CHAPTER 6: WINTER WATERFRONT

The greenway system proposed in the previous chapter offers opportunities for more people to enjoy the waterfront. Those who currently visit it in the colder months know how beautiful the shoreline is, year-round. However, most people assume that high-quality outdoor waterfront experiences in the Greater Toronto bioregion occur only during the summer months. Therefore, it is useful to examine the potential of the waterfront and river valleys to create different but equally memorable experiences in the colder months, from mid-September to mid-May. Harbourfront and the City of Toronto's eastern beaches offer examples of waterfront areas already well-used throughout the year.

In April 1990, the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto suggested to the Royal Commission that a study be undertaken to "explore the possibilities of more wintertime recreational and entertainment activities along the central waterfront." As a result, the Commission organized a work group comprising representatives from local and regional agencies, including the Board of Trade, to examine ways of enhancing outdoor use, and to prepare a report on the matter. The *Winter Waterfront* working paper was released by the Commission in December 1991 as a contribution to enhancing year-round waterfront use in Metropolitan Toronto.

From Burlington Bay to the Trent River, there is a great deal of potential to improve year-round waterfront use, at low cost.

The Greater Toronto waterfront is more than 175 kilometres (109 miles) long, encompassing an impressive variety of places — from peaceful natural wilderness areas to towering residential condominiums adjacent to highways and commercial/tourist facilities. From Burlington Bay to the Trent River, there is a great deal of potential to improve year-round waterfront use, at low cost.

ENHANCING WINTER WATERFRONT USE

Emerging development of a greenway system will increase year-round use of the Greater Toronto waterfront. Municipalities and conservation authorities would benefit

from sharing pertinent information and participating in joint waterfront user studies. Municipalities could also contribute by adopting and implementing policies that achieve six major goals:

- providing year-round access;
- ameliorating outdoor climate;
- providing facilities to accommodate year-round activities;
- increasing year-round opportunities for contact with nature;
- enhancing user safety; and
- improving winter events and programming.

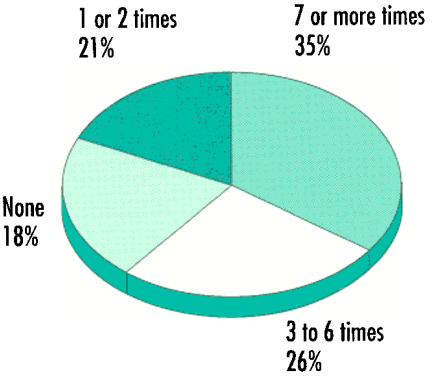
Providing Year-round Access

Accessibility to recreational areas is a key element in enhancing year-round use. The variety of walkways, ranging from the broad promenades at Toronto's Harbourfront to the modest paths and nature trails in Mississauga's Rattray Marsh or the Rouge River Valley in Scarborough, reflect the diversity of the bioregion's waterfront and river valleys; this should be retained, but connections between the various amenities should be made more comfortable.

The proposed greenway system would accommodate pedestrians and cyclists and would provide continuous access to waterfront promenades, parks, open spaces, and links to adjacent areas. The system should be safe and comfortable, connecting waterfront areas and the river valleys. The route of the waterfront greenway should be evaluated according to its ability to offer year-round use to pedestrians, cyclists, and others, including seniors and the physically challenged, and recognizing that some portions might be only seasonally accessible. Washrooms and food concessions should also be provided at appropriate nodal points and should be open to the public, as much as possible throughout the year. Frequent year-round public transit service to the waterfront, with shelters designed to be comfortable in the colder months, would also encourage use.

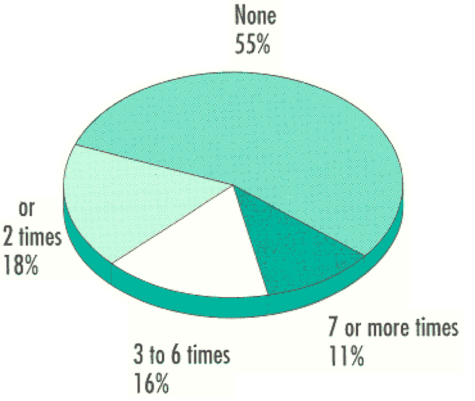
Waterfront Visits

Summer Visits



Average = 10.0

Winter Visits



Average = 3.8

The respondents visit the waterfront on average ten times in the summer and four times in the winter.

Source: Environics Poll. 1991.

Parking along the waterfront should be integrated into the surrounding environment; limited amounts should be carefully located along the waterfront, accommodating those who cannot walk long distances and enjoy visiting the waterfront, and those who enjoy viewing the lake from within a parked car.

Ameliorating Outdoor Climate

The climate of the Greater Toronto bioregion waterfront area is affected by the Great Lakes, which tend to make average winter temperatures three celsius degrees warmer and summer temperatures about one and-a-half degrees cooler than in the hinterland. In winter months, the influence of the lakes causes constant freezing and thawing periods, often making weather unpredictable and the use of outdoor spaces sporadic.

The prevailing mean daily wind direction for the Toronto region shifts according to the season: in winter it is from the west about 50 per cent of the time. In spring, prevailing winds come from the west only four per cent of the time, and 42 per cent from the northeast. In summer, the prevailing winds are from the southwest 61 per cent of the time, while in autumn they come from the west/northwest almost half the time.

Some northern cities with colder climates provide year-round facilities, but the challenge in cities such as Toronto, where weather is less predictable, is to use the urban design process to ameliorate wind conditions and maximize access to the sun: year-round facilities requiring substantial financial investment are not always necessary.

There are two basic ways of reducing wind velocity in a specific site: by planting vegetation or building structures such as berms, walls, and screens. Berms, combined with trees and shrubs, provide effective year-round windscreening, the degree of effectiveness varying with the porosity of the plantings. For example, very dense evergreens achieve a strong reduction (about 80 per cent) in wind speed and force but such reductions can be sustained only for short distances (about the equivalent of five tree heights), because of the return flow of deflected air to the ground. Less dense planting reduces the sheltering effect but increases the range at which it is effective.

The relationship between microclimate and use of the outdoor environment during colder months has been studied in various places. For example, Scandinavian studies show that, on days when the temperature is as low as 10 celsius degrees but there is no wind, people will feel comfortable even without heavy clothing and will make use of outdoor open space.

A recent research study concluded that Toronto's microclimate could be moderated by providing shelter against the wind, thereby extending comfortable outdoor use by approximately 56 additional days a year — an extension of park use of almost 50 per cent over the existing 18-week base season. (See Figure 6.1.) Because ambient temperatures in March, April, and May are often below the human comfort level of 10 degrees celsius, but sunlight and the length of days are increasing, techniques that offer site-specific shelter from the wind and that capture the sun in strategic spaces could increase temperatures and encourage use of these areas.

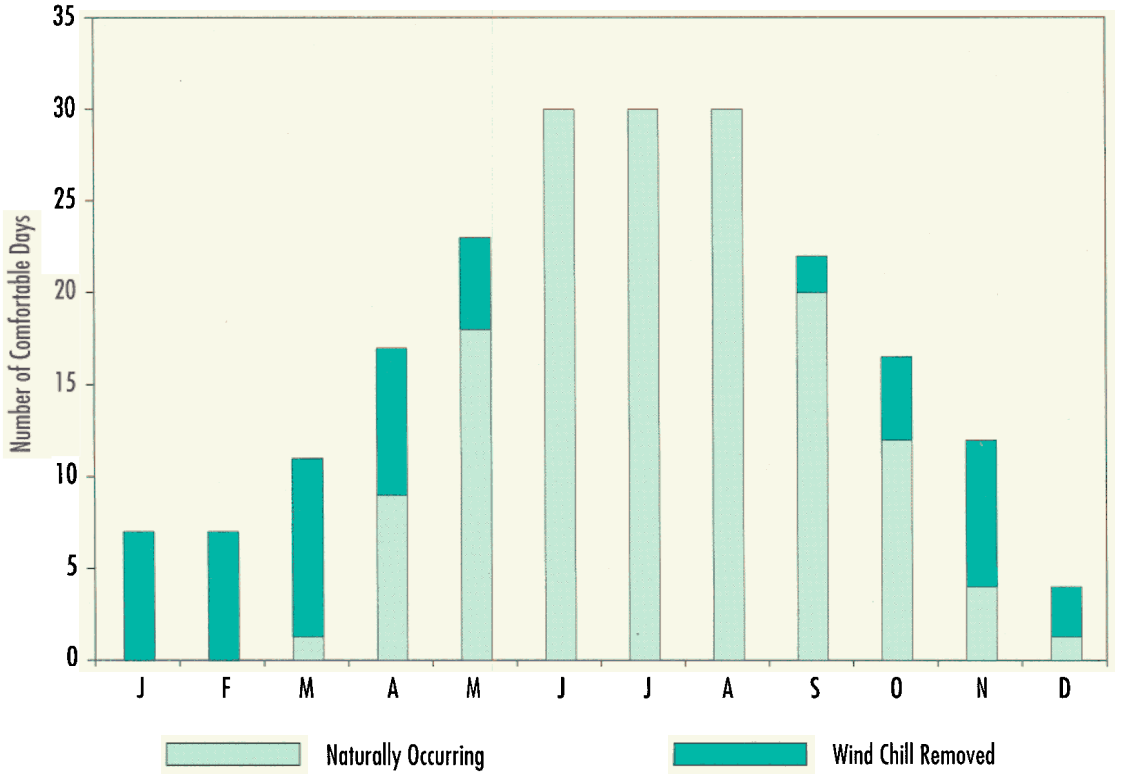
> **Tall, bulky buildings can cast broad shadows for surprising distances, influencing the experiences of people who never go near them.**
>
> Hiss, T. 1990. *The experience of place.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Temperatures in October and November are still in the outdoor comfort range but the effect of wet, windy weather on people needs to be addressed, if comfortable levels of outdoor use are to be achieved.

Studies examining the effects of built forms on sun and wind conditions and on pedestrians at street level have been done locally and in other parts of the world. San Francisco recently developed and adopted solar access and wind comfort standards for modifying building forms, heights, densities, and setbacks to ensure that developments do not put open-space pedestrian environments in shadow and do not generate a wind tunnel effect.

In response to massive development that reduced usable open space in San Francisco's downtown and on its waterfront, voters approved referendum "Proposition K" in 1984; it requires that access to sun be protected in all public parks and open spaces under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Department, from one hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset throughout the year. Following the referendum,

Figure 6.1 Increasing year-round use of parks by removing wind chill effects



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

several related amendments about access to sun on sidewalks and other open spaces have also been adopted.

Guidelines for controlling windiness in public open spaces in Toronto's Central Area were developed in 1974 but have not been adopted as part of its Official Plan. Currently, developers are encouraged to assess a project's impact on the microclimate of surrounding areas but — because proposals are tested for wind effects only in the final stage of the planning approvals process — are seldom required to make changes.

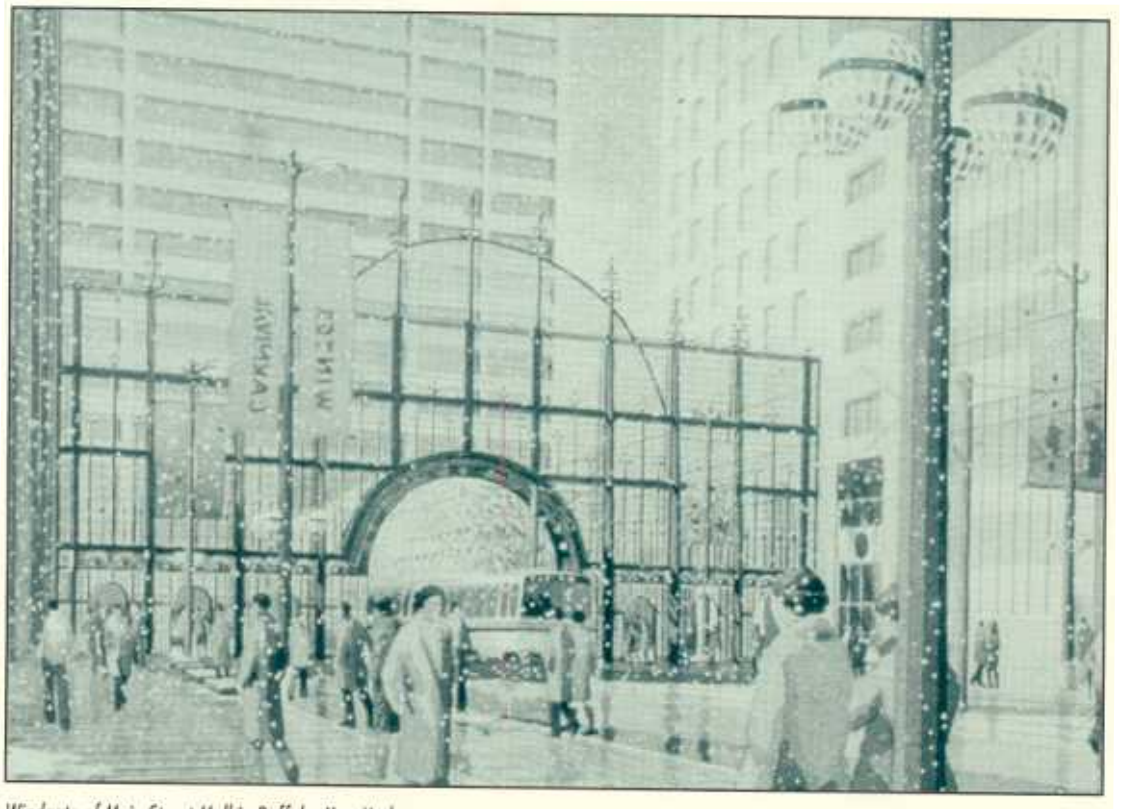
A 1991 study undertaken for the City of Toronto as part of Cityplan '91 examined and analysed the effect of buildings on wind conditions at street level and the combined effect of sun and wind conditions on pedestrian comfort. It recommended establishing procedures and standards for preserving access to sunlight on Central Area sidewalks, parks, and open spaces, and confirmed that sun and wind conditions are critical to outdoor uses, particularly in spring and fall. The report also suggested further studies to establish performance standards that will protect pedestrians from possible high winds resulting from future development such as those proposed for the Railway Lands.

Microclimate improvements in built forms, such as courtyards and wind-screening buildings, have been demonstrated in several Scandinavian projects. Studies show that courtyard use may be extended by about six weeks, most notably in spring, by applying the 10 degrees celsius comfort criterion. This microclimate improvement was achieved by applying urban design guidelines for each residential block — building heights are gradually increased from two stories at the southern edge of the courtyard to six storeys at the northern edge to screen out prevailing cold winds while allowing for maximum solar penetration.

Modest sunpocket at High Park in Toronto

Although appropriate authorities have a general understanding of the benefits of improving outdoor comfort levels, more appropriate policies, standards, and guidelines could be developed and implemented. For example, wind comfort and sun access standards would be helpful in developing all publicly accessible urban promenades, open spaces, and parks on the waterfront. Related guidelines could include the design of sitting areas and walkways located in areas protected from winter winds, sheltered to maintain views.

> **When building heights are routinely increased . . . the shadow impacts are greatly increased. For those on the receiving end the change is not one of degree; it may be absolute. They had sun; now they have none . . . Sunlight should be a right, not an amenity that is nice to have.**
>
> Whyte, W. H. 1988. *City: rediscovering the centre*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.



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.

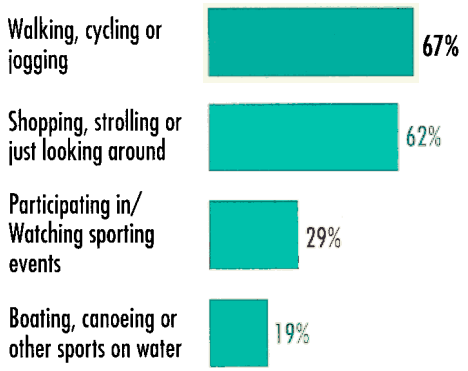
The length of recreational outings in cold weather will depend, in part, on air temperatures and the degree of protection from the wind. As a rule of thumb, people will walk for approximately ten minutes in winter before they need to warm up, with seniors and children more susceptible to cold. Walks 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.

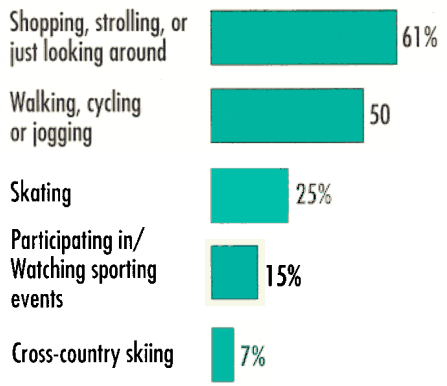
Existing facilities in park areas could be modified to function throughout the year. For example, gazebos could be adapted

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.

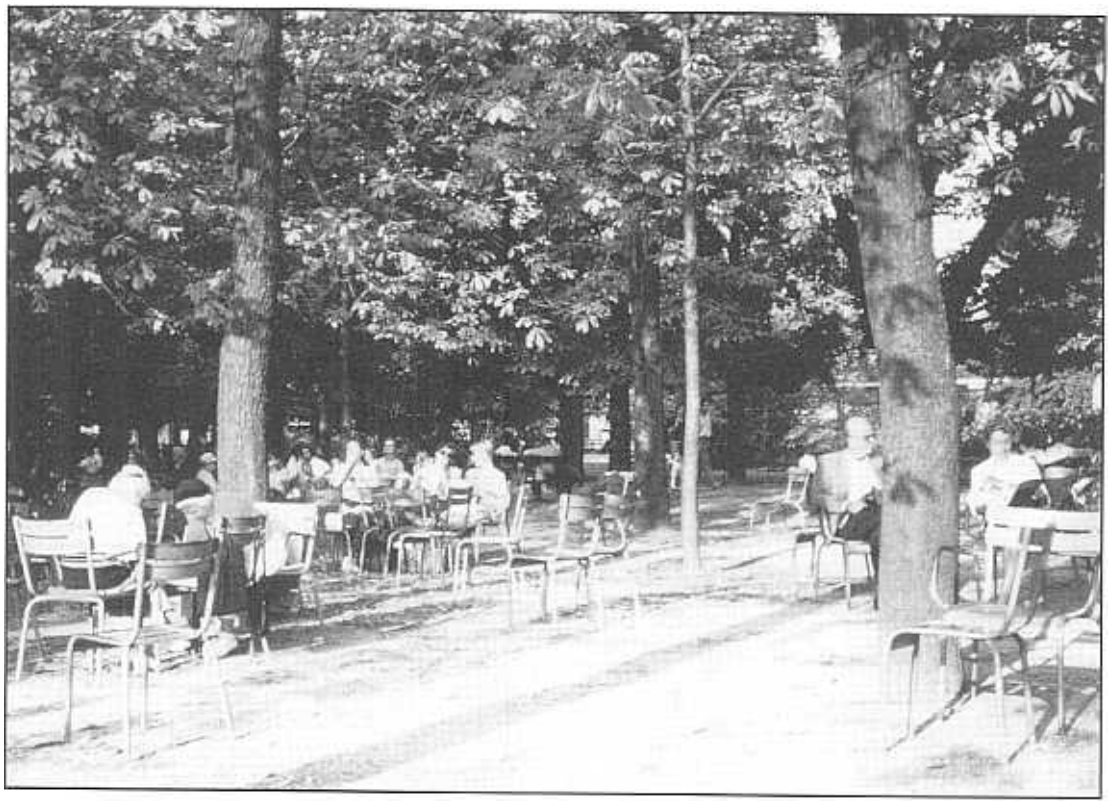
Where it is appropriate, and especially where access to sun is limited in peak use periods, consideration should be given to movable seating. Movable chairs and benches allow users to take maximum advantage of sun and shade conditions. Moreover, flexible seating arrangements provide opportunities for 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 programs for children could be developed and would include games, nature hikes or exploration tours, bird-watching, and animal tracking.

Low sun angles and long shadows in winter present opportunities to exploit the intricacies of gates, trellises, sculptures, and plantings to create imaginative winter landscapes and enhance outdoor spaces.

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

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.

It is not feasible nor necessary to "winterize" the entire Greater Toronto bioregion waterfront. Rather, nodes for year-round use and for staging winter events and festivals should be selected and connected to the greenway.

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

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 desireable 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.

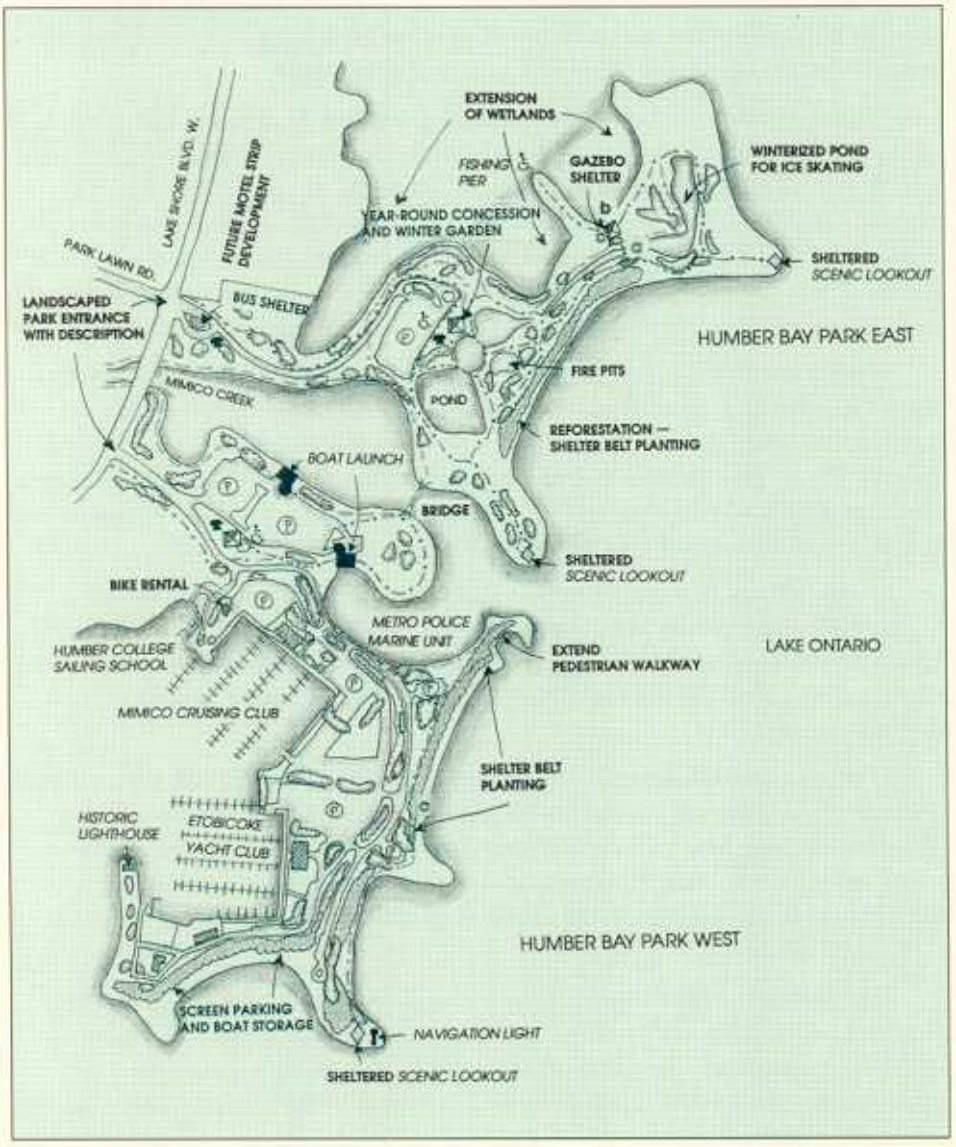
There are no food concessions open permanently to the public, although mobile ones cater to park users occasionally on summer days. In winter, mobile vendors could provide visitors with hot chocolate while they walked or skated. An existing comfort station in Humber Bay Park East could be enlarged to 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.