

**UNDER GARDINER —
PUBLIC REALM PLAN**

CONSULTATION SUMMARY



**MARCH
2023**

We would like to acknowledge that the Gardiner Expressway occupies the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit and the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, the Métis, and many other Indigenous nations.

Toronto, which is derived from the Mohawk (Kanien'kehá:ka) word T'karonto (which means the place in the water where the trees are standing), is now home to many diverse Indigenous peoples. We recognize them as the past, present and future caretakers of this land. We would like to pay our respects to all who have gathered and will continue to gather in this place. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work together to care for this land and act as stewards of these spaces.



Special thanks for the invaluable contributions from The Bentway Design Advisory and our community partners. Much like the public realm itself, this work relies on trust, accountability and reciprocity.

DESIGN ADVISORY:

PUBLIC WORK: office for urban design and landscape architecture

Two Row Architect

Transsolar KilmaEngineering

Third Party Public

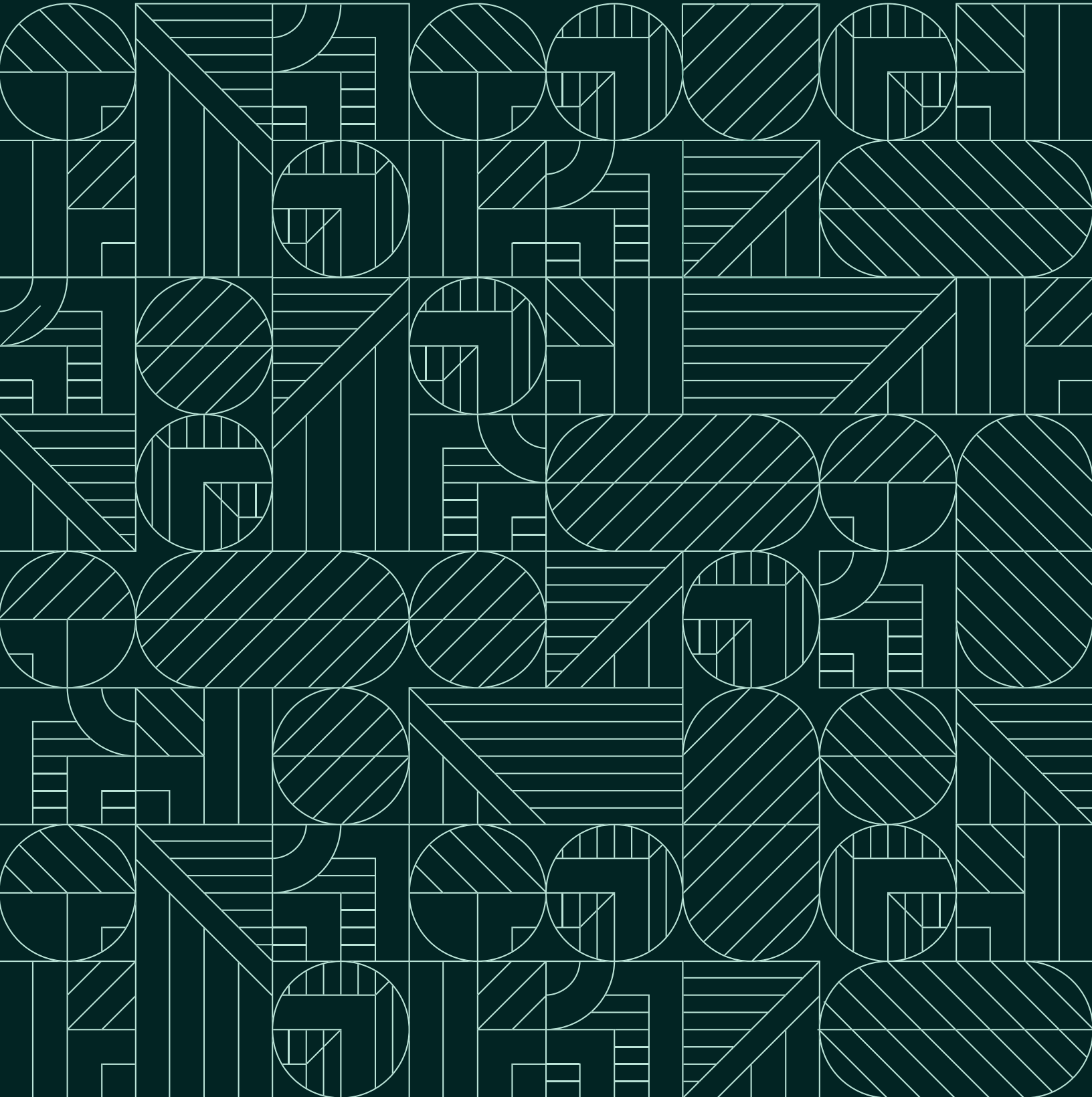
Frontier

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INTRODUCTION



In partnership with the City of Toronto, The Bentway Conservancy is developing the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan (PRP) to outline how the spaces under and adjacent to the elevated Expressway can better serve our city.

Assembling the Under Gardiner PRP is an inclusive process, involving multiple municipal and private stakeholders, and the public. This document serves as a summary of the consultation activities led by The Bentway, in collaboration with the City of Toronto, and captures the range of perspectives shared by stakeholders, communities, and the public, which will be used to inform the Under Gardiner PRP and the future of the public spaces under the Gardiner. The Project Team also includes design partners and a design team including PUBLIC WORK, Two Row Architect, Transsolar KlimaEngineering, Third Party Public, and Frontier.

These consultations were split into two rounds and included both synchronous and asynchronous engagements, which are further detailed in their respective sections. The engagement objective in Round One was to seek stakeholder and public feedback about things people liked and disliked, and ideas and suggestions for improvements to the spaces

under the Gardiner Expressway. Following this process, The Bentway and the City presented their preliminary findings, highlighting site-wide design strategies and a shortlist of potential opportunity sites and projects within five districts within the primary study area. For Round Two, the objective was to seek stakeholder and public feedback on these proposals, including where people agreed and disagreed, and what elements people wanted to prioritize most among those presented.

What is a Public Realm Plan?

A collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and The Bentway Conservancy, the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan is a high level road map for improving the quality of the space and experience under the Gardiner Expressway. This is an aspirational document that strives to establish common consensus around a vision and direction for improvements, as opposed to a prescriptive set of guidelines.

The proposals and opportunities discussed in the context of these consultations are not finalised, nor is consultation on any of the discrete actions complete. Rather this report is about establishing priorities, objectives, and opportunities for future action. All of the potential projects will need additional study, analysis and focused consultation process in their own right.

PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH TO CONSULTATION

Public consultation is an important part of the planning process, ensuring the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan is inclusive, accessible, and in service of as many communities as possible. Through The Bentway's mandate to program and activate spaces below the Gardiner, The Bentway's presence and activity is an ongoing and dynamic exercise in community engagement. If The Bentway Phase 1 exists as a proof of concept that the spaces under the highway can function as vibrant community assets as opposed to liabilities, then each artistic installation, panel discussion, and temporary program serves as a chance to build relationships within the community, and further expand what is within the realm of possibilities for these unconventional, and under appreciated types of public space. In effect The Bentway is in a near constant stance of provocative engagement. By leveraging the power of arts and culture we can influence common understandings of the relationship with the built environment and continually demonstrate the capacity of engaged communities. For the purposes of the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan Community consultation is a gentle and inclusive invitation to a powerful dialogue about our shared future and what is required to progress.

Assembling the Under Gardiner PRP has involved a variety of stakeholders and community members. Public consultation is an important part of the planning process, ensuring the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan (PRP) is inclusive, accessible, and in service of as many communities as possible. For the purposes of the Under Gardiner PRP, community consultation was presented as an inclusive invitation to a powerful dialogue about uncovering the Gardiner's possibilities and our collective desires for a shared urban future.

The sections following describe the methodology of our continued consultation process, including an outline of our first and second rounds of consultation, which engaged key stakeholder groups about what is like and disliked about the spaces under the Gardiner and then presented the synthesis of this information to the wider public for feedback, respectively. Two key groups that we supported individualized outreach and engagement with were Indigenous communities as well as unhoused communities. It is important not to conflate these two distinct groups, however both hold distinct knowledges and connections to the spaces under the Gardiner that necessitate individualized consultation. It is important to understand that both of these groups have been historically excluded from planning processes, and thus it is of the utmost importance to bring our efforts in engagement to these communities in order to redress this legacy of exclusion.

As keepers of knowledge and the traditional stewards of this land, we reached out to Indigenous community members in our networks to discuss and how to best incorporate longstanding and deep understandings of the relation between land, water, and all living beings into the public realm. The Under Gardiner PRP seeks to support pre existing Indigenous ways of knowing and engaging with space, land, and water as we work and live together in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation.

The Under Gardiner PRP recognizes that unhoused people have long lived under the elevated portion of the Gardiner expressway, thus holding a longstanding and intimate understanding of the life under the Gardiner as a space of hybridity and connection. As such, members from these communities hold important knowledge and interest in the planning of spaces under the Gardiner and have been engaged in this process of knowledge gathering and unlearning. Acknowledging the systemic exclusion of unhoused communities from planning and consultation processes, the project team strives to ensure that this report is informed by the unique perspectives held by members of street involved communities.

OUTREACH TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The historic entanglement of planning processes and coloniality has created a legacy which has excluded Indigenous communities, cultures, and values. This has created an environment of distrust between planning processes and Indigenous peoples, especially as it pertains to consultation and engagement around the use or dis-use of land. Operating from a trust deficit, outreach to Indigenous communities in this process is not necessarily outcome-oriented, rather it is focused on building trust and fostering positive working relationships. Our outreach to Indigenous communities reflects an ongoing and long-term commitment to working with these communities, learning from Indigenous knowledge systems, and incorporating these learnings into planning, design, and implementation of the Under Gardiner PRP. Further, we are committed to continually updating and engaging with the Treaty 13 holders. This outreach represents the beginning of a relationship-building process, one that demonstrates an ongoing commitment to mutual exchange and understanding and a long-term vision for the stewardship of spaces under the Gardiner.

OUTREACH TO UNHOUSED COMMUNITIES

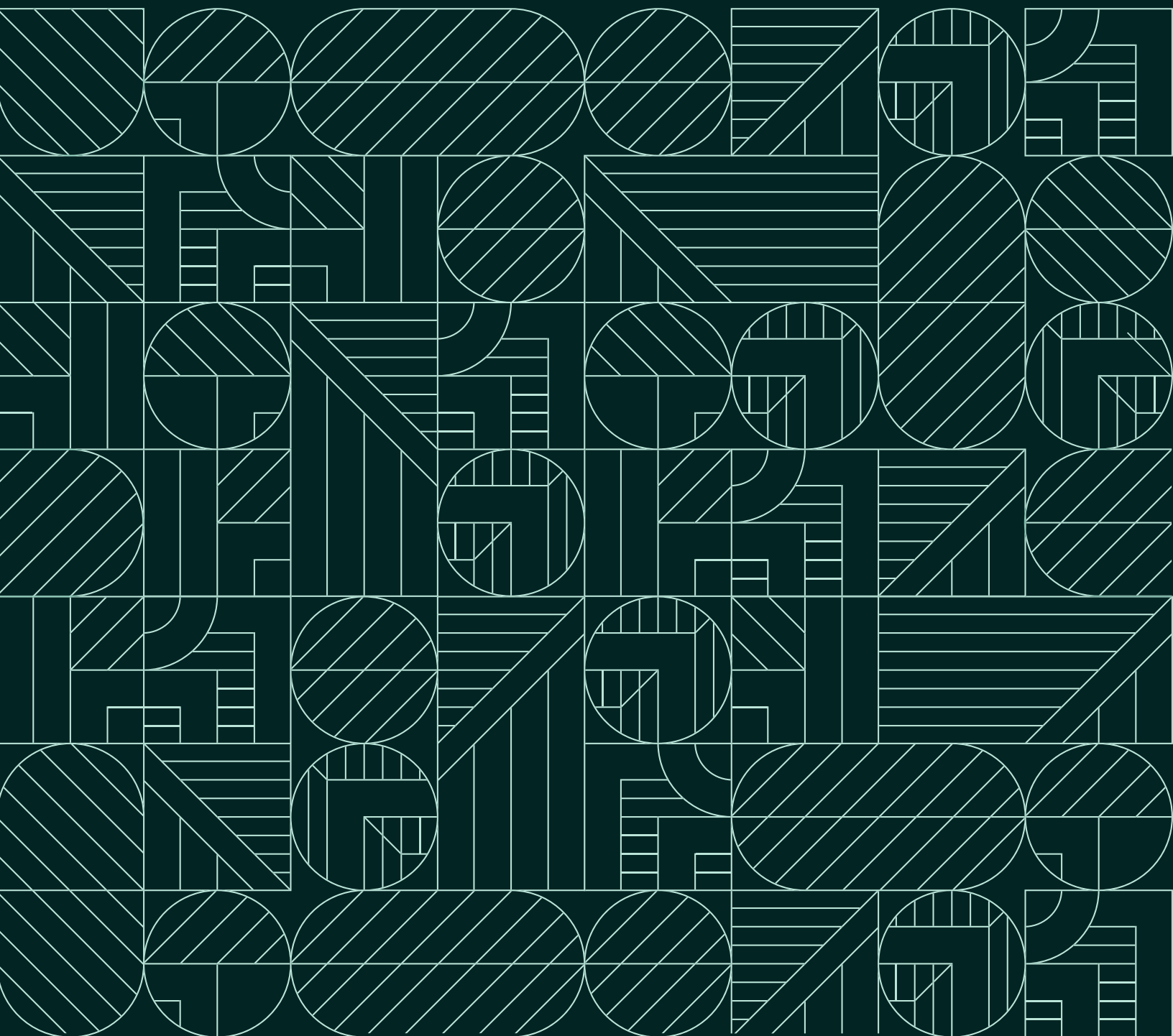
Team members from The Bentway engaged in semi-structured conversation with service users at shelters and respites centres adjacent to the under Gardiner corridor. These conversations were in regard to the experiences of members of unhoused communities in the spaces under the Gardiner.

The following represents the general thrust of these conversations and common themes that emerged throughout the consultation process:

1. Many participants underscored the need for access to predictable amenities, such as publicly accessible washrooms, garbage containers, harm reduction supports, public wifi and electrical outlets, among others.
2. These conversations stressed the importance of empathy in design. These features could include accessible benches and seating areas, wind breaks and public heating and cooling measures.
3. Participants underscored the need for safe and maintained walking paths in the area, allowing for connectivity, physical activity, and care along the corridor.
4. Many participants stressed the need for space for accessible programming under the Gardiner, often referring to programming that has taken place at The Bentway Phase 1 site.

The common themes that emerged through this consultation process represent features of urban design that would support street experience for unhoused people and the better use of public space for anyone traversing the under Gardiner corridor. Many of these features align with the priorities that arose from consultation with other stakeholder groups. This demonstrates how providing an elevated level of amenities and supportive features in public space benefits all members of the public, regardless of their patterns of use under the Gardiner.

ROUND ONE CONSULTATION SUMMARY



ROUND ONE CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

Throughout summer 2022, The Bentway team and the City of Toronto (the Project Team) executed Round One of consultation for the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan (Under Gardiner PRP). This first round of consultation included both asynchronous engagement (including surveys, Social Pinpoint mapping, social media, direct mail campaigns, and a project website) and synchronous engagement (including the Street Summit, direct stakeholder engagement, and street team outreach). The engagement objective in Round One was to seek stakeholder and public feedback about things people liked, things people disliked, and ideas and suggestions for improvements to the spaces under the Gardiner Expressway.

The feedback received in Round One informed the development and drafting of recommendations in the Under Gardiner PRP that were presented as part of the second round of engagement

Third Party Public wrote the following takeaways based on the comments collected by the Project Team through Social Pinpoint and stakeholder engagement summaries. Third Party Public assisted the Project Team's engagement efforts by providing strategic advice on developing a consultation strategy and other elements for public engagement.

ROUND ONE OUTREACH "AT A GLANCE"

May to August 2022

Asynchronous Tactics

Direct Mail Campaign:

15 000+

Project Website Visits:

900+

**Survey and Interactive
Map Unique Users:**

380+

Interactive Map Comments:

150+

Online Survey Responses:

65+

Synchronous Tactics

Street Summit Attendance:

600+

Stakeholder Round Table Sessions:

5

Street Team Outreach:

850+ interactions over 2 days

HIGH-LEVEL TAKEAWAYS

Many like The Bentway and feel it is a creative use of a previously underused space.

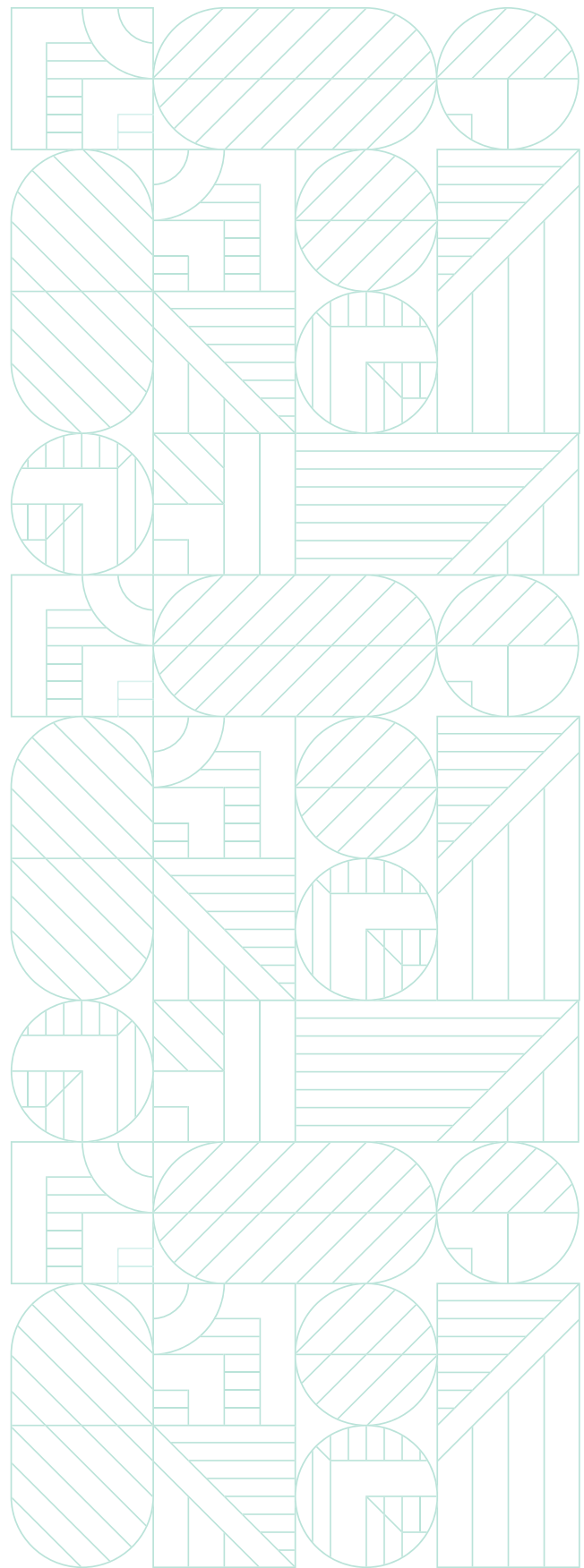
Specifically, participants like The Bentway Phase 1 site's approach to activating diverse spaces with public art and recreation. Many said they'd like to see the creative use of space and programming expanded across the areas under the Gardiner.

Safety concerns, poor connections, and an unpleasant environment are key challenges.

Participants identified conflicts between different road users, an environment that feels dominated by fast-moving cars, noise, dirt and debris were frequently mentioned as things that are challenging or not working well under the Gardiner.

There are many opportunities for improvement.

Many comments spoke to improving safety, accessibility, and comfort overall; improving the public realm (through plantings, landscaping, and other beautification); improving the cycling and pedestrian experience (especially with improved safety and connections); adding and expanding on commercial uses; and adding more public art.



DETAILED TAKEAWAYS

The Bentway (such as the dead end at the Bathurst Street bridge) and to areas beyond (such as to Coronation Park in the west, the Don Valley in the east)

What's working well and/or liked

Participants generally shared positive feedback about The Bentway as a model for the potential of improved under Gardiner spaces, saying it was a great use of the space. Specifically, many said they liked the creative programming of the space, kids' spaces and activities, public art (including murals and sculptures), shade and weather protection, and recent improvements to pedestrian connections within and across the space.

What's not working well and/or could be improved

A few common themes emerged in what participants said they didn't like or felt could be improved in the spaces under the Gardiner, including:

- An unsafe environment resulting from: too-short pedestrian crossings, lack of sidewalks in some areas (such as the south side of Housey), the poor condition of street markings (making it hard to see where pedestrians should go), flooding of paths of and roads (such as Lower Simcoe), and lack of clear separation of pedestrians, cyclists, and cars (leading to conflicts).
- A few said the presence of unhoused people in the space made them feel unsafe, with some suggestion for the City to provide good shelter or funding for those in encampments (rather than clearing them).
- Missing or challenging connections, both within

Defining characteristics

Participants said some of the defining characteristics under the Gardiner were: the height of the space, its potential for multiple uses, the shelter it offers from rain and snow. They used words like "raw," "decay" and "darkness" to describe it, with both positive and negative connotations. A few described the area negatively, saying it was "lifeless" and reflected society's lack of care for those with deep needs.

Opportunities, suggestions for improvement, and ideas for the future

Participants identified a wide range of opportunities, suggestions for improvement, and ideas for the future, including:

Overall, improving safety, accessibility, and comfort through strategies like:

- Widening sidewalks or adding missing sidewalks.
- Removing bus laybys, right turn channels, and double left turn lanes.
- Carefully considering the pedestrian experience at Gardiner off- and on-ramps.
- Adding more shade, weather protection, water fountains, and public restrooms.
- Improving crossings with longer cross times, fewer two-stage crossings.
- Improving street lighting.

- Finding ways to mitigate traffic noise.
- Applying Complete Streets thinking to surrounding areas (such as along Spadina south of King Street).

Improvements to the public realm, including:

- Painting the Gardiner. This was the top-rated suggestion on Social Pinpoint.
- Improving landscaping with bioswales, or green walls and hanging greenery off the bents themselves.
- Adding curb-less streets, such as at Maple Leaf Square and on Housey Street.
- Recognizing heritage, for example by installing “Lost Station” rest stops and heritage maps (similar to what’s being done for the Beltline) and retaining existing “acorn” light fixtures.
- Improving connections (including to future destinations like the new Ontario Line at Exhibition).
- Adding more places for people to sit, like at Union Station.
- Adding dog parks (such as east of Dan Leckie Way).
- Cover the underside to prohibit birds from nesting and leaving droppings in high traffic areas.

Many suggestions for improving the cycling experience, including:

- Improving existing bike infrastructure (such as upgrading the Lower Simcoe lanes, adding lights to the rail corridor underpass, extending the Harbour bike lanes east, and more).
- Adding new bike infrastructure (such as on Dan Leckie Way, Bremner Boulevard, Rees Street, and more).
- Extending multi-use trails (such as on the north

side of Lake Shore Blvd east of Yonge).

- Adding indoor bike parking at Exhibition GO, Stackt, Billy Bishop Airport, and the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal.

Many suggestions for improving the pedestrian experience, including:

- Installing sidewalks where they’re missing (such as south side of Front between Bathurst and Spadina) and paths where there are clear desire lines (such as between the Garrison Crossing stairs and Fort York Visitor Centre).
- Improving wayfinding signage (to help people connect to the waterfront, local destinations, and beyond).
- Adding or extending pedestrian bridges (such as extending an eastbound ramp from the Fort York bridge to connect to The Well).
- Adding more pedestrian lighting to improve safety.

Other suggested improvements, such as:

- Expand The Bentway’s footprint. Many participants shared support for expanding the creative use of space under the Gardiner.
- More murals and public art installations, commissioned by people who reflect the diversity of Toronto’s cultural communities, as well as artworks that elevate and celebrate Indigenous cultures and histories.
- More commercial spaces like restaurants, a beer garden, food trucks, farmers markets, or other public markets.
- More play spaces for kids, including a bike or skate park and/or more basketball courts.
- More cultural events and performance spaces.

DISTRICT-SPECIFIC TAKEAWAYS

Exhibition Place: West Anchor

Participants said they like:

- The temporary exhibit space in the City of Toronto building under the Gardiner.

Participants said they dislike:

- The "back of house" condition at the point of arrival from Exhibition Station and expressed interest in improvements to the public experience on Manitoba Drive.

Ideas and suggestions shared by participants:

- There should be a connected pathway from The Bentway to the planned Ontario Line station and existing Exhibition GO station.
- Accessibility improvements are a key consideration for many of the sites of the area which currently lack safe circulation routes.
- Clear, accessible multi-use paths to and from major trip generating uses, are an essential upgrade for the success of the area, however improvements to the public realm should not inhibit the operational capacities of Exhibition Place, the TTC and Metrolinx.

Bentway-Fort York

Participants said they like:

- The War of 1812 public art, and want more public art under the Gardiner.
- Pedestrian bridges over the rail corridor. Destinations and attractions such as The Bentway and Stackt Market.

Participants said they dislike:

- Noise from traffic on the Gardiner.
- The underused parking lot at the end of Stadium Road because it should be used to connect the two parks.
- The crowded and narrow conditions along the Martin Goodman Trail at Bathurst and Queens Quay. This trail is often crowded with cyclists, pedestrians, and dogs.

Ideas and suggestions shared by participants:

- Pave a path straight from the foot of the Garrison Crossing stairs to the stairs at the Fort York Visitor Centre, going down to The Bentway. The grass is worn because people walk this desired path anyway.
- Add a dog park to the open space north of the Garrison Crossing bridge.
- Create a wide bike/skate corridor under the Gardiner that connects to the skate trail.

Under Gardiner Islands

Participants said they like:

- The beautiful green space and plantings along the south side of the rail corridor between Spadina and Dan Leckie Way.
- Planting strategies which incorporate native plant species.
- Public art, murals, and Indigenous art.
- Widespread support for more public spaces and landscaped areas, such as the planned the Mouth of the Creek Park,
- Connected bike lanes, and would like to see the network expanded.

Participants said they dislike:

- Areas under the Gardiner here because are dirty (with litter and bird droppings) and left flooded or muddy after the rain.
- Areas that seem unsupportive of public spaces and connected pathways. For example, there are no sidewalks on Housey Street.
- Long wait times for pedestrian crossings.
- Dangerous pedestrian crossings at off- and on-ramps.
- Construction barriers that act as barriers to pedestrians.
- Unprogrammed spaces where there is not much to do.
- A few participants noted that car traffic conflicts with pedestrians particularly when drivers will make right turns at no-turning-on-red intersections.

Ideas and suggestions shared by participants:

- Mitigate traffic noise near residences
- Add outdoor cultural event and/or performance spaces. These spaces could accommodate food trucks, live music, and other artistic events.
- Use the under-utilized space under the Gardiner to the east of Dan Leckie Way; and between Queens Wharf and Bathurst. Suggestions include: a fenced dog park, market space, basketball or tennis courts, or general public space.
- Add sidewalks to the south side of Front between Spadina and Bathurst.
- Add an eastbound ramp down from the rail corridor pedestrian bridge.
- Turn Housey into a woonerf.

Toronto Terrace

Participants said they like:

- The pedestrian crossing at Spadina and Lakeshore because there is a rapid movement for pedestrians, bikes, and cars without having to wait long compared to Jarvis. However, others said this intersection is difficult, feels unsafe and they would like to see better markings, signage and lights installed.

Participants said they dislike:

- The walkway in Southern Linear Park is not well maintained and should have better lighting.
- Disconnected pathway at the south side of Roundhouse Park.
- The pedestrian crosswalk timer is too short at Spadina and Lake Shore.

Ideas and suggestions shared by participants:

- Widen the sidewalk on the north side of Lake Shore west of Lower Simcoe. It is currently a pinch point and cannot fit wheelchairs or motorized wheelchairs.
- Connect the sidewalk on the north side of Lake Shore Boulevard West between Rees Street and Spadina Avenue to the walkway in Southern Linear Park.
- Replant the trees that were at the northwest corner of Lower Simcoe Street and Lake Shore Boulevard West.
- Add traffic lights at Rees and Bremner for pedestrian safety.

Glass Gardiner

Participants said they like:

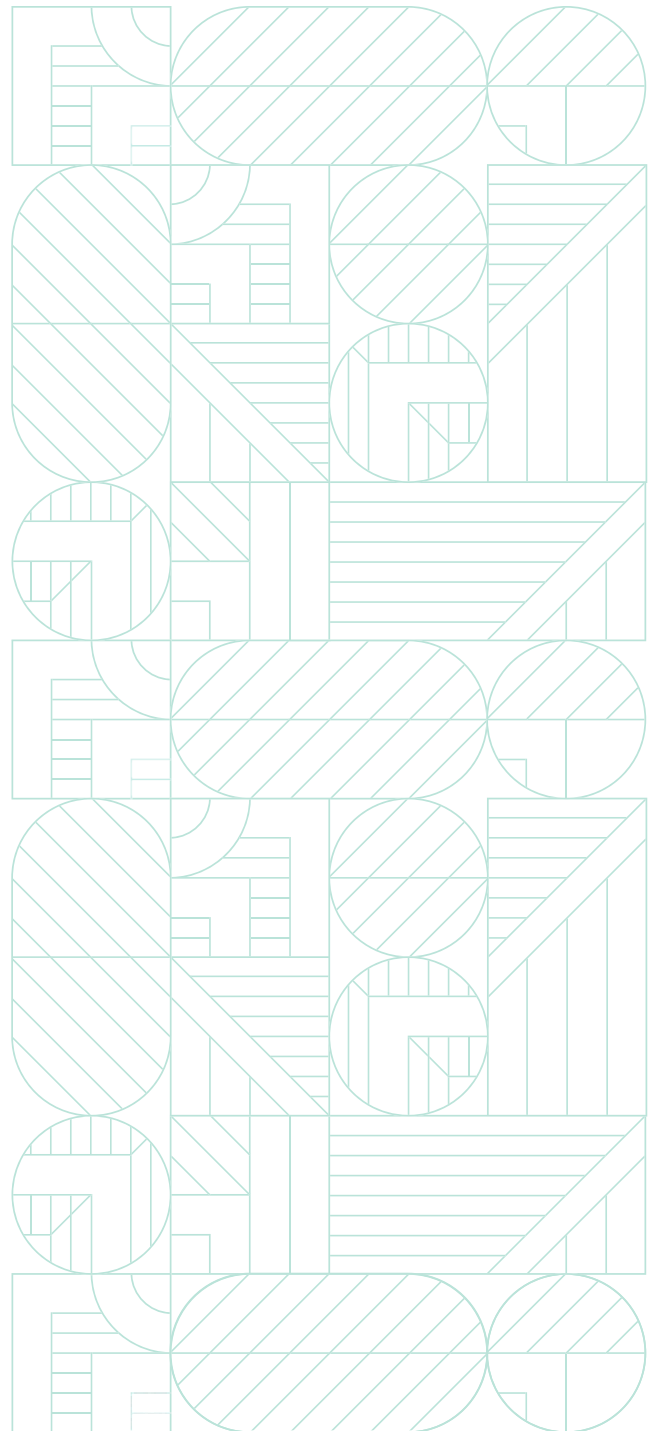
- The continuous weather protection from the canopies/shelters on the west side of Bay south of Lake Shore; as well as the We the North mural.

Participants said they dislike:

- The crossing at Lake Shore at Bay because there is a high volume of pedestrians walking to and from Union Station.
- Overcrowded sidewalks right next to a high-speed roadway which contributes to an unpleasant and potentially dangerous pedestrian experience.

Ideas and suggestions shared by participants:

- Add more landscaping, such as bioswales, street trees, vines, and green walls, on the north and south side of Lake Shore. This could also dampen noise from the traffic and add visual interest to the street. Replant the planter box at the northeast corner of Lower Simcoe and Lake Shore.
- Improve the street lighting along Lake Shore between Spadina to Cherry. Many of the streetlights on the pillars of the Gardiner are out and should be replaced with brighter lights. The light fixtures are currently very dusty and dim.
- Explore opportunities to expand sidewalks by removing bus laybys and low volume turning channels and off- and on-ramps and consider narrowing the road along Bay Street.



OTHER FEEDBACK

Participants also shared a number of comments about spaces and actions that are outside of the scope of the Under Gardiner PRP.

The following represents the range of participant feedback about topics and priorities beyond the scope of this study:

What's working well and/or liked

- Safe and connected cycling infrastructure like the cycle tracks on Wellington Street or the separated bike lanes on Fort York Boulevard.
- Roundhouse Park because of the play spaces for kids.

What's not working well and/or could be improved

- Disconnected pathways, such the dirt path between Queens Wharf and Bathurst, and the stairs to nowhere east of the Garrison Crossing path at Wellington.
- No pedestrian crossing at the south side of Front and Spadina.

Opportunities, suggestions for improvement, and ideas for the future

- Expanding public space by decking over the rail corridor, replacing surface parking lots, or removing/replacing streets (such as Fleet Street).
- Open the Island Yacht Club dock at Queens Quay and Dan Leckie Way to the public and add restaurants, shops, and activities.
- Connect the outer piers along the waterfront to create a seamless waterfront trail.
- Deck over the parking lot beside Jack Layton Ferry Terminal to expand the park space.
- Build the park at the foot of Yonge Street, east of the slip on the west side of 25 Queens Quay, in accordance with the Waterfront Plan.
- Open the "highline" park on the roof of the Hydro Substation at the Roundhouse.
- Suggestions to improve public transit (like constructing the Waterfront East LRT).
- Adding a toll or congestion charge to the Gardiner.
- Find ways to address traffic congestion and bottlenecks (for example, adding double turning lanes on busy routes and alleviating the long car line-ups).
- Remove street parking in Liberty Village to expand the public realm with landscape improvements.

STREET SUMMIT

If The Bentway Phase 1 exists as a proof of concept that the spaces under the Expressway can function as vibrant community assets and productive ecologies, then each program serves as an active consultation opportunity, and a chance to build relationships with and learn directly from the community.

One such example of this active consultation was the Street Summit, a two-day event hosted in May 2022 under the Gardiner at The Bentway’s Strachan Gate, that challenged traditional understandings of city streets and asked how we can create a more inclusive, equitable, and joyful public realm.

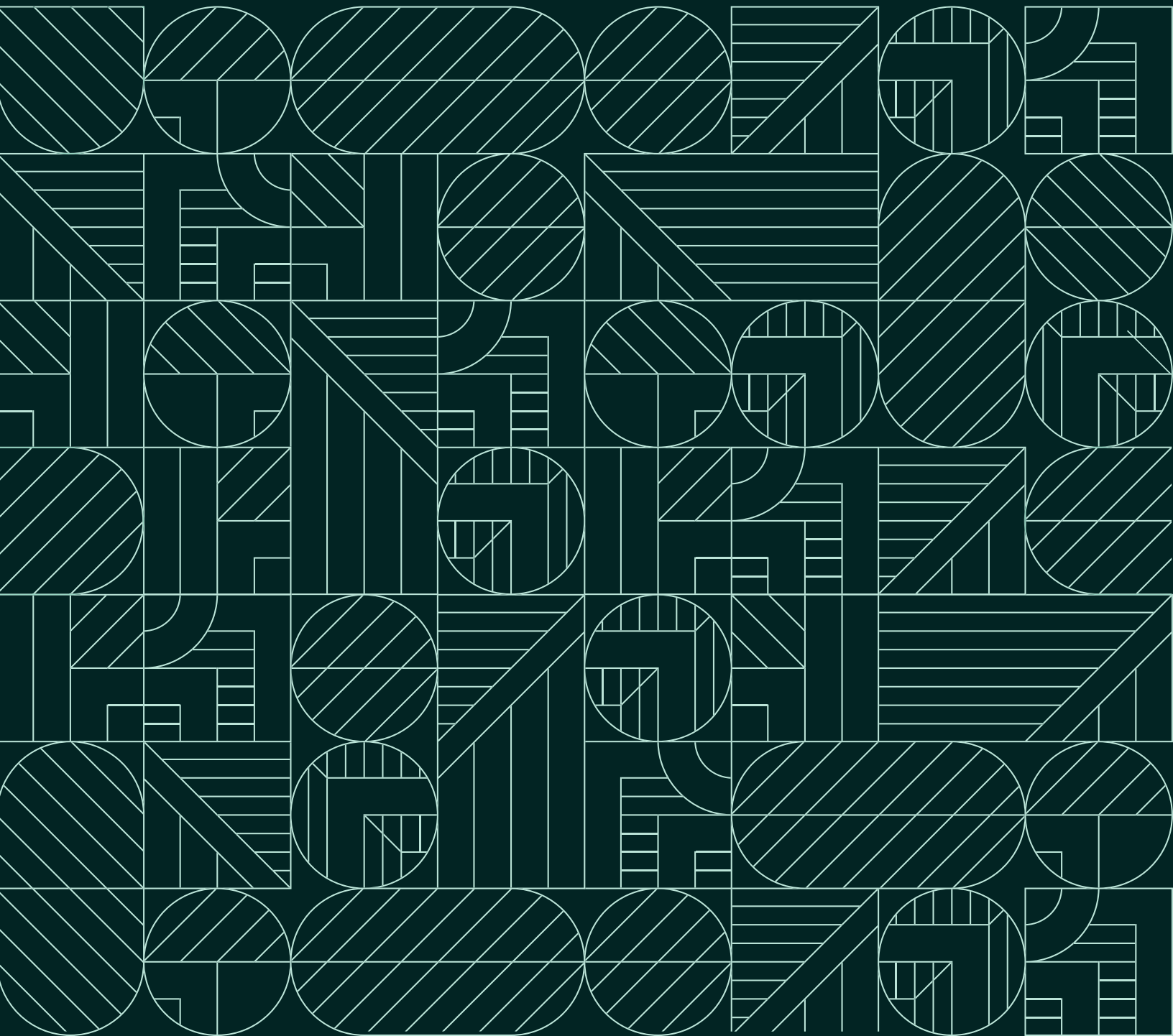
Equal parts conference, workshop, artistic intervention, and party, this free public event assembled local and international neighbours, urbanists, designers, researchers, city-builders, and artists alike to collectively explore familiar arteries and their potential for broader social, cultural, and political transformations.

This program served as a forum to collect public feedback on the transformation of The Bentway Phase 1 site as well as the improvements could best be scaled across the under-Gardiner corridor. During the Summit, many respondents contributed to the creation of a collective under Gardiner map, while participating in discussions and workshops about green streets, equitable design and collective governance.

The Street Summit illustrates how by leveraging the power of arts, culture, recreation and educational programming we can influence common understandings of the relationships with the built environment and continually demonstrate the capacity of engaged communities



ROUND TWO CONSULTATION SUMMARY



ROUND TWO CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

Following the first round of consultation, the Project Team continued building upon the work by incorporating feedback into the draft plan and sharing it in a series of focused meetings and open houses.

These included monthly TAC Meetings with various city departments, focused stakeholder meetings with representatives from both public and private sectors, targeted discussions with key stakeholders including representatives from different City Divisions, local BIAs surrounding the Gardiner Expressway, design consultants, and a series of semi-structured interviews with unhoused individuals using the space.

Afterwards, the refinements to the draft plan culminated in an interactive exhibit that outlined key frameworks for the future of the PRP that expanded on design strategies, a new baseline of continuous elements throughout the Under Gardiner, and priority projects per each district. These emerging opportunities were shared with the public

in a series of Open Houses held at The Bentway's Atrium space beside Canoe Landing Park hosted every Tuesday from January 17 to February 7, 2023, where visitors were encouraged to give their feedback to the plan. Members of the public were also able to view Open House materials and participate online from January 17 to February 21.



The Project Team conducted outreach for this event through their mailing list as well as the UG PRP mailing list, the project website, signage and info panels posted within the community (at the skate trail, outside The Bentway studio, and at the Canoe Landing community centre), their own networks, and via social media ads and organic posts.

Frontier synthesized the following takeaways based on the conversation, feedback, and engagement during the second round of stakeholder roundtables and comments collected by the Project Team during the open house sessions and through online form submissions. Frontier also assisted the Project Team's engagement efforts by collaboratively creating the interactive elements and designing the exhibition for the open house sessions.



ROUND TWO OUTREACH "AT A GLANCE"

October 2022 to February 2023

Asynchronous Tactics

Website Pageviews

2,000+

eNewsletter Recipients

11,900+

Synchronous Tactics

Stakeholder Meeting Participants

60+

Open House Participants

120+ over 4 sessions

Sticky Notes Posted

270+

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

A series of 5 stakeholder meetings were held from November 17-23, 2023, in which the Project Team presented elements of the new baseline and potential priority projects along the length of the Under Gardiner for the groups to discuss and give feedback.

These meetings were held virtually, and each meeting focused on one specific district under the Gardiner, with participants including representatives from both the City and private organizations in each respective area. The following is a high-level summary of the discussion that took place in each meeting, stakeholders shared the following:

Bentway–Fort York

- Safety and comfort elements were emphasized as being highly important
- Wayfinding and connections are important in creating gateways from the Under Gardiner to the rest of the city
- There was appreciation for how landings help make the space easier to travel through by separating long spaces into fewer, shorter stretches

Under Gardiner Islands

- Safety was highlighted as a key component for individuals travelling to, and from, the airport
- Spadina Crossing is a major pinch point, especially with the streetcar route that makes this crossing complicated. Increasing the safety of these crossings and extending the same functionality to other locations will help residents trying to reach the waterfront
- The proposed crossings throughout this district will require further study to ensure they can still function as major arteries throughout the city, especially in terms of traffic levels and safety
- There are exciting opportunities in the Spadina Island with in its proximity to other parks and areas of interest, and it presents an opportunity to create a second Bentway-like space

Toronto Terrace

- Electric vehicle charging stations emerged as a potential new amenity for consideration
- Safety and lighting were highlighted as key priorities
- The infrastructure of the Under Gardiner will need ongoing maintenance and repair and is a priority to ensure the safety of the space
- Noise and wind are important factors in the experience of these spaces
- The future of Rees Park and the connections surrounding it will require more detailed planning
- There are limited opportunities in this area for safe crossings without major changes, which will require more exploration with TTC representatives
- The structural feasibility, maintenance, and public access of the Blue-Green Medians is a key consideration

Glass Gardiner District

- The stadium traffic and ramps are a high-traffic space, and any opportunities to improve them are greatly desired
- Discussion around potential challenges in implementation, timing, and creating consistency when coordinating with different stakeholders
- There is a desire for a consistent identity along the Yonge-Lake Shore Expanded portal and to make the space feel more like a hub

Exhibition West Anchor

- Desire for the wayfinding system to integrate into the city's broader wayfinding strategies
- Lighting emerged as a major topic for these spaces, with the plan proposing to create a more welcoming experience for pedestrian visitors
- Safety and comfort are also key priorities
- Exhibition is a key area for TTC operations, and longer-term goals for it will require more study and collaboration with TTC representatives
- Proposed ideas are high-level and will require further study, with planning that aligns with other city projects in the future

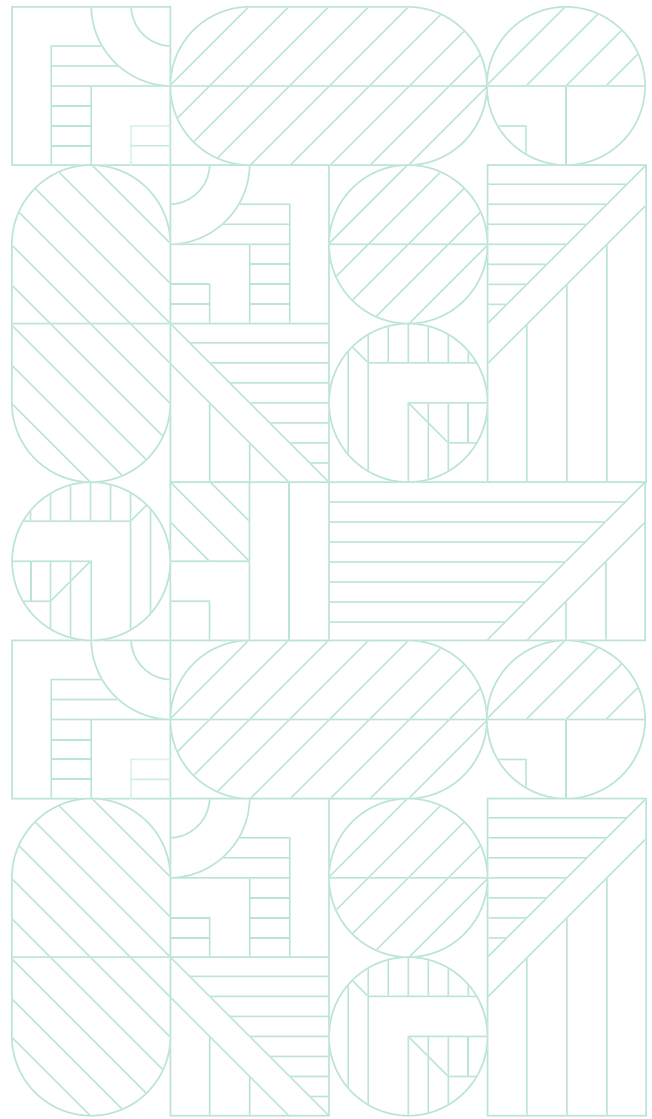


EXHIBIT OPEN HOUSE

A series of four open-house sessions were held at The Bentway's Studio Atrium, taking place weekly every Tuesday 3:00-7:00 PM from January 17 to February 7, 2023.

The open house sessions took the form of an interactive exhibition, with materials that included prompt questions for participants to give feedback by writing and posting sticky notes. These sessions were each facilitated by Project Team members and showed key design considerations and emerging opportunities for each district along the Under Gardiner.

The open houses engaged with the public to gather their feedback and helped focus and refine the opportunities identified to date. Exhibit materials were also published on the project website to allow those unable to attend in person to give their feedback on the emerging opportunities through an online form available from January 17 until February 21st.



HIGH-LEVEL TAKEAWAYS

The following points are high-level takeaways that summarize the detailed takeaways in the following section. These high-level takeaways are intended to be read alongside the detailed takeaways.

BASELINE ELEMENTS

What is a Baseline Element?

The baseline elements are a suite of streetscape enhancements including, street furnishings and public space amenities which are being proposed as a means of improving the conditions and experience below the elevated expressway. Think of these as the kit of parts, from which an improved public realm will be made.

There was lots of engagement with the rainwater management aspect of Productive Ecology.

Many participants were excited about reducing water pollution and managing rainwater runoff, especially in potentially reusing the water

to support plant life, reducing flooding, and improving the pedestrian experience.

There was lots of enthusiasm for more seating as an important aspect of Safety and Comfort.

More public seating and thoughtfully designed furnishings to help increase the usability of public spaces for rest, socializing, and recreational activities.

Many participants commented on a need for more publicly accessible water fountains and washrooms as part of Predictable Amenities.

In particular, washrooms should be clean and well maintained, easily accessible to the public, and inclusive to all genders.



EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES BY DISTRICT

What is an Emerging Opportunity?

Emerging Opportunities are proposed projects identified by the Project Team that respond to the unique challenges and opportunities present at the site they're located. These are all opportunities subject to further study, planning, and approvals.

Exhibition West Anchor

Many participants focused on improvements to transit connectivity and better crossings, increasing access to public transport and bike trails and pedestrian paths.

Bentway – Fort York

Many participants were excited about the recommendation to build a bridge and encourage more cyclist and pedestrian travel, as well as creating safer crossings and trails.

Under Gardiner Islands

Many participants commented on the potential to introduce more cultural programming, community spaces, and retail opportunities into the space, as well as improving safety along major crossings in the district.

Toronto Terrace

Many participants commented on building additional trails, as well as mitigating stormwater runoff and pollution and enthusiasm for bioswale medians.

Glass Gardiner

Many participants focused on improvements to the pedestrian experience and safer crosswalks, as well as the potential to create more vibrant cultural spaces in the Yonge and Lake Shore area.



DETAILED TAKEAWAYS

BASELINE ELEMENTS

Safety and Comfort

This category of baseline elements received the most engagement from participants

- Most comments agreeing that more seating was needed
- Ideas for seating included creative and thoughtfully-designed seating areas to encourage socializing, set-ups for family and friends, the aging population, creating spaces to rest, and using warm materials for sitting surfaces like wood
- Some participants disagreed about seating in relation to populations experiencing homelessness, with one comment about avoiding the area becoming a homeless camp, and others commenting to add places for the houseless to rest and sleep, and creating compassionately designed structures that double as shelter for our neighbours experiencing homelessness
- Traffic calming was another area that many participants agreed was important, with safety being a key priority. Comments included safer crossings for cyclists, improving pedestrian safety, and safer pedestrian crossing infrastructure including mirrors at pedestrian crosswalks due to restricted sight-lines
- Participants also agreed that more traffic calming was needed and shared comments about slowing traffic, reducing lines, and enforcing max speeds of 30km/h, particularly around the school

- Comments about pedestrian lighting include making the lighting beautiful, that it should be creative and designed by local artists
- Lighting was also noted to be important in creating safer conditions for pedestrians, women and families



Predictable Amenities

This category received the second-most engagement

- Most comments focusing on increased access to washrooms and water fountains
- Many comments agreed that there was a lack of publicly accessible washrooms, including comments that mention they're incredibly lacking downtown in general, that clean toilet facilities are essential, and that these are necessary services that will allow the public to enjoy the space without time constraints
- Participants agreed that washrooms needed for more routine maintenance and to expand public access and inclusivity for these amenities
- Participants also commented on more spaces and infrastructure to support cyclists, such as e-bike charging stations, tool theft prevention, adequate lighting, multi-modal connections via bike locking areas, and softer bike racks so bikes don't get scratched up
- There were also comments about increasing public wifi access, namely that it should be a human right in today's world and to consider creating a unified under Gardiner Wifi system, and to create more device charging stations co-located with comfortable seating.

Productive Ecology

This category also received a similar quantity of comments as the previous two categories.

- The majority of comments were about rainwater management, including that it's a huge opportunity for the Gardiner to serve as a sustainable precedent for storm water management at-scale, filtering pollutants and treating the water before it reaches the lake, and using rainwater to support plant life
- Participants agreed about reducing the flooding that happens at Canoe Landing Park and Spadina

& Lake Shore, that it's important in improving the pedestrian experience, that it's useful to add to the walkability of the area year-round

- Comments about perennial and native plants include that it should be stewarded by the Indigenous community, and ideas for community gardens to help reduce wait times for city gardens, a community warden/foraging to pick fruits and edible plants
- Participants also commented about re-wilding and planting more trees along the Gardiner, sharing ideas about tree and plant re-use in creating a circular economy, and that productive ecology should be the # 1 priority throughout these public spaces.

Wayfinding & Identity

- Participants liked the idea of consistent bent numbers and commented that it's unique and helps unify The Bentway and is great for wayfinding, adding ideas to identify different sectors by colour and to incorporate StreetArt decorations to deter graffiti
- Commentors agreed on the benefit of more connectivity, that it's important for encouraging pedestrian use and access, and that a multi-use trail will support more people to see the area
- There were a few comments about implementing the reflective intersection treatments, and that it's helpful with driver and pedestrian safety

BY DISTRICT

Exhibition West Anchor

Emerging Opportunities

The last station of the Ontario Line is planned at Exhibition Place, which will create a major transit hub on the western edge of downtown, resulting in new and faster connections for local and regional travelers. The Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan explores improved active transportation links in this area to strengthen first mile/last mile connection and multi-modal interfaces, as well as opportunities for adjacent cultural and recreational activities.

Multi-modal Transit Plaza

- This proposed project received the highest level of engagement for this district, with commenters agreeing that this area could benefit from more mixed-use and transit-oriented developments, improved connectivity to Ontario Place, and public realm improvements align key access points
- A few comments also mentioned increasing public space and ideas for more amenities, including local retail opportunities, convenience stores, seating, tables, bike fixing stations, e-bike charging, and transit card machines

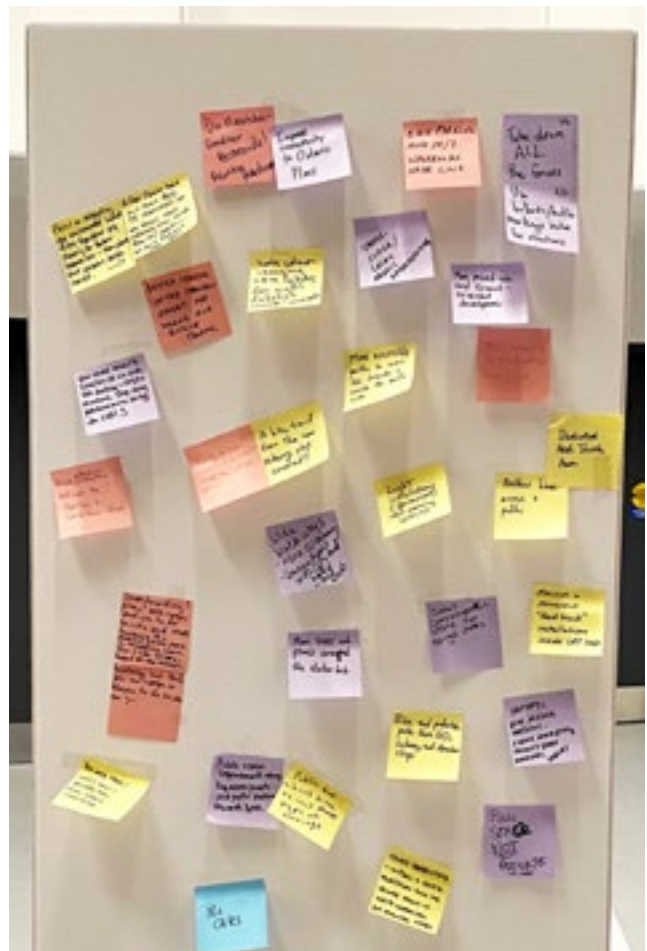
Manitoba-Under Gardiner Redesign

- This project received a close second amount of comments in volume, with lots of agreement on the benefit of bike and transit paths. Ideas include bike and pedestrian paths from GO, subway, and streetcar stops, a covered bike trail from the subway stop, more accessible paths to cross the tracks, and more transit connections

- A few comments also mentioned light installations for evening walks and to create safety and warmth
- A few commenters suggested a dedicated food truck area inside the LRT loop

Strachan Gateway

- A number of comments suggested to prioritize pedestrians, create trail connections, and create better crossings for walking and bicycle traffic and to create a direct pedestrian crossing between The Bentway and Exhibition place
- Additional suggestions include bike parking, 24/7 washrooms, and a space for skateboarding with ramps and blocks



Bentway – Fort York

Emerging Opportunities

The presence of The Bentway and the Fort York Visitors Centre are proof of the untapped potential for public space below the elevated highway. The Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan looks to build on these successes by extending connections to nearby communities.

Bentway Bridge & Landing

- This proposed project received the majority of comments within this district, with many commenters excited about building the bridge and how it allows seamless access to other paths and parks, and ideas to create more visitor/venue/storage space, playgrounds, or coffee shops
- There was some disagreement about how cycling should be implemented on the bridge, with some suggesting that it should be wide enough to allow cyclists and pedestrians to move without conflicts and to make it bicycle-friendly, while others commented to discourage fast cycling or to build a separate bridge for bikes
- A few comments also highlight the need for ongoing maintenance for cleanup, garden maintenance, and water overflow

Bathurst Crossing

- Participants agreed that there was a need for better pedestrian connections, specifically North/South connections and crossing Bathurst Street, as well as creating more safety at night with well-lit trails
- Other ideas include encouraging year-round transit along The Bentway, improving streetcar/bus access in this area, and spotlighting Indigenous history pre-Fort York

Shoreline Trail Extension

- Participants focused on transit and connections for this project, with comments that include improving wayfinding and pedestrian access, minimizing conflict among pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, reducing vehicular noise, addressing water issues that make it unpleasant for walking and cycling, and connecting it to the Iceboat Terrace Trail, and to keep extending The Bentway



Under Gardiner Islands

Emerging Opportunities

Strengthened connections, expanded park networks, and new amenities for retail and recreation could further enhance the public realm and better serve the surrounding vertical neighbourhoods. By expanding the existing Canoe Landing Park into Under Gardiner space, the Public Realm Plan recommends additional opportunities for retail, recreation, and cultural programming.

Spadina Crossing Improvements

- Participants agreed that safety was a key concern, with comments that this crossing needs major improvements and suggesting more crossings East-West and North-South
- Comments also agreed that pedestrian lights at Lake Shore and the Gardiner entrance are out of sync with traffic flow and are too short, especially for elderly people, differently-abled people, or children using the crossing, and to create more cycling infrastructure at the crossing
- Some comments mention noise level reduction on the Gardiner and to reduce the pollution from cars in this area

Spadina Island

- This district received the highest number of comments, with this project receiving the most engagement
- Participants were most focused on the opportunity for events, cultural, and retail space, with a number of comments that suggest community spaces for events or food trucks, farmers markets, hosting events that connect to waterfront, festive rentals, integrating live music, and pavilion retail opportunities
- Commentors also shared ideas for creating more leisure spaces in this area, including interactive amenities for residences, diverse/multicultural spaces, art displays, splash park, colourful play spaces, and resting/picnic areas
- A number of comments agreed that spaces for kids were important for the schools in the area, suggesting wider walkways and more seating areas, playgrounds, and food vendors



Dan Leckie-Lake Shore Triangle

- There were a number of comments suggesting more spaces for cultural programming and leisure activities, such as a skateboard park, child-friendly and teenager-friendly infrastructure, and art or video installations
- Some participants disagreed on dog parks in this area, with some comments calling for off-leash areas, while others stated that there's no need for more dog parks
- Participants agreed on creating more connections, including to extend Canoe Landing Park and connecting it to Spadina, and connecting Queen's Quay to the school
- Participants noted a need for traffic calming, protected bike lanes, reducing unsafe car movement and to improve the experience for pedestrians and cyclists, and noted that the area is not lit enough and can feel unsafe during nights



Toronto Terrace

Emerging Opportunities

While iconic Toronto landmarks like the CN Tower, the Rogers Center, and Ripley's Aquarium are located within metres of Lake Ontario, it is incredibly difficult to actually get to the waterfront from any of these major attractions. An improved public realm along, and under, the Gardiner Expressway could mitigate the existing barriers, and re-connect these iconic landmarks.

Enhanced South Trail

- This project received the highest level of engagement from commenters in this district, with notes about trails that are fully separated from traffic, ensuring multiple wide trails to accommodate game-day crowds, to build a trail for bikes and walking traffic from Spadina to Love Park, and to ensure lots of different trees and plants lining the trail
- Comments also mentioned bioswales for drainage and maintaining stormwater infrastructure
- A few comments also highlighted maps and better signage and wayfinding, especially for tourists and high traffic in the summer

The Wall of Toronto

- Comments agree that this is an iconic area for tourists, making it a high priority to get it right
- Comments also agree that there's a need for improved safety, especially for kids and at pedestrian crossings

Blue-Green Medians

- A number of comments mention connections to Roundhouse Park, including suggestions for stairs down from Roundhouse with an Elevated walkway between Lake Shore to access the South side, or an accessible ramp instead of stairs from Roundhouse park, and a green path behind Roundhouse leading to Simcoe
- Commenters shared an excitement for the bioswale medians, with suggestions for a children's garden in the medians, and that at least 50% of space should be earmarked for bioswales and vegetation to detox Gardiner runoff throughout all areas



Glass Gardiner

Emerging Opportunities

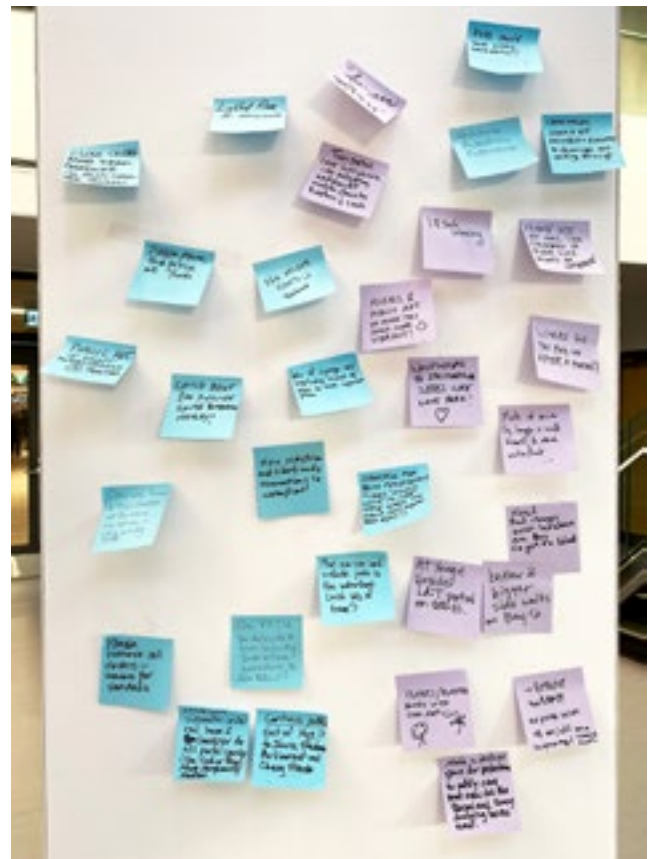
This section of the Corridor reflects a critical mass of new development and activity. The public realm below the Gardiner coexists with residential towers, office buildings, major sports venues, and the Union GO Bus terminal at CIBC Square. With such a range of users and an ever-increasing demand for space, the Public Realm Plan seeks to increase pedestrian safety as well as comfort for residents, employees, and all those looking to access and enjoy waterfront amenities and cultural destinations.

Yonge / Lake Shore Expanded Portal

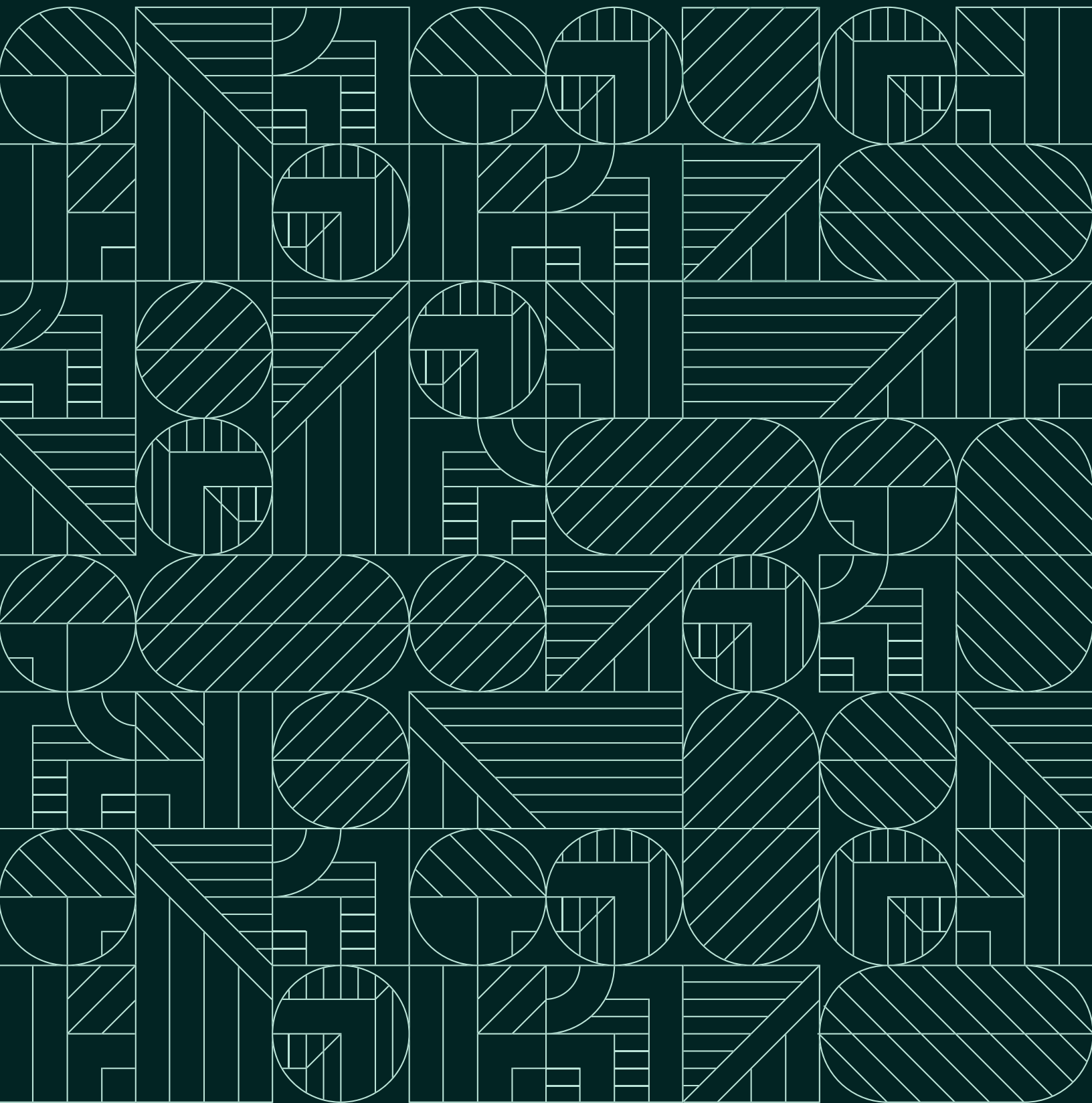
- Participants commented on creating more programming in this area, with suggestions for murals and public art to make this area more vibrant, planter boxes with cool art, to turn portal near Scotiabank into tailgating and play-off watch space for Raptors & Leafs games, and more wayfinding to spectacular sites like Love Park
- A few comments agreed that safer crossings are needed, with longer crosswalk times to reach waterfront, and to make a defined space for pedestrians to safely cross past the new Go Bus terminal
- Other suggestions include bigger and better sidewalks on Bay Street, a potential pedestrian ramp over Lake Shore on Bay, a LRT portal on Queens Quay East, to remove the ramp to the highway, and to add more litter receptacles and signage for CIBC Square

Waterfront Reconnect Portals (x5)

- A number of comments agreed that the pedestrian experience needs to be prioritized in this area, with feedback mentioning that it's stressful for both pedestrians and cars, that there's so much commuter tension and to close on/off ramps to/from Gardiner, to create more pedestrian and bike friendly connections to waterfront, more non-car and walkable paths to the waterfront
- A few comments agreed on creating safer crosswalks, with suggestions about painting, raising, or lighted crosswalks, and ensuring wide sidewalks for portal crossings
- Other comments include public art and light installations, lots of signage and wayfinding around the area to mark important places, public washrooms, and a bus shelter at the Southwest corner of Simcoe to protect from the wind



CONCLUSION



Public consultation is a key component of this process in ensuring that the draft plan is as inclusive, accessible, and serves as many communities as possible.

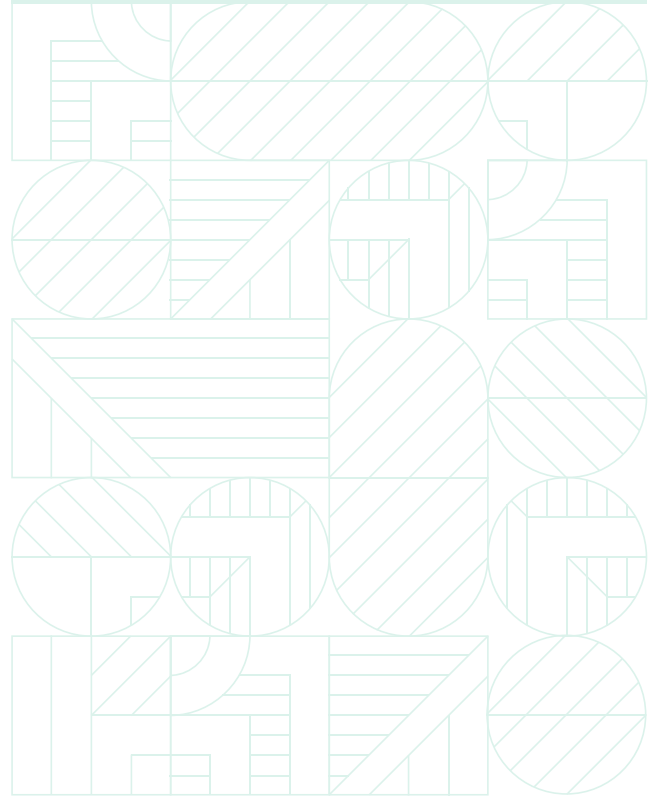
The process has taken place over the span of a year and included surveys, interactive digital engagements, mail campaigns, focused stakeholder meetings, and facilitated events and outreach. As a result, the Project Team has gathered a wide range of feedback from a diverse group of participants across both public and private sectors.

Following these two rounds of consultations, the Project Team will synthesize the feedback gathered and use it to inform and further evolve the emerging opportunities for the Under Gardiner PRP, which will go into a revised draft for the City review. The Under Gardiner PRP is a long-term guiding document, outlining emerging opportunities for future study and projects that may be realized upon future budget and Council decisions. Additional future consultations will be conducted to improve and refine detailed plans. The Under Gardiner PRP will ultimately be finalized by the City for Council decision and identify areas for further study and development.

Next Steps

Thanks to all who took the time to engage with this consultation process. From here the project team will be working to finalize the recommendations of the Public Realm Plan, informed by the ideas and feedback gathered through this process.

If you're interested in receiving updates about the PRP, you can do so by clicking [this link](#).



UNDER GARDINER PUBLIC REALM PLAN

