

6.0 WATERFRONT ESPLANADE RECOMMENDATIONS



Construction of an improved harbour master's building and 'repatriation' of the Sir John A. Macdonald to Block 'D' will help animate this area of the waterfront.

The Waterfront Esplanade is the urban segment of the longer Waterfront Pathway System. Through the downtown area the pathway cannot help but be more urban in experience. The Esplanade will differ from the sinuous waterfront pathway by its rectilinear alignment adjacent to the water, as it traces the quays and follows the bowed alignment of the former K&P Rail Line linking Confederation Park to Ontario Street. Its character should also be expressed through consistent use of pedestrian pavements, signature light fixtures and site furniture. These elements should reflect the marine/industrial heritage of Kingston's waterfront, but may be more contemporary in style so as to distinguish the Esplanade from the streets and parks of downtown.

The Esplanade's rectilinear alignment, doubling back along the quays, offers interesting views and reveals different conditions within relatively short walking distances. This indirect alignment can be further articulated by placing artifacts (anchors, signal buoys etc.) and public art (sculpture) at the key turning points, or 'knuckles', to lead pedestrians in a 'join the dots' manner. These knuckles should be expressed with pavement and project out to express a lookout. Many of these punctuation points are at street ends and will serve to inform and remind passers-by from Ontario Street, or farther west, the presence of the Esplanade, as well as protect longer views from the downtown to the water. It is recommended that the building massing of the Block 'D' respect the traditional Kingston block pattern to allow an easement, or as a minimum, a view corridor along Earl Street to Lake Ontario.

Arriving from the west, the Waterfront Pathway will pass-by the Great Lakes Marine Museum site, which will serve as the start of the Esplanade. Past the Steam House emerging views of the Block 'D' development site and Confederation Basin will be revealed. Moving north along Block 'D,' views to the Royal Canadian Military College and across Lake Ontario will be filtered by the foreground of docked boats and the breakwater. There is a natural inclination to walk out to the farthest projection in the lake. A boardwalk on the breakwater could facilitate as a spur or jetty, additional to the Esplanade. This boardwalk need only be 2.4 to 3.0 metres wide with a larger deck at the terminus and could be constructed on top of the large stone rubble of the breakwater. The boardwalk would facilitate fishing and even scuba diving access to the water. Relocation of the existing floating docks to the Block 'D' quay is recommended, to eliminate the visual clutter around the Shoal Tower in front of Confederation Park, and to be used as a catalyst to encourage the development viability of Block 'D' and animate this currently sterile portion of the Esplanade.

A relocated or new Harbourmaster's building would have clear views of all the overnight docks and should offer amenities such as showers, ice and other conveniences. Additionally, the 'Spirit of Sir John A. MacDonald' locomotive would serve to articulate the inside corner of the quay and draw pedestrians to the water from Ontario Street. This would be an appropriate location, as this engine was constructed at this site by the Canadian Locomotive Company in 1913. Building envelopes or future development of Block 'D', are illustrated in the Open Space Master Plan as stepping back to accommodate the locomotive and harbours edge, as well as maintaining key visual openings through the development site.

A determination of the extent and detailing for a railing at the water's edge will be part of the design of the Esplanade. However, a railing should, at a minimum, extend along the boardwalk associated with the Radisson Hotel. This boardwalk is currently narrow and dark, confined as it is under the low overhang and blank wall of the hotel.

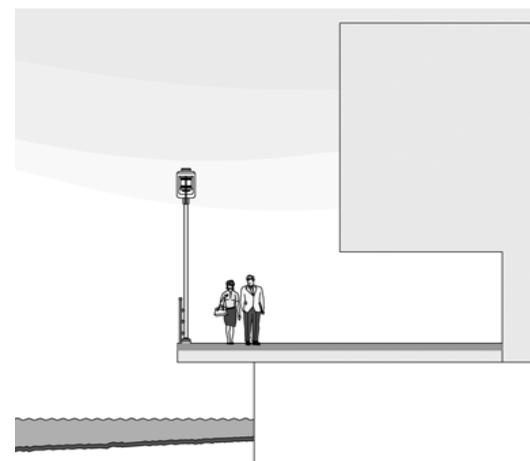
It should be cantilevered out over the water by 2.4 to 3.0 along the flanks and 4.0 to 6.0 at the east end. The end location is well suited for a minor sitting area and commercial opportunity. If viable, shop-front type use under the building overhang round the perimeter would animate and improve this portion of the Esplanade. Another opportunity to extend the width of this boardwalk is at the north side of the hotel where a stair up to the restaurant and lobby would greatly improve direct access and could, potentially, include an outdoor terrace.

While the Esplanade forms the water's edge of Confederation Park, it's distinct character of pavement and signature light fixture should be seen to pass along the edge of the park with its heritage overtones of symmetrical steps, pavements and gas lamps. The light fixtures in this section should be lowered as bollards to maintain clear views to and from the lake. Bleacher-like steps will easily serve as seating at the water's edge. The lookout 'knuckles' on the Esplanade side of the park should be articulated with artifacts or public art as points of interest.

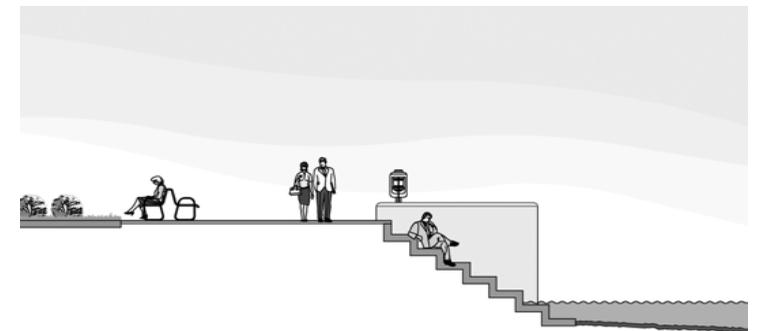
In the short-term, and as illustrated in the Open Space Master Plan, the lookouts may have simple sitting height planters with colourful floral displays. These planters could be converted to small fountains or plinths to display objects in the future. These are also key locations for Esplanade interpretive signage. These signs would be located at the knuckles along the route and include a standard Waterfront Pathway map, but also interpretive messages customized to the specific locations. For example, at Confederation Park, one interpretive sign might include a photograph of the Market Battery Fortification and speak to the changes in function and the on-going relationship between Kingston and Lake Ontario.



West quay between Block 'D' and Radisson Hotel



Esplanade Extended boardwalk at Radisson Hotel



Esplanade along Lake edge at Confederation Park

Another could explain the old K&P Rail Line to make sense of the bowed connection to Ontario Street. The old railway alignment, connecting Confederation Park to Ontario Street, is spatially confined as it passes between the rear access drive and parking lot. The Ontario Street connection is also confined within a modest boulevard that presents a design challenge, as it is important to establish an adequate presence at this corner. Clarification of the Esplanade through this section will draw pedestrians, who are presently unaware of this connection, particularly joggers, off Ontario Street to the park.

Location of an Esplanade sign and pedestrian lamps at the corner of Ontario and Queen Streets, as well as possibly tightening the spacing of the lamps along this section, will assist in raising its visual profile. Additional elements such as bollards, or a variant of the guardrail detail, might be considered to provide profile and integrity to the Esplanade through this section.



Esplanade connection from Crawford Wharf to Ontario Street

Once back on Ontario Street the Waterfront Pathway will conform to that urban streetscape, much as it does at the south edge of downtown. The proposed reconfiguration of the traffic island at the Fort Frontenac ruins includes the recommendation to widen the boulevard along Ontario Street, to allow for a generous sidewalk and street tree planting, improving the image and walking experience leading to the causeway.



The waterfront Esplanade follows the old K&P rail alignment to connect Confederation Park to Ontario Street and the causeway.