

Park Vert

June 26, 2018

Request for Proposals #2018-18

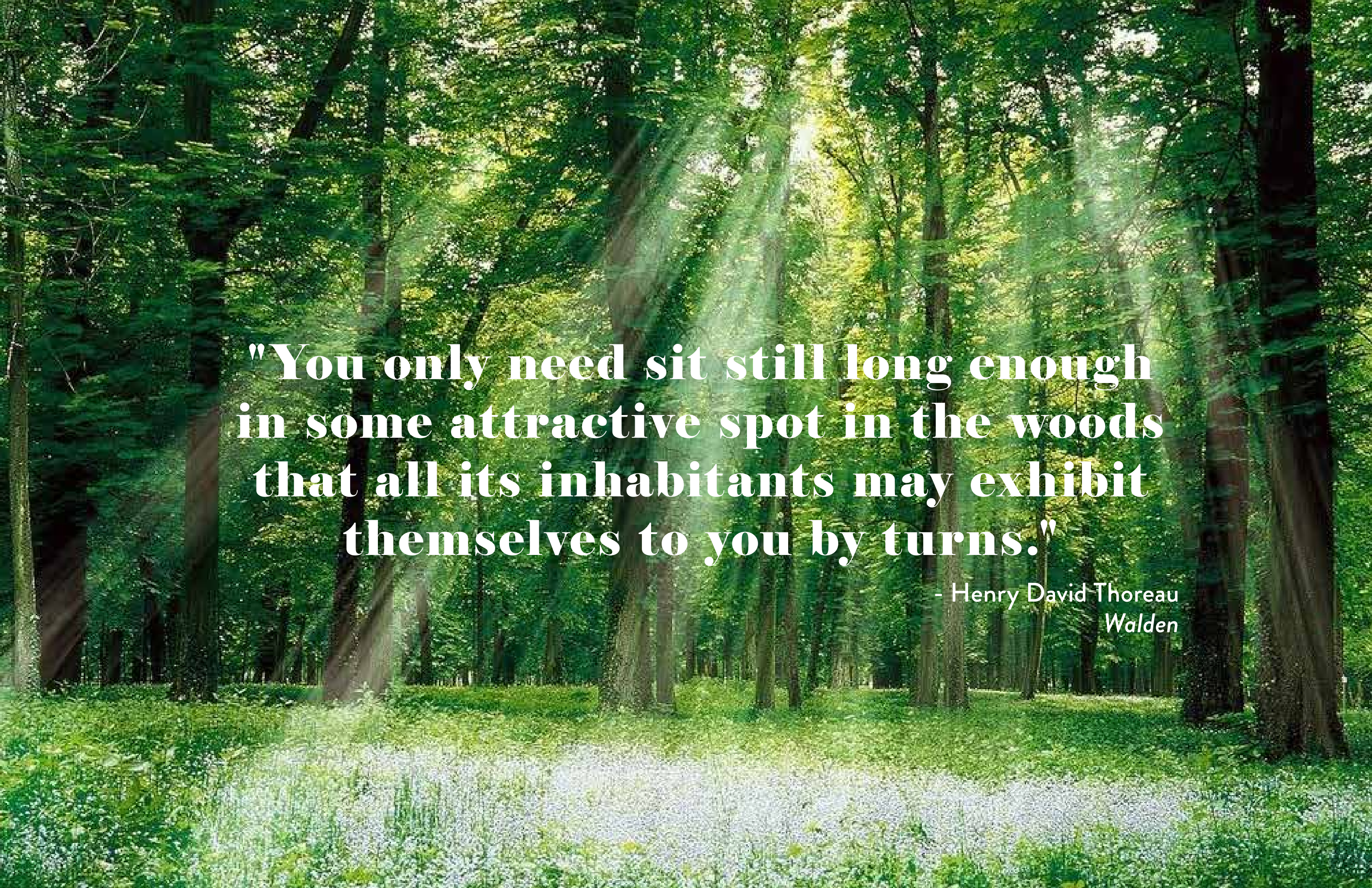
Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto

The Agency Landscape + Planning and DAVID RUBIN Land Collective Team

Park Vert

Design Team

- Agency Landscape + Planning
- DAVID RUBIN Land Collective
- MEP Design Inc.
- Batay-Csorba Architects
- Applied Ecological Services
- Cameron Cartiere
- GHD
- The Gehl Institute
- HLB Lighting
- Fluidity Design
- Pelican Woodcliff

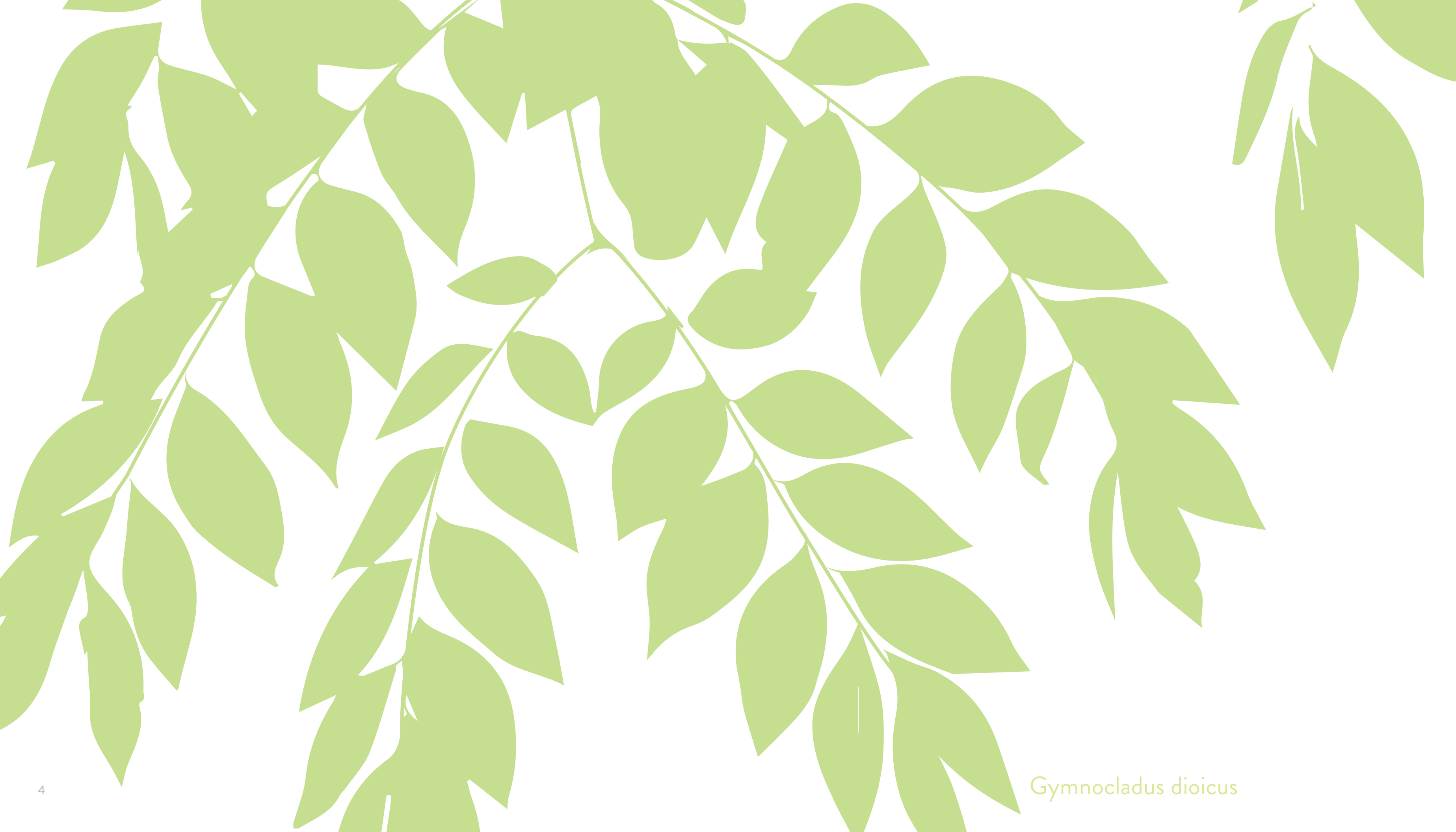


**"You only need sit still long enough
in some attractive spot in the woods
that all its inhabitants may exhibit
themselves to you by turns."**

- Henry David Thoreau
Walden

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Gymnocladus dioica

Design Narrative



Design Narrative



Community Vision

A haven. An oasis. A sanctuary. An introvert's respite. The community's aspirations for a quiet escape in the city are clear. Through previous engagement opportunities, hundreds of community members made their voices heard, guiding the design for the York Street site toward something innate in all of us: the need for a moment of peace, a shift in perspective, and a connection to the restorative power of nature.

Great cities are truly defined by the quality of their public spaces. Together, the Rees Street and York Street sites offer tremendous opportunities for Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto to continue to expand its world-class waterfront and better meet the need of the community for more park space, with each designed for different goals. Where Rees is intensive, energetic and "extroverted," York will be a quieter and more reflective counterpoint. At Park Vert on York Street, we imagine a place with many layers where people can come for immersion in nature, elevation from the city, shelter from noise, and timeless experiences of water, forests, and views.

Design Principles

Designing for quiet is far from antithetical to designing for people. Our design team embraces a human-centered approach and believes that people are the heart of a city. For the York Street site, this is manifest in our design principles that connect the community's vision to a physical space.

Give Me Shelter

Create shelter and prospect through strategic design moves.

Timeless Engagement

Connect people to timeless and ever-changing experiences.

Live with Nature

Be inspired by natural processes and interior habitat species.

Bridging Art & Design

Cultivate an intentional sense of presence and peace.

The Urban Forest

Respect and nurture Toronto's love of its urban tree canopy.

A Loop in the Stitch

Provide unique and complementary experiences.

Quiet & Connected

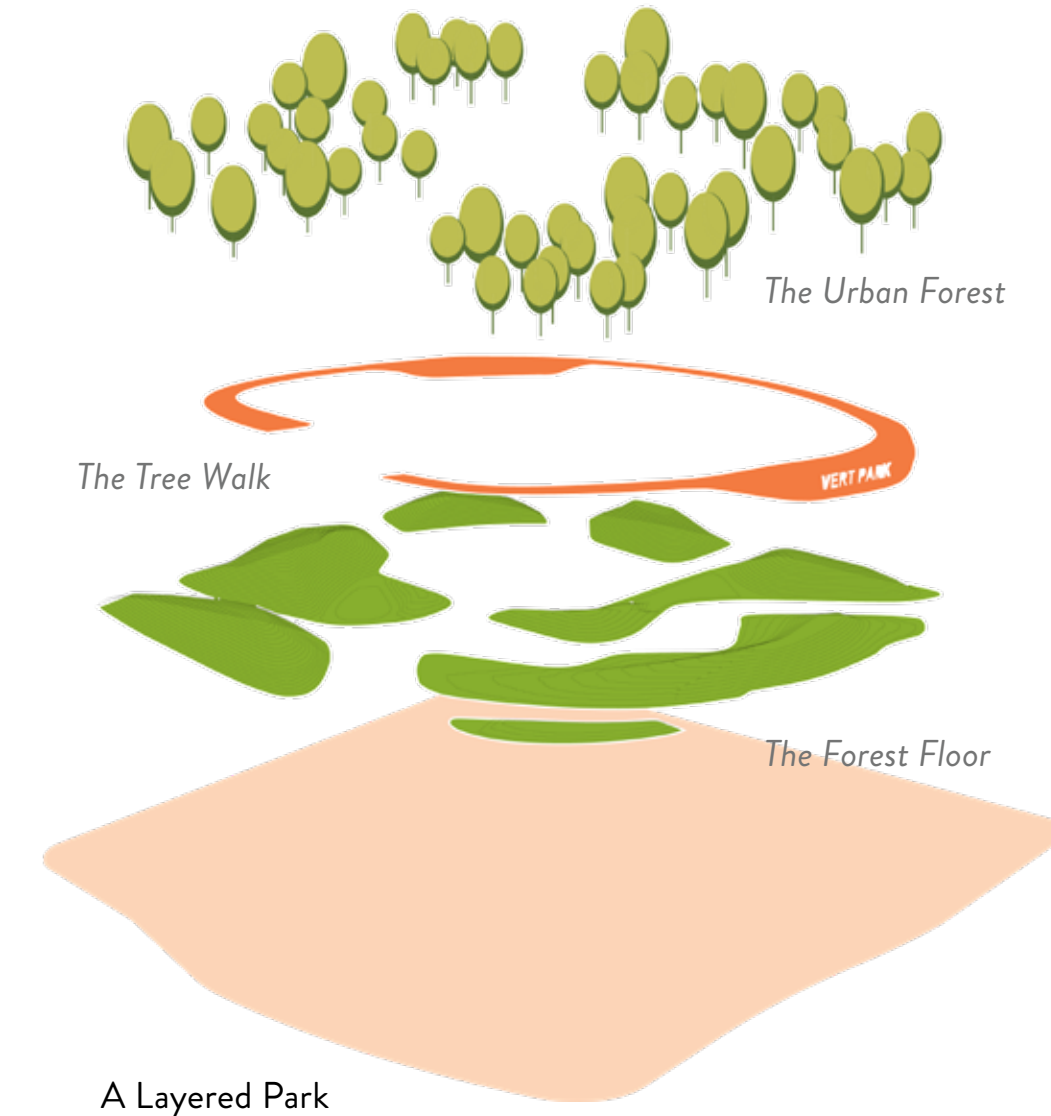
Enhance public life to ensure a better public realm.

Park Vert

"Park Vert" celebrates the community's desire for a green oasis and its love of Toronto's urban forest. The park is conceived as a series of layers that unfold for the visitor – both from the ground up and the outside in – revealing new experiences in every direction. Arriving at the site from the bustling city, Park Vert invites visitors inward through a richly-planted, topographic frame that buffers street noise and draws you into a quiet, open plaza, called the "Clearing." Looking up from the forest floor, the visitor takes in the "Tree Walk," a light walkway that encircles the site. The Tree Walk incrementally lifts people a level up from the busy ground plane of the city and into the realm of the tree canopy, where they can appreciate the sounds of birds and capture a long view into the serene, blue water of the Inner Harbour. From sky to ground, the park's three vertical layers are defined by:

An Immersive Green: Urban Forest

Toronto's urban forest serves as vital urban infrastructure, capturing water, offering summer shade, and providing critical habitat for local species. Park Vert reinforces that critical canopy, creating a diverse and layered forest within it that is planted, over time, for maximum diversity and climate resilience. More than just a functional element, the selected tree palette is choreographed with the unfolding of the experiential tree walk, shifting from the forest floor through the branching structure of the trees and up into the loose leafy, canopy. The plantings also mimic the native transect, moving from wet lowland to dry upland species as one ascends up the Tree Walk.





A Platform for Experience: Tree Walk

Perhaps the most defining design element of the park is the Tree Walk, a circular structure that offers at once a meditative walk through the city, a destination view of the lake at the site's southwest corner, and a series of programmed moments, from individual seating to a suspended amphitheater. Encircling the site, the Tree Walk, together with its related vegetation, is envisioned to embrace park users, buffering them from loud traffic along York and Harbour Streets. The shape of the Tree Walk references the former off-ramp, incorporating elements of the remaining bents, and re-interpreting the structure and materiality to be airy, light and connected to topographic islands that merge with the forest floor.



The Ground Plane: Forest Floor

The ground plane uses surface material changes to reinforce the sense of transition from the city outside, through the planted frame, into the central Clearing and arriving at the park's fountain. While changes in surface treatment softly define spaces, customizable furniture allows flexibility throughout. The fountain is designed as an ephemeral pool, a common feature of temperate zone forests. Like its inspiration, the fountain changes slowly and quietly, creating this effect with a shallow dish fed from its bubbling rim. In everyday occasions, the fountain creates a meditative moment and interacts with dappled light of the forest; but, it can also be occupied dry for larger community events.

Public Art Program

Public art at Park Vert brings together community engagement and specific artistic interventions. The Tree Walk, with approximately 220 meters of linear space, is a potential site to integrate artwork directly into the landscape, particularly around interpretation of the historic bents and new railings, paving, street facade and mural commissions. Park Vert can also become the destination for an urban arts residency program to incorporate ongoing interest and perspectives into public space. Themes for the residency or for permanent works can reinforce the meditative qualities of the place, prolonging contemplation and consideration of the space.



Sustainability & Innovation

Sustainability & Innovation Green is more than a name for Park Vert: sustainability is at the core of the principles and design decisions that shaped the park. Guided by Waterfront Toronto's Resilience and Innovation Framework for Sustainability, the concrete roadway that once occupied York Street will be transformed to a planted, productive space that is accessible to transit, incorporates on-site renewable energy, reduces light pollution, and incorporates water efficient landscaping throughout the park space and facilities. The space is designed to be inclusive to a range of users, from bikers and walkers to strollers and wheelchairs, or even local and migratory wildlife, all needs have been considered in the design and metrics.



Betula papyrifera

Community Vision

Community Vision

Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto have big ambitions for the expanded terrain of the waterfront system offered by the Rees Street and York Street sites. The goals as stated speak to our team - growing the park system, chipping away at the intense need for downtown open space, exceeding sustainability benchmarks, setting new standards for resilience and continuing a tradition of design excellence and innovation.

While the leadership's ambitions speak directly to our design minds, the community's feedback struck a deep emotional chord. Hundreds of community members channeled their dreams for these sites - with sticky dots, note cards, story circles and string. They spoke, through all these incredible tools, to something both primitive and essential: the need for even the most urban of dwellers to have moments of peace and connections to the restorative power of nature.

Diving into the feedback, we see the great opportunity inherent in two new parks happening concurrently. Where Rees' program is intensive, energetic and "extroverted", York's is the quieter and more reflective counterpoint. A haven. An oasis. A sanctuary. An introvert's respite. We imagined a place of embrace and shelter, where one can leave behind the worries of the grind, the constant social media updates, and the roar of the urban sidewalk for something more tranquil and restorative.



Summary of Community Views of Existing Site



Need for multi-modal engagement



Concerns about noise and congestion



Undecided on approach to the Bents



An Immersive and Quiet Refuge



Places to Sit, Work and Meet



Shade and Shelter



Exposed to wind, heat and cold



Frame views of the City



Capture views to Lake Ontario



Rich and Abundant Layers of Planting



Water for its Aural and Visual Delight



Places for Art, Daily Programming and Events

Community Vision



Populus tremuloides

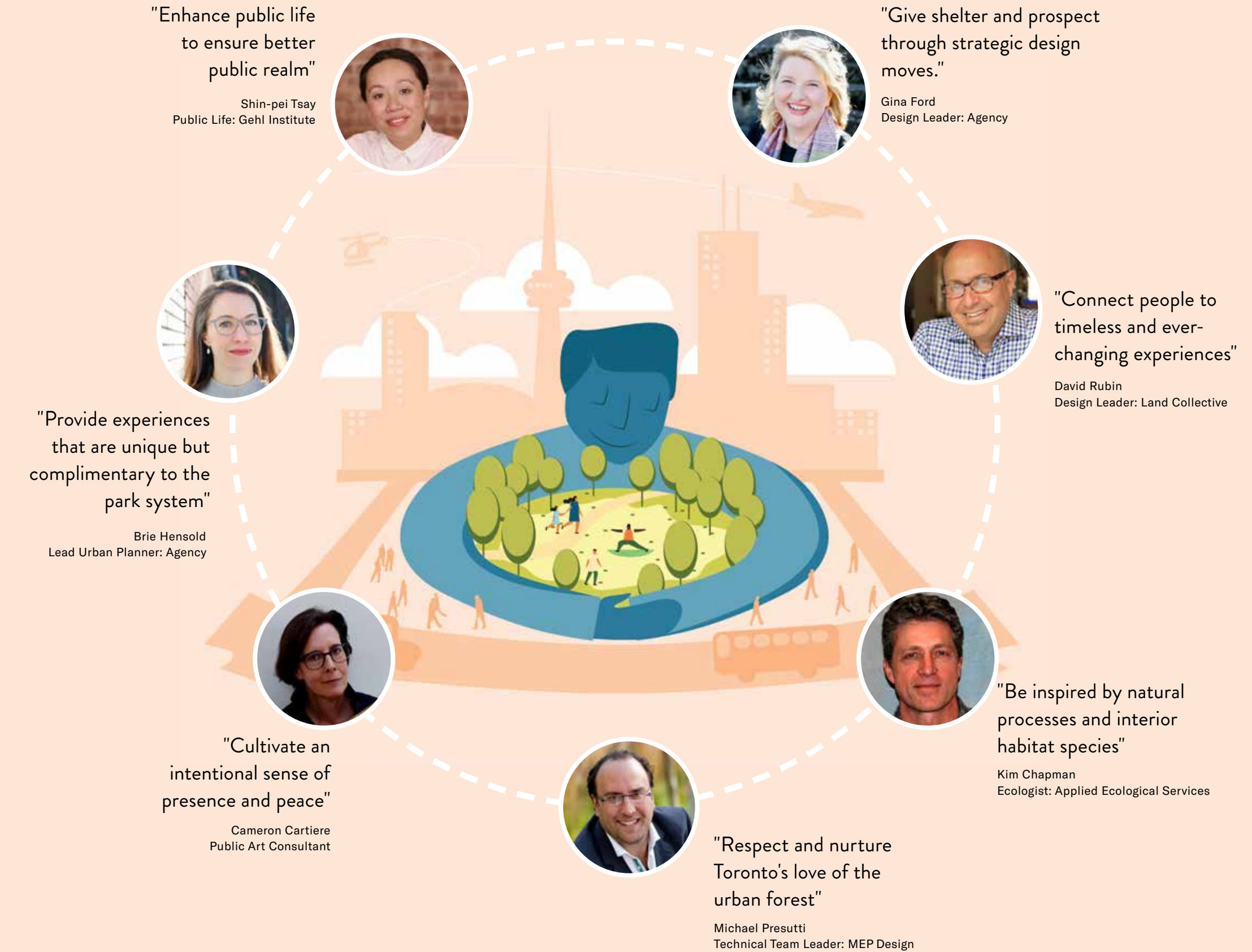
Design Principles

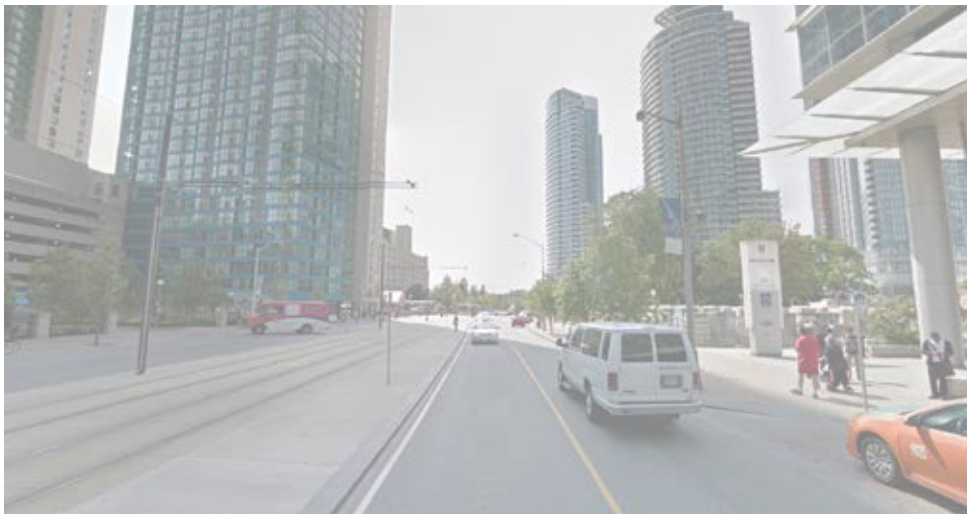
Design Principles

Our design team is united in our humanist approach to the planning and design of public space. We are a team of strong, diverse and opinionated specialists that care deeply about these questions of inclusion and its correlation to new forms of design excellence. We continually seek opportunities to explore these questions together as we share a human-centric perspective about the role of design in cities. For our York Street site, this is manifest in how we think about and achieve the community's vision.

We asked our expert teammates - based on their deep and specialized knowledge - to think and reflect deeply on the idea of an "introvert" park. How can the design of this two-acre park create an escape, a refuge and oasis? How can we achieve something that resonates with the quieter of our species? What are the barriers to a peaceful and serene urban experience - and how can we leverage design to overcome them? What are the types of spaces not currently present in the wealth of waterfront parks? What does this particular site offer us as building blocks for construction of a splendid refuge?

What follows are their responses codified into design principles that serve as the foundation of our proposed design.

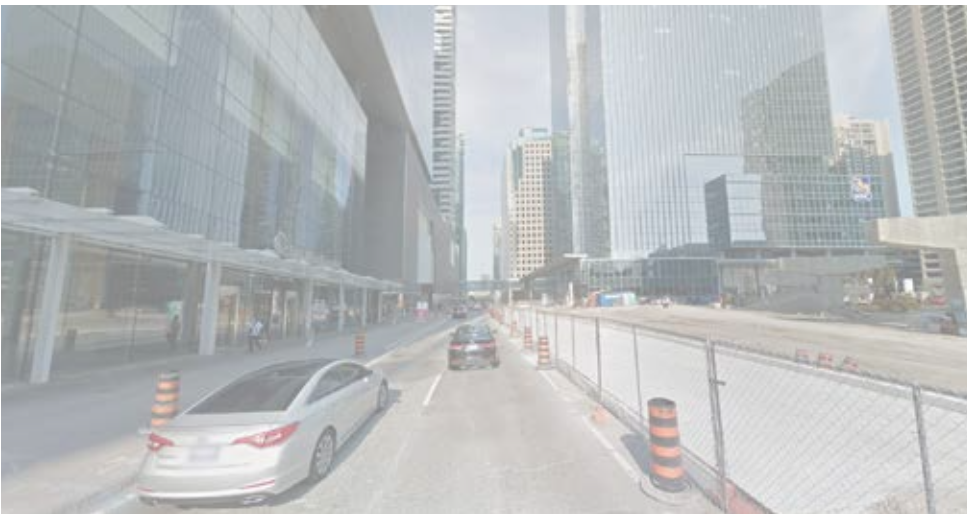




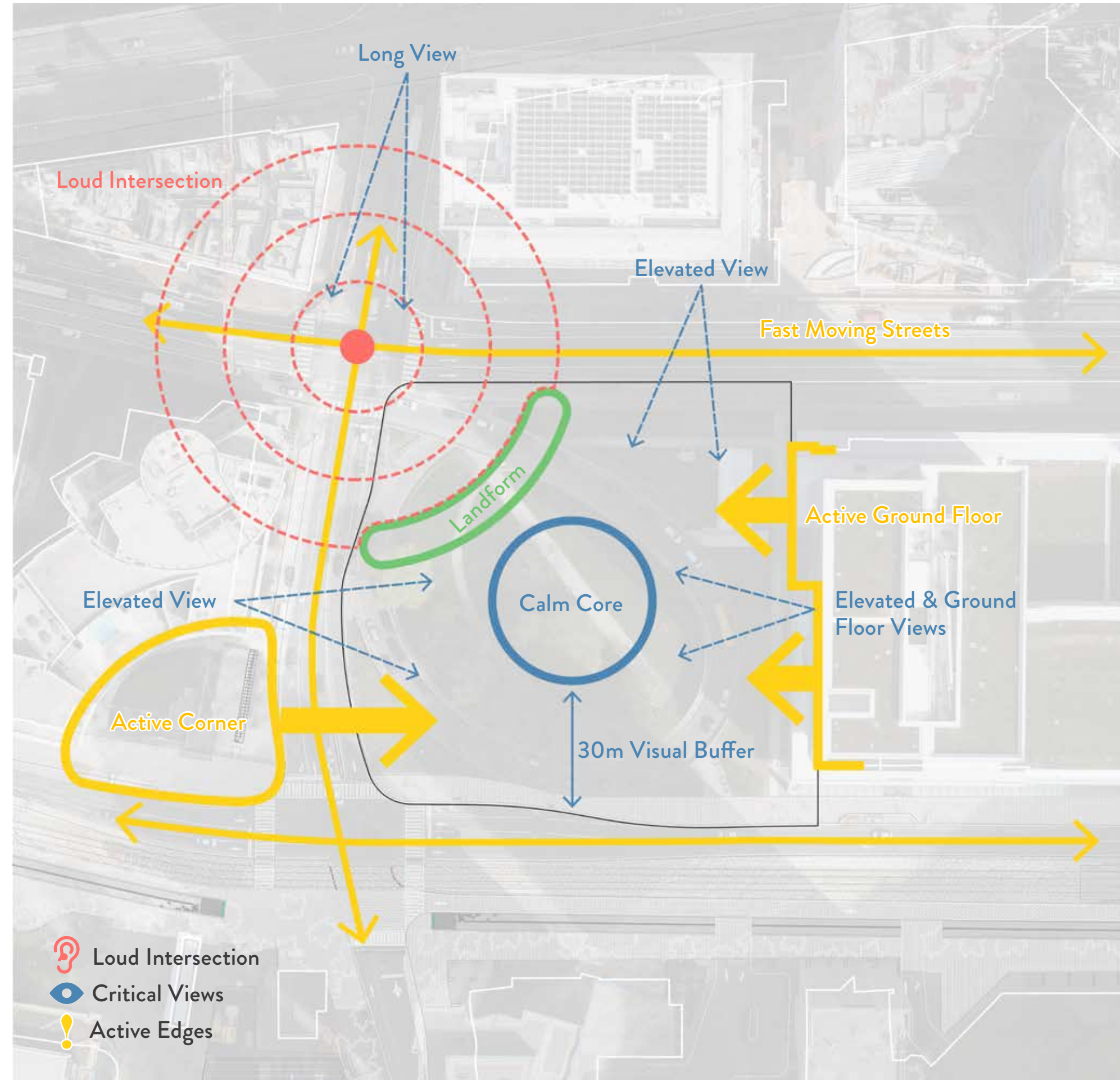
Queens Quay: A highly activated multi-modal streetscape.



York Street: A busy connection between the city and the lake.



Harbour Street: A new neighborhood street.



Uses landform and landscape elements to screen and buffer the park from noise



Minimizes the presence of fast-moving objects and stimuli, creating a calm and serene core



Creates sheltered places (refuge) from which to experience views of the city and lake (prospect)



Embraces connectivity with adjacent users and users at different scales



Give Me Shelter

"Give shelter and prospect through strategic design moves"

A refuge. An oasis. An escape. These words from the community speak to the need for our site to be "other" than its urban context - to stand in powerful contrast to the noise, congestion and chaos of the city. This idea of park as retreat is more easily accomplished in parks of significant scale - places like High Park in Toronto where one can truly lose themselves in the deep meandering forest paths - but not impossible on the small scale of a 2-acre park. The design moves need to be strategic to leverage every square meter toward the ultimate goal of quiet!

We see the potential for horizontal and vertical layering. A visitor moves seamlessly from the outer layer (the bustle and frenetic action of the streets and sidewalk) through a layer of landscape (which shields the noise and visual cacophony of urban life) into a peaceful and calm central oasis. Vertically, the park can please those looking down from above (through its forms and textures), those peering in from the edges and those firmly planted on the ground. Each layer offers an embracing and enveloping experience, adding reflection and time to those that pass through and a peaceful sanctuary to those that choose to linger.

- Gina Ford, Design Lead, Agency



Timeless Engagement

"Connect people to timeless and ever-changing experiences"

A successful space is one that's well-attended and loved by the hearts and minds of the citizenry it serves. Bringing forth this emotional richness and connection requires a thoughtful understanding of landscape as the most equitable design form – one that, when rendered inclusively and empathetically, allows visitors of all kinds to find meaningful engagement at any time, not only throughout the seasons of the year but throughout the seasons of their lives.

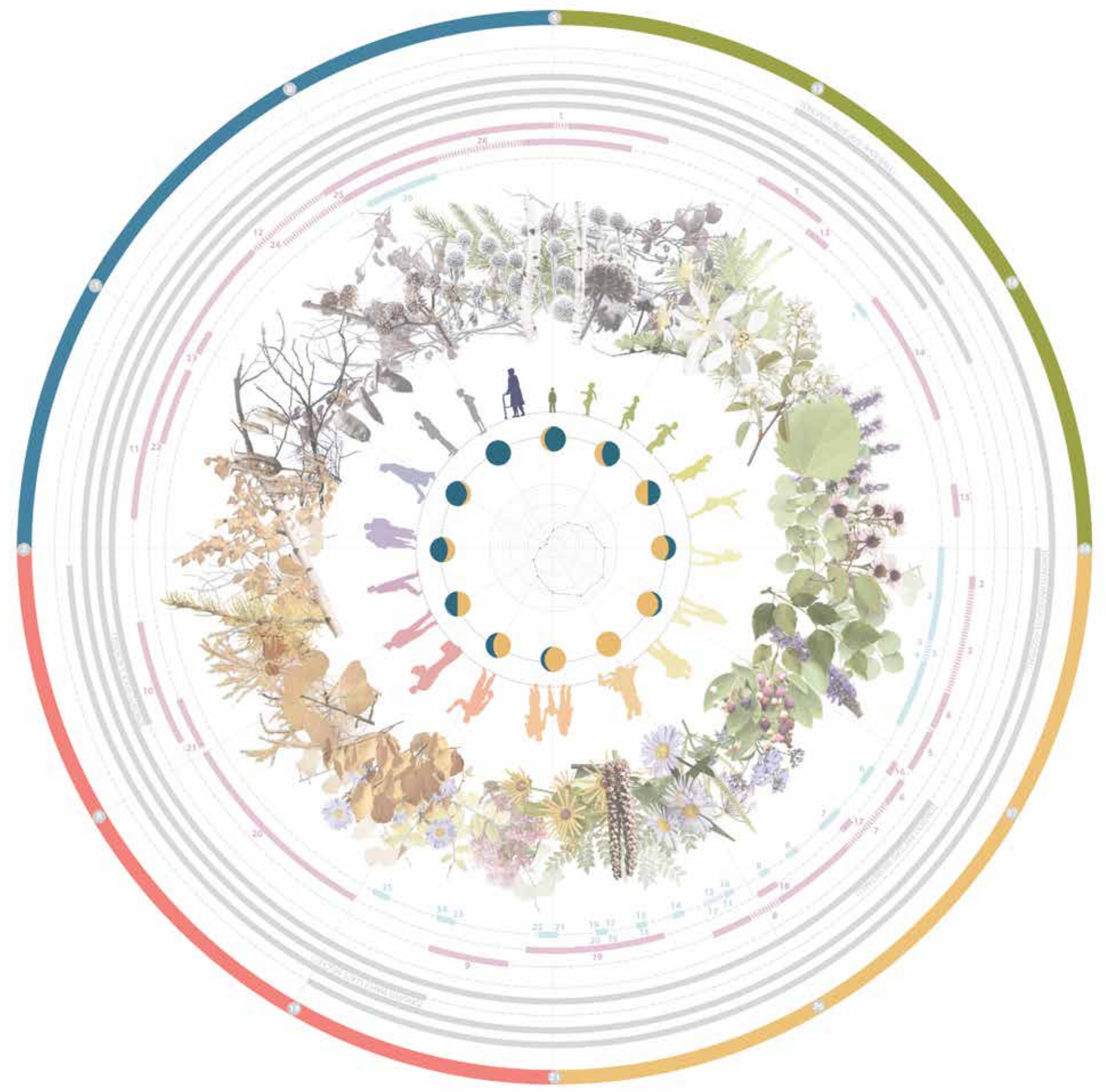
Whether morning, afternoon, or evening of the winter, spring, summer, or fall – enjoyed in the context of youthful engagement or aged experience – the best parks resonate timelessly through life. Park Vert aspires to be a place of such timeless engagement, beloved of the heart and mind and embracing all who seek respite and connection. An enlightened ascent through the park's many vantage points at any time of day or year – whether viewing a wellspring of buds breaking into bloom, or enjoying a moment of quiet contemplation among fall foliage or winter chill – mirrors the span of different perspectives held by the diversity of Toronto's residents. The park's embrace holds the breadth of its citizenry in inward focus while at any one moment offering multiple vantage points to the city outward, inspiring connection and love of place in perpetuity.

- David Rubin, Design Lead, DAVID RUBIN Land Collective

- Toronto Seasons
- Avg. Monthly Temperature (°C)
- Toronto Professional Sporting Events
- Toronto City Events
- Toronto Cultural Events
- Human Life Phases
- Day/Night Cycle

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Toronto Film Festival | 2 Francophone Intl. Film Festival |
| 3 Luminato Artist Festival | 4 North By Northeast Festival |
| 5 TD Toronto Jazz Festival | 6 Toronto Fringe Festival |
| 7 Beaches Intl. Jazz Festival | 8 Toronto Summer Music Festival |
| 9 Toronto Intl. Film Festival | 10 Reel Asian Intl. Film Festival |
| 11 Arts Indoors and Out | 12 Toronto Design Festival |
| 13 Easter Eggs Eggstravaganza | 14 Cherry Blossom Celebration |
| 15 Victoria Day Celebration | 16 Toronto Outdoor Art Fair |
| 17 Honda Indy Toronto | 18 Toronto's Street Festival of Beer |
| 19 Canadian National Exhibition | 20 Halloween Toronto |
| 21 Royal Agriculture Winter Fair | 22 Toronto Christmas Market |
| 23 New Years Celebration | 24 Toronto Light Fest |
| 25 Winterlicious | 26 Canadian Intl. Auto Show |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Haru Matsuri Spring Festival | 2 Toronto Pride |
| 3 Taste of Little Italy | 4 Chin Celebration |
| 5 Intl. Dragon Boat Festival | 6 Chin Intl. Picnic |
| 7 Festival of India | 8 Toronto Intl. Brazilfest |
| 9 AlohaFest Toronto | 10 Island Soul Festival |
| 11 Caribbean Carnival Festival | 12 Taste of the Middle East |
| 13 Habari Africa Festival | 14 Festival of South Asia |
| 15 Chinatown Festival | 16 Pan American Festival |
| 17 Taiwanfest | 18 Korean Harvest Fest |
| 19 Afro Caribfest | 20 Tamil Fest |
| 21 Hispanic Fiesta | 22 Toronto Greek Festival |
| 23 Toronto Ukrainian Festival | 24 Roncesville Polish Festival |
| 25 Toronto Oktoberfest | 26 Kumbha |



Creates opportunities for connection and contemplation throughout all seasons



Celebrates the City's identity and speaks to its unique calendar of events and programming throughout the year



Embraces daily natural rhythms and elevates transitions of the day from morning to afternoon, evening, and night



Inspires equity and the participation of the breadth of all citizens, from every stage and walk of life



Live with Nature

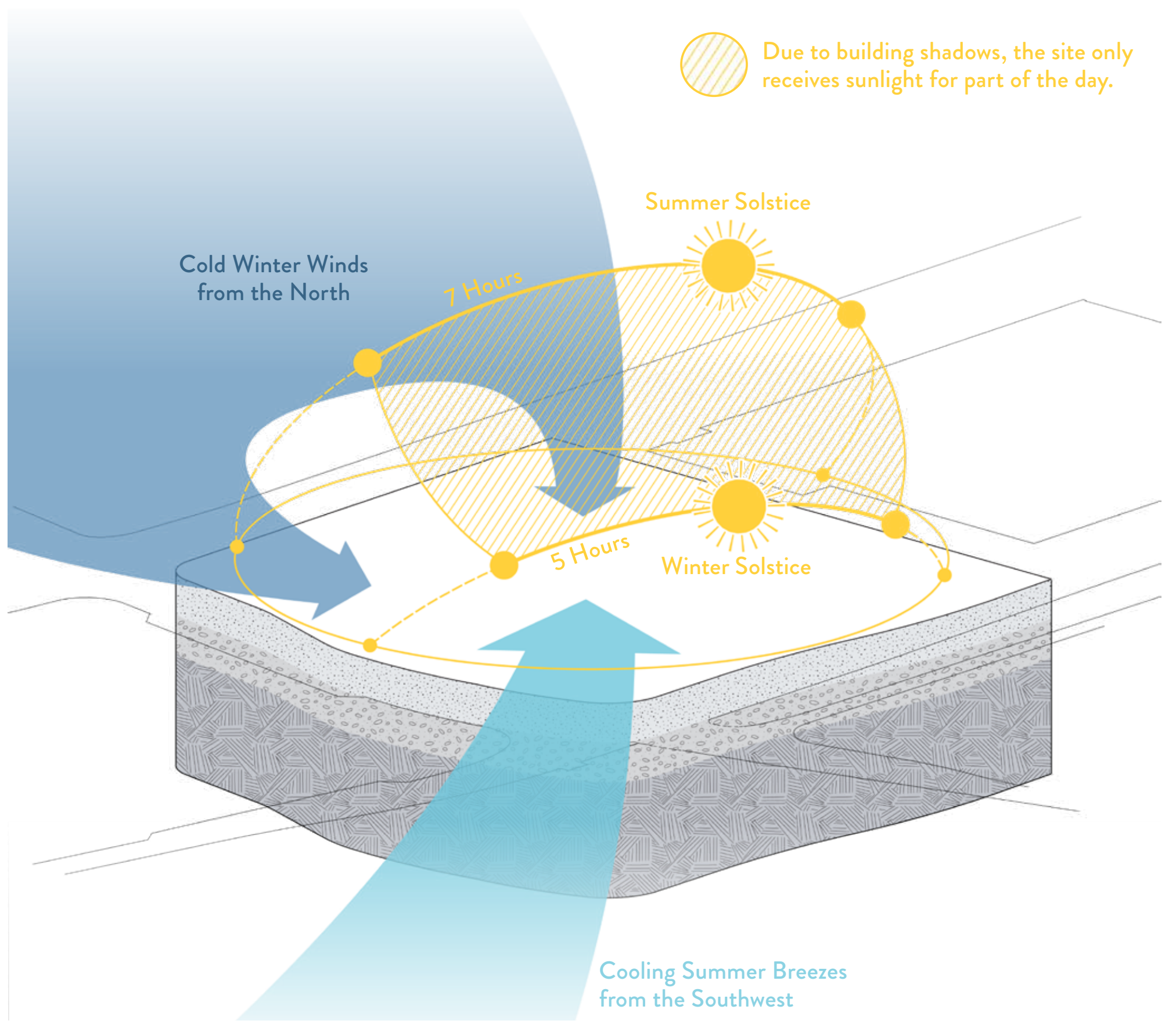
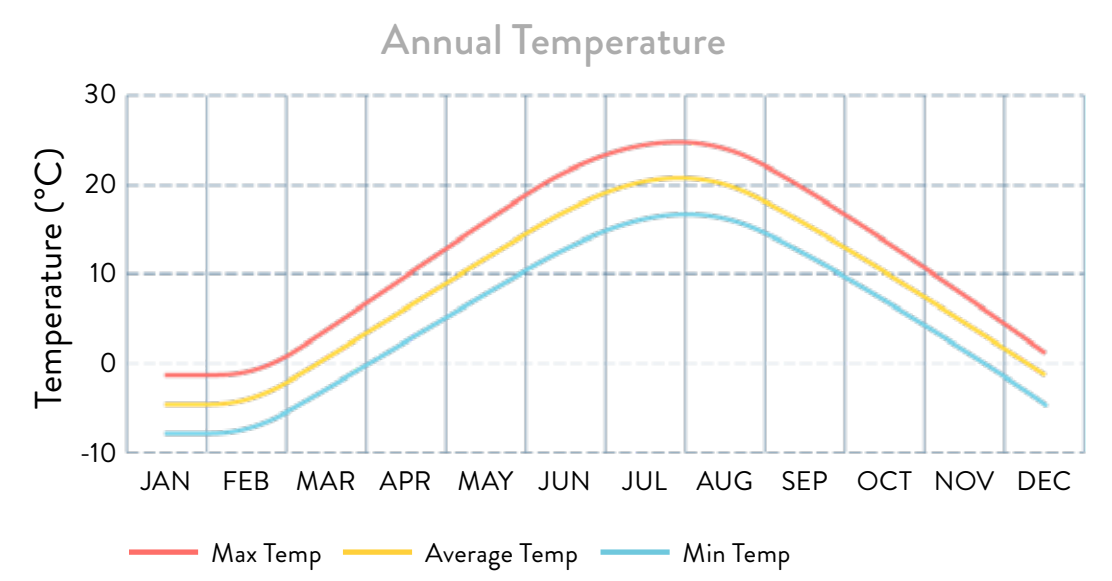
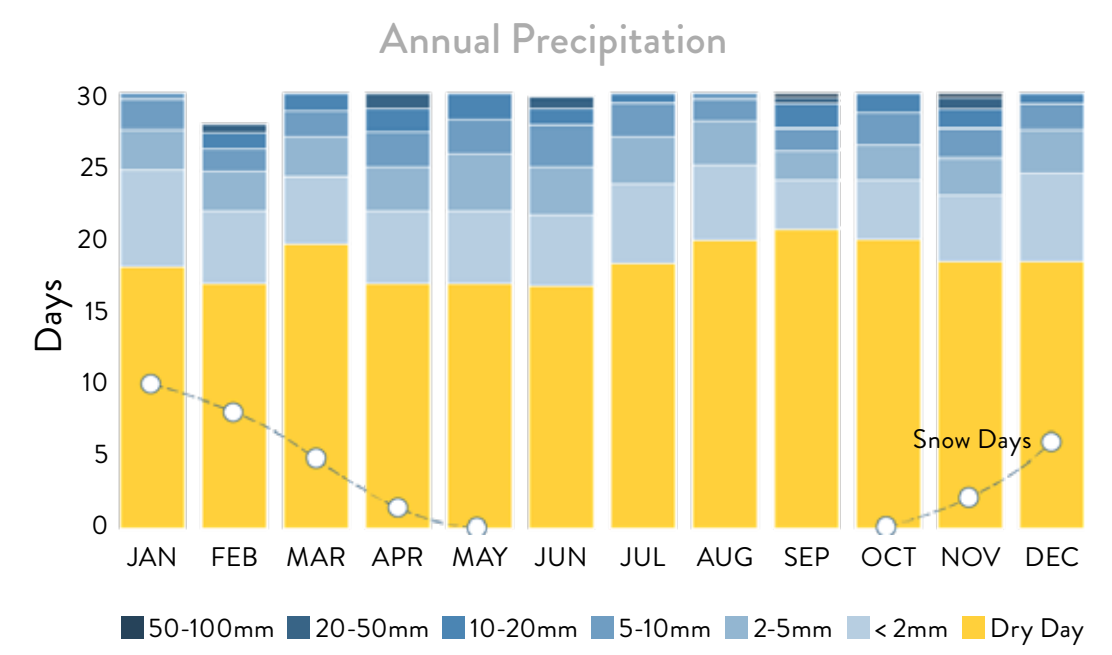
"Be inspired by natural processes and interior habitat species"

All my career I've operated in the belief that people can meet their needs while not destroying nature's beauty, diversity, and resilience—perhaps even restoring it. The right design can make that happen. Even an urban park design can elevate the ecological functions and resilience of a place, and deliver more ecosystem services that support the human enterprise.

In designing ecologically, can the needs of people be fully met? If you read the literature on the positive human response to nature—research that continues to support E. O. Wilson's hypothesis posed by his 1984 book, *Biophilia*, that people have an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other forms of life—then restoring nature in cities becomes an act of restoring the human being. It will always be good for both. The specifics of design in every test case will center around the ways that a park can be designed to function like a healthy nature preserve.

The response of certain humans and animal species to the environment is similar for all the senses—visual, aural, olfactory, tactile, gustatory. Quiet, varying, and green spaces free from fast-moving objects is what "introverted" species gravitate towards. Scientists call them "area-sensitive" species.

Site Microclimate



Allow winds from the lake to easily move through: i.e. don't impeded the "sea breeze" phenomenon



Create a multilayered forest structure for shade and cooling



Engage with the site's hydrologic cycles including capturing stormwater.



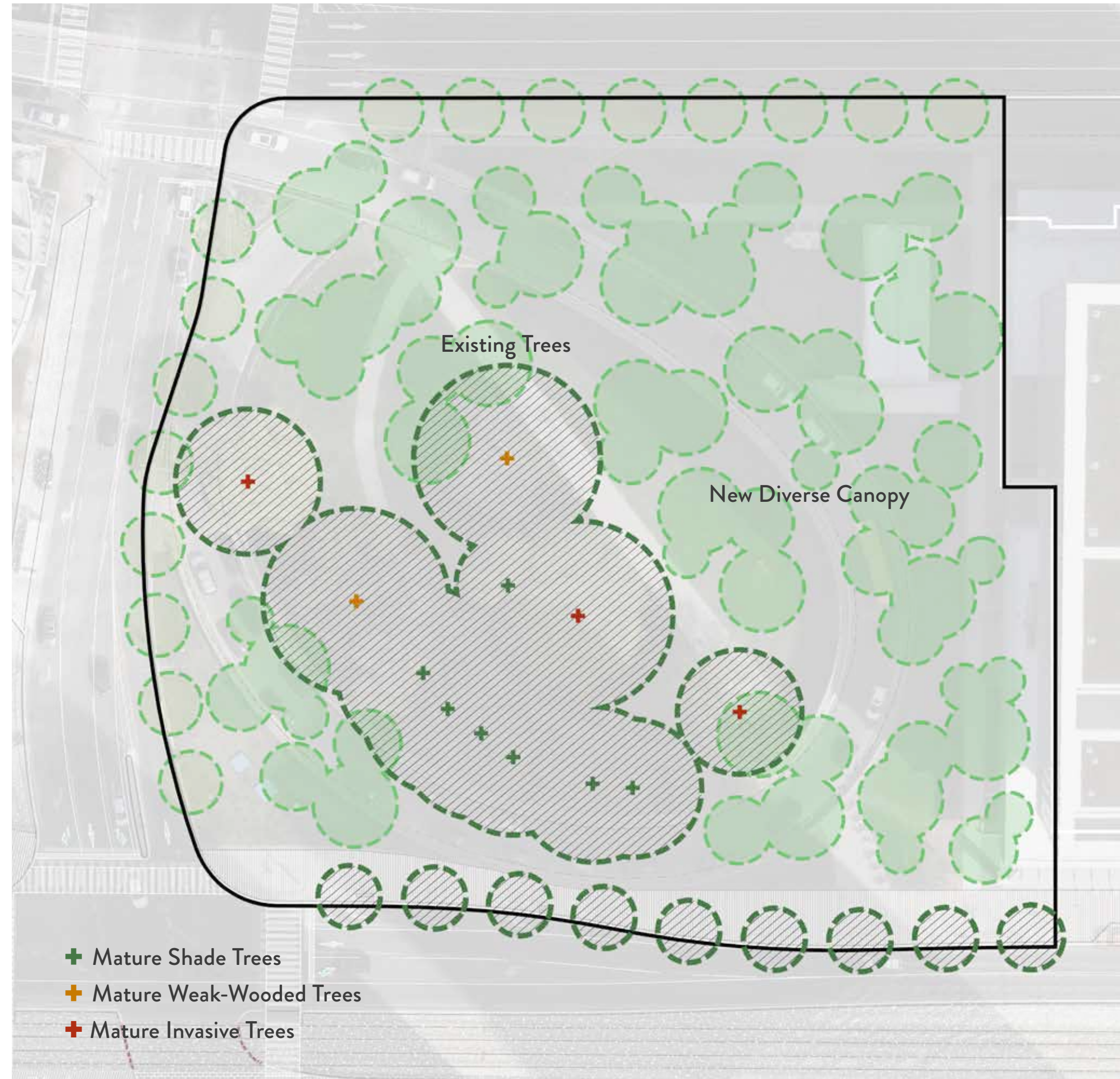
Select a planting palette that can adapt to environmental change over time



Existing Tree Grove



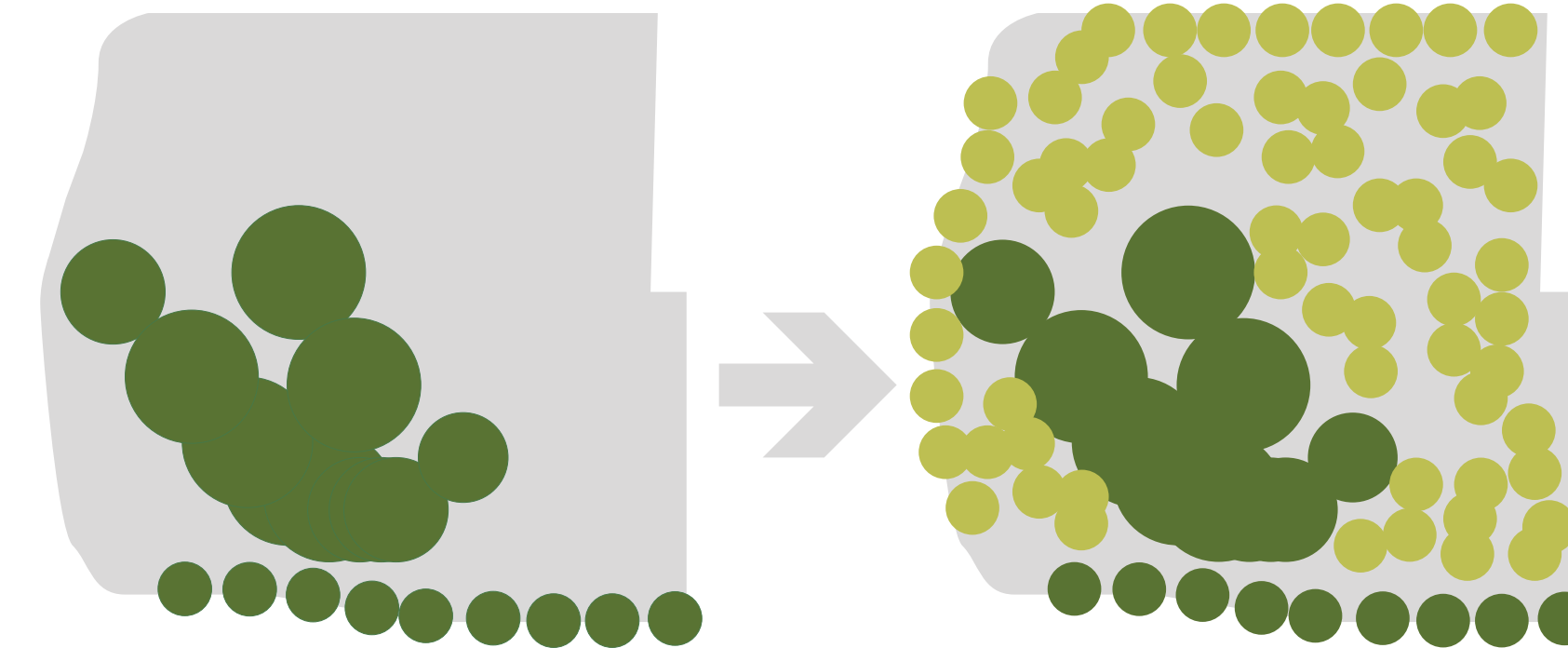
Existing Tree Grove



Preserves the existing canopy to provide shade and structure in Toronto's downtown core.



Introduces a new generation of canopy trees that will eventually replace the existing trees.



The Urban Forest

"Respect and nurture Toronto's love of its urban tree canopy."

Study after study tell us that human beings respond differently to the built environment. People of the more introverted persuasion gravitate toward forested hillsides, for instance, than their extroverted companions who prefer wide open sunny places like beaches. And nowhere is the forest more important than in Toronto's collective identity.

Park Vert can be a place to truly address the issue of landscape as a dynamic system of constant and inevitable change. Typically, when a park landscape is designed and built, it starts out young, then matures, and over time deteriorates—requiring rejuvenation, sometime radical. This is seldom planned for or spoken of, but it is often the fate of highly designed landscapes which intended to be static. In ecological systems, nothing is static, and in fact, disturbance and change are essential to maintain species diversity and the normal functioning of the system, including adaptation to a changing environment.

Our approach to vegetation is inspired by this cycle. We will respect and care for the twelve existing large canopy trees, but plan a palette of plants that can adapt, diversify and grow the urban forest's health and contribution over time.



Bridging Design & Art

"Cultivate an intentional sense of presence and peace"

From an arts perspective, how can we think about being quiet and being present? Reviewing the surveys and reports, this is a zone of movement and one could consider using that movement as a means to bring an inner sense of quiet and calm. So many of the current users engage with the surrounding site via walking. This brings to mind the role of the labyrinth – a path of contemplation. This need not be a literal labyrinth, but rather an underlying pattern that guides the movement through the site and allows the user to gently turn into and through the site as they turn inward. There can be places to stop and linger, but the path invites the Journey.

There are also ways of thinking about the history and memory of the site as a way of foregrounding presence. Do the Bents, for instance, present an opportunity for another level of park – the Paris Promenade Planté or a small High Line. It could allow for an architectural feature rising up and curving from the ground offering a view back across the park and Queens Quay to the harbour. Further, the bents can also offer a canvas for transformation.

- Cameron Cartiere, Arts Consultant

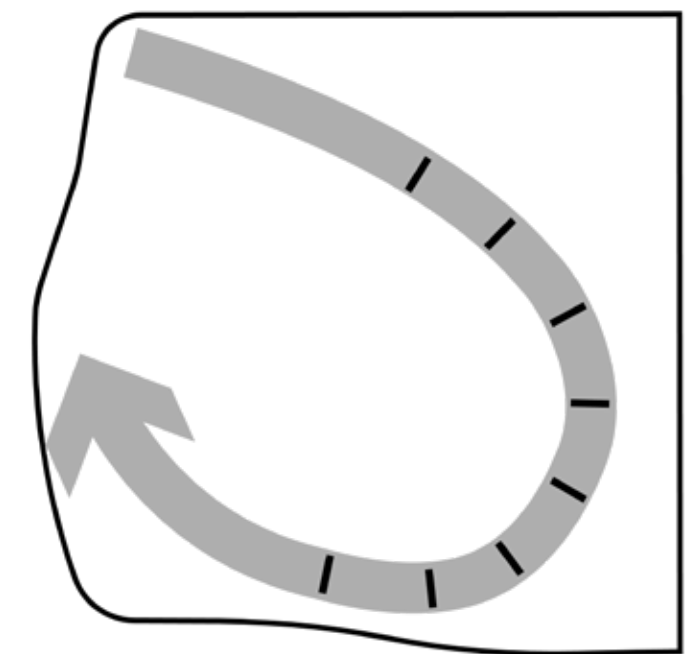


Existing Bents

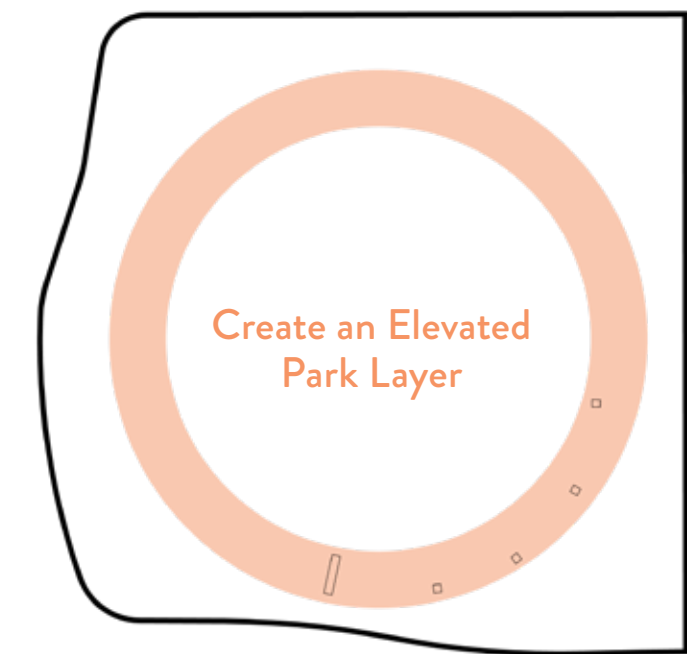


Speeds of Movement

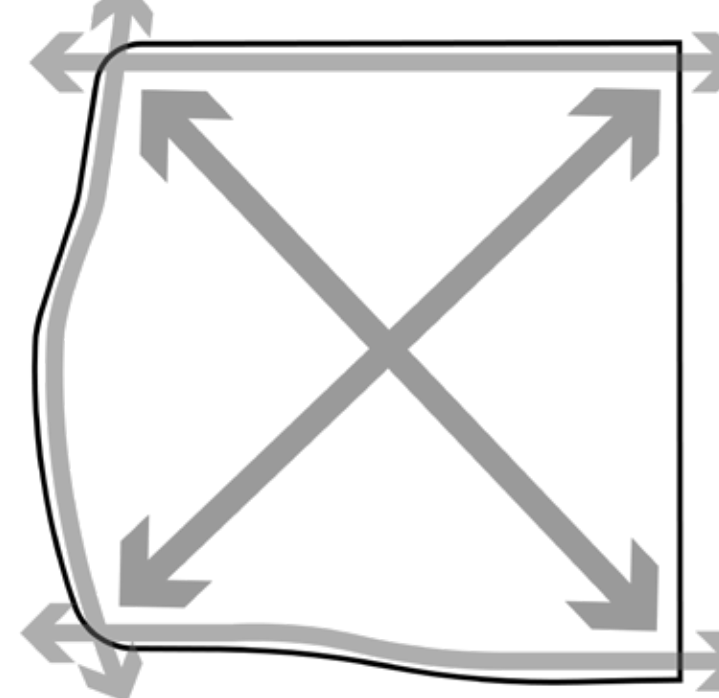
Existing Infrastructure



Proposed Infrastructure



Pedestrian Desire Lines



Proposed Meander



Leverage existing infrastructure to create an upper 'world' where community members can come in contact with the canopy!



Create an iconic and glowing upper level that is both an icon and a destination. HLB Lighting designed the lighting at Dallas' Rory Meyers Children's Adventure Garden.



Create path systems that wander and meander, allowing shifting views and visitor exploration. Here, artist Frances Whiteread creates a mounded solar observatory in Chicago.



Use paving systems to reinforce a sense of meander, inviting the visitor to get lost in the site. Artist Jim Denevan here uses sand and soil to make a temporary series of streams.



Queens Quay



Canoe Landing Park



Rees WaveDeck



Shelbourne Common



First Street Promenade



June Callwood Park



Canada's Sugar Beach



HTO Park East



Corktown Common



Canada Square



Underpass Park



Simcoe WaveDeck



Lauren Harris Square



HTO Park West



Toronto Waterfront Park



Rees and York Street Parks



A Loop in the Stitch

"Provide experiences that are unique but complimentary to the park system"

The park is at a historic nexus of transportation, industry and culture. It is a stone's throw from Union Station, which is Toronto's gateway from the region to its active downtown and a where all of the various methods of public transportation - bus, light rail, regional rail - intersect. The current park is also an uninviting and exposed gap in an otherwise connected and vibrant open space network along Toronto's most valued public asset - its Harbour.

Almost 20 hectares of open space have been designed or planned for public enjoyment in the Queens Quay stretch of Toronto's harbour, within a system of almost 300 hectares along the entire waterfront. The majority of these parks and plazas are public gathering spaces - places to see and be seen, to inspire togetherness and to expose the public to view of the water and towering skyscraper backdrops. Park Vert presents an opportunity to celebrate places for gathering in a novel way, an approach unlike any in the recent park investments along the harbourfront. Rather than exposing Park Vert to its surrounds, the park is a tranquil center and vibrant green amenity in an otherwise bustling and exposed environment.

- Brie Hensold, Urban Planner, Agency



Promoting Physical and Mental Health

Place is integral to health. Outdoor public spaces offer physical and mental health benefits that are distinct from those of indoor public or civic facilities and institutions, such as libraries, schools, government buildings, and recreation facilities. The physical and social characteristics of our environments influence our ability to access and benefit from safe streets, great urban parks, quality transportation networks, meaningful public engagement, and more—making us more or less physically active and socially engaged. For example, research has found that children living within one kilometer (0.6 miles) of a park or playground are five times more likely to have a healthy body weight, demonstrating in one way how essential equitable access to public space can be to health.



Social and Physical Resilience

Public life thrives when physical and social elements are considered hand-in-hand in space planning, development processes and urban governance. A vibrant public life helps to create social cohesion and equity, which are indicators of community resilience. Social cohesion is not only key to promoting resilient communities, it helps foster a sense of belonging, empathy, and trust toward other people. It is also a prerequisite for achieving equitable and lasting responses to climate change. Similarly, systems that are part of climate adaptation planning should not be treated separately from enhancing social benefits and spaces and thus improving public life. For example, in the Netherlands, public officials take the approach that climate adaptation is about improving neighborhoods, increasing equity and controlling water during a climate crisis.

Promoting Physical & Mental Health



Ensure Care
Park Vert will ensure spaces are maintained and provide pleasant sensory aesthetics.



Diversify Use
Park Vert will include spaces that provide opportunities to walk, cycle, stop & stay, sit, see, play & exercise.



Welcome All
Park Vert will be accessible by all including taking into account proximity of public transportation, paving accessibility and opening times.

Promoting Social & Physical Resilience



Embrace Diversity
Park Vert will be a space that a wide range of demographics can use including age, race, income, educational attainment, gender & home location.



Create Exchange
Park Vert will promote social interactions by creating opportunities to talk and listen, spaces that catalyze social mixing; as well as spaces for private reflection and calm.



Activate Everyone
Park Vert will benefit from inclusive programming for a wide range of demographics and during different seasons.



Quiet & Connected

"Enhancing public life ensures a better public realm"

Public life includes the interactions, exchanges, and activities that take place between people and the public environment. Further, public life is the inclusion of the public in the decision-making process and governance of our city. The public realm is made up of the spaces that shape our everyday experience in our neighborhoods and communities: sidewalks and public squares, parks and other green spaces, and spaces that are part of our transportation networks, including everything from streets and bike lanes to bus stops and rail stations. These spaces serve as important sites for people to come together and cultivate a sense of social connection among and across communities.

The markers of Park Vert's success do not stop at its borders, but instead should be a reflection of how it supports the needs of people in the community, and how it connects to the broader network of Toronto's parks, public spaces, and transportation system. By thoughtfully and collaboratively designing Park Vert as a space that forges meaningful relationships with the city, its inhabitants, and visitors from near and far, it will improve health, increase safety, build civic capacity and ultimately provide a sense of belonging, increasing quality of life for everyone who uses the park.



Acer rubrum

Park Vert



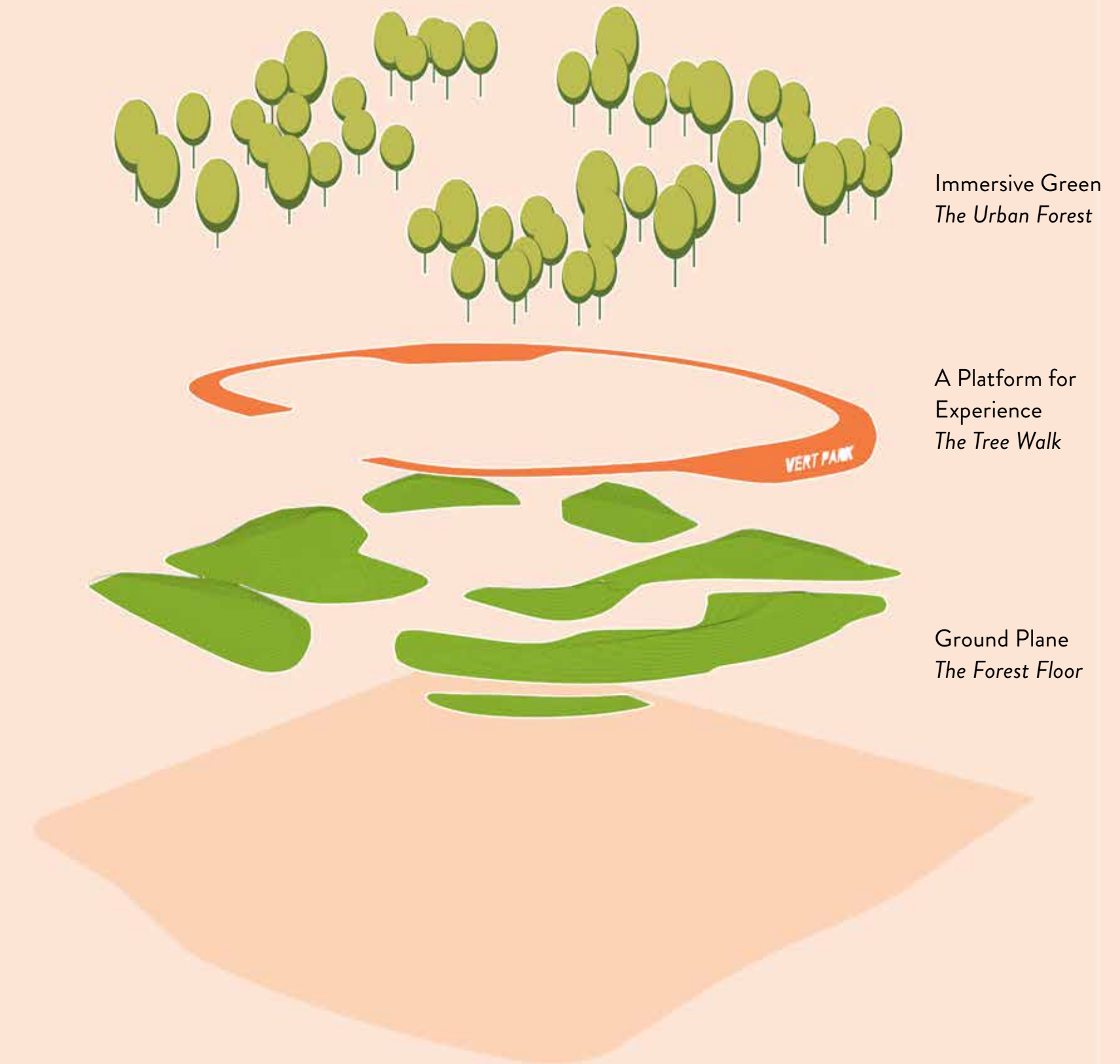
Three Layers

Park Vert meets the desire for a quiet and peaceful retreat by imagining the park as a series of layers. These can be expressed both horizontally (from sidewalk to center) and vertically (from sky to ground). This approach creates a park that is infinitely dynamic, providing the visitor with new paths and journeys to experience.

The Urban Forest. A diverse and layered forest forms a continuous but porous ceiling, sheltering visitors from the imposing glance of the surrounding towers. Conceived as a dynamic and ever-changing system, the forest is planted with maximum biodiversity and resilience in mind. We suggest the inclusion of the existing trees in this palette, but with the long-term goal of creating a more native and rich forest over time.

The Tree Walk. Reminiscent of the former off-ramp but delightfully different in form, scale, program and materiality, the Tree Walk honors the site history while providing a memorable journey through the forest and to an extraordinary long view of the lake. Islands of topography support the Tree Walk and the park's verdant plant palette while also screening the center of the park from the disruptive noise and visual cues of the city fabric.

The Forest Floor. The park's ground plane, orchestrated as a series of textural thresholds, lead to the park's fountain. Imagined as an ephemeral pool, the fountain is a slowly changing and serene spectacle at the Clearing, the park's central plaza. Here, the visitor is rewarded with the delight of water, quietly embraced by the softscape frame and under the dappled light of the forest.



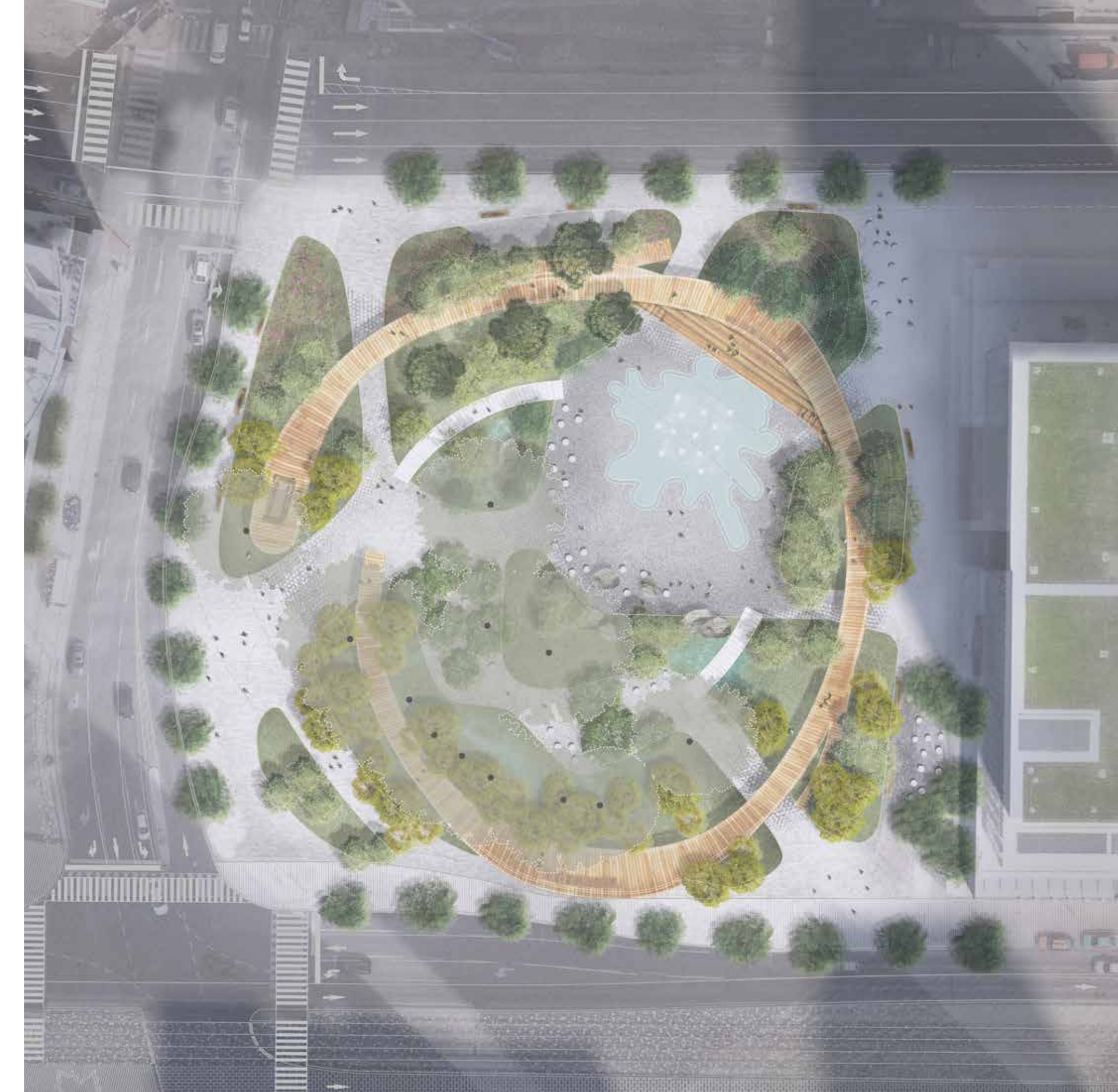


Park Vert

Park Vert - a name that celebrates the community's desire for a green oasis - is an urban sanctuary, a place of engagement with nature in the city.

Conceived as a series of layers that unfold for the visitor, Park Vert provides a sculptural framework that offers - in turns - discovery, journey, delight and quiet. The visitor moves from city sidewalk through a richly-planted, and topographic frame into an intimately-scaled plaza called the Clearing. Encircling the composition is the park's iconic Tree Walk, a light and airy homage to the site's history that brings the visitor into constant and immediate contact with the many textures of the park's urban forest. Moments of pause. Places for prospect. The mesmerizing dance of water. Unexpected blooms. One might lose themselves ...

While formally, the park's composition of sinuous curves and unexpected vantage points provides visual delight, it also establishes a robust framework for both daily use, lunchtime activities and larger community events. The Tree Walk offers a series of pause places, one at each of its edges - a seating and identity node at Queens Quay, a suspended amphitheater at Harbour Street, and a lunchtime overlook at York Street. Movable tables and chairs are numerous, creating customizable seating and lingering opportunities. The Clearing can be easily transformed from fountain to plaza, enabling markets, performances and gatherings.



Immersive Green

The Urban Forest

The forest of Park Vert is its primary character-defining feature. We look to expand, layer and diversify the forest. Starting with the presence of the twelve mature trees - largely composed of invasive species like Norway maple and Chinese elm - we grow the palette in scale, diversity and texture.

Looking to the native landscapes of the Toronto region and the location of our site within the lake's transitional edge, our plant palette takes strong cues from the maple forest plant community. Its dense but dappled canopy (from 70-100% closed), its closed tree architecture, and low light levels at the ground mean a broken ground cover replete with spring blooming pulses of many herbaceous species.

Many species of native trees and shrubs are available for our use at Park Vert. We have created an initial palette that is adapted to local conditions, but also diverse enough to allow for change over time in response to the constantly changing natural environment. We look to species with great wildlife value, imagining a place where the chirping of birds and the scurry of terrestrial mammals is part of the peaceful retreat. These are arranged to create interest at the ground layer, an experiential transect along the project's Tree Walk and a largely continuous ceiling to shelter the park from above.



The Urban Forest is expanded, layered and diversified to create texture on the ground, an experiential transect on the Tree Walk and a sheltering ceiling above.





From York Street looking south, the park's topography creates interest and gateway.



A secluded moment of passage transitions the visitor into the Clearing.

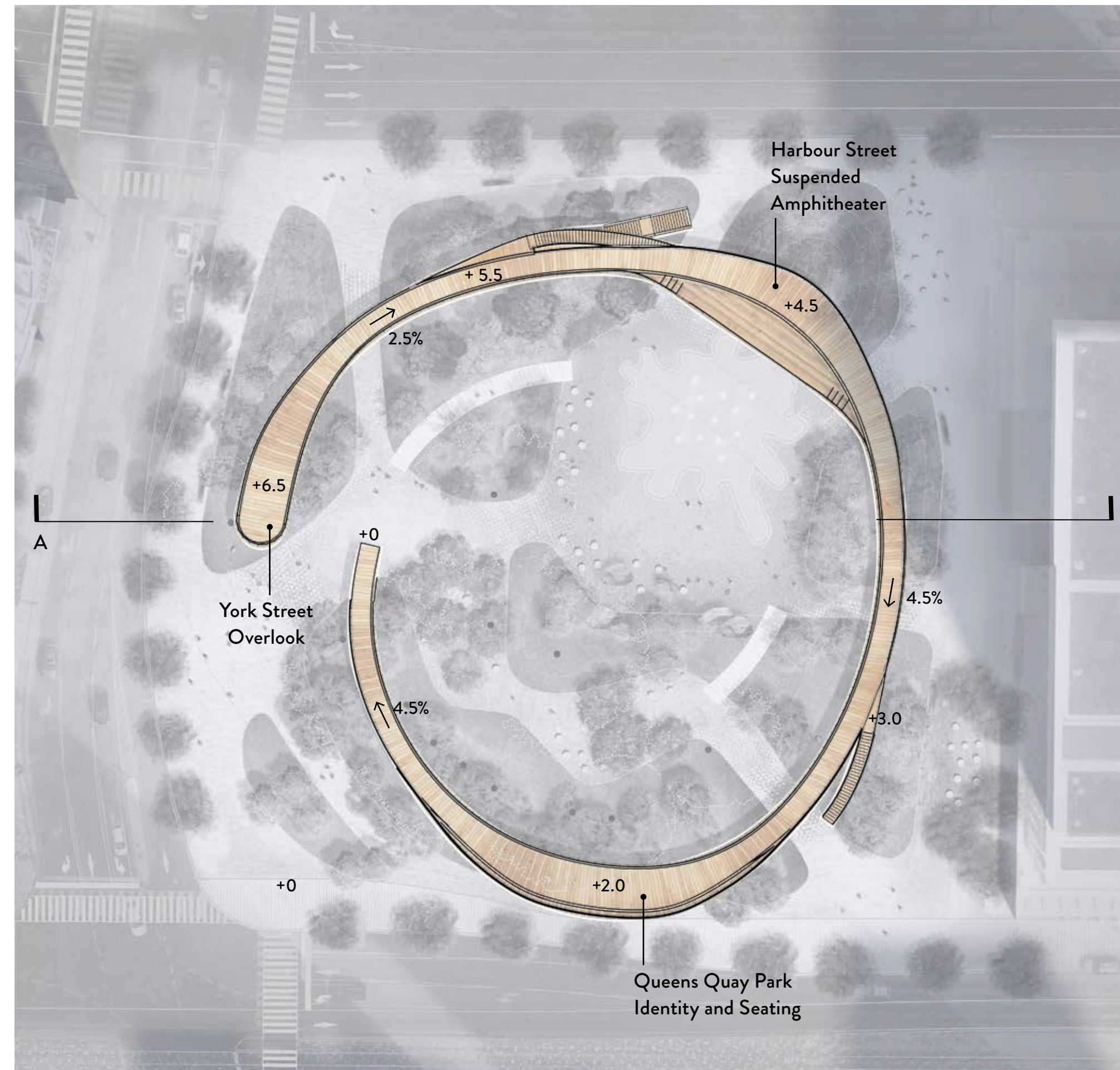
Platform for Experience

The Tree Walk

While the community was not unanimous in its approach to the Bents, our design team found their presence on site unique feature capable of becoming a powerful new expression. Taking cues from the former off-ramps and leveraging the structural capacity of the Bents, the team imagined a Tree Walk beginning and ending at York Street. Forming a continuous climb through the canopy to an extraordinary long view of the Lake, the Tree Walk is a journey for visitors to inhabit the tree canopy, experiencing a changing landscape of diverse plant species along the way.

Though it recalls in parts the off-ramp in geometry, it is an entirely unique construction. Made of light metal and wood surfaces, it is a place scaled and programmed for people (not cars). Its sculptural form offers something to those that look on it from above and gives back to each of the street edges with programmatic nodes: a seating and identity node at Queens Quay, a suspended amphitheater at Harbour Street, and a lunchtime overlook at York Street. It further helps to buffer and shelter the interior of the park.

Islands of topography support the Tree Walk and the park's verdant plant palette. These are scaled to screen the center of the park from the disruptive sights and sounds of the city. They are further shaped to ensure clarity of sight lines, reinforcing a sense of safety and visual sequence. Towards the Clearing, low points within the plant beds allow for stormwater capture and cleansing.



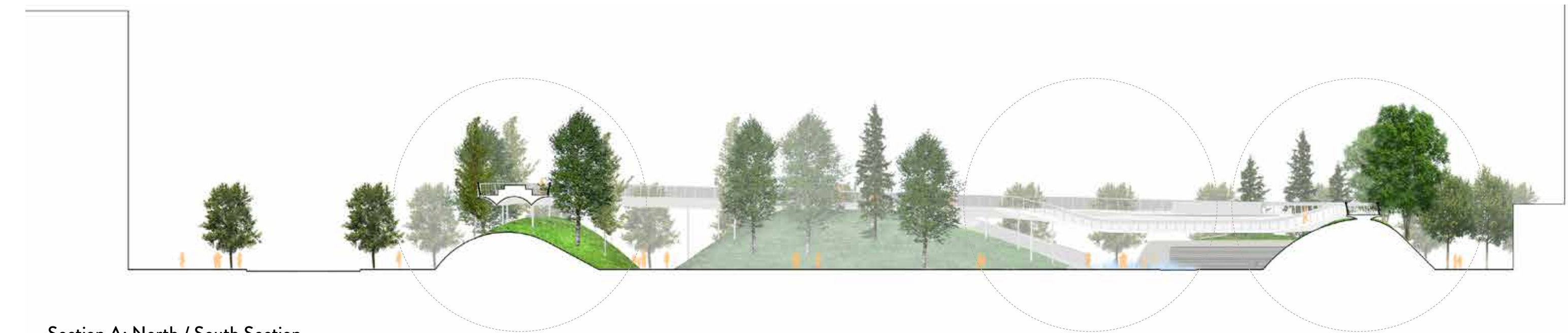
The highest point of the Tree Walk aligns with a long view over York Street to the Lake.



A suspended amphitheater peels down from the Tree Walk enabling perches upon which to watch the life of the Clearing.



Often atop a landform, the Tree Walk moves in and out of the forest, offering a series of close, textured discoveries and long, dramatic views.



Section A: North / South Section
The Tree Walk allows visitors to experience the canopy and great long views while also serving as iconic park landmark.



From Queens Quay looking north, a visitor sees the Tree Walk as a lighted beacon and a place of solitude.



From the Tree Walk, the visitor is treated to long views of the Lake and glimpses into the life of the Park.

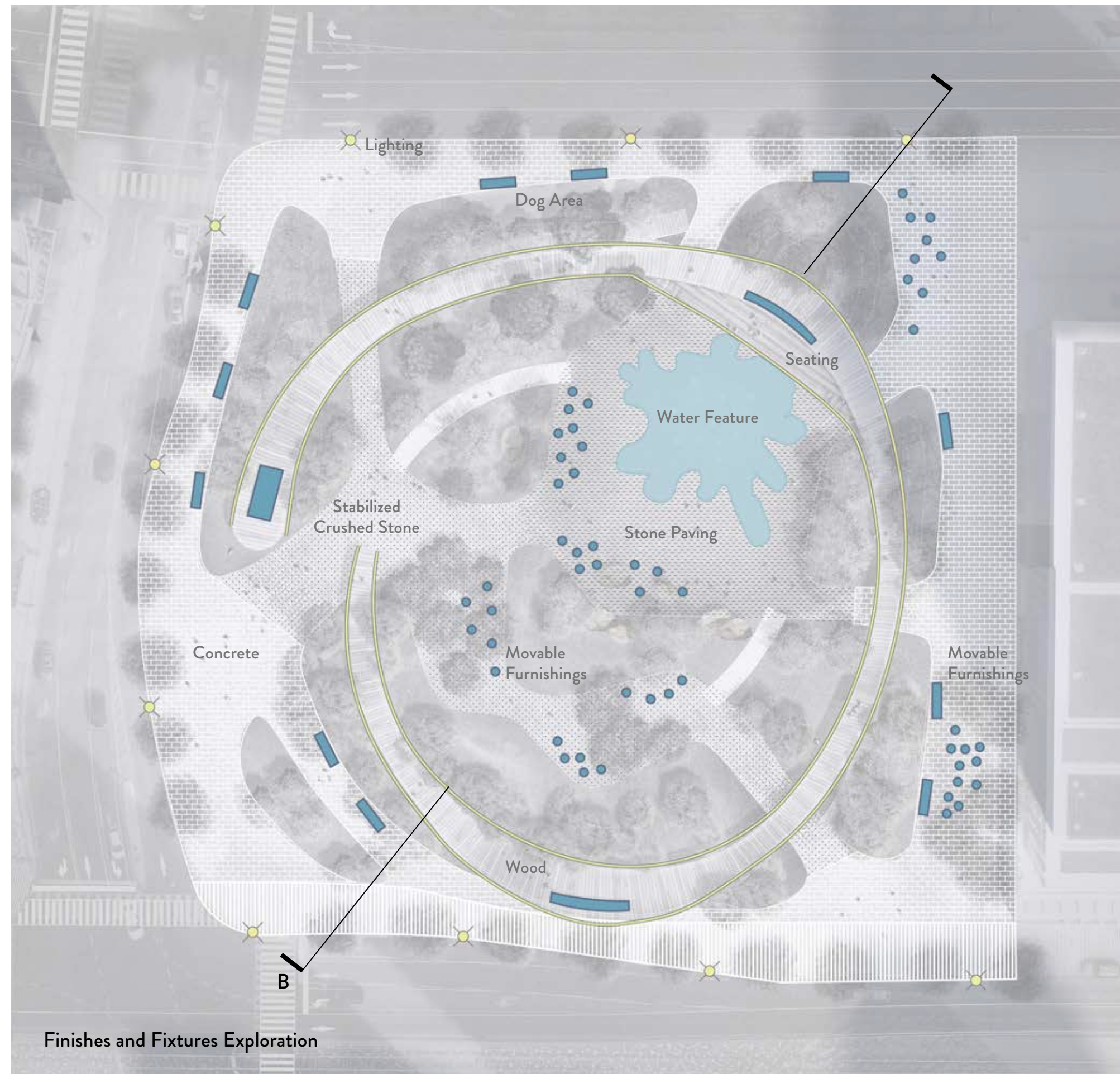
Ground Plane

The Forest Floor

The ground plane of the park is varied and reinforces the sense of transition and threshold from the outside (the hard paved and concrete sidewalks) through the planted frame (formed of a stabilized crushed stone) to the Clearing (a finely paved carpet of cut stone). The absence of hard lines and abrupt transitions - both in terms of grade and ground surfaces - lends to the meditative quality of the space while allowing for varied sensory experiences.

The spaces of crushed stone - the transition space between the City and the Clearing - are infinitely flexible spaces well endowed with movable tables and chairs. Visitors find open places with unique compositions of planted edges and varied conditions of sun and shade. Customizable furniture and varied shapes and scales of spaces allow each person to find their own place to linger.

The Clearing is defined by its loose forest frame and the presence of water. Inspired by a common feature of temperate zone forests - the ephemeral pool - the Ephemeral Fountain shares many of its muse's characteristics. It is not a loud or major show of water effects, but rather a shallow dish fed from its bubbling rim over time. The filling of the dish is a meditative spectacle that delights during the everyday moments while the slow drawing down of it allows for the plaza to be used as a stage for performances and a platform for larger community events.



Finishes and Fixtures Exploration



Common in northern temperate forests, ephemeral springs and pools are temporary places of water.



Water effects in the Ephemeral Fountain are slow and ever-changing, creating a place to frolic that is quietly engaging.



The fountain is irregular in form and shallow in depth, creating fluid spaces that allow for different scales of interaction.



Section B: North / South Section
The project's central Clearing is surrounded by landscape and graced with an Ephemeral Fountain.

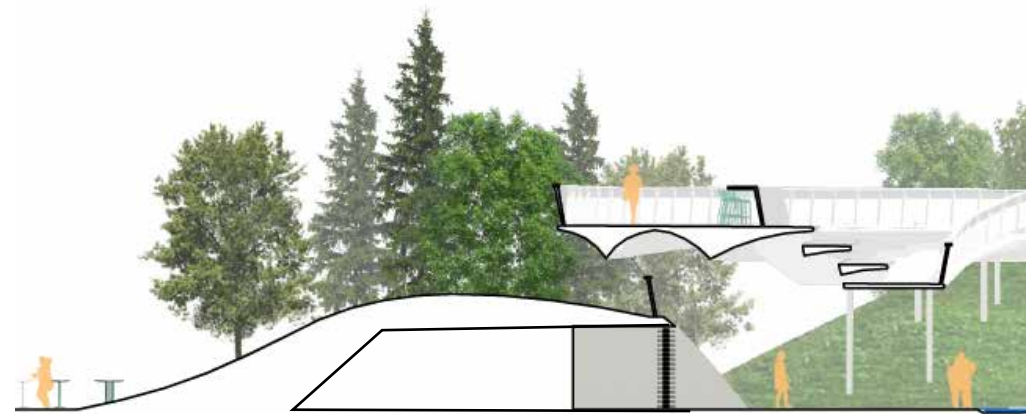
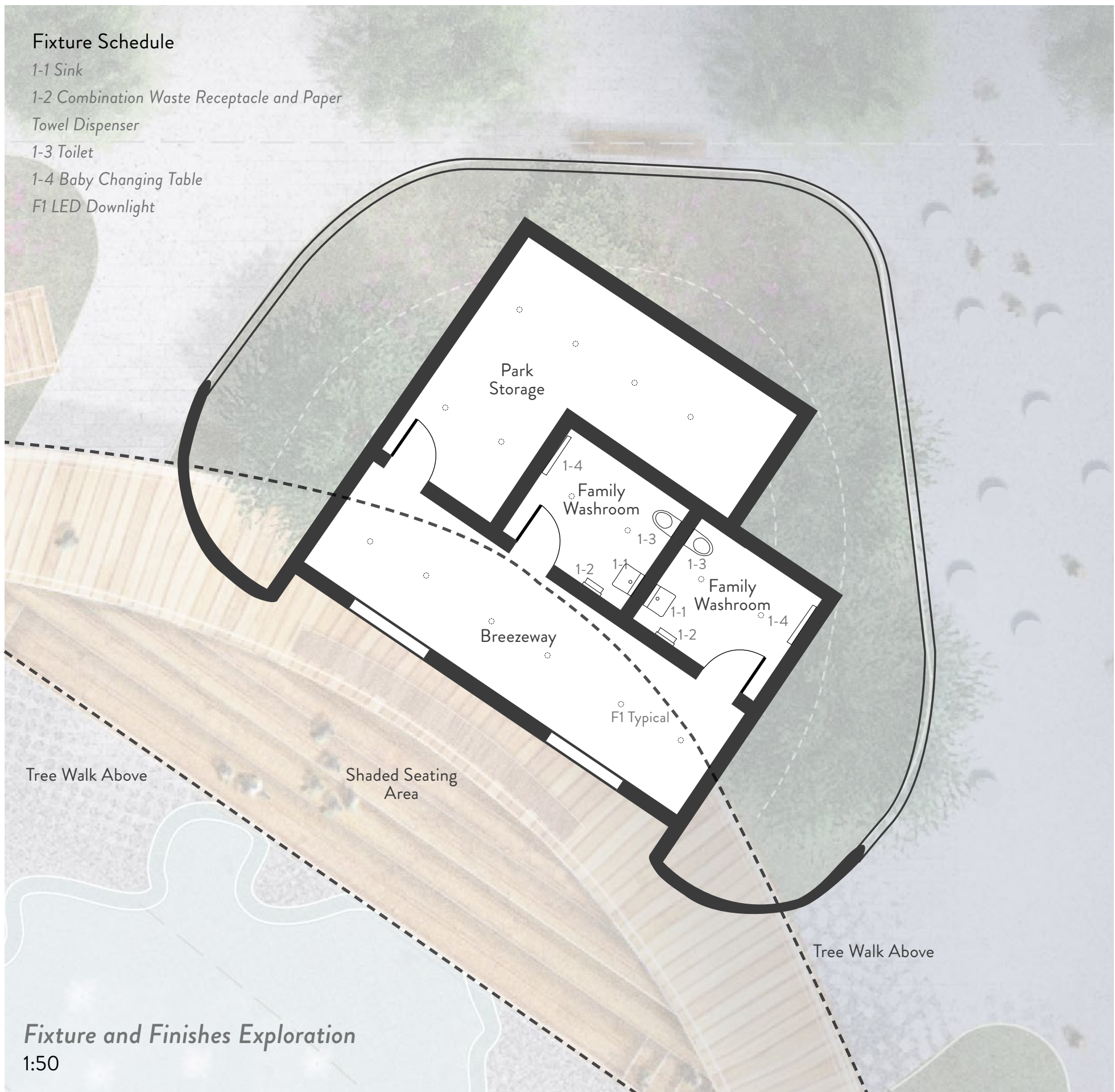
Low points on site are used to capture and clean stormwater, providing a natural water feature of sorts!



From Harbour Street looking east, the topography creates a showcase of the park's diverse plantings.



The Clearing on a summer day welcomes long lunches in the shade and splashing in the Ephemeral Fountain.



Pavilion Cross-section

An Embedded Pavilion

This small green-roof covered pavilion accommodates park controls, electrical infrastructure, storage for movable park elements and maintenance tools. The Tree Walk shelters the entrance, providing a shaded seating area. This plan provides two universal washroom stalls, but one could be replaced with a small office or counter space.



Amelancier canadensis

Public Art Strategy

Public Art Strategy

The public art component for Park Vert is a two-fold approach to community engagement and artistic interventions.

The Tree Walk with its incorporated bents offer several opportunities for integrated artworks (railings, paving, and street facade) and mural commissions that respond to the meditative nature of the park. As large-scale vertical and horizontal canvases, the Tree Walk and its bents can enhance the mood of the space while conveying changing narratives of the city, revealing hidden views of nature, and offering possibilities for a program of changing artworks.

A residency program as a public art option brings ongoing vitality and interest into public space. Be it a national park or an urban parklet, artists-in-residence in our natural and created green spaces can have a dramatic impact on the individuals and communities who use these spaces. Through images, poetry, sculptures or performance, artists can offer a fresh perspective on our shared natural environment and guide the visitor to view their surroundings in unusual ways. The range the work coming from a residency program is limitless. A theme such as “Art and the Urban Oasis” could inspire unique nature photography, original poetry collections, outdoor performances and musical compositions, artist walks, or temporary sculptures.

A community engagement and artistic intervention program for Park Vert!

An ever-changing arts program is consistent with the park's dynamic ecosystem approach.



An artists residency encourages ongoing cultural vitality and artistic stewardship within the park!



Can evolve in collaboration with other park and civic programs, partnership and funding streams!



Inclusion of both vertical and horizontal art opportunities is consistent with the City's public arts program.



Creative and artistic engagement is integrated into the overall fabric of the park, not as embellishments or visual add-ons!

Sample of Arts Potentials



Granville Street Bridge, Vancouver Mural Festival



Underpass Park, Toronto



Bridge Underpass, Seattle



Kingsway, Vancouver



Singapore



Crosswalk, Downtown San Jose

Sample of Artist Residency Programs



Fieldhouse Program, Vancouver Parks + Recreation



Arts Transcending Border, College of the Holy Cross



Anissa Mack: Pies for a Passerby. Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn





Larix laricina

Sustainability & Innovation

Sustainability & Innovation

Waterfront Toronto is at the frontlines of the sustainability movement in an effort to combat climate change and ensure our waterfront can be enjoyed for many generations. To mitigate climate change, our team developed an innovative approach that creates both a sustainable urban and natural environment within Park Vert's boundaries and connects into a robust network of connected destinations.

The park is designed with sustainability best practices that meet the values and goals established by the Resilience and Innovation Framework for Sustainability. What was once an impervious, barren site at the center of a Gardiner Expressway ramp will now be a sheltered, productive space that is accessible to transit, incorporates innovative on-site renewable energy sources, reduces light pollution, and incorporates water efficient landscaping throughout the park space and facilities.

The peaceful, natural setting accommodates a multitude of visitors - cyclists, strollers, pedestrians and runners - and amplify the immersive experience of nature for everyone. Native plantings combat the occasional extreme weather event and provide valuable natural habitats for local and migratory wildlife species. The park and facilities on site are designed to meet or exceed Waterfront Toronto's performance metrics and targets.



Climate Positive

The site draws on renewable resources to create a dynamic and verdant destination.

Reliance on fossil fuels continues to drive up greenhouse gas emissions around the world. Carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels increased 1.4 percent globally in 2017 alone, reinforcing the urgent need to switch to cleaner sources of energy, to design energy efficient spaces, and to incorporate material life cycles and waste streams into any new project or development.

Park Vert seeks to raise the standards for resourceful design through renewable energy sources and material sources that reduce the global impact of the park's construction on the environment. The park is designed to generate energy through on-site solar capture and store any additional solar capacity in batteries as backup power or "sell back" to the grid to offset neighboring parks energy consumption. Rainwater is captured via an underground rainwater harvester and stored in underground tanks for irrigation use while water from the fountain is recaptured on site and cleaned before being recycled through an intensive filtration system.

About one-hundred fifteen new trees and tall shrubs will be planted to create a light and variable canopy above the park grounds. Native low lying shrubs and ground cover plants will be incorporated into the park topography to enhance the park's texture and to protect the tree root systems to ensure these trees provide respite from urban heat islands during the summer months and capture carbon well into the future.



Carbon Sequestration
Over 115 trees and shrubs will be added to this park, which is about 2,500 kilograms a year.

Renewable Energy
All energy consumed in the park space and in park facilities will come from renewable sources. Where possible, park buildings will take advantage of passive cooling.

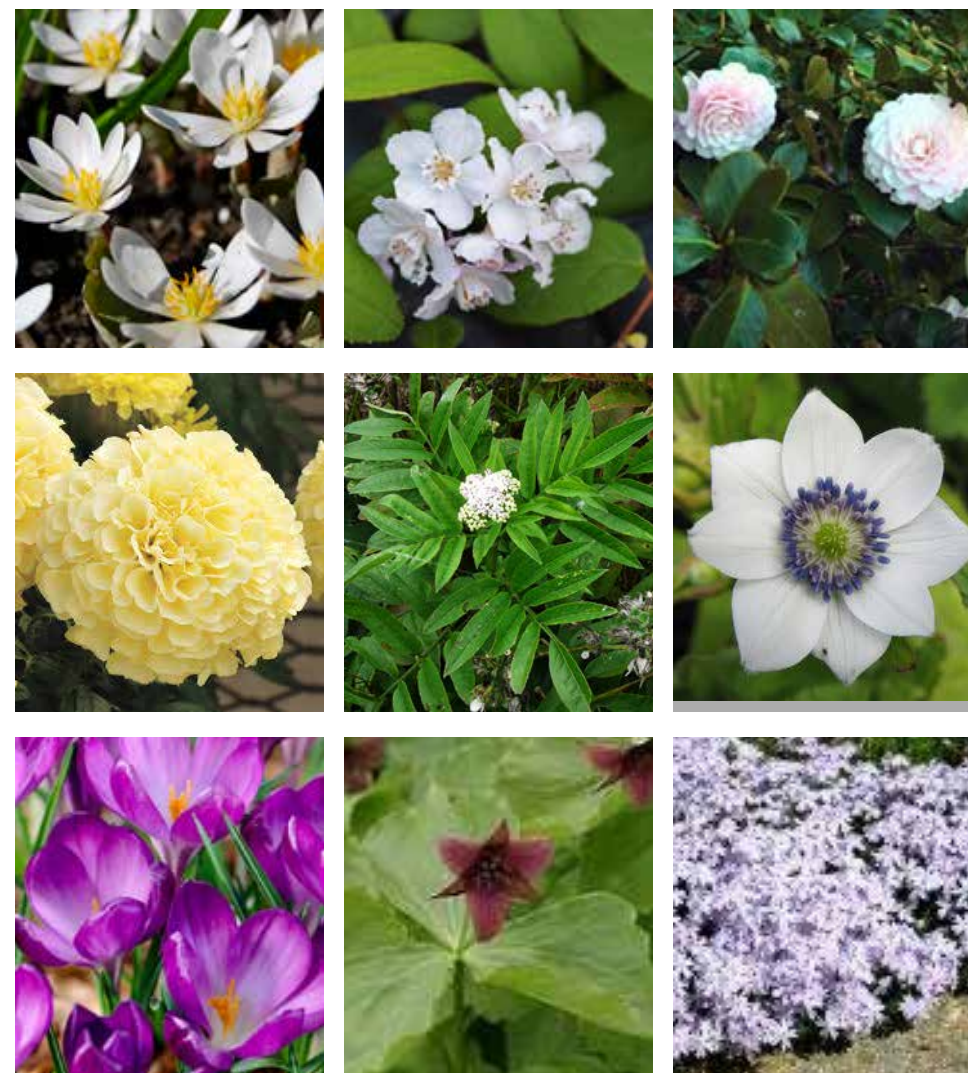
Water Capture and Reuse
Underground rainwater harvesters will capture 3 millimeters of water during a rain event.

Inclusive Resilience

The adaptive design mimics native ecotypes, while including horticultural touchstones from many cultures.

As a process, inclusion recognizes and respects the diverse needs and values of people using public space as well as the aspects of a place that make it worth visiting. Ultimately, it imbues all members of the community a sense of responsibility for the design, activation and resourceful nature of the space. Park Vert is designed as an ecologically dynamic and functionally adaptive place that represents particular community desires and is accessible to the diverse Toronto residents and their visitors. Park Vert is also an active park in a passive setting - from the lush landscape, to entries and infrastructure - the park is designed to withstand and respond to an increasingly variable climate. The health and well-being benefits of access to safe, high-quality, and green public spaces that are vital for social interaction inclusion and resilience. Social isolation, or lack of social connection, is devastating to a person's health, increasing mortality risk by approximately 30%. Loneliness, social isolation, and living alone correspond, respectively, to an average 29%, 26%, and 32% increased likelihood of mortality. Since the 1980s,

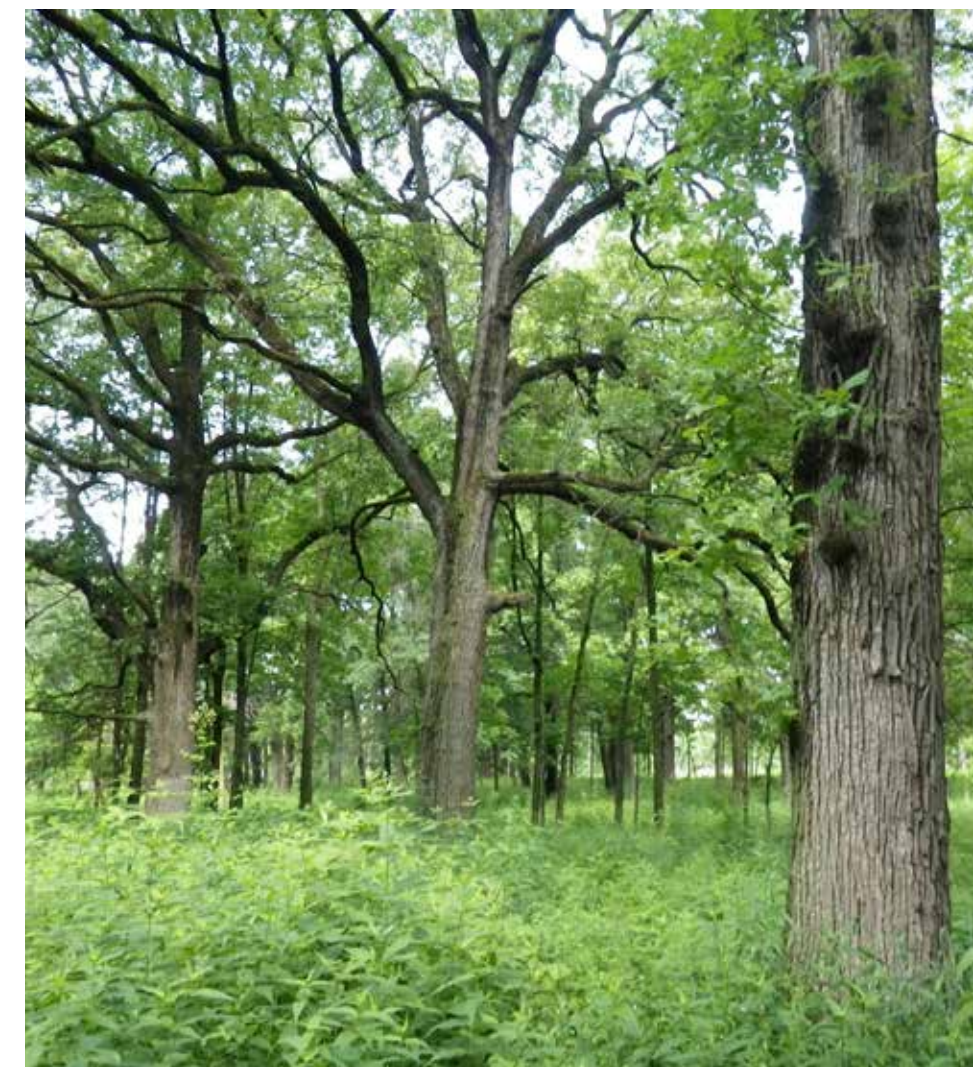
the percentage of American adults who say they are lonely has doubled from 20% to 40%. In short, the influence of social relationships on mortality risk is comparable with that of other well-established risk factors such as chronic diseases. The park celebrates its natural heritage with species that were abundant in native Toronto forest ecosystems. The Oak woodland and savanna, maple forest, and lowland forest ecosystems provided thriving habitats that withstood climate variability unique to the region. These ecosystems are present in the native flora found in the park and mixed with plant species that are representative of the diverse cultures and native tongues present in Toronto today. This multicultural palette works together to support a layered and productive landscape, and social destination for all.



A Piece of Home

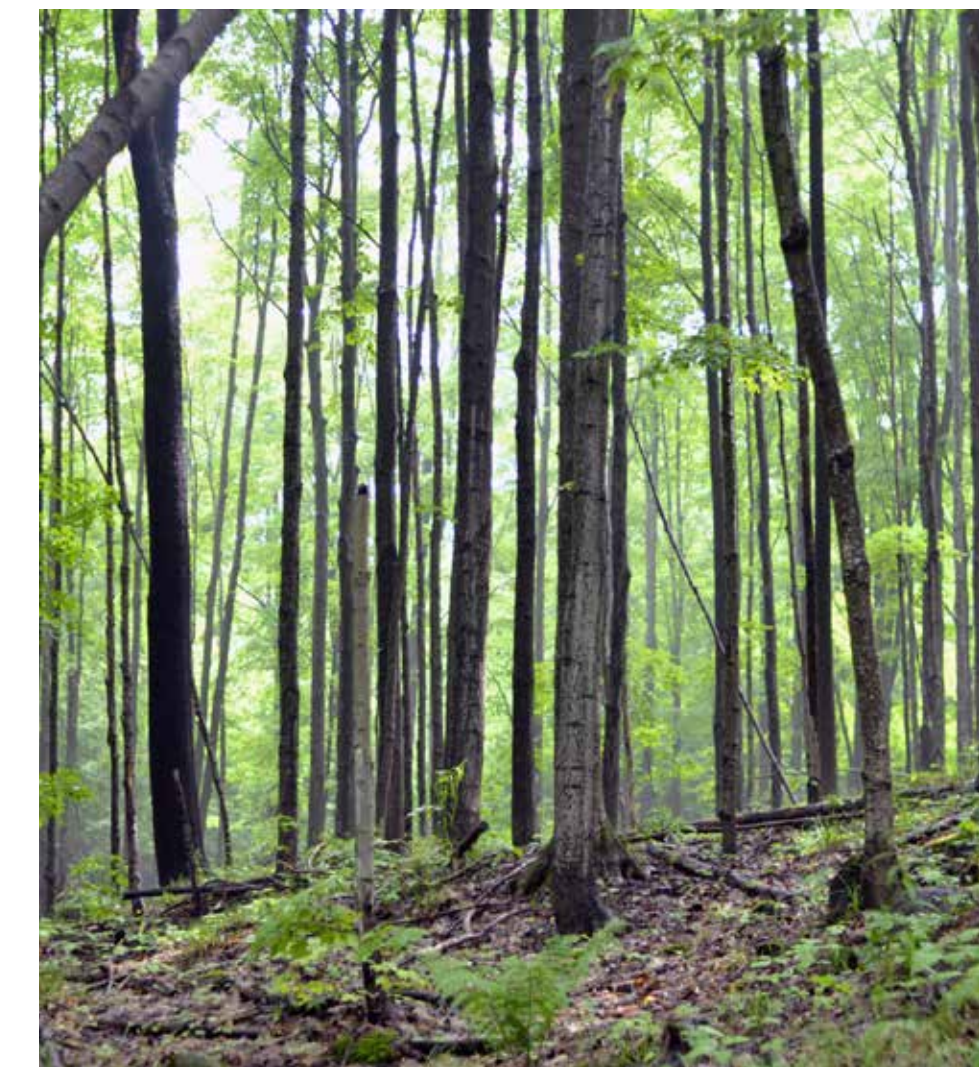
Toronto is a culturally-rich and progressive city, with over 200 distinct ethnic origins represented by its diverse population. The contributions of this tapestry of residents is also reflected in the plantings along the forest floor and in the material choices of Park Vert.

From left to right: China, Bloodroot; Northern China, Duetzia Rubens; Japan, Camellia; India, Marigold; Italy, Dwarf Elder; Korea, Anemone; Russia, Wild Crocus; Ontario, Trillium; United States, Creeping Phlox.



Oak Woodland & Savanna

This forest type is characterized by a 30-70% closed canopy and open tree architecture. This allows dappled light to reach the ground below, which in turn, supports a continuous layer of ground covers. Due to the light penetration, many herbaceous understory species produce season-long blooms.



Maple Forest

This forest type includes a 70-100% closed canopy and relatively closed tree architecture. The density of the canopy restricts light penetration to the ground plane. The shaded understory supports sporadic ground cover patches, which typically flower in the spring before the canopy 'leaves-out.' This pulse of flowers creates a dramatic effect.



Lowland Forest

This forest type has a 50-90% closed canopy with arching to closed tree architecture. The ground receives limited light but supports a continuous layer of shade-adapted ground covers. This plant community thrives in wet soils and has adapted to periodic flooding.

Intelligent & Connected

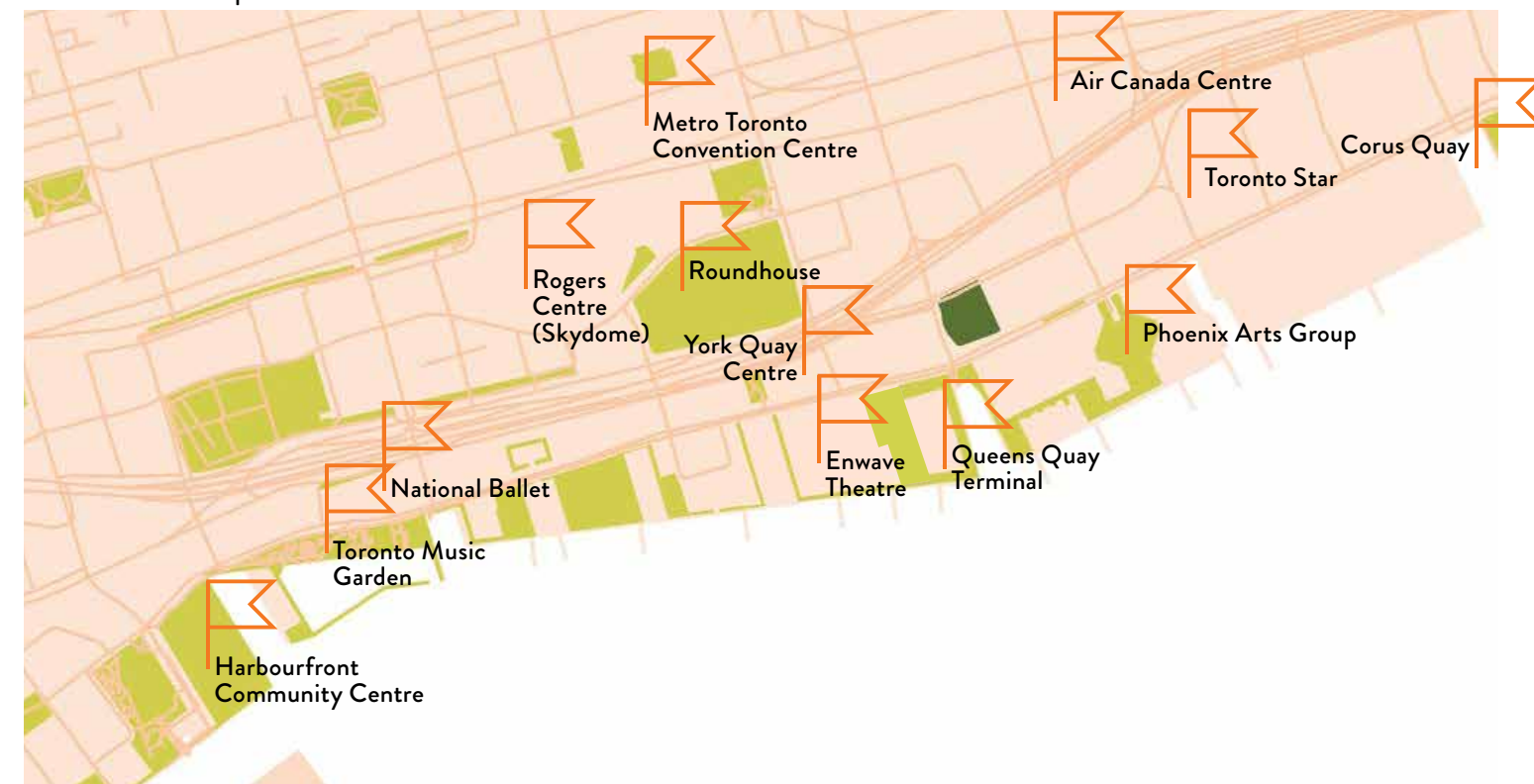
The park is both integrated into the City's systems of movement and communication and a deliberate refuge from those systems.

The park is at the epicenter of downtown, within walking distance to some of the most treasured destinations in the city like the Queens Quay and Queens Quay Terminal, Enwave Theatre, Air Canada Centre, Roundhouse and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Park Vert is also connected to regional transportation networks that bring visitors to and near this urban refuge. Union Station, a gateway to Toronto's suburbs and other cities is a mere few blocks from the park and part of a significant pedestrian route between the station, the waterfront, and water transportation. Park Vert is both immediately accessible to the 65,913 and growing population that live in the Waterfront/Harbourfront neighborhood, the thousands of people that work directly adjacent to the park, and the approximately 43 million visitors to the waterfront annually.

Community economic development is also central to the role of the park at the center of it all. Public wifi enhances connectivity between residents and their families outside of the city and abroad and provides a quiet place to connect visitors to employment resources. Physical proximity to places and accessible digital connectedness encourage digital equity via a high return platform for engagement with an invisible reach beyond the limits of the park.

Proximity

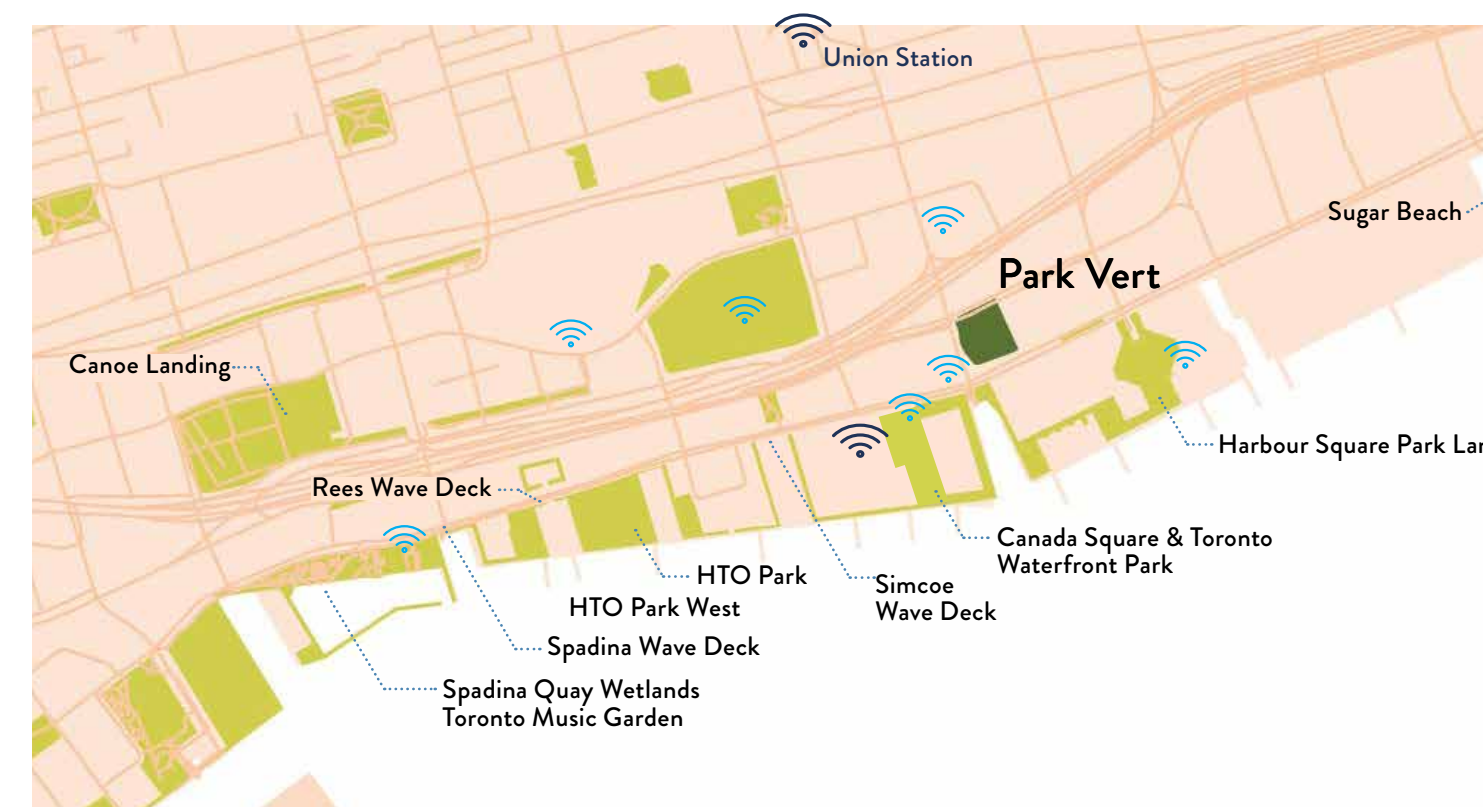
The Park is within a 10-minute walk from cultural, economic, and transit destinations making it one of the most valuable parcels in Toronto.



Destinations

Wifi for Everyone

The park provides publicly accessible wifi that connects users to the jobs, housing, entertainment and loved ones



Existing Public Wifi
Existing Limited Access Wifi (Cafes, Hotels, etc)

City Mobility Systems

The site is connected to regional transportation hubs (like Union Station and the Ferry Terminal) and networks that bring visitors to and near this urban refuge.



Vehicle Circulation Only (Expressway)
Waterfront Vehicle/Bike Circulation
Light Rail Lines/Stations
Light Rail Lines/Stations

Human-Experience Driven

The park is an opportunity for visitors to find a green, cool respite from the city - either alone or as a community.

Diverse and representative participation in the processes that shape public shared spaces can foster meaningful inclusion. Diversity is a key element of social and mental health; stated differently, certain health benefits may accrue when an individual engages with a more diverse group of people, which leads to higher social capital.

The natural embrace of the park creates a series of spaces that foster a sense of and actual protection against crime and traffic. Seating features and fountain elements respond to local needs and behaviors of a mixed generation audience, attracting children, adults, parents and seniors alike. People must feel a space is safe before they use it, yet the presence of people in a space is an important indicator of safety. The presence of women, children, and elderly people in public spaces make them seem safer. These same groups that are vital to sense of safety are often the most vulnerable to environments where crimes occur. Today, the populations living in the surrounding Harbourfront neighborhood

overwhelmingly represent the working age population (68% of residents), while seniors and children are under half of the city's average age cohorts (6% versus 15% and 7% versus 16% respectively). Attracting those groups from outside of the neighborhood to make use of this place is a top priority.

Other characteristics and amenities such as site furnishings (benches, waste bins, shade, etc.) also invite a diversity of users and increase use. Sites with a mix of features invite a mix of users and uses—people from different racial and ethnic groups who want to use the space for socializing, spending time with family or friends, recreation, independent relaxation, or group activities. Other elements that make a place more attractive and inclusive can also make it feel safer. For example, a study of public housing in Chicago found that the presence of physical factors including vegetation and social factors including neighborhood social ties were significantly related to residents' perceptions of safety.



Everyday

Create opportunities for a mix of leisure activities that reflect the ebb and flow of daytime activities and visitor needs - places to sit and eat lunch, places to people watch, places to engage with the forest and get above the trees.



Movie Night!

For larger community events, the fountain can be shut off and a screen or stage event can be installed. The plaza can be set up for a movie or stage event with 450 people.



Shopping Spree

Activation of the park could be accomplished with markets and fairs. For this, the plaza can hold hundreds of people visiting 40 market tents.



I do.

For formal events - like a Park Vert wedding - the plaza can hold a large tent and table (for 200-250 people) and supplemental tents for support functions.

Biophilic Design

The design brings people into contact with natural systems through planting, water and materials.

Trees matter. A lot. In one study, the amount of time residents spent in equal-sized common spaces was strongly predicted by the presence, location, and number of trees. The more trees, the more people were observed using the space at any given time. The presence of trees consistently predicted greater use of outdoor spaces in two inner-city neighborhoods—by adults, by youth, and by mixed-age groups of youth and adults. Other studies confirm that physical activity rates increase in public spaces with a verdant variety of plants and ground cover. So Park Vert delivered!

High quality materials are fused with high quality design. This both ensures individual experiences, though inherently different, are positive and that the park is taken care of and adored for many generations.

The transformative and high quality features of the park will benefit both human and animal species that often lack habitats in urban environs. The mix of native trees and plants will create natural elements that support native insect and bird species, but also provide an alluring microclimate for people escaping the urban elements.



The Clearing
The park offers a journey of contrasts - open and closed, dark and light, wild and urban. The park's central Clearing is our opening in the forest.



The Islands
The park's unique topography is constructed of mounds that echo the islands of the Lake.



The Forest
The biological and visual diversity of our forest planting palette is akin to a wilder natural experience and simulates much of the forest's unique texture.



The Ephemeral Pool
The park's water feature recalls the ephemeral springs and pools found in the region's forests.

Park Vert

Design Team

Agency Landscape + Planning
DAVID RUBIN Land Collective
MEP Design Inc.
Batay-Csorba Architects
Applied Ecological Services
Cameron Cartiere
GHD
The Gehl Institute
HLB Lighting
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Pelican Woodcliff

