

# Looking to the Past: Origins & Openings

**1967****Context: Expo '67 Leads the Way**

Held in Montreal from April – October, Expo '67 was a world's fair, regarded as the most successful of the 20th century. 62 nations participated, and Ontario had its own pavilion to showcase the province. Following its success, the Ontario government was inspired to create a permanent version of the temporary fair. Both the temporary Expo '67 and permanent Ontario Place that followed were built at a time when design was focused on futuristic ideas and landscapes, using new forms and relationships between spaces in a way that hadn't happened in architecture previously. In/future seeks to embody these futuristic ambitions by reimagining the opportunities for this space once again.



Construction of Cinesphere  
Credit: Source Unknown



Aerial of Ontario Place at Opening  
Credit: Zeidler Partnership Architects

"They will find as you will, a new focal point for our province. A festive, informative and exciting place; a place which demonstrates a new attitude to our lakefronts; a place which offers a tremendous amount of activities to meet the variety of interests held by people from all across our province and beyond."

John Robarts, Premier of Ontario

**Did You Know?**

The original cost for the pod structures was prohibitive, as they needed to withstand large open water waves. Eb Zeidler was inspired on vacation to create a coral-like structure to block the waves. Great Lakes shipping vessels were used as an artificial reef and the pods could be constructed as originally designed.

Eb Zeidler's daughter Christina Zeidler is the Chief Alchemist of the Gladstone Hotel, and daughter Margie Zeidler is the President and Founder of the Urbanspace Property Group who run the 401 Richmond building.

**1969**

## Ontario Place Construction Begins

Building on the recent success of Expo '67 in Montreal, the Ontario Government decided to create a permanent home to showcase the province, focusing on arts and entertainment. Canadian architect Eberhard (Eb) Zeidler was commissioned to create the centrepiece of the park, which was designed by his firm Craig, Zeidler; Strong. This included the Pods, five interconnected structures sitting above the water, and Cinesphere. These were surrounded by the West Island, Marina, the Forum, and an artificial sea wall made from sunken ships, all connected through a variety of walkways, lookout points and bridges.



Pods and Cinesphere  
Credit: Zeidler Partnership Architects

**Map****Buildings at Opening****1 The Pods**

These modernist pods are the geographic centre of Ontario Place, seeming to float over the water and connected by walkways above Lake Ontario.

**2 Cinesphere**

The world's first permanent IMAX cinema, Cinesphere was modelled after the Expo '67 American Pavilion's geodesic dome by architect Buckminster Fuller, which has since been repurposed as the Montreal Biosphere.

**3 Marina**

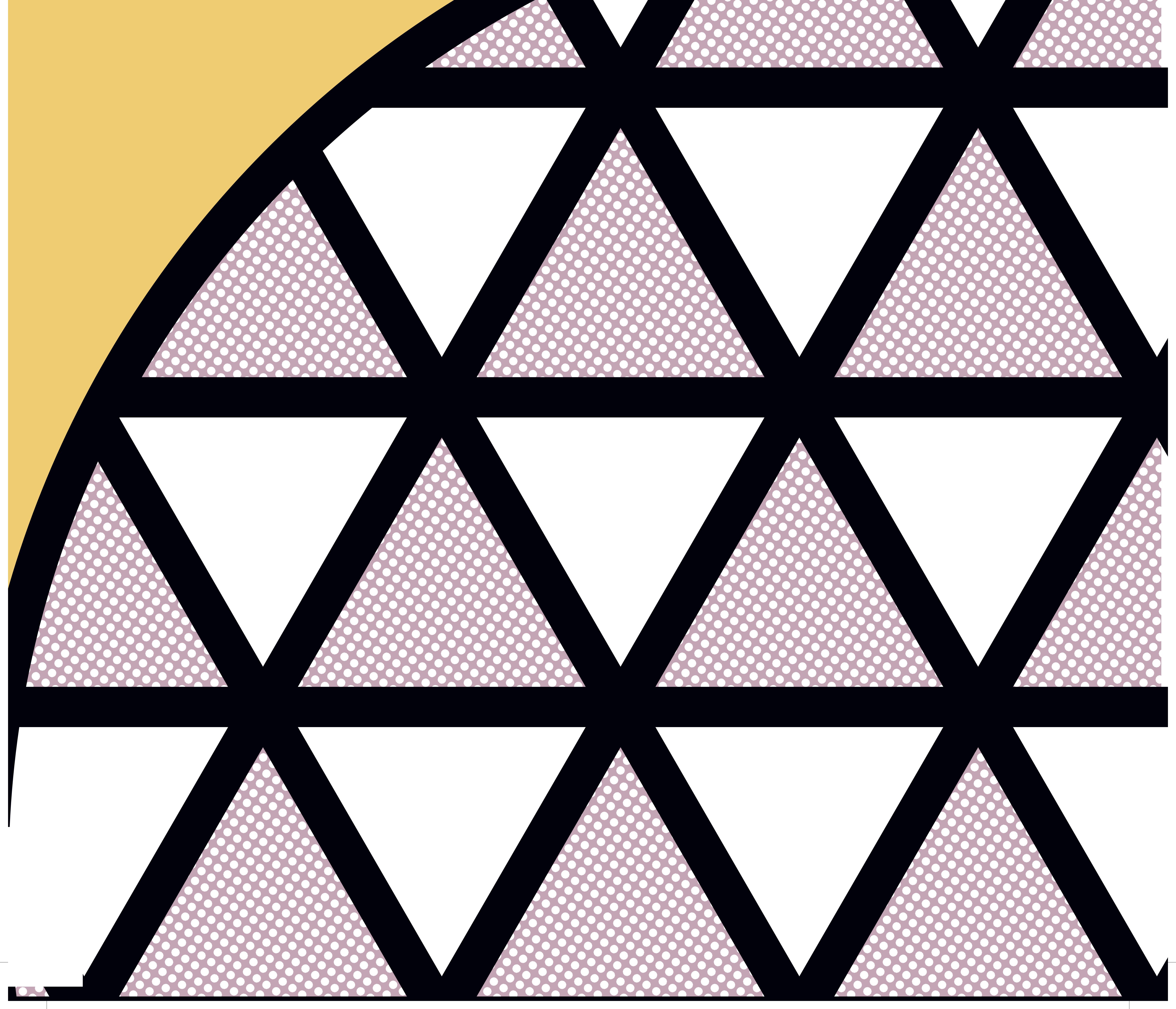
The Marina is still used today as it was—a marina, with boat slips available for the public to rent.

**4 The Forum**

The Forum had 3,000 seats and 5,000 additional grass seats and a rotating stage. It hosted a wide variety of concerts, from the National Ballet and Toronto Symphony, to legends like B.B. King and Johnny Cash, Canadian icons like Lighthouse, Bruce Cockburn and Stompin' Tom Connors, and later popular acts such as Triumph, Men Without Hats and Tina Turner.

**5 West Island**

Originally featured park space including a lagoon, beaches, pavilions, and picnic area. The lagoon was outside the pavilion where you are standing today!



# Looking to the Past: Slides & Silos

**1971**

## Ontario Place Opens

Ontario Place opened officially on May 22, 1971.

**Context:** Spadina Expressway Project Cancelled

Built in the era of large-scale infrastructure projects, Ontario Place came at the heels of the Allen Expressway. Originally slated to include a highway down Spadina, which would have required appropriating land on either side of the street to provide space for the highway. The year Ontario Place opened, public opposition to this extended highway prevailed, and the downtown portion of the road was cancelled, preserving Toronto's downtown as a viable and people friendly place.

**1972**

## Children's Village Opens

The Children's Village was added on July 1, 1972 on the East Island. It featured many interactive exhibitions and play areas for children.



**1973**

## Queen and Prince Philip Visit Ontario Place

As part of their visit to Toronto, the Queen and Prince Phillip visited Ontario Place. Their visit speaks to both the prominence and excitement surrounding Ontario Place, particularly in its opening years.

### Did You Know?

Swans named Flic and Flac that were originally a gift from the Queen to the City of Ottawa, but were later donated to the province of Ontario, were released at Ontario Place. They lived in the lagoon where you are now.

**1976**

**Context:** CN Tower Completed

When it opened, the CN Tower was the world's tallest free-standing structure and world's tallest tower, records it held until 2010. The structure used innovative engineering solutions, and remains the most distinctive piece of Toronto's skyline to this day.

**1977**

**Context:** Charter of the French Language is Passed

Until 1977, most Canadian financial institutions were based in Montreal, which was generally regarded as the financial capital of the country. In 1977, the Charter of the French Language was passed in Quebec, which included the requirement that business be conducted primarily in French.

Because of this decision, most of these headquarters began moving Canada's financial centre from Montreal to Toronto.

**1978**

## First Waterslide Opens

The first waterslide in Canada, 370 feet long and made of concrete, opened in 1978 on the East Island.

**1980**

## Ontario North Now Silos Open

Building on the original focus on Ontario Place as a venue to showcase the province, the interconnected Ontario North Now Silos were opened in 1980. The silos were constructed to hold exhibits featuring different aspects of Northern Ontario. The exhibits included, in order from the entrance: Northern Lights, Virgin Forest, Wood Products, Mine Head, Industrial, Native People, Northern Culture, Sports and Recreation, and Regions of the North.

1980 also saw the addition of bumper boats.



**1981**

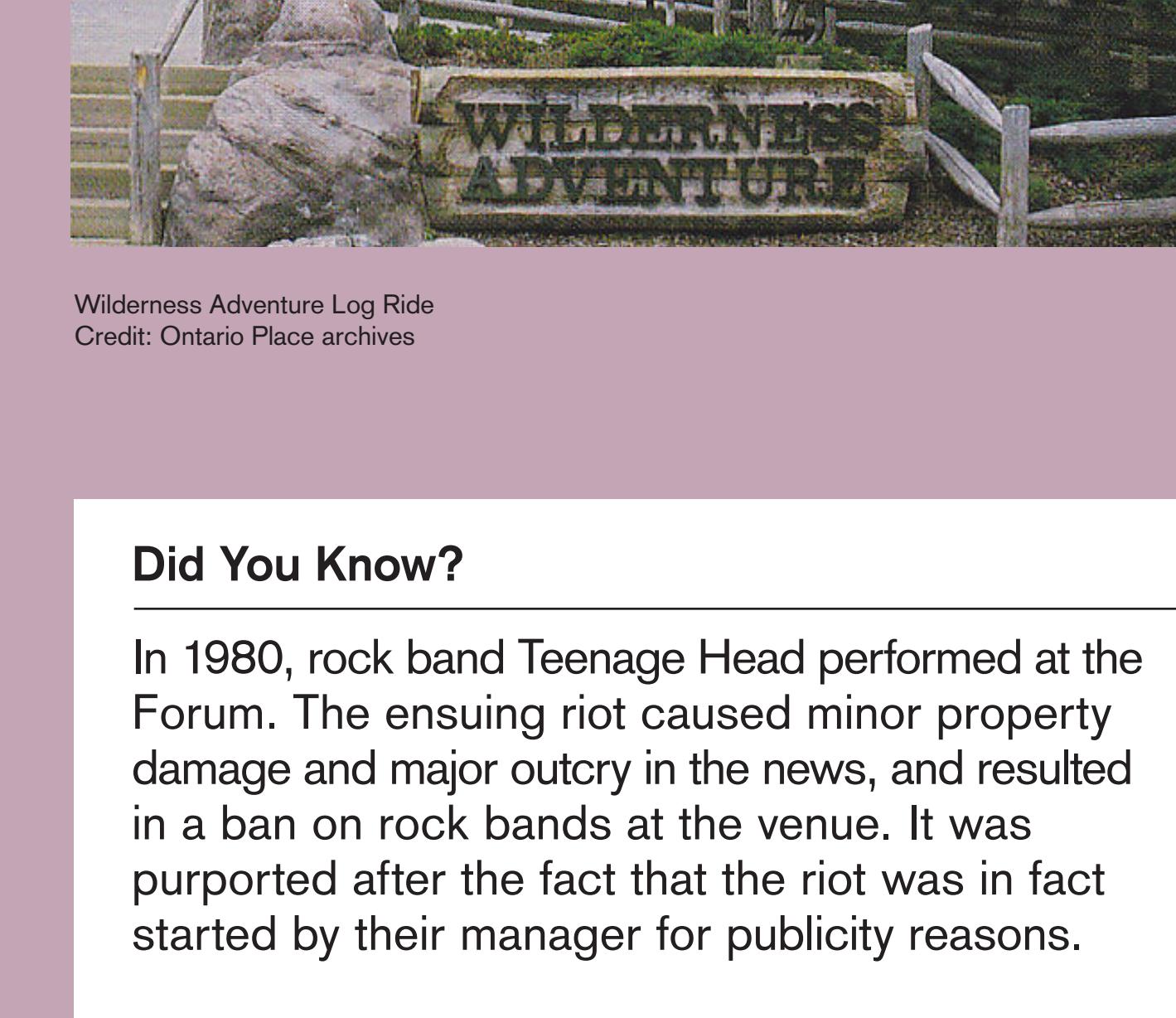
**Context:** Canada's Wonderland Opens

When Ontario Place opened in 1971 to promote Ontario's arts and culture, the concept of Amusement Park was still relatively new in the way we know it today. The opening of Canada's Wonderland, the first major theme park in the country, created an unanticipated competition for Ontario Place's increasingly similar focus.

**1984**

## Log Ride Opens

The focus on Northern Ontario was eventually expanded to include most of the West Island, including the Wilderness Adventure log ride, a replicated mine, and "Muskeg Pete's Main Street".



### Did You Know?

In 1980, rock band Teenage Head performed at the Forum. The ensuing riot caused minor property damage and major outcry in the news, and resulted in a ban on rock bands at the venue. It was purported after the fact that the riot was in fact started by their manager for publicity reasons.

## Map



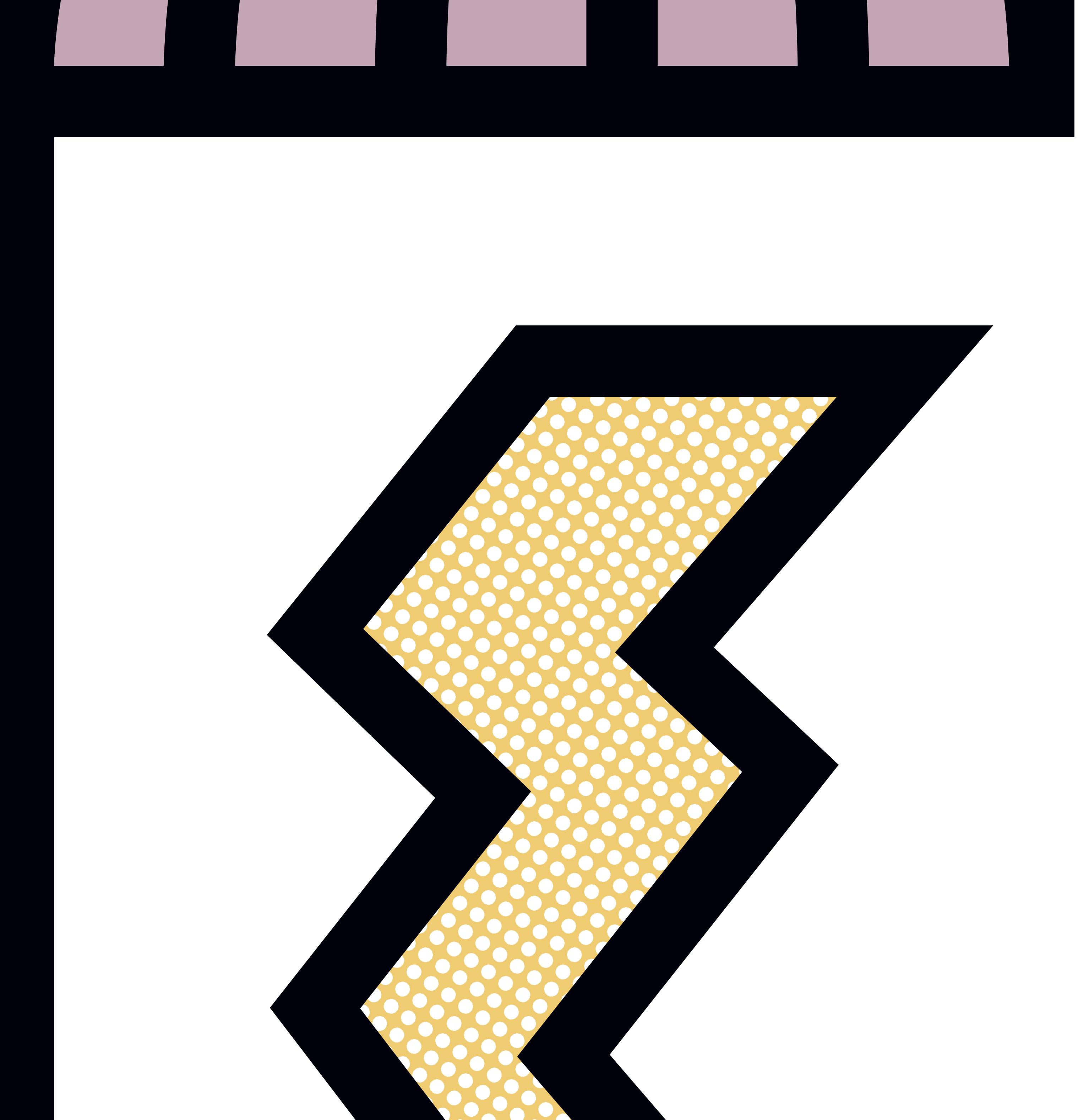
## Portions of the Island That Were Added/Changed

① Children's Village (East Island)

② Waterslide (East Island)

③ Silos (West Island)

④ Log Ride (West Island)



# Looking to the Past: Transitions & Transformations

**1990-1995**

## Waterpark Expanded

Building on the original waterslide, the Soak City water park was expanded throughout the 1990s. This was Canada's first water park, slowly replacing older rides and a portion of the Children's Village.



Soak City  
Credit: Wikipedia user Glogger

**1994**

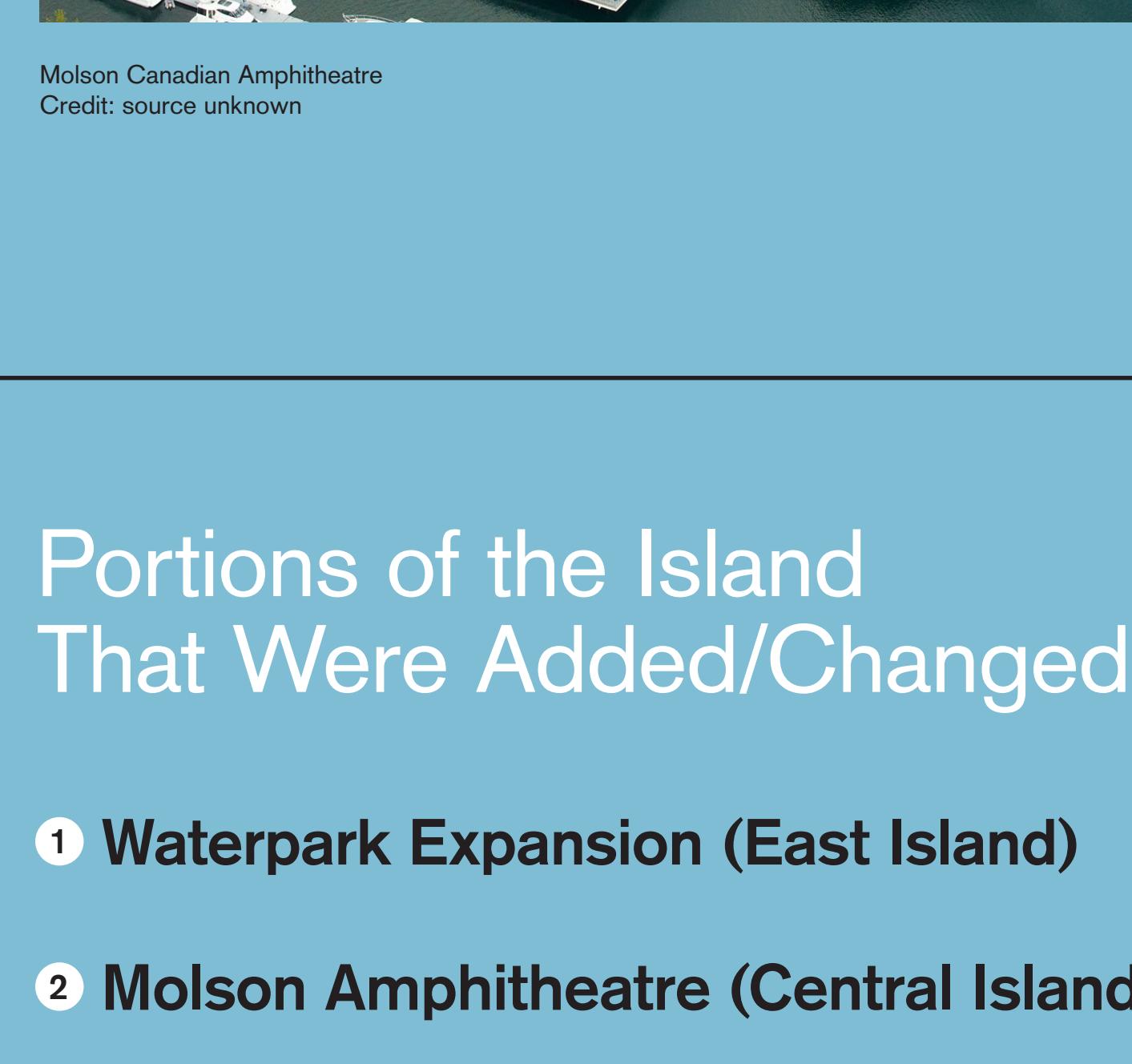
## Atlantis Opens

In 1994, Ontario Place Corporation entered into an agreement with the operators of Atlantis for the opening of a banquet facility in two of the Eb Zeidler pods.

**1995**

## Molson Canadian Amphitheatre Replaces the Forum

With construction beginning in 1993, in 1995 the Molson Amphitheatre opened on the former grounds of the Forum. Bryan Adams was the first performer to play at the venue on May 18, 1995. Increasing the capacity from the Forum's 8,000 to 16,000, the Molson Amphitheatre continues to host a wide variety of big name acts, from the Foo Fighters to Drake, and Dolly Parton to Blue Rodeo (who have performed there every year since opening).



Molson Canadian Amphitheatre  
Credit: source unknown

**1998**

**Context:** City of Toronto Amalgamates

The Province, spearheaded by then premier Mike Harris, amalgamated the six municipalities of Toronto, East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough and York to form the City of Toronto as we know it today.

**2010**

## Ontario Place Renovations

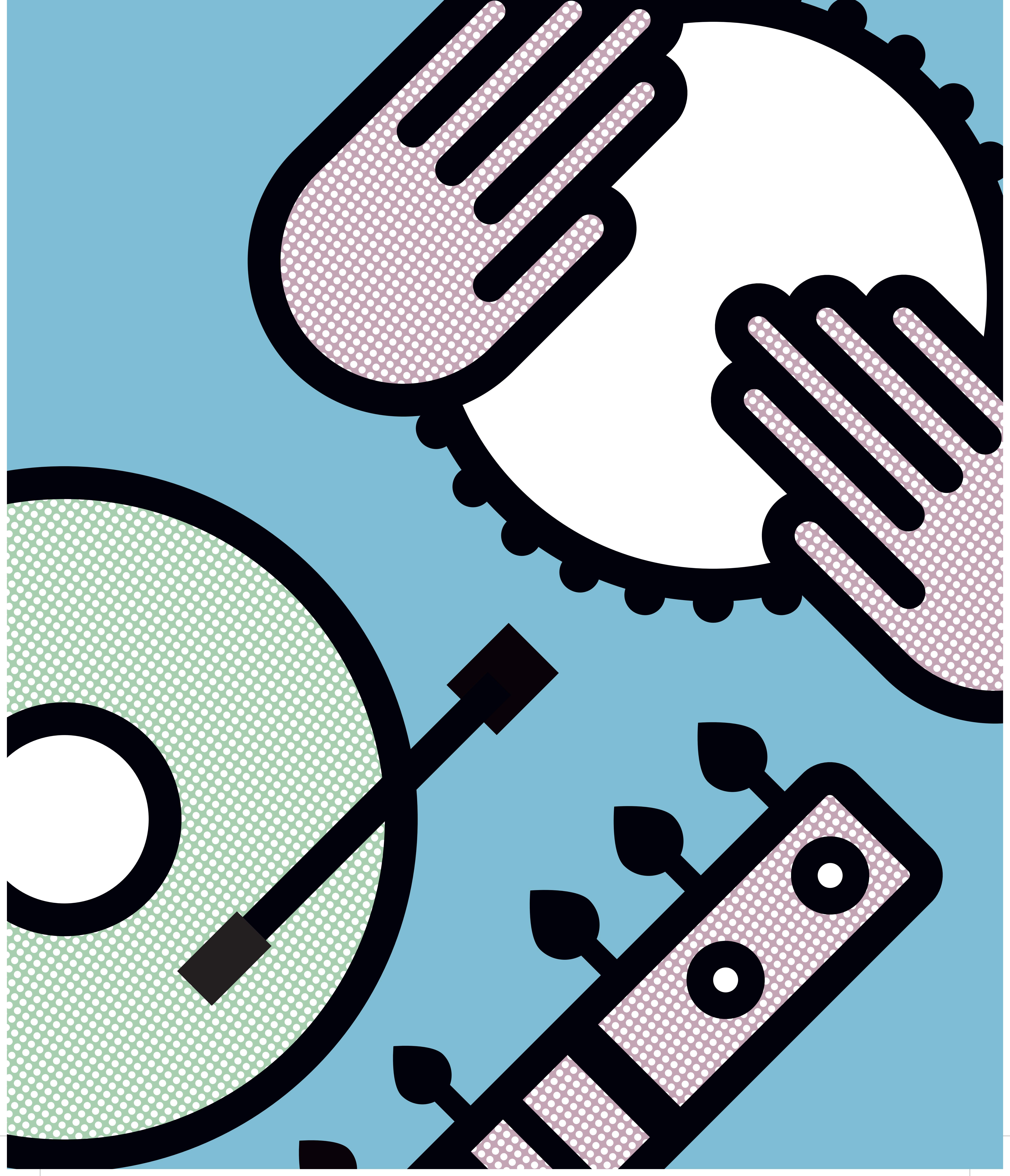
In 2010, the Province announced extensive renovations to Ontario Place, totalling over \$10 million. These renovations included the addition of Echo Beach, further expansion of the water park, restoration of the Cinesphere, and the addition of an Eco-Learning centre.

## Map



## Portions of the Island That Were Added/Changed

- ① Waterpark Expansion (East Island)
- ② Molson Amphitheatre (Central Island)
- ③ Echo Beach (East Island)
- ④ Atlantis (Northern Pods)



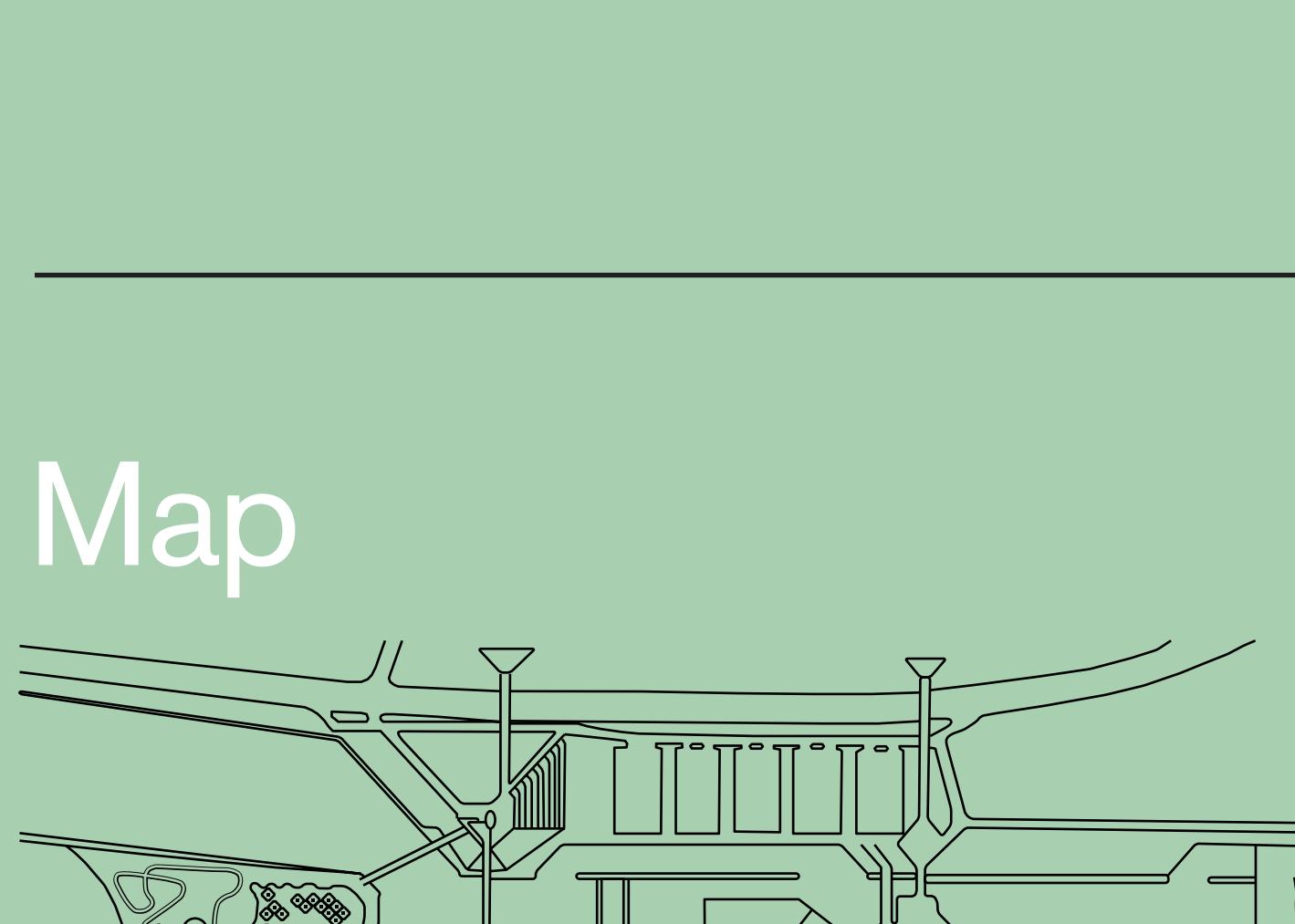
# In the Future: Transitions & Transformations

## 2012

### Province Announces Plans to Revitalize Ontario Place

Shortly after extensive renovations, the Province released a request for information and subsequent request for proposals, in 2010 and 2011 respectively. These were to elicit ideas for the redevelopment of Ontario Place. Then in 2012, the Province formerly announced plans to revitalize Ontario Place. An advisory panel was set up, spearheaded by John Tory, to recommend the best options for redevelopment.

Following the announcement, the majority of Ontario Place was closed, including the amusement facilities, leaving only the Molson Amphitheatre, Marina, Echo Beach and Atlantis.



Vintage photo depicting majority of Heritage Attributes identified at Ontario Place  
Credit: Source Unknown

## 2014

### Ontario Place Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

In light of the revitalization efforts, it was determined necessary to evaluate the cultural heritage assets at Ontario Place. The outcome of this evaluation was the Ontario Place Statement of Cultural Heritage Value, which lists the "highly geometric architecture of the Pavilion, the Cinesphere and the connecting walkways and bridges", as well as the marina, ship barriers, and connections and relationship with the West Island.

Moving forward, the revitalization will be required to take these attributes into account, preserving them in the ultimate redesign of the facilities.

## 2015

### Construction of Park Begins

Phase 1 of redevelopment begins, consisting of a large park designed by landscape firms West 8 and LAND INC. The park is currently being constructed on the East Island, and will include four season amenities such as trails, gardens, a rocky beach and fire pit, boardwalk, and upper trail with the summit looking over the lake.



Romantic Garden, part of park currently under construction

## 2016

### Ontario Place Hosts Pilot Projects

This year has seen Ontario Place begin to host pilot projects to better understand the future potential of the facility, including the in/future festival.

## Map



### Portions of the Island That Were Added/Changed

- ① Closure of amusement portion and Water Park
- ② Park under construction (East Island)
- ③ Cinesphere and the Pods designated as structures of Heritage Value

