



Bird's eye of the Port Lands looking west from Leslie Street

## 4.12

# EARLY ACTIVATION PROJECTS

Regeneration and renewal in the Port Lands is a multi-decade-long proposition. The end state is not immediate nor, necessarily, predetermined. There will be a gradual reveal of the **transformational moves**, with the entire area, and the unique and memorable districts within, cycling through various stages and typologies. There are exciting possibilities within this context for establishing an evolving, organic culture that capitalizes on the Port Lands' unique attributes, while at the same time 'kickstarting' the transformation and creating a different environment than would be conceivable with a comprehensive renewal scheme over such a vast area.

Early activation project ideas are being identified in this Framework as a starting point for the Port Lands transformation. The early activation projects consist of a series of sites, uses, and landscapes where new, creative programming or activity will draw people to Port Lands in the near-term, but also fuel the cultivation of future districts. They are intended to

open the public consciousness and imagination about the territory of the Port Lands. If successful, these activation projects could become urban 'hot spots' that can help shape and solidify the character and identity of the Port Lands. The sites and landscapes are tied into the future infrastructure corridors, foreshadowing the future evolution of the Port Lands.

This Framework is mindful that ingenuity is an inherent human quality, and that society is in a constant state of flux and in need of new and innovative cultural stimuli. As such, the activation projects identified are not an exhaustive list. They are identified as a means to inspire possibility and encourage further ideation. They represent the thinking at a specific point in time and require further exploration and partnerships to operationalize. Through this process of further exploration, other activation ideas may emerge that could be equally, if not more, compelling. The end goal remains the same in either instance - **activate the Port Lands, but do it now.**



## 4.12.1 Cultural Activation Sites

There are a number of potential sites in the Port Lands that could provide the backdrop for early activation, but that would also contribute to the realization of the Port Lands vision. In fact, some areas of the Port Lands have already experienced activation. For three consecutive years, the Luminato Festival used the Hearn as a stage for the arts, which brought with it an awakening and awareness of the Hearn's potential. Likewise, the adaptive re-use of the historic Queen's Foundry building, with its eclectic mix of uses and users, draws people to the Port Lands.

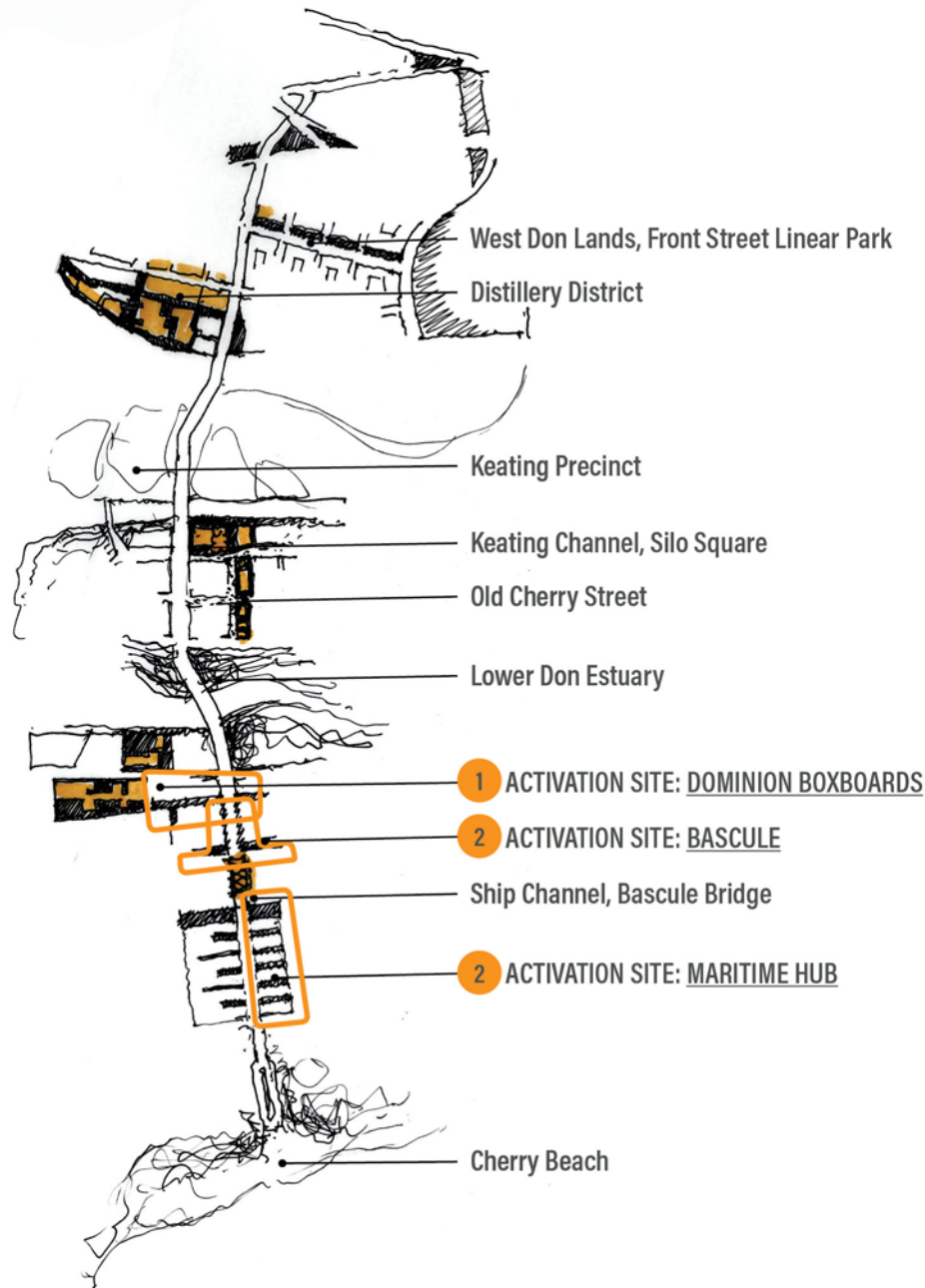
For the Port Lands next wave of activation, there is the potential to unlock a new set of sites that could host a range of temporary events or permanent uses. Five activation sites and cultural uses are suggested that are unified and bound together by common elements - water and future signature streets. The five sites (Figure 82) are envisioned as platforms for breeding a new image of the Port Lands. They would be civic grounds for innovation, culture, recreation, industry, and nature.

**Figure 82:** Activation Sites and Cultural Uses

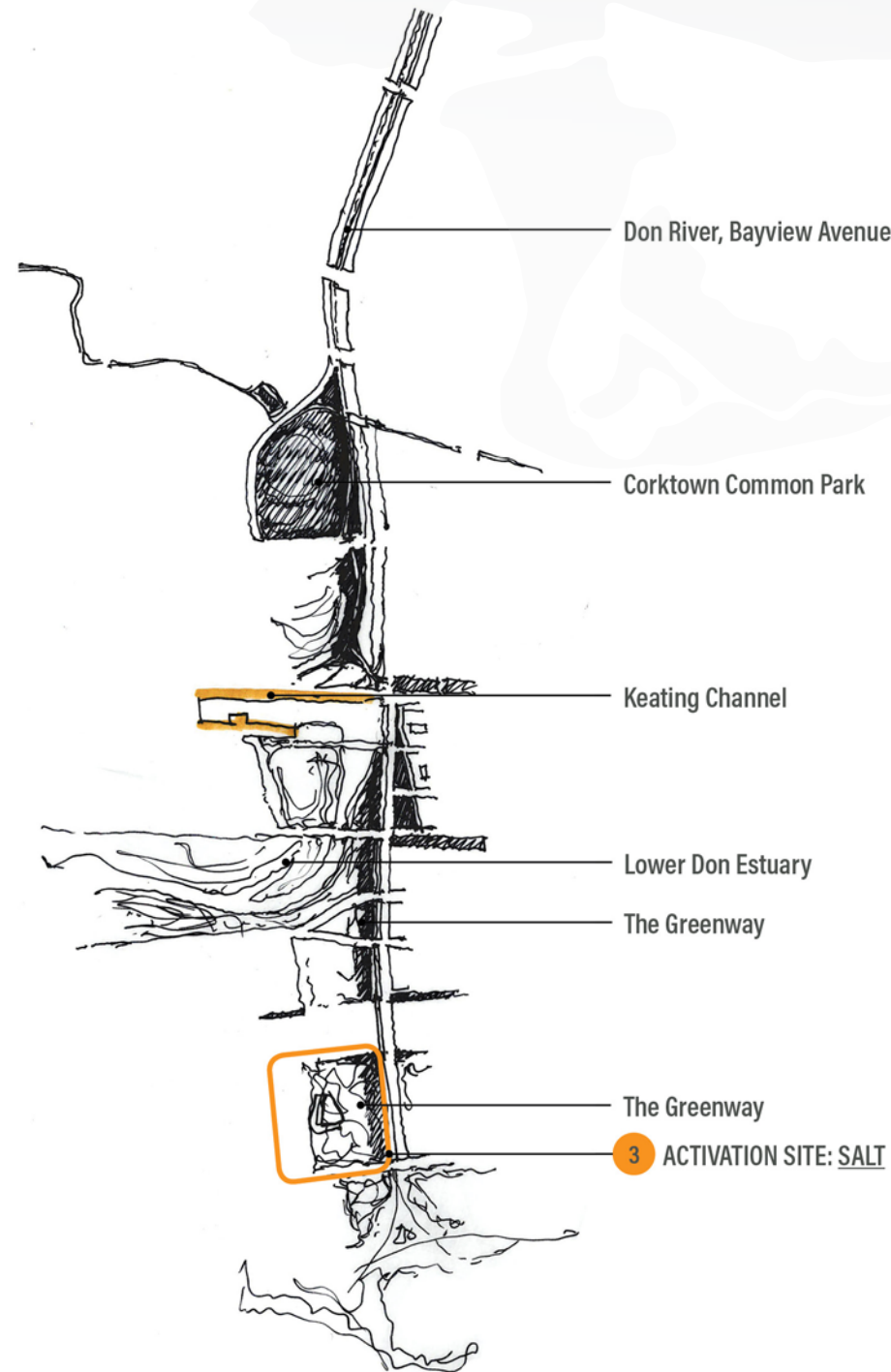


- |                           |               |                 |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| ① Polson Point            | ③ Salt Stages | ⑤ Turning Basin |
| ② Bascule and Martime Hub | ④ Hearnfront  |                 |

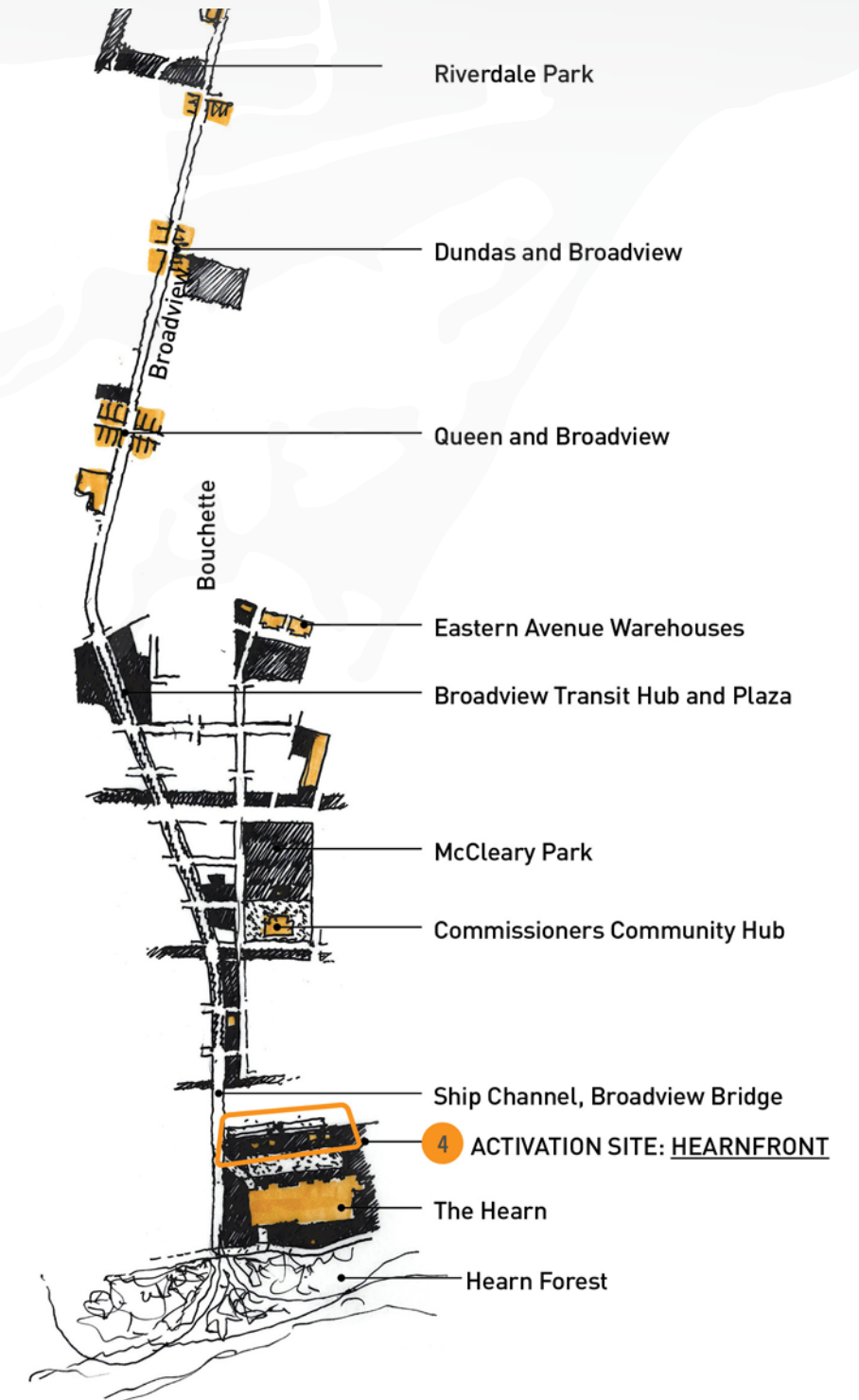
# 5 CULTURAL ACTIVATION SITES FORESHADOWING THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF THE PORT LANDS



BROADVIEW SEQUENCE



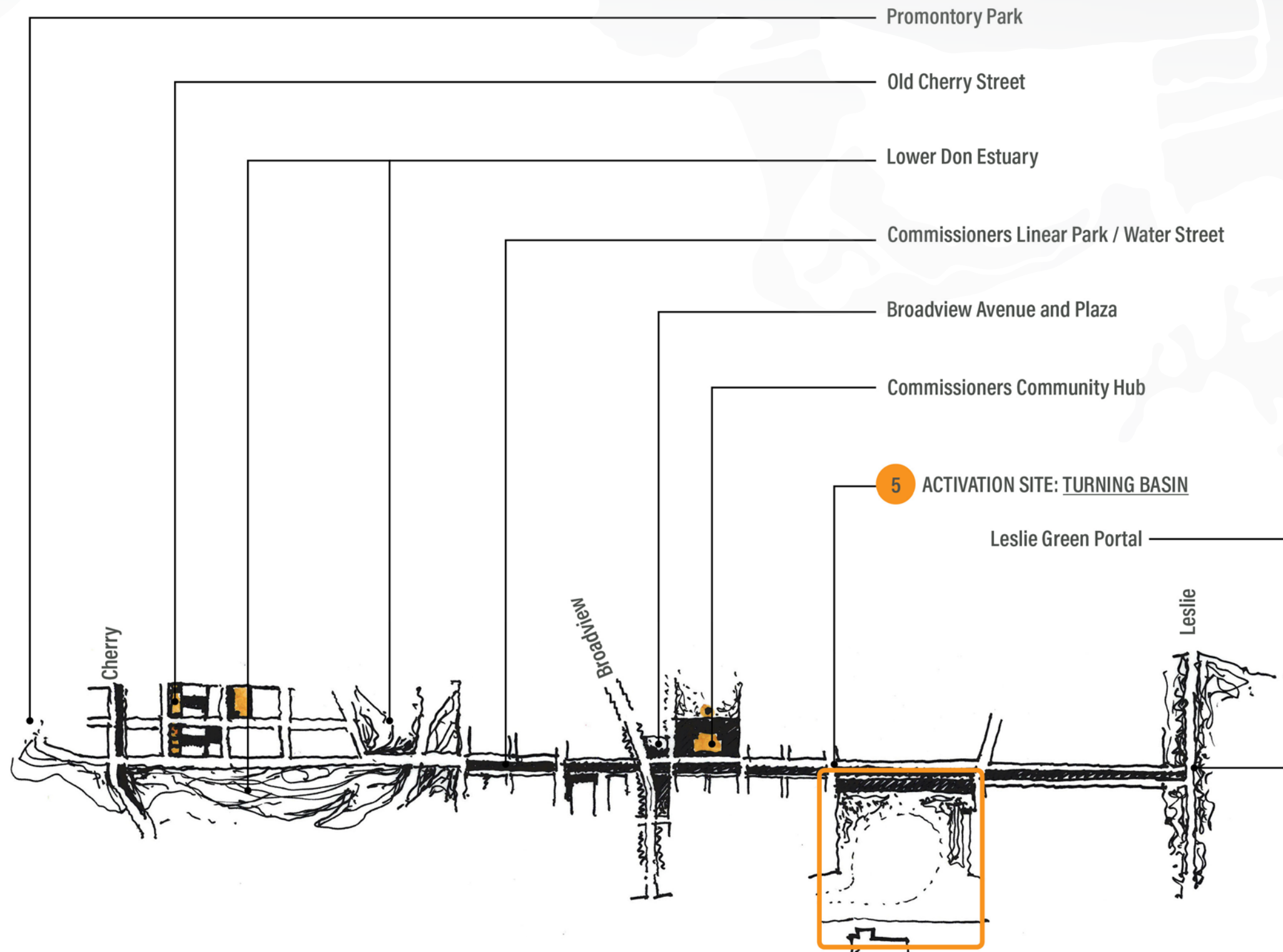
BAYVIEW/DON RIVER SEQUENCE



CHERRY SEQUENCE



# 5 CULTURAL ACTIVATION SITES FORESHADOWING THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF THE PORT LANDS



COMMISSIONERS SEQUENCE





# Polson Point

There exists a small, yet burgeoning, culture within the historic Dominion Box Boards building complex located on Polson Quay. The complex is under both private and public ownership. Support can be given to further cultivate this site with multiple cultural partners, creating a joint platform for arts and culture that can increase the public presence of this area for Torontonians. Support for such an initiative may continue to be self-organized (as it is today) supplemented with additional support from local cultural organizations and/or the City to stimulate new activities and promote further uses to take root, both inside and out, permanent and temporary.

The activation of the building by 24-7 cultural agents could occur in tandem with activating the existing Jennifer Kateryna Koval's'kyj Park with temporary cultural programming. For instance, the park could host a temporary art beach or act as a performance arts stage with its incredible views back to the city.

Strengthening the community of existing creative industries and growing this capacity in this area will help illustrate the vibrancy of a mix of alternative use scenarios for urban diversity and their potential to draw interest from the public at-large. In doing so, this creative cluster could anchor important programs for the cultural life of the Port Lands and attract city-wide attention.





## Bascule and Maritime Hub

The Strauss Trunion Bascule Bridge is one of the Port Lands' highly visible industrial artifacts. It will be a beacon of the past, but also a symbol of the future. Opportunities exist for inserting new cultural uses and activity adjacent to its north and south-side landings.

This bridge will continue to be operable as a lift-bridge and serve as a vital connection to the south side of the Ship Channel and gateway to Cherry Beach. Temporary activity adjacent to the bridge's abutments could include floating dock structures which allow people access to the water's edge.

The temporary activations could be linked to activations along the east side of Cherry Street south of the Ship Channel, and potentially a portion of the west side, enabling the Maritime Hub and gateway to the Beach to take shape early in the transformation.

Currently, much of the land on the east of Cherry Street is used for the storage of vehicles. These sites could be made available and redeveloped with incubating uses, artist studios, pop-up shops, or maybe even quaint little food nooks. Re-purposed shipping crates, or the next trendy structure, could house these uses.



Strauss Trunion Bascule Bridge



Strauss Trunion Bascule Bridge



Inside the Kunststad NDSM, Amsterdam



Kunststad NDSM, Amsterdam

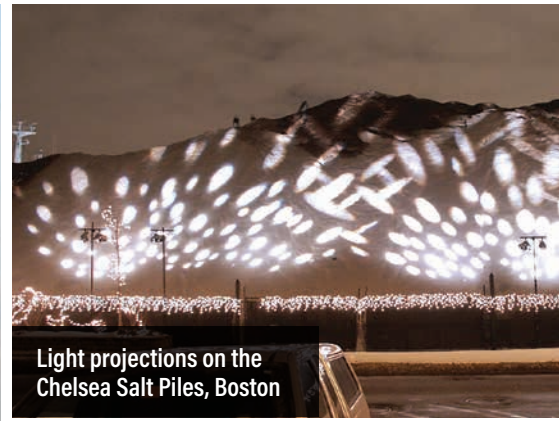
# Salt and Don Greenway South

On the south side of the Ship Channel, there is potential for an activation strategy based on the idea of culture coexisting alongside industry, which could be realized in a number of ways. Early delivery of the Don Greenway south of the Ship Channel would not only enhance public access, but also enable culture and industry to fuse. The early activation could educate the public about the resources needed to maintain Toronto, as well as provide a stage for cultural activities. The salt operations would need to be reconfigured to accommodate the park space, but in turn, this would open up opportunities for implementing some of the necessary servicing infrastructure needed south of the Ship Channel.

Alternatively, these two seemingly oppositional activities can share the same space, just not at the same time. The transport and storage of salt in the Port Lands is a seasonally-driven activity — highly active in winter but retreating in the spring and then ramping up again through the summer and into the fall. This opens up a unique possibility for carefully regulated interim occupation of the sites with temporary artistic installations (art, music, theatre and dance) similar to the Chelsea Salt Piles in Boston. The salt piles also provide interesting topography for the Port Lands. They can reach upwards of five storeys providing opportunities for projecting onto the piles for movie nights or artistic light installations.



Concept rendering of seasonal activity associated with the salt piles

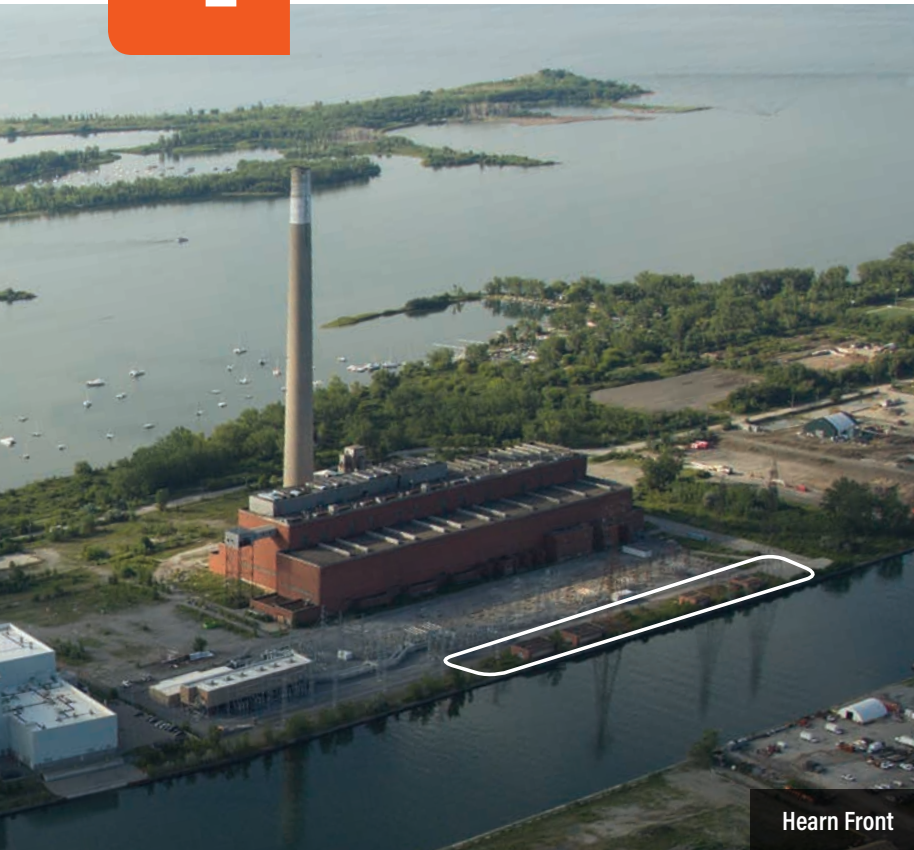


Light projections on the Chelsea Salt Piles, Boston



Concept rendering of movie night on the salt piles





Hearn Front

## Hearnfront

Building on the success of the Luminato Festival at the Hearn, four small structures adjacent to Ship Channel could be re-purposed to host a hybrid of food culture and recreation adjacent to the water's edge.

This would create a powerful magnet on the south shore of the Ship Channel. Toronto's lively food culture could find a unique 'outpost' in an unparalleled setting that can be boosted by creating a memorable recreational draw that allows people to arrive by and engage with water.



A Hearn outbuilding



A Hearn outbuilding



# Turning Basin

The monumental scale of the turning basin, coupled with the passive lawn adjacent to its northern dockwall and the white facade of the Port Lands Energy Centre can do triple duty. The passive lawn already provides a peaceful and quiet reprieve from the hustle and bustle of city life, as well as providing a venue for the port-scaled spectacles to unfold seasonally. Events could be hosted in this passive lawn space where cinema and films are projected onto the Port Lands Energy Centre's facade. City Council recently requested staff to develop a work program to deliver this park space early on in the Port Lands transformation.

The temporary and movable barges contemplated as part of the blue-green park network or other floating elements within the Turning Basin itself could provide interesting recreational opportunities, providing yet another opportunity for people to engage with water. During the winter months, pick-up hockey games have been known to occur on the frozen surface of the Turning Basin. The depth of the Turning Basin and the stormwater that outlets into the Ship Channel are safety challenges that would need to be resolved to formalize this activity in the winter with Ports Toronto and in consideration of the continued shipping function of the Turning Basin.



## 4.12.2 Five Landscapes

The scale of the Port Lands landscape cannot be underestimated - both in terms of what exists today, and what could ultimately be realized in the fullness of time. The landscape today is the result of the evolution of two competing forces: that of man-made infrastructure for industry and energy, and re-naturalization - both purposeful and accidental (e.g. the Leslie Street spit), when nature springs up in the cracks left by industry.

The landscape of the Lower Don Lands will revolve around the realization of a single, powerful goal - the re-establishment of the mouth of the Don River, re-connecting the ravine to the Inner Harbour via a constructed, naturalized estuary. Here, the tools of delivery will be of the 'mega-project' nature, with multiple levels of government coming together to implement progressive infrastructure that unlocks the potential - and value - of adjacent redevelopment lands.

Figure 83: Five Landscapes



① Lower Don Estuary

③ Water's Edge

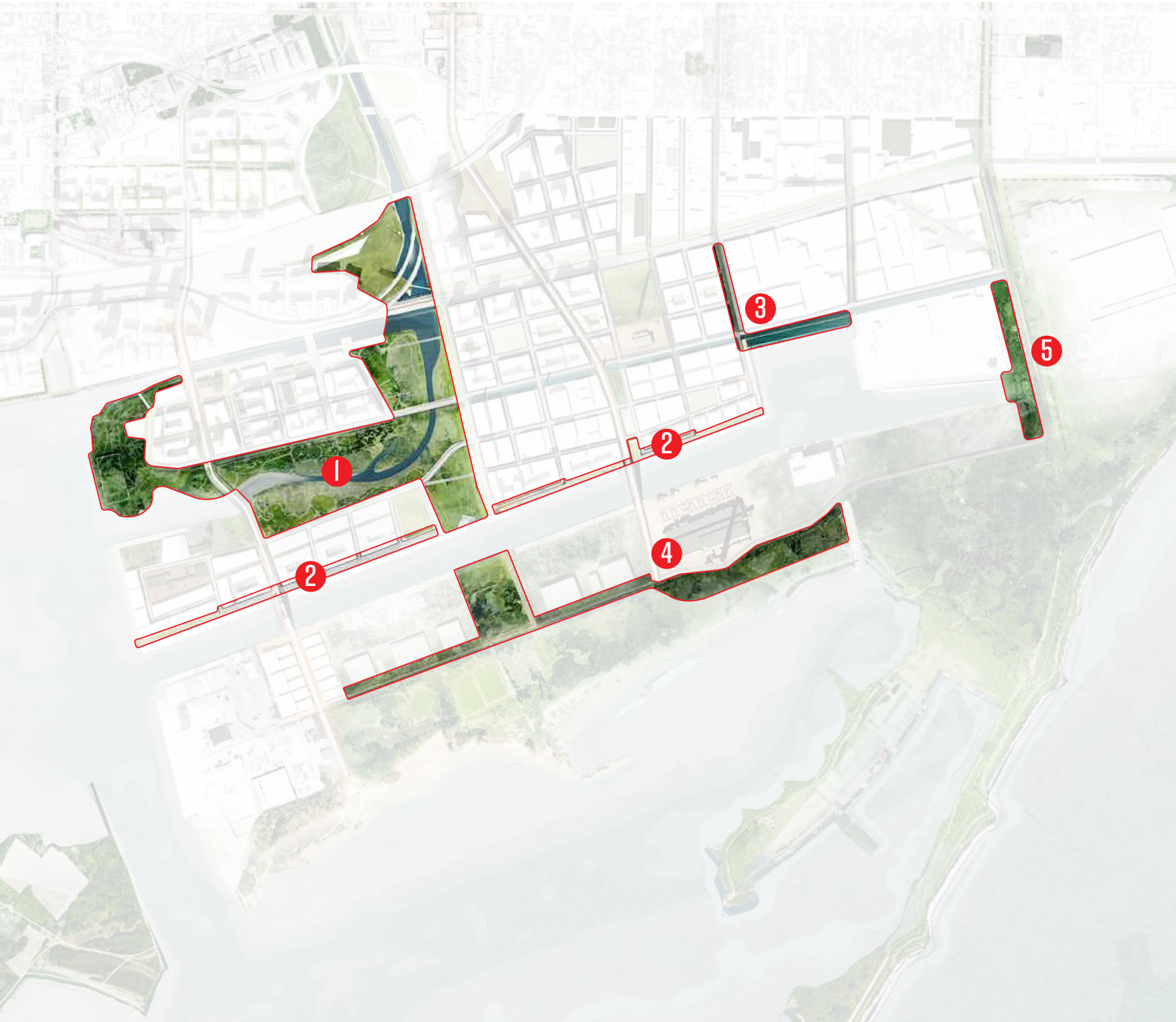
⑤ Leslie Green Portal

② The Greenway

④ Unwin Wilds



# 5 LANDSCAPES, 50 YEARS TO CULTIVATE.





In contrast to this comprehensive transformation of Toronto's Central Waterfront and Lower Don Lands, the sheer size of the Port Lands proposition offers the chance for a different approach. Pioneer landscape processes can be initiated now, far in advance of the expected occupation of the lands. This can be entirely strategic, allowing large-scale low-cost interventions to have the potential for massive impact given enough time for maturity. Both figuratively and literally, the first action for making a landscape in the Port Lands could be planting acorns.

Landscapes in the Port Lands need not be restricted to planning for an 'end state'. Instead, in some areas landscape systems can be initiated with the realization that they will continually evolve - in a similar manner to the natural systems that would (and have) come to life in the absence of a guiding hand. In fact, out of pure necessity, this landscape must be realized to accept change and evolution, with a 'lighter' touch for maintenance and operations.

Here, scale dictates that the cost of observing traditional maintenance procedures would be vastly untenable. Rather, the majority of this landscape must be allowed to find its own natural balance, allowing our occupation of the Port Lands to take on a new dimension in terms of our relationship to nature in the city.

Five landscape opportunities are identified that in time will cultivate, grow roots and shape development for generations to come. Inspiration for these landscape sites, in part, is the Leslie Street Spit and the 'light touch' taken by the TRCA in nurturing this urban wilderness. The creation of the Spit was a process of symbiosis on a civic scale. It has evolved over a period of over 50 years in tandem with the growth of the city. As excavation occurs for new high-rise in the downtown, remnant fill is strategically placed at the spit to create new islands and peninsulas. The result is a constant process of gradual transformation of soil, bricks and rubble - broken down by wave action and sedimentation - and transformed into a series of new wetlands and habitat in the Inner Harbour.

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## Lower Don Estuary

A project that re-establishes the natural waterway of the Don River, the Lower Don Estuary, by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, will be one of the largest infrastructure projects in Toronto's history. Though by necessity it must be immediate in its physical form - in order to function in holding back rising water - here is the opportunity to develop a 50 year landscape of evolving

habitats and plant communities, able to evolve and respond to their evolving context and climate. Pioneer plant communities can spring up and be replaced, species and habitats left to establish and evolve as the estuary matures. As various uses and communities develop around the estuary, there is the potential for the landscape to adapt to suit over different decades.

# Water's Edge

As a counterpoint to the immediate impact, and order and craftsmanship of the Toronto Central Waterfront Water's Edge Promenade, the Port Lands offers the chance to take a slower approach, and establish planting and water colonies ahead of redevelopment of the adjacent lands. The language could be robust and raw, as opposed to refined and particular, and the planted systems encouraged to take root, spread and adapt to this harsh yet unique environment.

The landscape of the water's edge would be planned to accommodate future infrastructure and dockwall repairs, but would speculate on territories where plantings could take root in the short to mid term, allowing

for future accommodation of works around them. As the redevelopment process played out, some would stay, but others would be naturally erased or displaced, just as natural plant habitats establish then make way for future ones. Nature has always found a way in the Port Lands - so it seems only fitting that the water's edge should embody this.



Landscaping at the Philadelphia Navy Yard



Promenade at the Presquile Rollet Park



Promenade at the Presquile Rollet Park



## Carlaw and Basin Promenade

Establishing the park space and activation at the Turning Basin has the potential to start to incubate a linear park that connects the east end of the City to other activation sites and projects and a potential ferry link. Since Cherry Street is already fairly established as a link in the west end, Carlaw would be perfect as an east end counterpart.

Initial actions could include the establishment of a water landscape and public space at the Turning Basin. In tandem, the linear park along Carlaw could start to be established with tree planting and basic trail amenities, to be upgraded at a later date as development comes. Since Carlaw is fairly wide given its low traffic demands south of Lake Shore Boulevard, it could be reduced in the interim to allow clear areas for tree growth establishment.



Rendering of the Carlaw right-of-way



Carlaw Avenue activation potential



Landscaping at the Presquile Rollet Park



# Unwin

Unwin Avenue currently occupies the 'seam' between a relatively amorphous and open stretch of industry to the north, and the rugged wilderness of the wild, natural areas to the south. Here is an opportunity for a landscape that gently starts the process of renaturalization along the north edge of this seam, nestling the industrial uses into a fringe of maturing landscape that makes Unwin feel like no other street in the City.

In addition, since the alignment of Unwin will shift further north (closer to the Hearn itself), this landscape opportunity suggests the gradual

re-establishment of a forest and/or naturalized meadow at the foot of the Hearn and south of the future alignment similar to the naturalization that has occurred at the Port Lands Energy Centre.

This naturalization could occur while preserving the functional existing alignment of Unwin Avenue in the interim. This action would start the process of increasing the territory of the future Lake Ontario Park and expanding the existing Environmentally Significant Area, while dramatically positioning the Hearn as a massive civic monument offset within a forested wilderness.





## Leslie Green Portal

Leslie Street is the interface between the street itself, the Ship Channel and the wild expanse of the Leslie Street Spit. Here is an opportunity to dramatically expand the greening that has taken place along the street along the west edge of the street creating

a green finger that reaches back up to the city that maintains and embraces the active rail corridor in the near term. The project would create a focal point in the eastern area of the Port Lands, with an expanded overlook down the Ship Channel.



The Leslie Street Spit



Multi-use trail



Green tram corridor in France



## EARLY ACTIVATION PROJECTS FOLLOW-ON WORK

ACTIVATION PROJECT IDEA	KEY ACTIONS AND ISSUES TO EXPLORE	OWNERSHIP	AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS	EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION
<b>CULTURAL ACTIVATION SITES</b>				
<b>1. Polson Point</b>	<p>Options to be explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with existing Toronto Dominion Box Boards tenants to provide cultural opportunities to the broader public;</li> <li>Explore opportunities to incubate additional arts and cultural users within existing city-owned lands/buildings through relaxation of rents; and</li> <li>Identify temporary cultural activations and events within Jennifer Kateryna Koval's'kyj Park and partnerships to sponsor and/or fund activations.</li> </ul>	Public (with long- and short-term leases) and private	TPLC, private owner, Waterfront Toronto, tenants, arts organizations, Economic Development, Parks, Forestry and Recreation	Light to Medium Touch
<b>2. Bascule and Maritime Hub</b>	<p>Options to be explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the cost for a floating dock structure adjacent to the bridge and potential uses;</li> <li>Undertake preliminary design and feasibility for park space adjacent to the Ship Channel on east side of Cherry: and</li> <li>Utilize existing vacant land on the east side of Cherry, relax rents and/or undertake a design competition for cultural occupation and area amenity in innovative and/or salvaged structures.</li> </ul>	Public	Ports Toronto, TPLC, Economic Development	Medium Touch
<b>3. Salt and Don Greenway</b>	<p>Further exploration of three potential options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interim occupation of a portion of the future Don Greenway during off peak months where the public could safely engage with salt;</li> <li>Engaging artists to design a quirky tarp that could double as a projection screen for movie events in the Port Lands. Funding and logistics to be addressed; and</li> <li>Permanent and early delivery of the Don Greenway park requires potential relocation of portion of existing salt operations, further study related to environmental conditions, detailed design and funding.</li> </ul>	Public with short-term leases	Salt Operations, TPLC, TRCA, Toronto Water, Waterfront Toronto, Ports Toronto	Light and/or Heavy Touch
<b>4. Hearn Front</b>	Explore opportunities and additional requirements to repurpose one or more of the existing out-buildings with pop-up cultural uses, restaurants or other programming.	Public with long-term leases	OPG, Studios of America, Hydro One, TPLC, City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto	Medium to Heavy Touch
<b>5. Turning Basin</b>	<p>Options to explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with artists and arts organization, identify potential cultural activations within the existing passive lawn</li> <li>Assess the cost for a floating dock structure and complete a vessel navigation study within the Basin</li> </ul>	Public	TPLC, Ports Toronto, Toronto Water, arts organizations	Light to Medium Touch





ACTIVATION PROJECT IDEA	KEY ACTIONS AND ISSUES TO EXPLORE	OWNERSHIP	AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS	EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION
<b>FIVE LANDSCAPES</b>				
<b>1. Lower Don Estuary</b>	Due diligence in process. Subject to funding from provincial and federal government, implementation by 2023.	Public	Waterfront Toronto, TRCA, Waterfront Secretariat, TPLC	Heavy Touch
<b>2. Water's Edge</b>	Identify suitable locations for pioneer landscapes that could entertain public access (condition of dockwall, leases and access) and ensure plantings would not impede full realization of the promenades.	Public	Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Waterfront Toronto, TPLC, Ports Toronto	Medium Touch
<b>3. Carlaw and Basin</b>	Preliminary design of an interim landscaped condition and final configuration of the street. Funding required to undertake design work and planting.	Public	Transportation Services, TPLC, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Waterfront Toronto	Light Touch
<b>4. Unwin</b>	Explore soil conditions and identify potential areas along the north side of Unwin Avenue where community planting could occur. Potential locations include between the existing Unwin alignment and the Hearn's chimney stack and other frontages adjacent to the north side of Unwin Avenue.	Public	Evergreen, TPLC, OPG, Studios of America, TRCA, Waterfront Toronto	Light Touch
<b>5. Leslie Green Portal</b>	Relocation of existing uses and/or termination of leases at the Leslie Street Slip. Funding to develop and implement final landscape design.	Public with short-term leases	TPLC, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Waterfront Toronto	Medium Touch





