

## LOWER DON CHANNEL

It is difficult to naturalize a linear, channelled river like the Don between Rosedale and the proposed new delta. The City found it challenging just to find space for a cycling and walking trail there two years ago. Because the railroad tracks, expressways, and steel and concrete banks that hem in the lower Don seem to be here to stay, this highly urbanized stretch might better be treated more formally, as an attractive riverside park.

As part of the delta restoration, the Don Task Force suggests pools and rapids every hundred metres or so in the Don. They would help maintain the river's new and steeper gradient, and provide upstream access for fish. Fast-growing, water-loving willows and poplars could be planted on the almost treeless banks; their shade, as well as falling leaves and insects, would improve fish habitats and food sources. But, most important, the degraded lower Don would become a "people place" with welcoming shade trees, the pleasant sounds of a more natural river, and spots to sit and watch ducks paddling and fish circling in the pools.

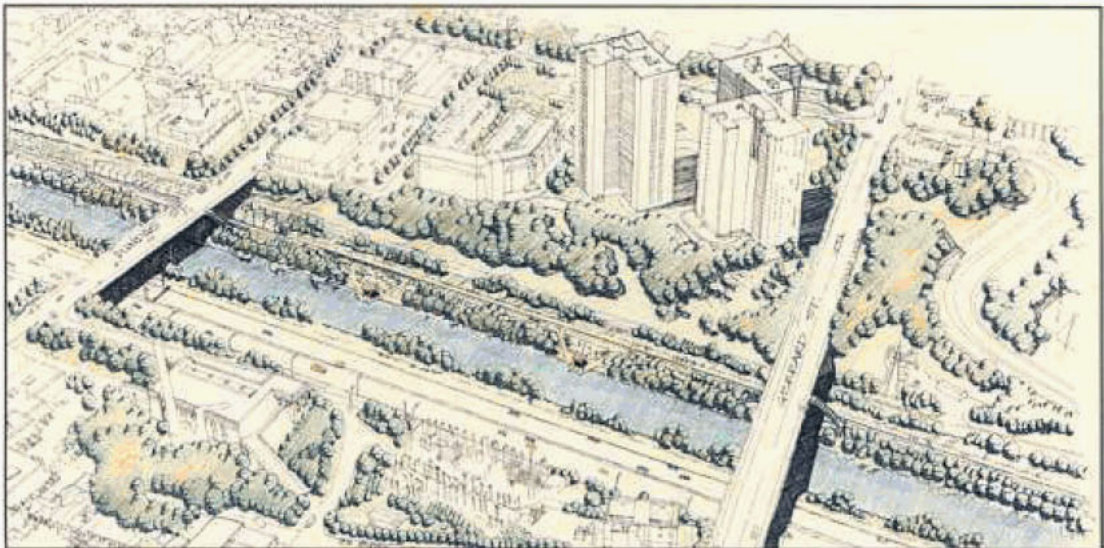
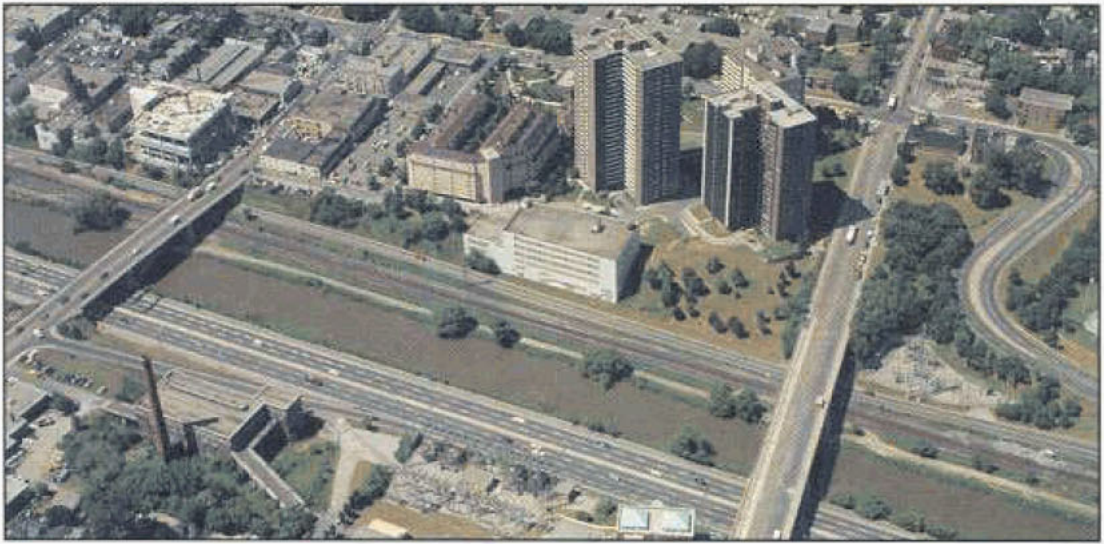


Figure 33 Lower Don Channel

## ACCESS AND RECREATION

The Don watershed is a dramatic network of branching green valleys and ravines in one of North America's largest urban centres. Through regeneration, it can again become a healthy home and migration corridor for wildlife. It can become a haven

for people too, maintaining vital connections with nature and offering respite from the pressures of the city within the city itself. The mobilizing force for restoration is access. The more people who enjoy the valley, even in its present state, the greater the groundswell for its healing.

What better way to encourage a watershed consciousness than to link up existing

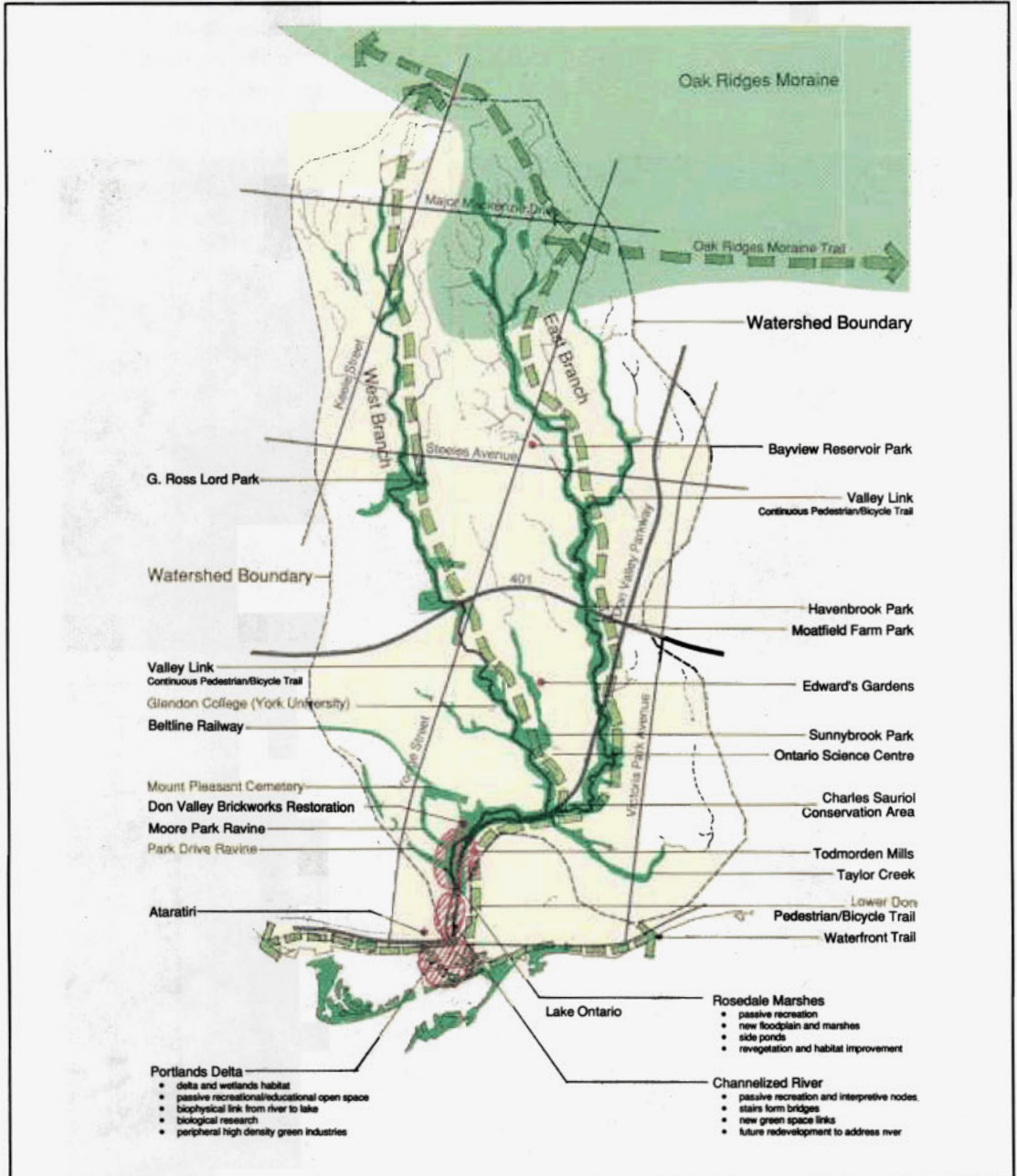


Figure 34 Connecting the watershed

trails — such as the lower Don bicycle path and the nature trail through the Charles Sauriol Conservation Reserve — through the whole watershed? That, in turn, would link the Martin Goodman Trail along the lakeshore with the proposed greenway on the Oak Ridges Moraine. Ever since the City opened a path on the lower Don — especially since an access stairway was built at Riverdale Park — dozens of cyclists, joggers, bird-watchers, and people just out for a stroll enjoy the lower valley every weekend.

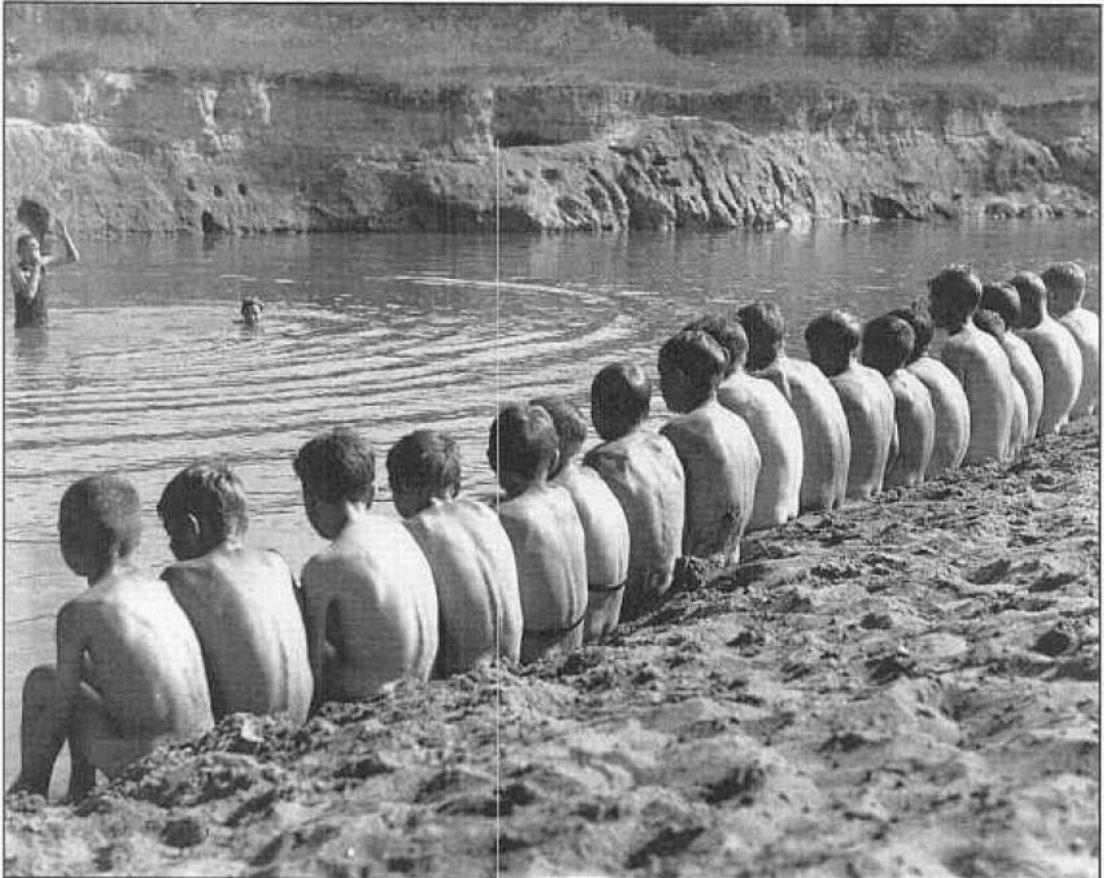
Apart from any recreational or spiritual uses it may provide human beings, the Don watershed is valuable in its own right as a natural system. Nonetheless, because people are now an inextricable part of the natural system, the point is to heal the watershed for all. The Don's advocates hope that, someday, when the foxes, turtles, and maybe even salmon return, children will be able to splash in the Don's swimming holes again.

## THOUGHTS ON ACHIEVING THE VISION

How do 800,000 people in seven municipal jurisdictions, with bureaucrats from several different provincial and federal ministries — plus troops of interested planners, politicians, naturalists, biologists, engineers, landscape architects, and lawyers — achieve a vision as far-reaching as restoration of a watershed?

One way not to achieve the vision is for each city and town in the watershed to continue acting on its own. What may benefit one local municipality may harm the entire watershed as well as local natural areas.

A further recipe for failure is to allow the vision to slip out of the hands of citizens and become the sole property of experts.





Dictating regeneration from above — by governments and their consultants — almost guarantees the loss of public support and stifles valuable initiatives. Neighbourhood and citizens' groups already practise restoration

locally: planting trees, cleaning up ravines, and acting as watchdogs to stop chemical spills and vandalism of nature. They must become part of a co-ordinated process for watershed regeneration.

