and bridging many lagoons — which would foster accessibility, but felt there were "many objections" to a streetcar link with the mainland. Moreover, he noted that the "general introduction" of roads would radically alter the "secluded and distinctive character of the scenery." Finally, just as it appeared to be neither "convenient" nor "economical" to promote commercial development on the Island, he expected that a policy of leasing lots for summer homes would become unfeasible in light of a growing urban population. "[T]he whole area will be needed for public use," argued Olmsted, "and the development in the meantime should be carried on with that end in view."  

After five studies of the entire waterfront had been reviewed, the THC released its $19 million waterfront plan in the fall of 1912. The press universally praised the scheme — "essentially a Toronto plan drawn by a Toronto boy," as the Daily News boasted — which was published in 1913 as *Toronto Waterfront Development, 1912-1920*. The title was significant, for this was not a scheme aimed simply at increasing cargo tonnages. "Every need, from aquatic recreation to factory space, and from bridle paths and boulevard driveways to freight sidings, ship channels and docks has been fully considered and adequately met," declared the Globe. The overall effect was a scene capable of arousing "the imagination out of even the torpor of a generation of hideousness along the waterfront." The public imagination had, however, been well-stimulated by the proposals unveiled in recent years. As the Mail & Empire put it,

Ten years ago the scheme ... would have seemed not merely ambitious, but visionary. It would have been regarded with longing, but would have been put aside as too magnificent for a city of Toronto's circumstances and expectations.

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95 Toronto Globe, 15 November 1912.
[Toronto’s] citizens have not such modest ideas of its destiny [now] as they had then.96

In coming to terms with these "circumstances and expectations," Toronto would achieve status "among the great cities of the world."97 As parochial as this sounds, the THC’s vision was indeed expansive. International recognition was soon forthcoming as well. In 1925, the Commissioner of Port Development for Charleston described the THC’s plan and subsequent activities as the "broadest and most comprehensive work of its kind that has ever been done," and was especially taken by the plan’s multiple objectives.98 Domestically, the THC’s approach would be mimicked by at least one other Canadian harbour commission.99

From the plan’s opening paragraph, the THC situated itself in the context of (and as the departure from) long-standing problems, squandered opportunities, and abortive vision-making:

The best manner in which Toronto’s fine natural harbour and waterfront could be developed for the benefit of the city is a problem which has engaged the attention of the citizens from time to time, and which has been dealt with in a somewhat desultory and piecemeal fashion by various City Councils of the past. That the possession of a harbour almost without parallel on the Great Lakes should mean something, not only in the way of aesthetic development but also in the cold terms of dollars and cents to the fortunate municipality which owned it, has been always present in the background of the people’s thoughts, and has been expressed occasionally by the men most directly interested. But this thought and its expression never until the last two years became crystallized into definite action, and the City grew to its present prosperous condition with ... practically no assistance from its harbour.100

The THC aimed at a vision that was comprehensive, coordinated, and large in scale. As Home Smith had suggested earlier, this was an outcome of the THC’s inheritance from the City — Ashbridge’s Bay, the Toronto Island bayfront, a few inner harbour properties, and

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96Toronto Mail & Empire, 15 November 1912.

97Toronto World, 15 November 1912.

98Roy S. MacElwee, *Port Development* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1925), 84. By this time, Cousins had also served as consulting engineer to the Port of New York Authority.


100Toronto Harbour Commissioners (THC), *Toronto Waterfront Development, 1912-1920* (Toronto: Brigdens, [1913]), 3.
all the waterlots between Bathurst Street and the Humber. The commissioners felt "it was their duty to plan for the fullest possible development of all the property placed in their charge along the lines to which each particular section was best suited." By combining the roles of land owner, planner, developer, and manager, "harbour work, shore protection and park development could be carried out coincidentally and economically."\(^{101}\)

Three geographical "sections," which generally corresponded to three "classes of development," were identified. The Eastern Section and 17 acres at the foot of Bathurst Street were slated for industrial development; commercial and dock development was also to occur there and in the Central Section; the Western Section and the entire "outer waterfront" were to experience park and boulevard improvements. The greatest emphasis was placed on the industrial sector, rather than on harbour work, shore protection, or park development. Not surprisingly, Ashbridge's Bay (now to be called the "Toronto Harbour Industrial District" or the "Eastern Harbour Terminals") constituted the plan's focal point and, in fact, its justification.

Involving some 27 million cubic yards of material, the reclamation of Ashbridge's Bay was to be the largest project of its type ever undertaken in Canada [fig. 34]. This "big dredging proposition" would create nearly 650 acres of industrial land; another 365 acres would be devoted to streets, railway reservations, and waterways. Chief amongst the last category was a ship channel, capable of handling the largest vessels on the Great Lakes. A recreational strip was also planned along the District's southern edge; this embraced three miles of cottages, a seawall (which, continued as a breakwater, would extend from Woodbine Avenue to the eastern City limits), a protected waterway ("patterned after the natural lagoons in the interior of the Island")\(^{102}\), a boulevard and other lines of movement, and parkland.

\(^{101}\) THC, *Toronto Waterfront Development*, 5. In 1914, the National Conference on City Planning held its sixth meeting (and its first outside the U.S.) in Toronto. Robert Gourlay's overview of the THC's activities included a discussion of "basic principles of water-front development" — in effect, a 13-point manifesto. "We believe that a city possessing a water front has a heritage of incalculable value for every citizen," began Gourlay. He went on to extol the primacy of public ownership of riparian lands; the importance of making living conditions "healthier, happier, cheaper and better" for all; the obligation of financial self-sufficiency on the part of port authorities; the necessity of providing adequate warehouse accommodation, harbour facilities of the "greatest possible draft," coordinated and properly serviced transportation modes, a large central marketplace, model factories, and facilities for ship building and repair. The THC also believed the waterfront development "from an industrial standpoint" required the reclamation "of all lands that are otherwise marshy or waste places." Regarding the waterfront's "partial neglect" from a recreational and aesthetic perspective, Gourlay noted that the THC would "apply modern methods to its restoration so as to enhance its value as a citizens' playground, providing easy and cheap access thereto from all parts of the city." The THC hoped to keep at home those "thousands of citizens, who hunger every summer for a holiday by the water, [who] flee away to spots which, by nature, are not so richly endowed as Toronto." See Robert S. Gourlay, "Basic Principles of Waterfront Development as Illustrated by the Plans of the Toronto Harbour Commissioners," in *Proceedings of the Sixth National Conference on City Planning* (Boston, 1914), 17-20.

\(^{102}\) THC, *Toronto Waterfront Development*, 11.
The Toronto Harbour Commissioners' plan for the "Eastern Section" of the waterfront, 1912. The "Toronto Harbour Industrial District" — penetrated by a new Ship Channel and a partially filled-in Keating Channel — engulfs most of Ashbridge's Bay. The lake edge has been hardened with a seawall and carries a boulevard as far as Woodbine Avenue; inside are a lagoon system (modelled after the adjacent marsh) and other park features, including a cottage-strip reservation. A breakwater lies offshore east of Woodbine Avenue. [THC, Toronto Waterfront Development]
The plan’s Central Section reflected uncertainties regarding the railway viaduct and the dominant pattern of private landholdings [fig. 35]. As viaduct work had not begun east of Bathurst Street, the THC was loath to commit itself to a dockage scheme for the area, despite promising $1.8 million would be spent on modern facilities. More definite plans were laid out for Toronto Island. The Island was to be expanded by 352 acres, providing land for a new boulevard and improving "certain portions of ... which are at present neither sightly nor useful." The major lagoons were to be bridged, and the interior waterways connected by a "belt-line ferry service." More substantial bridges would be thrown over the Western Channel and the East Gap, thus allowing a 12-mile boulevard to link the plan’s three sections.

The Western Section was reserved for recreational and commercial activity [fig. 36]. It was comprised "almost entirely" of shore protection and park reclamation work on 190 acres of new land, and was to host a "modern and artistic public bath-house." The commercial element, extending from the Sunnyside Bridge to the Humber, consisted of features "incidental to the development of a summer resort watering place." It formed part of a complex system of movement — for small craft (within a breakwater-protected corridor), pedestrians, horseback riders, automobiles (on a boulevard driveway and a revamped Lake Shore Road), electric streetcars (along a four-track radial railway entrance), and steam railways.

Linking Waterfront and Region

The THC’s interest in regional connections extended beyond the radial railway network. As the plan made clear, "connection will be made with the boulevard and driveway to be constructed by the City up the Humber Valley." This harmonized with the ideas sketched out by the City in 1910 and 1912; it also dovetailed neatly with a major real estate project launched by Home Smith at that time. The "Humber Valley Surveys" comprised five subdivisions which were to be linked by the Humber Valley Electric Railway and the Humber Boulevard [fig. 37]. The latter, which joined the THC’s lakeshore drive at its western terminus, resulted from a deal struck with the City in 1911-12. Home Smith turned over 105 acres of valley-bottom parkland and dedicated a boulevard allowance; in return, the City was to expend $125,000 on a roadway and park improvements, and annex certain lands west of Toronto. The region’s citizenry was to gain "a double advantage,

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103THC, Toronto Waterfront Development, 20.
104THC, Toronto Waterfront Development, 20.
105THC, Toronto Waterfront Development, 22 and 28.
106THC, Toronto Waterfront Development, 24.
Figure 35. The Toronto Harbour Commissioners' plan for the "Central Section" of the waterfront, 1912. To link Toronto Island with the cross-city boulevard, bridges are to be built over the Western Channel and the East Gap. Extensive reclamation work is to take place along the Island's bayshore. An enlarged Bathurst Quay supports industry to the east and parks and aquatic uses to the west. Few prescriptions are made for the north shore of the inner harbour, given the dominant pattern of private landholdings. [THC, Toronto Waterfront Development]
Figure 36. The Toronto Harbour Commissioners’ plan for the “Western Section” of the waterfront, 1912. An elaborate system of movement is laid out, mostly on reclaimed land. It includes a breakwater-protected waterway, a beach walkway, a boardwalk, a boulevard, a service road, and a radial railway reservation. Reservations for aquatic clubs, an amusement park, and other forms of commercial development are also identified. [THC, Toronto Waterfront Development]
Figure 37. Robert Home Smith's Humber Valley Surveys, c. 1912. The key lines of movement through the subdivisions were to be the Humber Boulevard (to be built by the City of Toronto in exchange for parkland) and the Humber Valley Electric Railway. The Humber Boulevard, closely following the river and labelled here as "Humber Valley Drive," was to join the THC's Boulevard Drive at the Humber mouth; the Electric Railway was to run either along Lake Shore Road or on the THC's radial railway reservation. [Home Smith & Company, Humber Valley Surveys]
inasmuch as they continue in occupation of a pleasure ground valued by their forefathers, and a heritage of no small historical interest.¹⁰⁷

Home Smith also engaged in other planning projects which were less obviously self-interested. In his capacity as THC chairman in 1922, he initiated a study of running a boulevard (or pair of boulevards) from Toronto to the east end of the Scarborough Bluffs. The idea harkened back to the Civic Guild plan of 1909, in which he had been involved; in 1912, Home Smith had told the Canadian Club of Toronto that "[t]his generation cannot allow Scarboro' Cliffs to remain in private ownership."¹⁰⁸ The 1923 study (rather paradoxically entitled Preliminary Report on the Preservation of Scarboro Heights as a Scenic Asset, and their Development as such by the Construction of a Boulevard along the Bluffs) was prepared by Norman D. Wilson, a THC engineer who later gained renown as a transportation consultant. Wilson investigated road alignments both atop and below the Bluffs as far as the Highland Creek Valley [fig. 38]. The entire valley, which he regarded as the "proper" link between a lakefront boulevard and Kingston Road, was recommended as a City park; similar proposals were made for the Toronto Hunt Club property and a 50-acre parcel west of Bellamy Road.¹⁰⁹ The lower boulevard was considered the more scenic alignment, but its estimated cost of $9.9 million, the difficulty of accessing the tableland, and construction impacts militated against it. Wilson's choice was the upper boulevard. A mere $2.4 million could obtain an adequate road allowance, a generous tableland park strip ("to preserve the banks from defacement"), shore stabilization, and a drainage system to prevent runoff down or seepage through the cliff face. Wilson suggested that the costs of the project should be shared amongst City, Township, provincial, and federal governments given the significance of the Bluffs.

Wilson, Home Smith, Cousins and others also guided Toronto's city planning revival in the late 1920s. The Advisory City Planning Commission (ACPC) unveiled a new plan


¹⁰⁹While the Highland Creek Valley had aesthetic merits and provided a natural corridor for linking the boulevard(s) with Kingston Road, the area to the east was deemed "of no particular scenic beauty." See Norman D. Wilson, Preliminary Report on the Preservation of Scarboro Heights as a Scenic Asset, and their Development as such by the Construction of a Boulevard along the Bluffs (Toronto, 1923), 3. The park-and-boulevard idea was apparently revived again about 1935 and attracted discussion in the press.
Figure 38. Detail from Norman D. Wilson's proposal for a boulevard (or pair of boulevards) along the Scarborough Bluffs, 1923. This section shows existing development, subdivision plans, waterlot ownerships, topography, offshore soundings, and a potential road alignment in the vicinity of the Toronto Hunt Club. [Wilson, Preliminary Report on the Preservation of Scarboro Heights as a Scenic Asset, and their Development as such by the Construction of a Boulevard along the Bluffs]
for the City — or, more specifically, its downtown — in 1929.\textsuperscript{110} Foreseeing great prosperity with the opening of the new Welland Canal, the ACPC envisioned a downtown which "in beauty and in dignity, in ease of traffic flow and in business utility, will be comparable with that of any city on the continent, and in keeping with the unparalleled uniqueness of Toronto's residential areas, with its waterfront development, [and] its National Exhibition ..."\textsuperscript{111} As Toronto's last major City Beautiful planning exercise, the ACPC made a number of dramatic proposals for the urban core. The stultifying effect of the railway lands posed an especially trying problem, particularly in the poor connections between the downtown and the waterfront. To join University Avenue (to be widened and extended south of Queen Street) with the Fleet Street-Boulevard Drive axis (now regarded as a "trunk" thoroughfare), a $5 million suspension bridge over the railway lands between Bay and John streets was proposed. While this would relieve traffic bottlenecks at the viaduct subways, the ACPC acknowledged that the bridge was both financially and technically impractical. As an alternative, the commission proposed realigning the Bathurst Street bridge to give direct access to the waterfront, thereby "avoiding the congested business area, the congested subway at York Street, and the level crossings on Fleet Street."\textsuperscript{112} From Bathurst, the waterfront and the core would be linked by new roadways ripped through Victoria and Clarence squares and the built-up area to the east [fig. 39]. Dispensing with the THC's 1912 notion of an "outer boulevard," the ACPC also recommended that a "shore boulevard to the east" be formed by paving Fleet Street between Bay and Commissioners streets.\textsuperscript{113}

The Toronto electorate rejected the ACPC's plan early in 1930. Dispensing with the 1929 report's lavishness, the City's Advisory City Planning Committee — drawn entirely from the civic bureaucracy — released a utilitarian plan later in 1930 focusing entirely on

\textsuperscript{110}The ACPC was struck in 1928, with Home Smith and Cousins acting as two of its commissioners. Home Smith and Cousins had previously served together (as commissioner and consulting engineer) on the Ottawa-Hull Plan Commission in the early 1910s. Wilson, who was engineer in charge of surveys and lands during the THC's first decade and had left to organize his own town planning consultancy, was the ACPC's general director.

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Report of the Advisory City Planning Commission, with Recommendations for the Improvement of the Central Business Section of the City of Toronto [ACPC]} (Toronto, 1929), 49. Also see Lemon, "Plans for Early 20th-Century Toronto." Greatly increased cargo tonnages accompanied the new Welland Canal's opening in 1931. Tonnages (mostly coal) swelled from 1.3 million in 1930 to 2.1 million in 1931; in 1911, only 330,767 tons were recorded. See THC, \textit{The Port and Harbour of Toronto, 1834-1934} (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1934), 61.

\textsuperscript{112}ACPC, 41. To foster communication with the harbour, the Board of Trade later suggested widening the York Street subway from 66 to 80 feet or having streetcar tracks laid in the tunnel. Both ideas were rejected on grounds of cost in \textit{Report of Civic Department Heads re the Advisory City Planning Commission's Report for the Improvement of the City of Toronto} (Toronto, 1929), 7-8 and 23. In 1931, the Bathurst Street bridge was realigned to its present position.

\textsuperscript{113}ACPC, 45.
Figure 39. The Advisory City Planning Commission's plan for downtown Toronto, 1929. The principal link between the central business district and the waterfront was to be made via "Passchendaele Road" (the dark diagonal at lower left centre) and its westerly extension cutting through Clarence Square and Victoria Memorial Square. As proposed, a direct connection between this new roadway and Fleet Street and the harbour would be obtained once the Bathurst Bridge was realigned, but only the latter project was executed. [Report of the Advisory City Planning Commission, with Recommendations for the Improvement of the Central Business Section of the City of Toronto]
improvements to the road network. The waterfront was addressed in several ways. To accommodate "the great volume of tourist and weekend traffic during the summer months," the road allowances on Kingston Road and the Toronto-Hamilton Highway were to be increased for ten miles beyond the City limits to a "sufficient" (but unspecified) width. Other recommendations included extending Queen Street west into Etobicoke; opening up a road from Keating Street to Eastern Avenue along the east bank of the Don; extending the Fleet Street-Boulevard Drive axis to Kingston Road and Woodbine Avenue; and connecting Strachan Avenue and Dowling Avenue across the north side of Exhibition Park [fig. 40]. Almost as an afterthought, support was lent to the extension of boulevards up the Don and Humber valleys from the lakeshore; these were to join "on the highlands to the north-west of the City."  

Revising the 1912 Plan

Rather surprisingly, the ACPC criticized the THC (and its 1912 plan) and the railways (for the grade separation issue) for diverting attention from the larger "civic problems of town planning" in the years before the Great War.\(^{115}\) Whatever merit this claim might have, implementation of the 1912 plan by no means proceeded smoothly after being endorsed by the City in 1912 and the federal government in 1913. Circumstances external to the THC thwarted its prediction that a new waterfront would materialize within eight years of breaking ground. By the time the THC's construction activities wound down in 1932, the plan had been subjected to a host of revisions and additions. Though most of the basic ideas held, many of the details were much altered.\(^{116}\)

The mainland portion of the plan's Central Section was not defined until 1913, after an agreement was reached with the railways to build the viaduct between Bathurst Street and the Don. The construction of concrete docks, a 130-foot commercial highway, and a system of north-south streets was to accompany an extension of the harbourhead line some 1,000 feet south. Filling would give the THC 180 acres of "better land under modern conditions" on the central waterfront; in addition, the THC would control about 97 per cent of the shoreline between the Humber and Woodbine Avenue.\(^{117}\) But the outbreak of war and the purchase of the Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern railways by the federal government delayed viaduct construction until 1924. It also retarded the THC's development activities;

\(^{114}\)Report of the Advisory City Planning Committee on Street Extensions, Widenings and Improvements in the City of Toronto (Toronto, 1930), 5 and 10.

\(^{115}\)ACPC, 21.

\(^{116}\)For an overview of the THC's activities in its first two decades, see THC, Port and Harbour of Toronto; O'Mara, Shaping Urban Waterfronts.

\(^{117}\)Gourlay, 30. Also see Mellen, 334-38; E.L. Cousins, Toronto Waterfront Improvements [1912-1924] (Toronto, 1925), 15-17.
Figure 40. The Advisory City Planning Committee’s general roadway plan for the Toronto area, 1930. The waterfront contained some of the widest streets in the region, but a few sections — including Fleet Street in the East Bayfront — remained to be built. Proposals include a new road along Exhibition Park’s north side, the extension of Queen Street from Parkside Drive into Etobicoke, and stronger links between the Port Industrial Area and Kingston Road and Woodbine Avenue. The lakeshore area shown extends from Royal York Road to Birchmount Road. [Report of the Advisory City Planning Committee on Street Extensions, Widenings and Improvements in the City of Toronto]
filling and dock construction west of Yonge Street stopped in 1922 pending resolution of the viaduct affair. Other revisions to the Central Section plan involved Toronto Island. While the THC proceeded with its park reclamation scheme during the Great War, the federal government’s failure to bridge the Western Channel and the East Gap stymied the cross-Island boulevard. Attention turned toward a more lofty transportation mode when, in 1929, the Western Sandbar was proposed as a permanent seaplane, flying boat, and amphibious plane base. Work on the site began that year, but was abandoned in the face of opposition to filling in the Hanlan Memorial Regatta Course, lying between the Western Sandbar and Hanlan’s Point. Instead, a temporary air harbour terminal was established at the foot of Scott Street. As the THC boasted in 1934, the terminal was the "only registered hydroplane base on the Canadian shores of Lake Ontario and ... one of the few licensed air harbours in the world where passengers from the air can be landed within four minutes distance of the terminal railway station and principal hotel." In 1937, work started again on the Western Sandbar, with "Port George VI" opening in 1939.

Development in the Western Section largely took place along the lines proposed in the 1912 plan. It was guided in its details by Alfred Chapman, a Toronto architect who had long been involved with waterfront planning. The OAA’s 1906 plan apparently derived from an earlier study prepared by Chapman; the inner harbour scheme was certainly his, for he

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118 Toronto Globe, 15 May 1922.

119 Stinson and Moir, 17-26. By this date, the Boulevard Drive and Fleet Street had been built as far east as Yonge Street. In 1925, Cousins pushed for the completion of Fleet to Cherry Street in conjunction with the paving and extension of Commissioners Street to ultimately reach Kingston Road. Not only would this enhance the commercial prospects of the reclaimed lands, but it would give the public some idea of the physical scope of the THC’s activities. "The Harbour Commissioners," pointed out Cousins, "have not as yet a continuous road through their property, the improvements at present are widely separated and disconnected, with the result that the citizens of Toronto have no means of realizing the wonderful asset in their possession for the reason that they have no opportunity of driving through it. The Sunnyside development has adequate access and all have observed the result ... When the citizens can drive from the Humber to the Woodbine, along the waterfront, then and then only will the potential possibilities of the undertaking be fully realized." See Cousins, Toronto Waterfront Improvements, 53.

120 THC, Port and Harbour of Toronto, 19. Also see Stinson and Moir, 30-34; Gibson, 155-56, 177, 192-94, and 195-201. Flying boats began using Toronto Harbour in 1914, and a year later Canada’s first air school opened on the Western Sandbar. Construction of a tunnel under the Western Channel — apparently the first step toward an Island airport — ended soon after it began in 1935, thanks to federal politicking.
Figure 41. Toronto’s "Central Harbour Terminals," with the THC's scheme for the East Bayfront, 1921. The proposed dockwall profile is shown as a heavy dashed line; existing dockwalls appear as a heavy line; the 1912 shoreline is represented by hachures. In the East Bayfront, the heavy dashed line is also the bulkhead (or pierhead) line; the thin line offshore is the harbourhead line. This simple profile contrasts sharply with the ragged pier outline of 1913 (see fig. 25). [THCA, PD 2/1/8411]
championed an identical plan before his colleagues in 1908. Along with Home Smith, he was on the Civic Guild's Plan Committee, which was responsible for the 1909 plan. Professional ties between the developer and the architect were evident in Chapman's design of the Old Mill Tea Room (1914) and the adjacent Humber Bridge (1916) as part of the Humber Valley Surveys project. As a harbour commissioner, Home Smith was loath to treat the THC's work simply as an engineering exercise, believing that the waterfront's form was as important as its function. On his recommendation, Chapman became the THC's consulting architect in 1914.

The Sunnyside area received Chapman's initial attention. His "Report on Humber Bay Development" (1915) added a strong architectural element to the lines of movement and commercial possibilities laid out in 1912. The "unique natural advantages" of the locale were to form the basis of "the most ideal and comprehensive playground and pleasure resort that a large city could desire." While most of the area between Parkside Drive and the Humber was to remain as public open space, Chapman suggested building pavilions, restaurants, boathouses, and, at the Humber mouth, a major hotel. He also recommended a canal linking Grenadier Pond with the lake, and, between Parkside Drive and Roncesvalles Drive, a "modern amusement park ... [which,] properly equipped, in such a situation, would undoubtedly produce a great revenue." Many of these features were part of a "Western Development" scheme approved by City Council in 1917 [fig. 42].

In 1919-20, plan-making was renewed amid rumours that a "foreign syndicate" was interested in developing a commercial park adjacent to Sunnyside. Rather than allow private enterprise to profit from public expenditures on the waterfront, the THC began to develop the site according to new designs produced by Chapman. As Cousins recalled in 1925, the THC decided "to set aside certain areas for purely recreational park uses, to regulate and control the class of building and type of amusement and thereby provide the citizens with clean and wholesome recreational facilities of pleasing appearance — an asset to the City and of benefit in improving its western entrance." The THC was also motivated by a need to produce revenue, given that its industrial and commercial properties elsewhere lay in a "dormant state, due largely to lack of adequate access." With grade separation work in

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123 Cousins, Toronto Waterfront Improvements, 27.

124 Cousins, Toronto Waterfront Improvements, 26. After a decade of discord between the THC and the railways, the agreement which finally produced a waterfront viaduct was signed only months before Cousins wrote his report. On the THC's broad-based approach to revenue production, see James O'Mara, The Toronto
Figure 42. The THC's "Western Development" plan, 1917. Relative to the 1912 plan, land-based movement is simplified, while water-based travel is extended to include a canal linking Grenadier Pond with the lake. Five clusters of commercial development appear, including a hotel at the Humber mouth; "building sites" are laid out north of the new Lake Shore Road. [THCA, PD 2/1/5249]
south Parkdale finished and construction of the Boulevard Drive and the new Lake Shore Road well under way, access was a less intractable problem for the Western Section. In contrast, an opportunity existed to link transportation improvements with the development of apartment houses, an amusement ground, and other leisure facilities [figs. 43-45].

Serviced by new roads, a boardwalk, a protected waterway, and a streetcar line, the THC's Sunnyside Amusement Area opened in 1922. As reported in the journal *Construction*, amusement facilities were erected to the north of the Boulevard Drive to supply the "legitimate demand of the population for this type of [recreation]." Chapman's buildings to the south were few and "of such a character and far enough apart as to form an architectural attraction, and not an interference with the broad view and fresh sweep of air that is the main element of attraction of any waterfront." By 1932, this arrangement had fallen victim to the success of its elements, and Sunnyside had become a "problem." Pedestrian traffic between the Amusement Area and the lake was in conflict with motor traffic along the Boulevard. After considering the merits of pedestrian subways and bridges, Cousins recommended that the Boulevard be diverted northward around the Amusement Area. Besides relieving the traffic hazard, an opportunity was presented for revitalizing the entire site, whose fortunes were flagging amid the larger economic crisis. With additional reclamation, Cousins proposed doubling the size of the Amusement Area and intensively developing the new lands south of the boardwalk [figs. 46-47]. Without the impetus provided by the Boulevard diversion, he argued that Sunnyside "will never attain its utmost possibilities as a revenue producing asset." Despite the project's potential as a relief work, the $370,000 scheme failed to win City Council's approval.

In the meantime, Chapman was forging connections in the Western Section between the THC and the Canadian National Exhibition Association (CNEA). In 1920, Chapman and A. Frank Wickson were hired by the CNEA to devise "a coherent development plan for future guidance." One Beaux Arts-inspired proposal from 1921 revived the amusement

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125 "The 'Sunnyside' Development of the Toronto Harbour Commission," *Construction*, 15 (1922): 236-47. The most prominent of Sunnyside's buildings, the Bathing Pavilion, was especially regarded as a great advance in public enterprise. One City alderman described it as "something in the way of a dream of Palm Beach, with the colouring of Ostend blended into a very harmonious Canadian whole." Quoted in Mike Filey, *I Remember Sunnyside: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Era* (Toronto: Brownstone Press, 1981), 53. Despite the anticipated warming effects of the breakwater, the lake failed to achieve Palm Beach temperatures. As a result, one of North America's largest swimming pools at that time was built adjacent to the Bathing Pavilion in 1925.


127 Canadian National Exhibition Association (CNEA), *Annual Report 1920* (Toronto, 1921), 15 and 42. The CNEA's Plan Committee was ultimately comprised of Toronto's Parks Commissioner, C.E. Chambers, and architects Chapman, Wickson, and J.P. Hynes. On this fecund decade of development at Exhibition Park,
Figures 43-45. The THC's proposed "Western Development," as designed by Alfred Chapman and rendered by Stanley Turner, 1921. Recommendations include a wall of apartment houses north of Lake Shore Road and a lakeside bathing pavilion (top), an amusement area (middle), and Venetian-style aquatic clubhouses (bottom). [THCA, PC 1/2/89-90 and PC 1/3/288]
Figures 46-47. E.L. Cousins’ proposal for reorganizing Sunnyside, 1932. The existing shoreline and recreational development appear in the upper image, along with a proposed new roadway. To avoid conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles during the summer, the Boulevard Drive was to be diverted northward around the amusement area; the latter would be enlarged south of the existing Boulevard on newly filled land (lower image). [Cousins, Report on Boulevard Diversion and Revision of Recreational Areas, Sunnyside Beach]
pier idea from the 1912 plan, provided space for the Boulevard Drive, reconfigured the eastern streetcar entrance, and at several points drew the protected waterway into the grounds. It also eliminated every existing structure in Exhibition Park [fig. 48]. The functional efficiency of the plan were especially praised by the CNEA in its annual report for 1921:

The new buildings are being laid out to conform with a development plan which has been evolved to care for the growing needs of the Exhibition for the next fifty years. The scheme provides for the eventual reconstruction of the entire plant, assures speedy traffic handling, ample auto parking and a pleasing and comprehensive building layout that is not only attractive in appearance but gives easy access for visitors and provides for the best display of exhibits, broad thoroughfares and open spaces for better circulation of the crowds.\textsuperscript{128}

Chapman continued to advise the CNEA on site planning at Exhibition Park; he also designed several important buildings there. In both cases, strong relationships were established with the Boulevard Drive, which was completed through and to the east of the grounds in 1925. In 1922, cooperation between the City, the CNEA, and the THC shifted the Drive's alignment northward so that the apex of its curve intersected the Princes' Boulevard axis. This axis — the key organizing element for the Park's east end — was terminated in 1927 by Chapman's Princes' Gates. The main facades of his Ontario Government Building (1926) and Douglas Kertland's Automotive Building (1929) also addressed the Boulevard Drive. With such aspirations and achievements,\textsuperscript{129} Alfred Chapman might properly be regarded as the Daniel Burnham of the Toronto waterfront.

Chapman also helped rethink part of the 1912 plan's Eastern Section. While most of Ashbridge's Bay was filled according to the original scheme, the seawall-park-and-cottage

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\textsuperscript{128}CNEA, \textit{Annual Report 1921} (Toronto, 1922), 9. The plan's effectiveness lay in organizing development in the east end of Exhibition Park.

\textsuperscript{129}In addition to his site planning for the THC and CNEA, Chapman's major architectural works on the waterfront included the THC's Sunnyside Pavilion Restaurant (1917, demolished), Administration Building (1919), Main Life Saving and Police Patrol Station (1921, demolished), Leuty Avenue Life Saving Substation (1921), Sunnyside Bathing Pavilion (1922), and Palais Royale (1922); the CNEA's Pure Food Building (1922, demolished), Ontario Government Building (1926), Princes' Gates (1927), and Electrical & Engineering Building (1928, demolished); and, for private clients, the Crosse & Blackwell Building (1927) and the Yardley Building (1930). Chapman's design for a waterfront "Memorial Stadium" — commissioned by the City of Toronto in 1922 — influenced Maple Leaf Stadium (1926, now demolished), built on Bathurst Quay by Molesworth, West & Secord. Nearby on the Quay was the Tip Top Tailors Building (1929), designed by Roy H. Bishop & Roger Miller; Bishop was in partnership with Chapman and engineer J. Morrow Oxley between 1921 and 1925. As the THC's consulting architect, Chapman also had power of approval over all buildings erected on the waterfront until 1925, when he resigned his position.
Figure 48. A proposal by the Plan Committee of the Canadian National Exhibition Association for the redevelopment of Exhibition Park, 1921. All of the existing structures in Exhibition Park would have been demolished to make way for this highly formal scheme. Two canals were to penetrate the Park, presumably allowing for arrival by water, as also indicated by the proposed pier. The final relationship between the Park and the Boulevard Drive at the Exhibition's east end had yet to be decided. [Chapman, Alfred Chapman]
treatment along the Bay's lakefront became an open question. In 1916, Chapman had more in mind than the three-mile strip of cottages proposed four years earlier:

The enormous industrial area being developed, just north of this [strip], has no district adjoining to satisfactorily house the thousands of mechanics and operators who will be employed there. Although, in theory, we do not relish the Apartment or Tenement as a solution to our housing problem, in practice, we shall have to come to it, as experience and land values of other cities prove to us. Ideal Apartment house schemes have been worked out in certain cases in Paris, New York, and [London], but I know of no case where such an opportunity presents itself as it will on this strip of land bordering the great industrial area on one side and the parkway and lake on the other. It would help solve the problem of the employer, thereby increasing the advantages of the locality, and it would give the fresh air and beauty to the maximum number of persons all the year round instead of to a few for only a few months, and on the sandy soil it should be considerably healthier ... than Parkdale.

... I see for this particular development a street south of the industrial area, with possibly street cars serving what in the future would be a series of [three- or four-storey] model Apartment houses.... I have considered this housing problem in England, France and the United States, but have never stumbled across such an ideal combination of humanitarian and economical elements as we have here with the working district on one side and the open air and parkway on the other.130

Chapman's proposal, made soon after reclamation work brought the eviction of cottagers on Fisherman's Island and at Simcoe Park, came to nothing. The shoreline development anticipated in the 1912 plan did not materialize, either. In 1927, the federal government refused to provide funds for the eastern seawall as promised in 1913, claiming that the project was merely a park of local significance. As the prospects of an expanded sewage treatment plant on Ashbridge's Bay grew and those of a lakeside boulevard diminished — the THC also had second thoughts about recreational development. The removal of cottages on Woodbine Beach in 1928-29 seemed to confirm that the shoreline was

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130 Alfred H. Chapman, "Report on Cottages at Simcoe Park, 24 July 1916." THCA, RG 3/3, box 334, folder 5. At a 1914 planning conference, the relation of the THC's work to the rest of the city was questioned. The noted British planner Thomas Adams was particularly insistent on the issue of housing, especially in regards to the Eastern Harbour Terminals. Gourlay responded that the adjacent residential area was growing rapidly and that the THC's industrial sites would be served adequately by streetcars. Adams argued that both the City and the federal government should have some say in such development, in order that proper linkages were made. The City Commissioner of Saskatoon concurred: the only fault he could find "is that the scheme has been developed as a unit and not considered in the development of the city as a whole," particularly in terms of transit and housing. Gourlay pointed out that the THC had presented a transportation scheme to the City in 1913, but the matter was unresolved. See Gourlay, 45. In the early 1920s, THC bureaucrats often spoke as if industrial housing in the Eastern Section was official policy.
to be turned toward industrial ends [fig. 49].131 This was in fact the THC’s intent, coupled with the idea of creating an "artificial" harbour between the East Gap and Coatsworth Cut. The *Telegram* described the project as follows:

Extending three thousand feet into the lake from the present shore line, reclaimed industrial land would surround a stretch of water which would accommodate the largest of vessels, protected completely from the waves of the open lake, and providing thousands of feet of additional dock space.132

As Cousins soon made clear, meeting Toronto’s port needs was not the primary objective of the outer harbour project. Building a new port was "only a fraction of the picture"; creating lucrative industrial land was far more important [fig. 50].133 But faced with lukewarm interest from the City and the federal government, the idea languished until after the Second World War. In fact, interest in the THC’s existing industrial land had also been lukewarm. For many reasons, the scale and character of manufacturing envisaged in 1912 did not materialize.134

Further east, the area lying between Woodbine Avenue and Scarborough Township was long a source of friction between the local citizenry (on the one hand) and the City and the THC (on the other). Because nearly three-quarters of the waterfront was privately owned, it received scant attention in the 1912 plan; the lakeside boulevard veered north upon reaching Woodbine Avenue, and the only public work identified was a breakwater stretching to the city limits. Repeated calls for shore protection finally resulted in the THC bringing forth a pair of $2 million development plans in 1920 [figs. 51-52]. Both contained a bath house and a protected waterway for bathing, anchorages for aquatic clubs, storage areas for small craft, and commercial reservations. One plan included a continuous boulevard along the lakeshore, while the other (less expensive and more to the City’s liking) did not. Neither stimulated much public action. Though the City began expropriating waterlots as early as 1921, it was nearly a decade before waterfront improvements began. Instead of enlarging the beach through a major dredging operation and protecting it with a breakwater, a less expensive program of groyne construction, lakefront property acquisition, and minor filling

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131Woodbine Beach, lying between Woodbine Avenue and Coatsworth Cut, was the last residential area to be cleared along the lake edge of Ashbridge’s Bay. The removal of cottages on Fisherman’s Island and Simcoe Park (collectively the area between Coatsworth Cut and the East Gap) began in 1915 and finished about 1920.


133Quoted in Toronto *Star Weekly*, 14 March 1931. Recalling the priorities of the 1912 plan, Cousins maintained that "the harbour was only secondary to the industrial area that was to developed, with parks third."

Figure 49. Anticipated revisions to the Toronto Harbour Commissioners’ 1912 plan for the Eastern Section, 1928. These fears proved to be well-founded, though the full conversion of Ashbridge’s Bay to “industrial purposes” did not occur. [Toronto Star Weekly, 4 February 1928]
Figure 50. The Toronto Harbour Commissioners’ proposal for a second (or outer) harbour, 1931. A new offshore breakwater would enclose part of the lake between Coatsworth Cut and the Eastern Gap, making port and industrial development possible along the lake edge of the Eastern Harbour Terminals. Existing reclaimed lands are shaded dark; the small remnant of Ashbridge’s Bay is at the lower right. [Toronto Star Weekly, 14 March 1931]
Figures 51-52. Two "Eastern Development" plans by the Toronto Harbour Commissioners, 1920. These studies had in common lakefilling to create a wider beach, breakwater-protected bathing areas and anchorages, boathouses, aquatic clubhouses, refreshment and bathing pavilions, and a boardwalk. They differ in that one proposal had a continuous waterfront boulevard running from west of Woodbine Avenue toward Kingston Road, while the other gave access to the beach mainly at the ends of existing north-south streets. [THCA, PC 1/1/5841 and PC 1/1/5997]
was conducted with relief appropriations. The 19-acre Beaches Park finally opened in 1932, based on a 1931 plan far less elaborate than its 1920 predecessor [fig. 53].

The period 1911-32 was an unprecedented period of planning and development on the regional waterfront. With its comprehensive view of physical structure and land use, and its metropolitan sense of transportation and economic development issues, the THC became Toronto's *de facto* planning agency. Its property holdings and legal powers allowed it to step into a managerial void, filling it with visions of a multiple-purpose waterfront at once efficient and elegant. Supported by the business community, the general public, and (most of all) by powerful legislation, the THC escaped the advocacy or advisory roles played by the Civic Guild and the Civic Improvement Committee. Its varied objectives and undertakings ultimately created some misunderstanding, inasmuch as the THC did not think and act like a conventional port authority. As Cousins lamented in 1931, the THC

should never have been created as a harbour commission or some such name. That was a misnomer. It should have been called an industrial and commercial development commission or some such name. No sane man would ever have spent $25,000,000, which was the amount of the original bond issue, on Toronto's ambition to be a lake port.

Nevertheless, the THC's endeavours represented the pinnacle of large-scale planning in the Toronto region before the City's Master Plan of 1943.

While the THC possessed a remarkable degree of control over the environment in which it operated, its autonomy was limited in a number of ways. The 1912 plan, for example, worked out of a set of local precedents and pre-existing lines of development. While the plan *per se* evoked a sense of mission on the part of a few people, it also addressed long-standing and well-defined public frustrations and desires. This likely helped the plan gain wide acceptance. At the same time, the THC (and the larger urban reform culture) was cognizant of American trends in planning, design, and administration, and these too were implicated in its affairs. Finally, in terms of implementation, the THC was constrained by a variety of forces and circumstances external to it which greatly influenced what appeared on the ground. As the landscape of 1932 made clear, the plan of 1912 was not a mass of details to be adhered to strictly, but a general statement of how and where development was to proceed.

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136 Quoted in Toronto Star Weekly, 14 March 1931.
Figure 53. The City of Toronto’s plan for the Eastern Beaches, 1931. In this modest scheme, lakefilling has been abandoned in favour of acquiring and developing existing lands along the shoreline. The THC’s 1920 planning boundaries (west of Woodbine Avenue to east of Victoria Park Avenue) have been cut back to the area between Woodbine and Silverbirch avenues, though the City has now proposed building an athletic field west of Kew Gardens. The boardwalk remains, unlike many of the facilities proposed earlier by the THC. [CTA, MT 00452LE-O]
SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

No area in the Toronto region has been as richly or continuously imagined — or as persistently debated — as the waterfront. This interest extends back into the late 18th century, when the British recognized and began exploiting the natural advantages of the inner harbour. How the new settlement of York should be laid out, and where certain activities should take place, were contentious issues then; they have remained so for the past two centuries. Here, I briefly sum up the experience of waterfront vision-making during the period 1852-1935, and offer some closing observations.

Given the region’s historical pattern of urban development, it is not surprising that most waterfront visions were geographically centred on the City of Toronto. The lakeshore to the east and west was not neglected, however. Toronto was much interested in the potential of Etobicoke and Scarborough as sources of water supply and recipients of sewage disposal. The conservation of outlying natural features for recreational ends, and the upgrading and extension of regional lines of movement, also attracted the City’s (and the Province’s) attention. Few proposals were generated for the waterfronts of Etobicoke and Scarborough per se. While this might be accounted for by dominantly rural conditions (especially in Scarborough Township and the area to the east), or by jurisdictional fragmentation (as in Etobicoke, which by 1930 shared the western shore with the municipalities of Mimico, New Toronto, and Long Branch), a more important factor was the prevailing ethos of private initiative and speculative development — which, it should be noted, could on occasion be grandly conceived. 137

From an initial focus on the north shore of Toronto’s inner harbour, the compass of waterfront planning expanded greatly. By the early 1890s, reclamation and development schemes had been drawn up for the City’s major landholdings elsewhere on Toronto Bay, and the resources of the York County watershed had been scrutinized. The importance of a regional perspective was made most apparent, however, in the general city plans unveiled from 1906 onward. The OAA, the Civic Guild, and the Civic Improvement Committee had little regard for Toronto’s political boundaries, which had in fact spread along the shoreline in a series of annexations. 138 The THC also worked on a regional scale — as did Toronto, especially after 1912 and in accordance with the City and Suburbs Plans Act and other planning-related legislation.

137 Mimico, New Toronto, and Long Branch separated from Etobicoke Township in 1911, 1913, and 1930. For important private ventures in these and other locales, see Wayne Reeves, Regional Heritage Features on the Metropolitan Toronto Waterfront (Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, 1992), 14-20, 23-27, 150-55, and 166-70.

138 Toronto’s waterfront annexations were: Brockton (1884), Sunnyside (1888), Parkdale (1889), Lake Shore Road (1893), East Toronto (1908), and Balmy Beach (1909). See James Lemon and James Simmons, A Guide to Data on Nineteenth Century Toronto (Toronto: Department of Geography, University of Toronto, 1977), 50. Swansea, which separated from York Township in 1925, amalgamated with Toronto in 1967.
Well into the 20th century, plan-making was dominated by a fairly small coterie of professionals (mainly architects, engineers, and surveyors), civic officials (frequently trained as administrators per se after 1900), and reform-minded citizens and organizations. The entrenchment of specific ideas about waterfront development reflected consensus-building efforts within and between groups (as in the definition of sewerage options by engineers and their acceptance by the medical fraternity). Entrenchment and coordination also stemmed from continuous involvement by certain individuals and groups, and by overlapping group memberships. Whereas individuals (such as Kivas Tully) played highly visible and significant roles in shaping waterfront policy during the 19th century, professional societies (the OAA) and advocacy groups (the Civic Guild) emerged as leaders of public opinion in the early 20th century. Ratepayers’ associations voiced their support for or opposition to various plans, but rarely put forth their own substantial proposals; this was left to other specialized community groups like the Board of Trade, whose members believed that their business-oriented visions reflected the aspirations of the larger community.

The Board of Trade’s crucial insight was that a community-sponsored plan was no substitute for a single public institution with the authority and power to impose order comprehensively and on a large scale. The Toronto electorate agreed, and the institution quickly materialized as the Toronto Harbour Commissioners. The planning mentality also took root in the civic bureaucracy, albeit divided along departmental lines; Toronto would not formally establish a Department of City Planning and Surveying until 1930. Individual personalities remained important within the public sector. Bureaucrats E.L. Cousins and R.C. Harris appeared frequently in the press, and occasionally were accused of unduly shaping public policy. Controversy also erupted when little distinction between public and private interests appeared to exist (as in the case of land developer and harbour commissioner Robert Home Smith).

In essence, planning was seen as a challenge to laissez-faire attitudes, a corrective to a perceived imbalance between public and private interests, and an assertion of the importance of the public realm. The waterfront was too important a resource to be left either to uncoordinated, piecemeal developments which were conceived and undertaken on a small scale, or to self-interested business giants like the railways. As the general plans of 1906-11 argued, a distinctive landscape character would emerge by way of deliberate planning and management, not by happy accident. The protection of the community’s health also required public involvement, in terms of leadership (such as convincing citizens that a safe water supply and effective sewage disposal practices were related) and direct intervention (as in the construction of facilities which lacked local precedent).

Striking a balance between waterfront interests meant a variety of things. It meant the urban community battling the railways for space on and access to the inner harbour, and battling private syndicates for control of Ashbridge’s Bay. It meant the identification of where specific uses were best situated on the waterfront, and the equitable distribution of the benefits of development. It meant taking aesthetic as well as utilitarian and economic concerns into account. Balance, however, invariably tipped toward the economic side of
things, even where private activity came under strict public control. Thus, the industrial improvement of Ashbridge's Bay was no less important than its sanitary improvement (E.H. Keating); aesthetic improvements were not made to be for their intrinsic value, but to advertise Toronto and impress potential investors (the OAA); and effective waterfront planning and administration would help advance the region's business prospects (the Board of Trade).

The quest for an enlarged and enhanced public realm also had a plural character. From the 1850s onward, the provision of safe, convenient, and ample access to the water was a major objective. So too was the physical construction of a waterfront-based civic image, for it was believed that the lakeshore should both look good and work well. Architectural form interested Tully and some of his peers, and later concerned the OAA, the Civic Guild, the THC, and the CNEA. Even the City's Public Works Department subscribed to this view; just because some of the waterfront's most crucial functions were utilitarian did not mean that they should lack a ceremonial quality. The role of nature in the public realm was rather more ambiguous. Those elements of Toronto's natural heritage which satisfied certain aesthetic norms (and thus contributed positively to a sense of the region, like the Bluffs) were slated for preservation. Those elements which were neither "beautiful" nor "picturesque" were to be reclaimed for productive ends. But even this arrangement was not straightforward. While their 1912 plan eliminated virtually all of Ashbridge's Bay, the harbour commissioners wanted to create a facsimile of it in the artificial lagoons along the lake edge; as well, the filled additions to Toronto Island were to appear as a work of nature. The very presence of the lake was, in fact, a great boon for development: filling in water lots was an expedient means of creating new public space, given relatively cheap acquisition and construction costs and a reluctance to disturb private interests on existing lands.

Perhaps the greatest feat of imagination was expressing a holistic sense of the waterfront. This drive for a comprehensive, coordinated order — which took decades to mature — was predicated on seeing how a diverse array of problems and opportunities were interrelated. It was an approach applied to specific areas, issues, and projects, as in the 19th-century reclamation schemes for Ashbridge's Bay, which embraced a variety of uses; in resolving Toronto's sewerage problem, which gave rise to O.A. Howland's synthetic vision; and in C.H. Rust's seawall and boulevard proposal, which, on the surface, was to enhance the aesthetics, recreational life, and transportation infrastructure of Toronto's west end, but fundamentally provided a cheap means of solid waste disposal, with direct implications for improved public health.

The task of uniting these varied aims and initiatives was left to the THC. As implied by its multiple-use plan of 1912, the THC was responsive to the interests of the whole community — though, as with many of the earlier plans, manufacturing and economic

139 Also noteworthy is the engineers' practical appreciation of the region's topography and natural processes.
objectives were paramount. The 1912 plan was the first in the Toronto region to deal comprehensively with land-use issues. It set a precedent for creating an immense amount of land for a wide range of uses, and for specifying in advance what and where those uses would be. Industry, commerce, and recreation all had their place; even housing was seen as a possible function, if located such that full public access to the water was maintained. The harbour commissioners were also much interested in notions of linkage. Physically, they attempted to give some overall physical coherence to their work through continuous lines of movement on land and water. Institutionally, connections were made between the THC and other public agencies (such as the City and the TTC, in regard to radial railway entrances) and between the public and private realms (as with the City and Home Smith, in regard to the Humber Valley).

Much was envisioned for the Toronto-area waterfront during the years 1852-1935, and much was achieved. The implementation of many proposals now seems to have been all but inevitable. In fact, realization often came about only through decades-long persistence and patience. This lag-time must have surprised those who saw the merits of planning as self-evident. Moreover, implementation brought no permanent solutions: what was considered successful one day was soon overwhelmed by circumstances. As with the THC’s 1912 plan, an almost continuous process of adaptation and re-planning resulted. Despite these challenges, the years 1852-1935 laid down a foundation for thinking about (and building) the waterfront comprehensively and on a large scale. In the 1940s and ’50s, a new sense of scale and public responsibility would accompany the formation and waterfront work of several regional agencies, including the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. Drawing upon established precedents for public action, many of the waterfront issues discussed here would be revived and addressed in a new context. These topics will be taken up in Major Study No. 28.
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