



## **Underpass Park - Fact Sheet**

### **LOCATION**

Under and around the Eastern Avenue and Richmond/Adelaide overpasses, south of King Street between Cherry Street and Bayview Avenue. The park is bordered on the southern edge by Old Eastern Avenue. On the northern edge, the park is bordered by the new east/west 'woonerf' that runs on the south side of the new Toronto Community Housing complex and Urban Capital's River City. St. Lawrence Street and the newly extended River Street, traverse the park, providing access from several locations.

### **PARK SIZE & PHASING**

**Total:** 1.05 hectares (2.7 acres), comprising three blocks

**Phase one:** total area: 0.6613 hectares (1.63 acres) opened July 16, 2012

- St. Lawrence to River Street block: 0.3240 hectares (0.8 acres)
- Eastern most block between River Street and the future Don River Park: 0.3373 hectares (0.83 acres)

**Phase two:** the 0.4383 hectares (1.1 acres) block west of St. Lawrence St. is under construction and expected to open in spring 2013.

### **PARK DESCRIPTION**

Underpass Park is the most extensive park to be built under an overpass in Canada, and the first ever in Toronto. The park's design is defined by the massive overpass structures.

About half of the park (0.6 hectares) is covered by the overpasses. The covered area is the more active zone within the park and benefits from the weather protection provided by the overpasses.

The eastern-most section of the park, east of River Street, includes two basketball half-courts, an extensive skatepark featuring a series of obstacles, rails and ledges, and flexible open space for programming or community events.

The playground is located in the middle section of the park, between St. Lawrence St. and River Street. This part of the park features a teeter-totter, hopscotch, 4-square, swings and playful climbing structures for all ages. It also includes a series of ribbon walls and park benches, and flexible community space that can be used for markets, festivals and seasonal public events.

The remainder of the park (0.4 hectares) is uncovered, providing an opportunity to add much needed green space to the park. A dense grove of salt and drought resistant trees, grass and other plantings add a natural element to the park and the area. Eventually, community gardens will make up a significant part of the southwestern edge of the park providing additional opportunities for residents to interact with each other and nature.

Lighting is a key feature of the park's design. The more than 50 overpass columns are colourfully lit using diffuse LED spotlights, highlighting the architectural qualities of the overpasses and ensuring the area is safe and inviting at all times of day. A combination of LED uplighting on the columns, shielded in-ground and in-wall lights, and illuminated concrete ribbons at the seating areas create a variety of different illuminating effects.

### **PUBLIC ART**

Mirage, by Toronto-based artist Paul Raff, is an installation of 57 octagonal mirrored stainless steel surfaces that have been applied to the underside of the Richmond/Adelaide overpasses. It draws inspiration from the definition of a mirage as an optical illusion by atmospheric conditions. Each of the panels is slightly different in size and spacing to create a subtle sense of movement. The artist uses the unusual site conditions of a park beneath an elevated roadway to blur the horizon lines between earth and sky. The surface area of the piece is approximately 264 square metres (11 m wide x 24 m long).

When planning the overarching public art strategy for the West Don Lands, Underpass Park was identified as a high priority public art opportunity. In late 2009, Waterfront Toronto launched its first ever artist competition to select artwork for the park.

### **PARK FEATURES**

- **Materials**
  - Hardscape – saw cut concrete in a linear pattern; historical granite cobblestones excavated from the area reused throughout the park.
  
- **Seating**
  - Concrete ribbon walls rising out of the ground topped with IPE wood to provide interesting and comfortable seating, and
  - A series of IPE benches with armrests and back support.
  
- **Accessibility & Safety**
  - The park is designed for community members of all ages and is fully accessible, with flush paving conditions to provide access to ribbon walls and playground equipment.
  - The design of the park places a strong emphasis on lighting to ensure the area is safe and inviting at all times of day.
  - The columns and underside of the overpasses were inspected and reinforced by the City of Toronto prior to the park opening.

- **Bird control**
  - Pigeon netting has been installed in the playground and art areas to prevent roosting and bird droppings. In the play area mesh has been affixed to the overhead girders. In the art area wires are strung along the outside perimeter, based on the same system employed for the perimeter of building ledges. The interior spaces each have their own customized grill of fine wires that are inserted and secured to the backside of the artwork.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Underpass Park is part of Waterfront Toronto’s Stage 1 Gold certification under the LEED for Neighbourhood Development (ND) pilot program. Some of the sustainability best practices incorporated into the park’s design include energy efficient LED lighting; drought, salt and shade tolerant planting for minimal maintenance and irrigation; recycled material on play surfaces, and the reuse of historical granite cobblestones excavated within the area.

**LANDSCAPE DESIGNER**

Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg of Vancouver/The Planning Partnership of Toronto

**PARK OPERATIONS**

The City of Toronto Parks Department

**BUDGET**

<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$9,577,535</b>		
<b><u>Phase I</u></b>		<b><u>Phase II</u></b>	
Federal	\$5,528,132	Federal	\$3,500,000
Provincial	549,403	Provincial	---
<b>Total Phase I</b>	<b>\$ 6,077,535</b>	<b>Total Phase II</b>	<b>\$3,500,000</b>