



Regeneration.
in
Action



The past decade has witnessed a renaissance of interest in the waterfront, expressed in a wide range of changes, large and small, that are transforming the relationship between waterfront communities and their Lake. These changes are at the heart of the concept of regeneration. What does regeneration in action look like? Here are some examples:

Where communities previously lacked access to their waterfront, 350 km (218 miles) of Waterfront Trail now link 177 natural areas, 143 parks and promenades, 80 marinas and yacht clubs, and hundreds of historic places, festivals, and museums.

- Where soils and groundwater were contaminated by industrial activities, new homes and parklands are being created on Cobourg's waterfront.

Where a dangerous roadway was the only way for a pedestrian to cross the Humber River, a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge provides a striking link between Etobicoke and Toronto.

- Where Toronto's eastern beaches were frequently closed to swimming, an underground detention tank now prevents flows of untreated sewage into the Lake, reducing beach closings from more than 40% of the summer to only a few days per swimming season.
- Where upstream activities were depositing large volumes of sediments into Oshawa's Second Marsh, watershed landowners and developers are learning about protective measures to control runoff.
- Where the Lower Trent River waterfront was unattractive and neglected, the Trenton Renaissance program is creating a public greenway as the setting for stores and restaurants, boosting local business.



Waterfronts are now the centre of redevelopment for most great cities of the world; they are the greatest natural asset, and can be a focal point for the community - look at Paris, London, Barcelona.

*David Peterson,
former Premier of Ontario*



Actions to promote these changes are part of the *Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy* developed by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and its partners to:

- protect the physical, natural and cultural attributes of the waterfront;
- identify restoration needs and methods and encourage landowners, communities and agencies to implement them;
- promote greater awareness, understanding and recreational use of the waterfront and encourage community pride and participation in its regeneration;
- promote economic activities and employment that are compatible with other Greenway objectives; and
- foster cooperation in cost-effective public and private initiatives by reducing jurisdictional gridlock, sharing resources, and coordinating waterfront activities.

The regeneration context of the Greenway - incorporating natural and cultural heritage, shoreline, community health and economic benefits - conveys meaning to the Waterfront Trail and gives it an appeal and justification that make it more worthwhile than the average “hike and bike” trail. The Trail acts

both as a symbol of this broader regeneration process, and as a potent way to build public support for other waterfront renewal activities.

This comprehensive, ecosystem-based approach to landscapes is part of a world-wide trend. For example, the concepts of heritage corridors and greenways are being used throughout the US to integrate historic preservation and ecological conservation with a framework for responsible local economic development.

What have we learned from our experience along Lake Ontario over the past decade? A rich variety of activities is steadily implementing the Greenway Strategy. Collectively, they illustrate a number of recurring themes that have been instrumental in successful regeneration and provide valuable lessons for continued success:

- Make the waterfront a community priority
- Look beyond your boundaries
- Set the stage with good planning
- Use milestone projects to build momentum
- Design with heritage in mind
- Add value with connections
- Make it happen with creative partnerships
- Secure strategic public investment
- Attract private resources

On the south side of Lake Ontario, the Genesee Valley Greenway follows the path of the abandoned Genesee Valley Canal and Pennsylvania Railroad, providing trail based recreation and a framework for inter-community cooperation on greenspace protection, heritage protection, interpretation, and regional tourism.



MAKE THE WATERFRONT A COMMUNITY PRIORITY

When a public vision for the waterfront is developed, its regeneration quickly becomes a priority, not only for those residents and businesses located near the lakeshore, but also community-wide. This focusses attention on immediate needs and stimulates public and private investment. It also helps to transform not just the physical character of the waterfront, but also community attitudes about its value.

A restored waterfront is a magnet for community events. Probably due to a combination of

factors - sense of space near the Lake, cool summer breezes, rejuvenated parks - waterfront public spaces attract many festivals and other events, with considerable local economic and social benefits. In some cases, these activities have become so successful that additional facilities are required. For example, in Hamilton, efforts are being made to develop alternate, inland venues for events to expand the opportunities beyond the highly popular Pier 4 and Bayfront Parks.



☁️ Ten years ago, the City of Mississauga approved a 30 year plan for its waterfront - Vision 2020. Since then, with the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail as a catalyst, the City and other agencies have invested close to \$70 million in waterfront land acquisition, a marina, heritage restoration, and park rejuvenation. The private sector has followed the lead of the City and made substantial investments in new businesses, housing, restaurants and a hotel.



☁️ The City of Belleville has been working to create a public greenway across its entire waterfront since 1990. One of the first phases was Bayshore Park - successfully integrating the Waterfront Trail, habitat islands, ponds and reefs, shoreline naturalization, and an artificial wetland for stormwater treatment. A riverfront trail up the Moira River is now being built to connect the Trans Canada Trail and Waterfront Trail.

☁️ The Town of Gananoque's transition from a predominantly industrial economy to one that relies to a great extent on tourism and recreation has been led by a focus on its waterfront. Over the past 15 years, careful planning in conjunction with public sector (over \$3 million) and private sector investment have brought about a major transformation - improved habitats, reduced erosion and pollution along the shoreline, upgraded parks, an expanded municipal marina, and an historic village with a museum, restaurants and shops.