

MAY 15 2018 // INNOVATIVE DESIGN COMPETITION

YORK STREET PARK

Design Competition Brief >



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	4
2.	GOALS (FROM THE RFQ)	7
3.	PROGRAM FOR YORK STREET PARK	8
3.1	REQUIRED DESIGN ELEMENTS:	8
3.2	SITE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS	14
3.3	SERVICING & INFRASTRUCTURE	18



Aerial photo 1969, showing the Off-ramp on the York Street Park site. Source: City of Toronto Archives

1. INTRODUCTION

Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation Department are sponsoring this six-week design competition to produce bold and innovative park designs for York Street Park and Rees Street Park in the Central Waterfront. Each of these sites will become important elements of the Toronto waterfront's growing collection of beautiful, sustainable and popular public open spaces along Queens Quay.

Five teams representing a range of different landscape design philosophies have been selected to focus on the Rees Street Park site based on the program set out in this Competition Brief. The program consists of nine Required Design Elements identified through community consultation, as well as a number of physical site opportunities and constraints that must be addressed in the design proposals.

The design competition will kick off on May 15, 2018 with an all-day orientation session – at which the teams will hear presentations from Waterfront Toronto, government officials, and key stakeholders – and a tour of the site. At the end of June, completed proposals will be put on public exhibition during which time input will be solicited from stakeholders, city staff, and the general public. A jury comprised of distinguished design and arts professionals will receive reports from these groups, and then select a winning proposal to be recommended to Waterfront Toronto and City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation. Further details are provided in the various sections of this Competition Brief.

The winning proposal will proceed into design development, detailed design and construction, for which approximately CAD \$7.0 million has been earmarked by the City of Toronto.



Postcard of the Toronto Waterfront 1970, showing the Off-ramp on the York Street Park site

PRECEDENT IMAGES



1. High Line, New York NY



2. Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York NY



3. "In the Grove"



4. Corktown Common, Toronto ON



5. Campus Martius, Detroit MI



6. Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle WA



7. Berczy Park, Toronto ON

2. GOALS

The ultimate goal of this design competition is to produce designs for two parks that respond creatively and sensitively to local needs through the direction provided in this design brief.

Seven high-level aspirations have been identified for York Street Park and Rees Street Park, which should provide the foundation for the park designs, and are to be considered in the methodology for each park design. Outlined below in Section 3 are more specific descriptions of existing conditions and detailed site opportunities and constraints.

The high-level aspirations for the two parks include:

- 1. 21st Century Parks:** York Street and Rees Street Parks should address the issues of a growing city and offer ways to provide compelling new park experiences within the constraints of a dense and fast-growing downtown core
- 2. Diverse Community of Users:** Toronto has one of the most diverse urban populations in the world and both parks should support animation and social activities by a wide range of people, groups and civic organizations.
- 3. Integrated Public Art:** Art is a fundamental part of the vision for York and Rees Street Parks. The design of each park should provide opportunities for innovation and the incorporation of art and/or an art programs that are unique to each site.
- 4. New Standards for Sustainability:** York Street and Rees Street Parks should set new standards for sustainability and climate resilience in both park design and operations.
- 5. Complementary and Contextual:** Both parks should complement the existing series of park experiences available on the waterfront while offering new experiences that fill any missed opportunities in existing waterfront parks while being responsive to the adjacent urban context and users in each park area.
- 6. Gateway to the Waterfront:** Both parks are located at key entry points to Toronto's waterfront neighbourhood. As such, both park spaces should fulfill the role of drawing park users and visitors to the waterfront, welcoming people and creating memorable experiences as they arrive and spend time at these key destinations.
- 7. Design Excellence:** Both parks should strive to maintain the standard of design excellence, quality of place, and attention to detail that has been delivered around the waterfront. High-quality, durable materials, innovative technologies and design excellence should be combined with careful attention to the operating parameters of Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

3. PROGRAM FOR YORK STREET PARK

The design for York Street Park must strike a balance between the preference of local residents for a green respite, the desire of the growing worker population for outdoor lunch activities, and the crowds heading to Harbourfront Centre and the Toronto Islands. Visitors to the park should be able to enter a peaceful, leafy atmosphere where they feel removed from the hustle and bustle of the busy downtown and where they can find opportunities to meet and socialize with colleagues and neighbors. Natural materials, timeless details and elegant proportions should offer mental calm in the busy city.

3.1 REQUIRED DESIGN ELEMENTS:

1. **Immersive Green:** The park should feature a space that is green and peaceful. This experience should be achieved sustainably through horticulture, arboriculture, material choices, and water management. The design must anticipate new forms of use and be robust enough to withstand heavy usage.



Bryant Park, New York NY

2. **Lunchtime Activity:** The park should offer a variety of comfortable places for workers and other visitors to eat alone, in pairs, or in small groups of up to 25 people. The parks should offer these convivial spaces of casual interaction for contemplation, work or meeting that will bring people into the park and separate them from the surrounding city.



“Running Table”, Millennium Park, Chicago

3. **Event Space:** The park should be able to transform into a space for larger gatherings, such as movies in the park or civic celebration during special events such as Victoria Day. The event space should be designed to have a minimal impact on surrounding residents,



Movies in the Park, Chicago

4. **Water:** A feature that allows visitors to touch, hear and see water. This could take the form of a traditional fountain, water wall, reflecting pool or other typology.



Paley Park, New York, NY

5. **Public Art:** The design should include a proposal for how public art could be integrated into the park. The type or form of public art could consist of: a program of rotating curated installations; a single permanent art piece; a series of permanent pieces; or a fully integrated art and landscape/architectural feature. Waterfront Toronto intends to procure an artist independently in the future, as funding for public art is not yet secured. This design proposal should provide an inspiring vision for how public art could animate the park.



Bryant Park, New York, NY

6. **Architectural Pavilion:** York Street Park should include a small pavilion that can accommodate park controls, electrical infrastructure, storage for movable park elements and maintenance tools. The building could include a shaded seating area and a small room with an indoor-outdoor counter that could be used as an information kiosk or other temporary use. Consideration should be given to providing one universal washroom stall.



Serpentine Pavilion by SANAA, Kensington Gardens, London UK

7. **Accommodation for Dogs:** While Parks, Forestry and Recreation has determined that York Street Park does not meet the requirements for the establishment of a Dog Off-Leash Area (DOLA) as described in “People, Dogs and Parks – Off-leash Policy”, there is a high density of dogs in the area. The design for this park should create spaces and places that are accessible for all park users to enjoy. The park design may include innovative design features that accommodate dogs and reduce the impacts of dogs on the park, ensuring that the benefit of the park design is for all users.

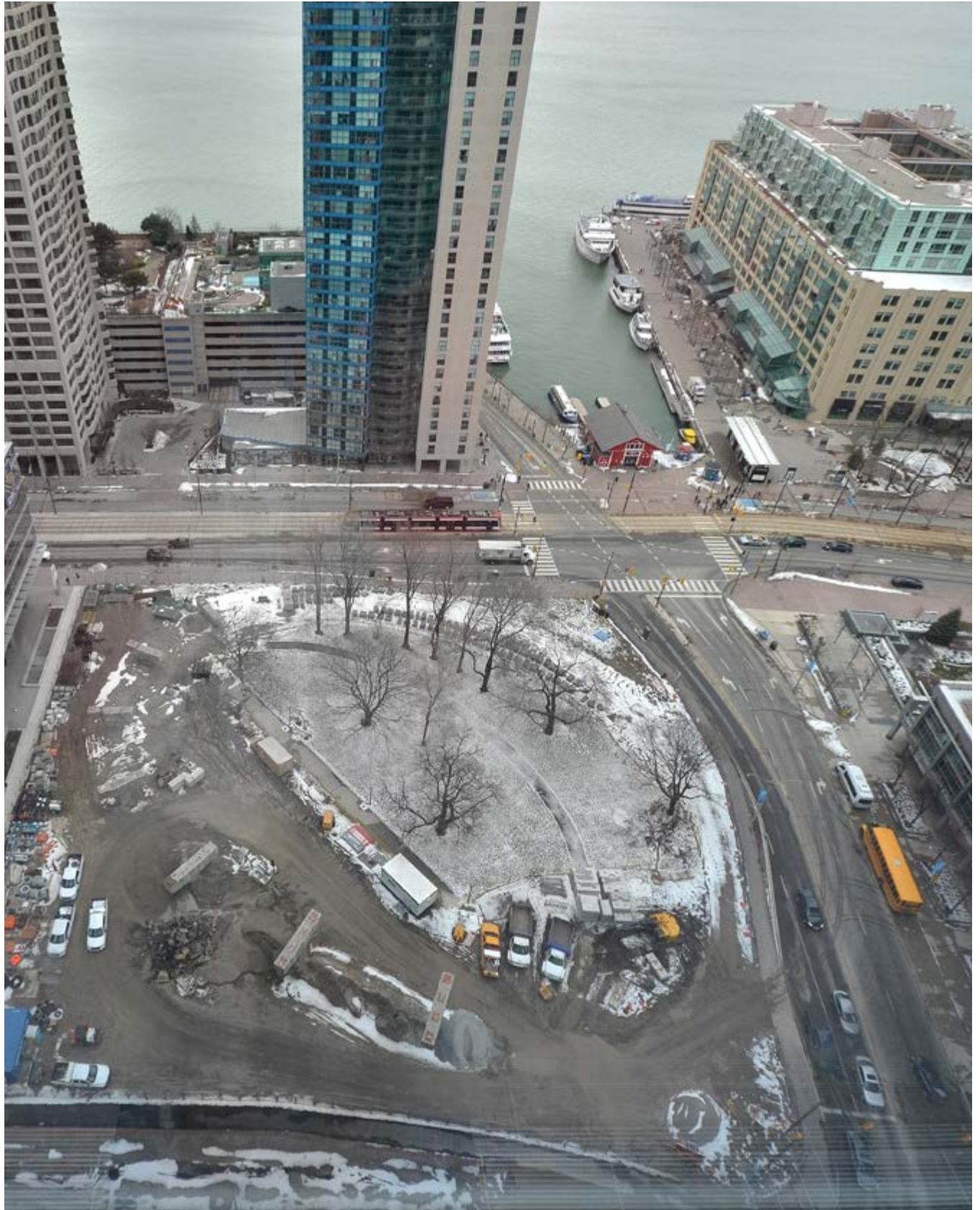


Dogs at the park

8. Park Amenities: The design should include a full spectrum of park amenities including benches, lighting, bike racks, drinking fountain, and wayfinding. Consideration should be given to providing playable elements or a modest play feature.



Lighting and benches on Merchants' Wharf Water's Edge Promenade



Aerial view of York Street Park site looking south, April 2018

3.2 SITE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The York Street Park site sits between the southern extension of the Financial District, known as South Core, and the York Quay residential neighborhood. It lines the east side of York Street, which is one of the busiest north-south streets connecting downtown to the waterfront. The park will occupy the site of the former York-Bay-Yonge eastbound off-ramp from the Gardiner Expressway, which was removed in 2016-2017. When the ramp was in place, the site included an open lawn, mature trees and limited pedestrian pathways. While the trees have been preserved, the public amenities will be removed and will be reconceived as part of this competition. The site is approximately 8,000 square metres (2 acres) in area. The key conditions that will affect the design are listed below and illustrated in Figure 4.1.

YORK STREET PARK SITE

- 1a** **Eight Bents:** The York Street off-ramp from the Gardiner Expressway was recently removed and replaced with a shorter ramp. This was done to allow a high-quality public park to be created on the site. The structural piers, or “bents”, were retained as a possible park element. These bents may be completely removed or incorporated into design proposals for consideration.
- 1b** **Twelve Trees:** Six Elms (*Ulmus parvifolia*), Three Norway Maples (*Acer platanoides*), one Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*) and one Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) have been preserved during the demolition of the ramp. These mature trees can contribute significantly to the future park and their preservation is preferred. Figure 4.2 shows the existing trees on site, with diameter information based on a 2016 Arborist Report. The arborist report found all the trees to be in good condition (less than 15% defects) in all three reported categories: Trunk Integrity, Canopy Structure and Canopy Vigour.
- 1c** **Hydro Infrastructure:** Three existing vaults are sited on the southwest corner of the site. Two foundations are currently empty and were constructed to accommodate a transformer and switchgear, and telecom equipment for Queens Quay. The third one, a stainless steel electrical box, contains metered power for special events, eventually for the use of the Waterfront BIA. These functions must be preserved, but may be relocated elsewhere in the park or a less obtrusive location.
- 1d** **Diagonal Footpath:** This path was created in lieu of an east side sidewalk on York that was not possible due to the off-ramp. It once connected to a pedestrian crossing on Queens Quay that was removed when Queens Quay was revitalized. This pathway does not need to be retained in the new design.

YORK STREET PARK SURROUNDING CONTEXT

- 2** **Harbour Street:** This street bounds the north side of the park. The removal of the York-Bay-Yonge off-ramp made the south side of the street accessible to pedestrians, permitting new patterns of use that have yet to be discovered. The design of Harbour Street includes four lanes of traffic, a dedicated two-way bicycle track on the south side, and street trees.

The northern edge of the site abuts the future bicycle track and the design team should consider the relationship between the track and the park to ensure safety and reduce conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.

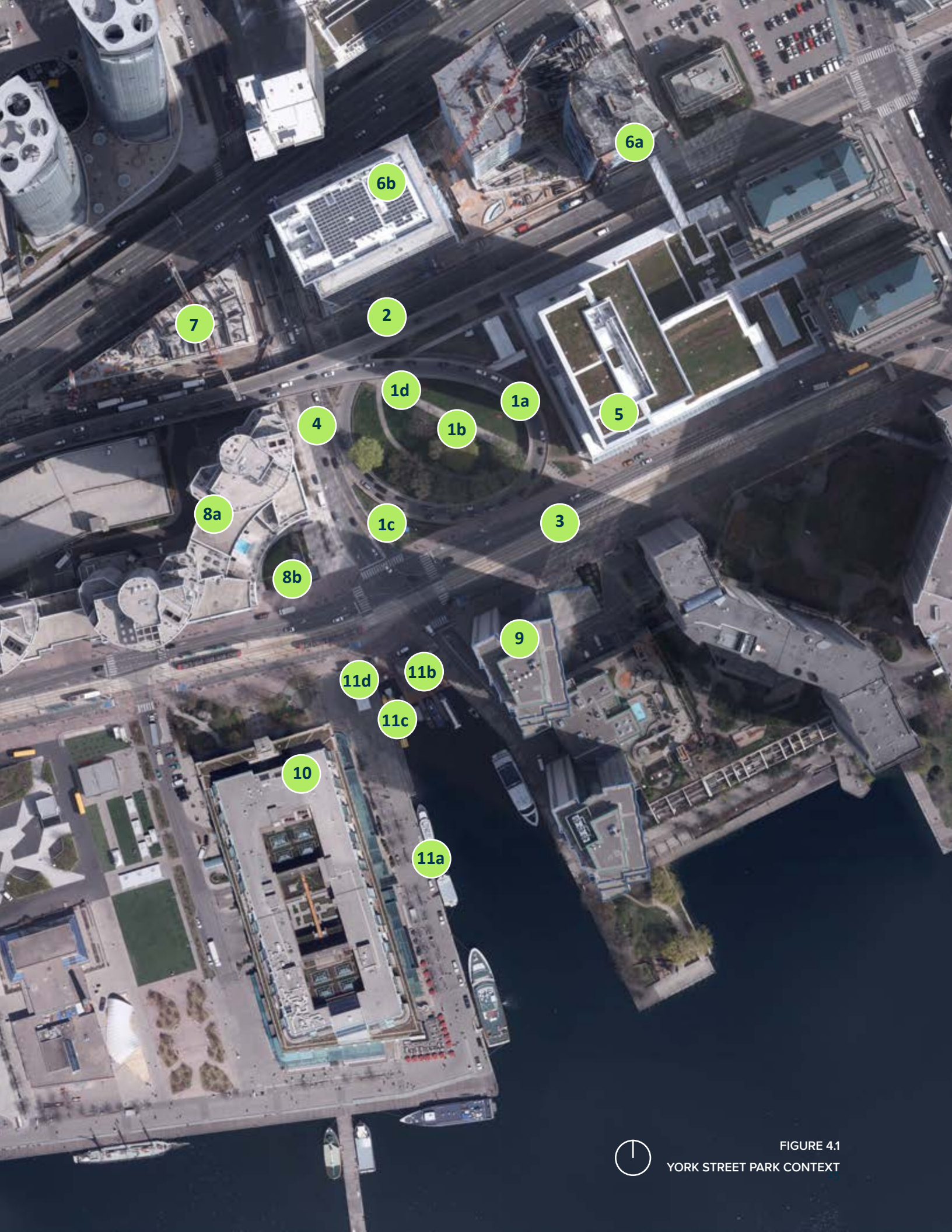


FIGURE 4.1
YORK STREET PARK CONTEXT

- 3 Queens Quay:** With its redesign and construction completed in June 2015, Queens Quay Boulevard is Toronto's main waterfront street and an important frontage for York Street Park. Queens Quay features two lanes of east-west traffic on the north side with a dedicated Light Rail Transit (LRT) line in the middle. On the south side, a generous granite pedestrian promenade alongside the Martin Goodman Trail, a multi-use recreational trail.

The existing configuration of granite paving and trees on Queens Quay at York Street Park was a response to the presence of the off-ramp. Since the ramp has been removed, designs for York Street Park should reinforce and articulate the continuity of the Queens Quay boulevard design and provide a celebratory frontage to the park on Queens Quay

- 4 York Street:** This street is one of the main gateways to the waterfront for pedestrians and automobiles coming from Union Station and downtown. The York Street edge of the park will be a gateway and visual connection to the waterfront for those arriving from the north. The existing configuration of York Street was determined by the spatial requirements of the off-ramp. Since the ramp has been removed, the design should normalize the east side of York Street between Harbour Street and Queens Quay and create a safe, comfortable, accessible pedestrian experience and a permeable edge to the park. Adjustments to the location of the eastern curb of York Street may be proposed, providing that two lanes southbound, and one lane plus a turn lane northbound are maintained. Any such changes will have to be reviewed and approved by Transportation Services after the design competition.

The west side of York Street includes a layby for buses that bring tours and groups to York Quay to board boats on York Slip. This is also a location for hop-on hop-off tourist buses and the layby function must be maintained.

- 5 RBC WaterPark Place/88 Queens Quay:** This is an office building located on the east side of the park. The space consists of a 31-storey tower with 930,000 square feet of office space (86,000 square metres). The complex has a food court and connects to Union Station via the Path network. The more than 4,000 people who work in this tower complex, along with workers in One York, represents one of the significant user groups for this park.

The west elevation of 88 Queens Quay forms the eastern edge of the park. This façade includes a 2-story glass lobby with views to the park, but no physical connection, as well as an untenanted retail space with doors that open immediately onto the park. The relationship between this building, its façade (including potential ground floor retail) and the park should be carefully considered in the design.

- 6a 88-100 Harbour Street:** Harbour Plaza Condominiums are a new condominium complex developed along with the One York office building. The two towers have 62 and 66 stories respectively, and together a total of 1,305 residential units. The buildings have been occupied since 2017.

- 6b One York Street:** This recently built office tower looks directly onto York Street Park from the north side of Harbour Street. One York includes a food court on the roof level of the podium with a publicly accessible terrace that overlooks the park. It has a total of 35 stories, and it is headquarters to Sun Life Financial, which has over 2,000 employees at this location.

- 7** **Ten York Street:** Ten York, a triangular-shaped residential building, is located at the corner of Harbour Street and York Street. It is anticipated to be occupied in the Spring of 2019. It has a total of 65 stories and 725 residential units.
- 8a** **208-210 Queens Quay and 8 York Street:** Waterclub is a residential complex that consists of three towers located at the corner of York Street and Queens Quay. The towers range from 27 to 38 stories in height, and include over 1000 residential units. At the corner of York street is a privately-owned public space (**8b**). This plaza contains a Bike Share Toronto station, a sculpture and a water feature and is heavily used as a seating area during the warm months of the year. The complex has a commercial frontage with business such as Starbucks, Quiznos, Pizza Pizza, a pharmacy and a dental office.
- 8b**
- 9** **One York Quay (77-99 Harbour Square):** This pair of 39- and 40-storey residential towers includes 812 units and ground-floor retail on Queens Quay facing York Street Park. The residential lobby of the building is located to the south of Queens Quay.
- 10** **207 Queens Quay:** Located the south-west corner of Queens Quay and York Street, this 12-storey mixed-use building was built in 1926 as a cold storage warehouse. The complex was renovated in the 1980's and includes over 20 retail units, including restaurants and cafes, a dance theatre, approximately 400,000 square feet of office space. Among its retail units are a Sobeys supermarket and a Tim Hortons café. The four top stories of the building include a total of 72 residential apartment units. The forecourt of Queens Quay Terminal includes a garden with mature ornamental plantings and pavings that honour the winners of the Toronto Book Awards.
- 11a** **York Quay Promenade:** Many of Toronto's commercial tour boats and charter boats leave from York Quay. Rebuilt in 2006 by Waterfront Toronto, this very busy promenade includes space for boat lineups, and a walkway for strolling along the water. At its south end this walkway meets the waterfront-wide promenade that connects to the public parks and open spaces of Harbourfront to the west. Ticket booths at the head of slip sell tickets for tours of the harbor, and small souvenirs
- 11b** **Pier 6 Building:** Currently housing a busy Beaver Tails franchise that generates long lineups during the summer, this little building is the oldest structure on Toronto's Central Waterfront. It was built in 1906 at the foot of Bay as the original Ferry Terminal Building. In 1988 it was relocated to its current location.
- 11c** **Water Taxi Stand:** Water taxis that take customers to Toronto Island as well as the Toronto Island Marina Tender leave from the head of York Quay.
- 11d** **Harbourfront Centre Kiosk:** This building sells tickets to Harbourfront center attractions and contains a large electrical transformer that serves the York Quay promenade and slips.

3.3 SERVICING & INFRASTRUCTURE

Since the York Street Park site was formerly part of the Gardiner Expressway right-of-way, it does not include any municipal service connections. The successful Proponent will be required to design the municipal services required for the park and they will be constructed and installed as part of the construction contract. Servicing Requirements include:

- 200 Amp Electrical Service complete with electrical panel and cabinet, meter, etc. as per the then most current City of Toronto standards.
- 150mm diameter Water Service complete with chamber, meter, back-flow prevention device etc. as per the then most current City of Toronto standards.
- Storm Sewer connection(s) as required by the design.
- Sanitary sewer connection if required by program elements in the Proponent's submission.

The park should include provisions for free wireless internet. This service will be designed and provided free of charge by Beanfield Technologies Inc. Coordination only will be required by the successful Proponent.

YORK STREET



Acer platanoides
Norway Maple
60cm DBH

Acer saccharinum
Silver Maple
82cm DBH

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
73cm DBH

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
46cm DBH

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
71cm DBH

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
68cm DBH

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
32cm DBH

Gleditsia triacanthos
Honeylocust
81cm DBH

Acer platanoides
Norway Maple
70cm DBH

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
69cm DBH

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm
58cm DBH

Acer platanoides
Norway Maple
52cm DBH

FIGURE 4.2
YORK STREET PARK TREES

