

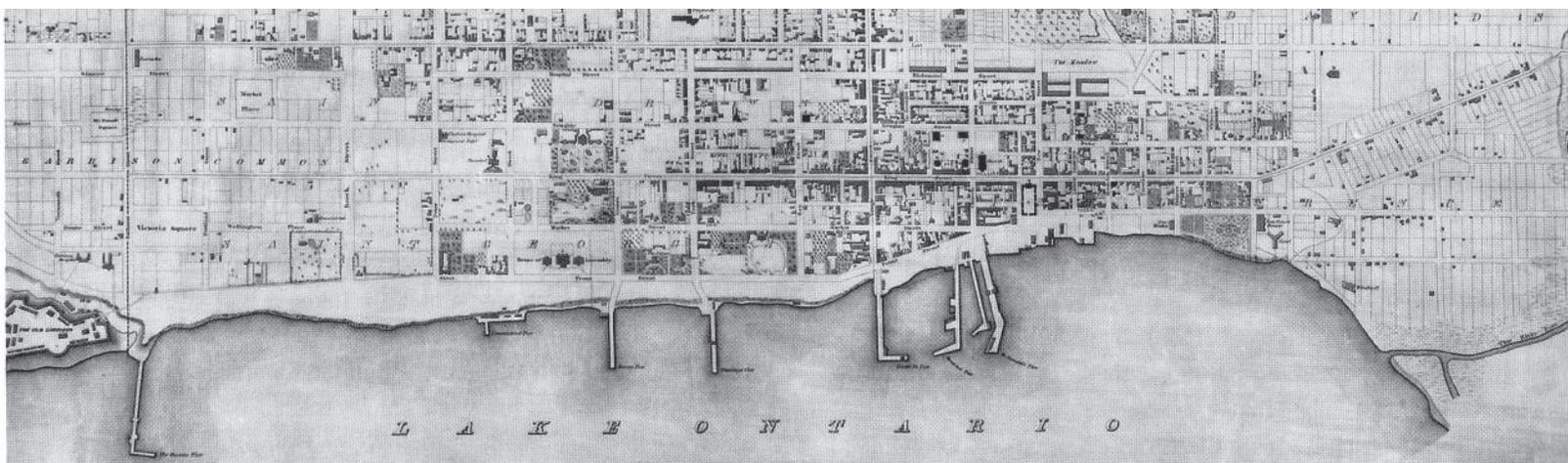
B. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The history of the Toronto waterfront in many ways parallels that of other major port cities. In the heyday of marine shipping, the waterfront was bustling with commercial activity and the growing demand for facilities led to extensive land filling. With the subsequent decline of shipping and the rise of truck transportation, these large waterfront areas became less useful for industrial purposes, and new visions for their reuse became needed.

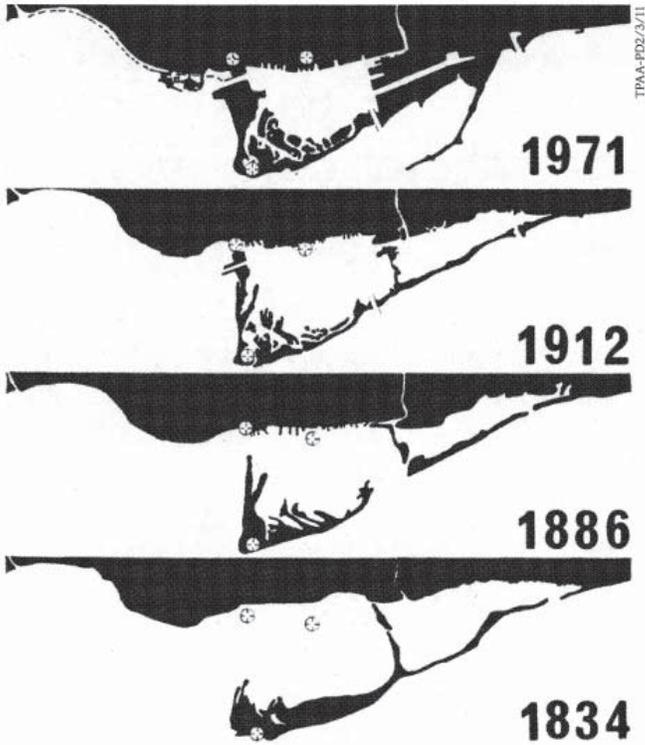
The shoreline of Toronto has changed dramatically over the past 100 years. The original water's edge of Lake Ontario roughly followed the present-day alignment of Front Street. Since the 1850s that shoreline has been extended almost one kilometre south into the harbour, first to Queens Quay Boulevard and then to the present-day water's edge. Early lakefilling was undertaken in order to create landside space for connections between water, rail and road that would connect Central Canada to the rest of the world.

Many efforts have been made in that time to plan the Central Waterfront. One of the first and most important was the 1912 Plan prepared by the Harbour Commission. This document set the stage for most of the waterfront improvement projects carried out through the end of World War II. The plan's impact can be seen most visibly in the dockwall profile that exists today from the Western Channel to Bay Street, most of which was built between 1916 to 1921. This was an era of relatively small ships, which accounts for the greater complexity and number of slips relative to the area east of Yonge Street. Significant changes to the water's edge profile since that time include the filing of two slips between Yonge and Bay Street, the reduction in size of the Spadina Street Slip, and the addition of the Portland Street Slip.

A second wave of waterfront planning was ushered in during the early 1950's in anticipation of the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Most of its visible impact was in the area east of Yonge Street, which is made up of fewer, wider slips for larger ocean-going vessels. By 1957, the lakefilling to create additional dockwall and harbour facilities was complete in the East Bayfront and parts of the Portlands. The Marine Terminal (MT) Sheds 28 and 29 were completed in 1959, and the Redpath Sugar refinery opened its doors the same year. But within a decade, the nature of cargo handling began to shift towards containerization. The warehouses declined in importance and by the 1970s were being used for non-marine related purposes.



1842, City and liberties of Toronto Plan



Toronto's evolving shoreline

A third wave of planning began in the early 1970s, when the city realized that the promise of the Seaway transforming Toronto into a major North American port was not to materialize. A new vision for a mixed-use, commercial and cultural centre was necessary, and in 1972 the federal government established Harbourfront Corporation, charged with the redevelopment of the Central Waterfront. The original plans for Harbourfront envisioned sweeping public park spaces and major cultural institutions. However, some of the early residential development projects were considered inappropriate, and faith and funding for the new corporation eroded rapidly. In 1991, it was reformed as Harbourfront Centre, a non-profit charitable organization with a mandate to organize and present public events and operate the 10-acre site encompassing York Quay and John Quay.

The fourth wave of planning was started by Toronto's bid for the 2008 Olympic Games. The organizing committee developed a plan based around the waterfront, which promised not only a dramatic setting for the two-week event, but also the necessary infrastructure for revitalization. In 1999, Toronto was considered the front-runner in the race to host the Games, and a task force led by Robert Fung was formed to evaluate post-Olympic economic pros and cons. Based on their report, the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments committed \$1.5 billion for the necessary public infrastructure in order to lend credence to the bid. Despite that public commitment, Toronto lost to

Beijing in the final round of voting. But given the amount of time and energy that had been focused on planning the waterfront, the three governments decided to uphold their financial commitment and forge ahead without the Olympics. In 2001, they formally created the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation and charged it with redeveloping the waterfront from end to end.

Each wave of development has left its traces; from archaeological remains of wharfs and ships below the current ground levels, heritage buildings, and cultural landscapes related to former uses remain above ground. Consideration should be given to opportunities to enhance existing heritage resources and to commemorate lost heritage in the design proposals.

Reference Materials:

Canada's Urban Waterfront: Culture & Heritage Infrastructure Plan, City of Toronto Appendix 3

Archeological Master Plan of the Central Waterfront, Appendix 5

Original Harbourfront Plan, Appendix 6

Toronto 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games: Master Plan, Toronto 2008, Appendix 7

