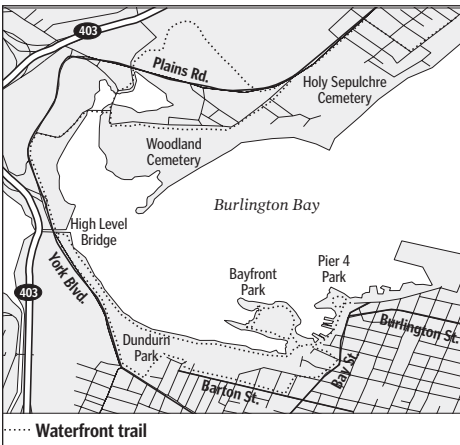


Ugly duckling to waterfront swan

Hamiltonians used to feel the need to apologize for their waterfront. “Yes, it’s ugly,” we often said, nodding at the smoking landscape while whizzing by on the QEW, “but it employs a whole lot of people.”

But with the extension of the Hamilton Waterfront Trail that now links Princess Point with HMCS Haida on Pier 9 six kilometres away, this city’s waterfront continues to grow as a place to celebrate rather than avoid.

A generation ago, the waterfront was a no-go zone. You’d risk your life scaling fences, crossing rail lines and climbing slag heaps to dip your toe in the water. For too long, we took for granted and harmed a physical gem many cities would kill to have. It’s taken decades to bring back the bay and the waterfront lands, thanks to the dedication of various community groups and individuals. Much more work is ahead.



Trails dot the waterfront area, forming a significant part of the revival effort.

the glimmering lake, first by an expressway and now by luxury condos stacked side by side like pieces on a chessboard, Hamilton will not have a city where only the rich can feel the breeze off the water.

It’s an approach that echoes the beautiful lakeside development of communities such as Burlington, Oakville and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Now sunny days bring out thousands of people to walk, jog, bike and skate the waterfront trail, kayak and sail in the harbour, even fish the waters. Community groups dedicated to restoring the bay have turned their impressive dedication to making the water safe to swim in again.

With each link in the chain, Hamilton’s shoreline is approaching the critical tipping point where there is enough to see and do to attract crowds and enough visitors to support attractions.

Plans to restore transit service from the downtown to the waterfront must be stepped up. It’s clear people want to enjoy the shoreline and it would be nice if they didn’t have to take a car to get there.

Hamiltonians owe it to themselves and their city to visit the trail this summer. Bring your friends and family, especially the out-of-town ones who don’t know the new Hamilton. All the profits of the Hamilton Waterfront Trust are reinvested, so spending any money will reap future rewards like ripples from a skipping stone.

Though the progress has been too slow for some, the stars are now lining up for the city’s shoreline. The Hamilton Beach Trail, Bayfront Park, Pier 4, the Marine Discovery Centre, the Lakelands Centre, boat tours, the Haida, eating spots and the trails and green space linking them all together are huge steps toward creating the kind of city most of us want to call home.

We’ve also avoided the mistakes of other cities, most notably our giant sister to the east. Where Toronto has cut its residents off from