

PROJECT: UNDER GARDINER



BACKGROUND



A map showing a plan view of the Project: Under Gardiner site. (Image credit: PUBLIC WORK)

About Project: Under Gardiner

Project: Under Gardiner is a new initiative that will transform more than four hectares (10 acres) of land beneath the elevated portion of Toronto's Gardiner Expressway, from just west of Strachan Avenue to Spadina Avenue, into a series of public spaces. Thanks to the visionary philanthropic support of Judy and Wil Matthews, the City of Toronto has been able to engage Waterfront Toronto to oversee the implementation of the project, which includes a 1.75-kilometre multi-use trail and 500-metre connection to Exhibition GO Station. By reclaiming this forgotten space, Project: Under Gardiner will create a series of rooms formed by the spaces between columns, reimagining the area beneath the expressway as a place for people. Project: Under Gardiner is based on a transformative framework design by urban designer Ken Greenberg, and Marc Ryan and Adam Nicklin of landscape architecture firm PUBLIC WORK. The vision for the project includes the continuous multi-use trail, a bridge over Fort York Boulevard for pedestrians and cyclists, a grand staircase at Strachan that will double as seating for an urban theatre, and a series of flexible, year-round performance and programming spaces that can be used by the community.

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Project: Under Gardiner is focused on helping Torontonians reclaim and transform this underused space for active community use, making it possible to host diverse events. From farmer's markets to chamber concerts, dance competitions to experimental theatre, street art festivals to kids' camps, the possibilities for this new space will be endless. The project will knit together seven downtown neighbourhoods – Exhibition Place, Liberty Village, Niagara, Fort York Neighbourhood, Bathurst Quay, Wellington Place and CityPlace – through the trail and network of public spaces. It will enhance connectivity to the city's waterfront and a corridor of important attractions and destinations – from the Canadian National Exhibition to the Rogers Centre to the Air Canada Centre.

What Makes this Space Different?

This project is unique in two ways. First, Project: Under Gardiner begins with a new kind of philanthropic partnership – a collaborative model – that is brought to life through active public participation in designing and shaping a new public space. The passion and financial assistance of a major donor is joining with the City and Waterfront Toronto to plan and build new infrastructure, and to showcase a new model of city building for Toronto.

Second, while there are other projects in Toronto that have focused on reclaiming underused space, the scale of Project: Under Gardiner is larger and more impactful because of its strategic location in a dense urban area, as a gateway to the waterfront, and at a focal point within our city's network of parks, trails and public spaces.

Design Framework

Public input will play a key role in shaping what happens in this space. The final design has yet to be determined, however the design team has established a framework. Their starting point respects the existing structure of the Gardiner, treating the underside as a covered street in the heart of the city. The Gardiner's columns and beams (also known as "bents") could be used to hold rigging, lighting, and signage, and the partitions that they create establish outdoor rooms that will separate the various activities and atmospheres of the space. The spectacular height of the canopy at this location offers myriad possibilities for multi-level experiences.

Funding

The project is supported entirely by a \$25-million donation from Judy and Wil Matthews to the City of Toronto. It was announced on November 17, 2015 and a first phase of construction is scheduled to be complete in late 2017.

Under the terms of the City of Toronto's donation policy, a report will go to the City's Executive Committee on December 1, 2015, and then to Council on December 9 or 10, 2015 to seek authority

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to accept this donation. The donation will then be transferred to Waterfront Toronto to execute the project.

Shaped by Torontonians for Torontonians

Public input and feedback is a cornerstone of Project: Under Gardiner. Torontonians will be invited to participate in creating this new public space through social media, the project website, public meetings and special events.

The focus in reclaiming these new spaces is to create highly-flexible, multi-purpose spaces that act as empty containers for Torontonians' creativity. The question we will be asking Torontonians to answer is: "What could only happen here?" Members of the public will be invited to help develop this vision alongside community groups and organizations representing sport, recreation, arts and culture, and entertainment.

Reclaim the Name

In an act of reclaiming what was once a forgotten space, we are asking Torontonians to help name this new public space. Further details on this naming campaign and how citizens can get involved will be unveiled in December 2015.

A Historic Site that Connects to Contemporary Culture

The four-hectare (10-acre) site is located beneath the elevated Gardiner Expressway from Spadina Avenue to just west of Strachan Avenue. Roughly following the alignment of Lake Ontario's shoreline at the time of the city's founding, the site touches four important cultural sites and public spaces:

- The Canadian National Exhibition
- The Fort York Historic Site and Visitors Centre
- June Callwood Park in the Fort York Neighbourhood
- Canoe Landing Park in CityPlace

By adding an important new east-west corridor for active transportation, the City's broader network of trails and paths is extended. The new multi-use trail enhances connectivity to a range of attractions, destinations and transportation hubs across the waterfront, including:

- Jack Layton Ferry Terminal and Toronto Islands
- Air Canada Centre
- Union Station
- Martin Goodman Trail
- Metro Toronto Convention Centre
- Ripley's Aquarium
- Toronto Railway Museum
- CN Tower
- Rogers Centre

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- Harboufront Centre
- Queens Quay Boulevard's new pedestrian promenade
- HTO Park
- Toronto Music Garden
- Billy Bishop City Centre Airport
- Fort York Library
- Coronation Park
- Allstream Centre
- Enercare Centre
- Echo Beach
- Ricoh Coliseum
- Molson Amphitheatre
- BMO Field
- Queen Elizabeth Theatre
- Better Living Centre
- Exhibition GO Station

Project: Under Gardiner dovetails with new planned and proposed development and investment in the immediate area, that will deliver a series of important amenities for the local community and the wider population of Toronto, including:

- William G. Davis Park and Trail (Fall 2016)
- Fort York Pedestrian Bridge (Spring 2017)
- Lower Garrison Creek Park & Trail (Late 2017)
- Dog Off-Leash Area (Dan Leckie Way and Lake Shore Blvd.)
- Toronto West Railpath Extension
- CityPlace Community Centre and Schools (2019)
- Fort York Visitor Centre's landscaped forecourt, also known as the "Liquid Landscape"

A total of seven downtown neighbourhoods, with a total population of over 70,000 residents, will be connected by this new multi-use trail and series of public spaces. Those neighbourhoods include:

- Exhibition Place
- Liberty Village
- Niagara
- Fort York Neighbourhood
- Bathurst Quay
- Wellington Place
- CityPlace

The site also connects to existing privately-owned-public-spaces (POPS) beneath the Gardiner Expressway, just west of Bathurst Street and just west of Dan Leckie Way. New POPS are being proposed on sections of private land along the site, including a market cafe at the historic Loblaws warehouse conversion West Block Est. 1928 (Spring 2019) at Bathurst Street and Lake Shore Boulevard.

Project Components

- 1.75 kilometres of new multi-use trail added to Toronto's network of trails and bike lanes, plus a 500-metre connection to Exhibition GO Station

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- 55 unique outdoor spaces, dubbed urban “rooms,” designed to facilitate different experiences – from the active and performative to the passive and contemplative
- Sites for community programming of all kinds – culture, placemaking, civic engagement, food, education, health and wellness, and the environment
- Strachan Grand Staircase
- Iconic crossing (bridge over Fort York Boulevard for pedestrians and cyclists)
- Connections to the “liquid landscape” of the Fort York Visitor Centre’s forecourt, as well as other POPS under and along the path of the Gardiner Expressway

About the Donors

Judy and Wil Matthews have a history of volunteer leadership and philanthropic giving to a wide variety of the City of Toronto’s education and medical programs, arts and cultural organizations and city-building initiatives. Passionate Torontonians, they are deeply committed to enriching the City and the lives of its citizens.

Wil Matthews worked as an investment banker, serving in various positions with Nesbitt Burns Inc. and its predecessor companies from 1964 until his retirement in 1996. As a prominent business leader, he has served as a director on a wide variety of corporate boards, as well as on the boards of many community and social organizations, including Renaissance Energy, Husky Energy, WestJet Airlines, SQI Diagnostics, and is presently on an advisory committee to Imperial Capital. In addition, Wil has dedicated his expertise to the boards of many community and social organizations including Dellcrest Children’s Centre, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Trinity College, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and The Toronto Symphony Foundation.

Judy Matthews holds a long-standing interest in urban renewal projects that emphasize creativity, beauty and greener more inviting spaces. She first became interested in civic initiatives in her early twenties while working on the anti-Spadina Expressway campaign. After her four children were settled in school, she completed an M.A. in Urban Planning from York University and began honing her professional expertise in the Planning Departments at Metro Toronto, the City of Toronto and the University of Toronto. Judy has directed her energy to realizing an impressive array of projects that improve Toronto’s livability and creativity including the award-winning St. George Street revitalization and the development of the \$30-million Open Space Master Plan for the University of Toronto, as well as the creation of the Music Garden at Harbourfront. Deeply motivated by a desire to work for the larger community, Judy is a dedicated and experienced volunteer who strongly believes in the role not-for-profit organizations play in civic life. A few of the organizations that have benefitted from her guidance include Creative Trust, The National Arts Centre, Toronto Community Foundation, The United Way and more recently, Artscape, the Canadian Opera Company, Evergreen and Park People.

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About the Partnership

This project establishes new kind of philanthropic partnership – a collaborative model – that is brought to life through active public participation in designing and shaping a new public space. The Matthews offered a project to the City that was pre-conceptualized. Rather than just earmarking their donation for a particular kind of work. The donation is directed specifically for this project, and aims to establish a new model for programming, operating and maintaining high-quality public space.

Project: Under Gardiner contributes to Waterfront Toronto's ongoing revitalization efforts and the revitalization at the Fort York Historic Site. Its vision is in keeping with the City's main waterfront planning document – the Central Waterfront Secondary Plan – particularly creating connections and building a network of public and green spaces.

The Toronto Office of Partnerships accepts philanthropic donations and manages sponsorships that provide community benefits that contribute to the quality of life in Toronto. Visionary gifts like the donation made to the City of Toronto by Wil and Judy Matthews help deliver new and enhanced programs in your community. Learn more about [How to Partner with the City](#).

The Matthews' requested that the City of Toronto engage Waterfront Toronto to manage Project: Under Gardiner, including public consultation, because of the agency's track record of managing complex projects. The project also falls within Waterfront Toronto's geographic area and within its mandate to oversee, lead and implement waterfront renewal initiatives from Coxwell Avenue in the east to Dowling Avenue in the west.

About Waterfront Toronto

The Governments of Canada and Ontario and the City of Toronto created Waterfront Toronto to oversee and lead the renewal of Toronto's waterfront. Public accessibility, design excellence, sustainable development, economic development and fiscal sustainability are the key drivers of waterfront revitalization.

About the City of Toronto

Toronto is Canada's largest city, the fourth largest in North America, and home to a diverse population of about 2.8 million people. It is a global centre for business, finance, arts and culture and is consistently ranked one of the world's most livable cities. For information on non-emergency City services and programs, Toronto residents, businesses and visitors can visit toronto.ca, call 311, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or follow us [@TorontoComms](#).

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About the Design Team

The design team is composed of writer, educator and urban designer Ken Greenberg and landscape architecture studio PUBLIC WORK. Greenberg is principal of Greenberg Consultants and the former Director of Urban Design and Architecture for the City of Toronto. Over the past four decades, his strategic, consensus-building approach has played a pivotal role in major downtown, waterfront, neighbourhood and campus rejuvenations throughout North America. PUBLIC WORK is focused on the intelligent evolution of the contemporary city. Before establishing the firm in 2012, principals Adam Nicklin and Marc Ryan played an integral role in the planning, design, and implementation of the West 8 + DTAH master plan for Toronto's Central Waterfront.

More about Greenberg Consultants greenbergconsultants.com

More about PUBLIC WORK publicwork.ca