

Downtown Waterfront Park Redevelopments

HERITAGE PARK (PHASE 1) & SAM CANCELLA PARK

Project Information Package
Spring 2026

DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT PARK REDEVELOPMENTS: Heritage Park (Phase 1) & Sam Cancilla Park

The City is redeveloping two downtown waterfront parks and we're inviting the community to help shape the preferred design concepts for each park. Feedback collected will help ensure the project reflects community needs, priorities, and aspirations.

Heritage Park and Sam Cancilla Park will both be redeveloped in alignment with the 2023 Waterfront Strategic Plan Update, which sets out a 10-year roadmap for improving the waterfront along Kempenfelt Bay.



HERITAGE PARK (PHASE 1): About the Project

Heritage Park has an approved Master Plan (2022) which also had a comprehensive public consultation campaign. Heritage Park's redevelopment is listed as one of the highest short-term priorities in the plan, identified as having significant potential to transform the waterfront into a major destination and drive downtown investment.



The Heritage Park (Phase 1) work is focused on the reconstruction of the water play feature and immediate area.

Features under consideration for this redevelopment include:

- A new interactive water play/feature and flexible plaza space**
- Accessible pathway connections**
- Native plantings**
- Site furnishings**

HERITAGE PARK (PHASE 1): The Site



Looking south-west toward the project area: existing water feature area in the distance and Sea Serpent Sculpture beyond.



The pump house building at the north edge of the water feature area.



The washroom building at the west edge of the water feature area.



The existing water feature area looking north-west.



View of the water feature area and pump house seen from the washroom building.



The north-west edge of the water feature area.

PROJECT STAGES & SCHEDULE:

Heritage Park Redevelopment Timeline



Park Scope	Project Stage	Approximate Timeline
Phase 1	Preliminary Concepts	Q1 2026
	Community Engagement	Q2 2026
	Preferred Concept	Q2/Q3 2026
	Detailed Design	Q3/Q4 2026
	Construction Start	Q3/Q4 2026
	Construction Completion	Q3 2027
Phase 2	Design	2028
	Construction	2028/2029

SAM CANCILLA PARK: About the Project

Sam Cancilla Park has been identified as a Focus Area priority in the Waterfront Strategic Plan. It was identified through community and stakeholder engagement as both requiring revitalization and for its ability to positively impact the waterfront. Prior to the Sam Cancilla Park redevelopment, as a separate project, the existing underground reservoir in the park will be decommissioned and the associated booster pumping station will be completely removed.



The scope for the Sam Cancilla Park redevelopment encompasses the full extent of the park including the adjacent portion of the North Shore Trail and is being coordinated with the Sam Cancilla Park Reservoir Decommissioning & Removal project.

Features under consideration for this redevelopment include:

Gateway feature (public art)

A new play area(s)

Water access

Flexible open lawn area and improved passive areas

Water feature

Overlook, seating, small gathering and rest stop opportunities

Accessible pathway connections (where feasible)

Native plantings

Site furnishings

Wayfinding signage

SAM CANCELLA PARK: The Site



View of Kempenfelt Bay from the start of the North Shore Trail at the south-west corner of Sam Cancellia Park.



Looking down the North Shore Trail at the south edge of the park.



View of the Bay from within the Park.



The sidewalk at the top edge of the park looking west down Dunlop St E.



View down Dunlop St E from the north-east corner of the park.



Looking toward Heritage Park from the sidewalk at the north edge of Sam Cancellia Park.

PROJECT STAGES & SCHEDULE:

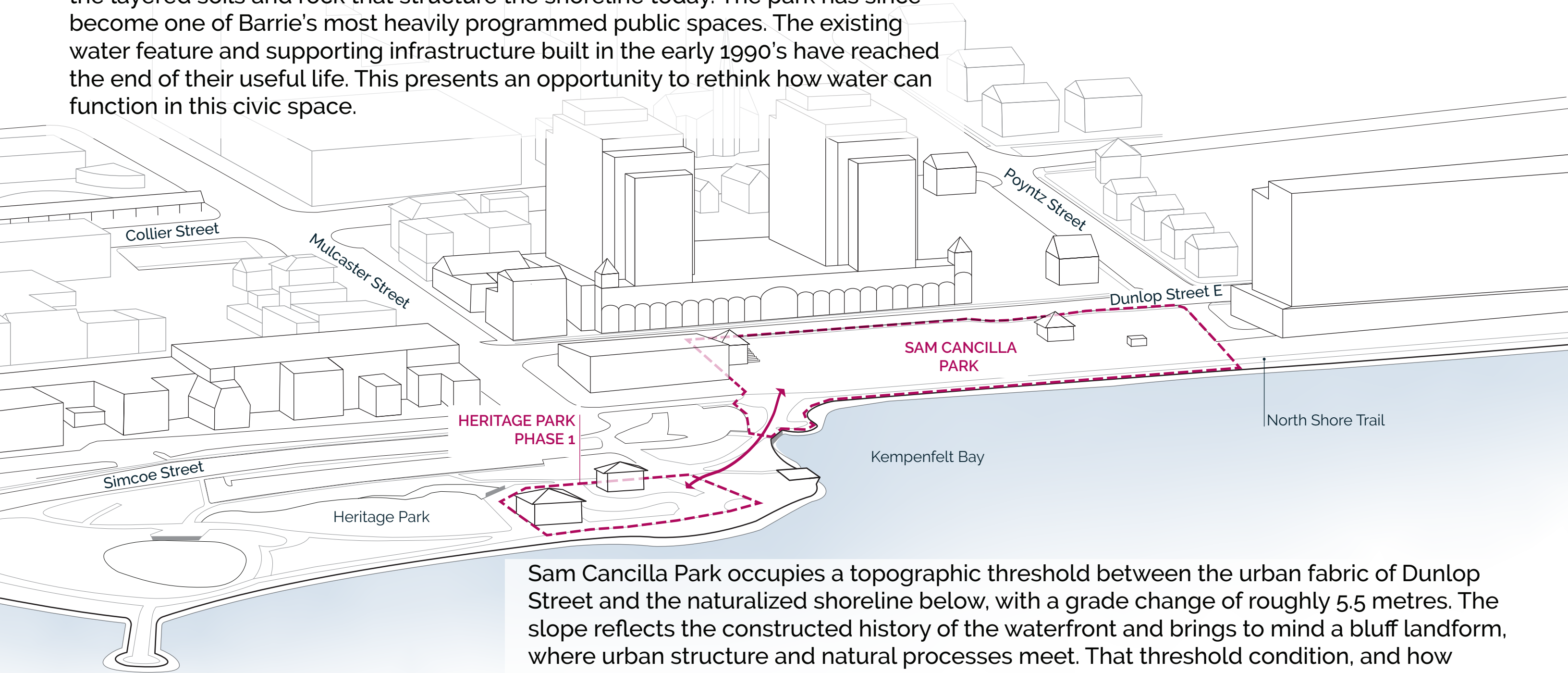
Sam Cancilla Park Redevelopment Timeline



Project Stage	Approximate Timeline
Preliminary Concepts	Q1 2026
Community Engagement	Q2 2026
Preferred Concept	Q2/Q3 2026
Detailed Design	Q3/Q4 2026
Reservoir Decommissioning Project - Initiation <i>(by the City's Infrastructure Department)</i>	Q3/Q4 2026
Reservoir Decommissioning Project - Completion	Q2 2027
Construction Start	Q2 2027
Construction Completion	Q3 2028

PARKS CONTEXT

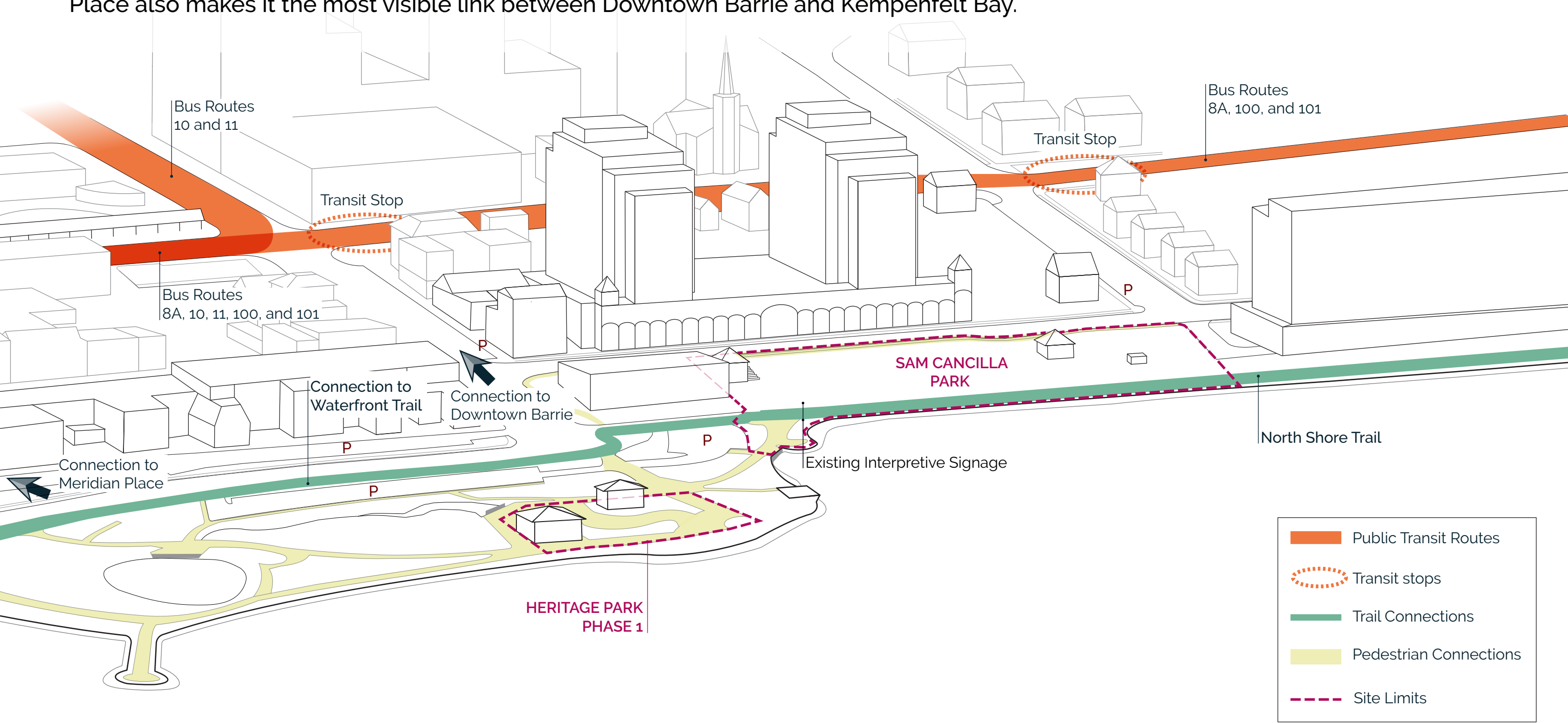
Barrie's waterfront parks are shaped by the relationship between the city and Kempenfelt Bay. Heritage Park was created through engineered infill in the late 1980s, forming new public ground at the edge of a much older geological condition. Retreating ice sheets carved the basin of Kempenfelt Bay and deposited the layered soils and rock that structure the shoreline today. The park has since become one of Barrie's most heavily programmed public spaces. The existing water feature and supporting infrastructure built in the early 1990's have reached the end of their useful life. This presents an opportunity to rethink how water can function in this civic space.



Sam Cancilla Park occupies a topographic threshold between the urban fabric of Dunlop Street and the naturalized shoreline below, with a grade change of roughly 5.5 metres. The slope reflects the constructed history of the waterfront and brings to mind a bluff landform, where urban structure and natural processes meet. That threshold condition, and how people move through it from street to water, is central to the understanding of this site.

CONNECTIONS

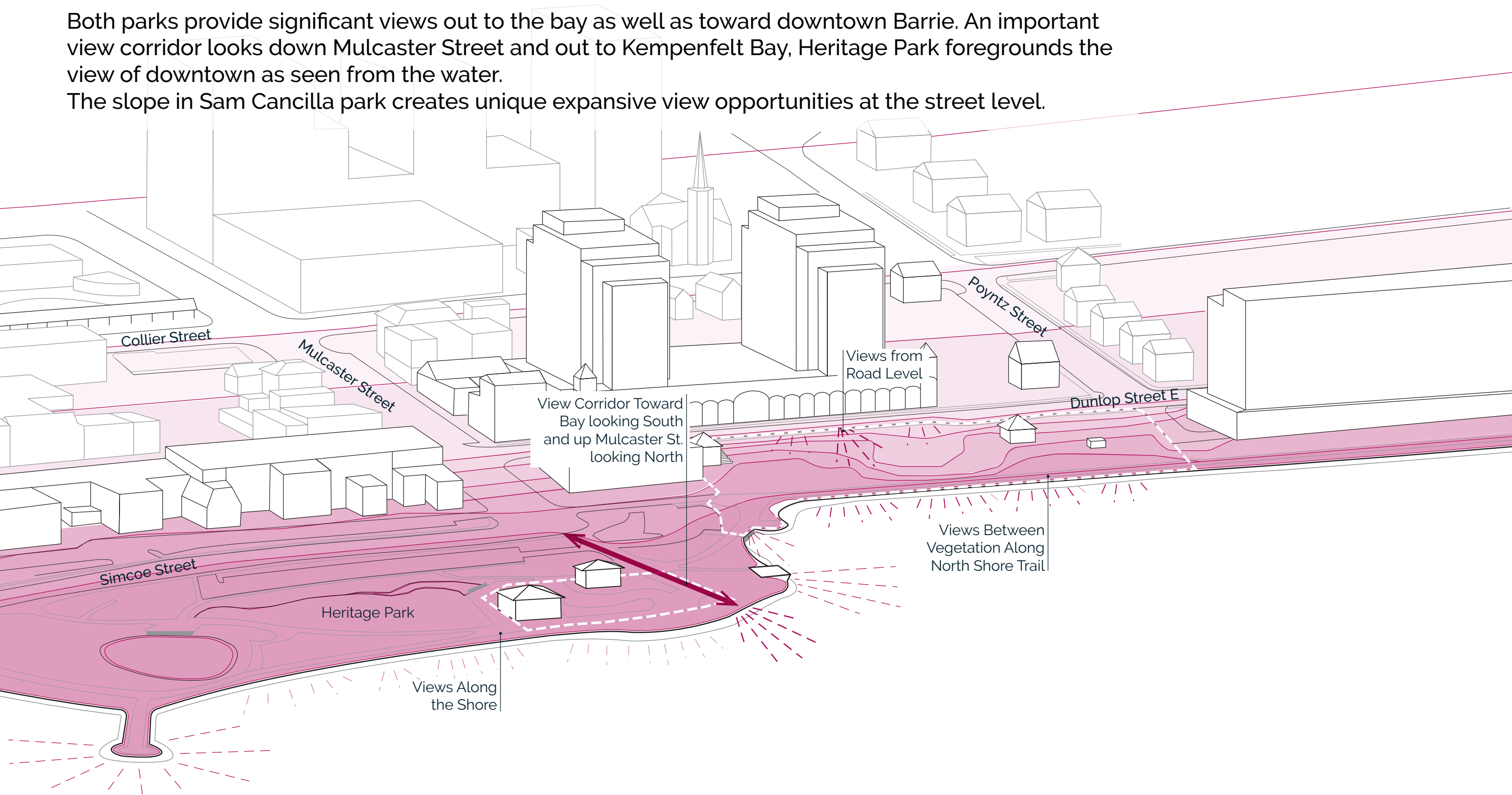
The parks sit at the meeting point of several major trail systems including the Trans Canada Trail, the North Shore Trail, the Simcoe County Loop Trail, and the Waterfront Heritage Trail, making it one of the most connected points on Barrie's waterfront. Heritage Park's position directly across from Meridian Place also makes it the most visible link between Downtown Barrie and Kempenfelt Bay.



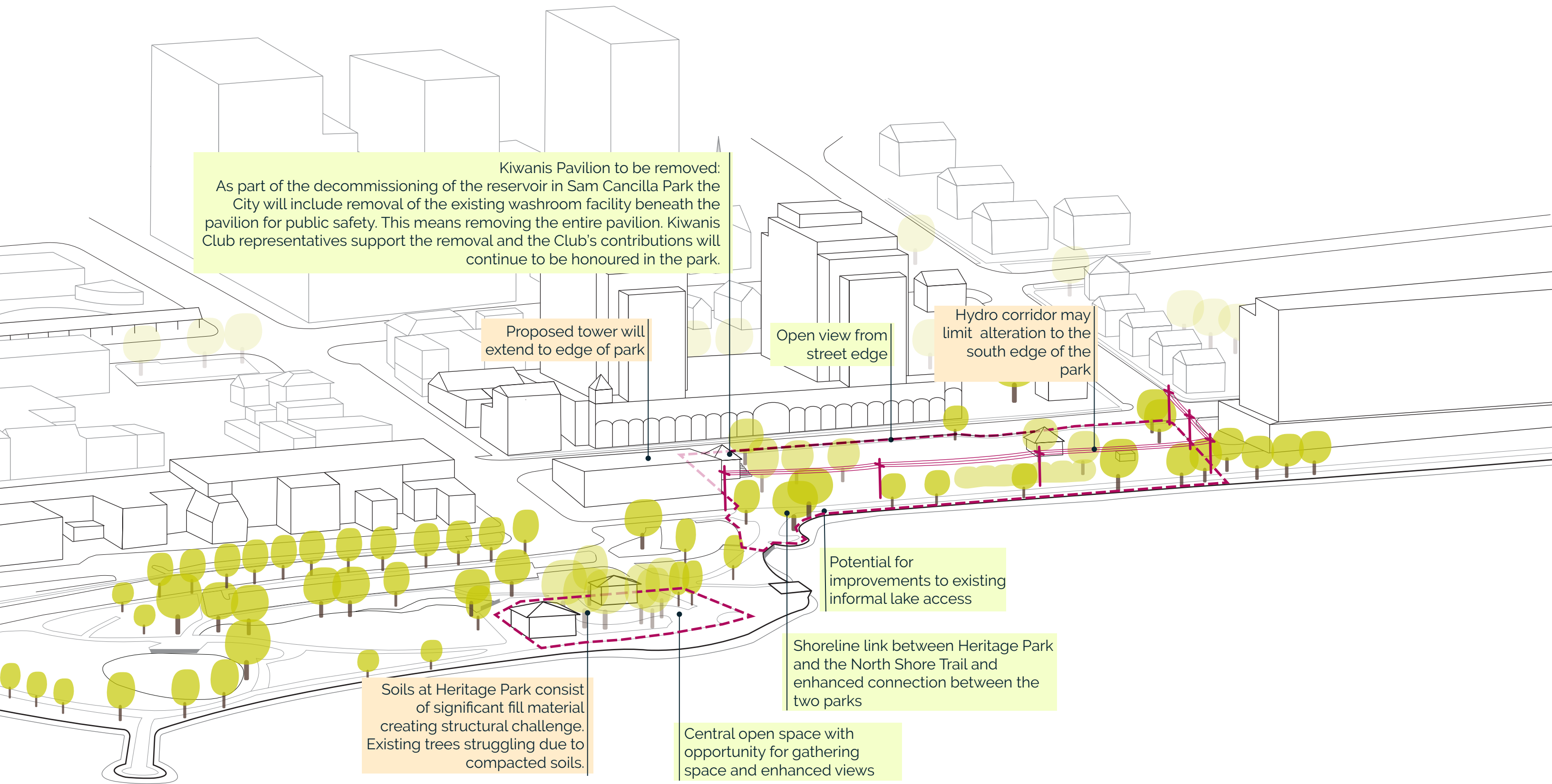
TOPOGRAPHY AND VIEWS

Both parks provide significant views out to the bay as well as toward downtown Barrie. An important view corridor looks down Mulcaster Street and out to Kempenfelt Bay, Heritage Park foregrounds the view of downtown as seen from the water.

The slope in Sam Cancilla park creates unique expansive view opportunities at the street level.



PARKS OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS



Kiwanis Pavilion to be removed:
As part of the decommissioning of the reservoir in Sam Cancilla Park the City will include removal of the existing washroom facility beneath the pavilion for public safety. This means removing the entire pavilion. Kiwanis Club representatives support the removal and the Club's contributions will continue to be honoured in the park.

Proposed tower will extend to edge of park

Open view from street edge

Hydro corridor may limit alteration to the south edge of the park

Potential for improvements to existing informal lake access

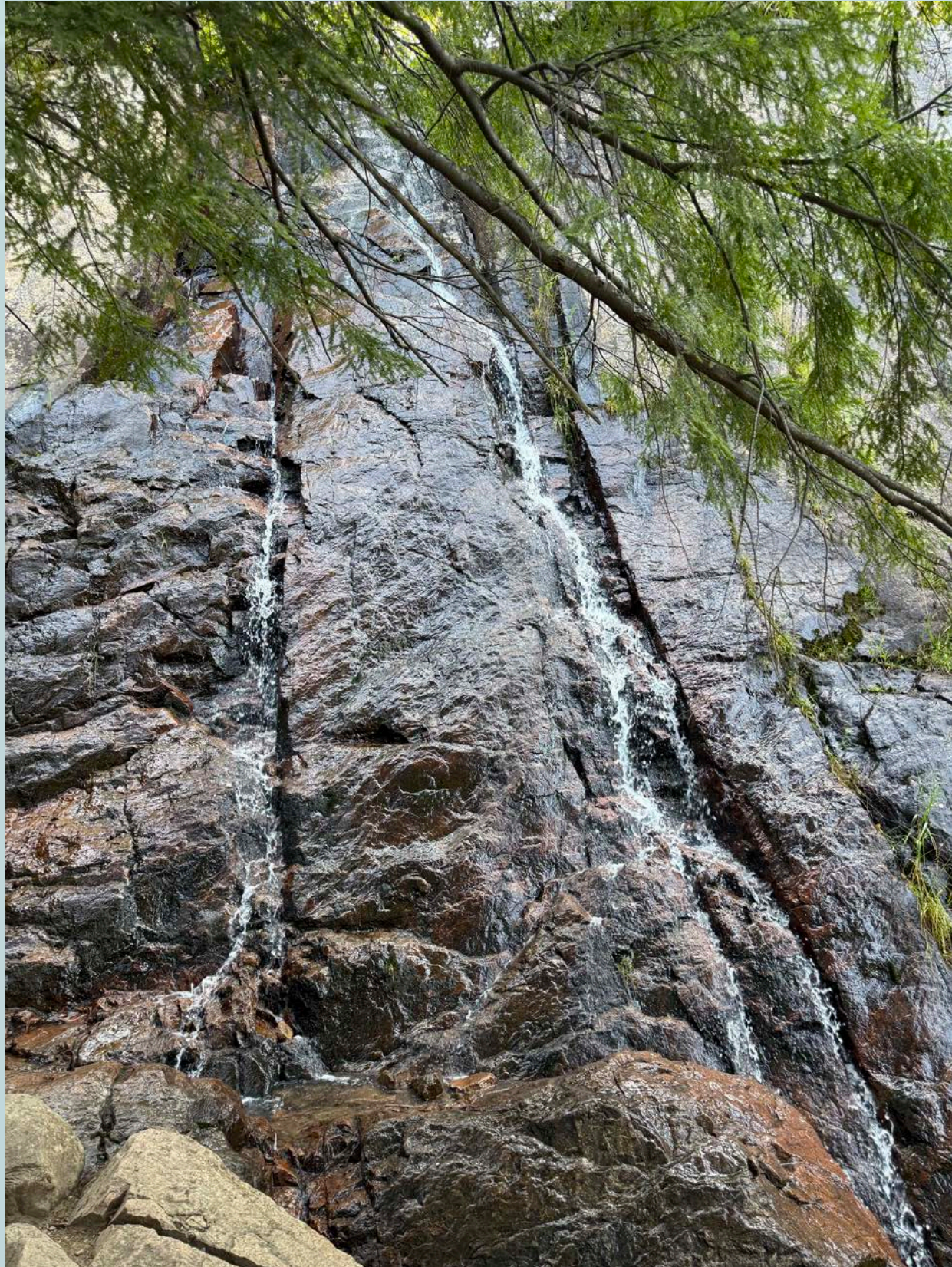
Shoreline link between Heritage Park and the North Shore Trail and enhanced connection between the two parks

Soils at Heritage Park consist of significant fill material creating structural challenge. Existing trees struggling due to compacted soils.

Central open space with opportunity for gathering space and enhanced views

HERITAGE PARK CONCEPT PLANS

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY

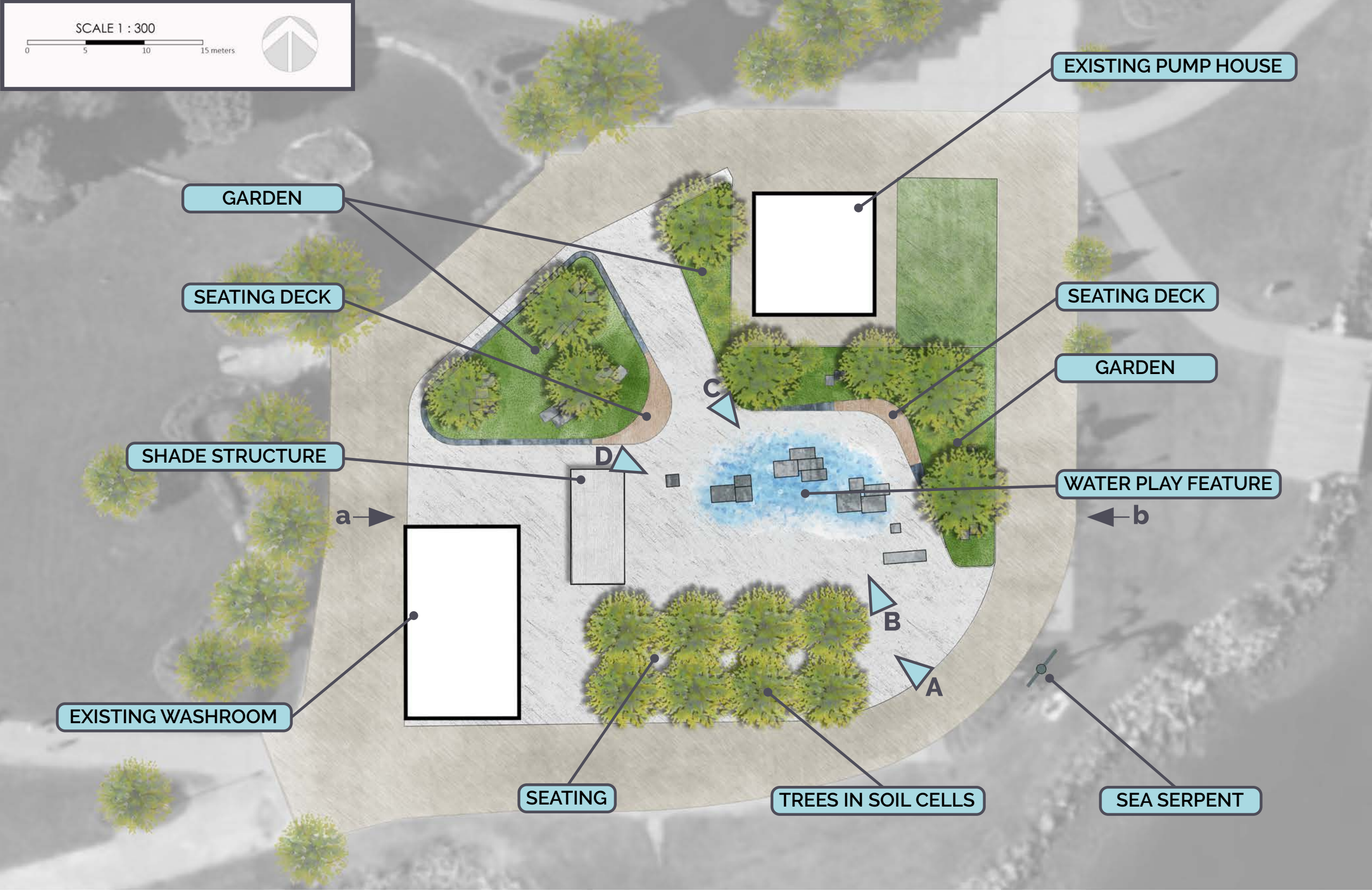


Set beside Kempenfelt Bay, the water feature reveals the concealed geological structure that shapes both the lake and the city. While Barrie's geology is largely hidden beneath soil, infrastructure, and urban life, the waterfront is fundamentally formed by deep stone formations and glacial action. This concept brings that hidden structure into the civic realm, not through literal representation, but through abstraction, material mass, and process.

A wall of large-format stone is conceived as a constructed exposure, giving physical presence to geological depth and time. Water moves slowly across and through this stone as seepage, narrow falls, and accumulation, expressing weathering rather than spectacle. In winter, water freezes and clings to the surface, allowing ice to trace flow and register seasonal change. The feature operates as a civic artifact rather than an amenity, anchoring Heritage Park in permanence and reinforcing the long relationship between stone, water, and the formation of the Lake Simcoe basin.

HERITAGE PARK PLAN

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY



HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE A

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY



HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE B

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY



HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE C

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY



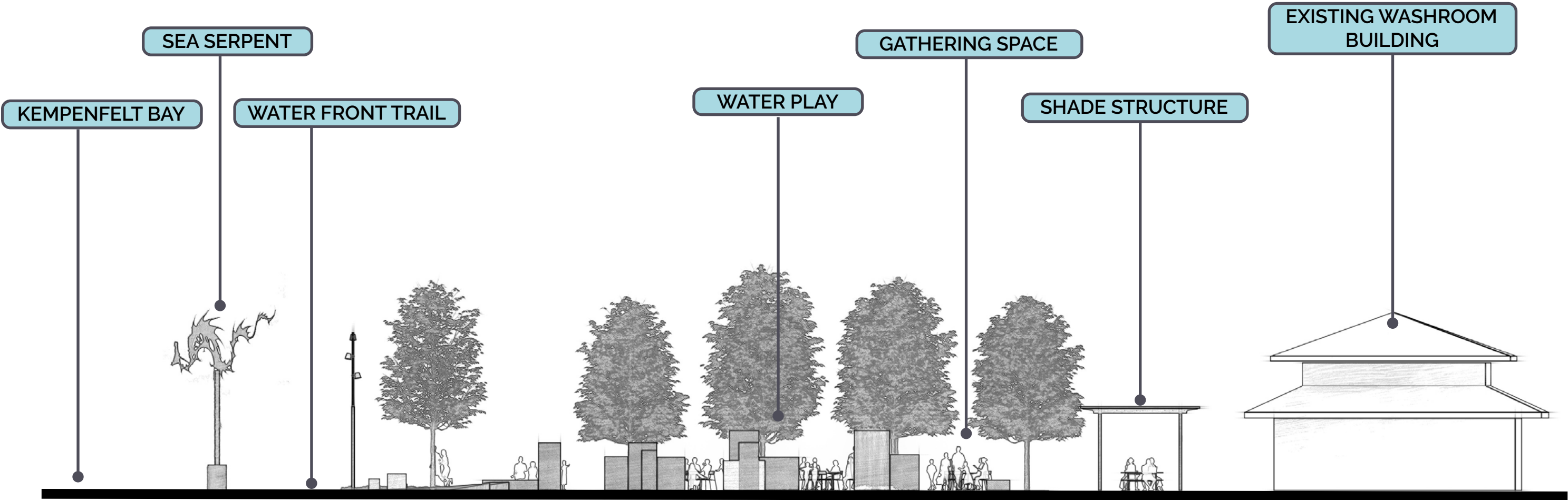
HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE D

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY



HERITAGE PARK CROSS SECTION a-b

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY



HERITAGE PARK MODEL

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY



HERITAGE PARK MODEL

CONCEPT ONE: REVEALED GEOLOGY

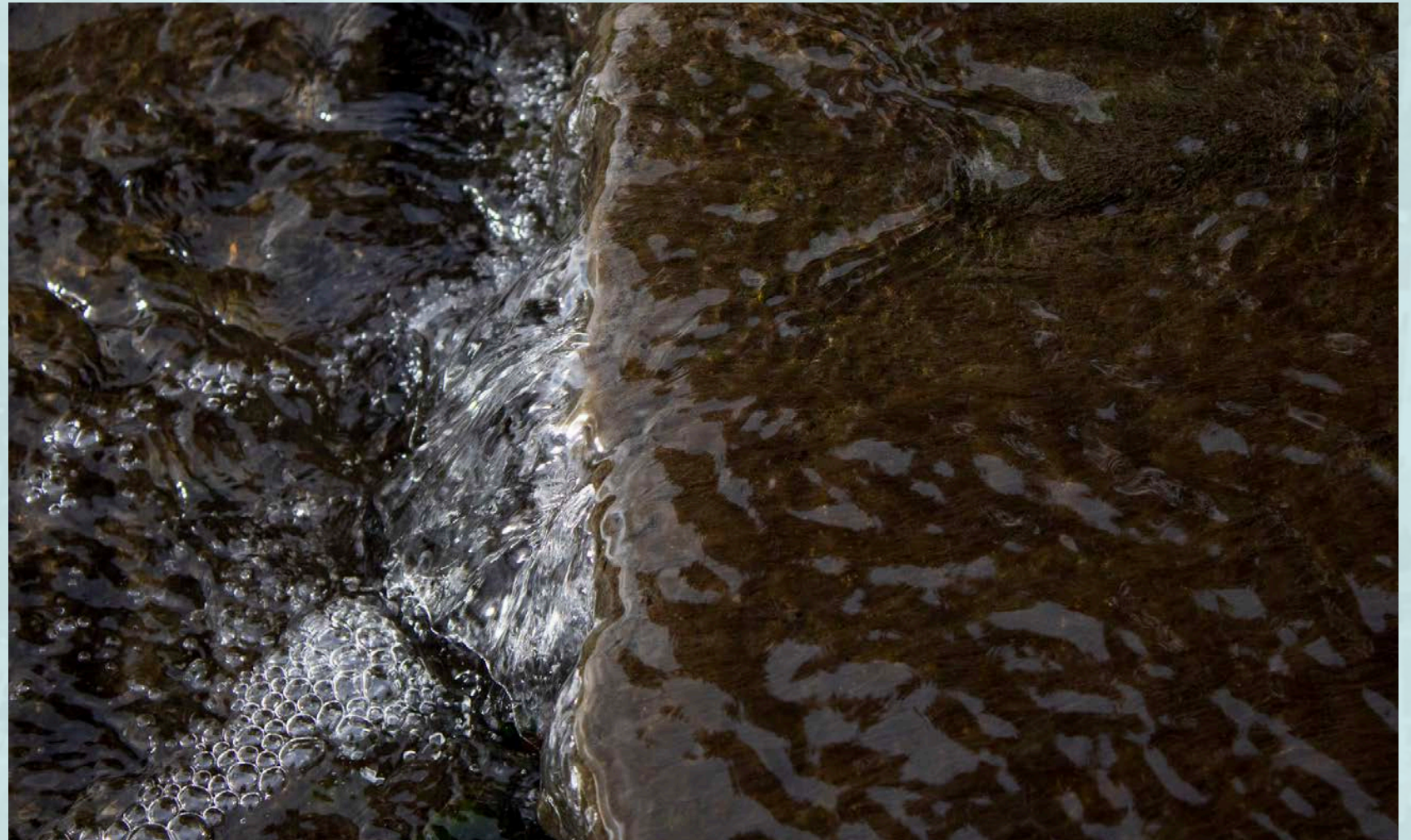


HERITAGE PARK CONCEPT PLANS

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE

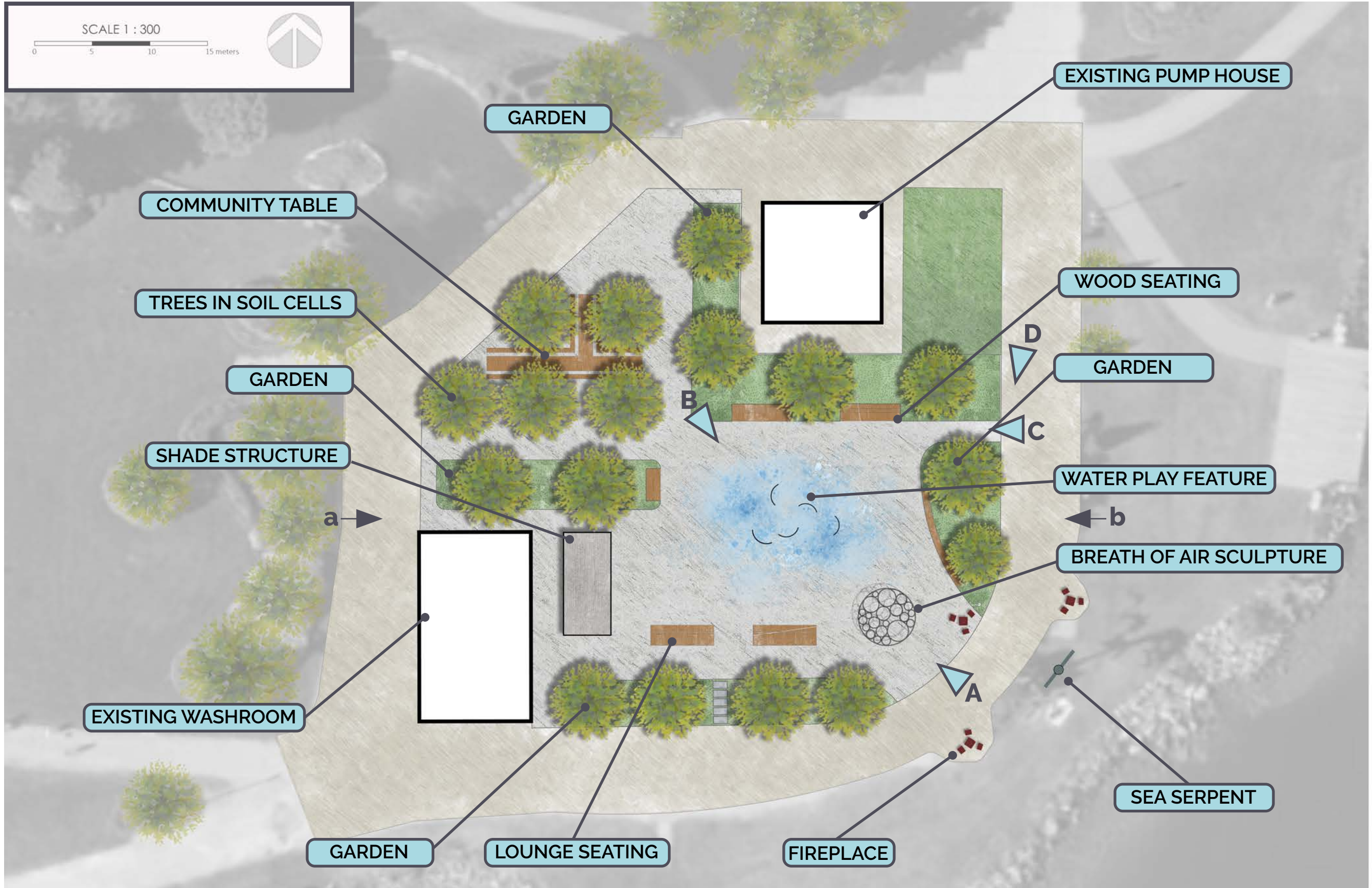
Set beside Kempenfelt Bay, Emergence does not compete with the lake itself. Instead, it forms a civic foreground, a public room where the city meets water at a human scale. This concept shifts the focus to the present experience, understanding water as a social and spatial medium that activates civic life.

Water is released through a series of curved forms inspired by the sails of boats on Kempenfelt Bay, allowing people to move beneath and between falling sheets of water. These elements bring the movement, lightness, and visual rhythm of the bay into the civic ground of Heritage Park, while also acknowledging the site's past as part of the lake. Suspended above the space, an overhead element, Breath of Air, gives form to the buoyant movement of air through water, drawing on the image of rising bubbles and suspended motion. With water on or off, the space remains a strong public place where the atmosphere of the waterfront is made present through motion, sound, and shared occupation.



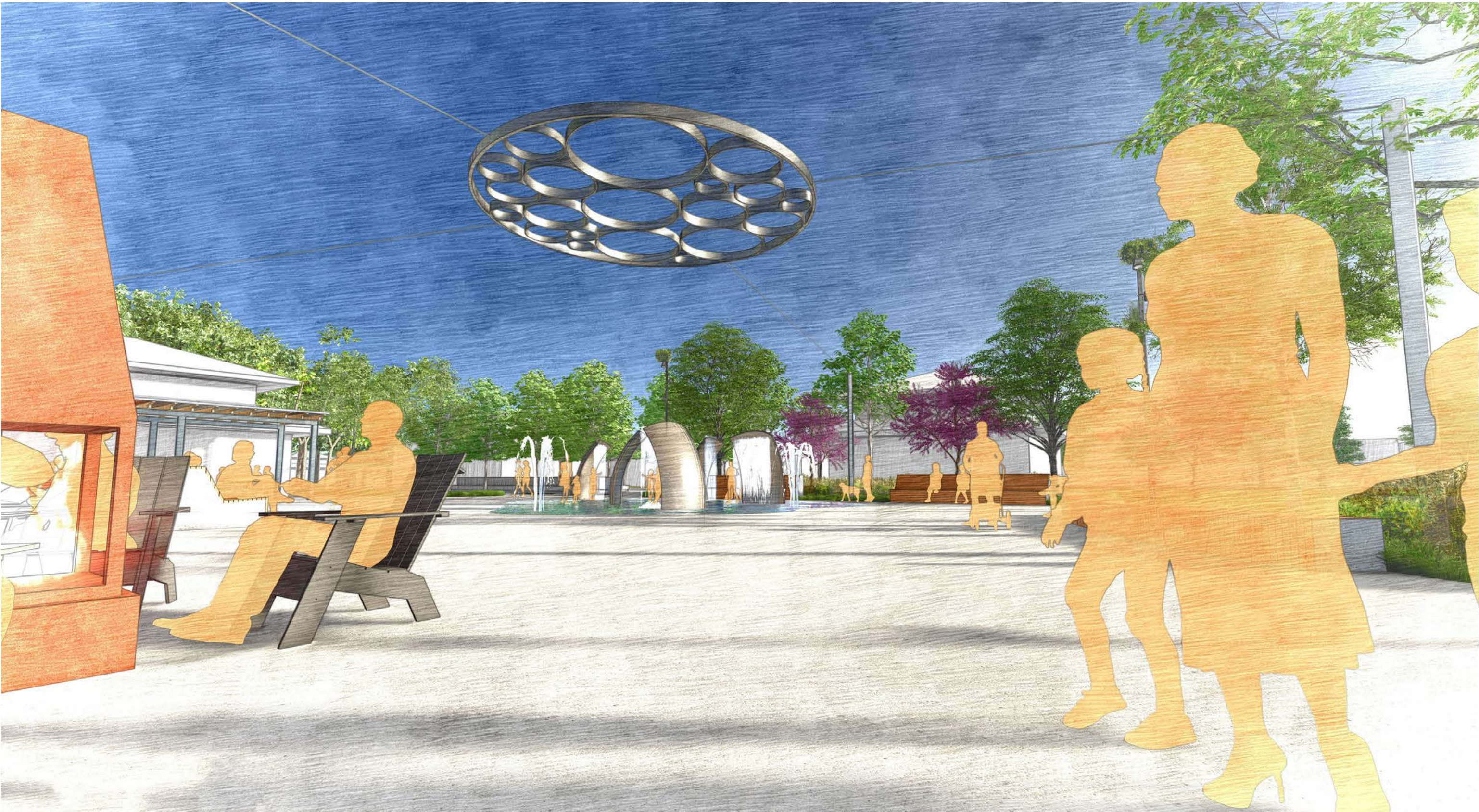
HERITAGE PARK PLAN

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE A

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE B

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE C

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



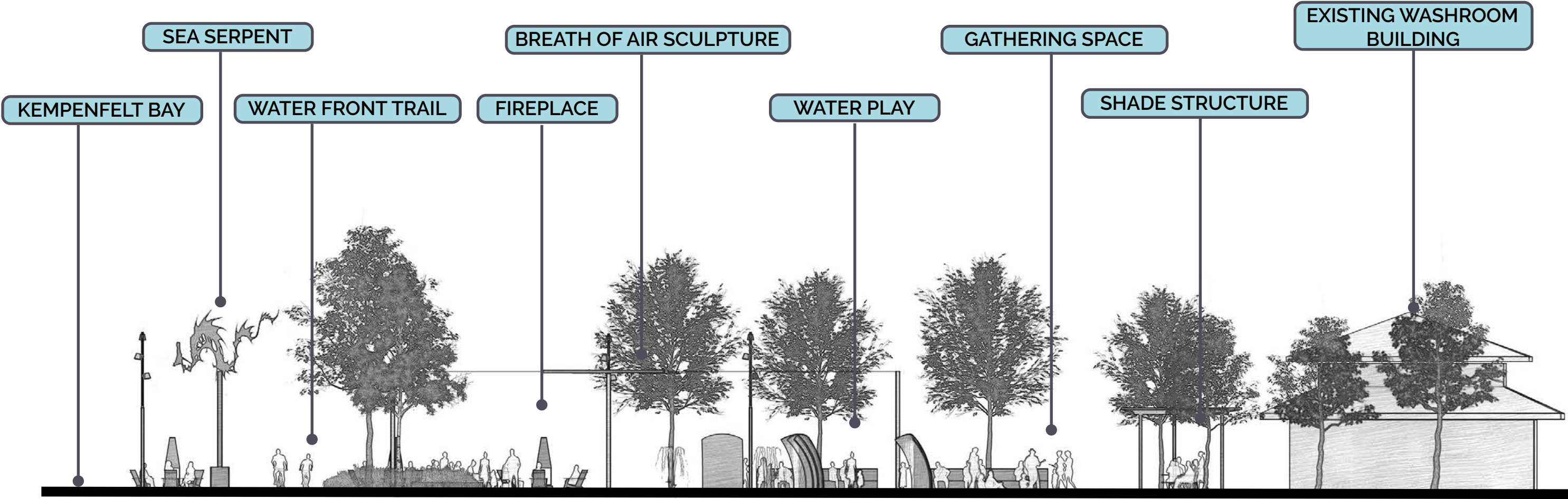
HERITAGE PARK PERSPECTIVE D

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



HERITAGE PARK CONCEPT CROSS SECTION

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



HERITAGE PARK MODEL

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



HERITAGE PARK MODEL

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE



HERITAGE PARK WATER PLAY MODEL

CONCEPT TWO: EMERGENCE

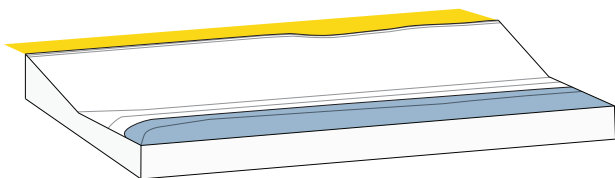


SAM CANCELLA PARK CONCEPTS

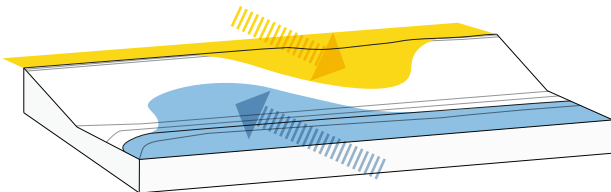
CONCEPT ONE: BAY COMMON

The setting of Sam Cancilla positions it as a primary urban park space to express the meeting point the urban fabric of the evolving city with the natural beauty of Kempenfelt Bay and the shoreline. The design draws elements of the waterfront landscape upward while extending the character of the city downward, creating a layered transition between built and natural environments. Moments of overlap between these conditions form places to pause, gather, and observe the Bay.

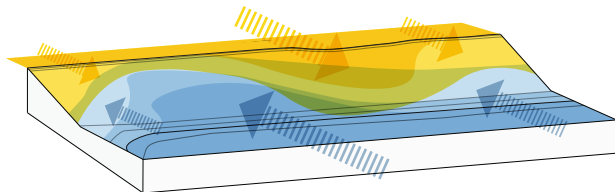
Spaces are shaped by this tension, offering a sequence of outlooks, small rest areas, and pathways that gradually move visitors between city and water. Planting, materials, and seating help express this meeting of conditions, allowing the park to function as both a gateway to the North Shore Trail and a place to experience the shifting relationship between urban life and the lake shore.



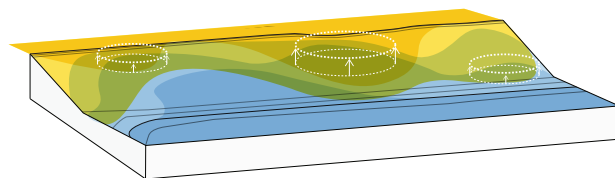
Urban fabric at street level and natural condition at lake level



Pulling in the urban structure and drawing nature in



Mixing and redefining the character of the park



The park as a connection between city, landscape, and lake

SAM CANCELLA PARK CONCEPT PLAN

CONCEPT ONE: BAY COMMON



SAM CANCELLA PARK PERSPECTIVES

CONCEPT ONE: BAY COMMON A - VIEW LOOKING TOWARD THE BAY



SAM CANCELLA PARK PERSPECTIVES

CONCEPT ONE: BAY COMMON B - VIEW OF GATHERING AREA



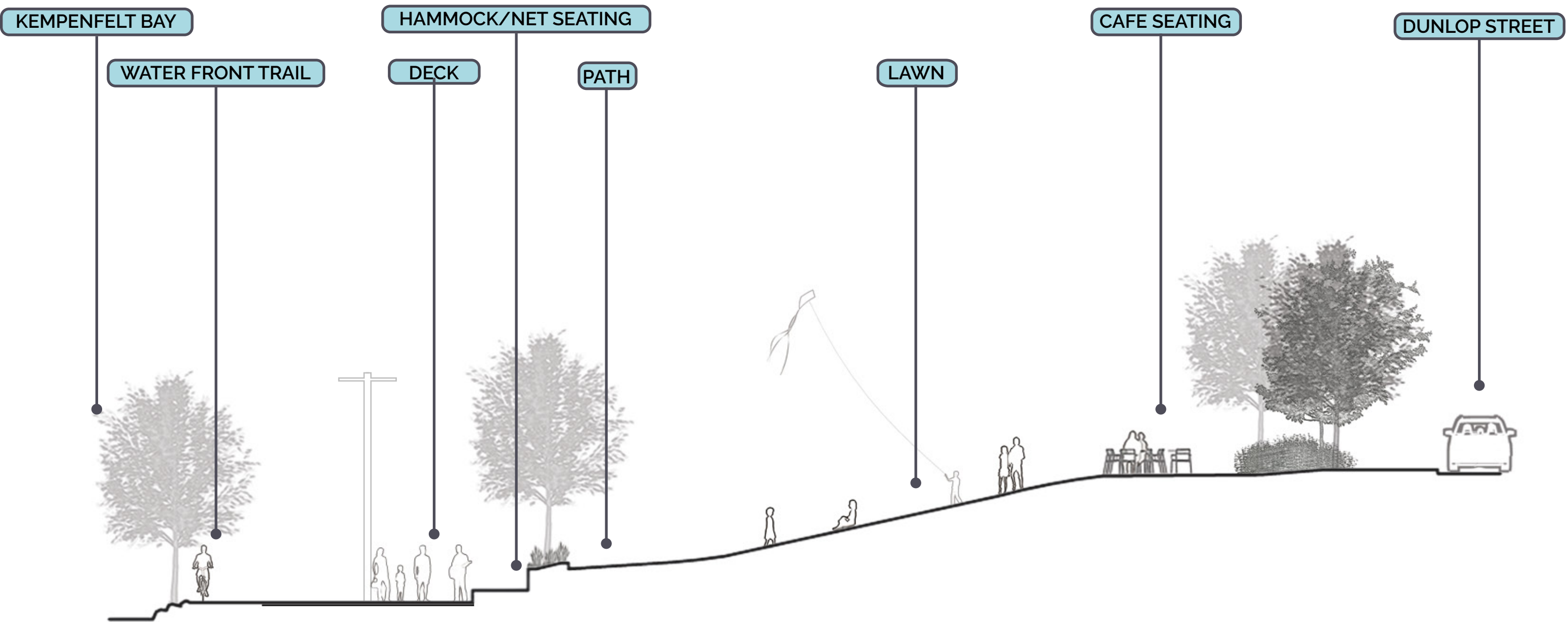
SAM CANCELLA PARK PERSPECTIVES

CONCEPT ONE: BAY COMMON C - VIEW OF DECK AND TRAIL



SAM CANCELLA PARK CROSS SECTION

CONCEPT ONE: BAY COMMON - Section a-b

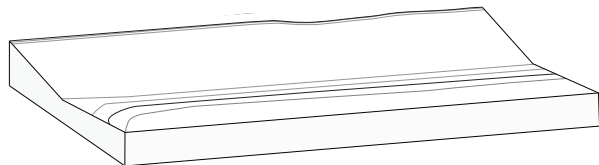


SAM CANCELLA PARK CONCEPTS

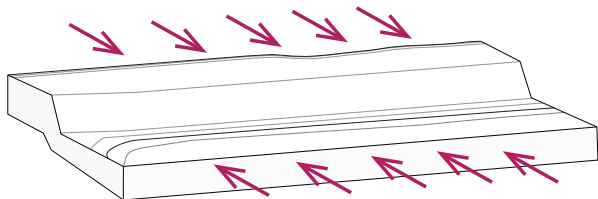
CONCEPT TWO: BLUFF

Inspired by the natural structure of a lakeside bluff, this concept organizes the park as a series of distinct landscape bands stepping down toward the water. Changes in elevation create a more dynamic experience of movement, with circulation paths passing through zones that reflect the character of bluff, slope, and shoreline.

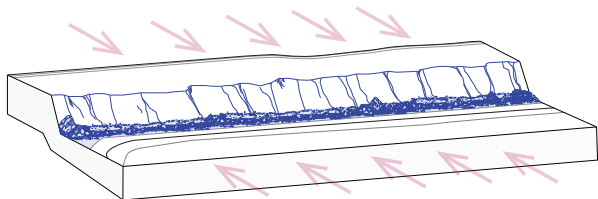
Stone, planting, and open space are used to express these layered conditions, creating a sequence of spaces that feel varied but connected. The design emphasizes the topographic change already present at the site, allowing visitors to descend quickly toward the Bay while encountering places to stop, gather, and experience the waterfront from different elevations.



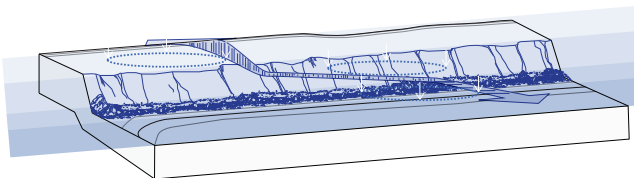
Existing slope of Sam Cancilla Park



Extending the city edge and creating an open plane of contact with the bay



Sequencing of space imagined as lakeside bluff landform



Connecting city to lake as a spatial experience

SAM CANCELLA PARK CONCEPT PLAN

CONCEPT TWO: BLUFF



SAM CANCELLA PARK PERSPECTIVES

CONCEPT TWO: BLUFF A - VIEW OF STREET EDGE



SAM CANCELLA PARK PERSPECTIVES

CONCEPT TWO: BLUFF B - VIEW OF TERRACE



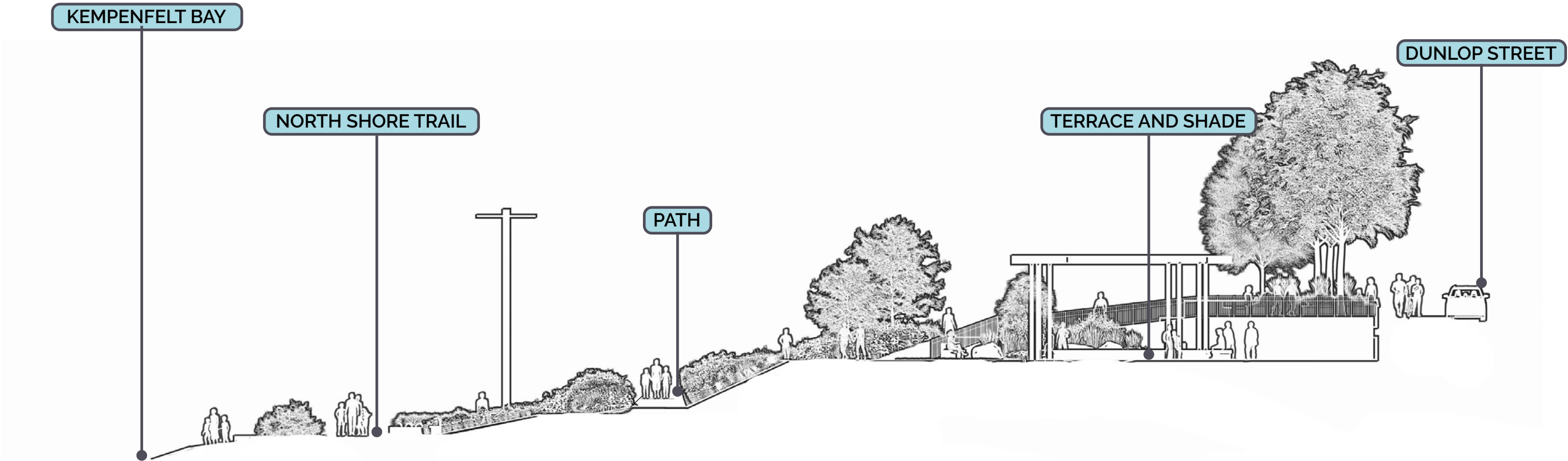
SAM CANCELLA PARK PERSPECTIVES

CONCEPT TWO: BLUFF C - VIEW OF TRAIL AND WATER ACCESS



SAM CANCELLA PARK CROSS SECTION

CONCEPT TWO: BLUFF - Section a-b



STAY IN TOUCH

Get Involved!

For more information on these projects and to participate in project surveys please visit the project webpage:

<https://www.buildingbarrie.ca/DowntownWaterfrontParks>