

# RENEW ≠ RESTORE

Toronto's Don River and Lower Don Lands are at a crossroads.

Long the victims of short-sighted and single-minded economic and engineering initiatives, the hardened River and its obliterated estuary marsh have an opportunity to re-establish themselves as primary forces behind Toronto's emerging waterfront. To do so, we must put aside traditional approaches to building cities alongside channelized rivers, and to reject the path of least resistance in redeveloping the Portlands—one which would undoubtedly reflect its flat, homogenous site.

Rather, we imagine actively inhabiting the dynamic mouth of the Don at a renewed and re-established ecological interface between river and lake, and at an expanded cultural interface between Toronto and its Lakefront.

And rather than re-shaping the river strictly according to the needs of the emerging city, we put the Don first, allowing the River to shape the metropolis, giving rise to unique, dynamic, engaging, world-class neighborhoods and open spaces. Socially vital and ecologically rich, the re-imagined Lower Don Lands are a new kind of metropolitan precinct, a cultural expression of a landscape-based urbanism, at the re-established mixing ground of the Don River's nutrient-rich, life-giving waters and the alternately placid and powerful waters of Lake Ontario.

wild river ecologies + robust urbanism + resilient vitality

RIVER + CITY + LIFE  
Toronto's Lower Don Lands

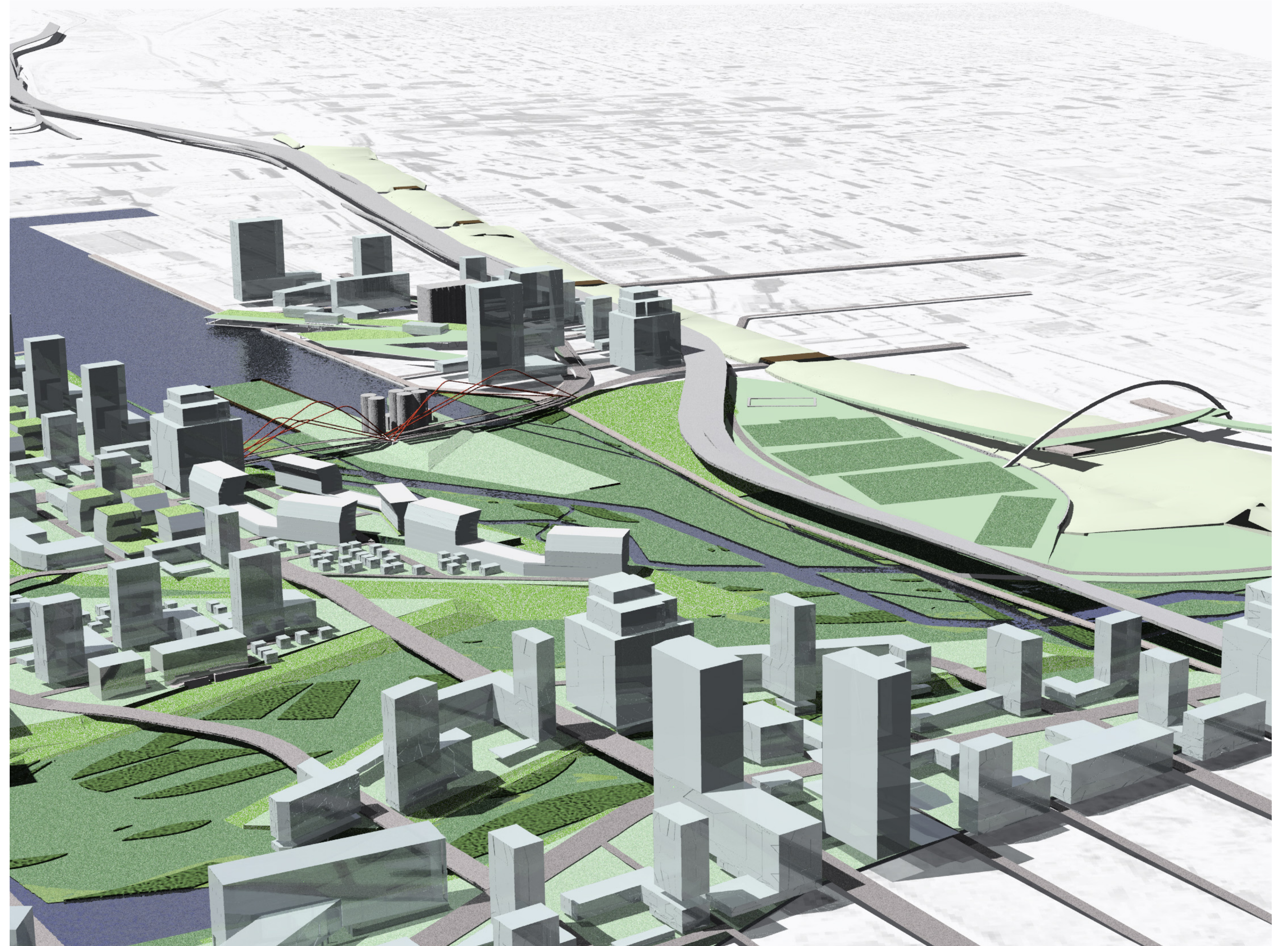


## TEAM

**stoss** LANDSCAPEURBANISM  
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# 01 FIRST THE RIVER

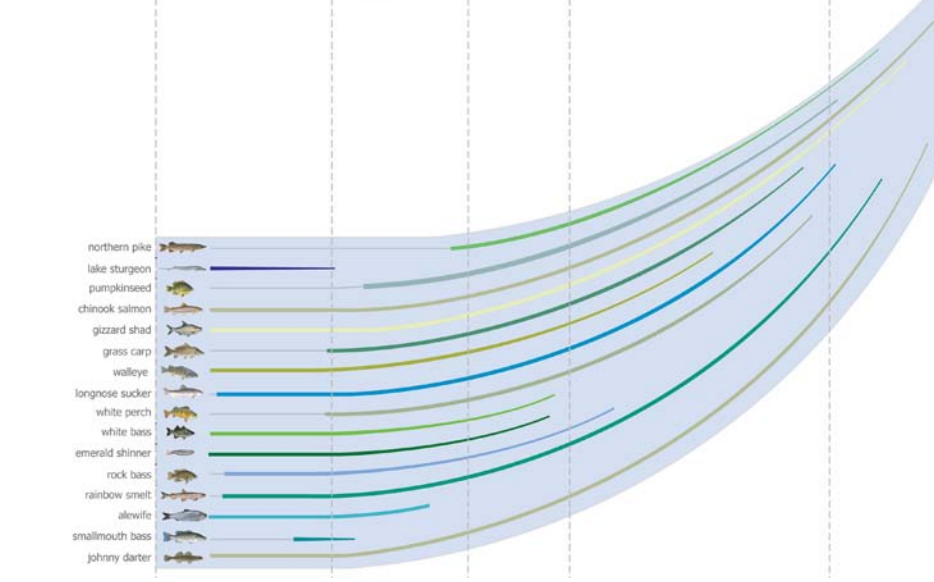


VIEW OF THE RECLAIMED MOUTH OF THE DON RIVER, WITH PRIMARY / SECONDARY CHANNELS IN CENTER, AND FLOODWAY / GREENWAY IN FOREGROUND LEFT. LOOKING NORTHWEST.

## RENEW THE DON

The Don River once emptied lazily into Ashbridges Bay, cultivating a rich ecological interface between river and lake. Subsequent channelization and industrialization left the mouth of the Don neutralized, out of synch with ecological flows and our of scale with its watershed. Renewing the Don necessitates reclaiming space for the mouth and re-kindling the delicate dynamics that mark the river-lake interface.

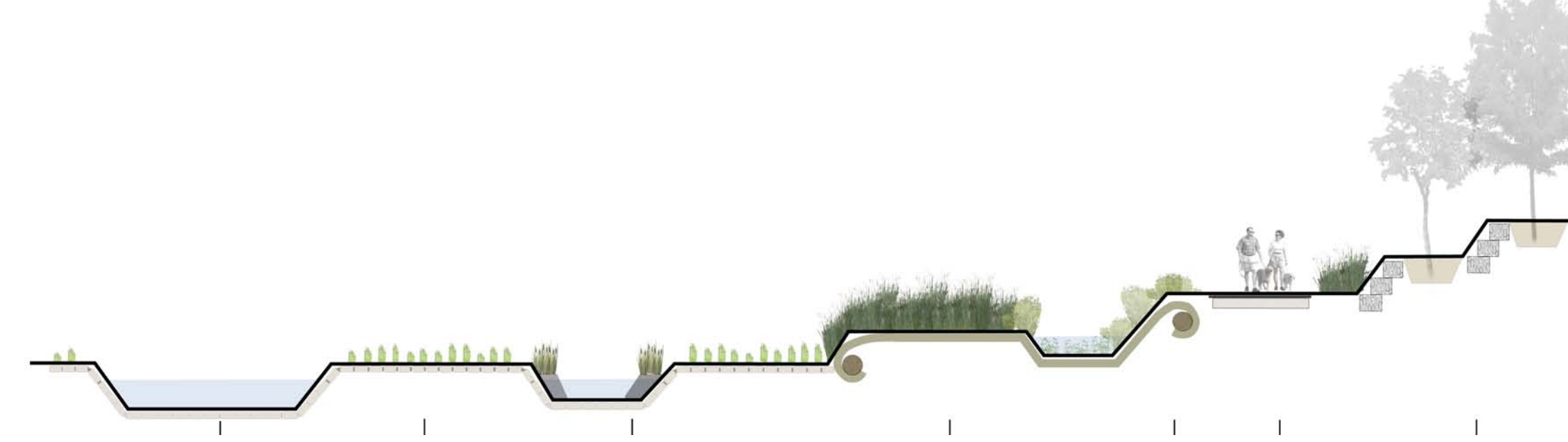
RIVER-LAKE INTERFACE IS RICHEST HABITAT FOR FISH.



## AMPLIFY THE INTERFACE

The river-lake interface is the richest breeding ground for fish and other wildlife. Therefore, we choose to re-establish the broad estuarine plate that slopes ever so slightly toward the harbor, thus maximizing the effects of river and lake fluctuation and ecological resilience.

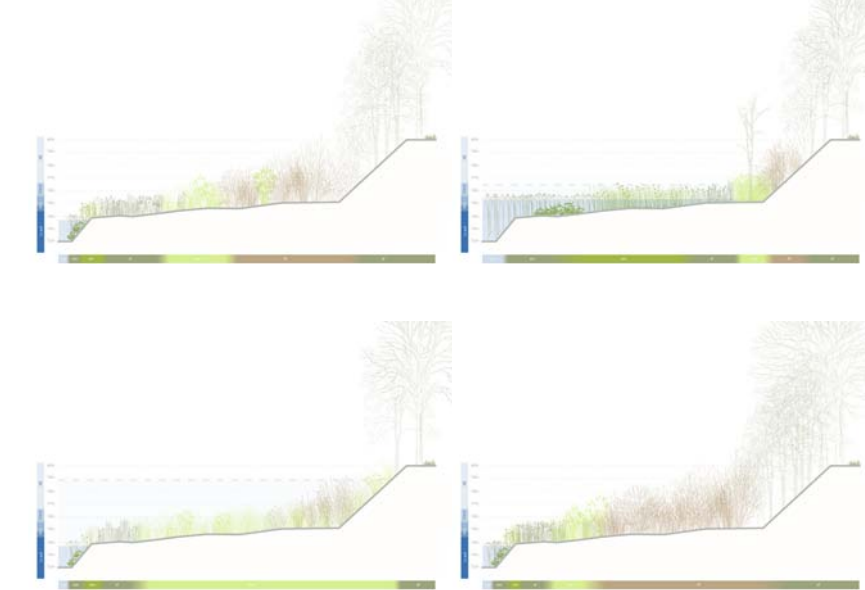
RIVER ENGINEERING: HYBRID PARTS + FLEXIBLE SYSTEMS



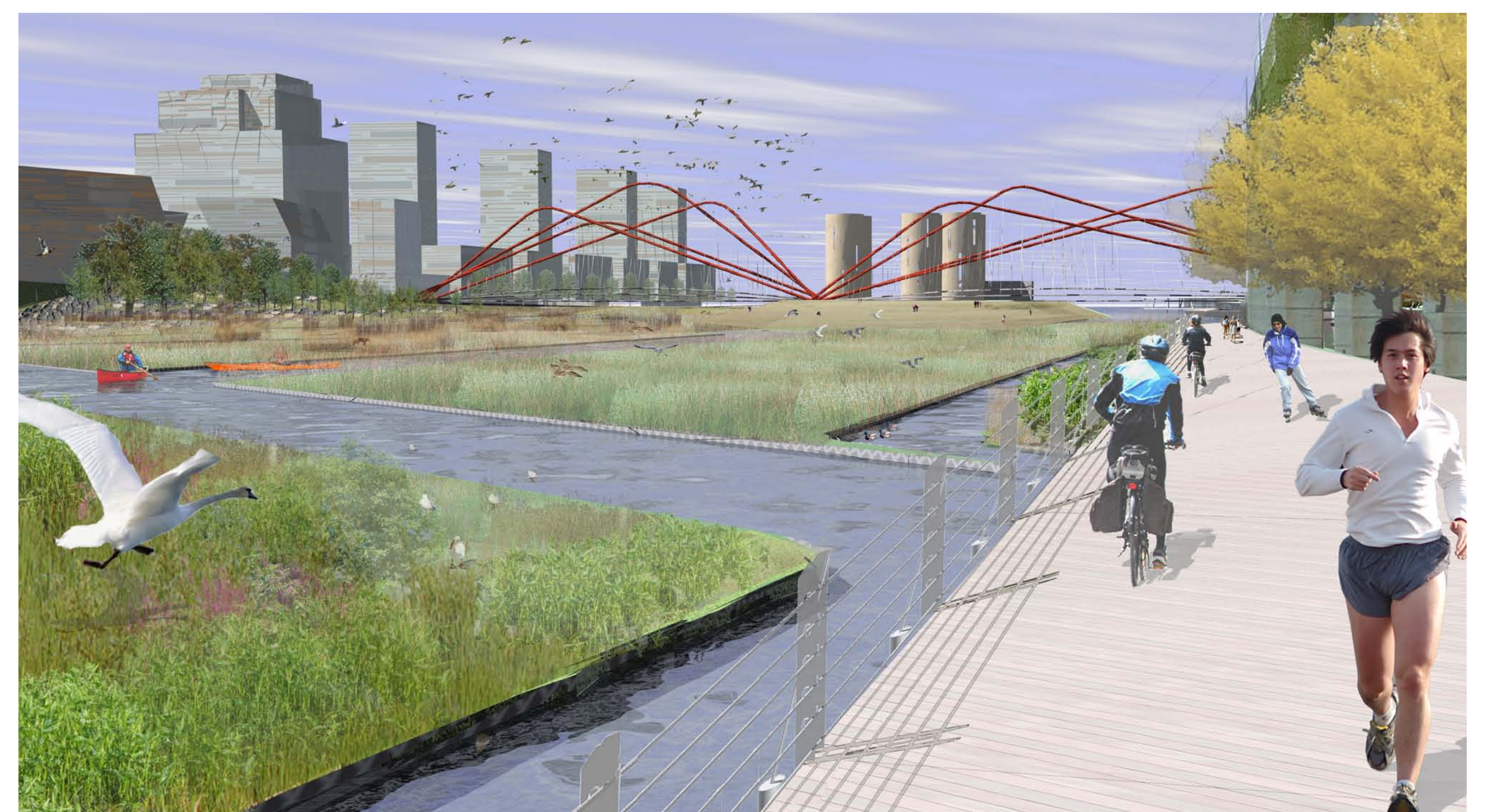
## HYBRIDIZE THE PARTS

Let's not be fooled—the Don remains a highly engineered river within a very constructed environment. However, by hybridizing the physical parts of the river system, and by flexibly deploying them to form a primary channel, broad marshes, a floodway, and armored uplands, we set up a framework that both structures and emancipates.

RESILIENT PLANT ECOLOGIES MOVE SPATIALLY AS HYDROLOGIC CONDITIONS CHANGE.



VIEW OF THE DON RIVER AND ESTUARY MARSH, LOOKING SOUTHWEST FROM THE MARTIN GOODMAN TRAIL.



## RE-IGNITE DYNAMICS

Amplifying and hybridizing yields an extremely dynamic estuarine marsh, tuned to both seasonal river events and long-term lake fluctuations.

HABITAT RAMPS AND TRAILS ALLOW DIRECT ACCESS TO THE WATER, AND WILDLIFE.

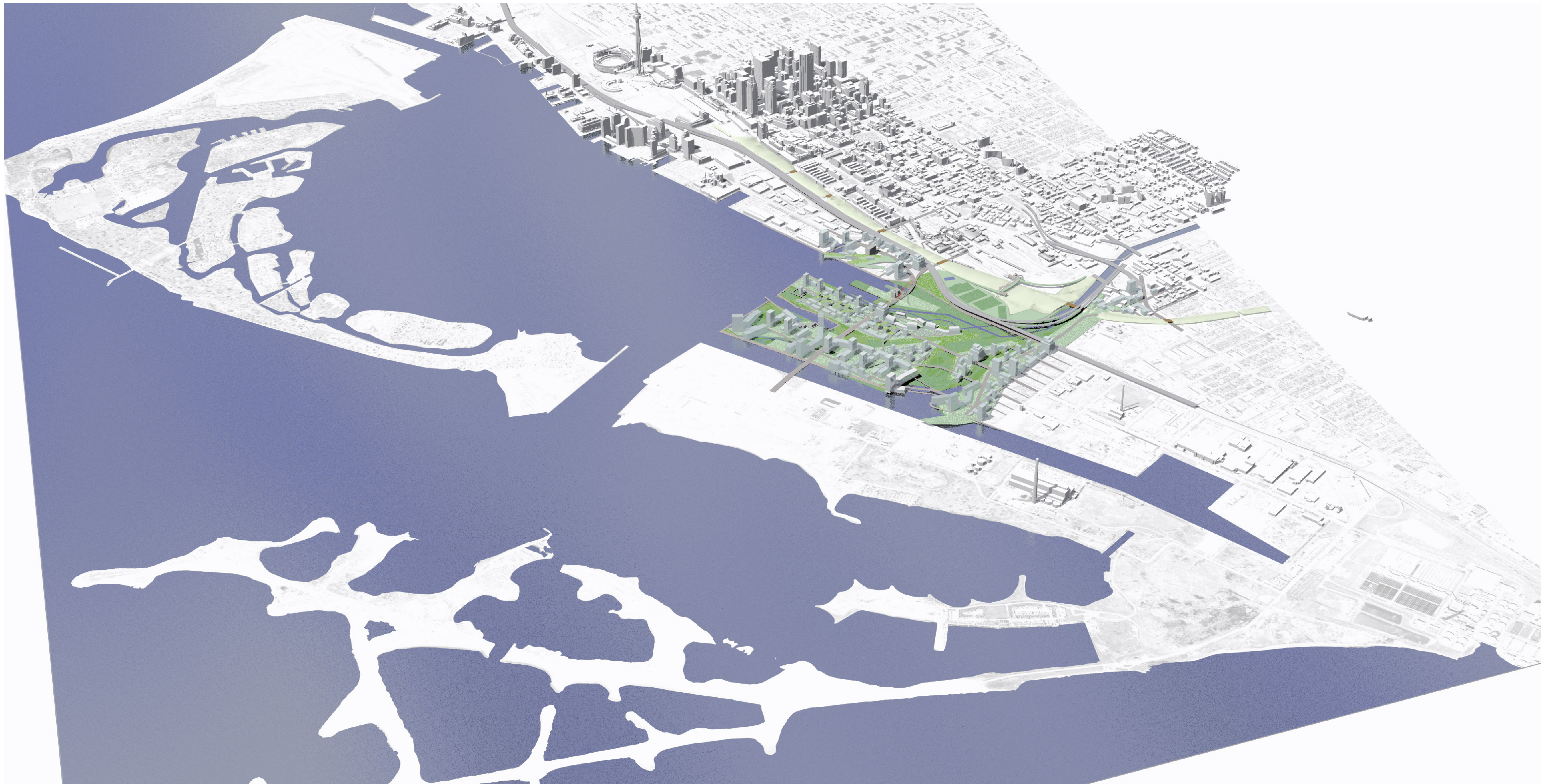


## RE-ENGAGE THE CITY

In taking back its space, the renewed Don becomes a life force once again, giving rise to a rich ecological habitat and breeding ground for wildlife, and structuring a new type of landscape-urbanism, a green city structured by the river.



# 02 THE LAKEFRONT EXPANDED



OVERVIEW OF THE RENEWED LOWER DON LANDS, IN CONTEXT WITH A CULTURALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY DIVERSE LAKEFRONT. THE RIVER GIVES LIFE TO A NEW TYPE OF LANDSCAPE-URBANISM AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN METROPOLITAN TORONTO AND LAKE ONTARIO.

## ESTABLISH CONTINUITY: EXTEND THE CENTRAL WATERFRONT PROMENADE

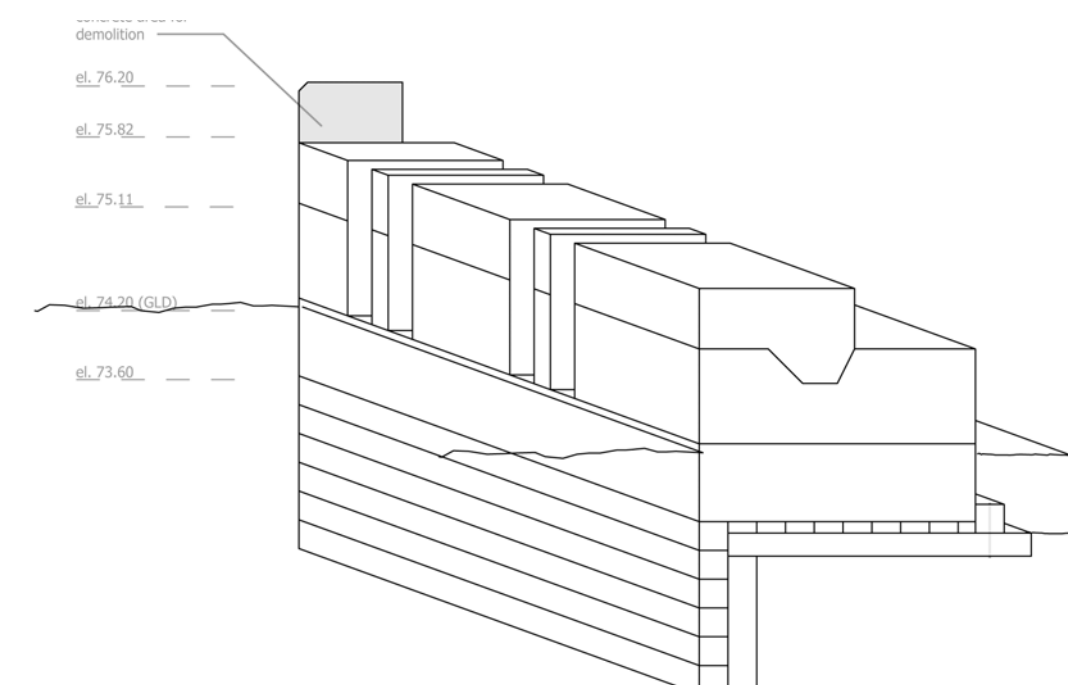
West 8's proposal for a wood and planted granite promenade is a good one; let's keep it going through the East Bayfront and the Lower Don Lands.



PAVING PALETTES FROM WEST 8'S WATERFRONT PROMENADE PROPOSAL, EXTENDED TO THE LOWER DON.

## ESTABLISH DIVERSITY: MODIFY THE HARBOURWALL

The existing harbourwall neutralizes the lakefront; it renders a potentially dynamic physical, ecological, and cultural realm as impotent. By implementing a series of incremental modifications along the wall, we can again experience a full range of relationships and interactions with water.



ONE OF 8 POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS TO THE HARBOURWALL, TO CATALYZE NEW SOCIAL / ENVIRONMENTAL ECOLOGIES.

## CULTIVATE NEW LAKEFRONT OPEN SPACE TYPES: LAKE MARSH + CHANNEL BASIN

As the continuous lakefront promenade and the various modified harbourwalls encounter diverse underlying and proposed conditions, many new lakefront edges are created, further amplifying potential city-water dynamics.

Out of this diversity arise two lakefront types: the soft, ecologically rich lake marsh, and the intensely social channel basin. Together, they form new habitat for salmon and strollers; for terns and tai chi; for button bush and bikinis; and for hooded mergansers and hockey players alike.

SWIMMING + SKATING ARE INTRODUCED TO THE CHANNEL BASINS.

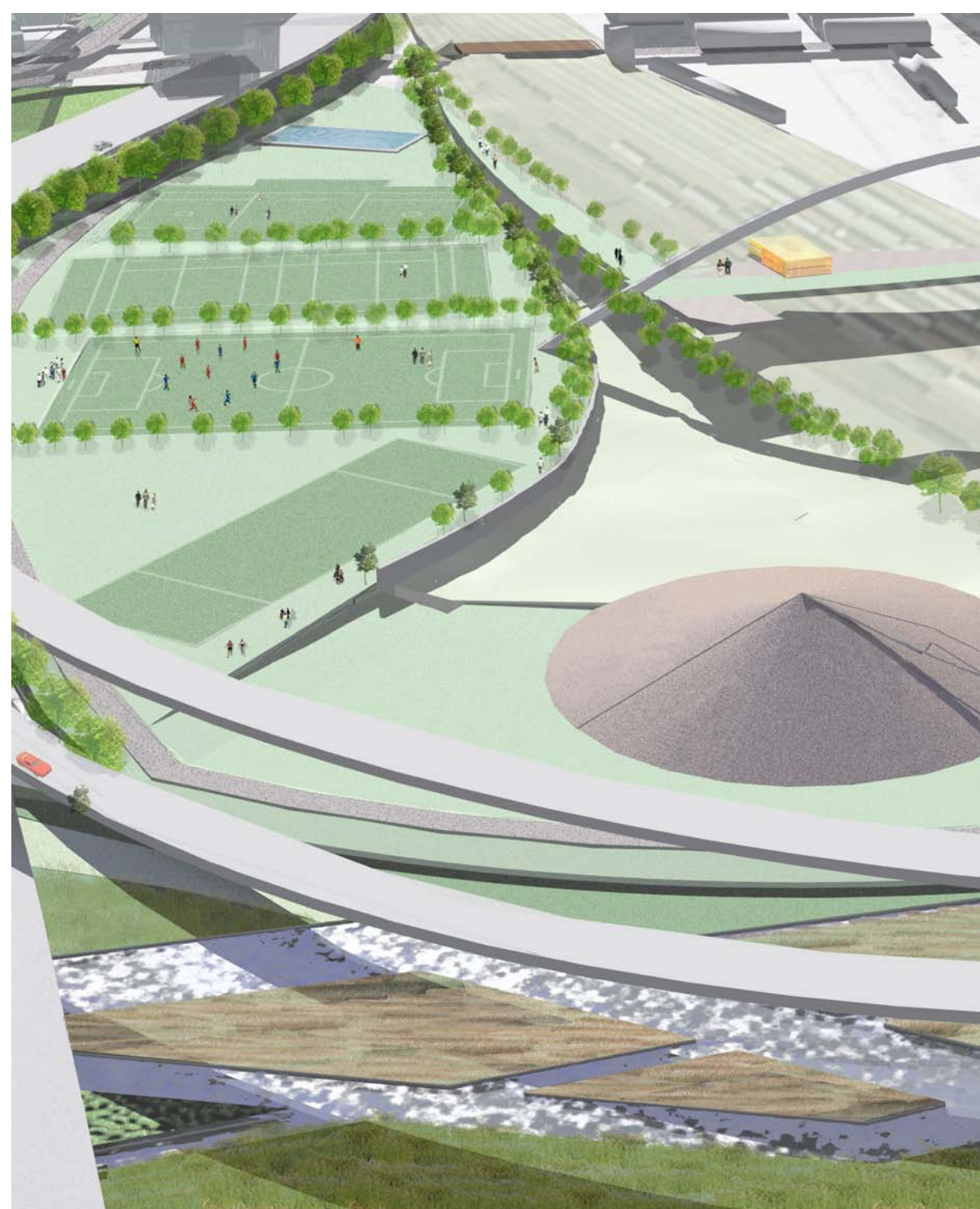


AN OPEN LANDSCAPE, AVAILABLE FOR QUIET RETREAT AND CIVIC FESTIVALS, AT ESSROC ISLAND.



# 03 WORKING OPEN SPACES

DON SPORTS PARK AS WORKING LANDSCAPE, WITH RAILYARD CAFE / GREEN BRIDGE + SEDIMENT OPERATIONS



Whether activating monuments from past occupations, as in the event space on Essroc Island; mitigating and engaging active infrastructure, as in the Don Sports Park and Green Connector across the railyards; or generating energy and filtering stormwater, as in the Wind Marsh and various Stormwater Notches: open spaces in the Lower Don Lands are put to work—environmentally, culturally, economically.

VIEW FROM THE WATERFRONT PROMENADE AT THE WIND MARSH, LOOKING WEST TO DOWNTOWN.





# 04 ROBUST NEIGHBOURHOODS

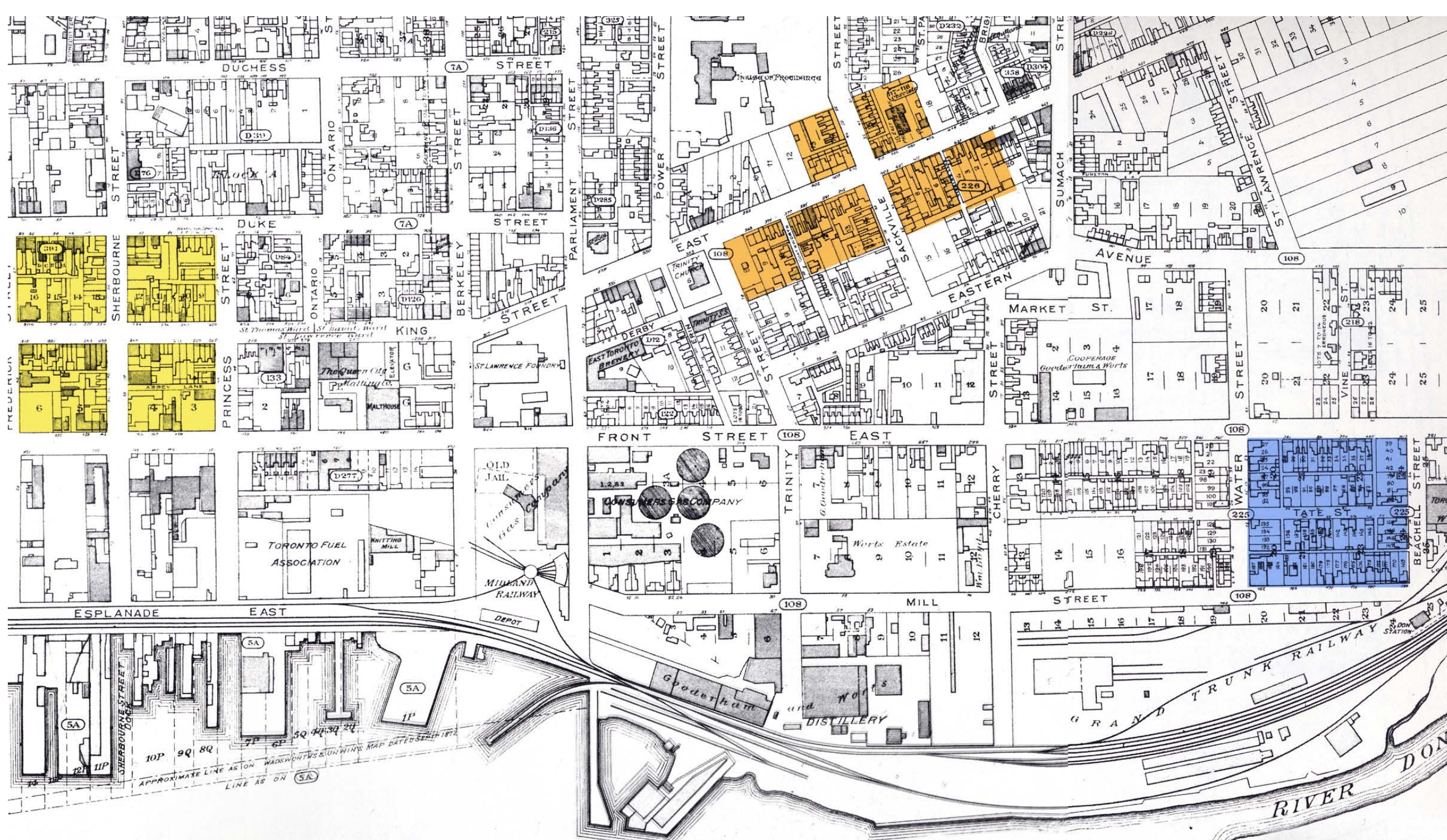


VIEW OF THE LOWER DON LANDS FROM THE HARBOUR, LOOKING NORTHEAST. THE LANDSCAPE IS MADE TO STRUCTURE AND WEAVE AMONG THE VARIOUS NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS, EACH A DISTINCT TERRITORY AND MIX OF SCALES AND USES.

## DYNAMIC URBAN SCALES

One of the characteristics of successful communities and which lends distinctness to them is an underlying lattice pattern of blocks, typically linked to the landscape. This is especially true in historic neighbourhoods like Corktown, Yorkville, and Little Italy. In keeping with this precedent, we adopt three scales of urban block, lifted from surrounding historic neighbourhoods: Corktown @ 46m x 46m; Old Town @ 80m x 80m; and St. Lawrence @ 125m x 125m.

HISTORIC MAP OF THE CITY, SHOWING PRECEDENT BLOCKS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS.



MAP OF PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOODS.



## THE URBAN COURTYARD

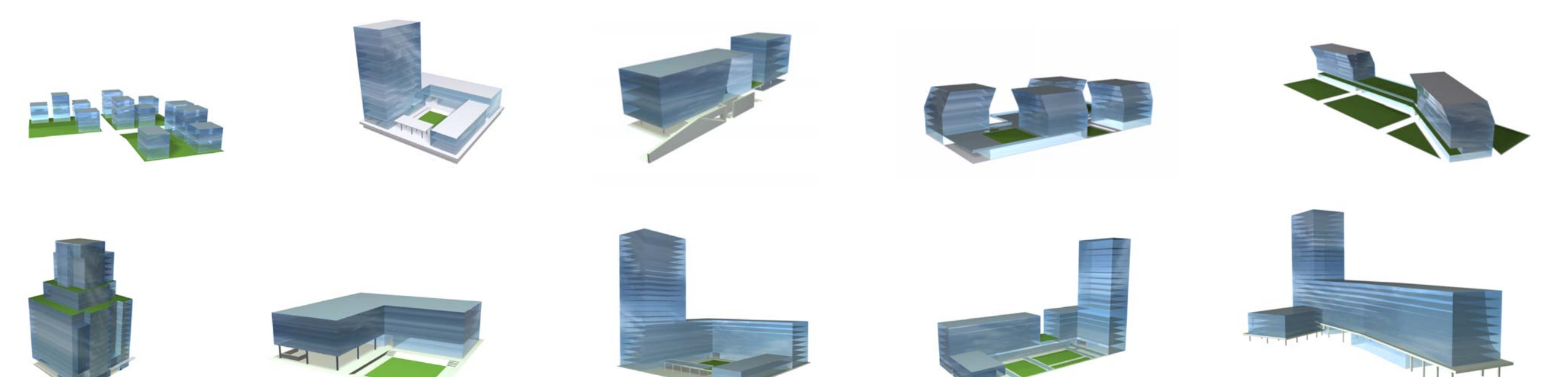
Five distinct neighbourhoods are proposed in the Lower Don Lands. They are Victory Flats, south of the Distillery; Commissioners Quay and The Channel in the heart of the precinct; and Don Island and Don Point along its eastern edge. Broadview is also extended south to connect to the Lake.

PROPOSED DON POINT NEIGHBOURHOOD, ALONG THE DON GREENWAY.



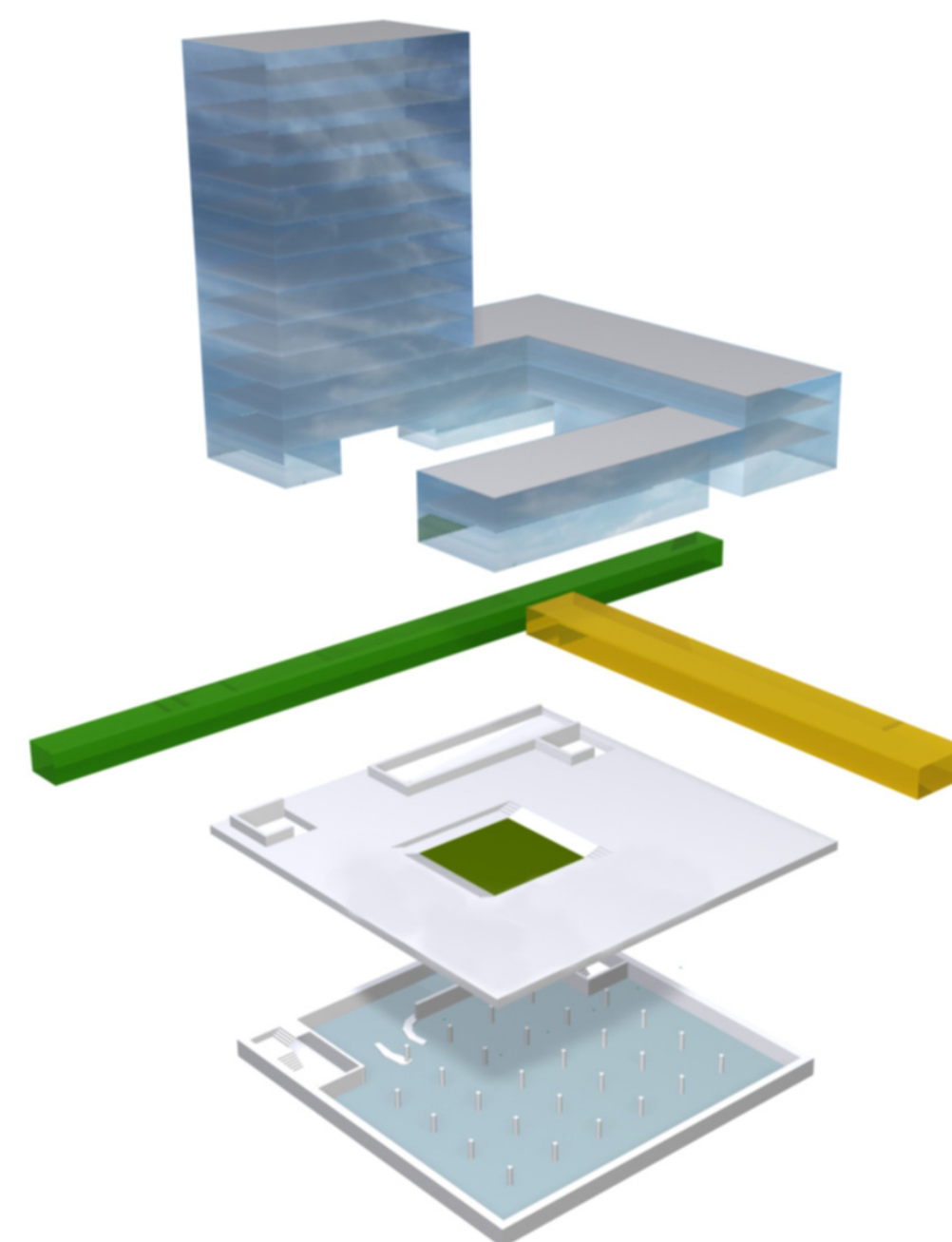
## NEW HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

The new communities of the Lower Don establish a modified set of building typologies uniquely defined by their relationship to the public realm and the newly naturalized landscape. Eleven variants carry a mix of residential, retail, and commercial uses.



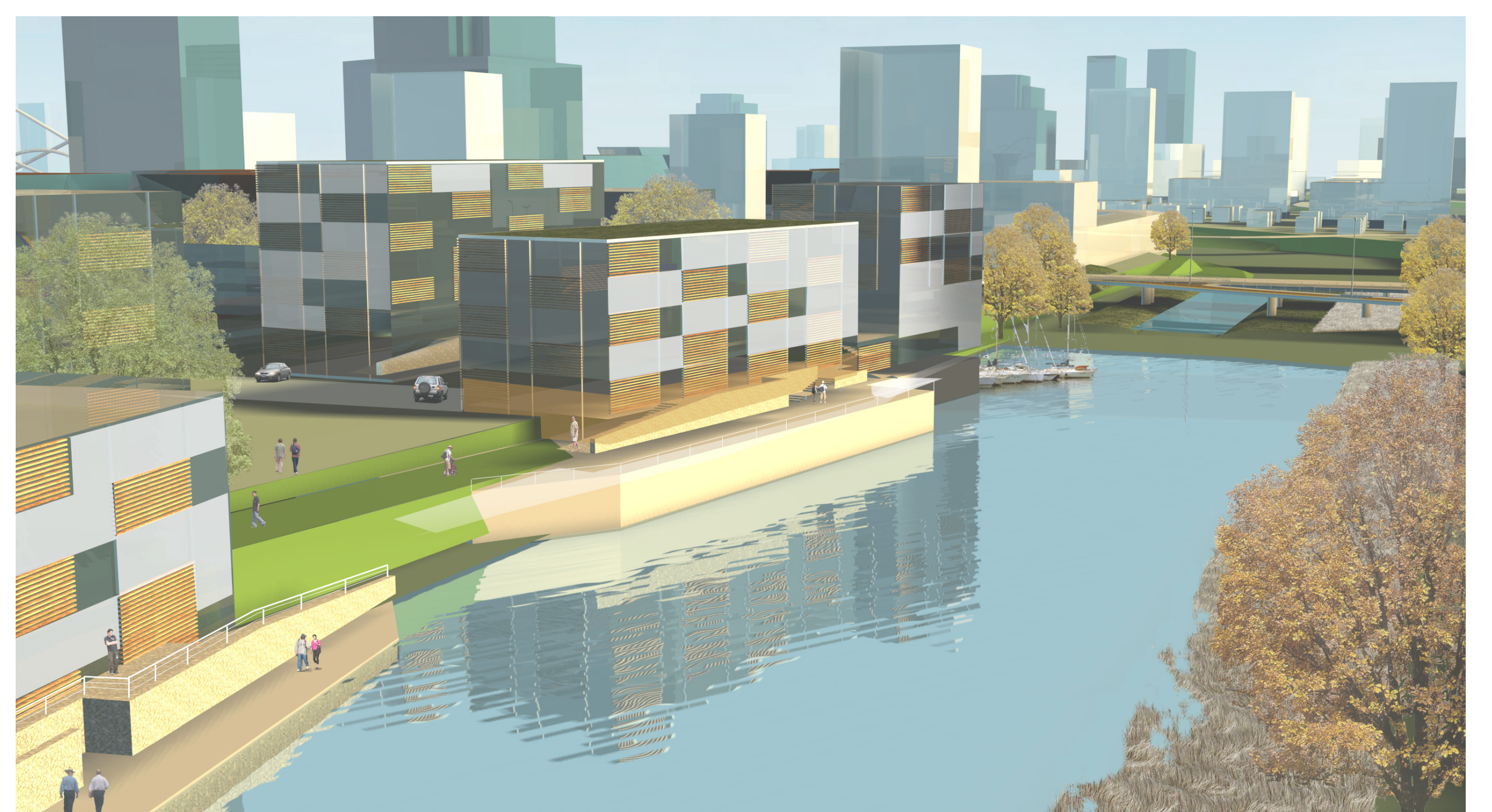
## THE URBAN COURTYARD

The urban courtyard is seen as a strong connector of the 'medium' public realm, acting between the public realm of the street / the park / the boardwalk and the residential areas. In this zone, the fine grain interpretation of the lawn, the step, the threshold is created. The courtyard space adjusts its character for its position and adjacency to both open space and programmed types. For retail uses at grade, the courtyard becomes more public and open. For residential uses at grade, careful delineation between semi-public and private routes are made. At institutional uses, the courtyard becomes public square where any number of public activities can be generated.



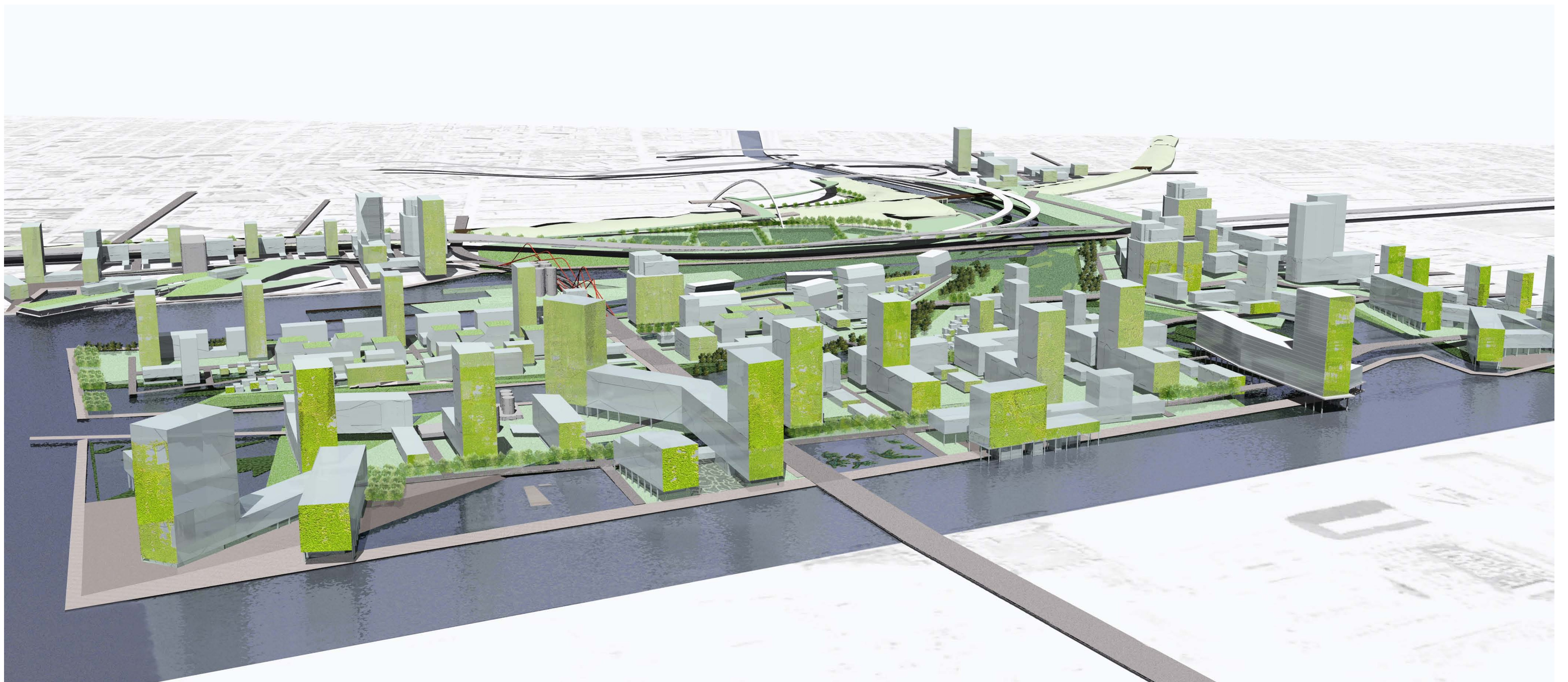
THE URBAN COURTYARD

VIEW OF A PORTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS QUAY NEIGHBOURHOOD, ALONG A RE-FIGURED POLSONS NOTCH.



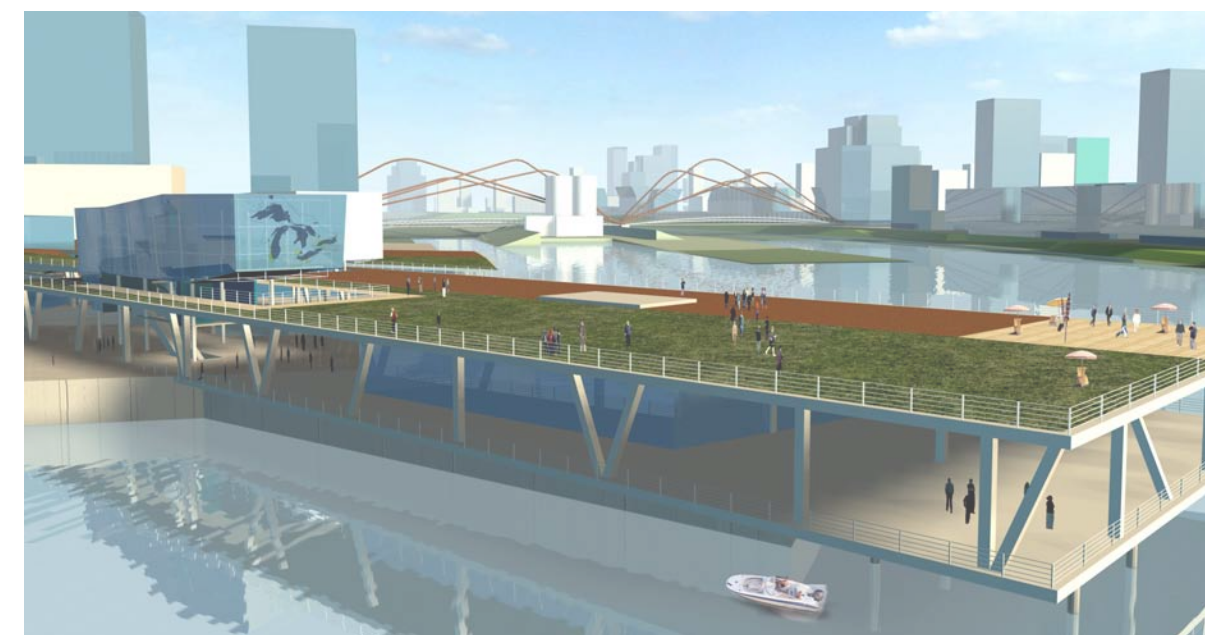


# 05 A WORLD-CLASS, SUSTAINABLE METROPOLITAN PRECINCT



VIEW OF THE LOWER DON LANDS RE-IMAGINED AS THRIVING METROPOLITAN PRECINCT, BUILT AROUND THE PERFORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF A RENEWED DON RIVER. LOOKING NORTH WITH THE SHIP CHANNEL IN THE FOREGROUND.

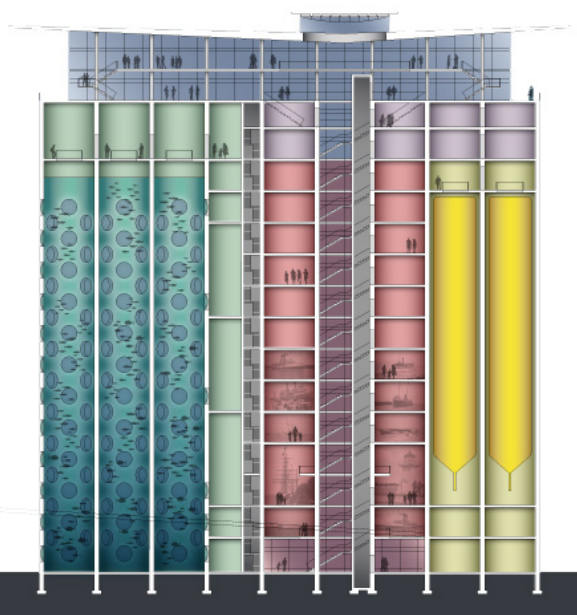
PLANTED ROOF AND PUBLIC WATERFRONT AT THE GREAT LAKES AQUATIC CENTRE.



## GREAT LAKES AQUATIC CENTRE

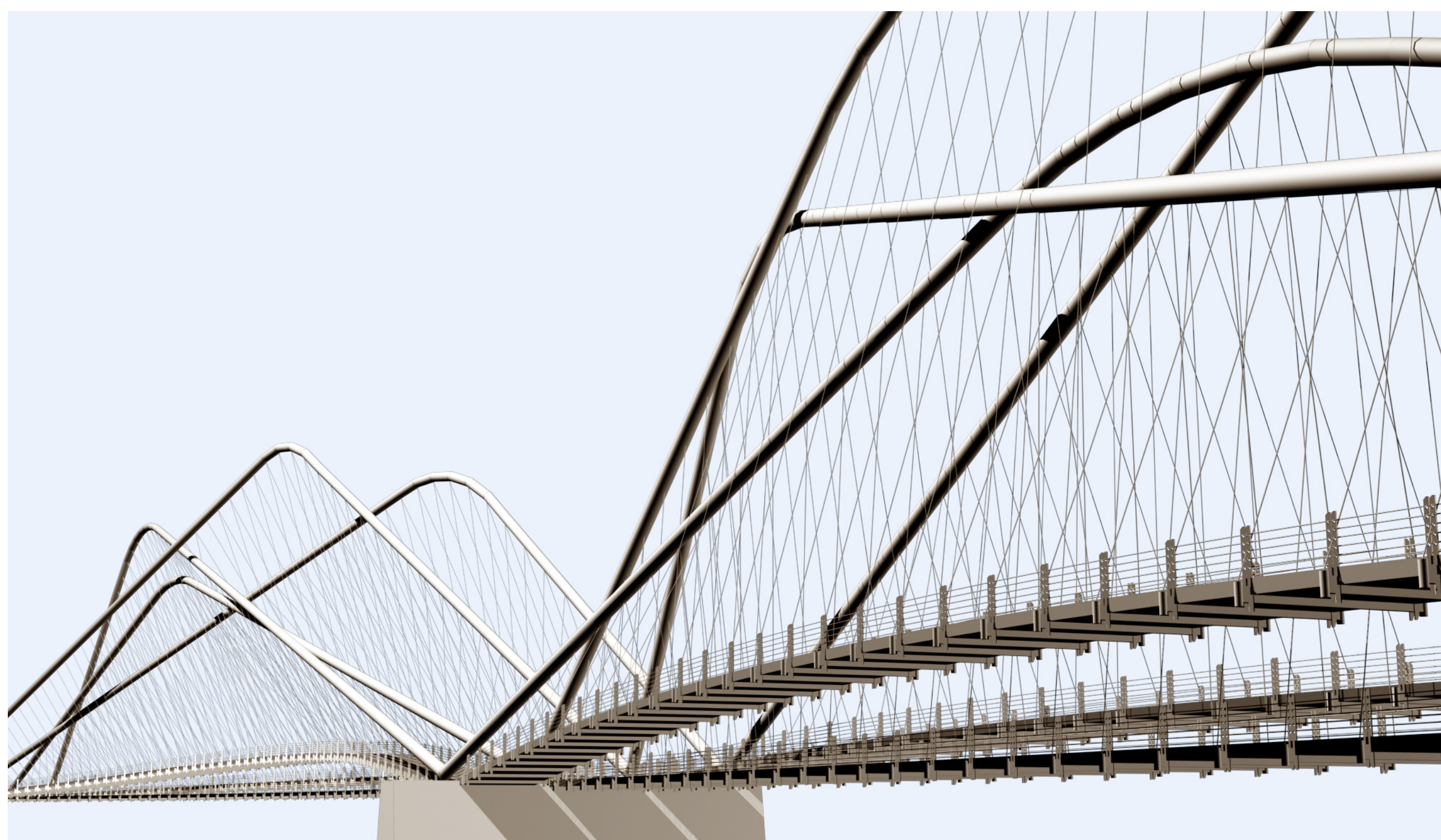
The new Centre creates a robust new international destination by combining heritage installations, environmental research, a dynamic waterfront public space and retail. The building roof lifts up from the ground, creating an elevated public space with fantastic views over the islands to Lake Ontario.

VICTORY SILOS AS FISH HATCHERY, BREWERY, HERITAGE DESTINATION.



Great cities and metropolitan precincts are well-organized and diverse, with multiple scales, multiple routes, good services, and lots of choices. Great cities work simultaneously for the local resident, the metropolitan visitor, and the global traveler. The Lower Don subscribes to and manifests this view of city-life.

THE FLEXING TRAVELWAYS AND STEEL SPANS OF THE MOUTH OF THE DON BRIDGE.



## MOUTH OF THE DON BRIDGE

The iconic bridge carries vehicular, rail, and pedestrian traffic over the body of the Lower Don River on separate travelways, each of which flexes independently to allow travelers unobstructed views of the River and Lake. The form reflects the flow and interplay of water beneath the deck, and the Don's newly reigned dynamics.

## INDUSTRIAL SILOS

The treasured silos are reanimated as participants in the site's transformation. The silos' charismatic forms remain powerful reminders of their industrial heritage, yet adaptive reuse gives them new life as members of the site's renewed social ecologies: water purifiers, sludge treatment, fish hatchery, and brewery.

VIEW OF ESSROC ISLAND AND MOUTH OF THE DON BRIDGE, LOOKING NORTHWEST.



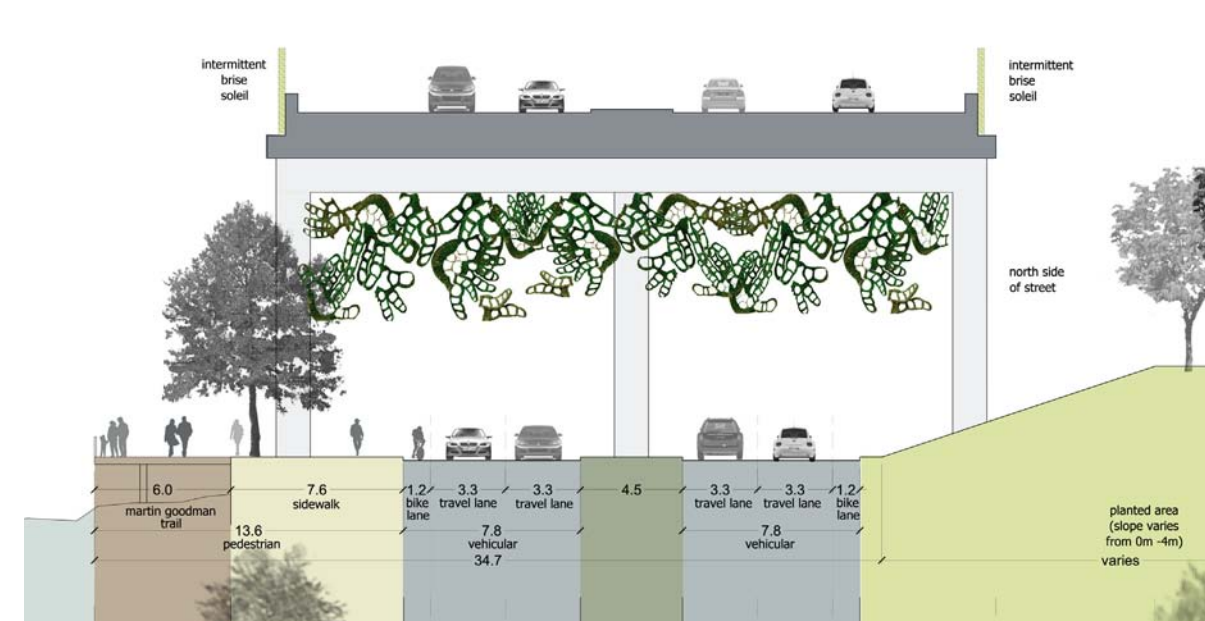
THE GREEN METROPOLIS AT NIGHT, LOOKING NORTHEAST FROM THE HARBOR FERRY.



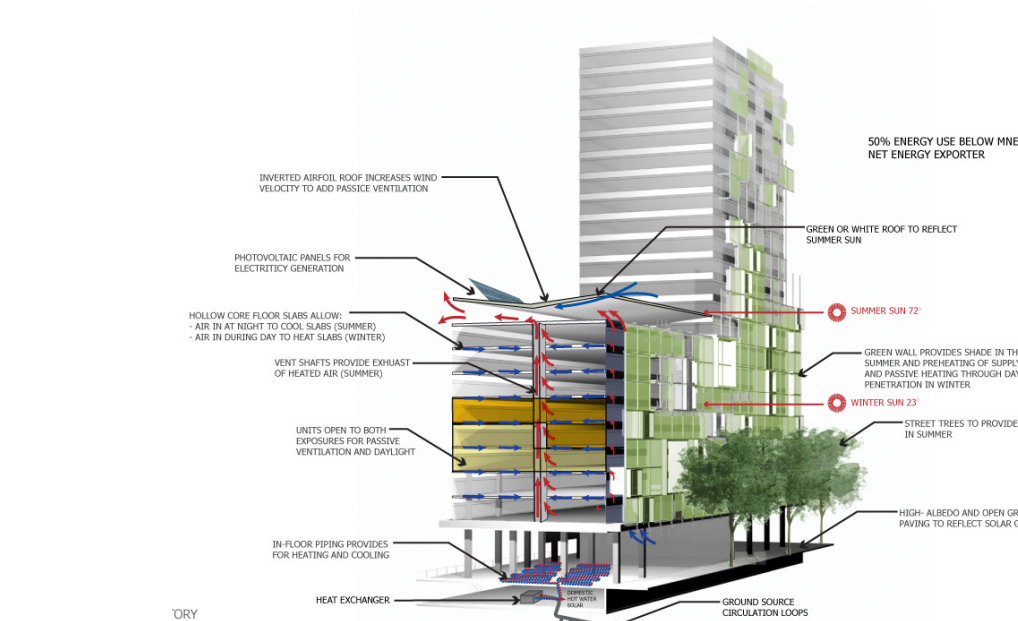
## MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

A full array of bicycle, pedestrian, light rail, and ferry routes are integrated through the Lower Don Lands, connecting it to nearby neighbourhoods and downtown, and lessening residents' and visitors' dependence on the automobile.

THE GREEN GARDINER, RE-IMAGINED AS A HYBRID PARKWAY. THE GREEN CLOUD BIOSCULPTURE CLEANS AIR + WATER.



INTEGRATED GREEN STRATEGIES FOR BUILDINGS, INCLUDING HABITAT FACADES + MECHANICAL SYSTEMS.



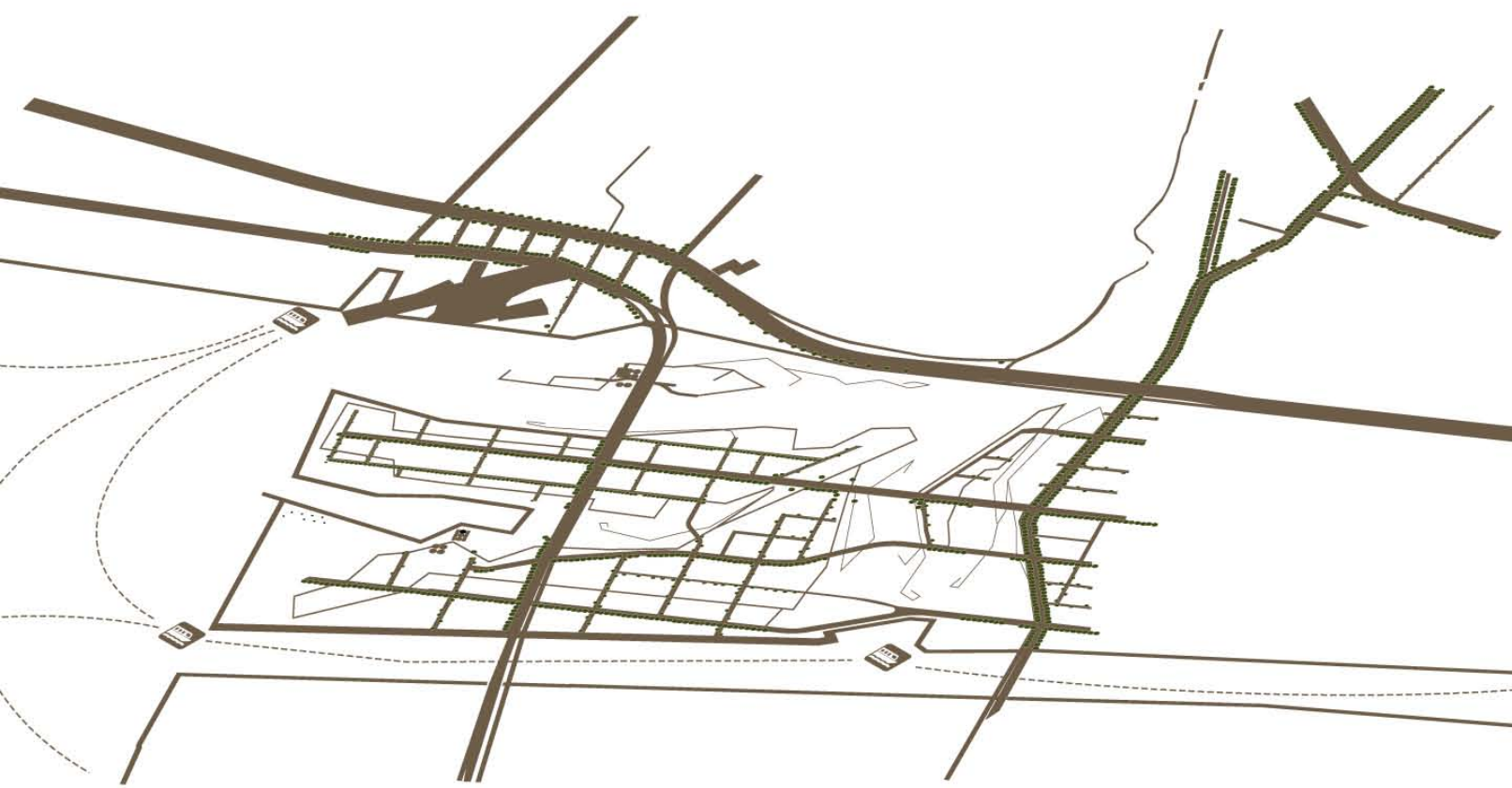
MULTI-MODAL URBAN CORRIDORS AND STORMWATER NOTCHES ON COMMISSIONERS QUAY.



## GREEN LIVING

The Lower Don maximizes benefits for the river, lake, natural environment, and all their inhabitants—human, vegetal, and animal. Green buildings; integrated stormwater swales; biosculptures; and smart demolition and remediation practices all contribute to a model green city.

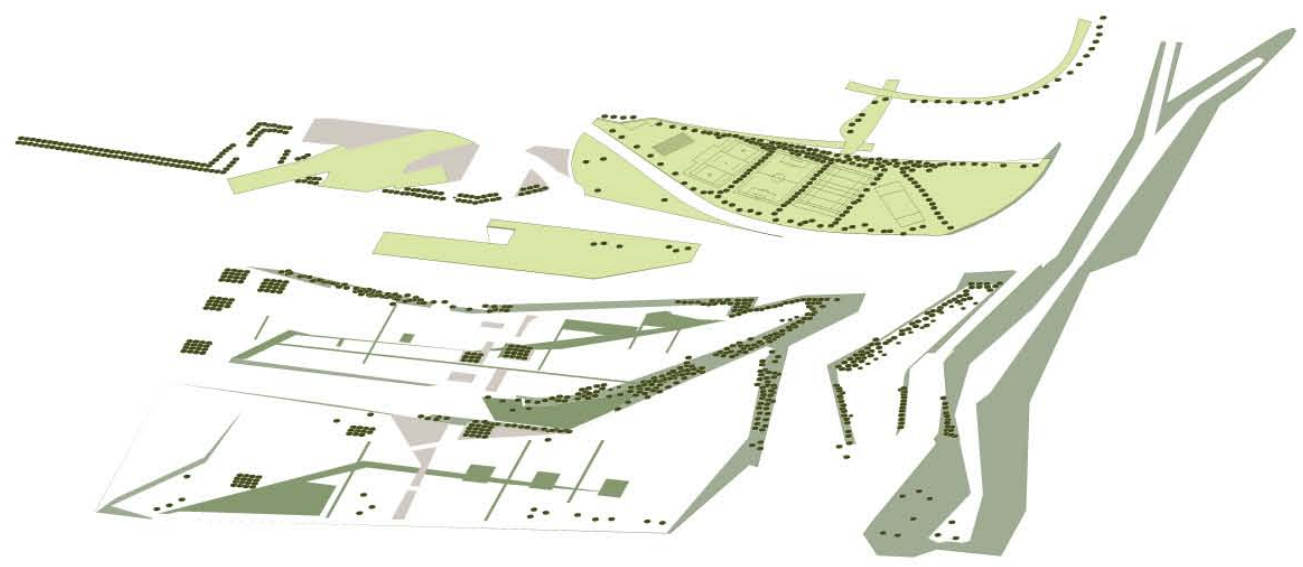




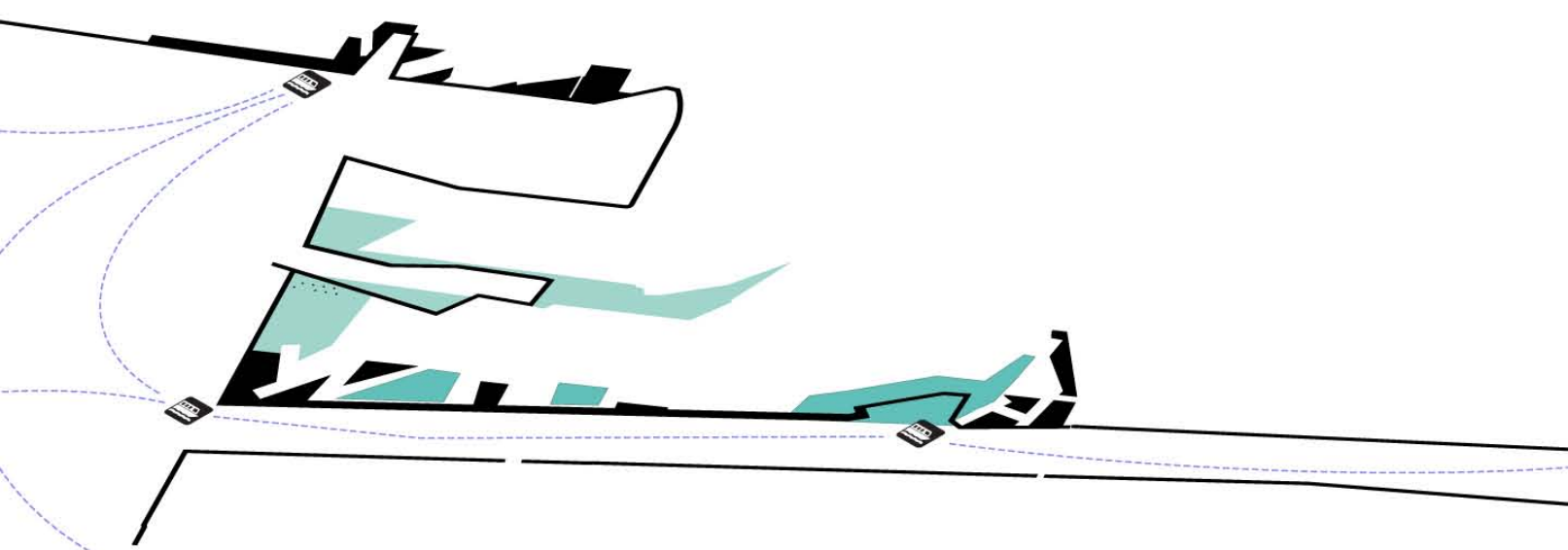
river city destinations + routes



robust neighbourhoods



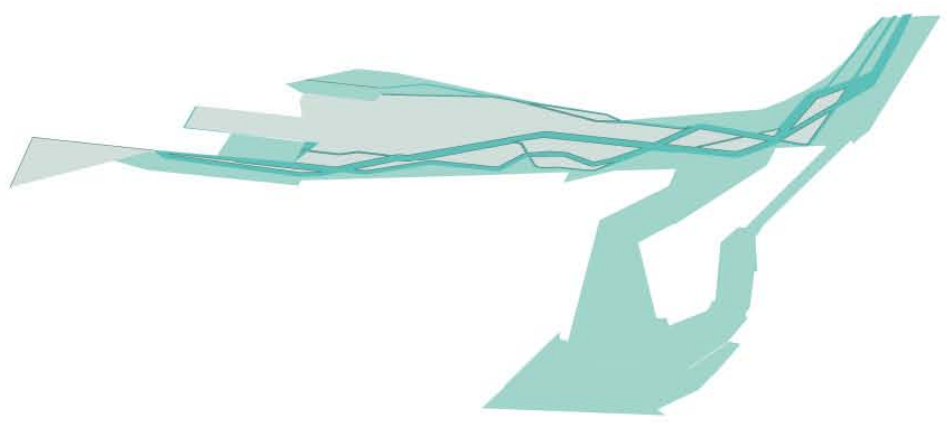
working open spaces



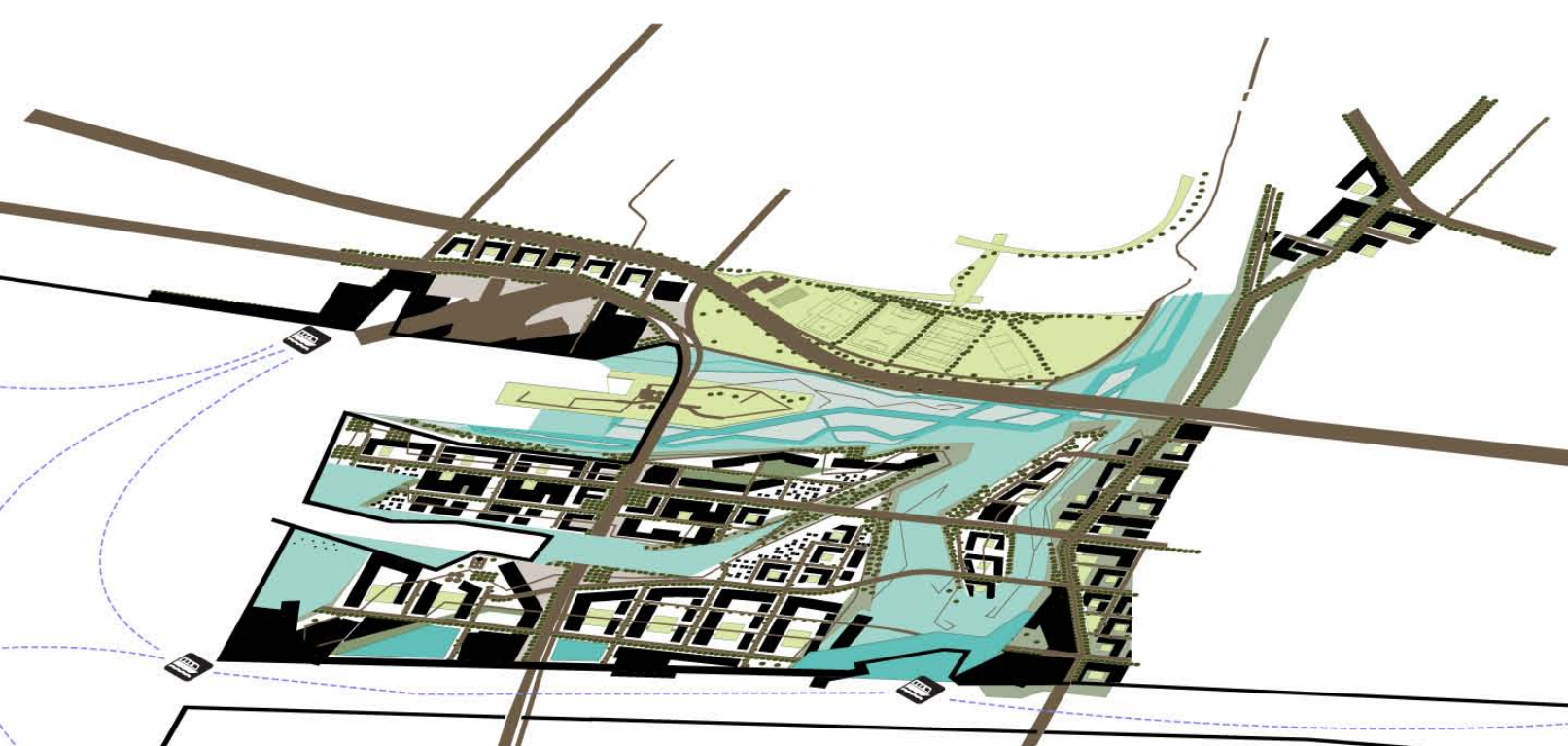
expanded lakefront



river spits



first the river



green living . green city



relocated dvp ramps

west don park

WEST DON LANDS

green bridge +  
rallyard cafe

DISTILLERY DISTRICT

don sports park

cherry landing

mouth of the don marsh

VICTORY FLATS

mouth of the don bridge

victory silos

essroc island

essroc silos

great lakes aquatic centre

lake marshes

lower don school

river spits

COMMISSIONERS QUAY

polsons notch

lake marshes

polsons slip

la farge silos

first the river

THE CHANNEL

east basin

wind marsh

SHIP CHANNEL

lake point

green living . green city

LAKE ONTARIO

PORTLANDS SOUTH





BROADVIEW SOUTH

relocated dvp ramps

at-grade parkway connection to broadview

future riverway berm

green bridge + railyard cafe

dewatering cells

don sports park

mouth of the don

DON ISLAND

don greenway

don greenway

DON POINT

PORTLANDS EAST

COMMISSIONERS QUAY

polsons notch

future greenway bridge

marina basin

THE CHANNEL

SHIP CHANNEL

cherry basin

bascule bridge

east basin

PORTLANDS SOUTH

cherry beach

# RIVER + CITY + LIFE