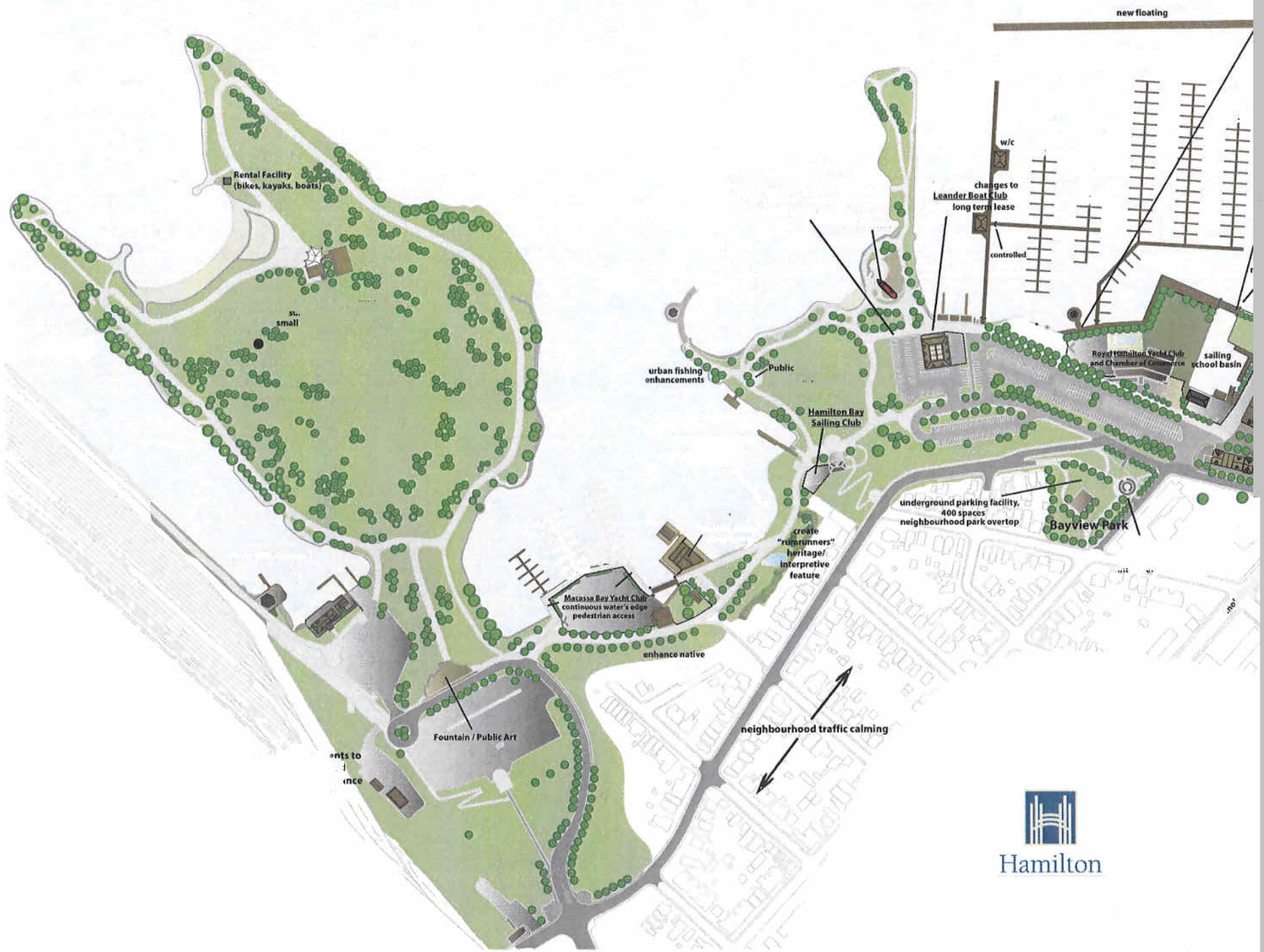
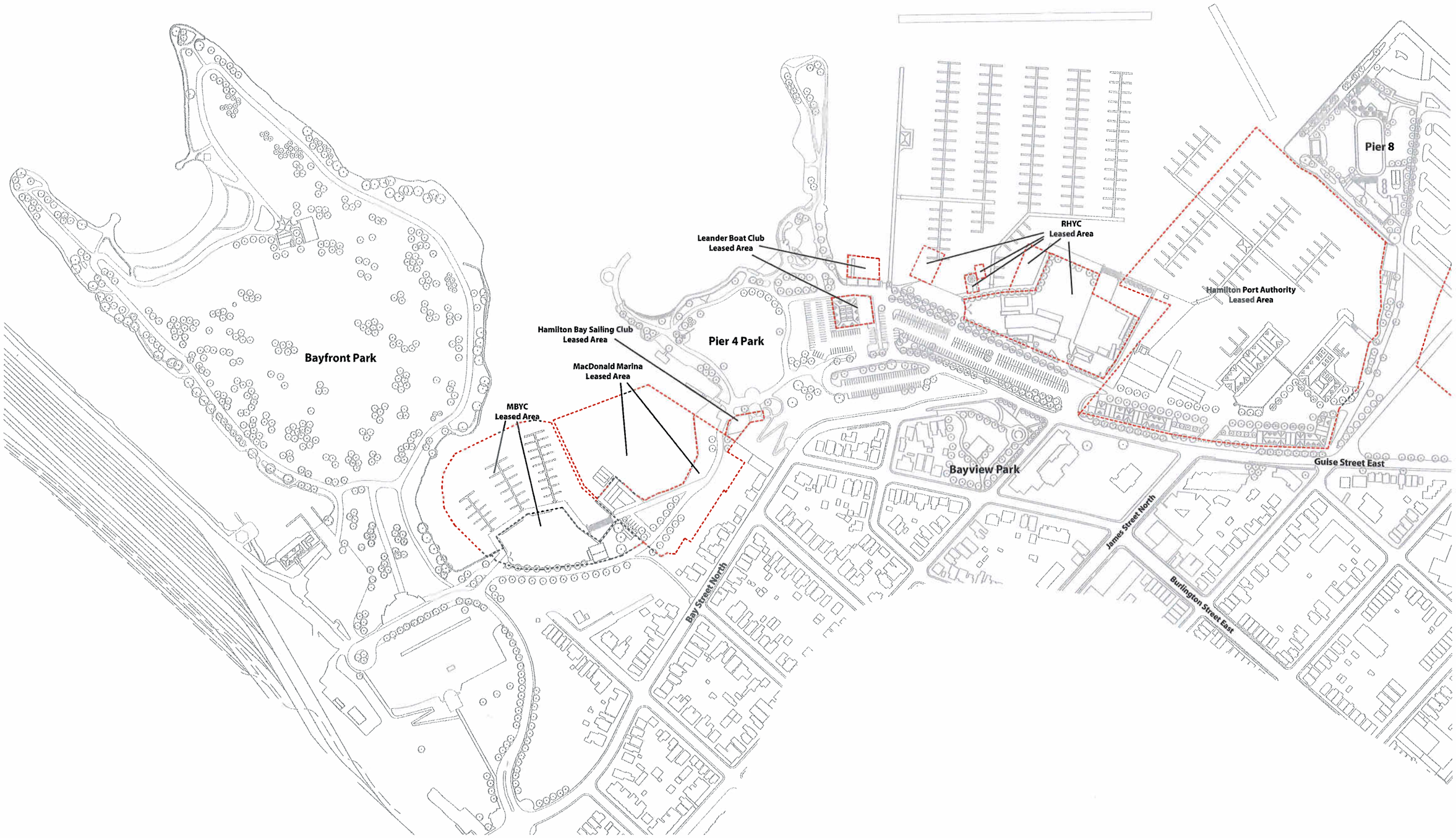
HARBOUR W ONCEPT



EXISTING LEASEHOLD BOUNDARIES



KEY IDEAS

Public Access along Water's Edge

Historically, the West Hamilton Harbour's water's edge has been comprised of a variety of public and private uses, largely inaccessible and of little interest to the general public. Access was restricted or intermittent, often for reasons of safety and security. In recent years however, newly reclaimed open space is now a popular City and regional destination. Along with this evolution of the West Harbour, the desire for continuous public access has grown and become the policy directive of both the City and the Waterfront Trust. To this end, this Master Plan illustrates the principle of a continuous public edge to the waterfront. In some situations, limited restrictions to accommodate special activities such as operation of the Marine Police Unit, sailing club regattas or seasonal marine launching activity are acknowledged. However, while the precise logistics of temporary closures or restrictions will evolve and change, the principle of continuous public access to the water's edge is a key premise of the master plan concept.

Multiple Waterfront Trail

The Waterfront Trail is the continuous recreational link throughout the City's waterfront and is essentially the backbone of West Harbour Waterfront Recreation Master Plan. The trail accommodates all types of users from pedestrians to cyclists, in-line skaters and even the recreational trolley. While the central route follows the waters edge, conditions for free movement will be affected by the type (pedestrians, cyclists, in-line skaters, etc.) and the number of users on a given day. For this reason, opportunities for minor diversions or route choice are provided in combinations of boardwalks, off-road trails and multi-use plazas or gathering spaces. Again, some management of users will be required, but the layered movement pattern should largely be self-governing.

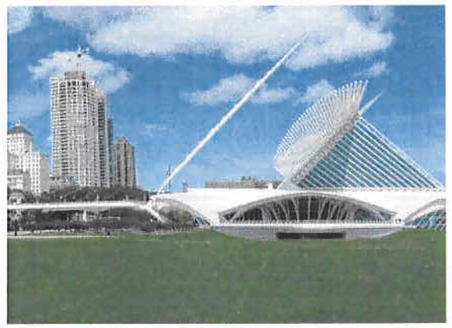
Vibrant and Active Public Spaces

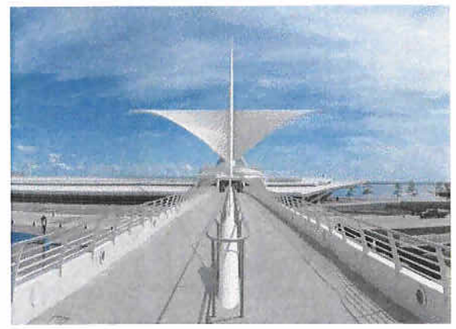
Vibrant and active place making in Hamilton West Harbour is about the design of spaces, the experiences they make possible and the consequences they have on users. To foster and facilitate these activities, the public realm must be both flexible and populated. Key among these are the principle gathering spaces such as the foot of James Street. Here, stairs become seating, a precinct becomes a temporary stage, or the plaza is transformed into a market to accommodate an event such as a seasonal public art or marine display. These types of spaces need to be open and flexible to accommodate a wide range of uses, while comfortable and complete when not in programmed use. Buildings that surround or support the spaces should shelter or temper the open spaces with public-related frontages and uses that spill into and activate the public realm. A high degree of transparency is also important so that when cooler or inclement weather draw people indoors, there is still a strong link with the exterior.

Coherence, Consistency and Place

In order to establish a coherent waterfront precinct, the landscapes, public spaces and architecture should be consistent with the language or family of building and landscape types that define Hamilton's West Harbour. While existing architecture styles vary, the form and materials of the memorable or iconic buildings are simple industrial sheds with pitched roofs and practical metal finishes. The landscapes and public spaces are generally either of the more recently constructed traditional parks or working waterfront spaces and piers. The buildings and landscapes are bordered by a natural, vegetated bluff, which in turn is edged by the adjoining residential neighbourhoods to the south and east. Whereas the urban fabric of the city is ordered, the waterfront precinct is more idiosyncratic, shaped by the evolution of the water's edge. The principle of recognizing and strengthening these key thematic building blocks should be the basis for future building and landscape design with the intent of ensuring that new development is rooted in and reflects this unique place.

YF NT PARK





ER 4

fountain / public art
potential winte
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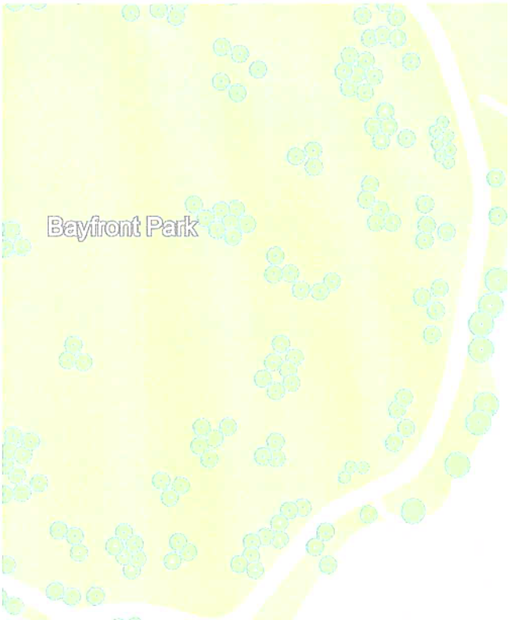

Bayfront Park

PIER 4 PARK

Gartshore Thomson Building

The relocated Gartshore Thomson building, a late 19th century brick office building nestled on a rehabilitated slope houses public washrooms and parks offices on the upper floor. The lower level of the building is home to the Hamilton Bay Sailing Club. While no changes are suggested to the ground floor for the Hamilton Bay Sailing Club, the washrooms do require upgrading with increases in number of stalls if possible. It is also anticipated that the parks operations will move from this building to a new location at Bayfront Park. The upper floor culd be used for club expansion, park programming or as museum space.

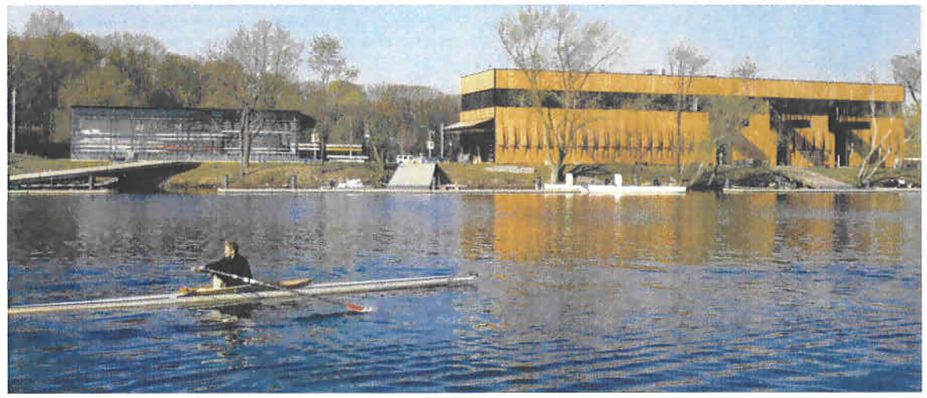
Leander Rowing Club

The Leander Rowing Club is to remain in their current building with a storage compound beside it. However, improvements to the building are necessary: a contemporary façade should be introduced to modernize and update the building's tired appearance. Functionally, the building should take better advantage of its layout by rearranging its interior training facility, which currently prevents sculls from exiting the building along a north south axis. Roll-up doors or similar openings would provide convenient access to sculls and would reveal the club's activities to the curious public.

Additional boat storage on the public pier is also a possibility for Leander. A light, floating boat house would be desirable for storage of the longer eight person sculls.

Existing docks will remain and be replaced as needed.

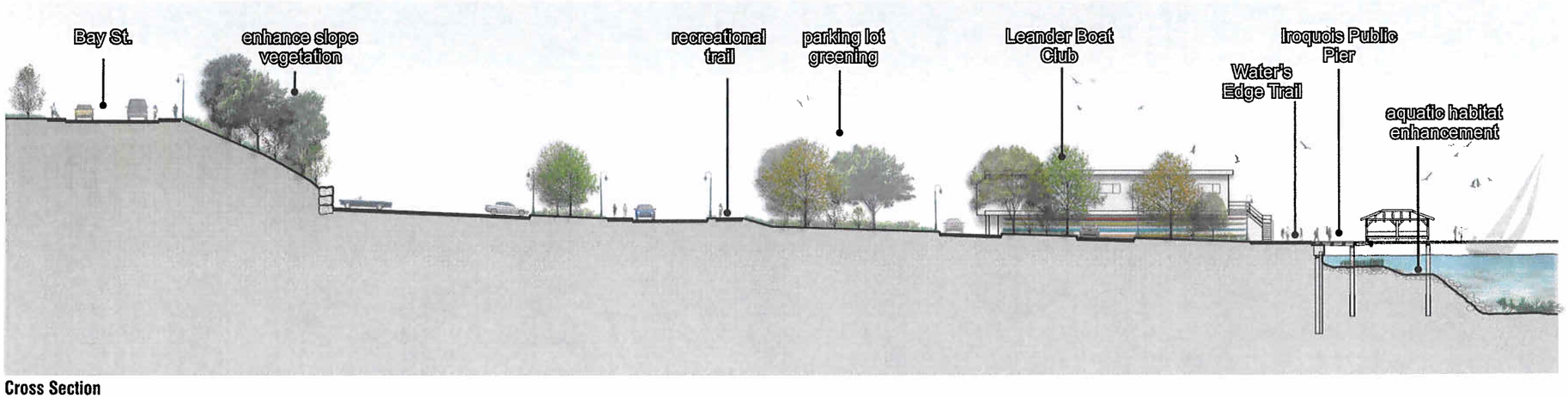
Leander Boat Club



above: Community Rowing Boathouse on shores of Boston's Charles River -design potential for Leander Boat Club

left: Boat storage bay on shores of Boston's Charles River -extra storage opportunity off the public pier

Gartshore Thomson Building

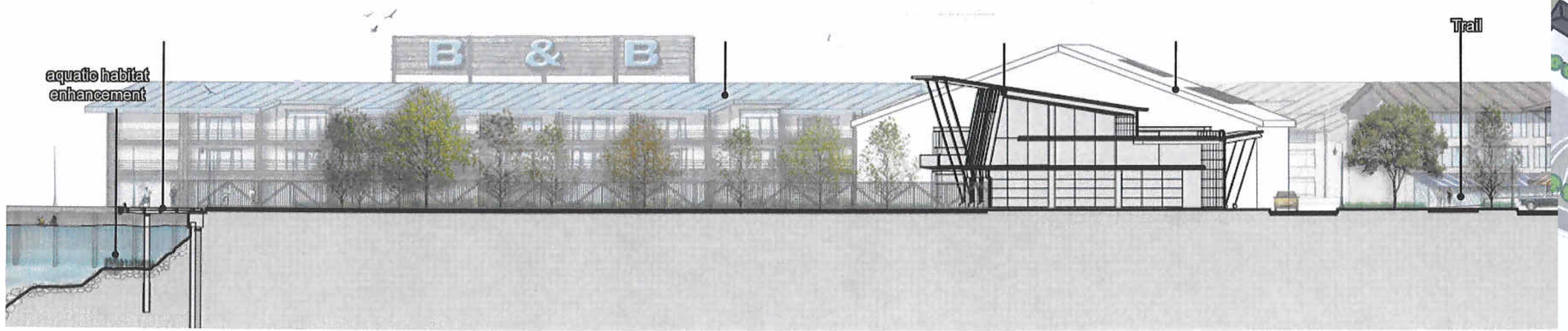


Cross Section

MA N BAS N

H. P. C.
DINE DOCK

Club
erce


B & B
aquatic habitat enhancement
Trail

Existing Buildings + Artifacts

Old buildings provide historical continuity with the past and are indicative of the distinctive architectural character of the waterfront. Consequently the character-defining elements of the waterfront must be safeguarded to retain its heritage value and extend its physical life. This may include preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or a combination of these actions or processes.

Reconstruction or reconstitution of a disappeared or non-relevant architectural style does not contribute to the character of the harbourfront and therefore must be avoided. Furthermore, creating a false sense of historical development by adding elements from other historic places, other properties, or styles (such as the new village style) is also to be avoided.

When the waterfront was industrial and port-related, it had distinctive waterfront architecture. Remnants of that legacy exist on Pier 8. When the Harbor began accommodating boat-users, a similar pier-shed building was used. The Hamilton Port Authority's storage shed is a remnant of this ongoing legacy. Programming for these existing buildings should involve minimal or no change to the character-defining elements that are essential to preserving the waterfront character.

Right: Architectural remnants of the waterfront's character & legacy

Above: Images of Hamilton's historic working waterfront featuring narrow pitch & flat roofs. *(Prints over Hamilton 2006)*

New Development

As a highly public and unique space within the city, the waterfront requires a distinctive architecture. The design and configuration of open space and new buildings should support the importance and future of this.

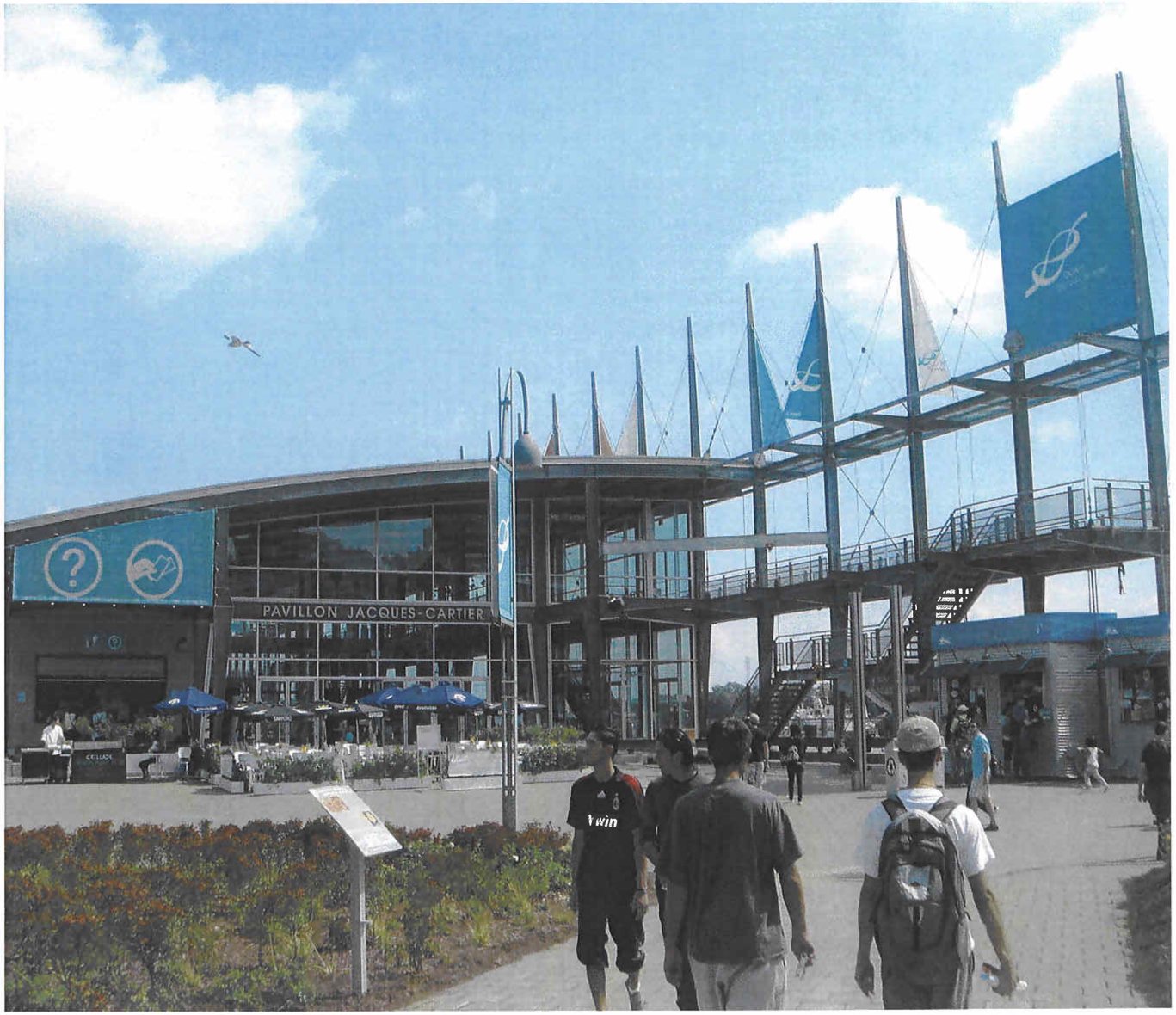
New development will predominantly occur along Guise Street and in the main basin area. Generally speaking, Guise Street separates public waterfront activities to the north and private developments to the south. New pier building forms arranged across the waterfront are to be differentiated from the house-forms of the north-end neighbourhood, reinforcing the distinctive harbourfront character.

The overall form should be long and narrow, similar to the buildings found along the West Harbour in Pier 8. This is an appropriate form as it is low, can frame and maximize views, but also be used to create micro climates and consistent street walls.

Through façade improvements and additions, the boat clubs should attempt to either maintain the character of the original buildings or reference a nautical theme in the architecture. This includes repeated exposed structural elements, horizontal punched openings, and articulated railings. Many good waterfront buildings reference the characteristics of ships – echoing elements such as a weighted hull & lightened superstructure, masts, cables, etc.

The West Harbour precinct should showcase sustainably designed buildings and be a model for other sustainable development within Hamilton. Buildings should meet LEED or equivalent sustainable design principles.

At Right and Above: Images of Montreal's waterfront district featuring architecture and urban design elements that are contemporary. Repeated structural elements, bouy-like lighting, sail-like flags & signage, and mast-like and cabled vertical structures.

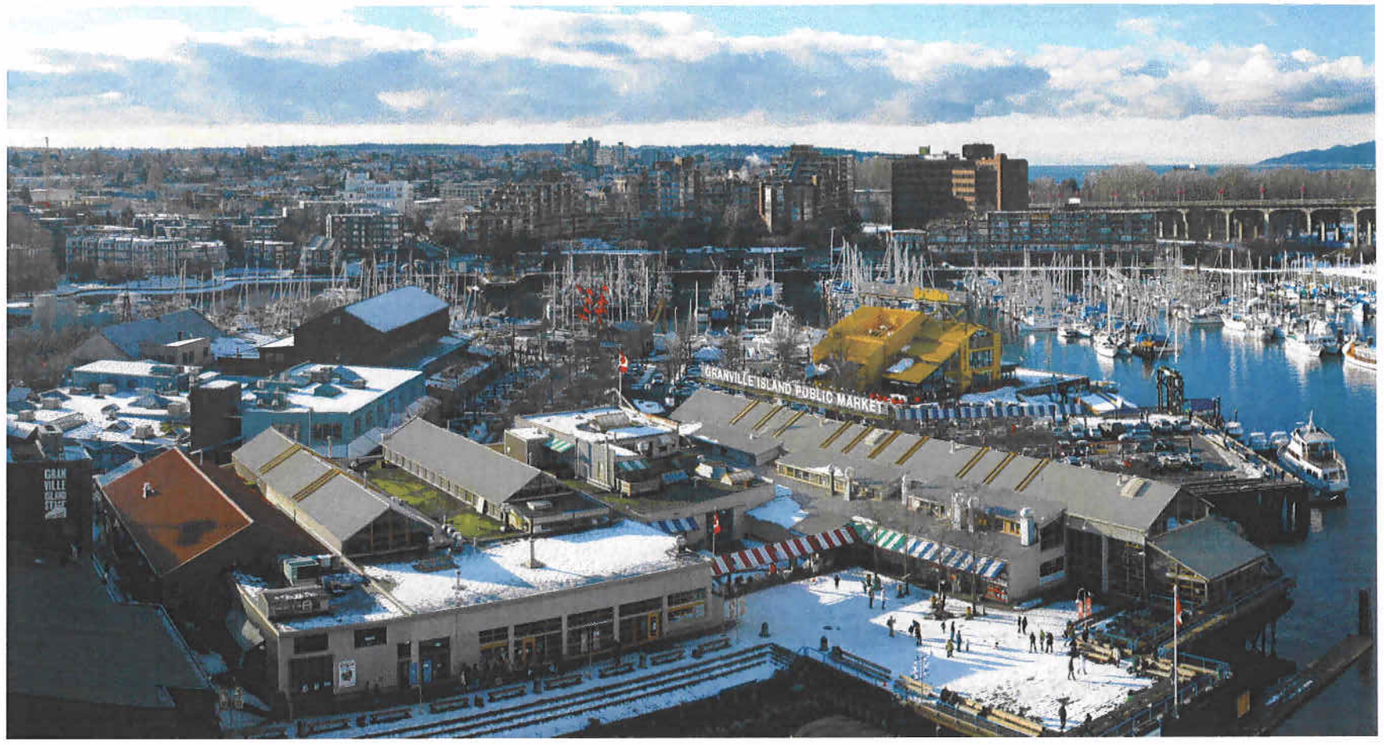


ARCHITECTURE

Shed Buildings

The Hamilton West Harbour collection of existing buildings is an eclectic mix of building types and introducing a new style will not enhance the cohesion of this district. Rather, a contemporary interpretation of existing forms, sympathetic to the traditional waterfront shed-form buildings can begin to bring harmony and distinction to the district.

The new shed-like pier buildings would have a single longitudinally peaked roofline, echoing that of existing buildings. A minimum roof pitch of 7:12 - 9:12 should be used. The intent is to provide an overall site composition of coordinated sloped roofs while avoiding idiosyncratic and inappropriate dormer rooflines.

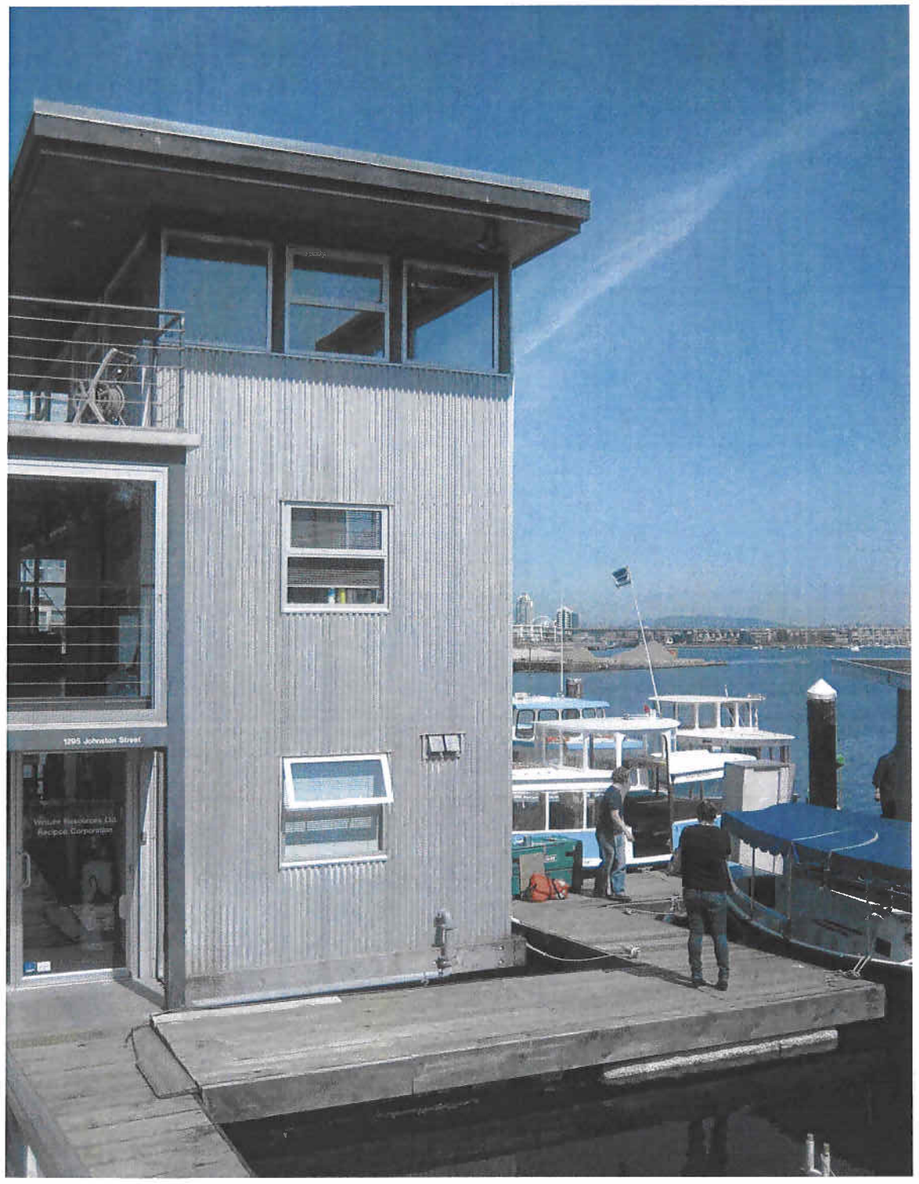


Granville Island's adaptive re-use of heritage structures includes programming in the form of retail, restaurants, and galleries. Architecturally, the buildings were energized through apertures, colour, lighting and exposed structure.

Materials and Finishes

Materials chosen for the new developments should be kept simple, consistent with the "working harbour front character" and mindful to not overshadow the integrity of existing buildings. Similar to the form of the new developments, the selection of materials should reference a nautical theme. As many successful waterfront buildings cite characteristics of naval architecture, such as weighted hull, lightened superstructure, masts, cables, etc., so to shall the choice of materials.

The scope of materials and their arrangement within the composition should embody a contemporary feel that communicates to the warehouse-character. Suggested materials include corrugated galvanized metal siding coupled with a roofing material that coincides with the siding. Structural members could be composed of recycled timber and any selection of masonary should be native to the area with its application demarcated to the structures lower level evoking the weighted hulls of ships. Use of transparent and/or translucent materials are encouraged in order to enhance the quality of the interior spaces of the new buildings as well as to promote a contemporary aesthetic and porous nature to the composition as a whole.



LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Landscape Types

The Hamilton West Harbour landscape is comprised of five general typologies, reflecting the various character areas of the western waterfront. Understanding and clarifying the extents and interplay between these landscape types will generally help clarify the structure and reading of the waterfront.

Bluff

The most significant topographic landscape type is the bluff located at the southern edge of the harbour. A strong physical prominence in the landscape, the bluff effectively demarcates and makes distinct the residential area on the top of the bluff with that of the lower harbour. The considerable grade difference naturally promotes views of the harbour while giving a unique character to the shallow harbour below. The bluff is predominantly covered with naturalized vegetation with views through the trees to the harbour. This naturalized vegetation should be promoted and enhanced with native species plantings. When viewed from across or along the harbour, this natural feature provides a foreground to the skyline of the City. The continuity of this feature should be encouraged wherever possible, balancing the desire for views with landscape continuity, much like a smaller version of the Niagara Escarpment.

Pastoral Park

Bayfront Park and Pier 4 Park are excellent examples of parks that are pastoral in nature. An idyllic landscape image is set upon users with a soft palette of sizeable trees, vast green open spaces and a large body of water. The users experience the many natural composed views through a series of curving paths. A retreat from the urban environment, every attempt should be made to keep these parks pastoral in appearance through a frequent and thorough maintenance program.

Piers and Port Lands

The marine piers and working port lands are the last vestiges of the working waterfront. Largely hard-edged and paved, these spaces have an industrial character with large flexible spaces which have historically had different uses depending on the time of the year. Reinterpreted as public realm, it is important to retain the materials and functional character of these work-a-day spaces in contrast with natural and pastoral park landscapes. Characteristically, these types of waterfront spaces have cobble plazas, boardwalk and timber structure, practical metal furnishings and vegetation at the margins or in containers.

Streets and Corridors

Street trees will help define the character of the streets or trails within the West Harbour. Native trees with a proven track record in urban conditions are recommended as a first choice. A diverse range of tree species planted throughout the corridors will create a strong landscape character. A row of trees along these routes will highlight their greater significance within the larger network.

PUBLIC ART

Program and Selection Process

In order to further establish a cohesive, visual connectivity along the main "Waterfront Trail" several locations have been designated for public art installations. A number of locations have been identified for major installations including;

- Pier 4 Park
- a fountain at the foot of Bayfront park
- a historically sensitive installation adjacent to the "rumrunners" heritage site
- significant public art piece at the foot of James Street

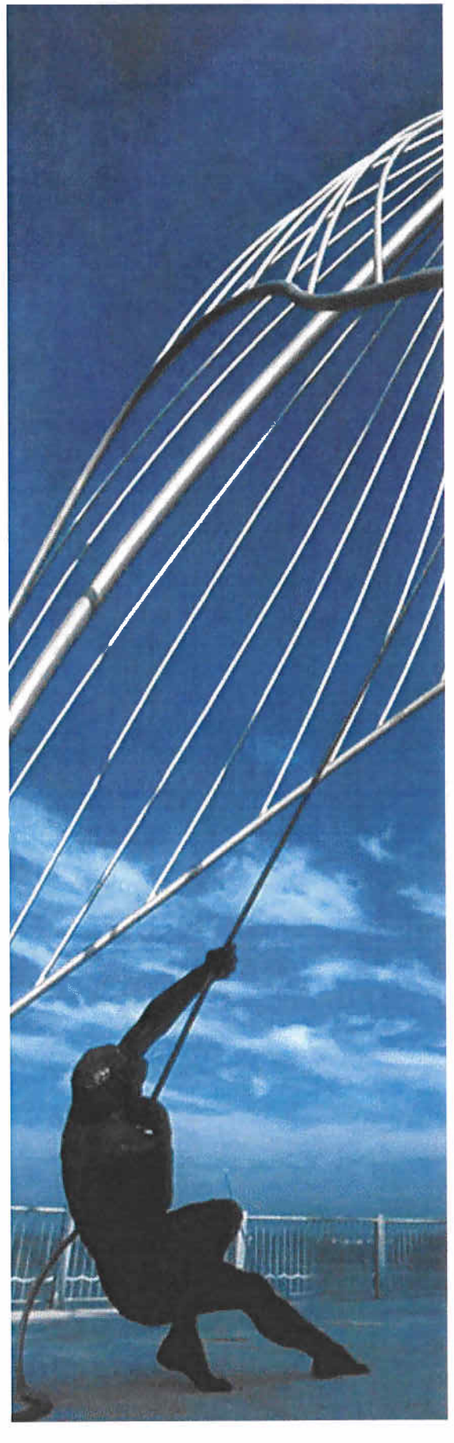
These installations will add to the vibrant and festive atmosphere of these significant locations while improving their aesthetic quality. They will serve as nodes for social and intimate activities, as well as to establish visual trail marks helping to connect the precincts along the harbour. Smaller installations can be envisioned along the waterfront trail intended to create a linear public art corridor which further enrich the users experience along this more trail. To add to the overall vibrancy of the area, public art can also be integrated with the construction of buildings and infrastructure throughout the site.

The process for selection of individual pieces of public art shall be in accordance with the principles set out in the City of Hamilton Public Art Master Plan. This requires that public art projects evolve openly through public consultation and stakeholder juries to ensure that the art selected is reflective of the community, the qualities of the site as a whole and will be in keeping with the goals of this plan.

proposed public art sites

existing public art sites

proposed linear public art corridor



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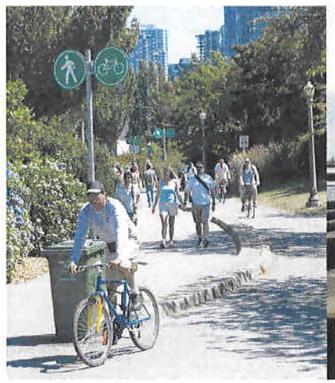
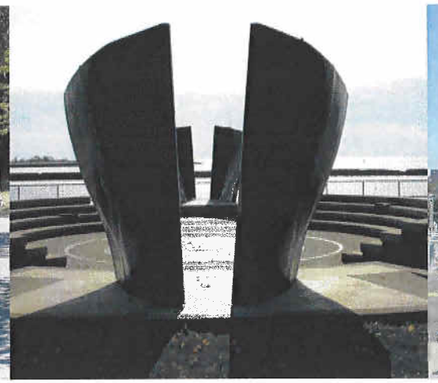
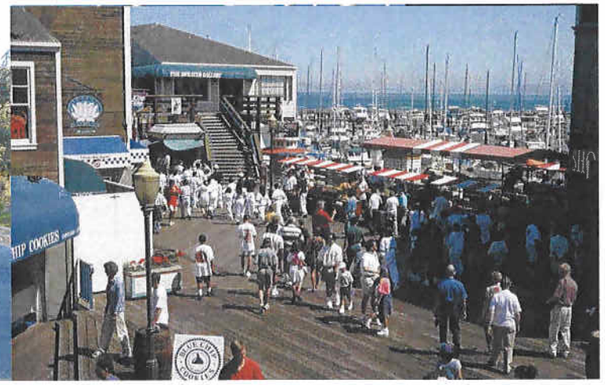
DESIGN REVIEW

Design Review

Design excellence will play a key role in creating a more liveable and beautiful waterfront. What is built on the waterfront, from the buildings to streets to parks and public art, will set new standards for architecture and public space across the city. The design of proposed developments and the public realm will implement the vision of the master plan and help Hamilton's West Harbour achieve its cultural, social, economic and environmental objectives.

In all cases where changes are proposed for the Hamilton West Harbour it is crucial to have a design review. A design review panel will provide expert, professional, unbiased advice to the City of Hamilton on proposed developments on the waterfront. The panel should act as an independent advisory body to the city, in order to assist in achieving high quality architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, and environmental sustainability in development. The panel will be advisory and in no way replace the City of Hamilton's regulatory approvals process.

The panel should be comprised of a mix of design professionals including architects, landscape architects, urban designers, engineers with sustainability expertise and individuals with expertise in planning. The members must be registered members in good standing with their respective professional associations. The panel should be selected by Council, as per other City boards and agencies. A terms of reference and policy/procedural guidelines should also be established.

Projects to receive critical input and advice would include buildings, structures, parks and public realm projects. Anyone of these should come before the design review panel a minimum of three times. This is to ensure a fair, consistent, and transparent process.