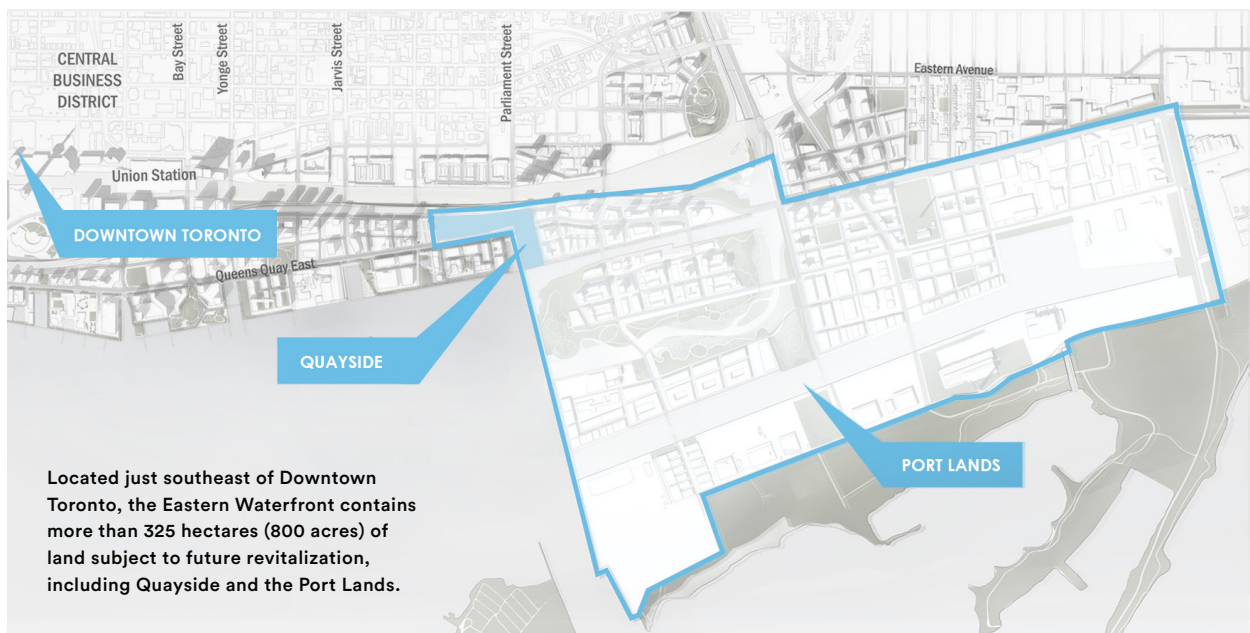# Press Backgrounder

About Sidewalk Toronto

Sidewalk Toronto is a joint effort by Waterfront Toronto and Alphabet's Sidewalk Labs to design a new kind of mixed-use, complete community on Toronto's Eastern Waterfront. Sidewalk Toronto will combine forward-thinking urban design and new digital technology to create people-centred neighbourhoods that achieve precedent-setting levels of sustainability, affordability, mobility, and economic opportunity.

Site

Sidewalk Toronto will begin with a new neighbourhood, called Quayside, located at Parliament Slip, just southeast of Downtown Toronto. Sidewalk Labs and Waterfront Toronto aim to bring the innovations advanced at Quayside to scale across the Eastern Waterfront, more than 325 hectares (800 acres) that represent one of North America's largest areas of underdeveloped urban land.

Located just southeast of Downtown Toronto, the Eastern Waterfront contains more than 325 hectares (800 acres) of land subject to future revitalization, including Quayside and the Port Lands.

Process

After exploring opportunities all over the world, Sidewalk Labs responded to a Request for Proposals issued in March 2017 by Waterfront Toronto that sought an innovation and funding partner for the Eastern Waterfront, beginning with the creation of a new neighbourhood called Quayside. Through this international call, Waterfront Toronto sought a partner with innovation ingrained in its culture to help re-imagine the conventional approach to city-building. Several local and international firms submitted responses to Waterfront Toronto's RFP, describing their vision, team strength and experience, and financial capacity. Following a rigorous evaluation process, Waterfront Toronto selected Sidewalk Labs.

In Sidewalk Labs, Waterfront Toronto found a kindred partner, one that has been deeply engaged in exploring solutions to the challenges in urban environments, including how to build inclusive, climate-friendly communities, improve quality of life and reimagine public spaces, and how technology can play a role in achieving these goals. Importantly, they recognize the value Toronto's local tech sector brings to the aspirations of the project and the role the community will play in shaping the neighbourhood of the future.

Objectives

- Establish a complete community that provides a superior quality of life for a diverse population of residents, workers, and visitors.
- Create a destination for people, companies, startups, and local organizations to advance solutions to the challenges facing cities, such as energy use, housing affordability, and transportation options.
- Make Toronto a global hub in a rapidly rising new industry of urban innovation.
- Serve as a model for sustainable neighbourhoods throughout Toronto and cities around the world.

Why Toronto?

Toronto is the world's most diverse city, a place where 51 percent of the population is foreign-born and 140 languages are spoken. That remarkable spirit of openness has made the city a beacon the world looks to, more with every day.

It's also led to incredible growth. Toronto is the fourth-largest city in North America, with a population of 2.9 million people in the city limits that is expected to grow by 35 percent in the next 25 years, and 6.7 million in the metro area expected to grow 42 percent over the same period. It has enjoyed enormous economic prosperity in recent years, including the rapid rise of its technology sector, which today employs 212,000 workers, with an emerging focus around artificial intelligence.

But Toronto's growth has brought with it substantial challenges. Housing prices have more than doubled over the last 10 years, with average sales now exceeding $750,000. Its transit system has been unable to meet the demand created by the revitalization of neighbourhoods throughout the city. And like all cities, Toronto must find ways to reduce local energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and help address the global threat of climate change.

For these reasons and more, it's the perfect city to advance solutions to common growth challenges. And it has the perfect place to do it: the city's underdeveloped Eastern Waterfront, where Waterfront Toronto has the opportunity to align all three levels of government and the public around a visionary plan that will make Toronto a global leader in urban innovation.

The Vision

The Eastern Waterfront will be a new type of place that combines the best in urban design with the latest in digital technology to address some of the biggest challenges facing cities, including energy use, housing affordability, and transportation.

It will be a place that embraces adaptable buildings and new construction methods to make housing and retail space more affordable. A place where people-centred street designs and a range of transportation options make getting around more affordable, safe, and convenient than the private car. A place that encourages innovation around energy, waste, and other environmental challenges to protect the planet. A place where public spaces welcome families to enjoy the outdoors all day and all night and where community ties are strong. A place that's enhanced by digital technology and data, without giving up the privacy and security that everyone deserves.

Knowing that great neighbourhoods aren't planned from the top down, Sidewalk Toronto will create the conditions for a community to be built—and innovations launched—by people, companies, startups, academic centres, and local organizations over many years. Sidewalk Toronto aims to make the Eastern Waterfront the global hub of a new industry focused on urban innovation to improve the quality of city life, tapping into Toronto's already-thriving tech sector and developing innovations that could benefit communities and neighbourhoods elsewhere in the city. To help get started, Alphabet plans to move Google's Canadian headquarters to the Eastern Waterfront.

To help explain this vision and start a public conversation about the future of the Eastern Waterfront, Sidewalk Labs has released the vision laid out in its response to Waterfront Toronto's RFP, available at www.sidewalktoronto.ca. The response represents early thinking about what this district could look like—ideas we hope will now be shaped by a public conversation that involves all Torontonians.

Public Engagement

Toronto is a city that the world calls home. Together we hope to make a neighbourhood that redefines city living, by creating the most inclusive, most liveable city on the planet. Our commitment to meaningful public engagement, collaboration, and co-creation puts people at the centre of Sidewalk Toronto. Combining the power of face-to-face conversations with the accessibility of digital tools, we are cultivating a more trusted and caring approach—one that celebrates and empowers a uniquely diverse city and the rich multiplicity of Torontonians. Together we hope to build a new kind of city for all of us.

Some of the values that inform our approach to engagement:
● Embracing diversity and difference across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area
● A belief that every resident should have a voice
● Working in good faith in service of the public good
● Ensuring our work is inclusive of and accessible to all
● Respect for continuous learning and the expertise of lived experience
● A belief that solving complex issues requires genuine collaboration

On November 1, 2017, we'll host a Town Hall where we'll ask you to join the conversation. Come out to share with us your ideas, your concerns, your hopes. The neighborhood of the future begins with all of us.

About Waterfront Toronto

Waterfront Toronto sees the waterfront as a place that belongs to every Torontonian. As city builders, we care about creating neighborhoods, parks and destinations that make people's lives better. Our mission to revitalize Toronto's waterfront, with the support of the three orders of government, is allowing the development of groundbreaking solutions to some of Toronto's most pressing issues: urban sprawl, affordable housing, climate change, mobility, and economic growth. As a proponent of citizen-led change, we work with the people of Toronto to make sure waterfront development serves their needs.

With over 800 hectares (2,000 acres) of underutilized land along Lake Ontario, Waterfront Toronto is responsible for the largest waterfront revitalization in North America. Projects include the West Don Lands, Corktown Common, Underpass Park, Sugar Beach, Sherbourne Common, Queens Quay, the Port Lands, Jack Layton Ferry Terminal, and The Bentway.

Waterfront Toronto was established in 2001 by the Government of Canada, Province of Ontario, and the City of Toronto to unlock the social and economic potential of the waterfront by using best practices in urban revitalization.

Underpass Park, TORONTO

Corktown Common, TORONTO

Sugar Beach, TORONTO

West Don Lands, TORONTO

For more information on Waterfront Toronto, please visit www.waterfrontoronto.ca

About Sidewalk Labs

Sidewalk Labs was created to explore how new technologies can solve big urban problems and improve quality of life in cities. Our unique team combines the urbanists who led New York City's post-9/11 revival with the technologists who made Google one of the world's most innovative companies. We believe in the power of emerging digital tools to help enhance social interaction and create people-centred cities, but we also bring a deep belief in the power of community plans, public input, and open collaboration—values forged by decades of experience working in local government.

Since Sidewalk's launch in 2015, its portfolio company Intersection has created the world's fastest and largest free public Wi-Fi network, LinkNYC, bringing super-fast connectivity to millions of New Yorkers and visitors. The Link system has since spread to London will come to other U.K. cities. Sidewalk has also incubated Flow, a company that uses data to enable new urban mobility services and solutions; Cityblock, a company that aims to improve healthcare services for underserved urban populations; as well as initiatives focused on planning data, intersection safety, and park improvements.

Before forming Sidewalk, members of our team led New York City's comeback after the attacks of 9/11. Sidewalk members transformed Manhattan's Far West Side into Hudson Yards, a booming new neighborhood enabled by smart investments in public transportation. We led the redevelopment of unused elevated freight track into the High Line, one of New York City's most popular and celebrated public parks. We designed PlaNYC, the pioneering citywide sustainability plan that made New York City a leader in fighting climate change. We opened Google's first engineering office outside Silicon Valley and helped jumpstart New York City's now booming tech ecosystem. And we imagined and built Cornell Tech, a new academic campus focused on technology and entrepreneurship.

Now, we are partnering with Waterfront Toronto, a group of dedicated public servants who have already helped transform the way Torontonians access the waterfront, to dream and build the neighborhood of the future in Quayside, with this vision ultimately scaling across the Eastern Waterfront.

For more, visit www.sidewalklabs.com

Link NYC, NYC

The Highline, NYC

Cornell Tech, NYC