

events is a 160-kilometre (100-mile) Canadian ski marathon, which receives more than 1,000 entries each year.

Other North American cities also mount special winter activities: Easton, Maryland, hosts a Waterfowl Festival in mid-November to celebrate waterfowl conservation. The International Eelpout Festival in Walker, Minnesota, held in mid-February, began as a spoof on all the north woods fishing contests and a celebration for those who had survived the “worst” of winter, but is now enormously popular and draws thousands of fishers. In Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, the “Spectacle of the Geese” each September celebrates the migration of Canada geese to the marshes, with sunrise and sunset viewing tours and paddlewheel boat excursions to see fall colours. The success of these events does not depend on snowfall or very cold temperatures, and similar activities may be well-suited to southern Ontario’s climate, the joy of winter being celebrated whatever the weather.

In winter, the city’s cultural life is at its peak, with theatres, concert halls, restaurants, and cafés alive with people. However, if urban promenades, parks, and open spaces had a higher level of comfort, some of those activities could be brought outdoors. If the Greater Toronto bioregion is to develop further as a tourist area during the colder months, there must be better attempts to promote outdoor winter opportunities on the waterfront, linked to the river valleys, as well as to the unique setting, culture, and history of the shoreline.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAXIMIZING YEAR-ROUND USE

It is not feasible nor necessary to “winterize” the entire Greater Toronto bioregion waterfront. Rather, appropriate waterfront nodes should be selected as potential sites for year-round use and for staging winter events and festivals of a regional, national, and even international

scale. These sites should be connected to the greenway and year-round public transit should be encouraged.

The waterfront from Burlington Bay to the Trent River has a number of

successful recreational areas, although primarily in the summer months, and they are the nodes with the most potential for year-round use. Many of them could be improved with vegetation barriers or shelters, at little cost to managing agencies, but with the promise of increased use and added revenue.

Four such recreational nodes in the Region of Halton, each adding to the diversity of the regional waterfront, are as follows:

- Spencer Smith Park, on the Burlington waterfront, is a well-used facility in summer for boat-launching and passive recreational activities; its location, immediately adjacent to the downtown area, gives it tremendous potential for year-round use.
- The Oakville and Bronte Harbour areas in the Town of Oakville could

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also be winterized at little cost and indoor club facilities could support outdoor recreational uses. Catering to the boating community, the regional facilities serve boaters, most of them in the western part of the Greater Toronto bioregion.

- Coronation Park in the Town of Oakville is one of the larger active waterfront parks, attracting many families. Amenities include summer weekend concerts and children's play equipment. As in the case of many local waterfront parks, the most popular winter activities here are walking and viewing.

Mississauga, the only Region of Peel municipality adjacent to Lake Ontario, has a variety of recreational waterfront uses:

- Jack Darling Memorial Park, between the Rattray Marsh nature preserve and forests and ravines in privately owned Lorne Park Estates, provides waterfront recreation and is surrounded by complementary uses. Seasonal park facilities could be extended to support added outdoor winter activities as well as the tobogganing that is now popular in the winter.
- To the east, the Port Credit Harbour area south of Mississauga's downtown houses one of the largest fresh-water marinas in North America. Although much of the harbour is currently publicly owned, it is leased to private operators, which limits public access. City proposals to revitalize the area and increase public access could increase the harbour's year-round potential. Adjacent indoor recreational facilities

at J. C. Saddington Park would also serve to enhance year-round use.

- Canada Post's site on the waterfront offers significant long-term potential for mixed uses, including year-round recreational facilities, particularly if some existing buildings can be adapted.

Metropolitan Toronto also has a number of diverse waterfront nodes with great potential for year-round use:

- Etobicoke's motel strip/Humber Bay Park area is the subject of ongoing review. Future development plans will likely include extensive residential and retail areas, creation of wetlands, and educational and recreational facilities. A proposed community park and supporting amenities are intended to accommodate major events and festivals. Humber Bay Park East is already well-used during the summer months; improvements could greatly enhance comfort and safety in the park, bringing in more regional park users during the colder months.
- Harbourfront and Garrison Common attract visitors regionally, nationally, and internationally. Harbourfront currently provides the most extensive year-round programming and entertainment along the Greater Toronto bioregion waterfront. The majority of off-season events are held indoors, although winter programs organized around the skating rink are very popular. If future public and private open spaces are designed for year-round use, there will be opportunities to expand events outdoors.

WINTER IN HUMBER BAY PARK

Etobicoke's Humber Bay parks east and west are well-used during the summer, but would benefit further from winter facilities and programming. Proposed redevelopment along the nearby motel strip may substantially boost demand for park use throughout the year. Thoughtful and low-cost improvements to existing facilities could result in high quality recreation for an increasing number of winter visitors.

The parks already have good road access and abundant parking, but public transit connections and facilities must be improved; building shelters for and servicing of both parks by TTC buses would increase accessibility. An existing proposal for relocating the nearby GO station may result in improved regional transit access.

Park vegetation is predominantly deciduous, which often means a bleak winter landscape; planting coniferous trees and shrubs would create a more attractive environment, provide wildlife habitat, and improve the microclimate. Metro's parks department has already begun planting native species in Humber Bay Park East. Extending wetlands on both sides of the fishing pier would promote wildlife diversity. The shoreline is the most desirable area for walking and sitting, but is exposed directly to winter winds; planting trees along the south and east shorelines of both parks would provide wind-screening.

Well-defined walking and bicycling paths exist throughout Humber Bay Park East, but not in Humber Bay Park West. The trail network — separated from roadways — should be expanded throughout the site and along the shoreline to maximize views to the lake. The trail should connect both parks via a bridge over Mimico Creek and extend north along the banks of the creek. Major walkways should be constructed using heat-absorbing surface materials, which would make winter maintenance easier.

Seating should be increased in both parks, especially in Humber Bay Park East, which attracts more people. Skating and winter bird-watching along Mimico Creek and nearby natural areas could be enhanced if resting areas were provided in landscaped outdoor sunpockets. A gazebo-type shelter adjacent to the canal would benefit both pedestrians and skaters.

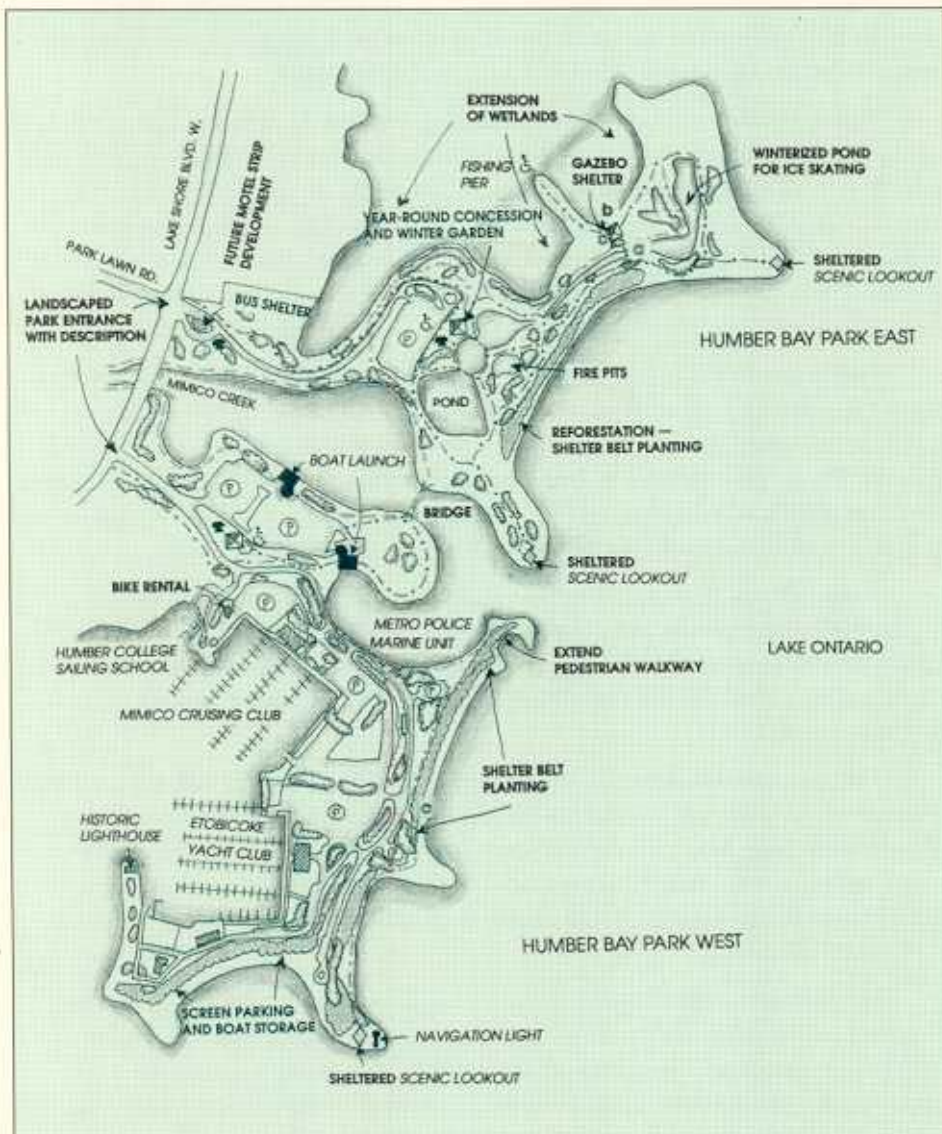
There are no food concessions open permanently to the public, although mobile ones cater to park users occasionally on summer days. In winter, mobile vendors could provide visitors with hot chocolate while they walked or skated. An existing comfort station in Humber Bay Park East could be enlarged to house a café/restaurant and horticultural display. Signs at all park entrances should give people information about year-round facilities.

The reduced number of park visitors during the winter season increases the risk of assault. Landscaping should reinforce safety, without detracting from the natural setting. Year-round food concessions would create a permanent presence in the park; pedestrian lighting and visitor information kiosks at park entrances would also create a safer environment.

Improvements now and in the future will attract more visitors; as the number of people using the Humber Bay parks increases, so will opportunities for expanding winter facilities and programming.

Source: Klinger, X. Winter waterfront: year-round use in Metropolitan Toronto, 1991. Working papers of the Canadian Waterfront Resource Centre, no. 9. Toronto: Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront.

Figure 6.2 Winter waterfront case study: proposed improvements for Humber Bay Park





People promenading along Toronto's Harbourfront in March

The Preliminary Master Plan for Garrison Common (Berridge Lewinberg Greenberg et al. 1991) examines year-round use in the area. Right now, outdoor spaces are used primarily during the summer, while design and programming ignore the possibility of year-round utilization. Winter climatic conditions here are harsh and open spaces would have to be modified to provide an acceptable microclimate.

- The park on the Toronto Islands is currently used year-round, as a major regional public place that accommodates millions of visitors, primarily during the summer season. With a few low-cost, key modifications, it could be made more comfortable, attractive, and accessible in the colder seasons. The feasibility of the present location of the Ferry

Terminal should also be reviewed for potential as a year-round operation.

The Islands already have a good vegetation base, including evergreen trees planted in the past five years. Additional planting would help to screen open spaces currently exposed to strong winds. Overall, in fact, winterization would require relatively little additional investment. Winter programming would also help to increase the number of park users.

- The Guild Inn and Guildwood Park in Scarborough are already used year-round. The hotel is privately operated, while the park, including an extensive collection of architectural artifacts, is operated by Metro and is open to the public. The park is especially

Where the winters are long and the sun sets low in the sky, people cherish what sunlight there is.

Whyte, W. H. 1988. *City: rediscovering the centre*. New York: Doubleday and Company.

beautiful in winter, when it can be viewed against a serene background of snow, evergreens, and the lake. Future redevelopment plans for the Guild Inn should maintain the site's existing scale and character and enhance year-round use.

While portions of the Durham waterfront are not yet fully developed, there could be recreational waterfront nodes in the future, providing opportunities for developing year-round use. Of those already developed, the key nodes on the Lake Ontario shoreline that have potential for year-round enhancement are as follows:

- The Petticoat Creek Conservation Area, in Pickering, surrounded by residential homes, currently operates seasonally and caters primarily to families; adding indoor recreational facilities would probably mean year-round use of the area.
- The Lynde Shores Conservation Area in Whitby is well-known as a place for viewing wildlife in the spring and autumn months, with boardwalks and viewing facilities. Both the Lynde Creek and Cranberry marshes provide excellent habitat for nesting birds. Summer activities at the conservation area include picnicking, fishing, and canoeing while winter-time users include participants in scheduled events such

as winter bird-feeder tours and skating on the Lynde Creek Marsh — one of the area's most popular outdoor winter activities. Future improvements could include an interpretive centre with improved indoor washroom facilities.

- The harbour area in the City of Oshawa is currently being studied with respect to its future uses. It has potential to be developed for uses including recreational with year-round facilities.
- Darlington Provincial Park in the Town of Newcastle is a haven for rugged outdoor types — camping and fishing are most popular in this passive and active park. Other waterfront areas along the Newcastle shoreline have yet to be developed for recreational or other uses. In planning for these sites, consideration should be given to building form and design and to recreational facilities that promote use throughout the year.

STEPS TO WINTERIZATION

Local and regional waterfront planning policies and practices should recognize the potential for enhancing outdoor recreational use in the colder months. Municipalities should undertake user surveys, and adopt and implement appropriate policies after public consultation, and with the co-operation of relevant governments, agencies, and special-purpose bodies. Standards and guidelines for sun access and wind comfort levels should be developed and enforced, requiring studies of wind impact, sun access, and other relevant factors before issuing project approvals. These studies should include assurances that there will

be no detrimental change in wind patterns, velocities, and turbulence at the sites in question. Wind testing of proposed projects should also be conducted by the proponents early in the approvals process and be taken into account in planning and urban design decisions.

Proposed developments for areas in which wind speeds already exceed acceptable comfort levels should aim to reduce these speeds. New promenades, open spaces or park sites in development or redevelopment projects along the waterfront should be located to minimize wind effects. As it is neither possible nor desirable to screen all areas of the waterfront from adverse winds, each site should be assessed on its need and potential for modification based on the existing microclimate, present and future uses, and adjacent development.

Surveys of both existing and proposed sites that would be affected by future development or redevelopment should be conducted to determine whether there is a need for site-specific guidelines covering building location, height, and form to avoid overshadowing. Modifications to built form should be required if proposed projects would create extensive overshadowing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

49. The Royal Commission recommends that local and regional municipalities across the Greater Toronto bioregion waterfront review their Official Plans and relevant supporting documents to incorporate policies that encourage year-round recreational use of the waterfront, particularly in the colder months.

50. The Commission further recommends that local municipalities prepare and promote design guidelines that encourage landowners and developers to enhance pedestrian microclimate conditions. Factors such as wind impact and sun access should be considered in deciding whether the location and mass of a building are appropriate.

51. Because not all areas of the waterfront are suited to year-round use, local and regional municipalities should work with agencies and the public to define priority recreational waterfront nodes for winterization; decisions should be based on user needs, the facilities available, and the potential to expand programming.