

Canadian Brownfields Case Study

The Bentway



Source: Cogley, 2019

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Bentway won the 2018 Brownie Award in “Financing, Risk Management and Partnerships”, which is an innovative approach to obtain capital financing for the purpose of economic and ecological regeneration. The project is located within the City of Toronto and was operated, facilitated and overseen by the City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto, Judy and Wilmot Matthews, Ken Greenberg Consultants, Public Work, Fort York National Historic Site and Artscape¹. The Bentway project is a new public space that ties together cultural, artistic, and recreational activities and events, including gardens and a skate trail underneath Toronto’s Gardiner Expressway². The Bentway is not a traditional park space, but instead is a new way of incorporating both a public space and transportation network while being located in a very concentrated downtown core. This Brownie Award highlighted projects that use public and private partnerships incentives to leverage investment. A public contribution of \$25-million was made by Judy and Wilmot Matthews to promote and enhance the use of the space. This funding allowed the project to become what it is today: an innovated multi-use public space³.

Site Characteristics and History

The project consists of 1.75 kilometers of multi-use trail and 500 meters of connections to the Exhibition Go Station underneath Toronto’s Gardiner Expressway⁴. The project boundaries are from Strachan Avenue to the west and Spadina Avenue to the East. The trail is used as a network that connects seven downtown neighbourhoods; Exhibition place, Liberty Village,

Niagara, Fort York neighbourhood, Bathurst Quay, Wellington Place and CityPlace⁵. The Bentway has an enriched history as it follows the original shoreline of Lake Ontario from when it was an important junction for trade, hunting and gathering for Indigenous peoples⁶. It is on the Treaty Lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit and is the territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat, the Metis and many other Indigenous

QUICK FACTS

Location

Toronto, Ontario

Project type

Public Space/Park

Site Size

4 hectares and 1.75 kilometers of a multi-use trail

Keywords/special features

Public park, partnership, engagement, donation, public space, multi-use trail and public art, stormwater management

Website

<http://www.thebentway.ca/>

Project address

250 Fort York Boulevard
Toronto, Ontario

Brownfield Awards

2018 Brownie Award Winner: REINVEST - Financing, Risk Management & Partnerships

Author

Brittany Silvaggio

Editors

Christopher De Sousa, Megan Easton, and Isabel Lima

Case studies were prepared as a course assignment by students enrolled in PLG845: Brownfield Reuse & Development, Cleaning up the Past and Building the Future, School of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson University (Winter 2019). Information for the case studies was obtained from online sources, available reports, and, in some cases, site visits and direct communication with stakeholders.

If you are aware of any errors or updates to the case studies, please contact chris.desousa@ryerson.ca.

The opinions expressed in this case study are those of the authors only and do not represent the opinions and views of either Ryerson University, the School of Urban and Regional Planning, or the Canadian Brownfields Network.



nations⁷. The project is maintained and operated by a not-for-profit organization called The Bentway Conservancy. The Bentway Conservancy ensures that the project utilizes the space to increase engagement with the surrounding neighbourhoods, while also including the City as a whole. The Conservancy's goal is to provide an innovative, safe, accessible space while also being fiscally sustainable⁹. The Bentway Conservancy works with the City of Toronto, Fort York National Historic Site, the seven surrounding neighbourhoods and the other private and public partners⁹.

Cleanup

Due to the project being located underneath Toronto's Gardiner Expressway, it has been receiving drainage from the overpass above. This led to soil and groundwater contamination from inorganics and metals, sodium adsorption ratio (SAR) in soil, electrical conductivity (EC) in soil, chloride in groundwater petroleum hydrocarbons (PHCs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)¹⁰. To address this contamination, a risk assessment and risk management plan was prepared. The risk management measures were for the park space surfacing, planted areas, concrete skateboard surfaces and playground. Soil remediation was completed on several areas of the site, as well as extensive air modeling to confirm the safety of the area beneath the Gardiner¹¹.

Financing

The driving force for this public space development started with a generous donation from Judy and Wilmot Matthews of \$25-million in 2015. Matthews presented an idea to the City of Toronto to turn the underutilized space underneath the Gardiner Expressway into a public park¹².

This donation resulted in The Bentway project. Over the term of the project, additional donations have come in from Ira and Maxine Gluskin, Richard M. Ivey, Donald Johnson and Anna McCowan-Johnson, the Langford Family Foundation, Northwood Family Office and Diamond Corp¹³. Although the Matthews' donation was very generous, there were other financial considerations that needed to be reviewed for this project.

The development of the project was conducted in phases. The first phase, which is now



The Bentway in the summer season

complete, was anticipated to cost \$23.8 million¹⁴. In 2016, \$3.0 million of the donation from the Matthews' family was received and \$1.5 million was retained by the Matthews foundation for the expenses related to the project, including communications, program development, legal and administrative costs¹⁵. As for the remaining \$20.5 million, it was expected to be received in 2016 and 2017 in advance for project spending¹⁶. A recommendation of a one-time draw of \$10 million from the City capital funding was made to help support the early stages of the operations and maintenance from the years 2016-2023¹⁷.

Design

The Bentway facilities include various gardens, a skate trail, recreational amenities, space for potential markets, public art and spaces for festivals and other public events¹⁸. Some of the features include a walkway with selective plantings, a staircase that doubles as seating for an outdoor theatre and a wider path for cyclists, skaters and joggers¹⁹. The Bentway project is based on adaptive reuse while tying together the existing architectural elements, like the 5-storey high pillars.

The Bentway in the winter season



being conducted in phases. Phase one of the project is completed and stretches from Strachan Avenue to Fort York Boulevard²⁰. The next phase is underway and will consist of a wooden bridge made from cross-laminated timber that suspends from the underside of the Gardiner Expressway²¹. This will provide a safe crossing and access to Fort York Boulevard. The project plans on linking more destinations to the site from Ontario Place and Exhibition Place, to Harbourfront Centre and the CN Tower²².

Sustainable Features

Stormwater Management:

The project consists of underground servicing and utilities that include sanitary and storm sewers and water mains²³. Green infrastructure of indigenous grasses are intended to be watered by storm run-off from the roadway above²⁴, while also converting the previous grey space to a sustainable green space.

Materials:

The paving system is recycled materials, including construction debris²⁵.

Project Founding Team

Judy and Wilmot Matthews, Ken Greenberg, Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto, Fort York National Historic Site, Public Work, Waterfront Toronto, and Artscape.

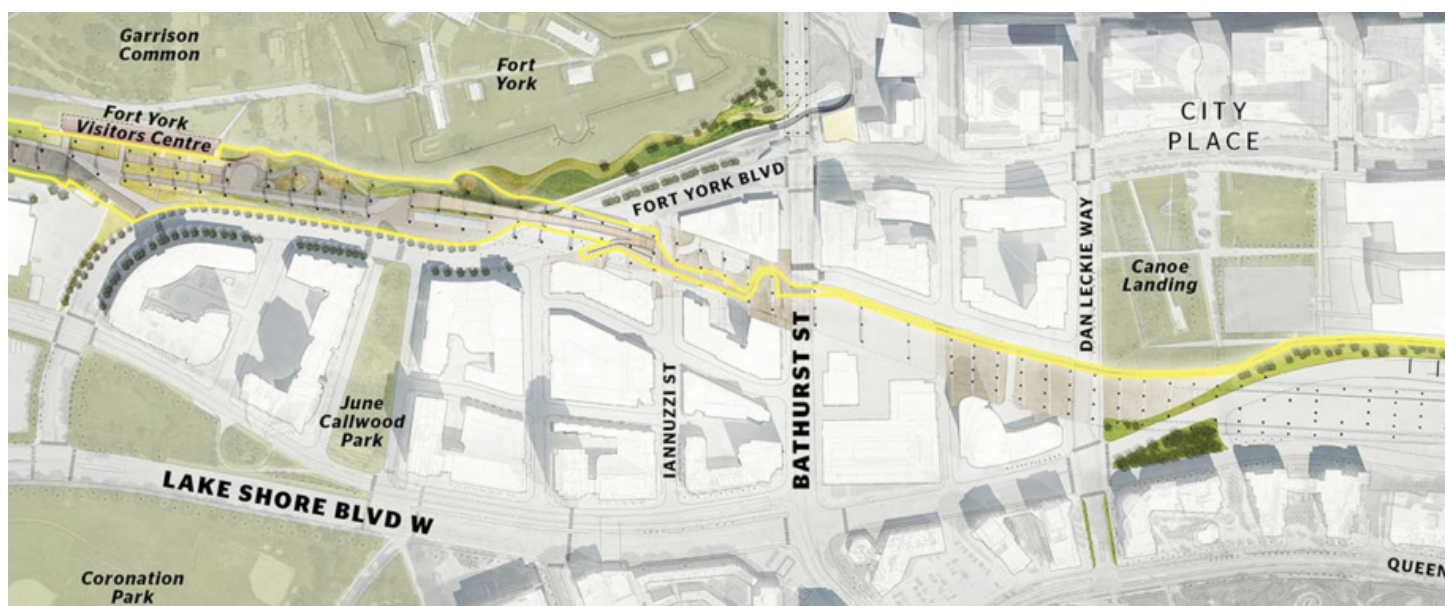
Community involvement

This project is a great example of public support. The driving force for the project began from the generous donation from the Matthews' family of \$25 million. This sparked the collaboration of public and private partnerships. The Bentway project was announced in the fall of 2015²⁶. The community had two different reactions; some were expressing excitement towards the project, while others were concerned with the type of crowd the park could attract²⁷. With the help of Park People, they began guided tours around the site to help engage the public with the project, while also collecting ideas, hopes and concerns from the public²⁸. The Bentway Conservancy is an online tool to voice the project goals while also allowing people to contact them regarding any thoughts or concerns²⁹. Judy and Wilmot Matthews went an extra mile and had the public vote on the project name. The Bentway began as "Project: Under the Gardiner", while a naming campaign was underway. The naming campaign aimed to tell a new story for the Gardiner³⁰. There was a list of 815 names presented from the public and a panel of 12 Torontonians who were familiar with Toronto's history. The panel drew 4 unique names, The Canopy, The Bentway, Gathering Place and The Artery³¹. Ultimately, the Bentway won due to its tribute to the unique columns and beams that now reflect the architecture of the public space today.

Observations and Lessons learned

The Bentway Project was able to transform an underutilized brownfield space into an innovative public space. This public park project was able to change the idea of park space. The Bentway was able to tie in surrounding neighbourhoods, while also providing unique and transformative design. This space provides public engagement through its recreational space, public events and artistic popups. What makes this project unique is that it was not driven by the City, but instead was initiated by Judy and Wilmot Matthews. The Matthews' donation inspired the City to develop an idea and vision of what is now known as The Bentway. This public space is an advocate and representation of sustainable adaptive reuse through public engagement.

However, this also begs the question as to why it took a donation, rather than the use of the Park, Forestry and Recreation reserve fund, to make this possible in the City of Toronto. This project will hopefully drive Toronto to develop more innovative and unique park/public spaces such as this one. The Bentway has shown cultural and social benefits through its unique and sustainable design. Toronto should use The Bentway as a template for future designs as it continues to be an urban, social gathering space that represents public artists and the diverse character of Toronto.



Scale and Neighbourhood Connections of the Bentway Project

Source: The Bentway, About The Bentway, 2019

Endnotes

- 1 About The Bentway - The Bentway. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.thebentway.ca/about/>
- 2 2018 Brownies Winners - Canadian Brownfields Network. (2019). Retrieved from <https://canadianbrownfieldsnetwork.ca/brownfield-awards/brownies/2018-brownies-winners>
- 3 Ibid
- 4 About The Bentway - The Bentway. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.thebentway.ca/about/>
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Home - The Bentway. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.thebentway.ca>
- 9 Ibid
- 10 2018 Brownies Winners - Canadian Brownfields Network. (2019). Retrieved from <https://canadianbrownfieldsnetwork.ca/brownfield-awards/brownies/2018-brownies-winners>
- 11 Ibid
- 12 Immen, W. (2017). Under-the-Gardiner park draws \$25-million from a modest donor. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/no-name-attached-why-some-donors-avoid-the-limelight/article35247943/>
- 13 Home - The Bentway. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.thebentway.ca>
- 14 Kusturin, D. (2016). Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee – November 30, 2016 Item 8c – The Bentway Segment 1 (Strachan to Bathurst) - Project Cost, Schedule and Risk Reporting. Retrieved from https://waterfronttoronto.ca/nbe/wcm/connect/waterfront/2d0e8e54-d47b-4f51-8443-b39e758f61b5/item_8c___the_bentway_segment_1_project_update_11_30_16_consolidated_1.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&fbclid=IwAR3vGC1vgikMBch23L1L5PU9ZvYBsVdUnstmi aO-koob7-cu5hcSzMDBuVQ
- 15 "Governance And Funding Options For Project: Under Gardiner And Class Environmental Assessment For Crossing Of Fort York Boulevard". Toronto, Ca, 2016, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-94187.pdf>. Accessed 29 Mar 2019.
- 16 Ibid
- 17 Cogley, B. (2019). The Bentway park opens under Toronto's Gardiner Expressway. Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2019/03/08/bentway-park-public-work-greenberg-toronto/>
- 18 Ibid
- 19 Ibid
- 20 About The Bentway - The Bentway. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.thebentway.ca/about/>
- 21 Cogley, B. (2019). The Bentway park opens under Toronto's Gardiner Expressway. Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2019/03/08/bentway-park-public-work-greenberg-toronto/>
- 22 Ibid
- 23 Construction Notice. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.thebentway.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Construction-Notice-Bentway.pdf>
- 24 Cogley, B. (2019). The Bentway park opens under Toronto's Gardiner Expressway. Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2019/03/08/bentway-park-public-work-greenberg-toronto/>
- 25 Ibid
- 26 Garrett, J. (2018). The Bentway promised us a lot—and it's delivering. Retrieved from <https://parkpeople.ca/archives/9509>
- 27 Ibid
- 28 Ibid
- 29 Home - The Bentway. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.thebentway.ca>
- 30 How to Name a Public Space that Belongs to the People. (2016) Waterfront Toronto. Retrieved from <http://blog.waterfronttoronto.ca/nbe/portal/wt/home/blog-home/posts/under-gardiner-naming-process>
- 31 Ibid