

Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA)

Report on the Value of Landscape Architecture in Canada



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Appendix D: Case Studies

Appendix D: Case Studies

Section D.1: Catalyst Case Studies

To help illustrate the positive impacts of landscape architecture on people and communities, three catalyst case studies were selected which exemplify the social, environmental, and economic contributions of the profession.

Suggestions for potential case studies were canvassed through the CSLA membership survey.

This appendix provides a brief summary of projects that demonstrate the range of contributions of landscape architecture makes to

- Climate change adaptation and resilience
- Heritage and cultural landscapes and Reconciliation
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Sustainability, urban design and renewal
- Human health and well-being

Three suggested projects were selected for more detailed case studies in consultation with the CSLA. Each case study provides a summary of the project, the role of landscape architects on the project and a discussion of how the projects have positive impacts on the economy, the environment and the community.

Section D.2: Climate change adaptation and resilience

Planning communities and landscapes need to take into consideration the environmental impact over an extended timeframe to ensure sustainable landscapes.

Projects which have had a positive impact on climate change and adaptation:

- River Valley Modernization – Edmonton, AB. Prioritizes the balancing of environmental, economic and social considerations by conserving and protecting natural areas throughout Edmonton.
- Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant – Richmond, BC. Upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant are being designed to support a growing population while protecting of the Fraser River’s ecosystem.
- Native Plant Solutions, water retention basins – Winnipeg, MB. Creation of naturalized stormwater retention basins to support sustainable stormwater systems.
- Municipal Flood Line Mapping – Nova Scotia. Development of flood maps to support community and land use planning considering expected changes from climate change.
- Don River Mouth Naturalization – Toronto, ON. Development of a naturalized river mouth from Don River to Lake Ontario to mitigate effects from flooding due to extreme weather events and climate change.

Section D.3: Heritage and cultural landscapes and Reconciliation

Designing landscapes which reflect the heritage and culture of a community which are mindful, accurate, and attractive.

Projects which have had a positive impact or are representative of local heritage and cultural landscapes and reconciliation:

- Naawi-Oodena– Winnipeg, MB. The former Kapyong Barracks is being redeveloped by seven Treaty 1 First Nations into the largest urban reserve in Canada to date.
- Ojibway National Urban Park – Windsor, ON. Is a potential national park which would protect endangered species and land which would be co-managed by two local First Nations alongside government institutions.
- Wascana Centre – Regina, SK. With the First Nations University of Canada campus located within Wascana Centre, the current master plan includes local Indigenous perspectives throughout development of the master plan.
- Agguttinni Uumajunut Territorial Park – Clyde River, NU. Development of the planning process included comprehensive engagement and decision making with the incorporation of Inuit knowledge throughout the planning and designing phases.
- sθəqəlxenəm | ts'exwts'áxwi7 (Rainbow Park) – Vancouver, BC. The first park in Vancouver to be given a name by local First Nations. The name memorializes the rainbows that would form over the marsh that previously existed at the site and is a nod to the area's 2SLGBTQIA+ history.

Section D.4: Equity, diversity, and inclusion

Designing landscapes which accommodate for equity, diversity, and inclusion through an emphasis on inclusive landscape planning in partnership with local communities.

Projects which have had a positive impact on equity, diversity, and inclusion:

- Granville Island – Vancouver, BC. The Granville Island Council was formed in 2019 to increase the influence of local residents on decision making at the site over the next 20 years.
- Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre – Halifax, NS. A new facility is being built to serve the diverse needs of Indigenous peoples in Nova Scotia.
- Queen Street Placemaking – Kitchener, ON. The placemaking plan was developed with input from the local public and key stakeholders to develop a pedestrian-first approach to the redesign of the street corridor.
- Regent Gold Course Redevelopment, Regina, SK. The redevelopment of a former golf course into an urban park was informed by extensive public engagement. A naming ceremony led by local Indigenous elders is planned for the Spring 2024.
- Old Market Square – Winnipeg, MB. The master plan was designed to be flexible to accommodate a variety of uses and events which puts people first while respecting both the historical and cultural context of the area.

Section D.5: Sustainability/Urban design and renewal

By designing communities which make use of pre-existing assets and transforming landscapes with considerations of the long-term sustainability of environments and well-being of people and communities.

Projects which have had a positive impact on sustainability and urban design and renewal:

- Frédéric-Back Park – Montreal, QC. Previously a landfill and quarry with a cement factory has since been transformed to an urban park which all residents can enjoy.
- False Creek Developments – Vancouver, BC. False Creek had several industrial yards including CPR roundhouses, pig farms, shipyards, lumber mills, and other industries. Today, False Creek has several parks, boardwalks, and planned development of Northeast False Creek for a vibrant waterfront destination with many amenities.
- Project Bonaventure– Montreal, QC. The redevelopment of the Bonaventure Expressway included reducing the number of lanes to develop an urban boulevard with sidewalks, bicycle paths, sitting areas, and playground.
- Robson Square – Vancouver BC. The central block contains the University of BC satellite campus and provincial government offices but the main attraction for residents is the urban plaza with waterfalls, trees, a garden, and a skating rink in the winter.
- Red River College Elgin Plaza– Winnipeg, MB. Elgin Plaza was designed to create a pedestrian plaza including gardens, seating areas, and recreational place.

Section D.6: Human health and well-being

By creating inspirational and quality public spaces which are developed through active community engagement ensure landscapes prioritize people's health, happiness, and well-being.

Projects which have had a positive impact on the health and well-being:

- Paquet Wharf – Lévis, QC. The wharf has been transformed into a public space for residents and visitors of all ages to socialize.
- Grand Concourse Walkway – St John's, NL. Safe, accessible, and attractive walkways were developed with a large focus on public participation in the planning process. The walkway connects many parks for people to walk, cycle, or run along, promoting social interaction and active lifestyles.
- ICE District – Edmonton, AB. The master plan prioritized walkability through existing thoroughfares and a plaza for socialization and recreation. Ongoing mixed-use programming at the plaza is accessed by residents and visitors.
- Rotary Park – Cobourg, ON. The park was developed to include age-friendly amenities for leisure and recreation.
- 19th Street Reconfiguration – Saskatoon, SK. Public engagement was an integral part of the planning process for the redesign of 19th Street to provide traffic calming, walkability, and the development of cycling routes for all ages and ability levels.

Section D.7: The Forks

History of The Forks and the development of The Forks North Portage Partnership

The Forks is situated on Treaty One land where the Assiniboine River flows into the Red River. The Forks has been an important meeting place for Indigenous peoples for over 6,000 years. Today, The Forks is a hub of commerce, recreation and ceremony, holding a prominent place in downtown Winnipeg.

In 1974, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared the area from the American border to the Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site a significant historical route. A 1974 study by landscape architecture firm Garry Hilderman and Associates identified 17 high potential tourism and recreation sites along the corridor, including the East Yards rail yards (now the Forks).

In 1984 CN Rail transferred a 13-acre strip of waterfront from the Provencher federal and provincial governments. This transfer allowed for the creation of a park area for events, festivals, and heritage programming, an amphitheatre, a rink, and a park. The landscape architecture firm, Hilderman, Witty, Crosby, Hanna & Associates, was hired to design the park.

In 1987, CN Rail transferred an additional 58-acres of land to the provincial government. In 1989, a repurposing of two railway cartage stables.

Today the Forks site is managed by the Forks North Portage Partnership, government of Canada, Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg.



Section D.7: The Forks

The legacy of The Forks and landscape architecture

The Forks embodies an all-season land-based design approach that makes the landscape the most prominent feature of the site. Buildings on the site support the use and enjoyment of the landscape without detracting from it.

Landscape architects including Garry Hilderman and Cynthia Cohlmeier have been credited with influencing the landscape design aesthetic of features including the Forks market plaza, the riverwalk trail, the tall grass prairie garden, and the Oodena Celebration Circle.

This land-based approach has resonated with Winnipeg residents and visitors and the Forks features prominently in Winnipeg's social and cultural life. Visitors to the site increased from 2.9 million people in 2013 to 3.7 million people in 2018.

The Forks ensures equity, diversity, and inclusion through a wide range of programming throughout the year

Public spaces at the Forks have been designed to support a variety of uses across all seasons. Programming at reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of Winnipeg. From small gatherings of families and friends to major events like the Winnipeg Folk Festival, the Forks creates spaces where everyone feels like they belong.

Environmental contributions

In 2008 the Forks made a commitment to target zero – meaning a site that generates zero greenhouse gas emissions. A number of projects have been undertaken at the site in pursuit of this target including geothermal energy, vegetable oil to fuel equipment, and a comprehensive composting and recycling strategy.

The Forks continues to explore strategies to reduce their carbon footprint including energy efficiency and geothermal collector.



Section D.7: The Forks

Celebrating heritage and culture is a defining feature of The Forks

The Forks has been a meeting place for Indigenous peoples for over 6,000 years, and Indigenous designs and public art throughout the Forks pay homage to past and present Indigenous peoples. Some of the sites that incorporate Indigenous design include the Oodena Celebration Circle which is an amphitheatre used for recreation, leisure, and Indigenous ceremonies, the Niimaamaa sculpture depicting mother earth, the Path through time sculpture that depicts the history of an Indigenous campsite from thousands of years ago, in addition to many murals around the park. More recent additions to public art were commissioned by Indigenous artists to shed light on the education of truth and reconciliation. The Forks continues to advocate and facilitate reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, through offering programs, public forums, and special events to encourage people to come together in the spirit of reconciliation. This includes self-guided tours, oral history tours by elders, and interpretive signage. The Forks also has memorials for Murdered and Missing Women and Girls (MMIWG) and residential school survivors.

The Forks continues to prioritize the incorporation of heritage and cultural values in the designed spaces with one of the first sites to include Indigenous language (Cree) on signs. The annual cool gardens exhibit public art installations highlighting the ethnic and cultural aspects of the City and is a popular place of demonstration for groups including Indigenous peoples, newcomers, visible minorities, and 2SLGBTQA+ peoples.

Economic contributions

The Forks has contributed to the municipal, provincial, and federal economy since inception. Highlights include:

- An estimated \$190 million of annual direct and indirect economic benefits in 2017/18. This could rise to over \$220 million after the Railside at the Forks development.
- Created employment for 1,500 people, representing 860 Full-time equivalent positions in 2017/18.
- Property tax payments of \$4.8 million in 2017/18. The proposed development of the Railside at the Forks could see property taxes increase by at least \$3.7 million annually.

Section D.8: Don River Valley Restoration Projects

History of Don River Valley and the transformation from industrial past

The Don River Valley was formed thousands of years ago during the ice age. The waterways created by glaciers have been used by Indigenous peoples for centuries. In the 1790s the Don River Valley began to be industrialized as sawmills, railways and factories like the Don Valley Brick Works were built. These developments made substantial contributions to the expansion of Toronto's economy but resulted in a degraded ecosystem and a flood-prone area in part from the clearing of vegetation and other changes to the local hydrology. For decades the Don River Valley remained in its industrialized state as the river was used to power industrial plants.

In the 1980s citizen advocacy helped drive government intervention to revitalize the Don River Valley. Two early studies prepared by the Hough Stansbury Woodland landscape architect firm, Bringing Back the Don and the Don Valley Brickworks Master Plans, helped set a path for restoring the Valley. Both plans incorporated a "landscape first" approach that integrated ideas on ecology restoration, flood management, and redevelopment of degraded lands. Early stages in the revitalization efforts involved habitat and ecological restoration and redevelopment of public trails and parkways to enhance community use of the open space corridor.



Section D.8: Don River Valley Restoration Projects

The legacy of The Don Valley Restoration and landscape architecture

The Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront (or the Crombie Commission) was established in 1988 to create a vision for redevelopment of Toronto's waterfront. The report relied on the contributions of many professionals including the Hough Stansbury and Woodland landscape architecture firm to conceptualize an approach to restoring the river valley. The recommendations included improving public access to the entire waterfront, imposing a temporary prohibition on lake filling, establishing a waterfront heritage policy, and protection of natural areas along the waterfront.

In 2001, The Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (or Waterfront Toronto) was incorporated as a development agency by the City of Toronto, the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Canada to revitalize the Toronto waterfront into a lively space that supports biodiversity and healthy ecology for the waterfront. Landscape architects have been key contributors to a number of major developments along the Don River Valley coordinated through Waterfront Toronto including: the Evergreen Brick Works (DTAH, and George Dark, Urban Strategies), Corktown Common (Michael Van Valkenburg Associates), a major trail network linking many communities and community spaces (DTAH), and the ongoing Don River Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Redevelopment Projects.

The Don River Valley Restoration projects embody best practices in urban design and renewal

The original course of the lower Don River ran through the West Don Lands. The river was straightened in 1892 to accommodate industrialization, leaving behind an underground layer of water and peat that impeded development.

To begin development of the West Don Lands, tonnes of soil were deposited over the water and peat to extract excess water. In 2012, a flood protection landform; a non-structural measure made of earth (e.g., soil and clay) that provides permanent flood protection was constructed to facilitate new development.

Today, the West Don Lands neighbourhood is home to Corktown Common, a vibrant park atop a flood protection landform. The park meshes urban

The park uses a natural stormwater recycling system to reduce the amount of potable water used for park maintenance.

Section D.8: Don River Valley Restoration Projects

A land-based approach to providing spaces people can enjoy to promote the health and well-being of Torontonians and visitors alike

People living in large urban centres can be susceptible to anxiety and depression due to constant stimulation of city life, burnout, and sleep quality due to city lights and traffic noise. Spending time in green spaces and nature has been shown to help reduce or manage intrusive thoughts and other risk factors contributing to poorer mental health. Getting outdoors also promotes social interaction which can reduce feelings of isolation and support better community mental health. The Don River Valley restoration features an extensive multi-use trail network that connects a number of Toronto neighbourhoods and parks including the Don River Valley Park, Corktown Common, Riverdale Park East, and Riverdale Park West.

The trails and public spaces support community mental health by providing opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and connect with neighbours.

Don River Valley Restoration Projects prioritized climate change adaptation and ecological services

Developments along the Don River Valley were designed to revitalize the land and maintain healthy ecological biodiversity in light of climate change and extreme weather events. Ecosystem restoration can reduce air pollution and promote immune health through enhanced exposure to diverse microbiota. The ongoing Don River Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Redevelopment will revitalize the river mouth and create land, aquatic, and wetland habitats to support existing ecological biodiversity and flood protection. To minimize environmental impacts, technologies were considered to minimize the amount of contaminated soil exported from the site and effective treatment of effluent.

Redevelopment of the Don River Valley has prioritized sustainable design practices for over thirty years

The Don River Valley was heavily industrialized and urbanized between 1790 and 1920, resulting in contaminated lands and poor ecosystem health. Evergreen Brick Works transformed heritage buildings and the surrounding land into a LEED Platinum certified centre for showcasing green design and sustainability. The Evergreen Brick Works project repurposed a former quarry into a community centre and natural environment park. Sustainable designs were accomplished by elevating the land by one-half metre, creating channels around the centre to direct water flow and create stormwater ponds, effectively preserving the area from future flooding. Today, the Don River Valley Park encompasses 200 hectares of green space from Evergreen Brick Works to Lake Ontario and incorporates several amenities including trails, a skating rink, local markets, food vendors, and public art exhibits. All proceeds from Evergreen's event space rentals are used to support Evergreen's mission to create greener sustainable cities.

Section D.8: Don River Valley Restoration Projects

Environmental impact

Pollution control and habitat restoration have been top priorities for development along the Toronto Waterfront. The City of Toronto's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan, adopted in 2003, resulted in approximately \$485 million in spending on management projects between 2003 and 2019. The projects are designed to improve water quality, reduce flooding risks, and protect watercourses from future erosion. The 2016-2025 Toronto capital master plan forecasted around \$2.8 billion for future projects over this timeframe.

Don River Valley restoration projects have resulted in more than 823 hectares of habitat being restored or enhanced between 2010 and 2019. Habitat restoration projects have resulted in the restoration of 23.8 hectares of coastal wetlands, 4.5 km of shoreline, and 1.9 km of riverbanks. The ongoing Don River Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Redevelopment project will create 13 hectares of aquatic and wetlands habitats and 4 hectares of land-based habitat which will improve biodiversity, water quality, and moderate the effects of flooding and erosion.

Economic impact

The Toronto Waterfront Investment was estimated to contribute \$3.2 billion in economic output and 16,200 fulltime years of employment between 2001 and 2013. Approximately 88% of investments were made in Toronto and more than 96% in Ontario over this timeframe. Expenditures included professional, scientific, and technical services (28%; which includes landscape architecture); finance, insurance, real estate, renting, and leasing (17% of expenditures); and public administration (11.1%) industries. The spin-off of this development resulted in \$2.6 billion of development in the East Bayfront and West Don Lands communities between 2001 and 2013, generating \$2.2 billion for the Canadian economy from development in these communities.

Construction activity for the Don River Mouth Naturalization and Port Land Redevelopment project is expected to generate around \$4.0 billion in GDP for the Canadian economy, \$2.7 billion on labour income, and \$1.5 billion in revenues to the three levels of government. In addition to the broader

construction activity investments, there is an expected \$1.1 billion of investment by Waterfront Toronto in flood protection and related infrastructure. This investment is expected to generate \$1.1 billion in GDP for the Canadian economy, \$724 million in labour income, and \$273 million in revenues

Section D.9: Bow River Valley

History of the Bow River Valley

The Bow River, which originates from Bow Glacier in the Rocky Mountains, holds significant historical and cultural importance, particularly for Indigenous peoples who have inhabited the region for thousands of years. The valley intersects the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, including the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The area is also home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government.

The confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers holds significant cultural value to Indigenous peoples, traditionally known as Moh'kins'tsis to the Blackfoot, Wîchîspa to the Stoney Nakoda, and Guts'ists'i to the Tsuut'ina.

In colonial times, the Bow Valley has witnessed significant changes with the arrival of European settlers in the late 19th century. The establishment of Fort Calgary in 1875 at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers, followed by the arrival of CP Rail in 1883 marked the beginning of urban development in the area. The growth of Calgary as a major city has had profound effects on the Bow River, including alterations to its flow and landscape due to infrastructure development. Today, the Bow watershed is also one of the most managed rivers in the province, with numerous dams and reservoirs located along the river, supplying water for hydroelectricity, irrigation, and municipal and industrial uses. The river, as well as its tributaries and reservoirs, is also used for numerous recreational activities including world-class sport fishing.

Winter snowfall in the Rocky Mountain headwaters supplies the majority of annual flow on the Bow River. Long-term climate predictions anticipate reduced snowpack or shifts in the location of precipitation from snow to rain in the headwaters, threatening the supply of water to Calgary and surrounding regions. Furthermore, rapid melting of snowpack has been associated with numerous floods in recent history, including the monumental 2013 flood that was one of the most damaging and expensive natural disasters in Canadian history.

Section D.9: Bow River Valley

Legacy of the Bow Valley and landscape architecture

Between 1978-1984, a group of landscape architects and other design professionals collaborated with the City of Calgary and Province of Alberta to author the Calgary River Valleys Plan — a visionary 20 year guiding policy document and master plan for the Bow River that placed emphasis on the establishment of a comprehensive open space network, a recreation corridor and comprehensive pathway system, restoration of former industrial lands, increased emphasis on the protection of water quality and riparian habitats, and strategic land acquisitions for future generations for the provision of parks and open space as urban development continued. What was proposed as a \$38M investment in the river valley (in 1981 dollars) led to several decades of sustainable development and open space protection along the Bow River corridor that continues today.

In the past two decades, the quality and quantity of open space available for public enjoyment has increased substantially throughout the City limits. The City and The Province continue to partner in providing valley-oriented recreation opportunities, a network of boat launches, the ongoing development and operations of iconic “island parks” such as Prince’s Island and St. Patrick’s Island, and the establishment of a world class Riverwalk in the inner city that has elevated the quality of public space, expanded river access and driven economic development in communities like the East Village, Eau Claire and Chinatown.

Section D.9: Bow River Valley

21st Century Climate Resilience

In the wake of the devastating 2013 floods in Southern Alberta, considerable governmental investments have been directed towards the restoration of the Bow River and its environs. Efforts include repairing damages, enhancing flood resilience along the corridor, and advancing the art and science of riverbank restoration and bioengineering. Dale Hodges Park, once a gravel quarry earmarked for acquisition in the 1984 River Valleys Plan, now manages substantial stormwater that previously flowed directly into the Bow River. In response to the adverse effects of extensive rip rap and bank armoring post-2013 flood, The City introduced the Fish Habitat Compensation Program. This program employs innovative bioengineering principles and upland habitat improvements to augment spawning, rearing, and feeding habitats. In a bid to bolster flood resilience in low-lying areas, all levels of government collaborated in funding the design and construction of flood barriers that reimagine flood infrastructure as urban amenities.

The collaborative efforts of landscape architects, working in tandem with water resource engineers, biologists, public artists, and allied disciplines, have given rise to recent projects that challenge conventional approaches to flood resilience, habitat restoration, and the provision of public amenities. These projects create infrastructure that not only addresses engineering challenges but also provides opportunities for public recreation and enjoyment, while simultaneously reinstating natural ecological processes in a densely urbanized environment. The culmination of these endeavours signifies a novel trajectory in climate-resilient city building, showcasing unparalleled levels of creativity and technical excellence. However, it represents merely the dawn of emerging fields within transdisciplinary practice poised to navigate the intricate challenges of a world confronting a changing climate.

Amenities for a world-class livable city

The Bow River significantly enhances Calgary's livability, contributing to its high global rankings on indices such as the Mercer Quality of Living Survey. The river provides recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, and economic benefits through tourism and real estate. Its role in environmental health, community engagement, and climate resilience collectively contributes to a desirable living environment, making Calgary one of the world's most livable cities.

Section D.9: Bow River Valley

Economic Impact

The Calgary River Valley has a diverse economic impact on the city. Key factors include:

- **Tourism and Recreation:** The River Valley attracts both locals and tourists for activities like hiking, biking, fishing, and picnicking, supporting businesses such as restaurants and recreational equipment rentals.
- **Real Estate and Property Values:** Proximity to the River Valley positively influences property values, enhancing desirability and contributing to increased economic activity in the real estate sector.
- **Business and Events:** The River Valley provides a scenic backdrop for events and festivals, stimulating local businesses in hospitality, entertainment, and retail.
- **Health and Wellness:** Access to green spaces and outdoor activities contributes to community health, potentially reducing healthcare costs and enhancing overall productivity.
- **Environmental Services:** The River Valley plays a crucial role in environmental services like water filtration and wildlife habitat, indirectly supporting industries dependent on a healthy environment.
- **Infrastructure and Development:** Investments in River Valley infrastructure contribute directly to the economy by creating jobs and supporting businesses in construction and landscaping.

The economic impact is intertwined with community well-being, extending beyond monetary considerations to encompass social, cultural, and environmental benefits.

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CONTACT US



300-250 Portage Ave,
Winnipeg, MB, R3B 2A9
(204) 942-0654



ig@intergroup.ca



www.intergroup.ca

InterGroup

CONSULTANTS