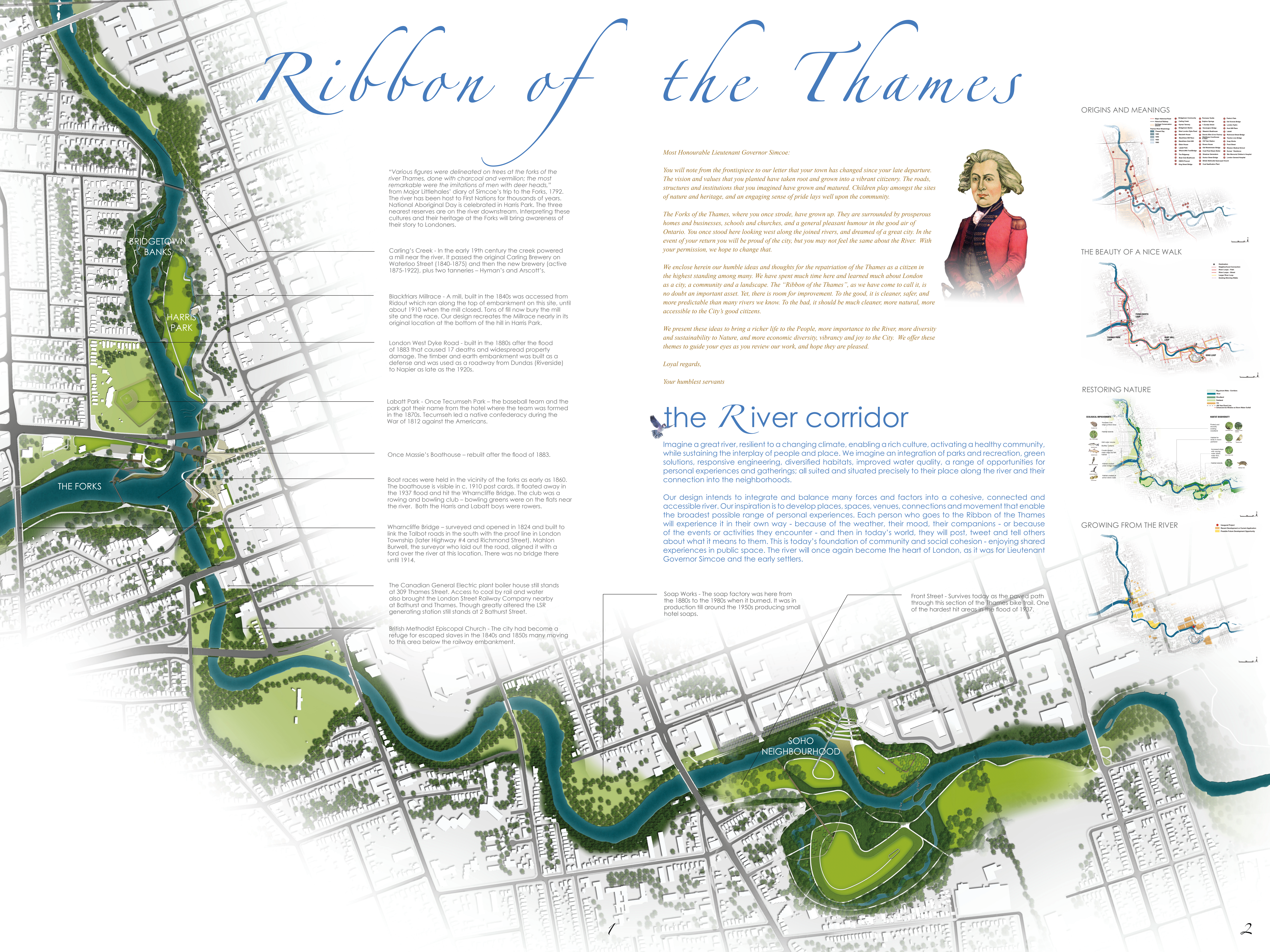


# Ribbon of the Thames



"Various figures were delineated on trees at the forks of the river Thames, done with charcoal and vermilion; the most remarkable were the imitations of men with deer heads," from Major Littlehales' diary of Simcoe's trip to the Forks, 1792. The river has been host to First Nations for thousands of years. National Aboriginal Day is celebrated in Harris Park. The three nearest reserves are on the river downstream. Interpreting these cultures and their heritage at the Forks will bring awareness of their story to Londoners.

Carling's Creek - In the early 19th century the creek powered a mill near the river. It passed the original Carling Brewery on Waterloo Street (1840-1875) and then the new brewery (active 1875-1922), plus two tanneries - Hyman's and Arscott's.

Blackfriars Millrace - A mill, built in the 1840s was accessed from Ridout which ran along the top of embankment on this site, until about 1910 when the mill closed. Tons of fill now bury the mill site and the race. Our design recreates the Millrace nearly in its original location at the bottom of the hill in Harris Park.

London West Dyke Road - built in the 1880s after the flood of 1883 that caused 17 deaths and widespread property damage. The timber and earth embankment was built as a defense and was used as a roadway from Dundas (Riverside) to Napier as late as the 1920s.

Labatt Park - Once Tecumseh Park - the baseball team and the park got their name from the hotel where the team was formed in the 1870s. Tecumseh led a native confederacy during the War of 1812 against the Americans.

Once Massie's Boathouse - rebuilt after the flood of 1883.

Boat races were held in the vicinity of the forks as early as 1860. The boathouse is visible in c. 1910 post cards. It floated away in the 1937 flood and hit the Wharncliffe Bridge. The club was a rowing and bowling club - bowling greens were on the flats near the river. Both the Harris and Labatt boys were rowers.

Wharncliffe Bridge - surveyed and opened in 1824 and built to link the Talbot roads in the south with the proof line in London Township (later Highway #4 and Richmond Street). Mathew Burwell, the surveyor who laid out the road, aligned it with a ford over the river at this location. There was no bridge there until 1914.

The Canadian General Electric plant boiler house still stands at 309 Thames Street. Access to coal by rail and water also brought the London Street Railway Company nearby at Bathurst and Thames. Though greatly altered the LSR generating station still stands at 2 Bathurst Street.

British Methodist Episcopal Church - The city had become a refuge for escaped slaves in the 1840s and 1850s many moving to this area below the railway embankment.

Most Honourable Lieutenant Governor Simcoe:

You will note from the frontispiece to our letter that your town has changed since your late departure. The vision and values that you planted have taken root and grown into a vibrant citizenry. The roads, structures and institutions that you imagined have grown and matured. Children play amongst the sites of nature and heritage, and an engaging sense of pride lays well upon the community.

The Forks of the Thames, where you once strode, have grown up. They are surrounded by prosperous homes and businesses, schools and churches, and a general pleasant humour in the good air of Ontario. You once stood here looking west along the joined rivers, and dreamed of a great city. In the event of your return you will be proud of the city, but you may not feel the same about the River. With your permission, we hope to change that.

We enclose herein our humble ideas and thoughts for the repatriation of the Thames as a citizen in the highest standing among many. We have spent much time here and learned much about London as a city, a community and a landscape. The "Ribbon of the Thames", as we have come to call it, is no doubt an important asset. Yet, there is room for improvement. To the good, it is cleaner, safer, and more predictable than many rivers we know. To the bad, it should be much cleaner, more natural, more accessible to the City's good citizens.

We present these ideas to bring a richer life to the People, more importance to the River, more diversity and sustainability to Nature, and more economic diversity, vibrancy and joy to the City. We offer these themes to guide your eyes as you review our work, and hope they are pleased.

Loyal regards,

Your humblest servants



## the River corridor

Imagine a great river, resilient to a changing climate, enabling a rich culture, activating a healthy community, while sustaining the interplay of people and place. We imagine an integration of parks and recreation, green solutions, responsive engineering, diversified habitats, improved water quality, a range of opportunities for personal experiences and gatherings; all suited and situated precisely to their place along the river and their connection into the neighborhoods.

Our design intends to integrate and balance many forces and factors into a cohesive, connected and accessible river. Our inspiration is to develop places, spaces, venues, connections and movement that enable the broadest possible range of personal experiences. Each person who goes to the Ribbon of the Thames will experience it in their own way - because of the weather, their mood, their companions - or because of the events or activities they encounter - and then in today's world, they will post, tweet and tell others about what it means to them. This is today's foundation of community and social cohesion - enjoying shared experiences in public space. The river will once again become the heart of London, as it was for Lieutenant Governor Simcoe and the early settlers.

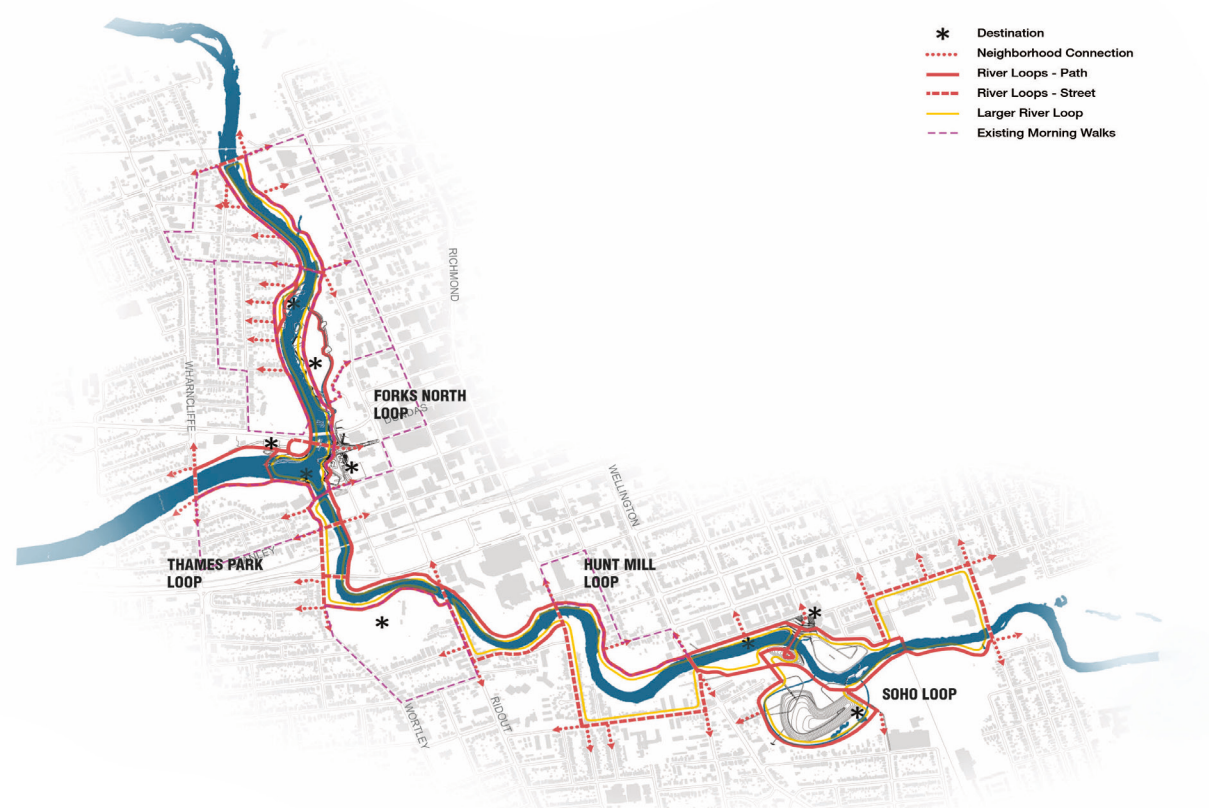
Soap Works - The soap factory was here from the 1880s to the 1980s when it burned. It was in production till around the 1950s producing small hotel soaps.

Front Street - Survives today as the paved path through this section of the Thames bike trail. One of the hardest hit areas in the flood of 1937.

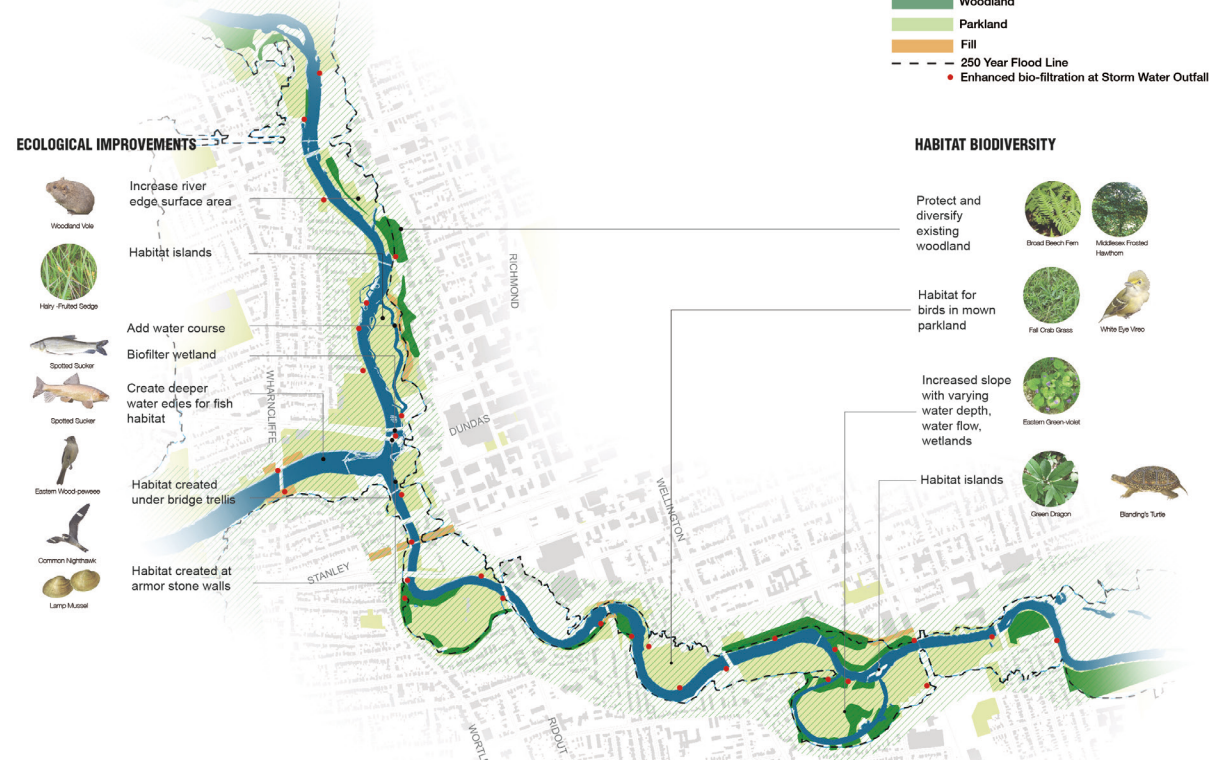
### ORIGINS AND MEANINGS



### THE BEAUTY OF A NICE WALK



### RESTORING NATURE



### GROWING FROM THE RIVER







*Sunset at the Forks*

**SUMMER**  
Workers and shoppers from Dundas street wander down the new Dundas Place to the calm of the river. Though the air is heavy and still, the shade, smells, and view of the moving stream offer relief. Sometimes getting into nature can be so important, and so simple.



*Canada Day at Dundas Place*



- ① BRIDGETOWN BANKS
- ② BLACKFRIARS MILL RACE AND THE SIMCOE SNEAK
- ③ HARRIS PARK HABITAT
- ④ THE WADING POOL
- ⑤ THE RIFFLE
- ⑥ DUNDAS PLACE
- ⑦ MUSEUM PLAZA
- ⑧ RIVERSIDE PLAZA
- ⑨ THE RIBBON
- ⑩ FORKS COVE
- ⑪ THE FISH TAIL
- ⑫ MASSIE'S RESTAURANT AND BOATHOUSE
- ⑬ ROBIN'S NEST
- ⑭ BECHER BRIDGE
- ⑮ PENMAN'S PERCH
- ⑯ LONDON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



- A THAMES VALLEY PARKWAY
- B THE RIBBON (NOT IN PHASE ONE)
- C ONE DUNDAS COFFEE AND GELATO
- D PROTECT EXISTING WATER FEATURES
- E BIO-FILTER WETLAND AT OUTFALL
- F CONCRETE SEATING TERRACES
- G STONE COBBLE PAVING
- H ARMORSTONE SEATWALLS
- I ARMORSTONE RETAINING WALLS
- J IPE WOOD DECKING
- K PROTECT EXISTING TREES
- L PROTECT EXISTING PLAY STRUCTURES
- M SLOPING LAYOUT LAWN TERRACES
- N ENHANCED NATIVE PLANTED EDGE
- O PLAZA WITH PATIO SEATING
- P PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NOT IN PHASE ONE)

## the forks



The Forks is the heart and historic center of London. So many elements, artifacts and activities that built the city happened here, or crossed through here. The secret to activating public space is triangulation - meaning the ability to see from point to point, and to get from point to point. The only way to triangulate the Forks is with the addition of our proposed Becher Bridge across the Main Branch of the Thames. With this bridge, its signature mast and stairway, the Robin's Nest, down to the river, we can instantly activate all sides of the Forks into one great central park for London.

Our concept works with the natural dynamics of the river - its scours and depositions - by formalizing the depositional sand bar in front of our proposed new Massie's Boathouse, with a restaurant on the second floor. The Fishtail, a formalized sandbar, will be reinforced to make it a permanent accessible feature that creates a quiet pool in its lee to allow safe, easy paddle access to the river for all users.

Below the Ribbon, an elevated boardwalk, is the Cove, a continuously accessible terraced area for events, gatherings and relaxing at the river in Ivey Park. Here you are connected into the Thames trail with easy access to anywhere in the system of parks. Our concept includes the creation of a number of smaller side channels which provide safe opportunities for enhanced connections to the river. The reactivation of the former Millrace behind Harris Park provides a unique opportunity for an interpretive program explaining the history of the site, and for a shady walk along a restored heritage feature.



**FALL**  
Walking from work to my home in Old South, I see a pair of Canvasbacks fly over on their route south. They follow the river, their guide, sustenance and protection. The day brisk, the sun getting low, it's time to relax and enjoy home.



Skaters at Soho Landing



**WINTER**  
The city awakens on a bright winter day. New snow sparkles on the trees, the ice on the river glistens. People are getting up, starting their day jogging, skating, and walking along the Thames. The crisp air and natural scene are just minutes from home. My day starts refreshed and happy.



Neighbours Stroll to Brisk Point at Victoria's Lookout



**SPRING**  
New parents, their kids in strollers, are out walking on this spring afternoon, getting themselves some fresh air and exercise, exposing young children to sun, sky, leaves, birds; ready to get home to prepare for homework and family dinner to round out the day.

soho neighbourhood

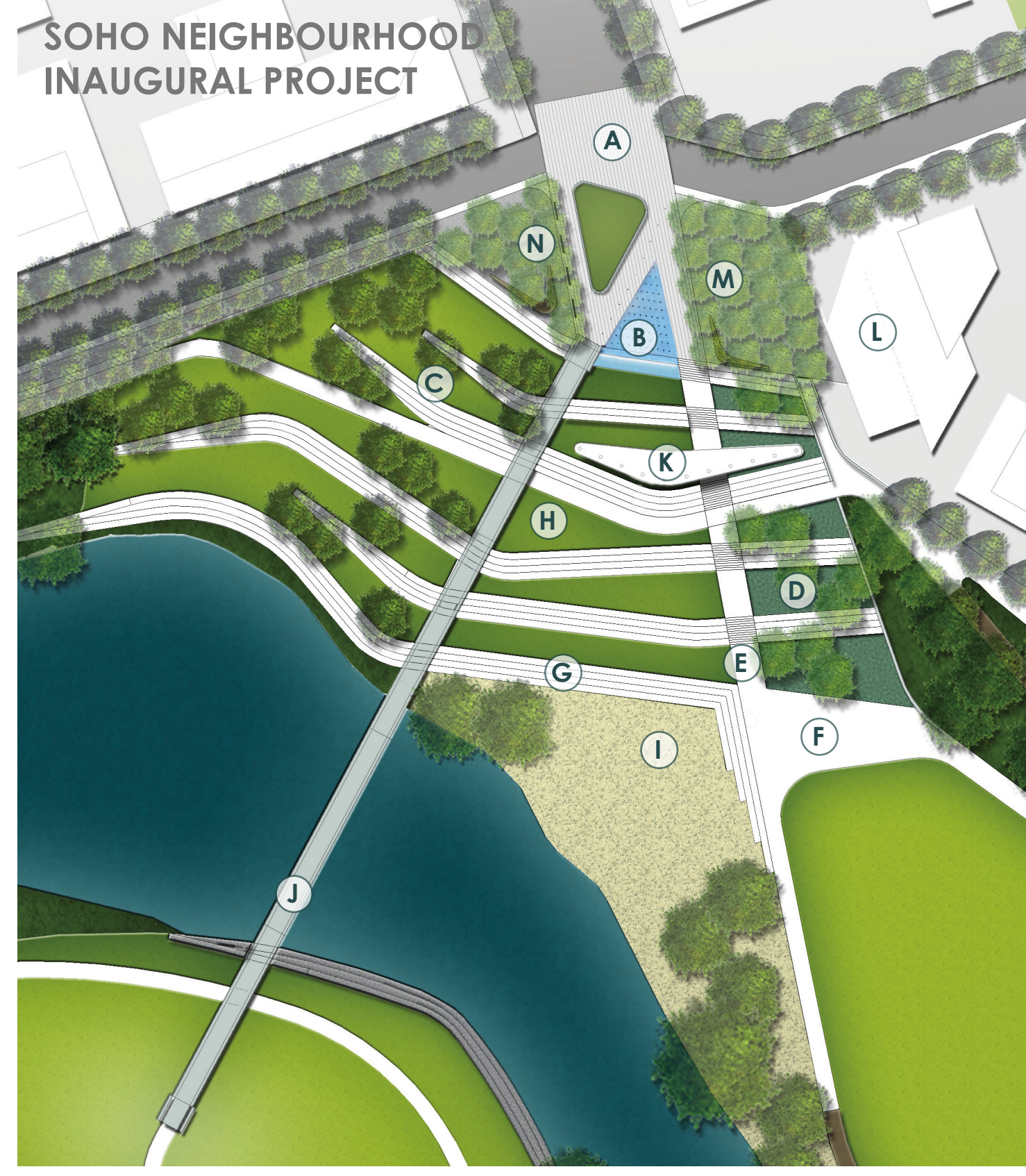
Our design at SOHO gives a public entry to the river at Colborne Street. Here we have "Victoria's Lookout", a plaza for events and gatherings connecting the neighbourhood to its river. From here you can walk a new ped/bike bridge to Brisk Point, an overlook that gives you one of the most beautiful views of the riffles, shallows and pools of the river, or you can descend the stairs or take the ramp down to Soho Landing and place your kayak in the stream.

Our design restores natural processes along the banks of the river and re-connects an old oxbow meander channel hydraulically to the main channel. Our research shows that sometime between 1878 and 1922 the meander was walled off from the river by a dyke. Today's path sits atop the dyke. The meander today has portions of wetland, some standing water and a riparian forest that is in need of management and restoration. We propose to leave the dyke in place but to use a culvert or conduit to tunnel below the dyke, restoring an active hydrological connection to the meander. This will enhance both water quality and flood storage capacity while also setting off the restoration of the rich mosaic of habitats that already exist.

Connecting the banks of the river and the neighbourhoods north and south is the most important urban intervention that we can make. People will be able to access the Thames pathway from both sides of the river. This allows the area to become an active destination with a variety of pathways, viewpoints, gathering areas, areas for play and for environmental education. This site will be perfect for school children in science programs to study and track the restoration of the river banks, learn about water quality, river dynamics, geomorphology, riverine habitats and wildlife.

By adding a pair of hills - Brisk Point and The Heath - that give overview, by restoring accessible banks along the existing point bar where the cricket pitch is today, and by connecting it all together with multiple paths, boardwalks, sitting terraces, and water quality terraces, this design concept will greatly enhance the experiences people will enjoy. People's physical connection to the Thames will be elevated as they see, hear and smell things one only experiences at the river's edge. But more importantly is the enhancement of the emotional connection to the river which will foster lasting memories of events and places each person will carry throughout their lives.

- ① VICTORIA'S LOOKOUT
- ② SOHO LANDING
- ③ PEBBLE BEACH
- ④ BRISK POINT
- ⑤ CRICKET PITCH COMMONS
- ⑥ THE OVERLOOK
- ⑦ THE WALK
- ⑧ THE HEATH
- ⑨ THE OXBOW PRESERVE



- A STONE PAVED PLAZA FOR SOCIAL EVENTS
- B POP-JETS W/ NEGATIVE EDGE WATER LENS
- C PICNIC GROVE TERRACES
- D BIOFILTER PLANTING TERRACES
- E CONCRETE SEATING TERRACES
- F STONE COBBLE PAVING AT LANDING
- G ARMORSTONE RETAINING SEATWALLS
- H LAWN TERRACES
- I NATURAL PEBBLE BEACH
- J PEDESTRIAN/ BICYCLE BRIDGE
- K SHADE CANOPY
- L MIXED-USE BUILDING W/ GROUND FLOOR CAFE
- M PATIO GROVE
- N PICNIC GROVE

