Executive Summary

SURP 824: Animating the Ottawa Riverfront in the Core of Canada's Capital—Project at a Glance

This project is the result of a one-semester workshop from nine students in the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen's University. The National Capital Commission asked the team to propose animations for the Ottawa riverfront in the Core of Canada's Capital. Through stakeholder interviews, a design charrette, precedent analysis, and a thorough analysis of existing conditions of the site, the team prepared a catalogue of animations for the river and riverfront, demonstrations of animations, and additional recommendations crucial to the implementation of the project.

This report presents a vision for the future of the Ottawa River in the Core of Canada's Capital. A comprehensive and coordinated approach was used to examine the unique social and physical characteristics of the study area, informing a list of interactive animations to encourage both residents and visitors of the Capital Region to engage with the river in new and exciting ways.

Riverfront Background

The Ottawa River in the Core of Canada's Capital is an iconic location, acting as both a municipal and provincial border between the City of Ottawa, ON and Ville de Gatineau, QC. The Ottawa River has always been bustling with activity. Located on unceded Anishinabe Algonquin territory, the river was once a prominent Indigenous trading and portage route. It was also home to many mills and logging companies on which the cities of Bytown (Ottawa) and Gatineau were built.

With the Parliament Buildings standing tall on their escarpment to the south, while the great wilderness of the Gatineau Hills frames the view to the north, the study area communicates the past, present, and future of where we as Canadians are going and what we as a nation value.



Map 0.1: *Core area boundary of Canada's capital.*

Existing Conditions

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 9,000 pedestrians and cyclists, as well as 150,000 vehicles crossed the interprovincial bridges within the study area on a daily basis. Despite many people passing through the study area, it is rarely their final destination. This can be explained by many factors identified in the team's existing conditions analysis, including fast-paced pathways, limited wayfinding, a lack of viewpoints and resting places, and a lack of public amenities.

Another important consideration in the existing conditions of the study area is its unique environmental characteristics. Notably, the Ottawa River is prone to flooding, with extreme flooding becoming more frequent over the past five years. Proposed animations had to feature a certain degree of resilience to flooding, erosion, and slope failure, while posing minimum disruptions to existing biodiversity.

Precedents Research

Through team meeting, stakeholder interviews, and guidance from the project coordinator, 44 waterfronts from around the world were selected that would provide beneficial learning opportunities and best practices for riverfront planning and animation. The team then short-listed the 20 most relevant precedents (see below) and extracted a set of principles for evaluating riverfront animations. The precedent analysis assisted the team in creating a list of best practices to guide recommendations for Ottawa's riverfront.

Table 0.1: *List of 20 best waterfront precedents.*

The Forks, *Winnipeg, MB, Canada*	**Samuel De Champlain Promenade,** *Ville de Québec, QC, Canada*
Vieux Port de Québec, *Ville de Québec, QC, Canada*	**Touch The Water Promenade,** *Edmonton, AB, Canada*
Dufferin Terrace, *Ville de Québec, QC, Canada*	**Market Square,** *Helsinki, Finland*
Vieux Port de Montréal, *Montréal, QC, Canada*	**Aker Brygge & Oslo Harbor Promenade,** *Oslo, Norway*
Danube Promenade, *Budapest, Hungary*	**Marina Bay,** *Singapore*
West Harbour, *Hamilton, ON, Canada*	**Harbourfront, *Toronto,*** *ON, Canada*
St. Charles Linear Park, *Ville de Québec, QC, Canada*	**Granville Island, *Vancouver,*** *BC, Canada*
100 St. Funicular & Frederick G. Todd Lookout, Edmonton, AB, Canada	**Waterfront Nyhavn,** *Copenhagen, Denmark*
Spree River Waterfront Promenade, *Berlin, Germany*	**Damrack Waterfront,** *Amsterdam, Netherlands*
Seine River Waterfront Promenade, *Paris, France*	**The Wharf, *Washington,*** *DC, USA*

Vision and Planning Principles

The following vision was informed by the existing conditions research, stakeholder analysis, precedent research, and design charrette, and was selected as a representation of the team's aspirations for the Ottawa Riverfront in the Core of Canada's Capital:

"A dynamic riverfront that provides opportunities for all people to create new experiences on historic waters."

The selected planning principles were informed by the best practices identified from the precedent analysis, in addition to the results of the design charette. The planning principles served as a foundation for the proposed animations, animation designs, and general recommendations for the study area.

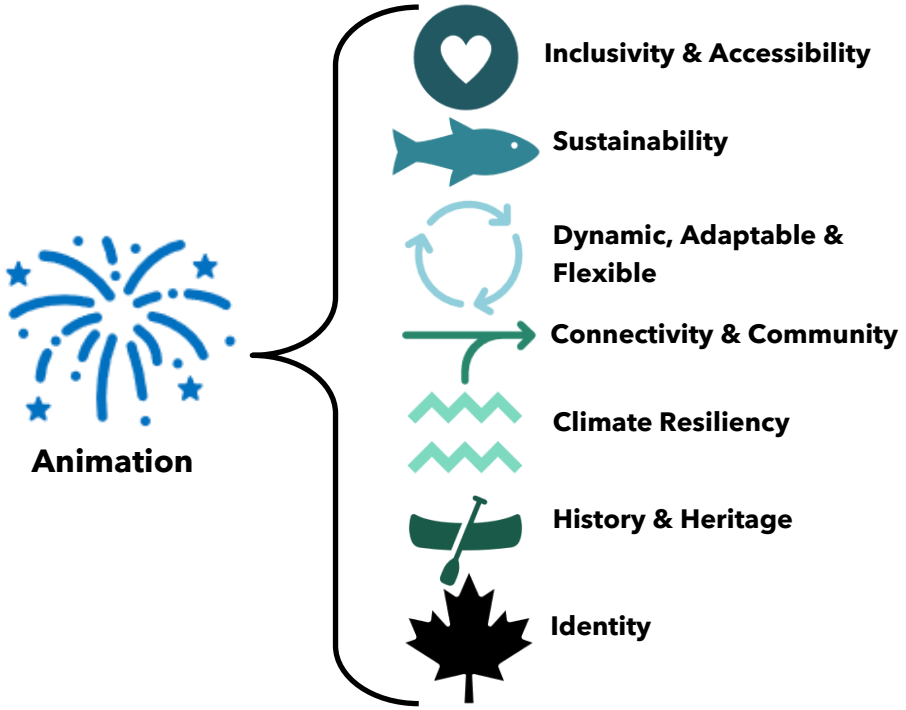


Figure 0.1: *Planning principles*

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges of the Site

Table 0.2: *Site-wide SWOC analysis*.

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
INTERNAL	• Scenic views and natural beauty. • Established pathway network. • Historic riverfront with heritage value. • Established tourist destination. • Naturalized landscape with unique biodiversity. • A large publicly-owned waterfront.	• River is fragmented by Chaudière Dam. • Insufficient access to the riverfront. • Limited connection between north and south shores. • Lack of public amenities surrounding riverfront. • Indigenous identity has been erased. • Varied topography and lack of uniformity. • Incompatible industrial uses. • Limited canopy and shelter from the elements.
	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
EXTERNAL	• Animation that fosters dialogue across the river. • Improving infrastructure and access to water-based uses and activities. • Facilitate sustainable revenue generation. • Central location contributes to making the river a destination within the region.	• Multiple stakeholders, unclear jurisdiction, and lack of communication and coordination. • Negative public perceptions towards the river. • Fast-paced river and riverfront. • Provincial boundary between Ontario and Québec. • Seasonal weather challenges and flooding. • Ongoing climate crisis and constantly evolving river.

The results of the SWOC informed the proposed animations by identifying strengths that could be reflected and weaknesses that could be addressed through the animations, as well as highlighting opportunities and challenges to consider throughout the project.

Animation Demonstrations

The study area was separated into five character areas based on both physical and human factors that shape them. Then, the team selected animations from our catalogue of animations to demonstrate them in locations across the study area. Examples of animation demonstrations that were prepared are displayed below and on the next page.

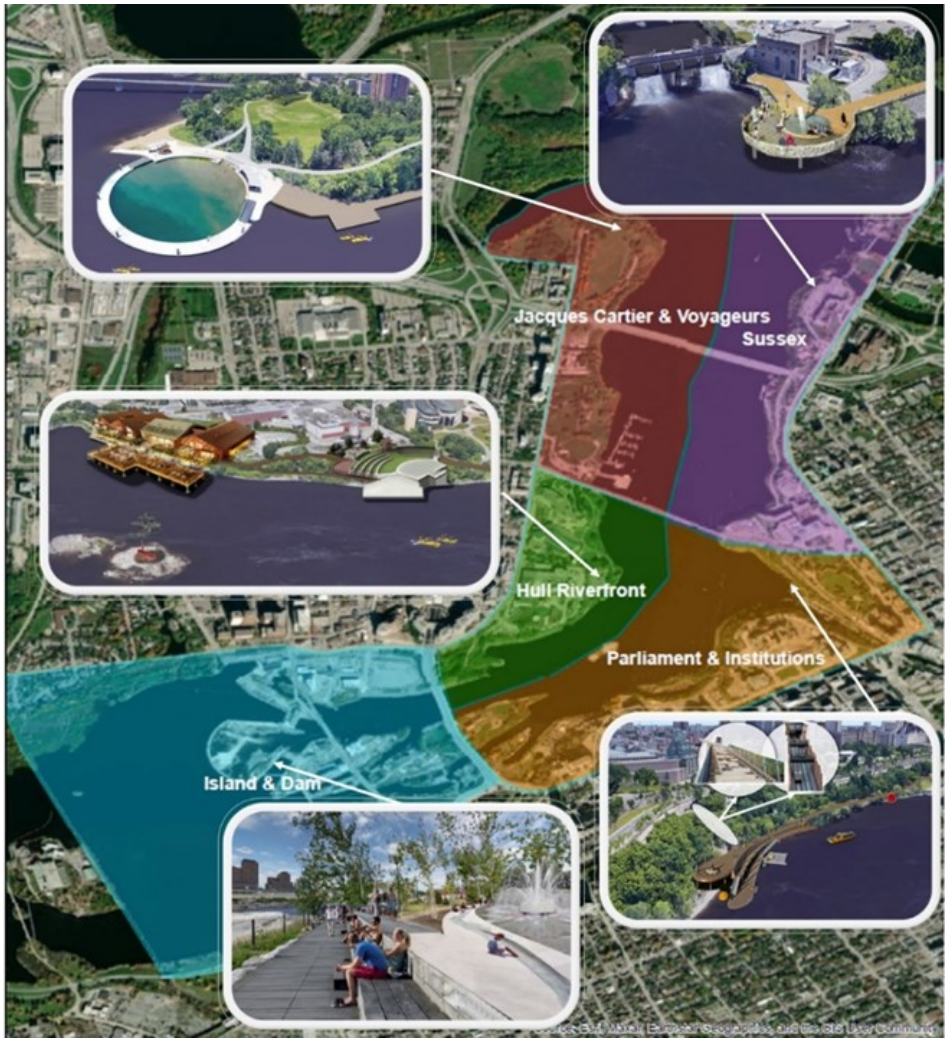


Figure 0.2: *Animation demonstrations in each character area.*

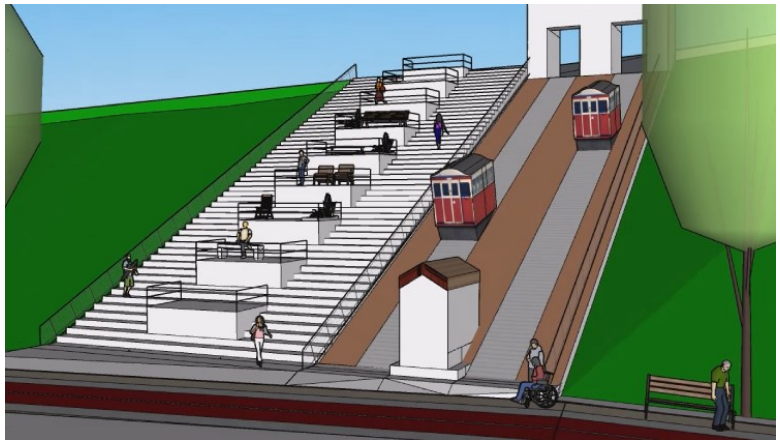


Figure 0.3: *Bytown Wharf animation demonstration.*



Figure 0.4: *Chaudière Falls animation demonstration.*

Additional Recommendations

For the animations to successfully meet the vision, goals, and objectives of the study area, additional design features must be considered. Therefore, the team proposed site-wide design recommendations to complement the proposed animations. These include accessibility, wayfinding, connectivity, animations that are not site-specific, architectural style and building materials, and environment.

High-Level Implementation Matrix by Character Area

An implementation framework of these recommendations and design features has been designed to guide future animations. This framework classifies different locations for animations against a matrix comparing both ease of implementation and impact of implementation.

Table 0.3: *High-level implementation matrix.*

		Ease of Implementation		
		High (Easy)	Medium	Low (Difficult)
Impact	Low	-	-	-
	Medium	-	• Jacques Cartier Park (South)	-
	High	• Public Amenities • Programming animations	• Jacques Cartier Park (North) • Island & Dam	• Parliament and Institutions • Sussex • Hull Riverfront

Conclusion

From time immemorial, the Ottawa River has played an invaluable role to in the lives of those living near it. While the experiences and memories of the riverfront are highly personal to the individual, it is clear that the Ottawa River, especially in the Core of our Nation's Capital, should be inclusive and accommodating to all. This specific portion of the river represents an important meeting place historically, presently, and hopefully extending into the future. The idea that the riverfront should be a meaningful, vibrant, dynamic, and dynamic meeting place for all, fuelled the project team's work throughout the semester.