

RiverCityLife

metropolitan living in the mouth of a river

first the river



river - spits



an expanded lakefront



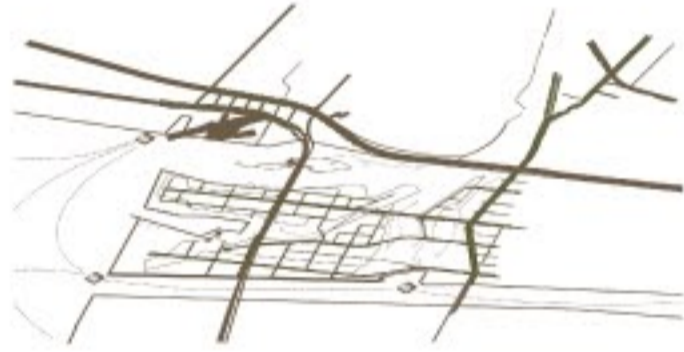
open spaces that work



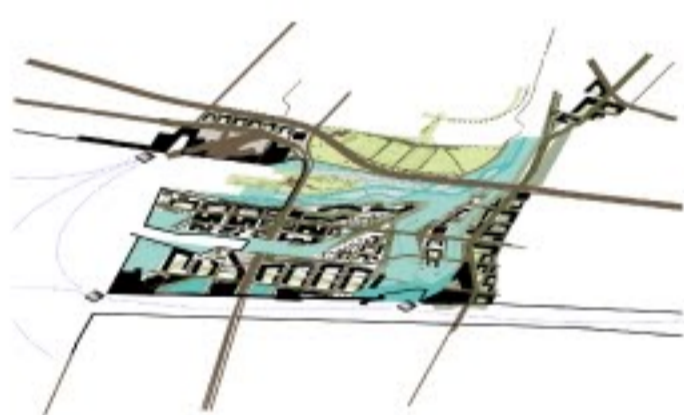
robust neighborhoods



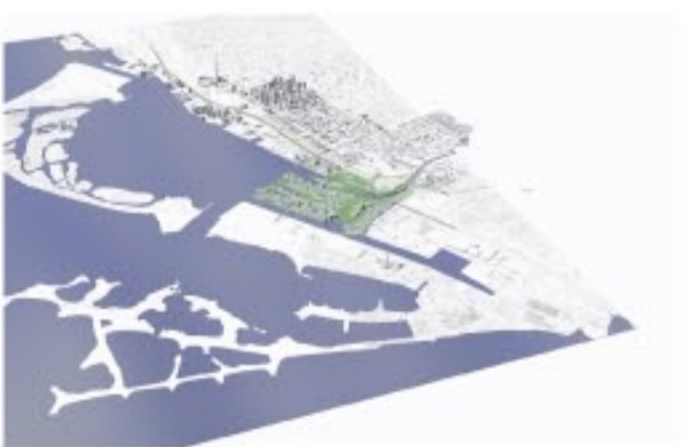
river - city destination + routes



RIVER + CITY + LIFE



The Lower Don Lands



The proposal looks to engage the specific, delicate dynamics at the mouth of the Don River in Toronto, at the place where it meets Lake Ontario. Given the Lake's twenty-year cycles of rise and fall, and the river's seasonal dynamics tuned to regional rainfall, the project takes on the very idea of living in a dynamic river interface—very much akin to the idea of living in an estuary.

To this end, we imagine actively inhabiting this estuarine-like condition, this dynamic mouth of the Don, to create a renewed and re-established ecological interface between river and lake, and an expanded cultural interface between Toronto and its Lakefront.

The River, the Lake and the rising and fluctuating water levels are allowed to shape this new metropolis, giving rise to unique, dynamic, engaging, world-class neighborhoods and open spaces. Socially vital and ecologically rich, the re-imagined Lower Don Lands are a new kind of metropolitan precinct, a cultural expression of a landscape-driven model for building new communities in areas subject to inundation and water level change.

Further, in building on the Environmental Assessment studies, even flood control becomes an opportunity. River and lake fluctuations put in play a constantly evolving wash of low waters that are amplified by the marsh's shallow grade. The effect around and among the spits, though, is dramatic: dry one month, entirely inundated the next: the spits can become temporary peninsulas that further emphasize the site's fluid occupations.

In taking back its space, the renewed Don becomes a life force once again, giving rise to rich ecological habitat, and structuring a unique landscape-based urbanism.

wild river ecologies + robust urbanism + resilient vitality RIVER + CITY + LIFE

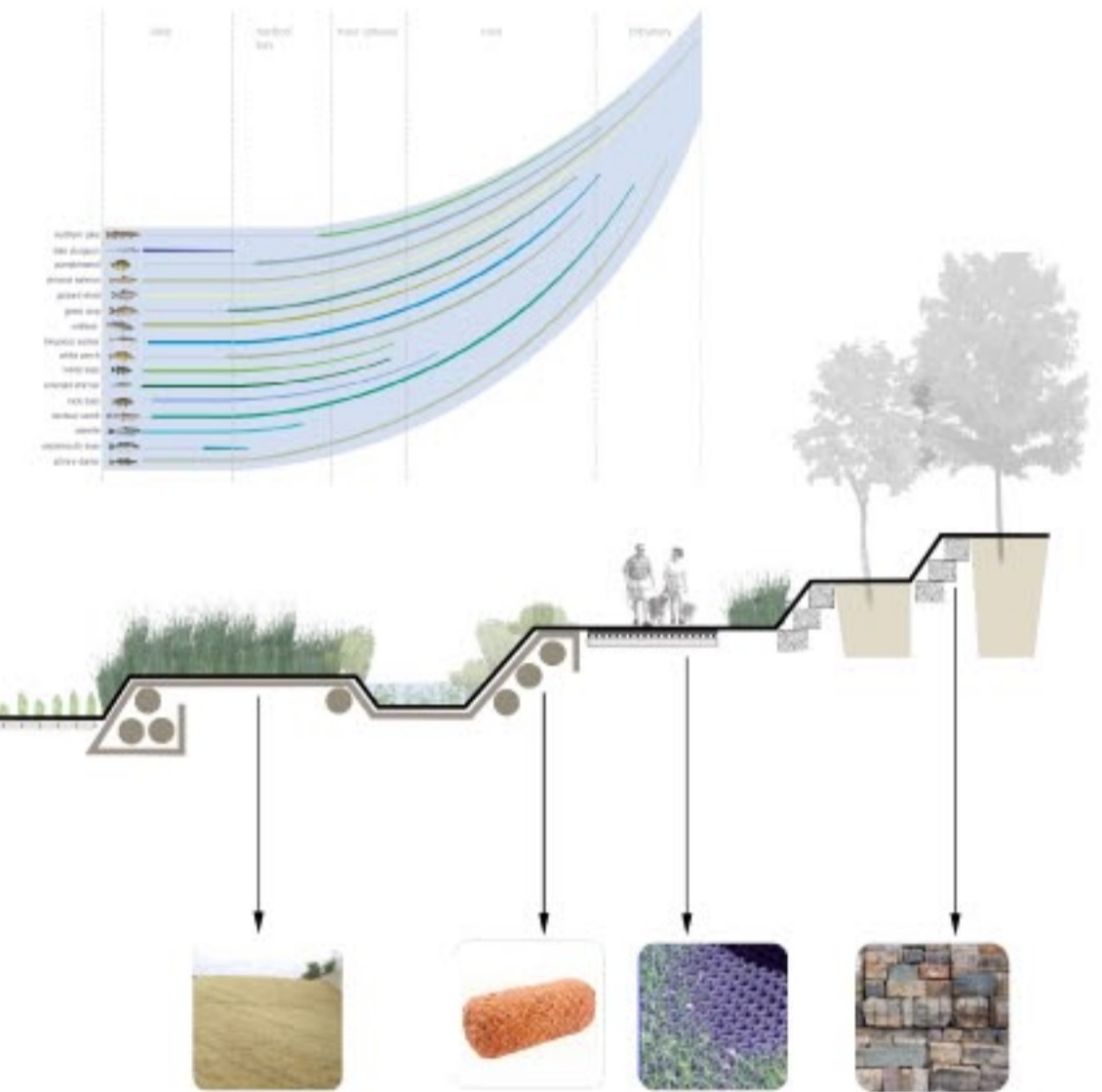
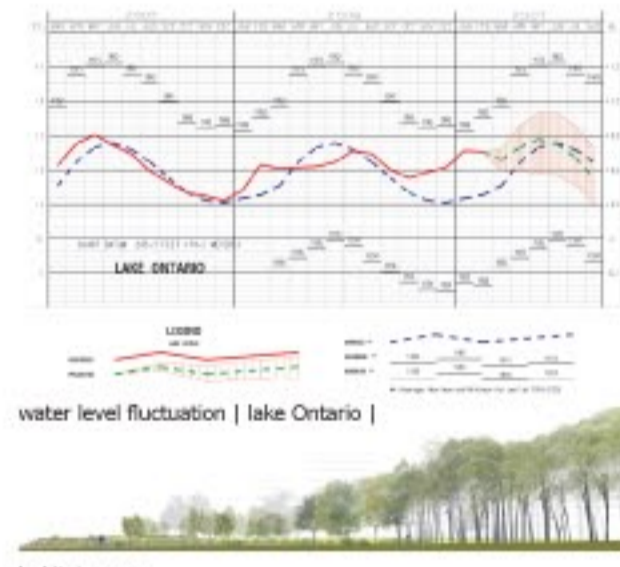
The project is organized as a series of guiding principles, supplemented by discrete kits of parts (river pieces, lake edges, building morphologies, street and boulevard types) that may be deployed flexibly according to conditions on the ground, and in response to various environmental inputs, and can be adapted as planning principles for future neighborhoods faced with inundations, changing shorelines and a need to develop and protect wetlands.

Here they include: first the river; amplify the interface; hybridize the parts; re-ignite dynamic ecologies; re-establish the wilds; re-engage the city; express dynamic flood control; cultivate new lakefront civic spaces; create open spaces that work; establish socially vital, robust neighborhood; build a green city, with lots of places to go, lots of things to do.

amplify the interface

Fish are a keystone species in helping to build a thriving ecosystem, and the river-lake interface is the richest breeding ground for fish and other wildlife. Therefore, we choose to re-establish the broad estuarine plate that slopes ever so slightly toward the harbor, maximizing the effects of both river and lake fluctuation and ecological resilience.

New ecologies breed new opportunities for interaction with the river, and new hybrid landscapes. Habitat ramps allow direct access from the spits to the river marshland, and function as ecological reserves that are activated in response to flooding and lake level fluctuations.



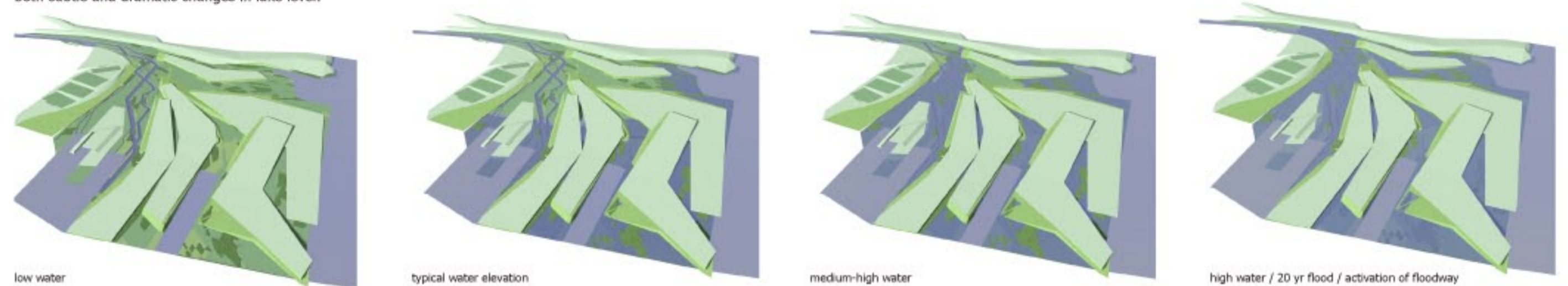
hybridize the parts

The Don remains a highly engineered river within a very constructed environment. By hybridizing the physical parts of the river system, by testing a full range of armored to porous surface conditions, and then by deploying them to form a primary channel, broad marshes, a floodway, and armored uplands, we can set up a framework that both structures and emancipates.

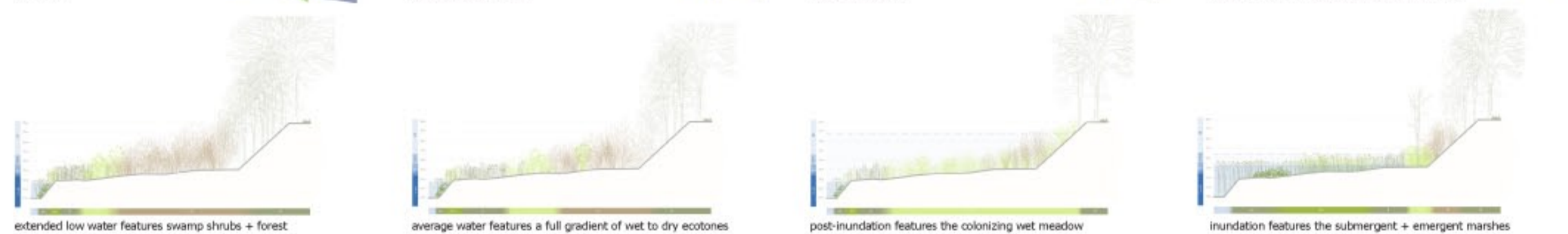
re-ignite dynamic ecologies

Amplifying and hybridizing yields an extremely dynamic estuarine marsh, tuned to both seasonal river events and long-term lake fluctuations. Here, we re-inaugurate the dynamics of the disappearing Lake Ontario Lagoon Marsh, a marsh characterized by especially resilient plant communities that will move significantly inland in response to both subtle and dramatic changes in lake level.

water dynamics



habitats



social ecologies



Given its urban location at the meeting point of the Don River with Lake Ontario, the Lower Don Lands invokes a broad set of geographical, social, environmental, and even economic conditions.

The continuous lakefront promenade encounters diverse underlying and proposed conditions, and many new lakefront edges are created, further amplifying potential city-water dynamics. Out of this diversity arise two lakefront types: the soft, ecologically rich lake marsh, and the intensely social channel basin.

By incrementally modifying the harbourwall, we can once again experience a full range of interactions with water, from high perches and overlooks, to slopes that kiss the lake, and from soft, muddy marsh to intensely urban promenade and marina. Together, the marshes and basins form new habitat for salmon and strollers; for terns and tai chi; for button bush and bikinis; and for hooded mergansers and hockey players alike.

