



[Rana Florida](#)

*CEO, The Creative Class Group*

## **Creative Spaces: Waterfronts That Make a Splash**

Posted: 06/04/2012 8:30 am

[New York](#) , [culture](#) , [Design](#) , [Porta Veil](#) , [Rod Ford](#) , [Sherbourne Common](#) , [Sugar Beach](#) , [Barcelona](#) , [Battery Park](#) , [Boston](#) , [Chicago](#) , [Cities](#) , [Creative Spaces](#) , [Docklands](#) , [Esplanade](#) , [False Creek](#) , [Hamburg](#) , [London](#) , [Recreation](#) , [Rotterdam](#) , [Photo Galleries](#) , [Summer](#) , [Sydney](#) , [Toronto](#) , [Vancouver](#) , [Waterfronts](#) , [Culture News](#)

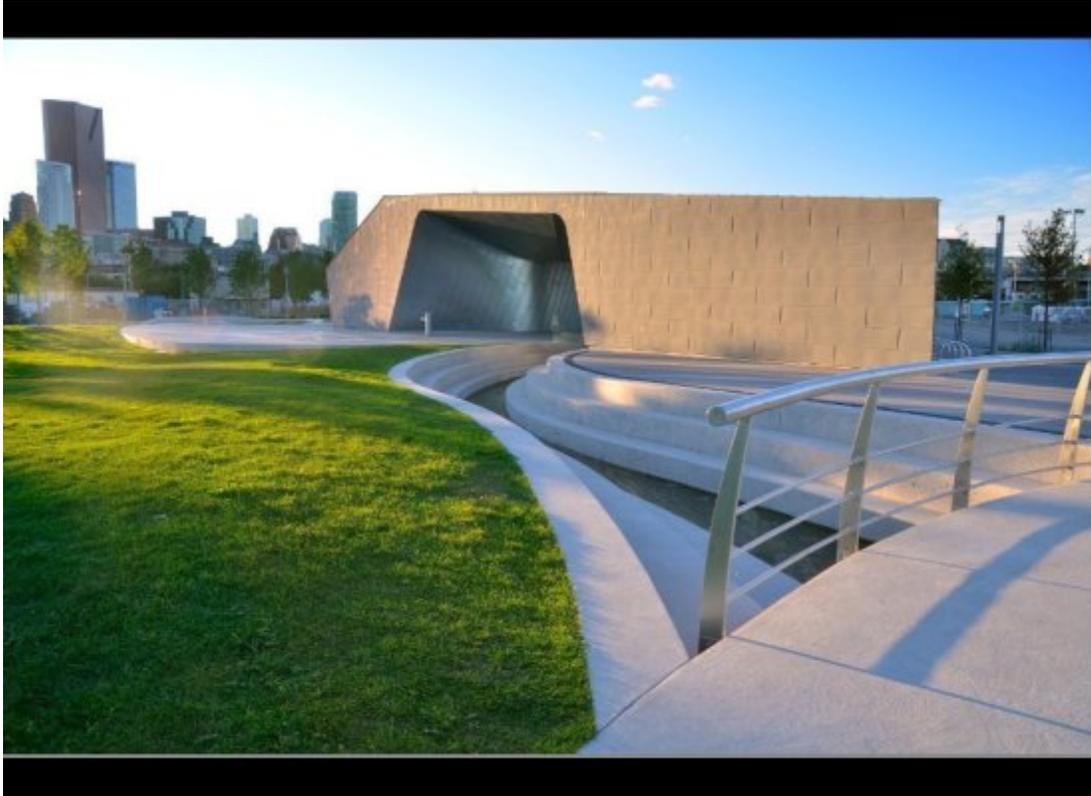
The debate is heating up around Toronto's Mayor Rob Ford's endorsement of [the plan](#) to put a casino on Toronto's waterfront. While some believe a mammoth entertainment complex is just what the waterfront needs, many emphatically disagree.

I asked John Campbell, President and CEO of [Waterfront Toronto](#) what makes a waterfront compelling. "Animation is the key to making a waterfront truly great," he told me. "The most successful waterfronts are the ones that are lively and vibrant and attract residents, workers and tourists by offering a variety of things to see and do, from shopping and dining to cultural attractions and signature parks and public spaces by the water." He went on to add, "One of my favorites is Sydney's waterfront because it's got everything -- a ferry terminal, great restaurants, a beautiful promenade, the iconic [Sydney Opera House](#), and the [botanic gardens](#) -- and it's always full of people."

Whether it is visiting the [Field Museum](#) or the [Shedd Aquarium](#) on Chicago's majestic Lake Shore Drive or hopping into a [water taxi](#) and gliding across Baltimore Harbor, why haven't most cities leveraged their waterfronts so well? Because as recently as just a few decades ago, most city waterfronts were still industrial ports. Now abandoned and seriously polluted, these wastelands need an expert master plan, including environmental assessments, transportation and infrastructure expertise, mixed use development options, and investments of millions or billions of dollars before they can be retrofitted for future generations to enjoy.

As the kids are almost out of school and summer is quickly approaching, this edition of [Creative Spaces](#) celebrates the cities that have done the work and spent the money to make vibrant and dynamic waterfronts -- great spots where tourists and locals alike can gather, play and reflect.

# Sherbourne Common, Toronto, Canada



Carved out of a neglected industrial area, Sherbourne Common is the first park in Canada to integrate a storm water treatment facility into its design—not to mention a skating rink, a pavilion, and a number of dramatic sculptures.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# Chicago, Illinois



Built over a railroad right of way, a train station, and a parking garage and featuring the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the massive Cloud Gate and Crown Garden sculptures, and the Lurie Garden, Chicago's 24 and a half acre Millennium Park is the world's largest rooftop garden—and one of Chicago's most beloved public spaces.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# Rotterdam, Netherlands



Though Rotterdam's port remains one of the world's largest, it no longer dominates the city's center. Devastated during World War II, Rotterdam has become a showcase for modernist architecture—so much so, that it “is increasingly to architecture what Paris is to fashion, or Los Angeles to entertainment,” according to The New York Times.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# False Creek, Vancouver, Canada



The former industrial center of Vancouver and the western terminus of several freight lines, the False Creek neighborhood was a disused brownfield by the 1960s when Walter Hardwick, a geography professor at the University of British Columbia, spearheaded its redevelopment as a mixed use neighborhood with public access to the water. Further redevelopment in the 1990s featured significant public amenities, including parks, schools and community centres, and a mix of co-op and low income housing.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# Sydney, Australia



The site where Europeans first disembarked in Australia, Sydney's Circular Quay looks out on Australia's most famous icons, the Harbor Bridge and the Sydney Opera House. Its last major renovations were completed in 1988, during the Australian Centennial.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

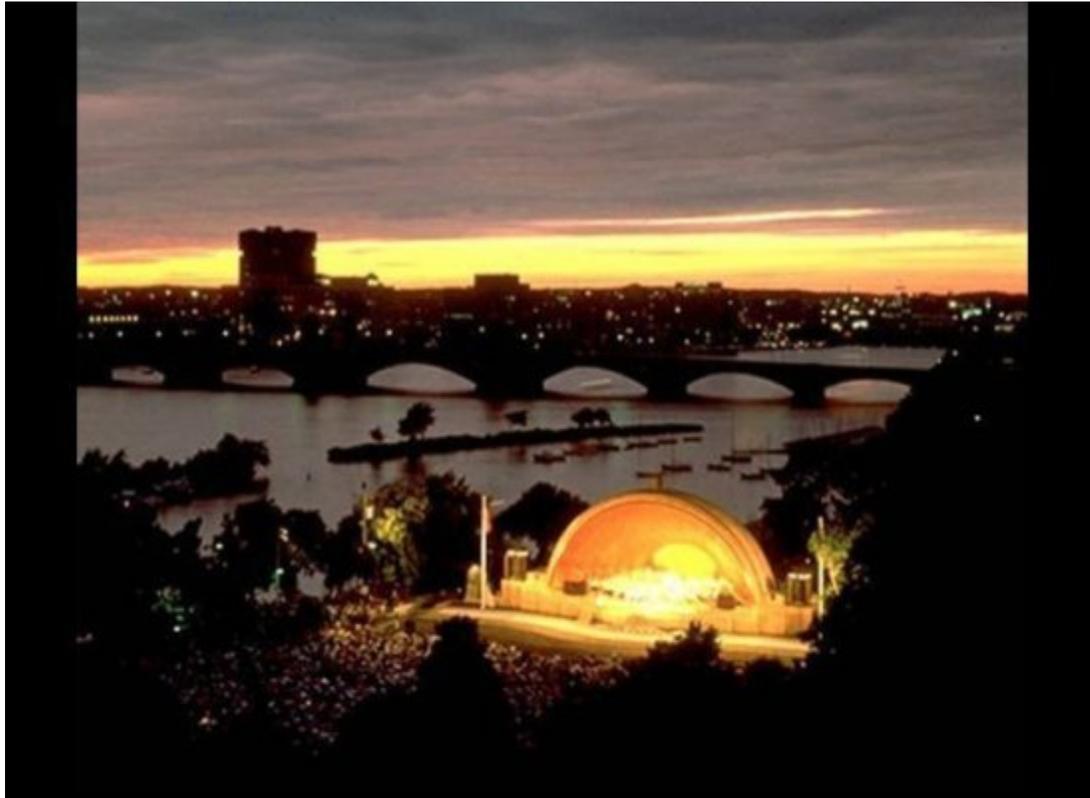
# Docklands, London, England



London's dock district was hit by more than 2500 bombs during World War II. It struggled back to life in the 1950s, but was abandoned in the 1960s when containerization necessitated a move to larger facilities. Overseen by the London Docklands Development Corporation, the neighborhood was gradually transformed into a commercial and residential center in the 1980s and 1990s.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# The Esplanade, Boston, Massachusetts



Boston's Esplanade first opened in 1910, when the Charles River was dammed and its tidal flats were banked. It was expanded dramatically between 1928 and 1936 with the additions of boat landings, a bandshell, and playgrounds, and again starting in 1949, when Storrow Drive was constructed alongside it.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# Battery Park City, New York, New York



A planned community of residences, office towers, and parks at the southern tip of Manhattan that was built on landfill excavated from the site of the World Trade Center starting in the early 1970s. Though development was set back for a time after 9/11, the neighborhood is currently home to some 14,000 residents.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# Porta Veil, Barcelona, Spain



Barcelona began to redevelop its waterfront in anticipation of the 1992 Summer Olympics. The highway that had formerly cut off the city from the water was moved underground. At the end of the always-busy Ramblas, a pedestrian bridge crosses a marina, leading into the newly revitalized Porta Veil, which is filled with parks, restaurants, and other amenities.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# Sugar Beach, Toronto, Canada



A whimsical new park that transformed a surface parking lot near the Redpath Sugar Factory into a lakefront beach and promenade.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# Hamburg, Germany



Hamburg's latest waterfront reclamation effort is the 383 acre HafenCity, whose masterplan was developed under the supervision of Rem Koolhaas. The cultural district—which will be built in phases through 2025—will feature an aquarium, a science center, a concert hall, a hotel and cruise ship terminal, corporate headquarters, and more than 5000 new residences.

Photo courtesy of Waterfront Toronto

# South Pointe Park, Miami Beach, Florida



The former site of police stables and harbor pilot facilities, the southern-most tip of Miami Beach is now a 17-acre water front park, filled with walking, running, and biking paths, picnic areas, restaurants, playgrounds, and a dog park. It's where the bay meets the ocean which makes for spectacular views, and is a favorite of locals, tourists, and film crews alike.