

Windgate of Main Street Mall in Buffalo, New York

Sunpockets can also be created in appropriate locations along the waterfront to encourage outdoor use in the off-season. These are a site-specific tool that can ensure solar access — semi-enclosed seating areas with direct sunshine access, protected from winds. They can be created using landscaping or other screening methods and are particularly desirable on the waterfront, where they can block the wind and provide vistas and views to the open water.

Walls and windgates should also be considered as wind protectors at promenade or park entrances and along roads. Windgates could be made of transparent materials, similar to those proposed as protection for walking areas in the City of Buffalo. Combined with vines and other plantings, they could become attractive sculptural elements and park landmarks.

PROVIDING FACILITIES TO ACCOMMODATE YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITIES

Available information on summer use indicates that walking, sitting, and enjoying nature are the most popular activities on the waterfront. Limited available data indicate that these activities, in addition to others such as skating, remain the most popular outdoor waterfront activities in the colder months.

Cold, snow, and ice tend to hinder outdoor recreational use in winter months, especially on the waterfront. To capitalize on investments and increase use, existing and future recreational and sports facilities on the waterfront should be re-examined, looking for ways to maximize year-round use. For example, the courts used for tennis in summer could be used for skating in winter, while swimming pools could be

converted for year-round use: uncovered in summer, enclosed in winter.

Improvements to waterfront facilities should be based on the interests and needs of both local and regional users, determined through surveys if necessary. Public consultation would also help determine which areas are more likely to be used throughout the colder months, and warrant immediate attention. Special emphasis should be placed on the needs of the elderly, physically challenged, women, children, teenagers, families, and ethnic communities.

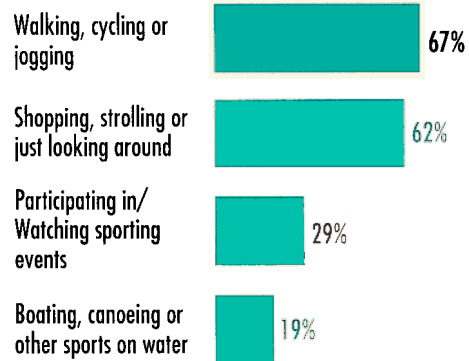
The length of recreational outings in cold weather will depend, in part, on air temperatures and the degree of protection from the wind. As a rule of thumb, people will walk for approximately ten minutes in winter before they need to warm up, with seniors and children more susceptible to cold. Walks and visits tend to be much shorter than in the summer, depending on the attractions and on available facilities such as washrooms, sheltered seating areas, and food outlets. Further studies of behavioural patterns of various user groups are required to pinpoint the length of travel time and average duration of a winter waterfront visit.

Locating facilities at selected nodal points along walkways would increase use and promote longer visits. Shelters from wind, rain, and snow, that still allow enjoyment of lake views, would also encourage prolonged visits to the waterfront as the weather gets cooler. Strategic locations for shelters include places where visitors linger or sit, such as look-out points and along walkways; these could be designed in combination with food concessions and washrooms.

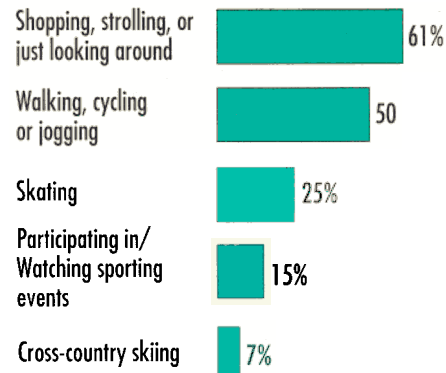
Existing facilities in park areas could be modified to function throughout the year. For example, gazebos could be adapted

Waterfront Activities

Summer Activities



Winter Activities



Participation in summer and winter waterfront activities by the respondents.

Source: Environics Poll, 1991.

with temporary enclosures such as transparent or glass panels and could even be equipped with stoves and wood to warm those who use the area for prolonged visits.

There is a general lack of seating in urbanized waterfront areas and parks. To foster year-round use, seating capacity standards and guidelines should be developed and applied for areas including parks and promenades. A lot of existing seating is unusable in winter: concrete benches and

steps are too cold, and seats in the shade, exposed to wind or covered with snow are rarely used.

Where it is appropriate, and especially where access to sun is limited in peak use periods, consideration should be given to movable seating. Movable chairs and benches allow users to take maximum advantage of sun and shade conditions. Moreover, flexible seating arrangements provide opportunities for both privacy and social interaction: Paris, New York, London, and Stockholm provide movable seats in many of their parks, and some — like the little chairs in the Luxembourg Gardens — have become park trademarks.

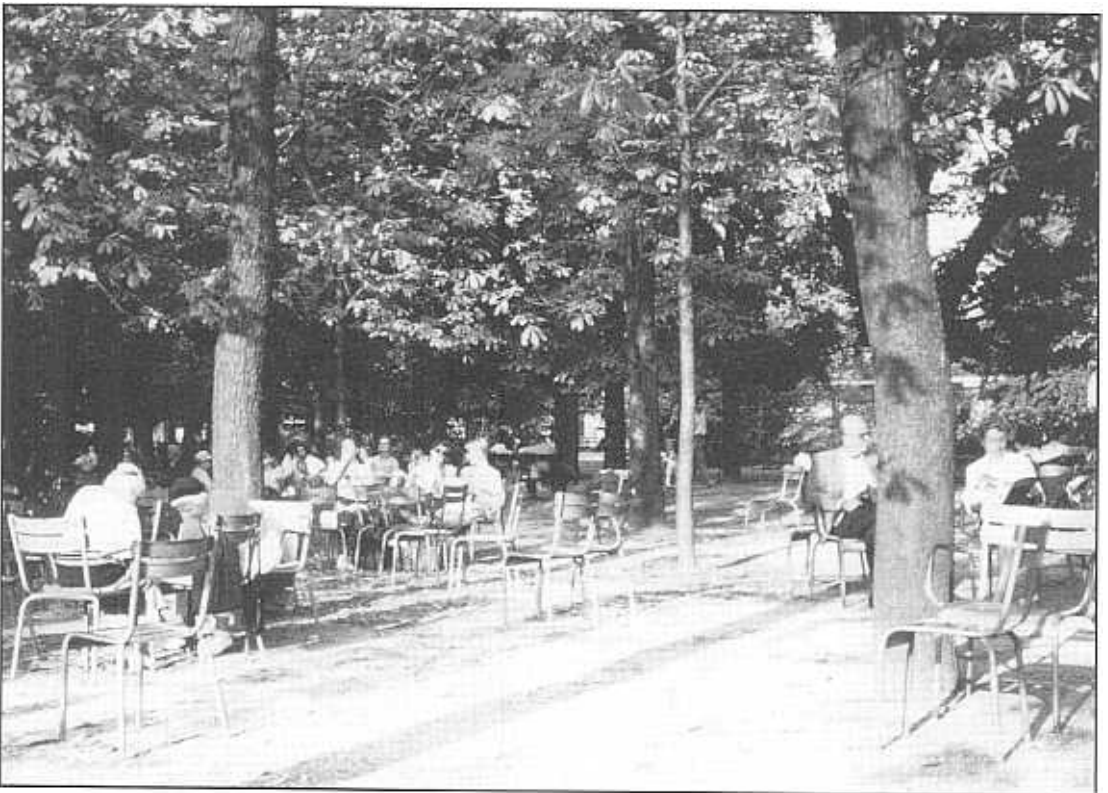
Vandalism and theft are often given as reasons for not providing movable chairs. However, this runs contrary to the experience at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art,

which provides 200 movable chairs along its front steps, and leaves them out 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Met found that it is less costly to replace stolen chairs than to pay for storage each night.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTACT WITH NATURE

One natural attraction of the outdoors is its seasonally changing moods; many places appeal to people because of natural features: a relaxing fall walk to view the changing colours; a family outing to learn about plants and animals on a wildlife reserve or conservation area; a spectacular view of the bluffs.

Sometimes what is a magnificent view in winter can be undistinguished in summer — a snow-covered landscape, for example.



Movable chairs in Luxembourg Gardens, Paris

Seasonal opportunities along the waterfront could offer the chance to:

- observe birds and butterflies along their migratory flight paths in spring and fall;
- follow winter animal tracks in the snow;
- observe and feed winter waterfowl;
- view the frozen lake and sculptured icy waves in winter;
- observe trees and shrubs, with their interesting bark, branch patterns, and clinging berries in winter; and
- appreciate the seasonal experiences of silence and the smell of melting snow in the winter, changing colours in the fall, warm spring breezes, and the softness of summer days.

Fragrant and tactile gardens would also offer those with impaired vision or limited mobility special opportunities for enjoying nature year-round. Only a few waterfront sites, such as the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington and the Rosetta McClain Gardens in Scarborough, currently do so.

Vistas should be developed with consideration given to seasonal weather, ambient light, and colour. Care should be taken to ensure that structures such as windgates and windscreens do not impair these views. Low angles of sun and long shadows in winter present opportunities to exploit the intricacies of gates, trellises, sculptures, and plantings designed to create imaginative winter landscapes and enhance outdoor spaces. Lighting,

ice, and the kinetic energy of wind can also be combined to devise intricate seasonal sculptures. Other ideas include using lake water to create fountains, cascades, ponds, and channels that could be artificially frozen to create skating and hockey areas.

Year-round nature interpretation centres should be provided in selected regional parks where natural areas, woodlands, marshes, and wetlands constitute a significant proportion of parkland. Nature

trails should include sheltered areas for observing and describing natural species, habitats, and geological formations. Special winter outdoor educational pro-

grams for children could be developed and would include games, nature hikes or exploration tours, bird-watching, and animal tracking.

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ENHANCING USER SAFETY

Given that the presence of people makes a place feel safe, the greater the number at a particular area of the waterfront, the safer they all feel. The safer they feel, the more inclined they are to continue visiting an area — an important factor, especially during colder seasons when fewer people use the waterfront and there are fewer hours of daylight.

The proposed greenway could make access to parts of the waterfront safer and more comfortable by adding connections from the city to the water, from downtown offices to waterfront parks, and from neighbourhoods to the water's edge, during the winter months.

In designing safe and comfortable recreational areas and pathways, consideration should be given to the change in level of usage and its effect on safety. The configuration and types of vegetation, proper lighting, effective signage, and seasonal wind and ice conditions should be considered and, where possible, bad-weather hazards should be ameliorated and safety improved.

Carefully sited built forms and well-designed facilities, complemented by events staged on the waterfront, could draw large crowds, increasing perceptions of the area as being safe.

IMPROVING WINTER EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

Special outdoor events and festival programming at the waterfront have so far focused on the summer season, while unpredictable changes in climate and increased temperatures have made it difficult to stage traditional outdoor events in winter. Local cities have sponsored winter festivals and events that failed because they were planned for cold, snowy conditions that did not materialize.

In order to increase seasonal tourism and recreation, emphasis should be given to events and activities that do not depend on ice and snow. Entertainment should be used as a means of promoting the waterfront's unique attributes: Christmas tree decorating, bonfires, and winter-adapted summer sports such as camping, marathons, triathlons, and canoeing could form the basis for successful festivals. Planning for such events should take into account the needs of nearby communities, especially in regard to potential traffic, parking, and other issues.

Efforts should also be made to facilitate the development of community-based annual outdoor/indoor events.

During the colder months in Toronto, special waterfront events are often held indoors in selected locations such as Harbourfront, Ontario Place, and Exhibition Place. Harbourfront's York Quay in Toronto is a good example of a popular site for recreational and educational water-related activities in the summer and skating and other uses in the winter. Further north, Nathan Phillips Square is used as a venue for numerous promotional events, such as fund-raising campaigns and art exhibitions. The square is a breathing space in front of Toronto's City Hall, with a park-like atmosphere in summer that appeals to hundreds of people who sit and eat their lunch or simply relax in the sun. At other times of the year, the reflecting pool becomes a skating rink, while nearby concessions serve the public. Popular outdoor activities such as pleasure skating should continue to be accommodated along the waterfront.

For more than 35 years, Québec City has had an annual winter carnival, 11 days in February filled with outdoor activities such as skating along 3.8 kilometres (2 miles) of the St. Charles River, a perilous canoe race in the half-frozen St. Lawrence River, a snow sculpture contest, and horseback riding. There are also many indoor events, including a beach party, an exotic hair-styling and make-up competition, a fashion show featuring Canadian designers, and a casino night.

Ottawa has its own February event, the 10-day Winterlude Festival. Activities include such adaptations of summer sports as snow-golfing and a triathlon that comprises skating, skiing, and running. Among other