

Eastern Central Waterfront Virtual Tour

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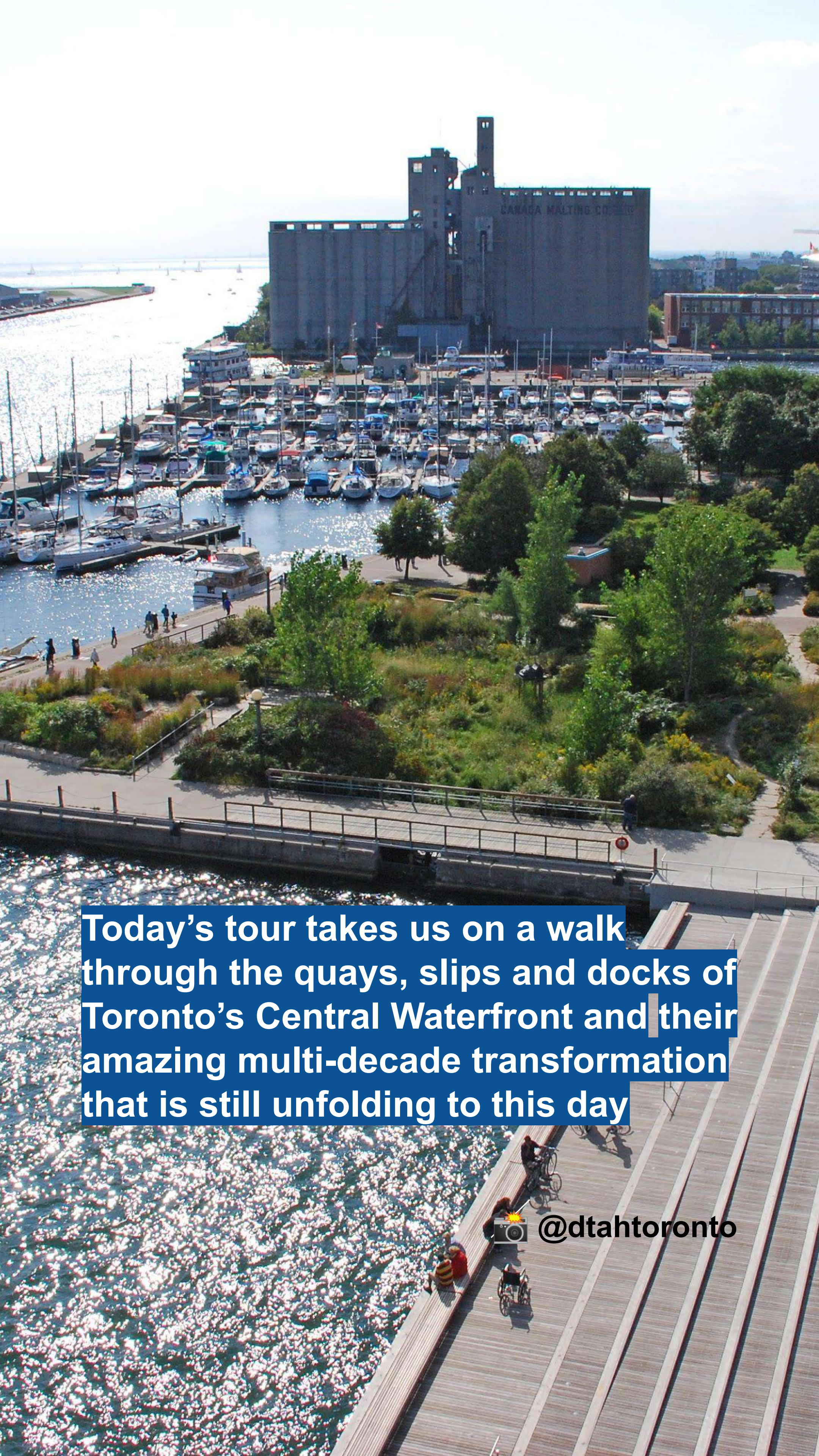
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**Missing our TSA tours
this summer?**

**We'll put on your walking
shoes because we're
taking you on a walk all
across the waterfront!**

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**Throughout the summer
we'll be sharing the
stories behind some of
Toronto's waterside
landscapes and
structures —
everything you need to
know to go exploring on
your own!**



Today's tour takes us on a walk through the quays, slips and docks of Toronto's Central Waterfront and their amazing multi-decade transformation that is still unfolding to this day

 @dtahtoronto

Built during the heydays of marine transportation, the quays (pronounced “keys”), docks and slips that now define the profile of the water’s edge are in large part remnants of the Central Waterfront’s industrial and commercial past



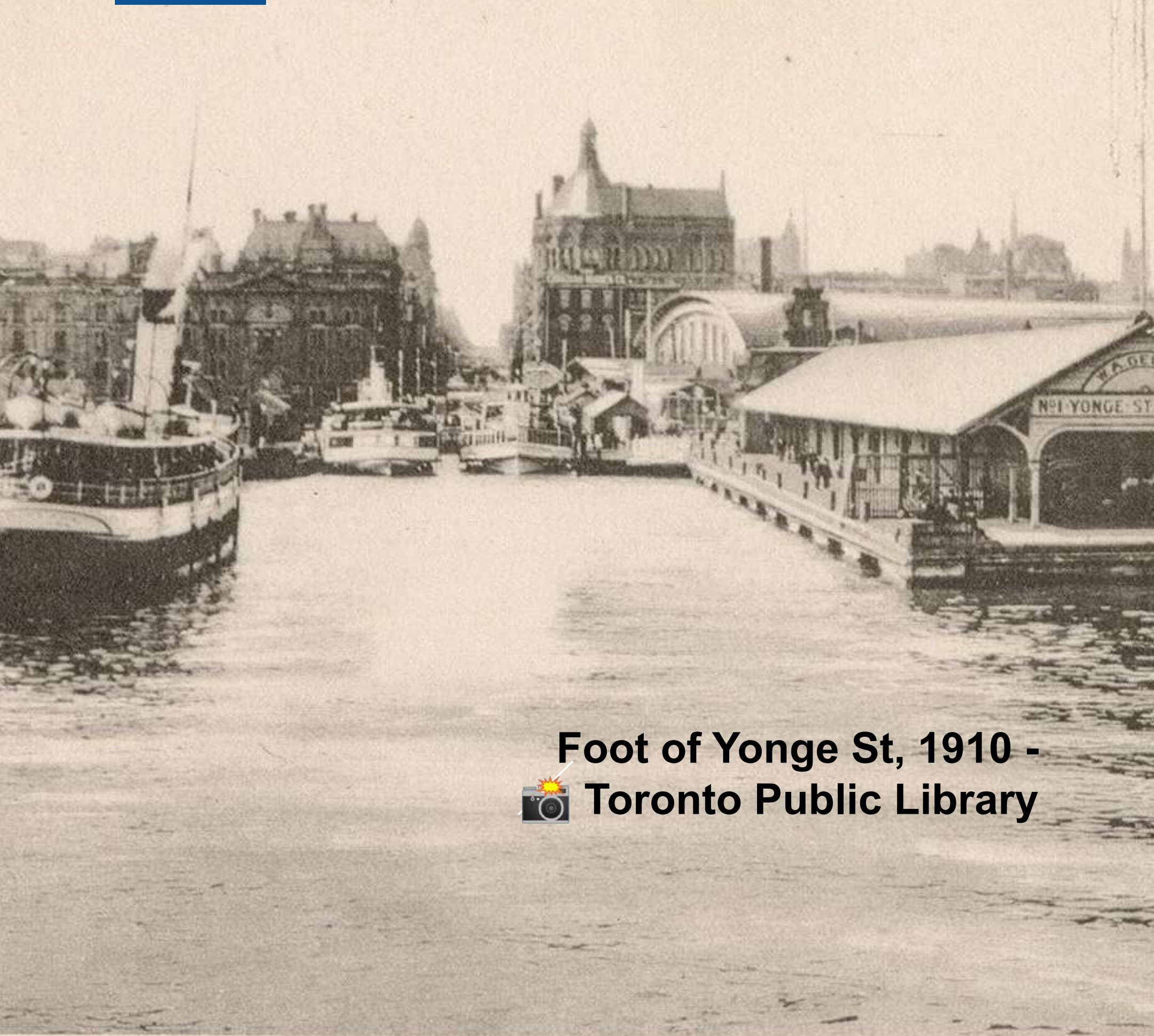
“Tree Line Slip”, between York and Rees Sts, 1927 📷 Toronto Public Library

Originally following present-day Front Street, the water's edge we see today is the result of over 100 years of lake infilling started in 1850s extending the shore farther and farther south (by a kilometer or more in some places)

1910



These successive infillings responded to the construction of wharfs, piers, slips and quays, all of increasing size over time, built to accommodate ever larger commercial ships and the buildings needed to store their goods. They were landside connections between water, rail and roads connecting Central Canada to the rest of the world.



Foot of Yonge St, 1910 -
 Toronto Public Library



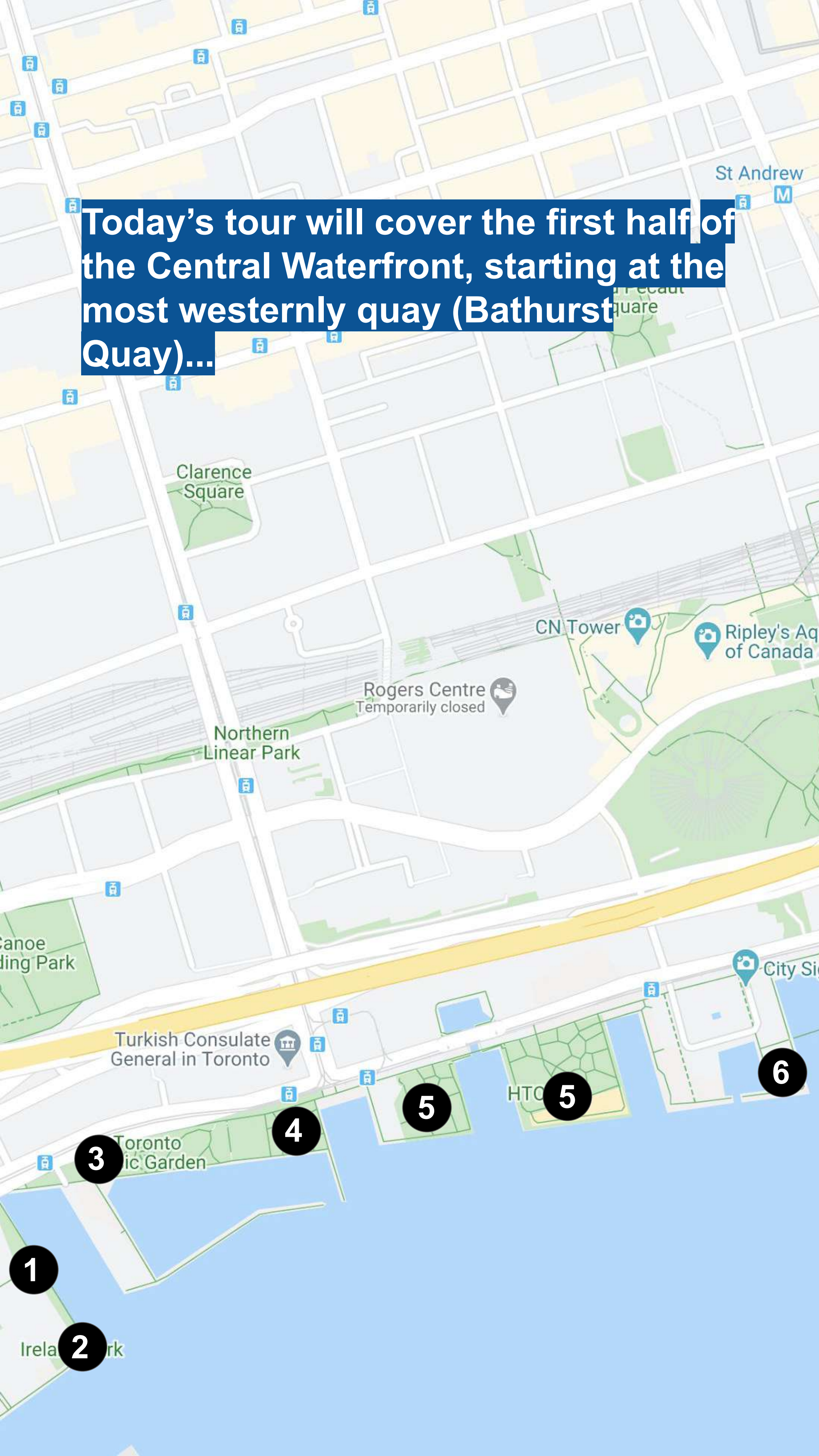
Queens Quay, 1910

...but while the harbour remained a bustling commercial hub for over a century, by the late 1970s shipping had been replaced by truck transportation and industrial uses had severely declined at the water's edge, opening the doors to a new chapter in our waterfront's history as a place to live, work and play

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While you could decide to walk all of the Central Waterfront in one day, we recommend you break it up into at least two trips to give yourself enough time to explore the unique character of each of the quays

Today's tour will cover the first half of the Central Waterfront, starting at the most westernly quay (Bathurst Quay)...



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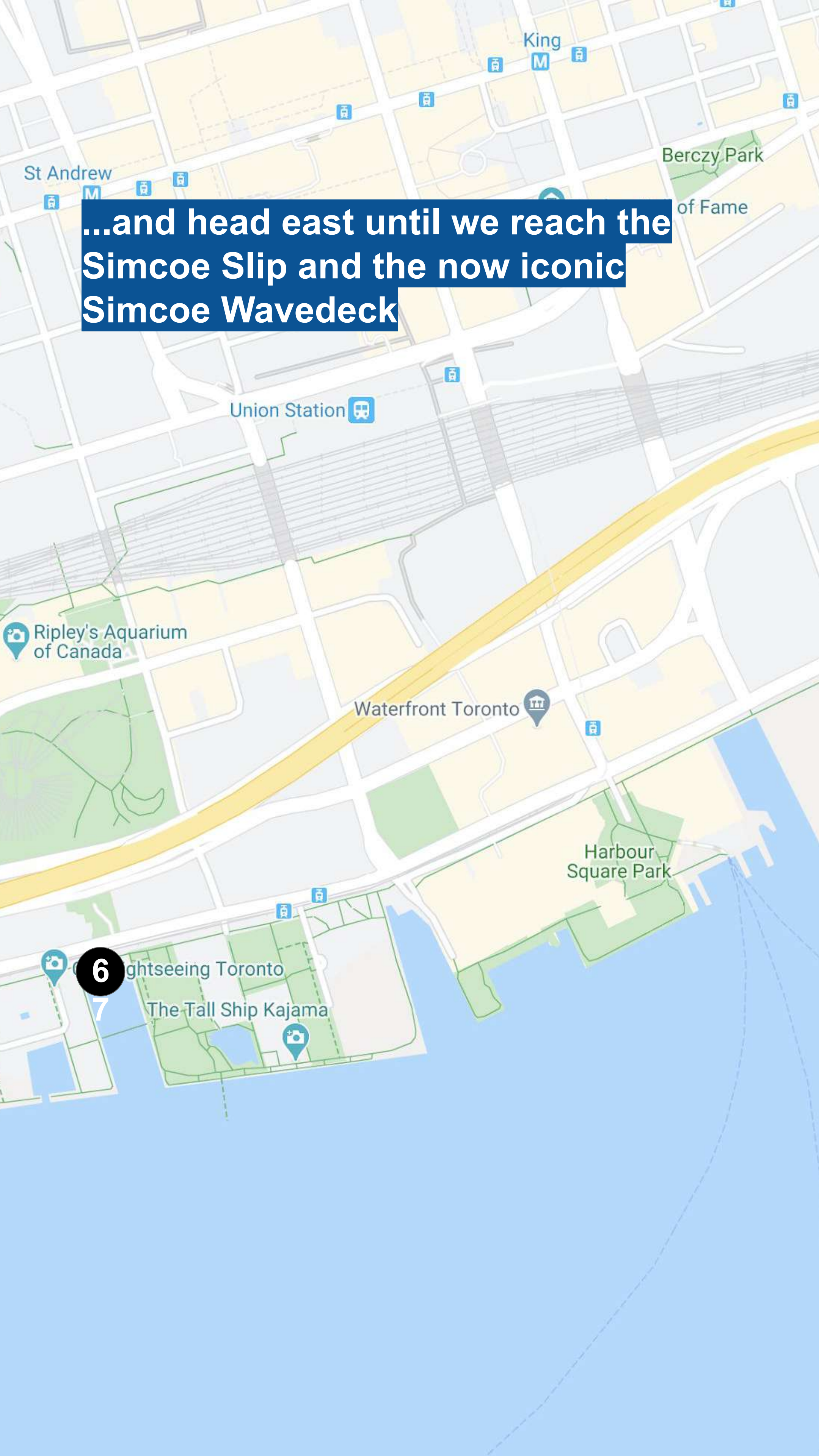
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...and head east until we reach the Simcoe Slip and the now iconic Simcoe Wavedeck



Generally speaking, the quays on this side of the harbour are the oldest, most of them built between 1916 to 1921. They are smaller than the ones east of Bay Street and have more slips, reflecting the smaller sizes of boats used back then



 Foot of Bay, 1930
Toronto Public Library



We'll start our tour at the most westernly quay — Bathurst Quay (also known as Eireann Quay), home of the Canada Malting Grain Silos and Ireland Park!

Built between 1929 and 1944, the silos are one of two remaining grain elevators in the harbour — reminders of our industrial past and examples of a unique building type developed in North America that influenced architecture Modern movement

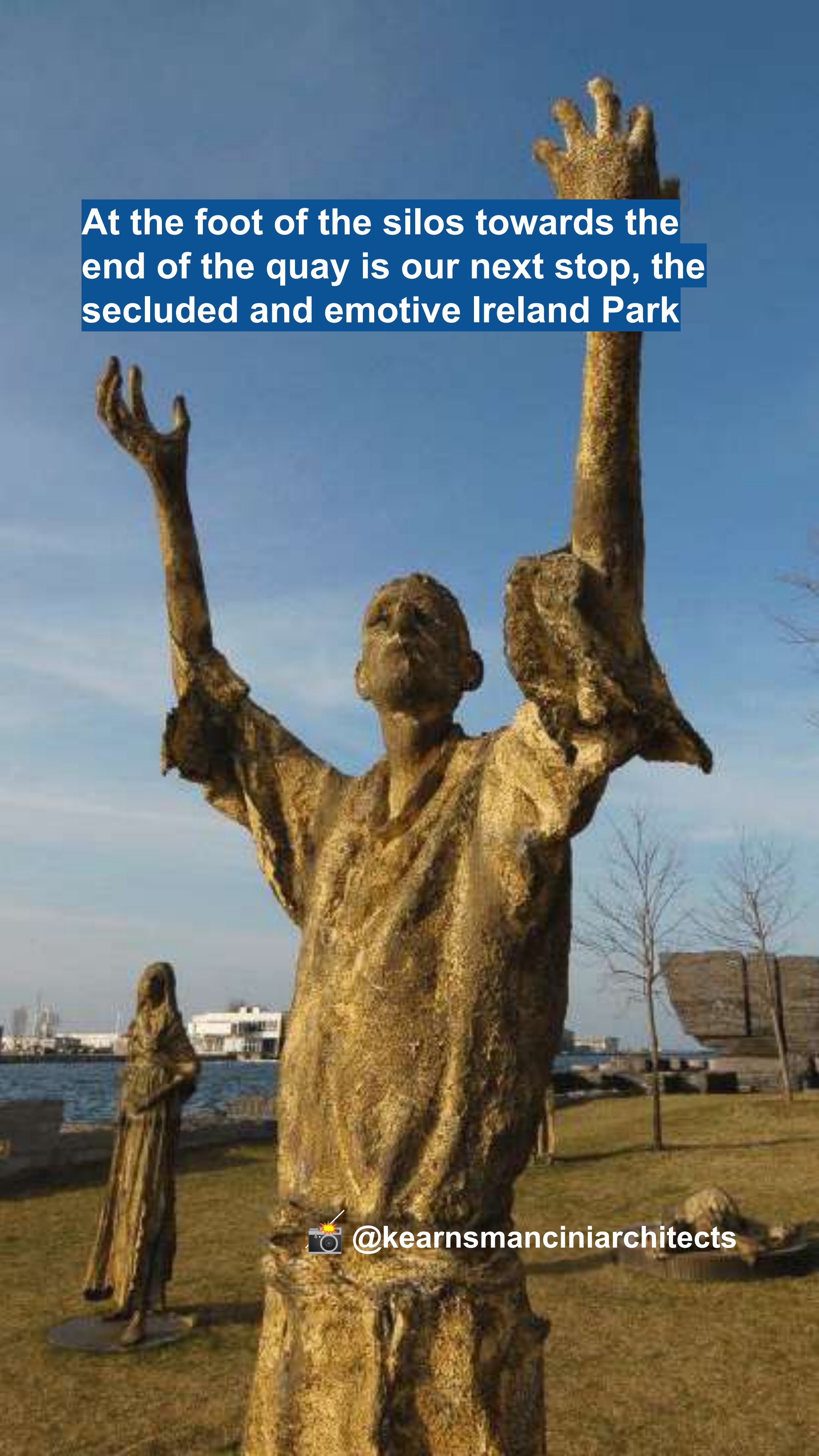


The south silos (1929) were designed by the John Metcalf Company and are an early example of the innovative explosion-resistant reinforced concrete grain elevator introduced in 1924. ✨ Toronto's earlier wooden grain elevators were all lost to fire



The north silos (1944), designed by T. Pringle & Son Ltd with architect M.C. Miller, represent the next generation with additional storage capacity

At the foot of the silos towards the end of the quay is our next stop, the secluded and emotive Ireland Park



@kearnsmanciniarchitects

Opened in 2007 and designed by Kearns Mancini Architects, this park honours Irish immigrants who fled Ireland's Great Famine, including the 38,000 migrants who arrived to Toronto in 1847

Some of its most notable features include...



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The Arrival - a series of five bronze sculptures created by Irish artist Rowan Gillespie. The sculptures mirror 7 similar sculptures in Dublin's Famine Memorial marking their departure.

..and the Memory Wall — made of Kilkenny limestone, the wall's inner spaces are engraved with the names of 675 famine immigrants who died in Toronto in 1847




 @kearnsmanciniarchitects

Now walk back towards the city and start heading east to our next stop — Spadina Quay and it's beautiful Music Garden!





Opened in 1999 and designed by American landscape architect Julie Moir Messervy in collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the Music Garden replaced a former parking lot on the waterfront edge.

A photograph of a garden path. The path is paved and curves through a lush garden. There are many trees and plants, including a bench on the left. The sky is blue. The text is overlaid on the top part of the image.

The garden is composed of 6 unique areas — each with its own design inspired by a different part Bach's First Suite for Unaccompanied Cello. Start at the first garden (Prelude) and follow the music!

Shall we dance?

(You're going to want to turn up your music for the next few!)



Prelude

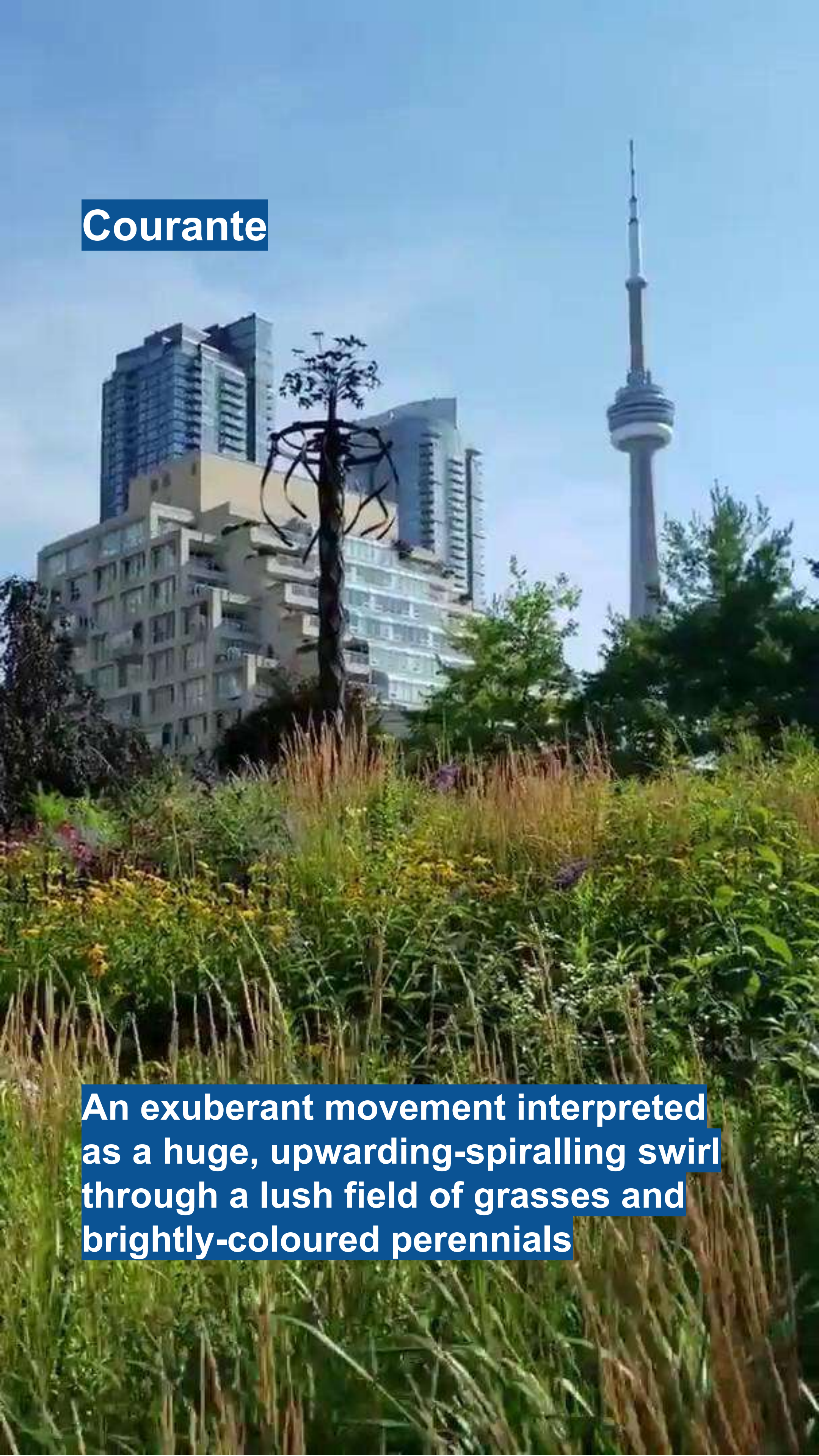
The first movement of the Suite imparts the feeling of a flowing river, lined by granite boulders and overtopped by an allee of native Hackberry trees regularly spaces to suggest measures of music

A lush green forest scene with large trees and a rocky area in the background. The trees have dense green foliage, and the ground is covered with ferns and other green plants. In the background, there are large, smooth, light-colored rocks. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

Allemande

An ancient German dance interpreted as a birch forest with wandering trail inviting you to swirl inwards to various sitting areas, culminating in a rocky vantage point surrounded by dawn redwood trees

Courante



An exuberant movement interpreted as a huge, upward-spiralling swirl through a lush field of grasses and brightly-coloured perennials



Sarabande

A contemplative movement based on an ancient Spanish dance form, interpreted here as an inward-arcing circle - a poet's corner - enclosed by tall evergreen trees



Menuett

A French dance contemporary to Bach's time, its formality and grace reflected in the symmetry and geometry of this movement's design. The hand-crafted ornamental steel circular pavilion shelters small musical ensembles or dance groups

..and finally, Gigue

An English dance whose jaunty, rollicking music is interpreted as a series of giant grass steps offering views of the harbour — an amphitheatre for informal performances under the willow

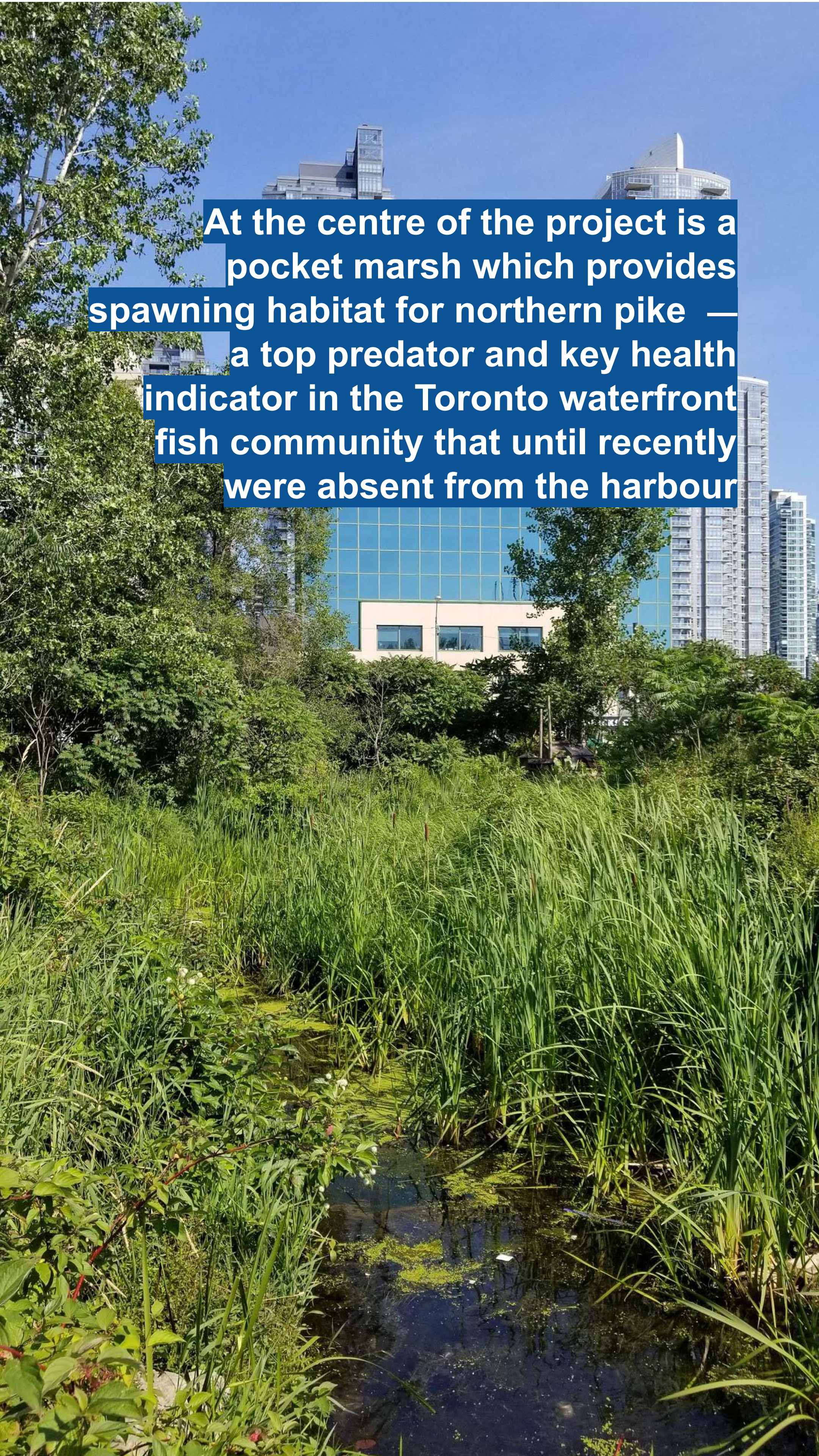
**After dancing (and some rest),
continue heading east until our next
stop — the Spadina Quay Wetlands**

**...and on your way don't miss the 1985
King's Landing, a terraced mid-rise
mixed-used building designed by
noted Canadian architect
Arthur Erickson**



Opened in 2000 with enhancements designed by PMA Landscape Architects, this small but mighty wetland was a pioneer in habitat restoration along the harbour transforming a former parking lot into a diverse and stable ecosystem





At the centre of the project is a pocket marsh which provides spawning habitat for northern pike — a top predator and key health indicator in the Toronto waterfront fish community that until recently were absent from the harbour

Not to be missed is the wetland's unique birdhouse...



Designed by Anne Roberts of Feir Mill Design, it depicts buildings of Toronto's 20th century lakeshore like warehouses, a corner bank, and even a mini Sunnyside pavilion!



...as well as the perforated wood posts that mark the edge of the site — an element introduced by Plant Architect Inc. that helps delineate the edges of the wetland and offer playful post-holes focusing your view on typically overlooked planting and birdlife

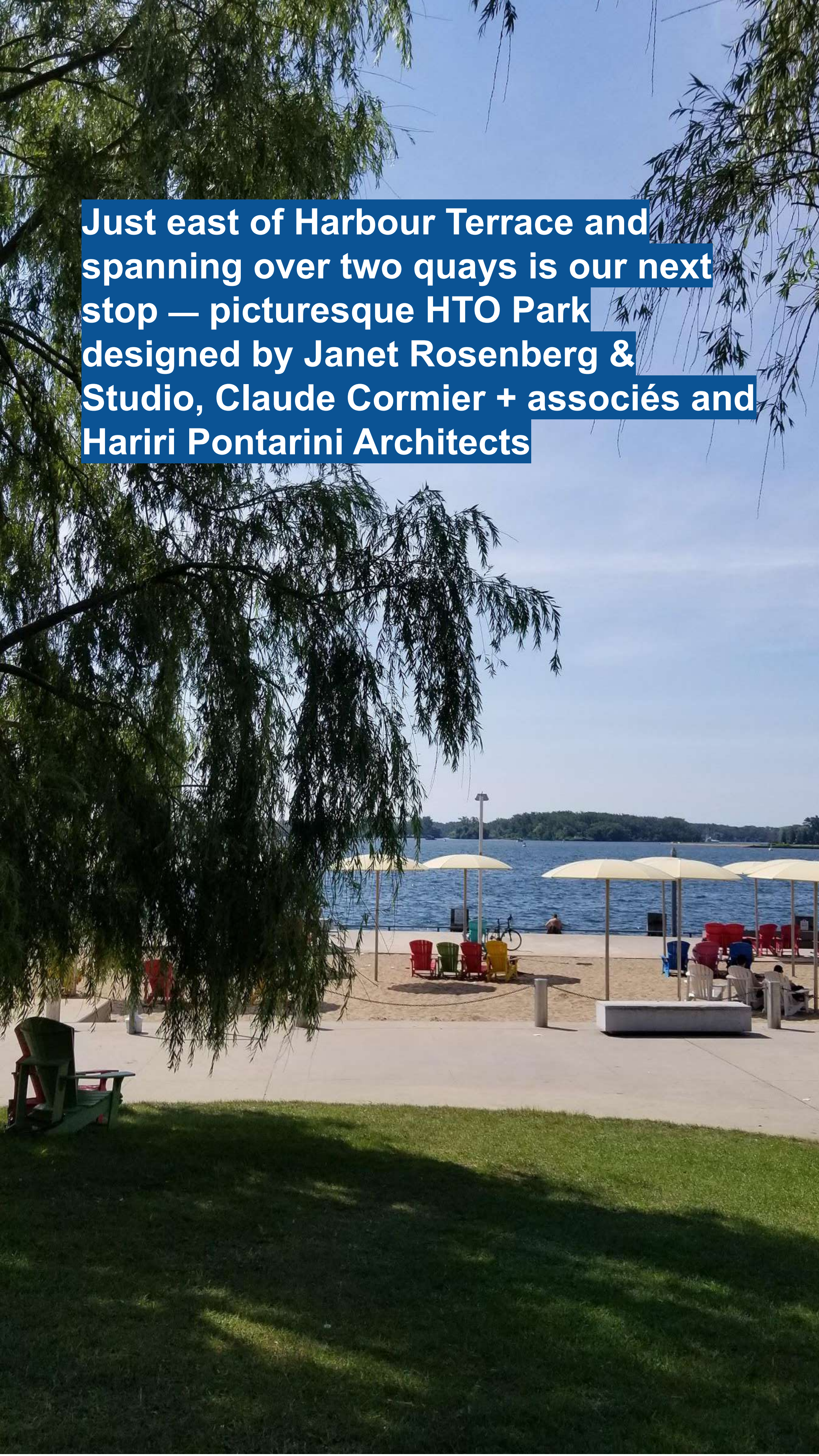
**Now head past the Spadina wavedeck
(we'll speak more about those later)
and onto our next two quays — Maple
Leaf Quay East and West, now home
to HTO Park**



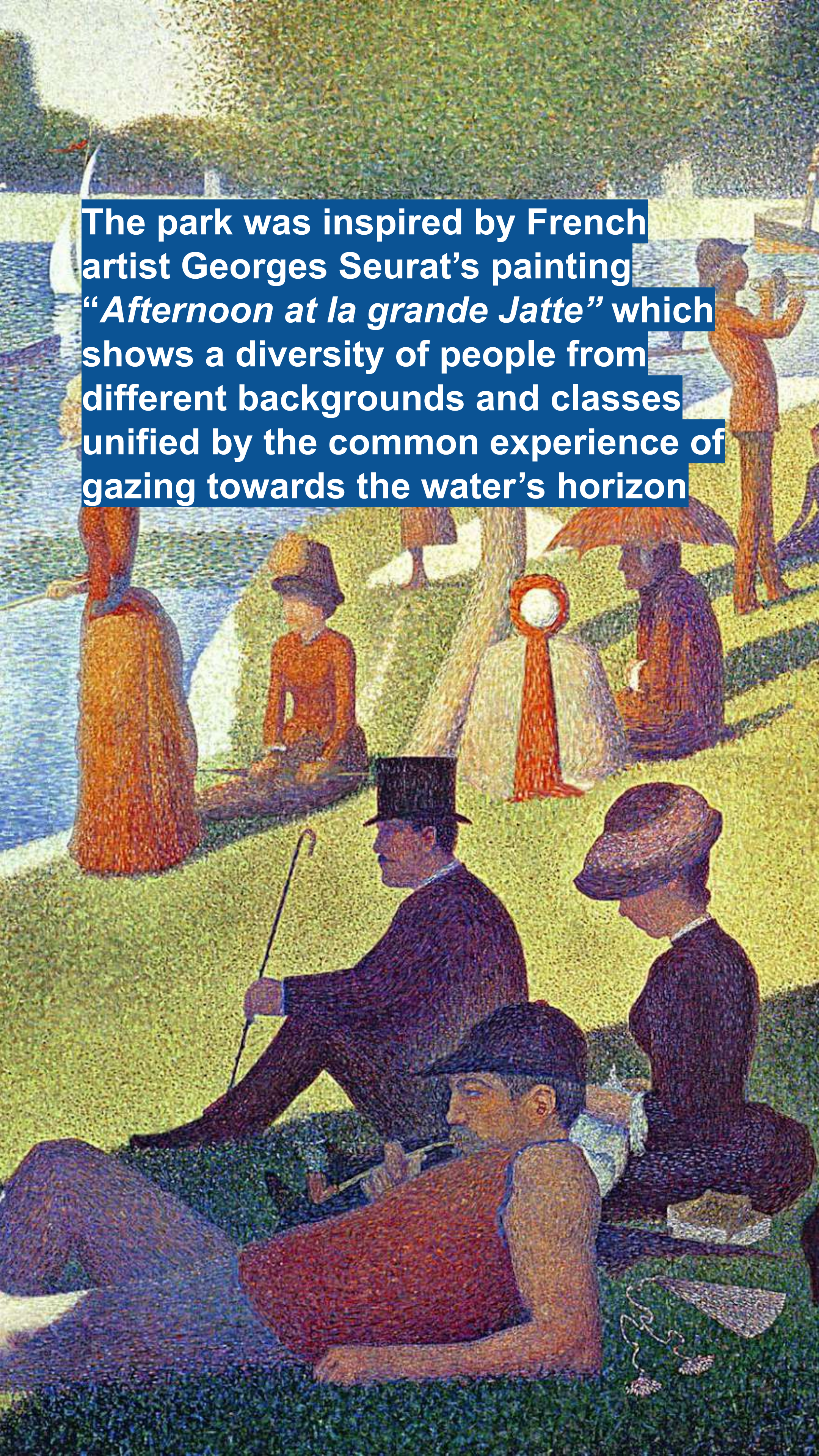


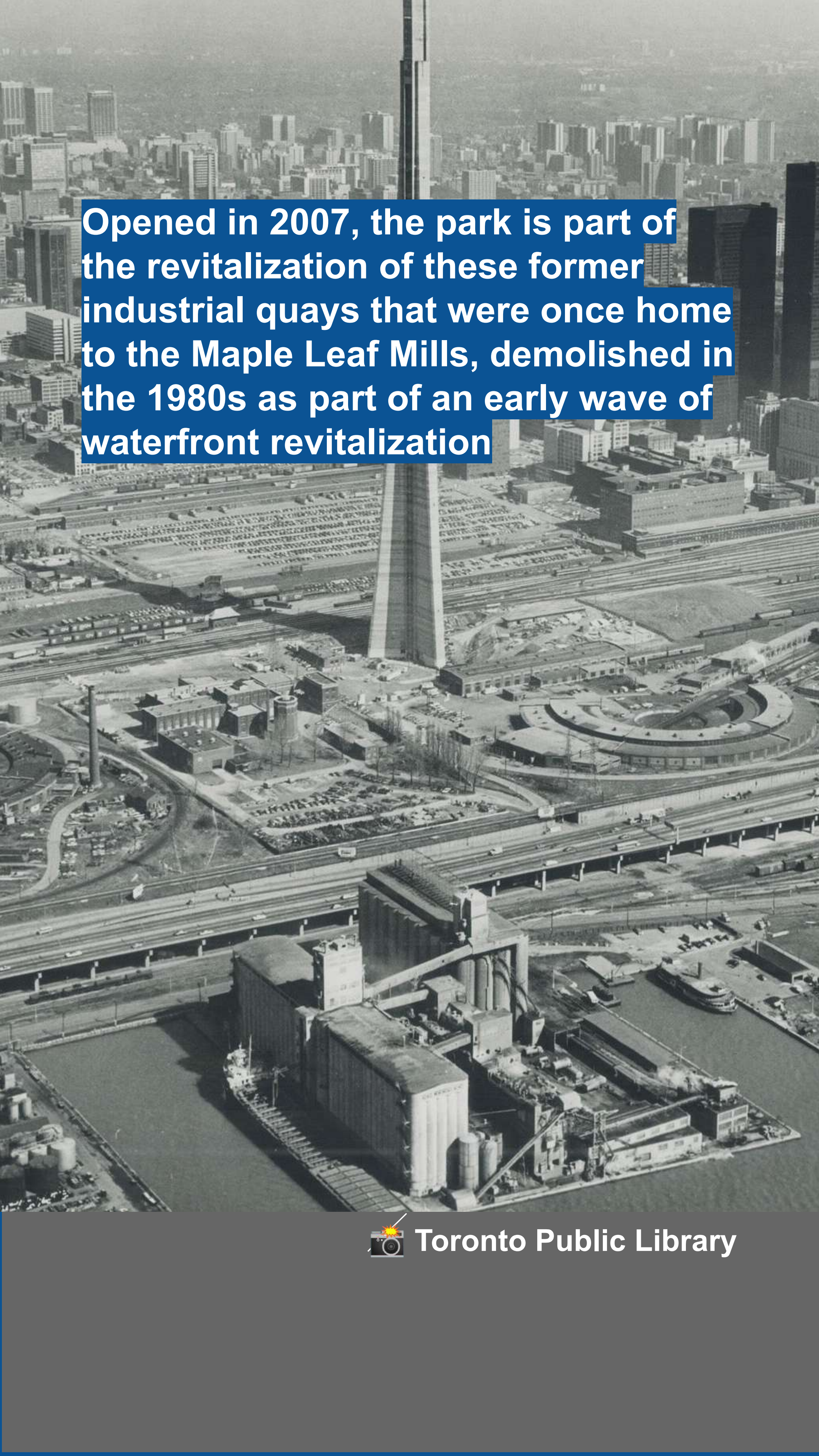
On your way walk around the nautical Harbour Terrace by Li Architects Inc (1987), another award winning mid-rise residential building on the waterfront

Just east of Harbour Terrace and spanning over two quays is our next stop — picturesque HTO Park designed by Janet Rosenberg & Studio, Claude Cormier + associés and Hariri Pontarini Architects



The park was inspired by French artist Georges Seurat's painting "*Afternoon at la grande Jatte*" which shows a diversity of people from different backgrounds and classes unified by the common experience of gazing towards the water's horizon



An aerial photograph of the Toronto waterfront. In the foreground, there are industrial buildings and a large circular structure. A multi-lane highway runs horizontally across the middle. The CN Tower stands prominently in the center. The background shows a dense urban skyline with many skyscrapers.

Opened in 2007, the park is part of the revitalization of these former industrial quays that were once home to the Maple Leaf Mills, demolished in the 1980s as part of an early wave of waterfront revitalization



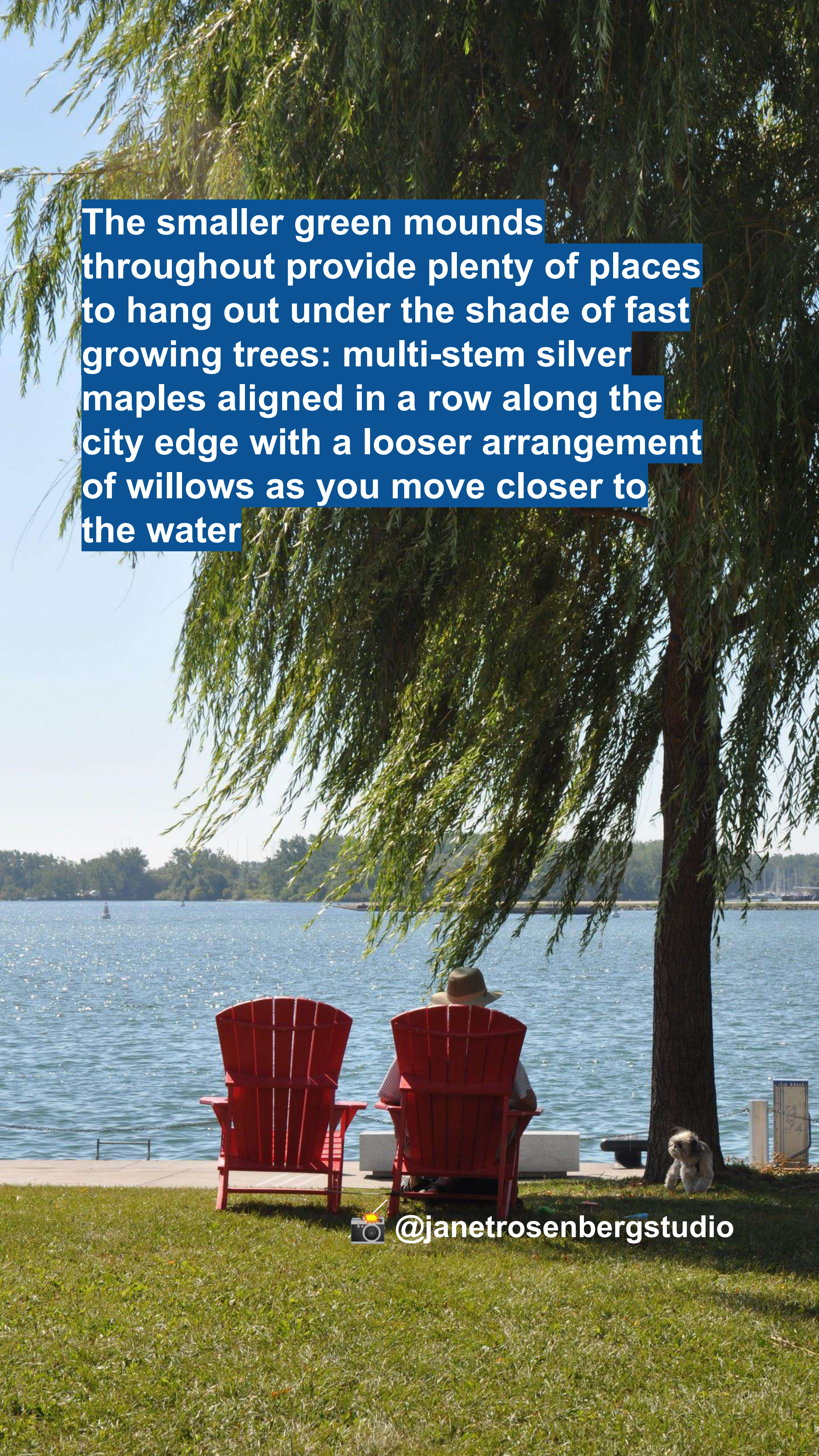
Toronto Public Library

A key feature of the park is its thoughtful topography — a soft hill helps conceal traffic when looking out from the park and highlights the lake's horizon when looking in (not to mention capping polluted soil from the former industrial site!)



@claudecormierlandscape

The smaller green mounds throughout provide plenty of places to hang out under the shade of fast growing trees: multi-stem silver maples aligned in a row along the city edge with a looser arrangement of willows as you move closer to the water



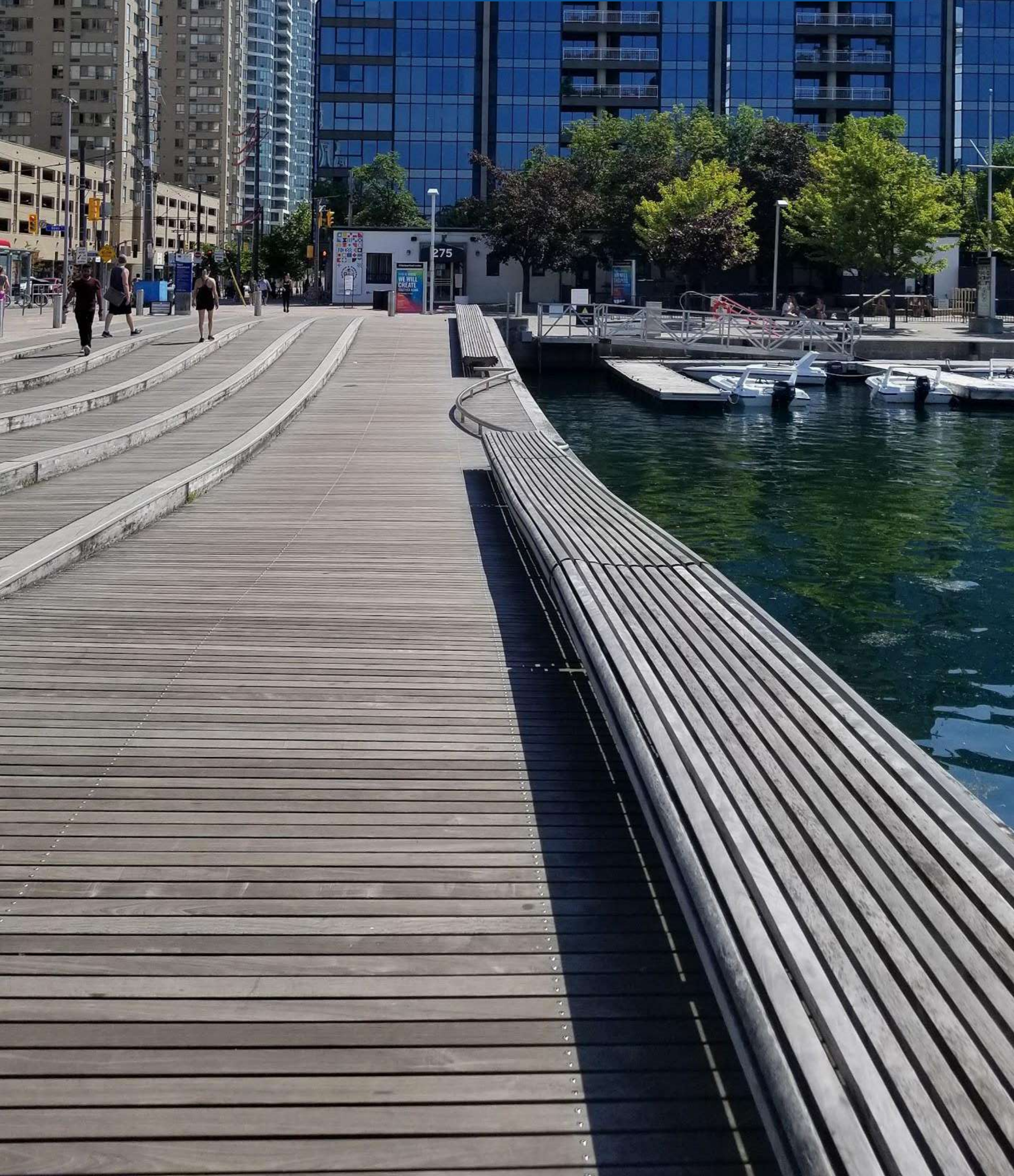
@janetrosenbergstudio

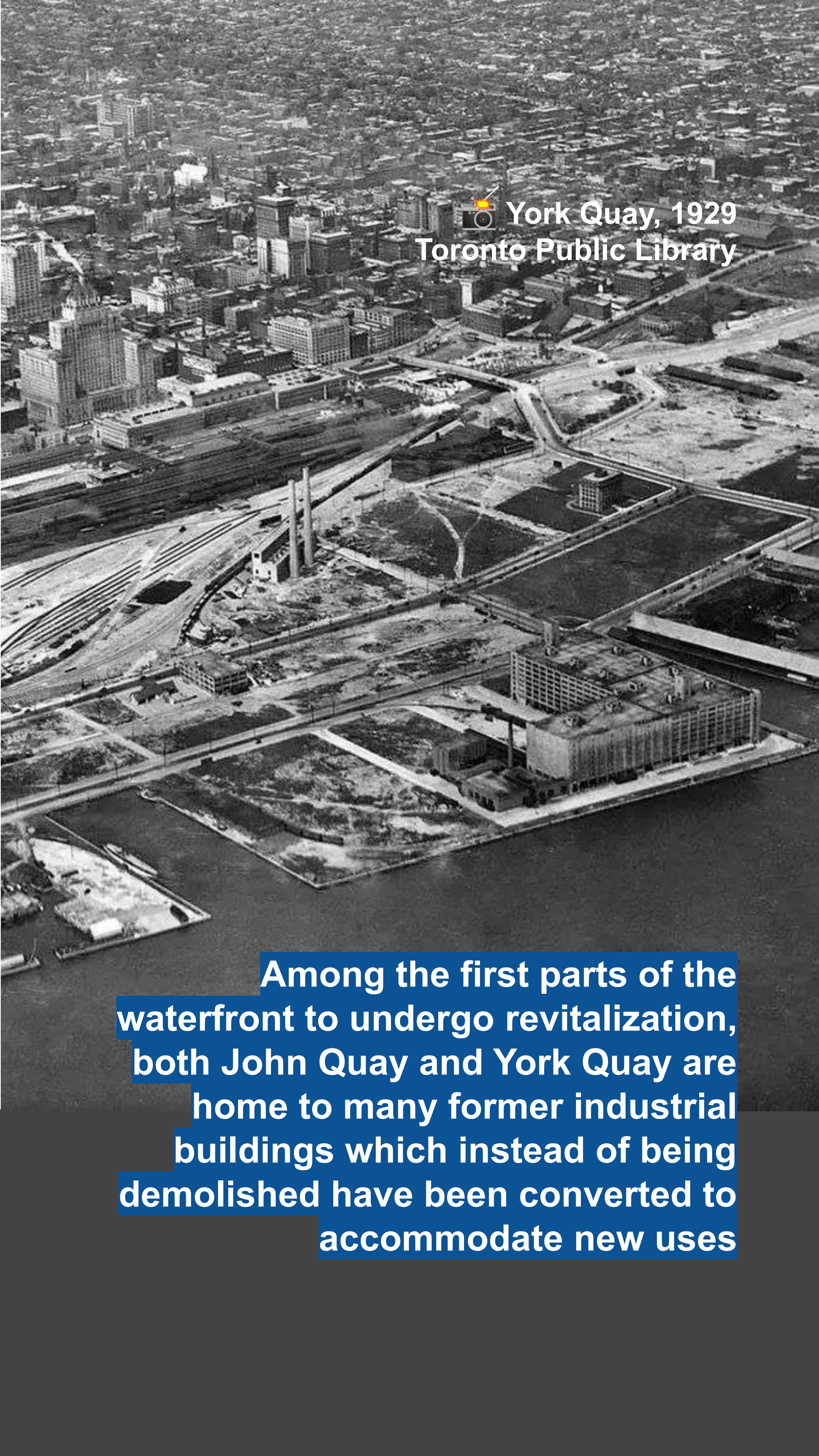
...but its most famous feature is its urban beach dotted with bright yellow metal umbrellas, a first of its kind in Toronto!



It's also a great spot to watch the planes at Billy Bishop Airport!

Once you are done lounging at the beach, make your way back to Queens Quay Boulevard and across the Rees Wavedeck (promise we'll talk about these in just a bit!) to our next stop — John Quay and York Quay





📷 York Quay, 1929
Toronto Public Library

Among the first parts of the waterfront to undergo revitalization, both John Quay and York Quay are home to many former industrial buildings which instead of being demolished have been converted to accommodate new uses

...like the 1930 Transit Shed #4, the only remaining example of early frame warehouses that once dominated the waterfront between Simcoe and Yonge which was converted into a restaurant when the hotel opened next door in 1985





 @dtahtoronto

Linking these two quays is the Simcoe Wavedeck — the most exuberant of the wavedecks designed by DTAH and West 8

A cross between bridge and boardwalk, the wavedecks extend public space out over the water at three slip-ends

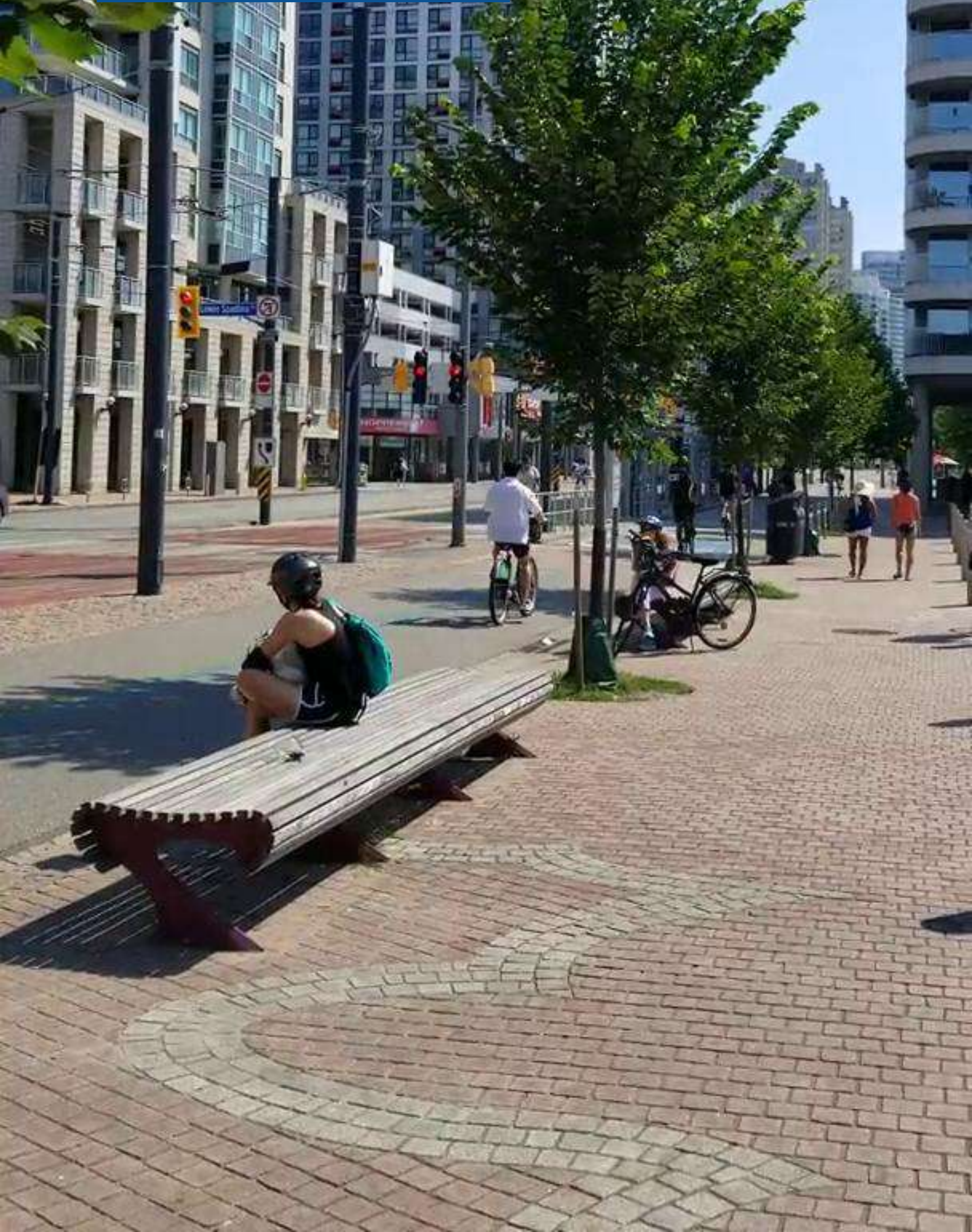




Built between 2008 and 2009, they were the first elements of a much larger public space strategy designed by DTAH and West 8 to connect existing public spaces and provide a unique and uniform identity across the entire central waterfront

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This plan includes the recently completed transformation of Queens Quay West from a four lane car throughfare into a multi-modal, tree-lined boulevard



..as well as custom-designed repeating elements inspired by Canada's iconic maple leaf 🍁

...like the unique mosaic granite paving seen across the waterfront featuring 7 sizes of maple leafs...

📷 @dtahtoronto

..and organically shaped benches with a profile that recalls the stem of a maple leaf!



This bench also looks like the perfect spot to take a seat and wrap up the first half of our Central Waterfront tour!



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**Join us next weekend
when we continue our
exploration of the
Central Waterfront —
there is still so much
to see!**

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...and remember, when exploring bring some water, wear some sun screen and make sure to practice physical distancing!

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**...and don't forget to
share your explorations
with us!**

**Tour developed by the
Toronto Society of Architects,
2020**

**Originally formatted as an
Instagram Stories tour**

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