

UNDER GARDINER PUBLIC REALM PLAN

the bentway  TORONTO

Showcase Presentation
September 2023

Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on and that of the Gardiner Expressway is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Toronto, a name which originates from the Mohawk (Kanien'keha'ka) word T'karonto (meaning place in the water where the trees are standing), is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We recognize them as the past, present, and future caretakers of this land. We would like to pay our respects to all who have gathered and will continue to gather in this place.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to work together to care for this land and act as stewards of these spaces.



The Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan is **a collaborative effort** between the City of Toronto and The Bentway Conservancy.

The plan builds on the success of previous public realm initiatives and policies such as The Bentway, Under Pass Park, Waterfront ReConnect, and The Lake Shore Boulevard East Public Realm Strategy, Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, TransformTO: Climate Action Strategy, Green Streets, and Complete Streets Guidelines among others.



Why Now?

The City of Toronto is undertaking a **major Strategic Rehabilitation Plan to keep the entire Gardiner express way in safe and operable condition**. This reinvestment presents a **once-in-a-generation opportunity to set the direction toward a new future above and below the elevated roadway**. The vision articulated through the Under Gardiner PRP represents an inventory of ideas, opportunity sites, and potential interventions for ongoing study, and **will be implemented on a decades-long timeline**.

As the remaining available properties along the under Gardiner corridor are built out, an integrated and interconnected public realm is essential for public life and the ongoing prosperity of Toronto's downtown core

PROJECT PARTNERS

The Under Gardiner PRP is a **collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and The Bentway Conservancy** that brings together asset owners, subject matter experts, diverse perspectives, and practical experience in planning, programming, operating, and animating the public realm.

This project **advances the strategic goals of removing barriers to the waterfront and making new connections**, by reintroducing the under Gardiner corridor as an essential part of Toronto's downtown public realm, establishing new public space conventions and **setting specific priorities for investment and improvement**.

The Bentway Conservancy

The Bentway Conservancy is an independent non-profit and registered charity founded in 2016 to reimagine the Gardiner. The Conservancy currently operates, programs, and animates The Bentway Phase 1 site and The Bentway Studio. The Bentway is an internationally recognized exemplar of active reuse and hybrid infrastructure

The City of Toronto

As a partner, the City of Toronto is represented in this project by a wide range of City divisions. The City's Under Gardiner PRP teams have representatives from senior leadership and staff working groups from the Economic Development and Culture, Transportation Services, Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, Corporate Real Estate Management and Urban Design departments and the Waterfront Secretariat

DESIGN TEAM

The Under Gardiner PRP is supported by a design team comprised of subject matter experts and the following industry leaders:

Two Row Architect

Two Row Architect is a 100% Indigenous-owned and operated firm from the Six Nations reserve. Two Row Architect's ultimate goal is to promote architecture that has a positive impact on nature, humanity, and our current sense of civilization

PUBLIC WORK

PUBLIC WORK is an urban design and landscape architecture studio focused on the intelligent evolution of the contemporary city. The studio aims to produce transformative work that invigorate the public realm and support public life by adding new layers of experience to the city

Transsolar KilmaEngineering

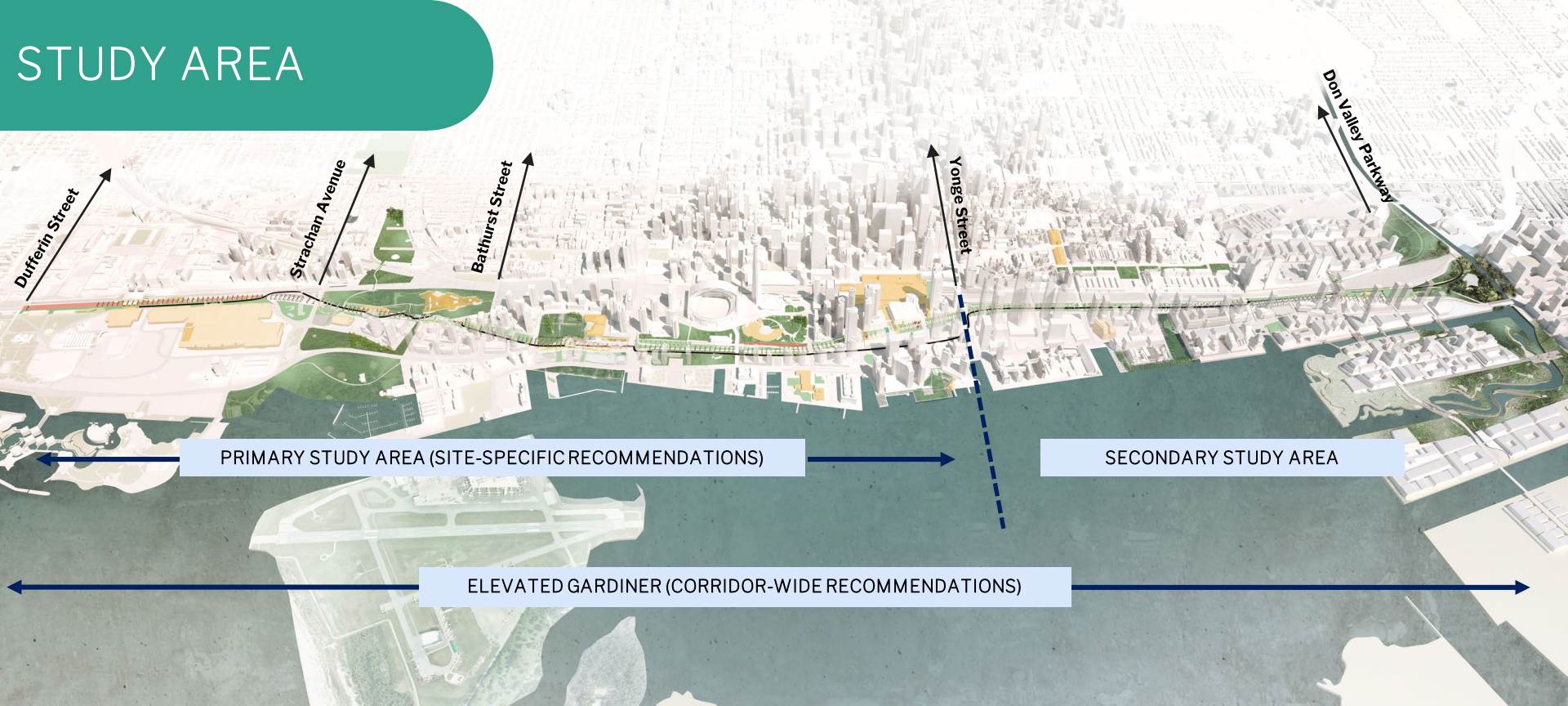
Transsolar KilmaEngineering is a team of engineers focused on creating climate-responsive built environments. Transsolar's unique approach had led to numerous breakthrough projects in North America.

Third Party Public

3PP specializes in making large, complex multi-stakeholder projects constructive and manageable. The team works exclusively with governments, public agencies, and occasionally non-profits working to serve public interests.

Frontier

Frontier designs big stories that help organizations thrive. Its Purpose Design methodology connects brand strategy with business strategy. Frontier works on projects in branding, storytelling, strategy, digital design, and team engagement



STUDY AREA

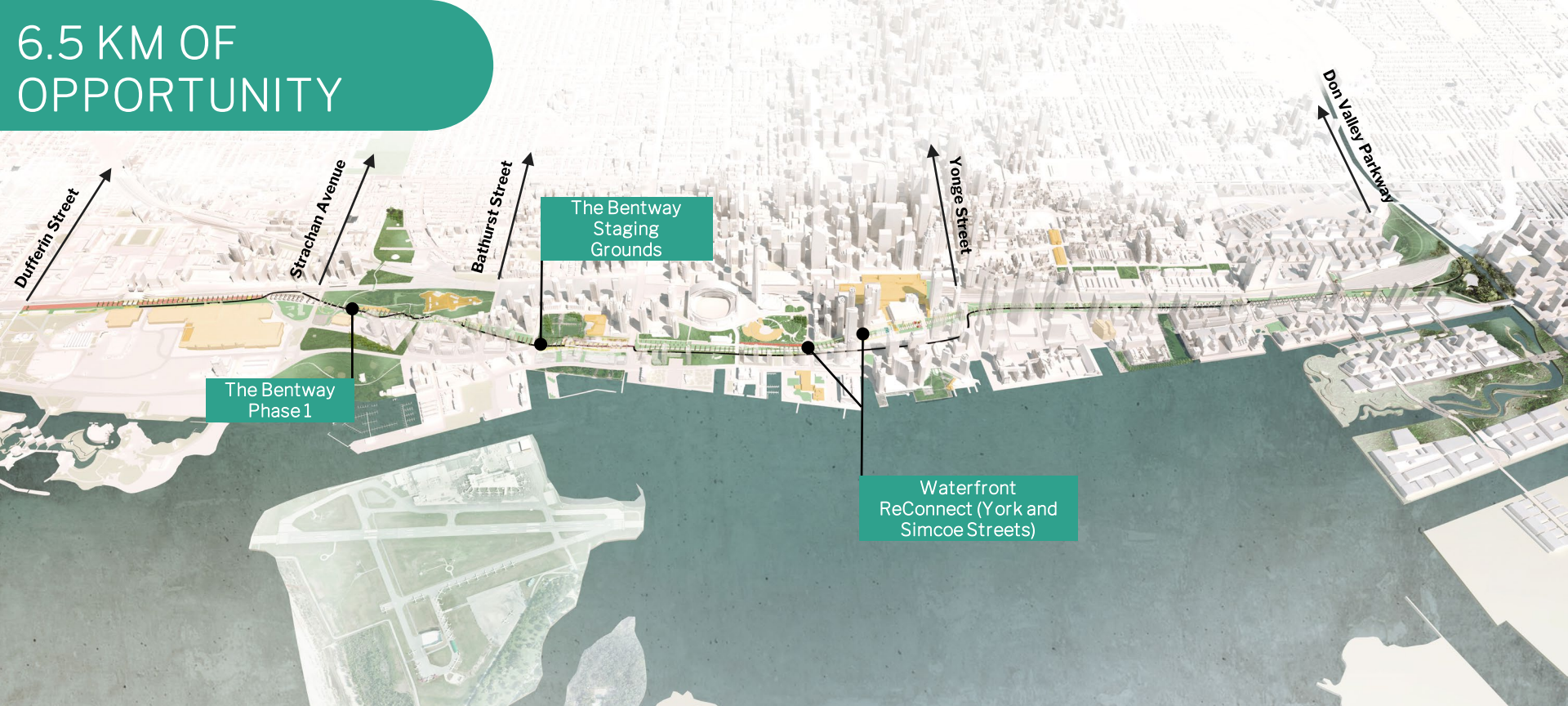
PRIMARY STUDY AREA (SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS)

SECONDARY STUDY AREA

ELEVATED GARDINER (CORRIDOR-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS)



6.5 KM OF OPPORTUNITY



OBJECTIVES

To deliver the full potential of the Gardiner Expressway, the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan is anchored by principle objectives informed by stakeholder engagement:

Recommend short, medium, and long-term opportunities for public realm and mobility improvements that align with existing work by public and private partners.

Identify and address infrastructure challenges such as rainwater management, cycling and pedestrian safety, and ongoing maintenance needs.

Define the scope and timeframe for various initiatives impacting the under Gardiner corridor, in order to facilitate investment and promote engagement in the process of transformation.

Establish a cohesive sense of place for the under Gardiner corridor through enhanced wayfinding, material palettes, approaches, planting and vegetation, and more.

Support the advancement of pilot projects and prototypes that highlight shared interest between municipal efforts and local stakeholders.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

From Obstacle to Connector

Create **inviting physical and visual connections** that link neighborhoods, community assets, transportation hubs, and public right-of-way in order to address concerns around the safety and accessibility of under Gardiner spaces.



Prioritize the Public Realm

Guide the development of **distinctive and exceptional public and semi-public spaces to support a diversity of use**, fostering unique gathering places for civic engagement and activity.



Harness the Gardiner's Unique Character

Enhance the identity of under Gardiner spaces through design and programming strategies that **celebrate the Gardiner's uniquely urban quality**, built heritage, layered history, and distinct communities.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

From Highway to Hybrid Infrastructure

Develop protocols and budgets informed by an efficient and coordinated approach to Gardiner Expressway maintenance and public realm upkeep, in order to **support to new efficiencies, cost savings, and a cohesive vision.**



Advocate for Equitable and Sustainable Growth

Support the development of **socially and economically resilient public infrastructure** that addresses long-standing environmental and public health concerns along the Gardiner Expressway.



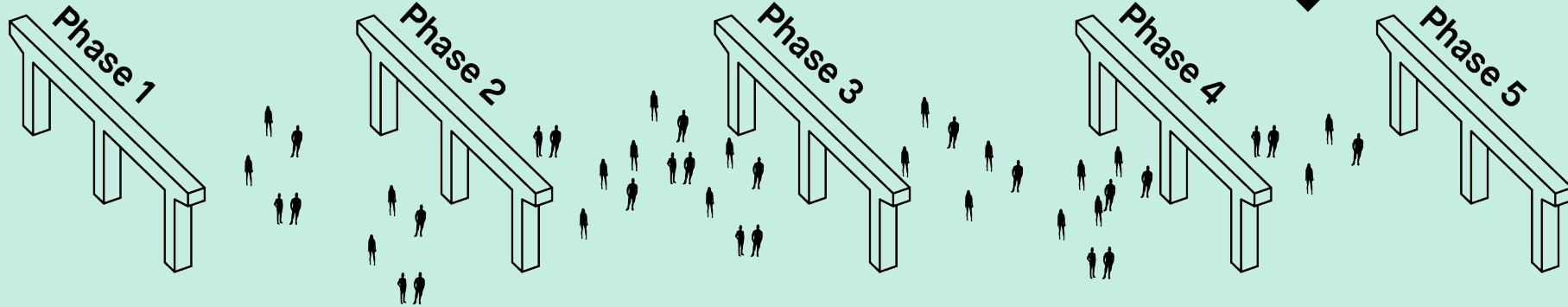
Resilient Economic Development for Toronto's Recovery

Aid the city's economic recovery by **repurposing underutilized infrastructure**, investing in downtown neighbourhoods, and developing creative programming for residents and visitors alike.



PROGRESS TO DATE

WE ARE HERE



**Background +
Methodology**



**Opportunities +
Constraints**



**Consultation
Report + Emerging
Recommendations**



**Implementation
Strategy**



**Draft +
Final Plan**

Q4 2021

Q1 to Q2 2022

Q2 to Q3 2022

Q4 2022

Q3 2023

CONSULTATION RECAP



2022-2023 Engagement Overview :

- 8+ Technical Advisory Meetings
- 10 District-Specific Stakeholder Consultations
- 2000+ Visitors to the Under Gardiner PRP Website
- 150+ Unique Comments on Interactive Online Map (spring 2022)
- 120+ Open House Participants (four sessions 17 Jan- 7 Feb 2023)
- 270+ Comments and feedback notes provided at Open House sessions
- Continued **Relationship Building efforts** with Indigenous and Unhoused communities
- Consultation with **City Departments** (ECS, Real Estate, Toronto Water, etc.)

CONSULTATION RECAP

- A lot of **engagement with the rainwater management aspect of Productive Ecology**
Many participants were excited about reducing water pollution and managing rainwater runoff
- Enthusiasm for **more seating as an important aspect of Safety and Comfort**
Many participants expressed a desire for more public seating and thoughtfully designed furnishings to help increase usability of public space
- Many participants commented on a **need for more publicly accessible water fountains and washrooms as part of Predictable Amenities**
Participants underscored that washrooms should be clean and well-maintained, accessible to public, and inclusive of all genders





CORRIDOR-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS: THE NEW BASELINE

These standards are **built on the success of existing under Gardiner features** and will contribute to the enhanced safety, accessibility and predictability of amenities along its length.

Acting as **a guide for future development**, the application of the new baseline will unite various projects along the corridor.

THE NEW BASELINE

Safety & Comfort

Pedestrian Lighting



Various approaches to pedestrian-oriented lighting being explored, including an expansion of existing systems, exploration of in-ground and uplighting and lighting that highlights the Gardiner architectural features.

Pedestrian Safety at Intersections



Pedestrian safety measures will be explored at key intersections and along the edges of Lake Shore Boulevard to create more hospitable environments for pedestrians.

Seating



For both accessibility and comfort, seating will be explored alongside other recommended provisions water fountains, Wi-Fi hotspots, and shelter from the wind.

Productive Ecology

Resilient, Perennial & Native Plants



A long-term planting strategy that “rewilds” the under Gardiner – the introduction of robust, low maintenance native plant species – can contribute to habitat regeneration and biodiversity.

The quantities of road salt and pollutants, from the road deck above, can create hostile environment for native plant species. However, resilient plants not only tolerate, but thrive in high salt environments and help to filter pollutants before they drain into Lake Ontario.

Rainwater Management



The downspouts that drain rainwater from the elevated road deck should improve to minimize dripping water and puddles in the public spaces below. Directing water into rain gardens that help filter runoff can reduce the impact on the sewer systems and the amount of pollution flowing into the watershed.

THE NEW BASELINE

Predictable Amenities

Public Wi-Fi & Charging Stations



Staying connected required access to power and Wi Fi. Charging stations as well as public Wi-Fi allow us to stay in touch with personal networks and online services and resources.

Public Washrooms & Water Fountains



Reliable access to washrooms, water fountains and bottle filling stations helps to address increased pedestrian and cycling traffic along the corridor. Providing access to drinking water is a health and safety consideration, especially during the summer months.

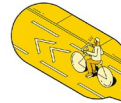
Bike Share, Parking, and Repair Stations



Combined with a safe multi-use path, bike parking and bike share stations at regular intervals along with seating and DIY repair stations will help to encourage casual and commuter cycling in the downtown core.

Wayfinding

Under Gardiner Path



Guidelines for the Under Gardiner Path will build on existing standards and act as a way to enhance the corridor's identity as well as connections to local destinations.

Consistent Bent Numbers



By clearly and consistently displaying numbers on the bents (the Gardiner's structural columns) we can help people find their way, similar to how street address numbers provide wayfinding on conventional roads.

Reflective Intersection Treatments



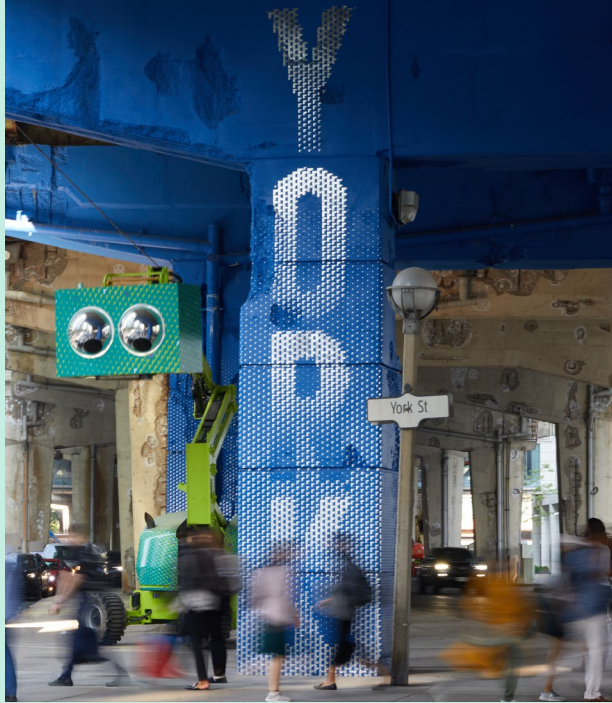
To enhance safety and accessibility, reflective surface treatments (or "Bent Socks") should, where appropriate, be applied to bents at all north/south intersections, to increase visibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

Signage Cages



A consistent system of signage cages can serve as a platform for community programs, announcement, and signage about the many events and programs hosted at nearby destinations.

THE NEW BASELINE EXAMPLES



EXAMPLE: The BoomTown Waterfront ReConnect installation makes effective use of reflective vinyl as a visual accent at the York Street intersection.



EXAMPLE: An example of bent numbers as a wayfinding system as applied to vertical surfaces at The Bentway Phase 1 site



SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS: EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES



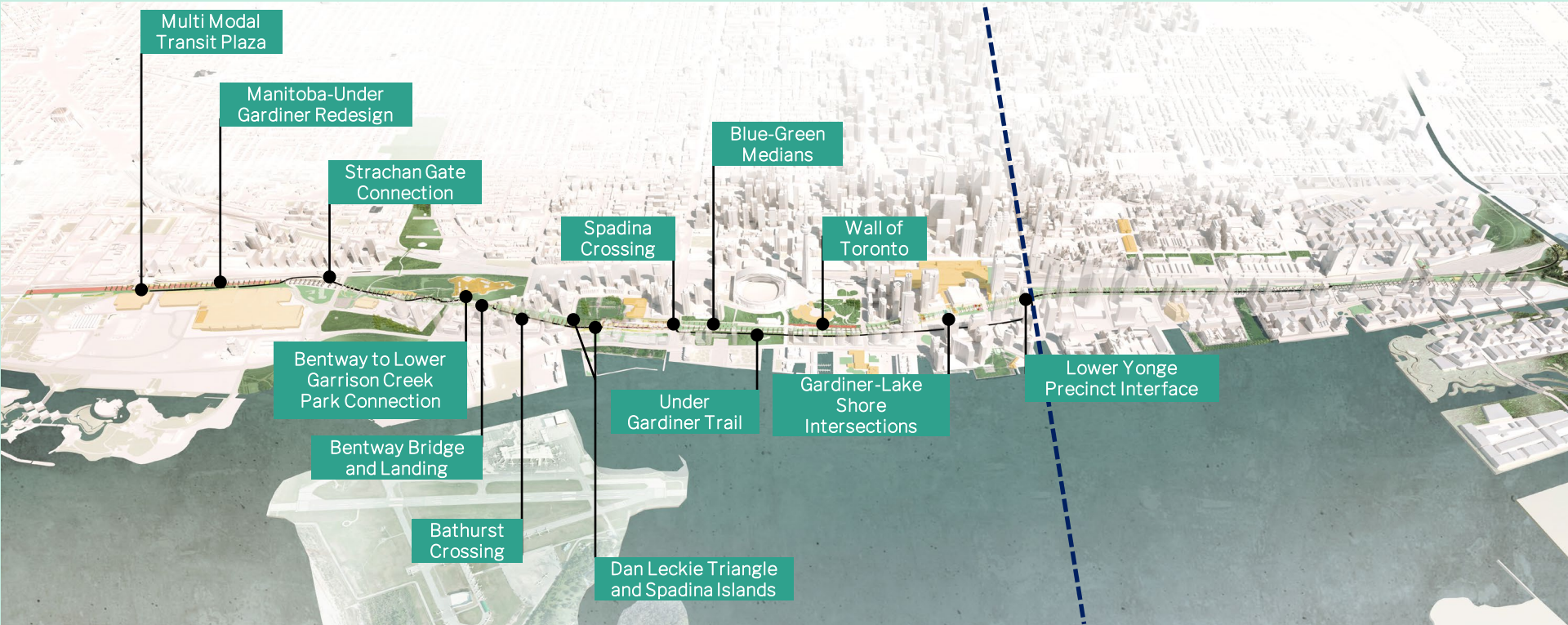
Site-Specific Recommendations

The report adopts a **district-specific approach** that identifies and reflects on geographic changes, local priorities, and driving factors influencing development along the under Gardiner corridor.

A series of opportunity sites and projects have been identified in each district, which **build on the key learnings and successes of existing under Gardiner spaces.**

Each of the district-specific opportunities require further study. **Adoption and implementation should be aligned with existing initiatives and investments** and unfold over a multi-year timeline.

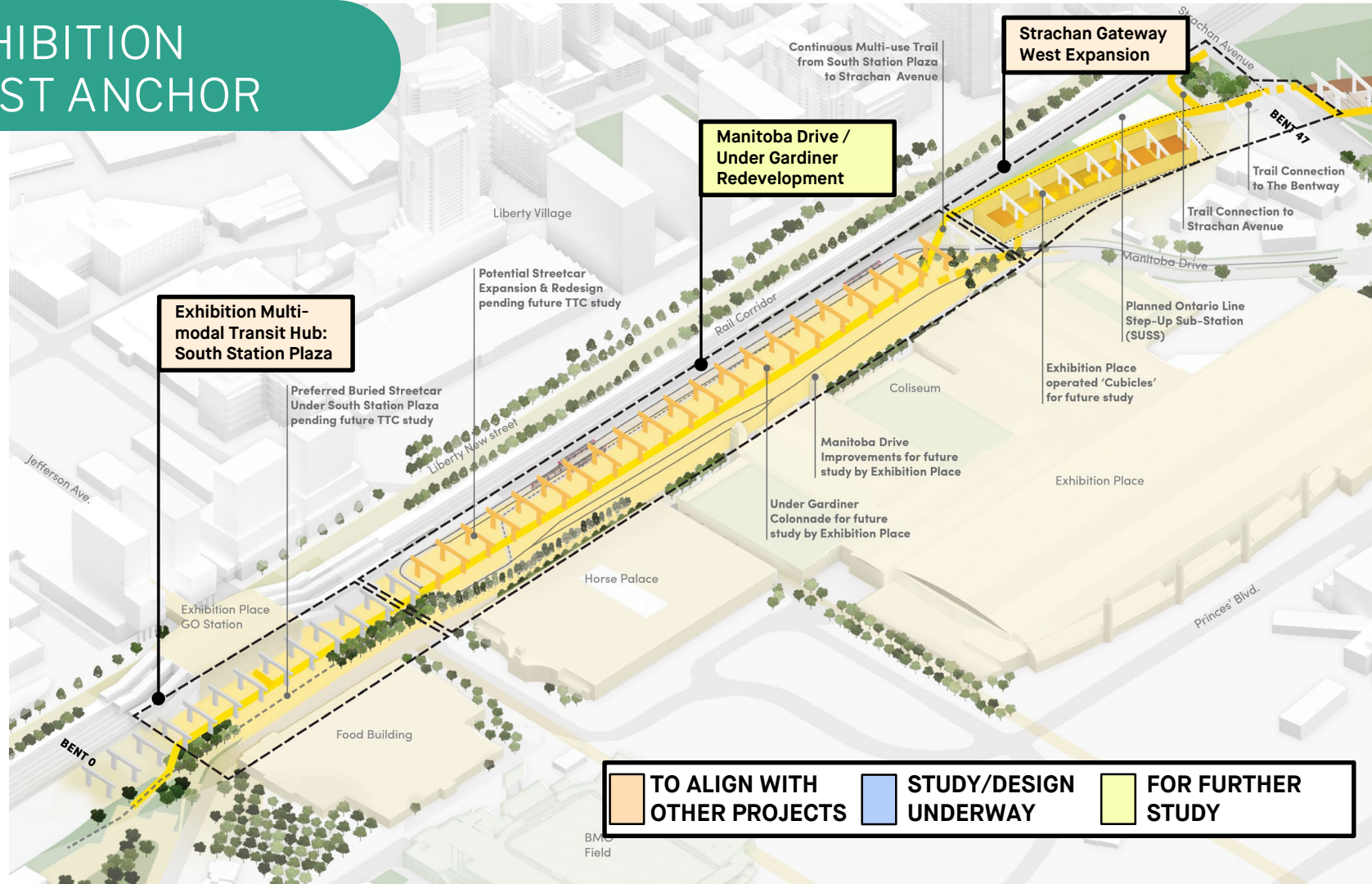
SITE SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES



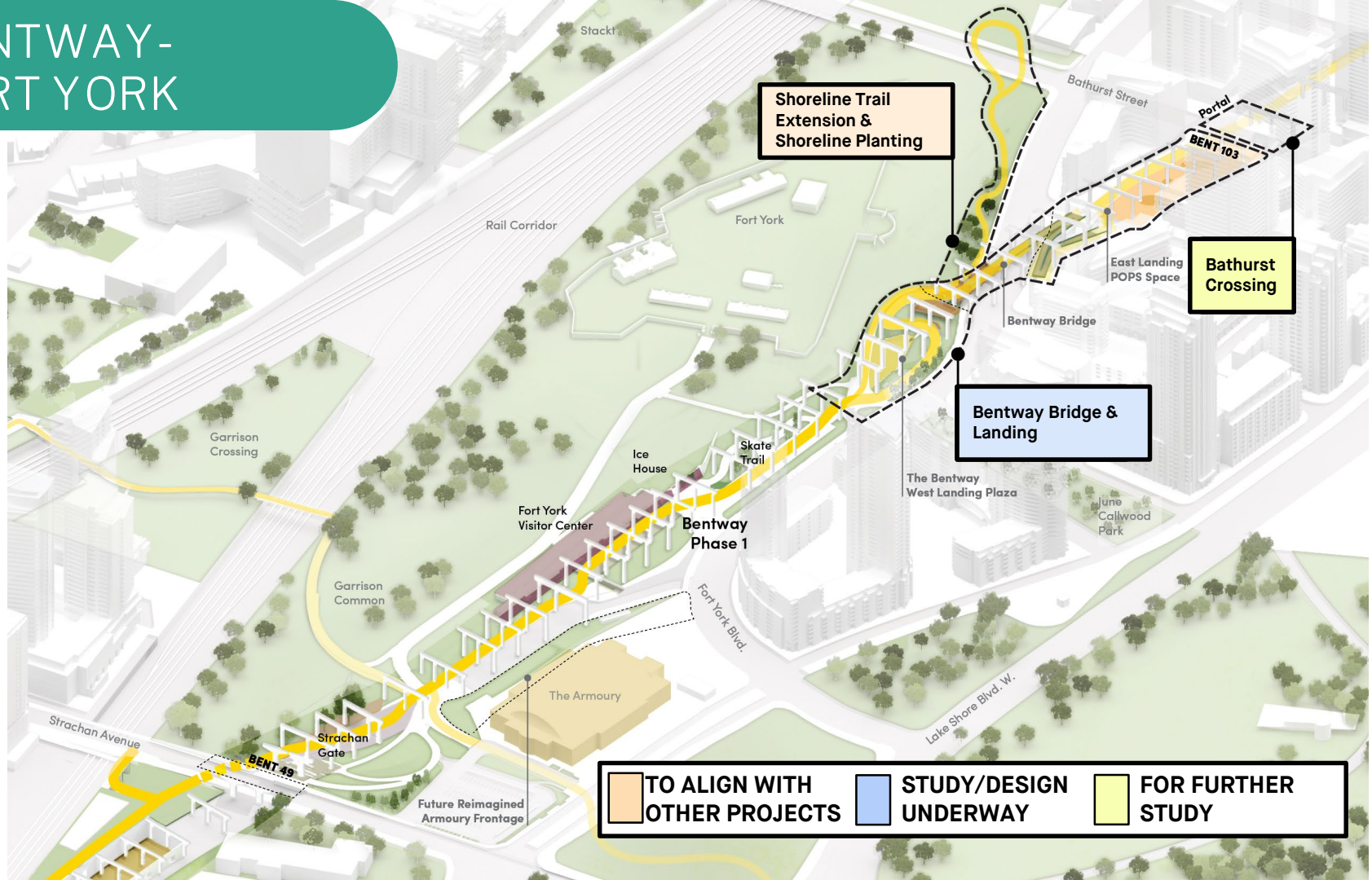
PRIMARY STUDY AREA

SECONDARY STUDY AREA

EXHIBITION WEST ANCHOR



BENTWAY-FORT YORK



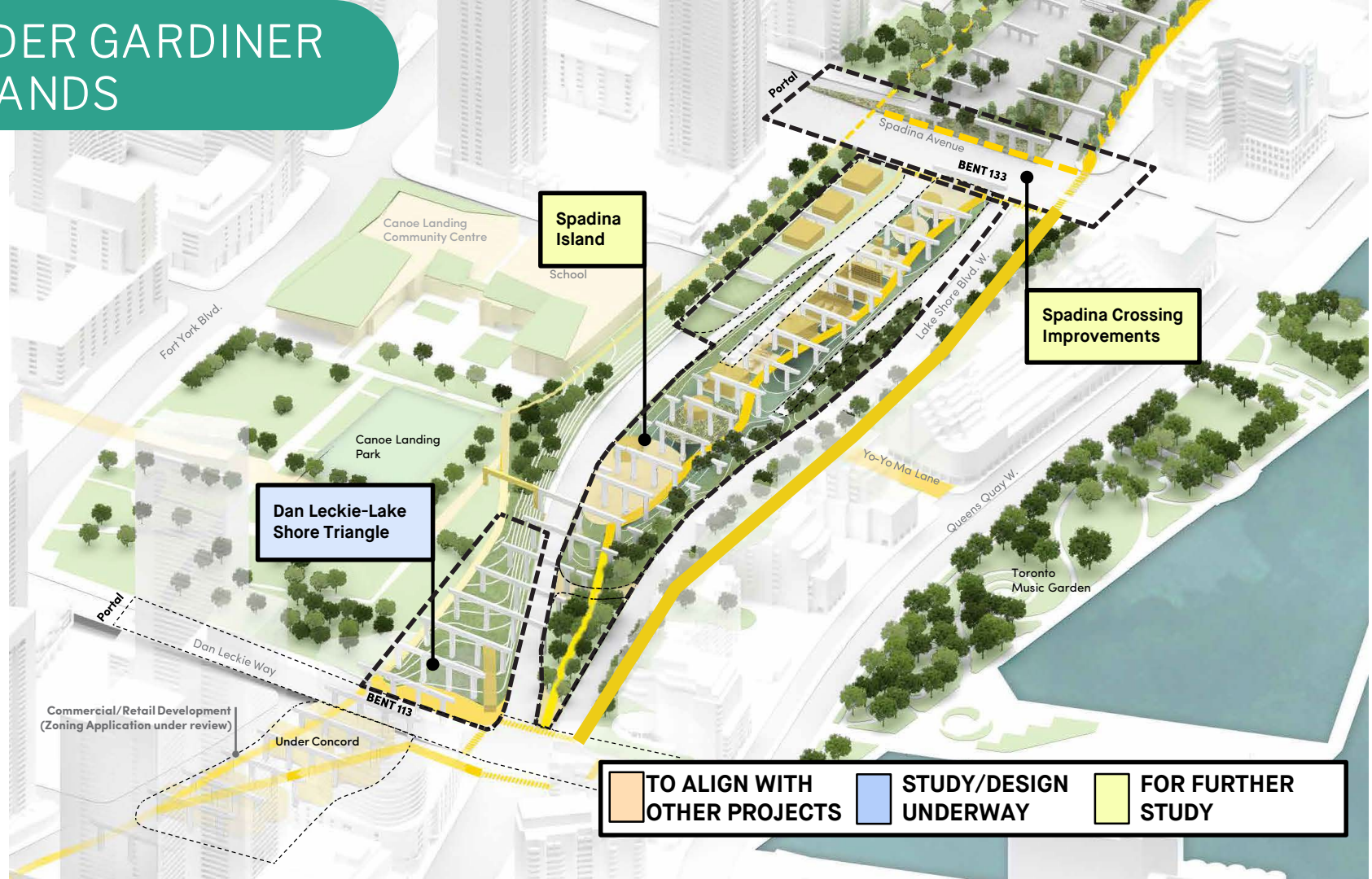
THE BENTWAY BRIDGE AND LANDING

The Bentway Bridge will provide a new, **safe way for cyclists and pedestrians to cross** Fort York Blvd. The project will build on the connectivity that Garrison Crossing Bridge provides and improve access to The Bentway, Fort York National Historic Site, and emerging commercial destinations to the east.

The Bridge will **support active transportation across the corridor and presents an opportunity to bolster access** to local cultural programming and economic development.



UNDER GARDINER ISLANDS



BENTWAY STAGING GROUNDS

Located at the intersection of Dan Leckie Way and Lake Shore Boulevard, The Bentway Staging Grounds is a site of active, environmental learning that continues The Bentway's creative work along the Gardiner Expressway. It is a temporary installation that unlocks an expanded public realm and programming opportunity for the CityPlace/ Fort York neighbourhood.

As of September 2023, visitors are invited into a living laboratory for urban ecology, with experimental gardens that use rainwater run-off from the highway above to support the growth of flowering plant species.



TO ALIGN WITH OTHER PROJECTS **STUDY/DESIGN UNDERWAY** **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Enhanced Northern Trail & Wall of Toronto

Blue-Green Infrastructure Medians

Enhanced Under Gardiner South Trail

Possible Multi-Use
Connection to Bremner
(for further study)

Roundhouse
Building

Rees Street

Rees Ridge

Trail Enhancement

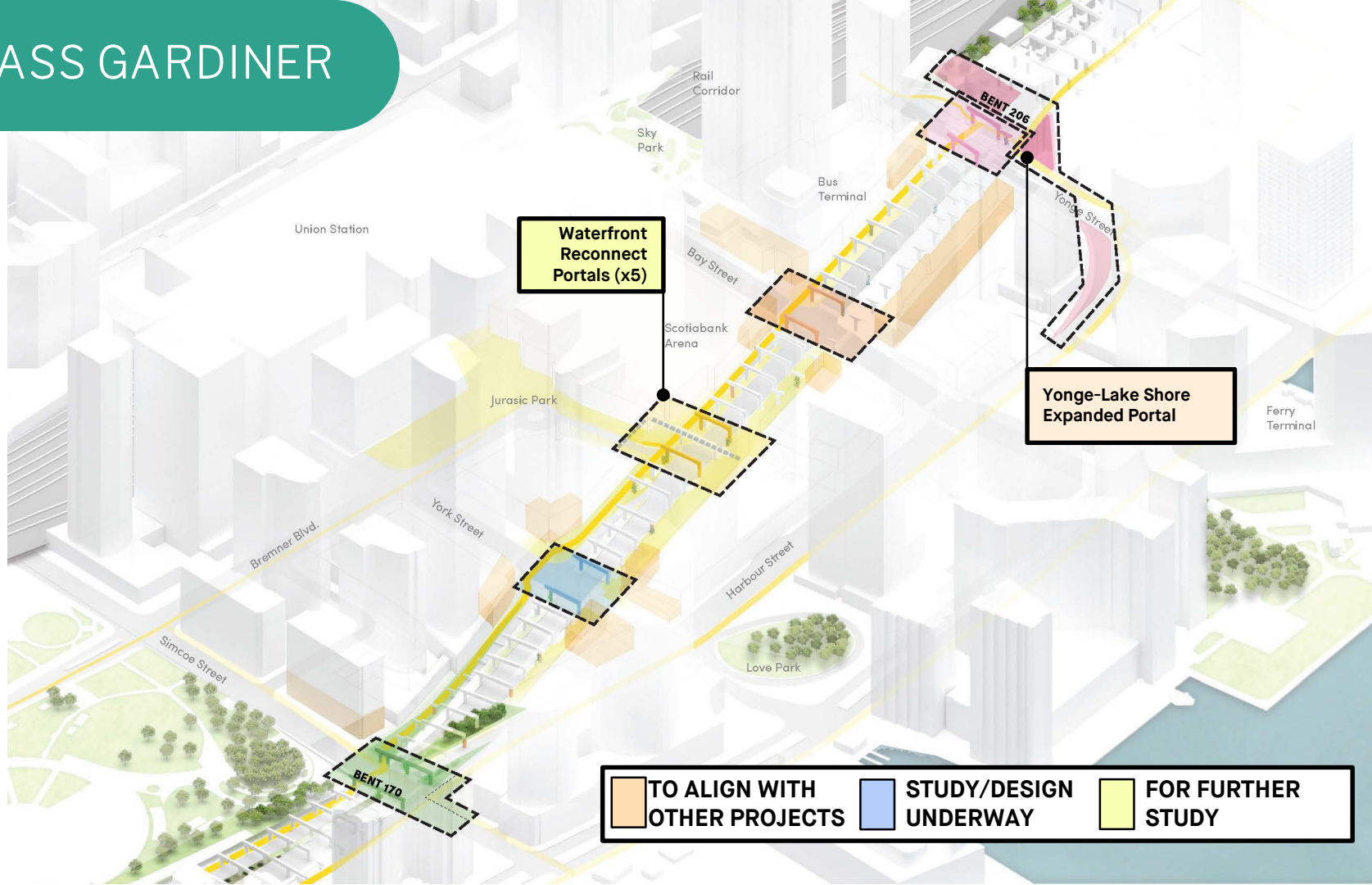
Pacific Reach
Development

TO ALIGN WITH OTHER PROJECTS

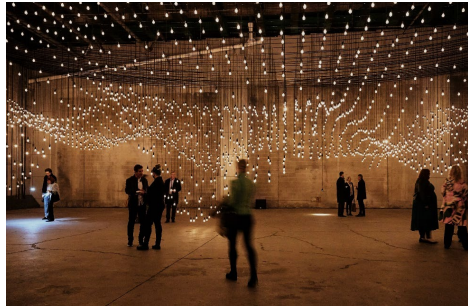
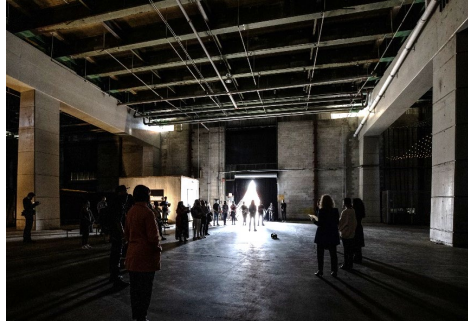
STUDY/DESIGN UNDERWAY

FOR FURTHER STUDY

GLASS GARDINER



TEST, TRIAL, TRANSFORM



Before and After Images of demonstration projects along the under Gardiner corridor, from left to right: Pulse Typology at Exhibition Place Cubicles, Waterfront ReConnect at York Street, Waterfront ReConnect at Simcoe Street, and Staging Grounds at Dan Leckie Way



The background features a complex, repeating geometric pattern. It consists of various shapes including squares, rectangles, and circles, each filled with different line patterns such as horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and concentric lines. The colors are in shades of teal and light green.

QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU

UNDER
GARDNER
PUBLIC
REALM
PLAN