2027 Environmental Design Competition - Fanshawe College

Reimaging Waterfronts within the Great Lakes Basin

Connection ▶ Destination ▶ Restoration

COMPETITION BRIEF

The 2027 Environmental Design Competition invites post-secondary students to envision the future of waterfronts within the Great Lakes Basin.

Shorelines have always connected communities to water, transportation, recreation, culture, and the natural environment. Today, the Great Lakes are facing significant pressures from climate change, development, aging infrastructure, ecological degradation, and changing community needs.

The competition challenges students to reimagine waterfronts within the Great Lakes basin as a place where people, communities, and natural systems can reconnect.

THE CHALLENGE

Great Lakes waterfronts are complex places where environmental, social, economic, and cultural interests intersect.

Students are asked to consider:

- How can waterfronts become destinations that support recreation, culture, tourism, economic activity, and everyday community life?
- How can redevelopment restore ecological systems, improve water quality, increase biodiversity, and create greater resilience to climate change?
- How can existing waterfront infrastructure and underutilized lands be transformed rather than simply replaced?
- How can waterfront redevelopment balance human activity with the protection and restoration of natural systems?

PLANNING AND DESIGN IMPERATIVE:

Students are invited to select a waterfront site within the Great Lakes Basin. Sites may be in an urban, rural, industrial, or small-community context. A number of sites have been included within this brief as possible waterfront locations to consider.

The selected site should provide an opportunity to explore meaningful changes at the interface between land and water.

Students should:

- Identify a waterfront site and establish a clear design vision.
- Analyze the site's physical, environmental, cultural, and community context.
- Develop a redevelopment concept that responds to the site's opportunities and challenges.
- Consider both developed and natural areas, including adjacent streets, public rights-of-way, trails, parks, and connections to the surrounding community.
- Demonstrate how the waterfront can become more connected, vibrant, accessible, resilient, and ecologically healthy.
- Consider the relationship between the proposed design and the Great Lakes Basin as a larger environmental system.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN THEMES

CONNECTION

Connecting People · Connecting Places · Connecting to Water

Great Lakes waterfronts can serve as important connectors between neighbourhoods, communities, natural areas, and the water.

Consider:

- Pedestrian and cycling connections
- Waterfront trails and public access

- Transit and multimodal transportation
- Connections between neighbourhoods and the waterfront
- Connections across barriers such as roads, railways, and industrial lands
- Universal accessibility and inclusive public spaces
- Connections to cultural and Indigenous histories
- Visual and physical connections to the water
- Blue-green infrastructure and ecological corridors

How can the waterfront reconnect people with the lake and with each other?

DESTINATION

Gather · Experience · Celebrate

A successful waterfront can become a destination for residents and visitors while remaining an integral part of everyday community life.

Consider:

- Public gathering spaces and waterfront plazas
- Parks, recreation, and active transportation
- Restaurants, markets, shops, and local businesses
- Cultural and community facilities
- Events, festivals, and seasonal activities
- Tourism and visitor experiences
- Waterfront housing and mixed-use development
- Public art and interpretation
- Waterfront promenades, lookouts, and gathering spaces
- Opportunities for four-season use

What would make people want to visit, stay, return, and experience the waterfront?

RESTORATION

Restore · Regenerate · Resilient

Waterfront redevelopment provides an opportunity to repair damaged ecosystems and create a more resilient relationship between communities and the Great Lakes.

Consider:

- Shoreline restoration and naturalization
- Wetlands, habitat, and biodiversity
- Native planting and ecological landscapes
- Stormwater management
- Water quality and runoff reduction
- Green and blue infrastructure
- Flooding and erosion
- Climate change adaptation
- Remediation and adaptive reuse of former industrial lands
- Reducing the environmental impact of new development
- Restoring ecological connections between land and water

How can redevelopment help restore the health and resilience of the waterfront?

COMPETITION DATES:

- Submissions due Friday, March 26, 2027 – in digital PDF format
- Presentation Saturday April 10, 2027 – Village Square, Fanshawe College, London Ontario

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Students are encouraged to think beyond the traditional waterfront promenade or park. Successful proposals may combine public space, development, ecological restoration, infrastructure, recreation, and community uses.

Water + Ecology

Explore the relationship between the built environment and Great Lakes ecosystems. Consider shoreline conditions, habitat, water quality, flooding, erosion, stormwater, and changing climate conditions.

Community + Culture

Consider who uses the waterfront today and who could use it in the future. Explore community identity, local history, Indigenous perspectives, cultural landscapes, and opportunities for inclusive public spaces.

Development + Adaptive Reuse

Consider how existing buildings, infrastructure, industrial lands, parking areas, and other underutilized spaces could be adapted, intensified, or transformed.

Mobility + Access

Create connections between the waterfront and surrounding communities. Prioritize walking, cycling, transit, accessibility, and other forms of sustainable transportation.

Public Realm

Design a sequence of memorable public spaces rather than a single destination. Consider streets, parks, plazas, trails, beaches, overlooks, natural areas, and spaces for gathering.

Four-Season Waterfronts

Great Lakes waterfronts are dynamic throughout the year. Consider how the site can support activities and experiences in spring, summer, fall, and winter.

Resilience

Consider how the waterfront can respond to flooding, extreme weather, changing water levels, erosion, heat, and other environmental pressures while continuing to support community life.

ROUND 1 - SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

▶ ANALYSIS **▶ IDEATION** **▶ VISUALIZATION**

Round 1 is a digital submission not to exceed a combined 10 mb:

- Three panels (24 x 36 PDFs):
  1) Analysis - understand the site, community, waterfront systems, opportunities, and challenges.
  2) Ideation - develop a design vision and demonstrate how Connection, Destination, and Restoration inform the proposal.
  3) Visualization - communicate the proposed waterfront through plans, diagrams, sections, perspectives, 3D visualization, mapping, and other appropriate design media.
- One page 250-word maximum project description; and
- One page including: Project Name, Group Name, competitor(s) name(s), address(es) and contact information including e-mail address(es).

The submission deadline is Friday, March 26, 2027, 11:59 pm EST to Professor Eli Paddle at epaddle@fanshawec.ca

The panels and project description must not identify the team members or their post-secondary institution to ensure unbiased judging. The Design Competition Committee will select a maximum of 12 high-quality submissions for the second-round digital\live presentations. Fanshawe College, School of Building Technologies and Design, will notify selected teams no later than Wednesday, March 31, 2027, for the Round 2 presentations. All work submitted by individuals or groups remains the property of the participating students.

ROUND 2 – IN PERSON\ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

Round 2 is an invited presentation. Presentations will be held on Saturday April 10, 2027, beginning at 9:00 am EST in-person and live online at Village Square, Fanshawe College, 1001 Fanshawe Boulevard, London, Ontario.

Invited teams will make in-person or live online presentations to independent adjudicators. Presentations will be a maximum of 10 minutes with 5 minutes for adjudicator questions. A minimum of five (5) independent adjudicators will listen to student presentations and review the submissions prior to decision-making.

AWARDS

1st Prize - $2000 2nd Prize - $1500 3rd Prize - $1000

Award decisions of the independent adjudication panel are final. Prize awards are divided equally amongst team members. There must be a minimum of six submissions for all prizes to be awarded. The number of awards may be reduced depending on the number of submissions.

ELIGIBILITY AND ENTRY FEE

Individual students or teams of full-time students studying at any accredited post-secondary institution are eligible to make one submission. Each student is eligible to participate in a maximum of one team and one submission. All work shall be completed by a student or team of students under their program faculty oversight. Students must be registered and in good standing at any government-accredited College or University in Canada or Europe on March 26, 2027.

No entry fee is required as part of the competition submission. All competition expenses incurred by a student or team are the sole responsibility of that student or team.

- Design competition background data, policies, digital mapping and aerial photography will be available upon request from Eli Paddle or Russell Schnurr.

Contact Information

ELI PADDLE

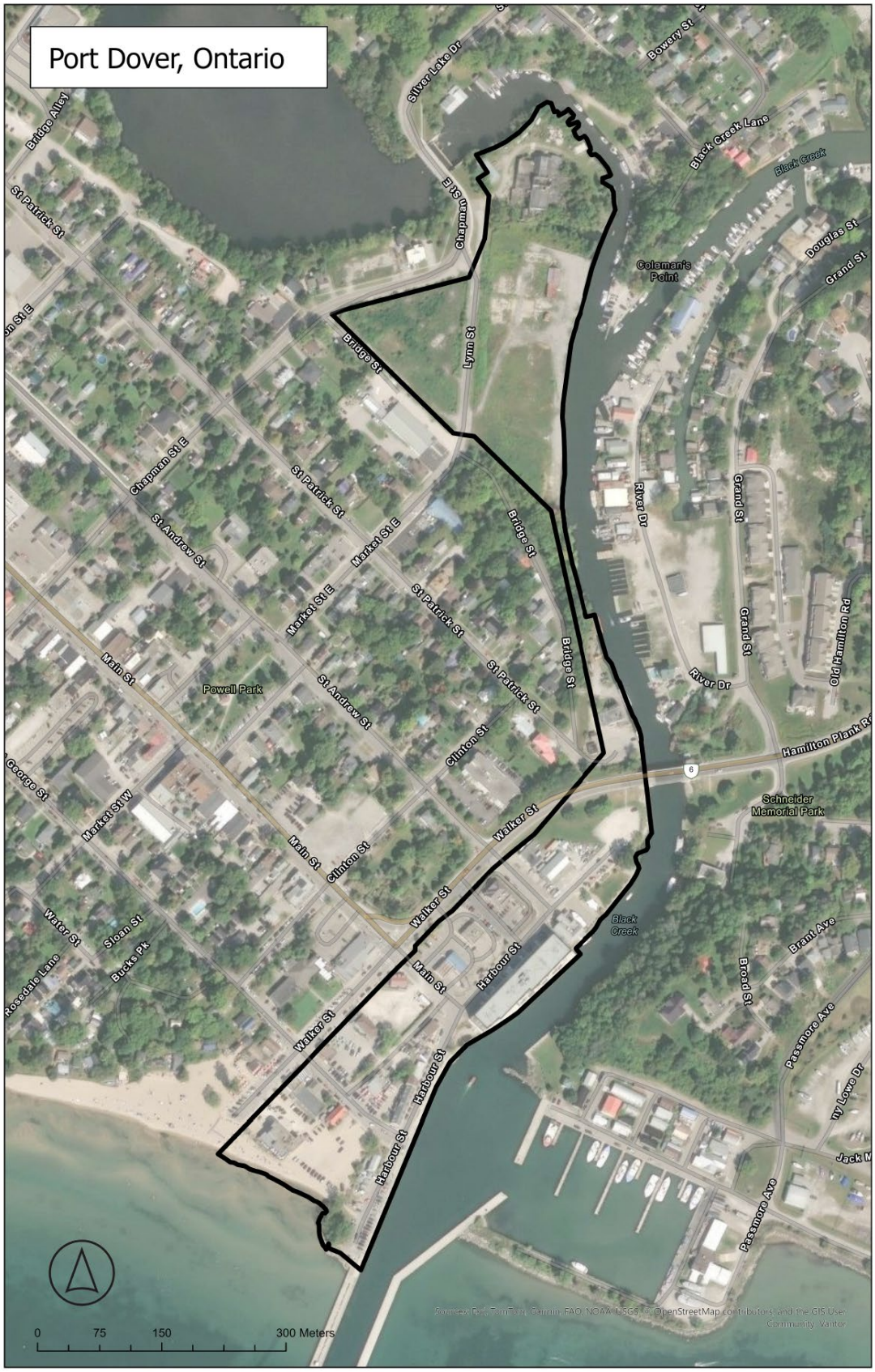
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APPENDIX – POTENTIAL SITES




Port Dover, Ontario
Silver Lake Dr
Bowery St
Bridge Alley
Black Creek Lane
Black Creek
St Patrick St
Chapman St E
Douglas St
Grand St
Coleman's Point
Bridge St
Lynn St
Chapman St E
St Patrick St
River Dr
Grand St
St Andrew St
Market St E
Bridge St
Market St E
St Patrick St
Old Hamilton Rd
Main St
Powell Park
River Dr
St Andrew St
St Patrick St
Bridge St
Clinton St
Hamilton Plank Rd
George St
Schneider Memorial Park
Market St W
Walker St
Main St
Clinton St
Walker St
Water St
Sloan St
Bucks Pk
Black Creek
Brant Ave
Rosedale Lane
Main St
Harbour St
Broad St
Walker St
Passmore Ave
Harbour St
Ivy Lore Dr
Harbour St
Jack M
Passmore Ave
0
75
150
300 Meters


Port Colborne, Ontario
Port Colborne
Park St
Fraser St
Durham St
Louis St
Charlotte St
Kent St
Victoria St
Adelaide St
Sugarloaf St
Victoria Park
Decew St
Nickel St
Rodney St
Lake Rd
Welland Canal
King St
West St
Elm St
Fares St
Mitchell St
Davis St
Welland St
Fielden Ave
Martha Dr
0
100
200
400 Meters


Midland, Ontario
Unimin Park
Bayshore Dr
Frank St
Huronia Park
Bayshore Dr
Edgehill Dr
Gloucester St
Lindsay St
George St
Charles St
Bay St
Barnett Ave
Manly St
Gloucester St
Russell St
Bay St
Barnett Ave
Charles St
George St
Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 80
Manly St
Dominion Ave
Hugel Ave
Bay St
Bayshore Dr
Midland Ave
Midland
Russell St
Dominion Ave
Queen St
St Margaret'S Catholic Church
King St
Hugel Ave
Manly St
Elizabeth St
75
300 Meters