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Queens Quay ready for its makeover

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The plan to redesign Queens Quay, the backbone of Toronto's waterfront revitalization plans, finally has the go-ahead.

The provincial government approved an environmental assessment yesterday for a pedestrian-friendly promenade. Construction of the first phase, an 800-metre section, should begin early next year.

The exact boundaries for that initial phase hasn't been determined, but it will be in the central waterfront around Harbourfront.

Traffic will disappear from the street's two south lanes, which will be transformed into a tree-lined linear park from Parliament St. west to Spadina Ave. It will include a dedicated bicycle path to replace the bike lane now on the street's south side.

The TTC's light rapid transit lines will remain where they are, in the centre boulevard, and vehicular traffic will be reduced to two lanes on the north side.

The plan calls for turning lanes and lay-bys — indented areas of the road where cars can pull over to the curb without obstructing traffic.

An initial \$48 million has been set aside by Waterfront Toronto. That will go towards reconfiguring the entire three-kilometre boulevard and building the first section, which is expected to take 18 months. The remaining phases are dependent on funding.

"My aspiration is that when people see the first phase, they'll see the merit of it and want more," says John Campbell, CEO of Waterfront Toronto. The money could come from additional government funding, or from the sale of city-owned and provincial lands that are now managed by the government agency.

Torontonians got a taste of what the new park will be like during the summer of 2006, when a demonstration project temporarily replaced the south-side lanes with turf, flowers, and a bikes-only lane.



An artist's conception of the remade Queens Quay, with two lanes of traffic and the other side devoted to pedestrians and cyclists.

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