

# New Wave

An undulating design by West 8 gives Toronto access to its waterfront.

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Toronto is creating public space quite literally out of thin air. September marked the opening of the Spadina WaveDeck, a curvy wooden plaza designed by Adriaan Geuze, the founding principal of West 8, best known for the redevelopment of Amsterdam's Borneo-Sporenburg docks. By cantilevering the city's waterfront over Lake Ontario, Geuze has added more than 5,000 square feet of usable ground where there just wasn't any before.

The Spadina WaveDeck spans one of downtown Toronto's many boat slips, little-used indentations in the harbor's edge that pinch the shoreline, leaving only about nine feet of sidewalk between the lake and Queens Quay Boulevard, a four-lane thoroughfare with streetcar tracks. This is no simple boardwalk, however. "We designed a specific silhouette of undulating decks where the city kisses the lake," Geuze says of the project, which will ultimately include five WaveDecks. His ipe-clad ribbons rise and fall as they cross the slips, their curves creating seating ledges and allowing the pedestrian walkway to wiggle down to the water's edge.

The fact that the project was built almost exactly as drawn (in renderings, it looks profoundly difficult to construct) is a testament to the design aptitude and tenacity of Waterfront Toronto, a semipublic agency created in 2001 to revitalize the city's six-plus miles of lakefront. Given control of 2,000 acres of public land and 1.5 billion Canadian dollars in seed money, the organization has hosted a series of international design competitions for various parts of the program. West 8, in collaboration with du Toit Allsopp Hillier, a local firm, was selected to envision the two-mile central segment. When complete, the project will eliminate two lanes of traffic, plant maple trees near the water, and create a total of five WaveDeck segments (two more are scheduled to open next summer). Some will rise more than others, one will morph into a children's playground, and another will resemble a powerful wave. "The others are similarly detailed," Geuze says, "but they all have a different span and a different curve."



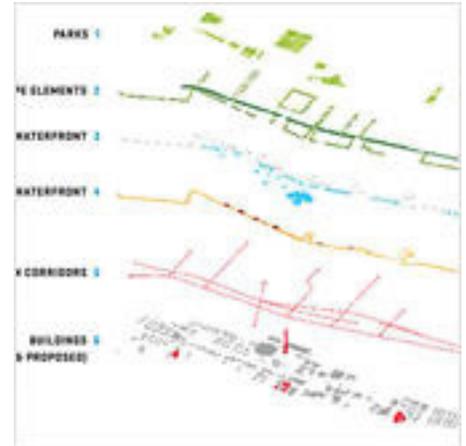
West 8 + DTAH's boardwalk juts out over Lake Ontario, offering Torontonians a better connection to the city's most important natural asset.  
Courtesy West 8 + DTAH Joint Venture

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“You build great cities by building a great public realm,” says John Campbell, the president and CEO of Waterfront Toronto. If he’s right, then Canada’s largest city—which is not merely retrofitting existing spaces but actually adding surface area—is well on its way. “We want to make sure as we march along and revitalize the waterfront,” Campbell says, “that the water’s edge is recaptured by the people, legally, physically, and psychologically.” Accordingly, Geuze wanted to define Canada’s newfound amenity by referencing a collective national memory: the beautiful view, large trees on the shore, and a rustic wooden cabin and dock perched on the edge of the lake. “This is what Canadians share,” he says, “this perception of the landscape, of looking out from a shoreline or dock across the water.”



The space is kept alive after dark by 24 under-water LEDs.  
Courtesy West 8 + DTAH Joint Venture