

Laneways

There are two types of laneways in Downtown Toronto, mixed-use laneways, and residential laneways. The form, character, and public realm potential of each type reflects its unique urban context.

Toronto's mixed-use laneways include service laneways that support high density areas of the Downtown, such as the Financial District, and access laneways, which offer an opportunity to contribute to the Downtown's urban fabric as mid-block connections. These types of laneways can provide unique urban experiences, encouraging tourists and locals to discover the city in a new way. Mixed-use laneways can provide a finer grain pedestrian network to move around the city, offering a relief valve for highly-used streets. They can also be transformed into great places to stay and spend time. Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) in the Downtown have created public realm master plans that include ideas to re-imagine mixed-use laneways along Yonge Street and King Street West. Proposals aim to create

more pedestrian-friendly spaces with improvements that include cafe seating, greenery, and public art.

Toronto's residential laneways represent one of the greatest untapped resources in the city. A network of green laneways that link to the broader parks and public realm system could provide key connections for pedestrians and cyclists, while offering new green space and environmental infrastructure. Cities such as Montreal and Chicago have been successful in activating their residential laneways to create additional public realm and green space.

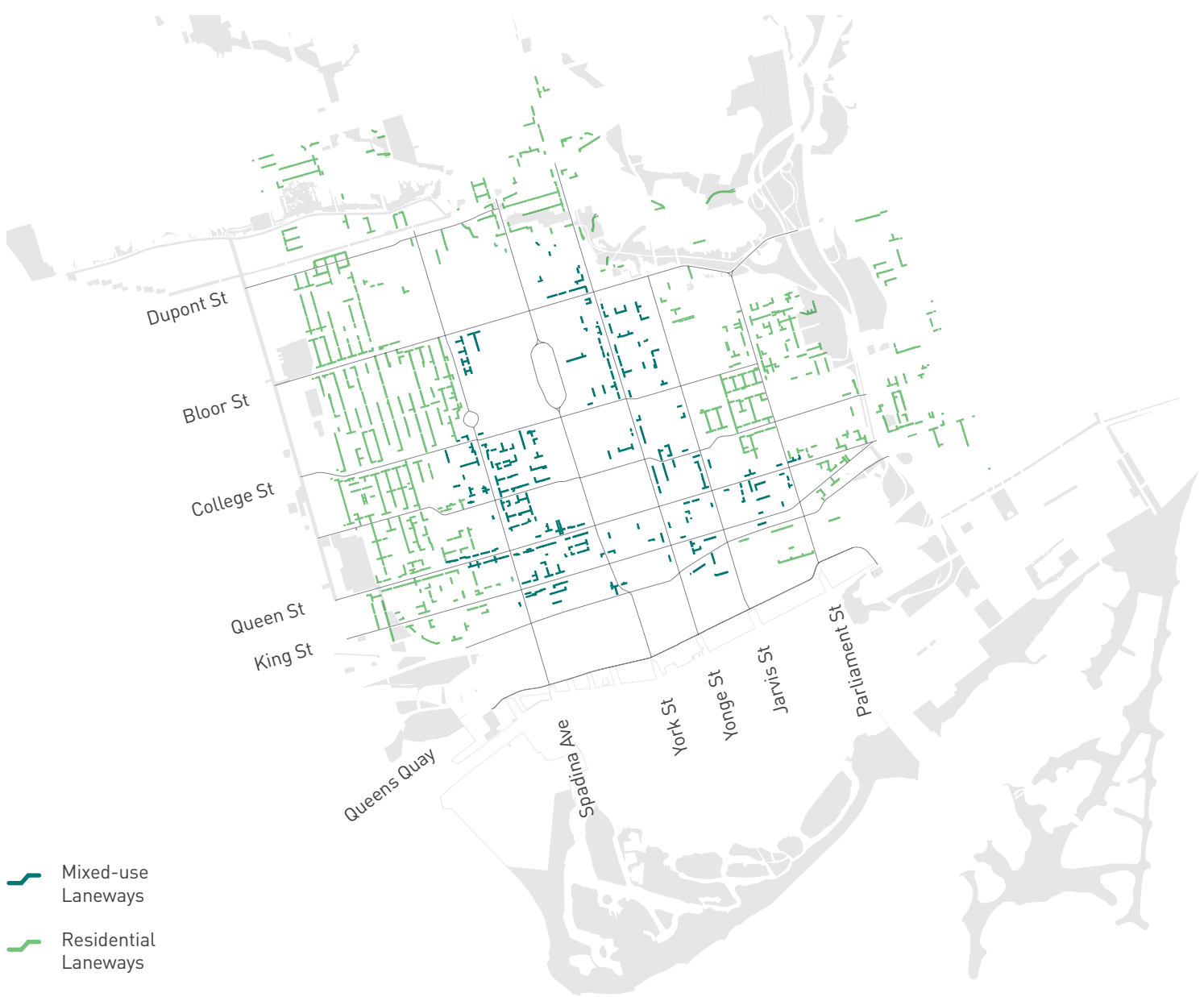
From a straight line to happy wandering:
nurturing a fine grain pedestrian network in
the core.



Residential laneway, Toronto, Canada



(right) Graffiti Alley, 'Love Your Laneway' event, by the Laneway Project, Toronto, Canada

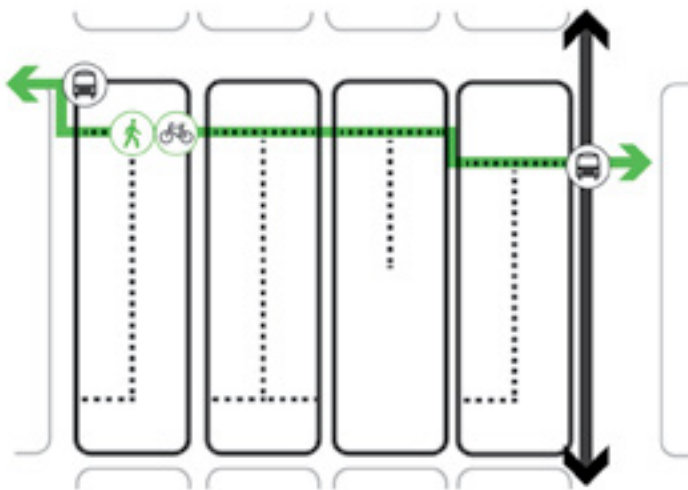


- Mixed-use Laneways
- Residential Laneways

Showing two laneway typologies in Toronto – the character of each type reflects it's unique urban context, Toronto, Canada

Residential Laneways

Opportunity 1: Laneways linking mobility networks



Laneways used by pedestrians and cyclists for commuting, connecting to transit, and creating more neighbourhood, age-and ability- friendly active transportation options.

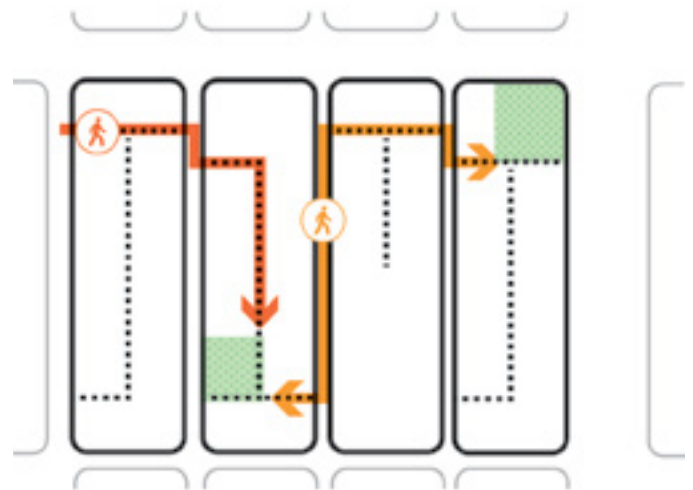
Getting It Done

Create an inviting reason for people to use laneways. Leverage the slower, quieter pace of laneways to invite people in.

Physical: Provide clear signage and messaging. Minimize vehicle through traffic and design for slower speeds. Encourage implementation of green infrastructure where appropriate.

Policy: Identify laneways as shared mobility area. Establish a hierarchy of streets to differentiate between those designed for faster traffic and neighbourhood streets designed for slower speeds.

Opportunity 2: Laneways connecting neighbourhood assets



Laneways that connect to existing small public spaces and increase accessibility to existing park amenities.

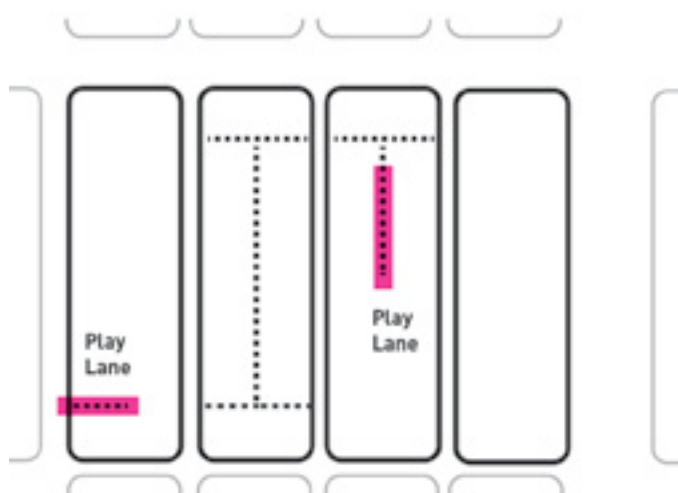
Getting It Done

Partner with private land-owners to make the best use of extra space. Focus on connecting desire lines.

Physical: Provide indicators such as lighting or murals that welcome users into the laneways. Remove barriers to connectivity including fences and overgrowth. Encourage the implementation of green infrastructure.

Policy: Identify laneways as shared mobility areas. Partner with private land-owners as needed to connect desire lines.

Opportunity 3: Laneways as destinations



Laneways that fill the gaps in neighbourhoods that are underserved by open spaces to create new destinations.

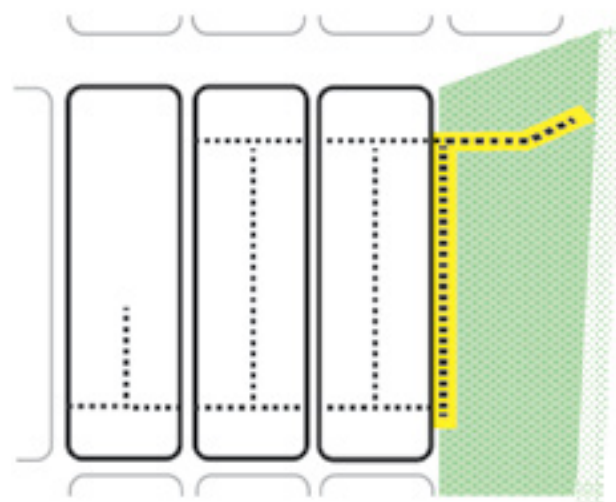
Getting It Done

Foster stewardship to ensure these spaces feel welcoming and inviting to everyone in the neighborhood.

Physical: Support placemaking by removing fences and providing lighting, signage, planting and high quality paving.

Policy: Identify laneways as shared mobility areas. Provide opportunities for play and lingering. Consider different programs, such as economic development or community foundation grants, to engage community partners to play a role in animating, beautifying or cleaning up laneways as destinations.

Opportunity 4: Laneways with park frontage



Laneways that support larger parks and green spaces.

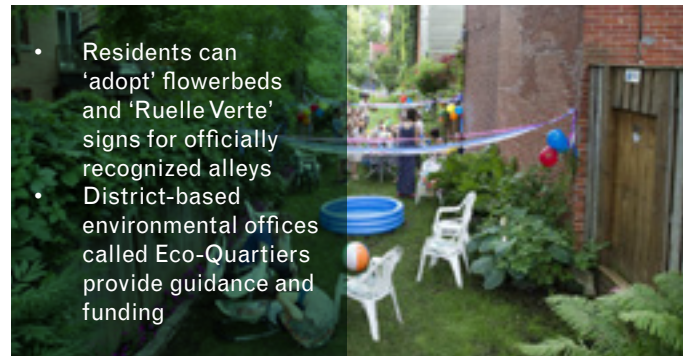
Getting It Done

Physical: Encourage the use of green infrastructure, stormwater management infrastructure, bio-swales and bio-retention planting beds.

Policy: Provide opportunities for uses that support micro-retail.

Ruelles Vertes / Green Alley Program – Montreal

Ruelles Vertes aims to turn residential laneways into greener, friendlier spaces by replacing asphalt with porous pavers or planting, and introducing measures to calm or restrict traffic. 'Ruelles Vertes' signs are placed on officially recognized alleys. District offices provide guidance and funding, while residents are responsible for forming a committee and maintaining the laneways after the changes are made.



Ruelles Vertes | Green Alley Program – Montreal, Canada

Alley Improvements – Los Angeles

Since the early 2000s, a range of alley improvements have been underway in Los Angeles, in both commercial and residential alleys. While funding, collaborators, approaches, and aims vary from project to project, many strive to address problems of stormwater management, trash dumping, and shortage of park space, especially in lower-income neighbourhoods.



Alley Improvements – Los Angeles, United States

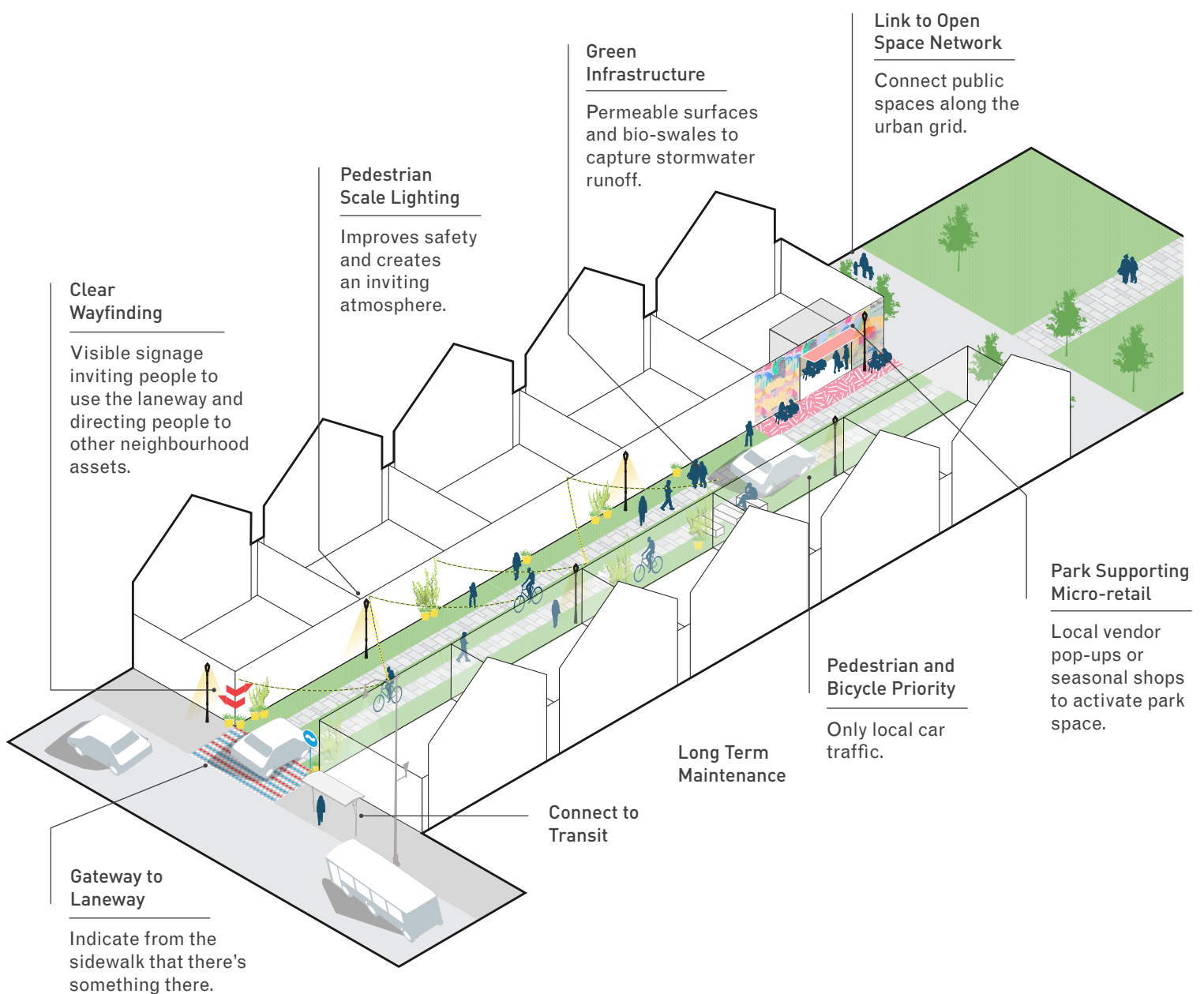
Green Alley Program – Chicago

Chicago is committed to transforming its extensive network of alleyways into greener, more sustainable environments by renovating key infrastructure with leading stormwater management solutions. With over 100 green alleys installed, what began as a pilot project in 2006 has blossomed into one of the most extensive green alley initiatives in the world.



Green Alley Program – Chicago, United States

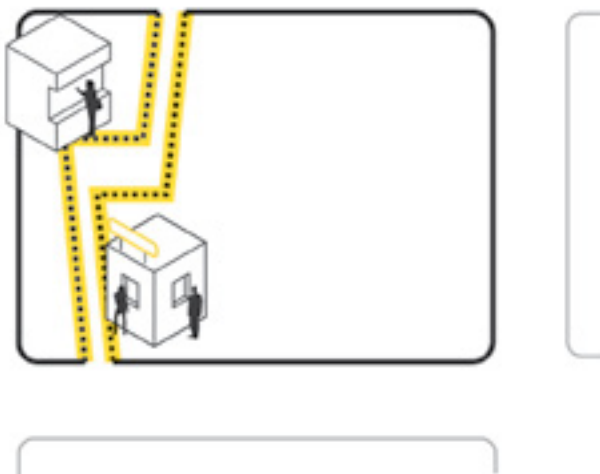
Opportunities and Keys to Success



Residential laneways: Opportunities and keys to success, Toronto, Canada

Mixed-Use Laneways

Opportunity 1: Laneways as micro-retail corridors



Laneways that act as small-scale main streets with active frontages to support micro-retail including food and beverage vendors.

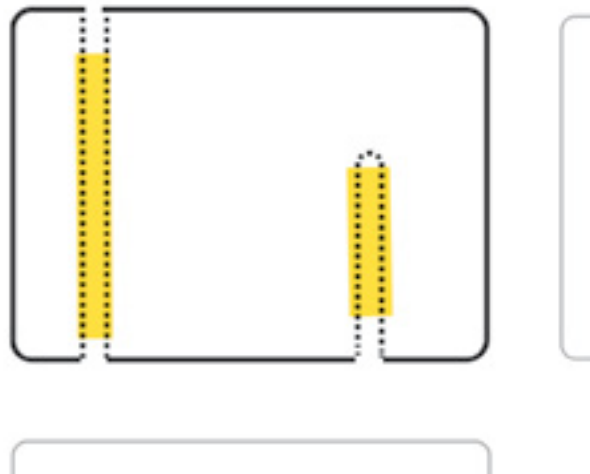
Getting It Done

Coordinate street cleaning, waste collection and loading and drop-off times to maximize public safety, access and enjoyment.

Physical: Encourage the use of pods, pop-up carts and container retail in the near term. Provide laneway-facing retail spaces in the long term. Support placemaking by providing lighting and signage.

Policy: Identify laneways as shared mobility areas. Coordinate load and drop-off times in off-peak hours. Partner or coordinate with businesses to open the backs of businesses onto the lane.

Opportunity 2: Laneways for creative / interactive hoarding



Laneways that are wrapped with murals or include interactive elements.

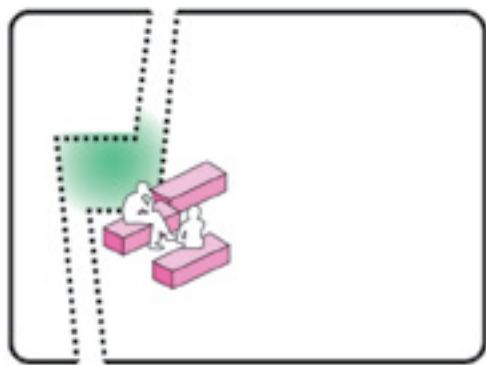
Getting It Done

Identify narrow, straight lanes that can support interactive elements. These lanes requires less space to stay and linger.

Physical: Install interactive elements such as a boulder wall, digital art, murals, exhibition space; or lighting.

Policy: Identify laneways as shared mobility areas. Minimize through traffic and coordinate loading and drop-off times in off-peak hours.

Opportunity 3: Laneways as places of respite and refuge



Laneways that provide interactive elements, such as murals, to inspire moments of quiet reflection.

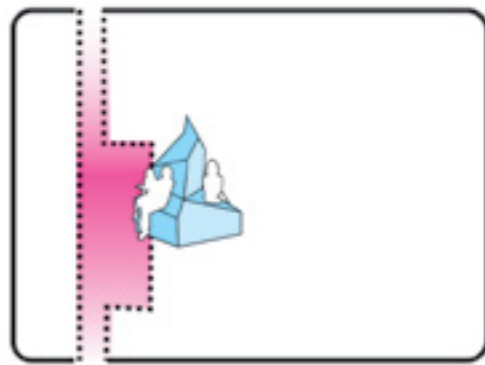
Getting It Done

Identify lanes that have small nooks and very little through traffic. Where the Downtown is loudest and busiest, laneways can offer a breath of fresh air, leveraging their naturally cooler, micro-climate.

Physical: Install interactive elements such as a boulder wall, digital art, murals, exhibition space, or lighting.

Policy: Identify laneways as shared mobility areas. Minimize through traffic and coordinate loading and drop-off times in off-peak hours.

Opportunity 4: Laneways as event spaces



Laneways that support regular programmed markets, one-off events and intimate gatherings.

Getting It Done

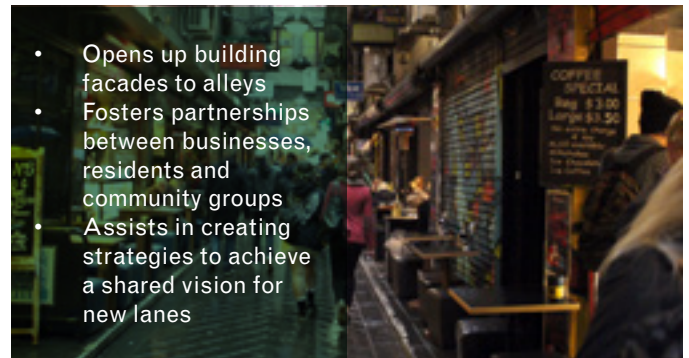
Choose lanes that can support regular programming. Holding regular events in laneways can establish street life in otherwise blank spaces, changing perceptions of what is possible in laneways. The key is to create a quiet and predictable traffic pattern during events.

Physical: Provide lighting and access to power.

Policy: Identify laneways as shared mobility areas. Enable online event booking to encourage regular programming. Provide access to power. Minimize through traffic and coordinate loading and drop-off times in off-peak hours.

Mixed-Use Laneway Program – Melbourne

The Melbourne Laneway Program transformed former mixed-use alleys into lively hubs of activity for small scale businesses and social interaction. The initiative originally helped revive an otherwise dying Downtown area. The plan was built on continuing to upgrade and maintain the physical form and condition of laneways, aligned with an economic development strategy for the creative industries contained within them.



Mixed-Use Laneways – Melbourne, Australia

Passageways – Chattanooga

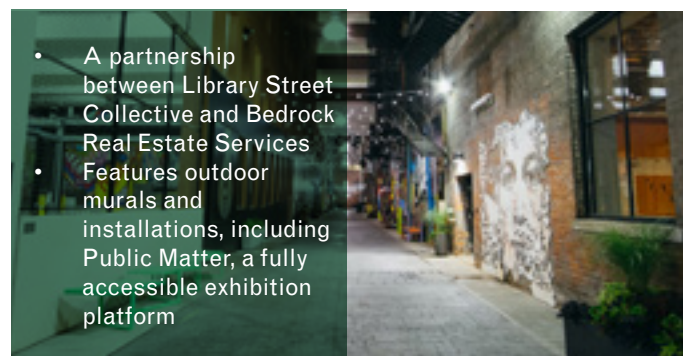
'Passageways' is a public exhibit that intends to change the way people think about forgotten urban spaces, and to show the potential benefits these spaces have for contributing to healthy urban environments. It is an investigation into the importance and the potential of auxiliary pedestrian spaces, and the creation of space within an existing connected alleyway network.



Passageways – Chattanooga, United States

The BELT – Detroit

The BELT is a redefined alley in the heart of downtown Detroit. The activation of the alley is a partnership between Library Street Collective and Bedrock Real Estate Services. Public Art is the driving force behind The BELT. The space is home to murals and installations that ensure local and international artists have a space to create and engage with the public in Detroit.



The BELT – Detroit, United States

Opportunities and Keys to Success

Consistent Identity

Unifying visual character.

Pedestrian Scale Lighting

Improves safety while giving the space an inviting atmosphere.

Active Frontages

Where there are no existing frontages to open up, micro retail pod.

Creative Hoarding

Wrap blank facades with creative elements: art, installations, bouldering walls.

Open Frontages

Open up building facades to lanes.

Universal Design and Accessibility

Shared Street

Limit through traffic.

Event Space: Closed Street

Ability to close lane to traffic for hosting events.

Plants and Greenwalls

Providing relief from the hardscape by improving micro-climates.

Creative Canopy

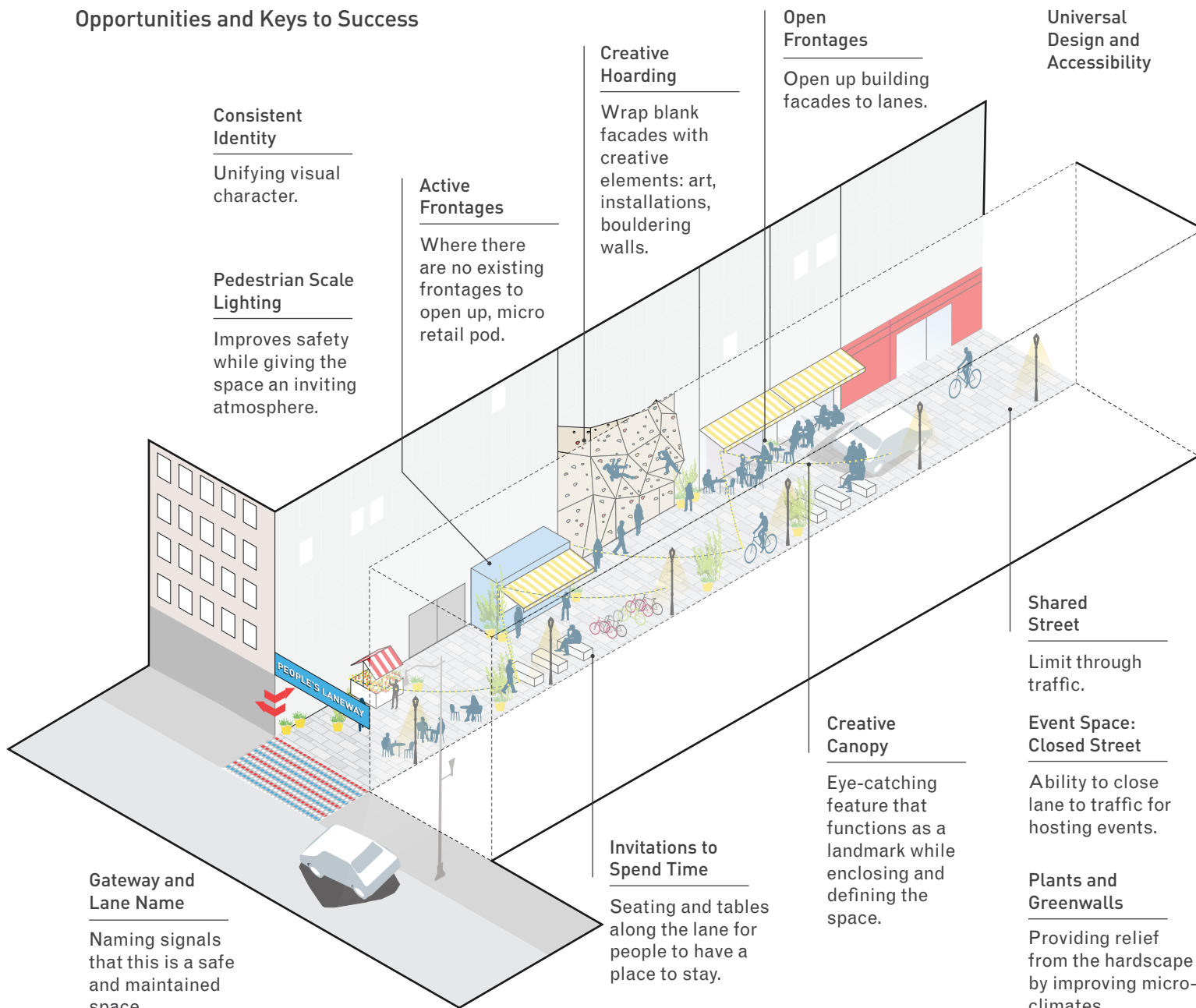
Eye-catching feature that functions as a landmark while enclosing and defining the space.

Invitations to Spend Time

Seating and tables along the lane for people to have a place to stay.

Gateway and Lane Name

Naming signals that this is a safe and maintained space.



Mixed-use laneways: Opportunities and keys to success, Toronto, Canada

Schoolyards

Like parkettes, schoolyards represent an open space in the community that could be better leveraged. These spaces have already or could have the potential to become true neighbourhood assets, providing safe and accessible spaces for families outside of school hours throughout the week.

Creating partnerships with local schools to improve and share schoolyards beyond school hours will benefit the school and the community by providing improved and expanded open spaces for students and nearby families. Re-imagined schoolyards can invite play, gardening and hands-on learning experiences into the daily lives of students and local residents.

Where possible, access to parks and / or open spaces through shared use agreements may be explored in cases where public schools are situated on highly constrained urban sites or part of mixed-use developments and where access to green space or hard

Opening schoolyards to the public during off hours – on weekends and after school – can create new neighbourhood nodes for play, learning and community.

surface play areas is insufficient.

In New York City, schoolyards have been transformed into playgrounds, weaving youthful and active hubs into the city's fabric. In Berkeley, schoolyards act as community gardens that provide students and neighbours with a connection to the natural environment and opportunities for learning.

Partnerships with school boards can transform schoolyards in the Downtown into public spaces outside of school hours, with school activities being one of a number of programs during the week. Putting schoolyards on people's mental map as an accessible open space is the key to success in transforming these spaces into assets for the broader community.



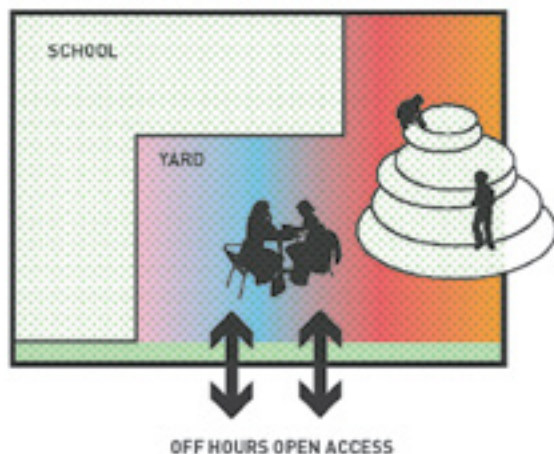
The Shared Schoolyard Project, San Francisco, United States

(right) NYC Schoolyards to Playgrounds, New York City, United States



Showing schoolyards in Downtown Toronto, Canada

Opportunity 1: Schoolyards as shared play spaces



Schoolyards that are open and visibly public play spaces after school hours and that provide a variety of leisure options for all age groups.

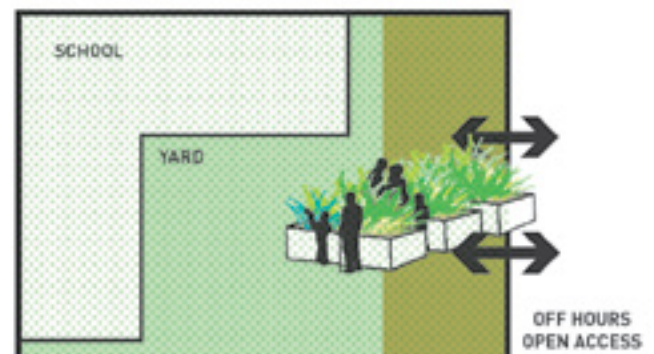
Getting It Done

Target schoolyards in areas that lack family-friendly hubs. Imagine creative approaches to fencing or add gate openings to create more than one access point. Consider the design of fencing as a public art feature. Create multi-purpose spaces to appeal to more users.

Physical: Identify creative approaches to fencing (e.g. clear fencing), the design of hard surfaces (e.g. multi-purpose court striping) and creating a comfortable micro-climate (e.g. canopies, awnings).

Policy: Identify a new approach to opening schoolyards to the community, encouraging seamless connections to the neighbourhood. Establish a schedule that shows when schoolyards are open to the public.

Opportunity 2: Schoolyards as neighbourhood gardens and food hubs



Schoolyards that host community gardens, providing school-aged children and the surrounding community with the opportunity to learn about and grow food.

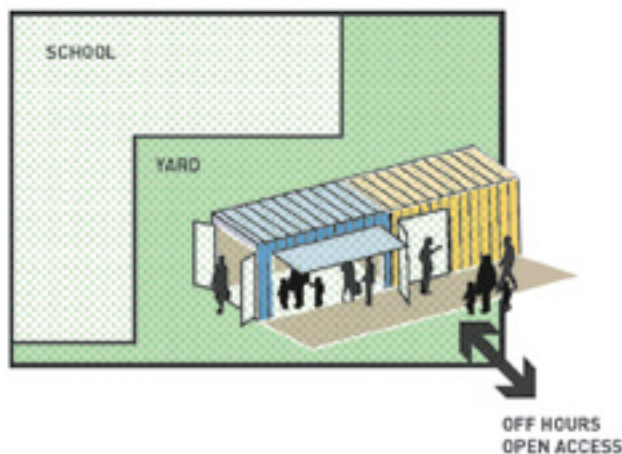
Getting It Done

Focus on schools in 'food deserts' or that are part of the edible schools program. Open gardens up to the public after school hours to expand gardens beyond student education into public assets.

Physical: Establish a hierarchy of use where shared facilities like gardens are closer to streets, making them easily accessible to both school kids and the neighbouring community.

Policy: Identify a new approach to opening schoolyards to the community, encouraging seamless connections to the neighbourhood. Link into Toronto's community garden program.

Opportunity 3: Schoolyards as learning labs



Schoolyards that provide an ongoing calendar of activities to support, educate and inspire makers, innovators, creators, and educators to share and learn in the space.

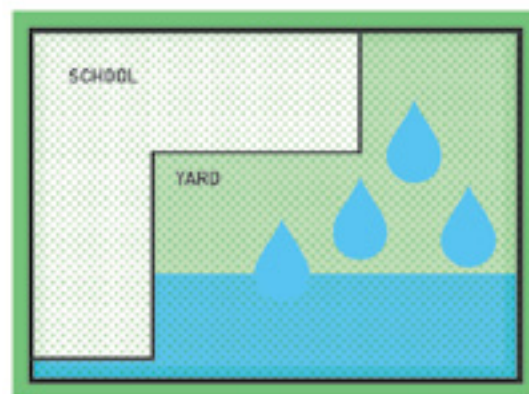
Getting It Done

Broaden the idea of schools as Centres for Learning for all ages by creating places for the community to learn about a variety of topics such as cooking, biology, robotics and life sciences. Link student curriculum with the public learning lab.

Physical: Create 'outdoor classroom' spaces that are designed in collaboration with students, school faculty and neighbourhood stakeholders. Consider a variety of design elements including seating, stages and shelter.

Policy: Introduce school programs where learning is outside. Conversely, create school spaces that are open and available to neighbours during certain times. Ensure the availability of these spaces is well-advertised.

Opportunity 4: Schoolyards as environmental leaders / canvases



Schoolyards that play a proactive role in managing stormwater and the urban heat island effect.

Getting It Done

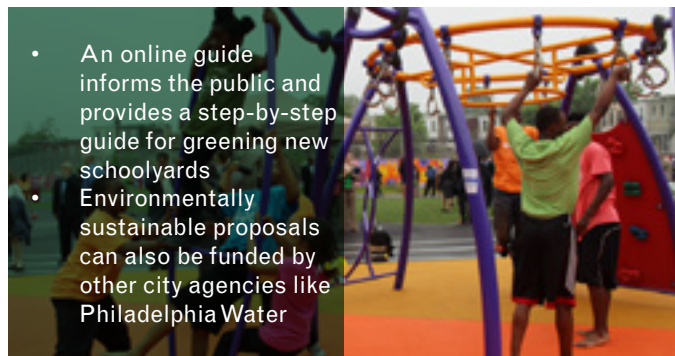
Position schoolyards as places to actively improve the city's environmental performance. Remove all or some hard space to increase green space, plant trees, combat the urban heat island effect and mitigate stormwater runoff.

Physical: Install porous, recycled surfaces, green infrastructure, bio-swales and bio-retention planting.

Policy: Link into the City's Green Streets Guidelines, Urban Forestry's policies and Toronto Green Standards.

Transforming Schoolyards – Philadelphia

As part of Philadelphia's Green 2015 Initiative, the city is transforming schoolyards into greener, more sustainable public open spaces that can be used throughout the week. The redeveloped schoolyards provide experiential learning opportunities for students and the community outside of school hours.

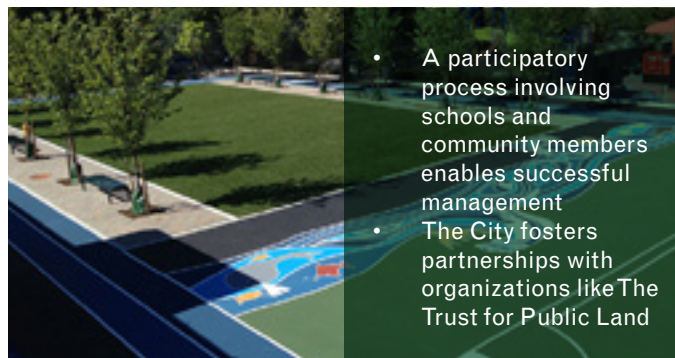


- An online guide informs the public and provides a step-by-step guide for greening new schoolyards
- Environmentally sustainable proposals can also be funded by other city agencies like Philadelphia Water

William Dick Elementary Schoolyard – Philadelphia, United States

NYC Schoolyards to Playgrounds – New York City

Schoolyards are transformed into vibrant playgrounds and opened to the public during non-school hours as part of the initiative to provide open public space within a 10-minute walk to every New Yorker.



- A participatory process involving schools and community members enables successful management
- The City fosters partnerships with organizations like The Trust for Public Land

Boerum Hill PS241 – New York City, United States

Edible Schoolyards – Berkeley

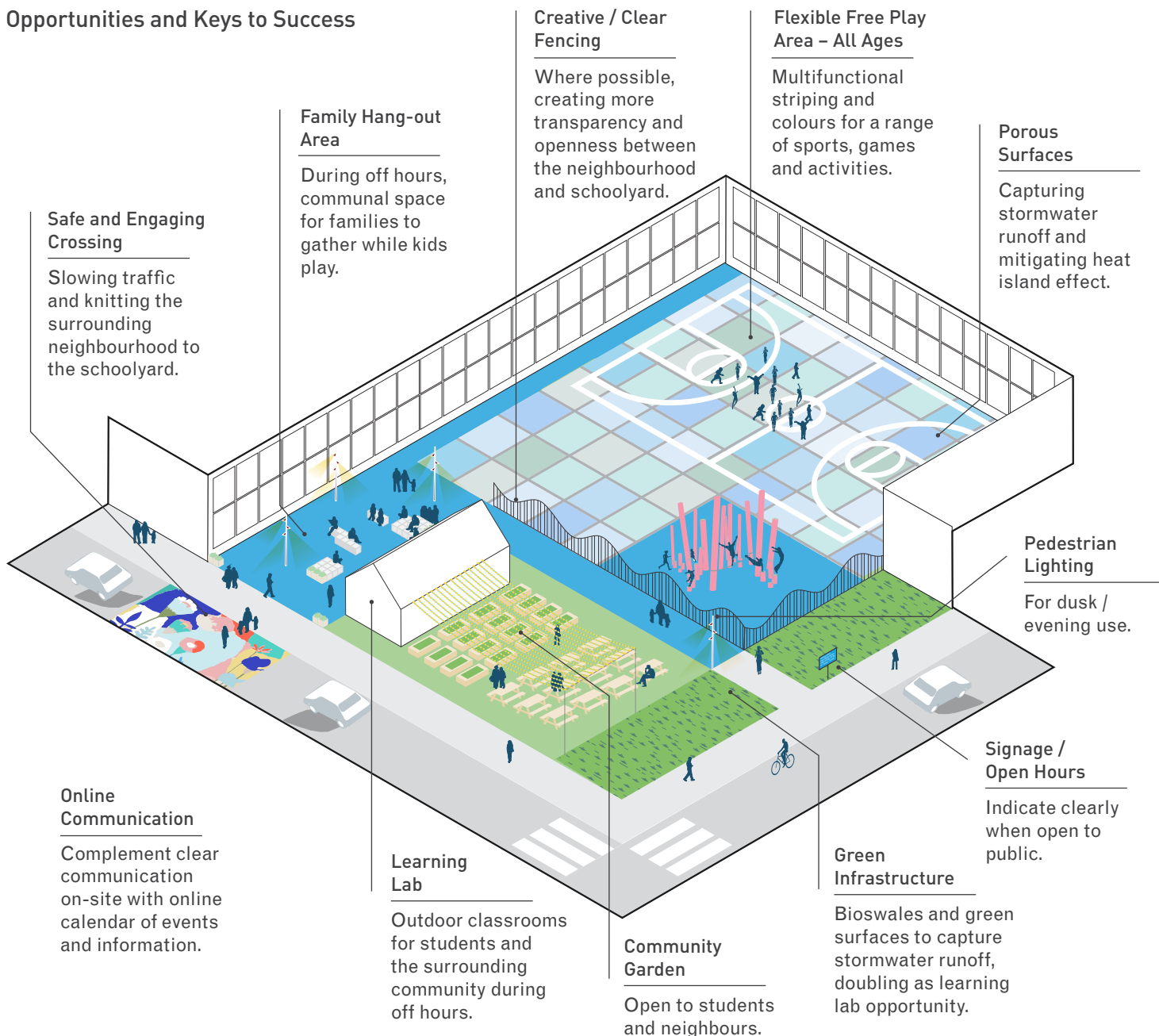
Edible Schoolyards began in the 1990s when a community member inspired a school to transform their neglected schoolyard into a learning garden. Edible Schoolyards has grown from this single project into a connected network of schools and community programs that use schoolyards to support food-awareness, environmental connection, and community relationships.



- Edible schoolyards provide opportunities for students to learn how to grow and cook their own food
- Learning gardens reclaim underused space to provide green space and educational programming

East Harlem Edible Schoolyard – New York City, United States

Opportunities and Keys to Success



Schoolyards: Opportunities and keys to success, Toronto, Canada

Churchyards / Cemeteries

Churchyards and cemeteries can be re-imagined as neighbourhood assets through creative programming and design. These re-imagined spaces can be welcoming open spaces for a variety of uses while respecting the sanctity of the spaces, which might include community events, educational facilities, or provide opportunities for leisure and play or quiet respite away from busy parks.

Historically, churchyards and cemeteries have offered a valuable public space asset in the Downtown and some may feel more welcoming than others. Churchyards are distributed in neighbourhoods throughout the Downtown, offering easily accessible 'day to day' open spaces for residents, workers and visitors. Cemeteries are among the best places to experience the urban forest in the city – making them an important piece of the parks and public realm system.

Innovative programming, as seen in Atlanta's Oakland

Creative programming and redesigns that preserve cultural landscape heritage elements can transform churchyards and cemeteries into new neighbourhood assets.

Cemetery with their 'Run like Hell' 5 km race, builds interest around visiting these spaces and works to shift perceptions about how cemeteries are used.

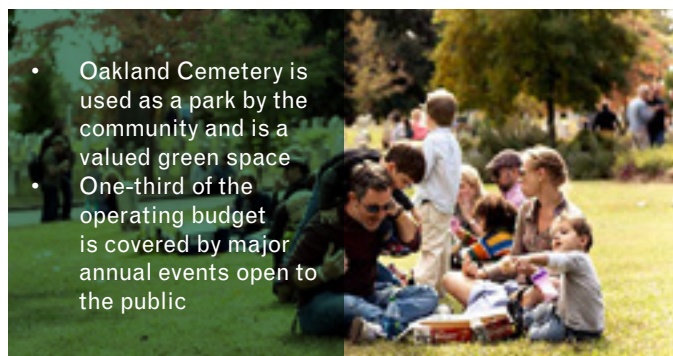
Active design can inspire visitors to engage with these spaces that are often underused. The engaging revitalization of St. Mary's Churchyard in London, or the popular use of the Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen, illustrate the possibility of transforming these spaces into valuable public realm assets.



Assistens Cemetery – the largest green space in a densely populated neighbourhood – is a prime location for picnics and other social meet-ups, Copenhagen, Denmark

Oakland Cemetery Park – Atlanta

Oakland Cemetery is one of the largest green spaces in Atlanta, Georgia. Creative programming, such as the 'Run Like Hell' 5 km run or the 'Tunes for Tombs' concert series have brought thousands of visitors to the space, establishing it as a valuable asset to the community. The cemetery features winding paths, large shade trees, flowers, shrubs, and appealing vistas.

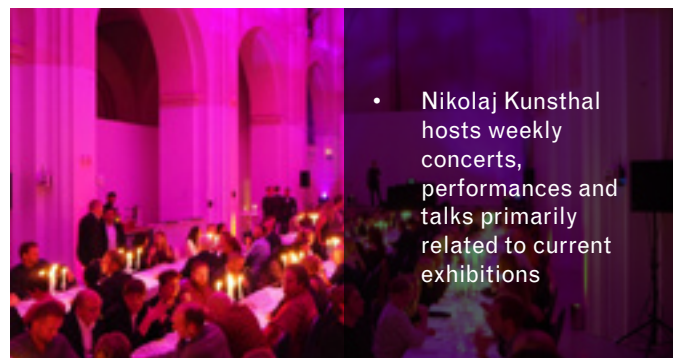


- Oakland Cemetery is used as a park by the community and is a valued green space
- One-third of the operating budget is covered by major annual events open to the public

Oakland Cemetery Park – Atlanta, United States

St. Nikolaj Church – Copenhagen

Nikolaj Church is located at the center of the city, next to the main pedestrian shopping street. It has been converted into an art museum and event space, recognizing its importance as a community meeting point beyond religious activities.

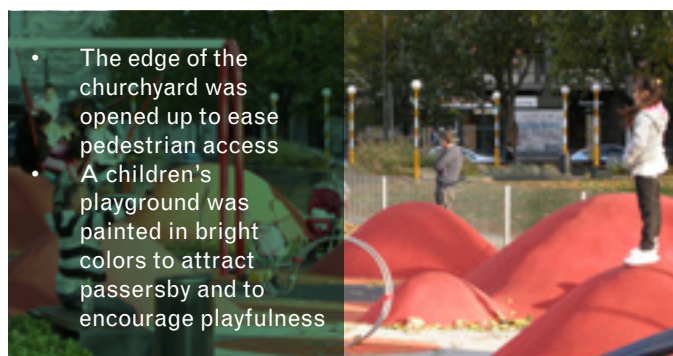


- Nikolaj Kunsthall hosts weekly concerts, performances and talks primarily related to current exhibitions

St. Nikolaj Church – Copenhagen, Denmark

St. Mary's Churchyard – London

The redesign of St. Mary's Churchyard has been an important phase in the regeneration of an entire London neighbourhood.



- The edge of the churchyard was opened up to ease pedestrian access
- A children's playground was painted in bright colors to attract passersby and to encourage playfulness

St. Mary's Churchyard – London, England

Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS)

In order to provide this much needed open space within Toronto's dense urban landscape, the City often negotiates with private developers to include Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces, or 'POPS' for short, as part of the development application and review process. POPS are a specific type of open space which the public is welcome to enjoy, but remain privately owned and maintained. They are a key part of the city's public realm network, providing open space in much needed locations across the city and complementing existing and planned publicly owned parks, open spaces and natural areas.

POPS are intended to complement the City's public parks, open space and natural areas, not replace them. While POPS can offer accessible and inviting pockets to sit, relax, and enjoy the urban landscape, the public benefits are often not fully realized. Predominantly nestled in the shadows of tall buildings and sometimes surrounded by inactive frontages, POPS need to

POPS are not the answer to the Downtown's park deficit, but they can supplement the parks system by providing high quality open spaces in the core.

focus on mitigating harsh micro-climates (e.g. shade, exposure, wind), and incorporating human-scaled urban design elements. POPS have the potential to become destinations for cultural events, outdoor work areas, and high quality spaces to stay and enjoy the urban setting.

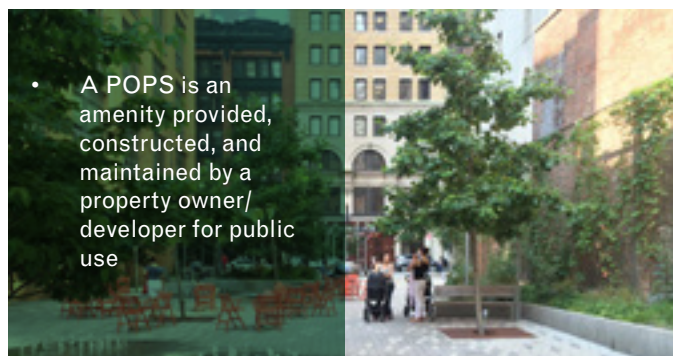
Important yet often under-utilized, POPS should work harder to supplement our parks and open space network. Through partnerships with local stewards, Downtown neighbourhoods can be empowered to engage with these local assets and ultimately create a more connected, layered and dynamic public realm.



The Pasture (POPS) at TD Centre, Toronto, Canada

Beekman Plaza – New York City

Beekman Plaza is located in downtown New York City, at the foot of a large residential tower. It is situated above a parking garage and accessible on either side. Minimum tree quantities established by the NYC zoning code required 23 plaza trees and six sidewalk trees.

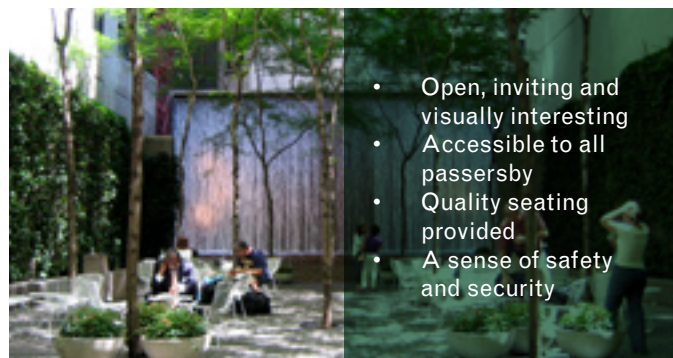


- A POPS is an amenity provided, constructed, and maintained by a property owner/developer for public use

Beekman Plaza – New York City, United States

Paley Park – New York City

Paley Plaza was created on the former site of the Stork Club. It offers a strong sense of place, human-scaled urban design elements, and a focal point in the form of a waterfall. It is a quiet oasis in the midst of bustling Midtown Manhattan. The plaza opened in 1967.

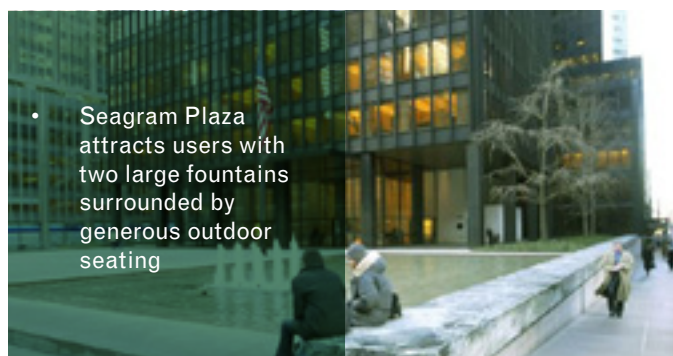


- Open, inviting and visually interesting
- Accessible to all passersby
- Quality seating provided
- A sense of safety and security

Paley Park – New York City, United States

Seagram Plaza – New York City

New York's largest and most successful POPS, the Seagram Plaza, takes up 75 percent of the site's Park Avenue footprint. The Seagram Building is set back 100 feet from the street edge, which creates a highly active and accessible open plaza.



- Seagram Plaza attracts users with two large fountains surrounded by generous outdoor seating

Seagram Plaza – New York City, United States

Overlooked Places

In recent years, a whole new generation of parks and open spaces have sprung up in places that we had previously forgotten. Playgrounds and skate parks beneath underpasses, urban beaches opposite industrial port facilities, linear parks alongside – even overtop of – infrastructure corridors. Vacant lots, rail and hydro corridors, remnant infrastructure, underneath overpasses, waterfront slips, Toronto Parking Authority lands, school yards, church yards, cemeteries – there is untapped potential that we must increasingly lean on to address our core's population increase.

Overlooked places, such as streets, infrastructure corridors, and underneath overpasses can be repurposed into unexpected public assets. From Underpass Park to Sugar Beach to the Green Line to the Bentway to Rail Deck Park, Toronto is en route to become a leader in re-imagining its urban infrastructure into inspiring public spaces.

Retrofit or re-imagine overlooked and unexpected places such as streets, infrastructure corridors and underneath overpasses.

Overlooked places also present an opportunity to let residents and volunteers test and prototype ideas in space. In Portland, a renowned skatepark – Burnside Skatepark – was originally built ad-hoc by a group of local skaters. It was soon incorporated into the city's official network of parks.

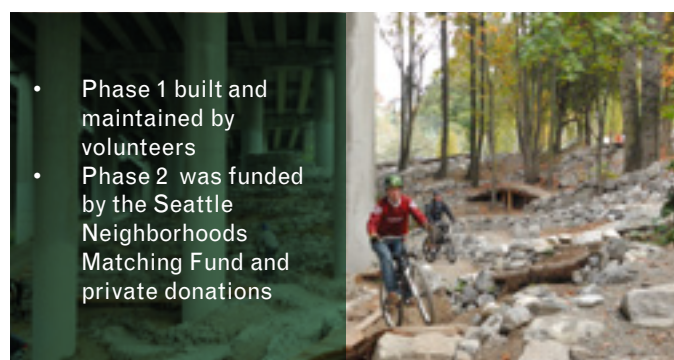
Capitalize on overlooked and under-utilized places to meet public realm needs and better connect the parks and public realm sequence. Empower community partnerships to unlock the potential of these spaces.



Underpass Park, Toronto, Canada

I-5 Colonnade Mountain Bike Park – Seattle

Beneath an interstate in Seattle, volunteers built a mountain biking park that connects to a larger 3 hectare park. More than a mile of ramps and wooden bike paths were built in partnership with the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance and the City of Seattle. The park is officially park of the larger Seattle Parks and Recreation system.



- Phase 1 built and maintained by volunteers
- Phase 2 was funded by the Seattle Neighborhoods Matching Fund and private donations

I-5 Colonnade Mountain Bike Park – Seattle, United States

Burnside Skatepark – Portland

In Portland, a group of skateboarders constructed this under-the-freeway park. Over the years, as the construction grew and popularity increased, the park won the city's vote and it became officially sanctioned as a park.



- Designed and build by local skateboarding community
- Initially made without permission, today it is City approved as a public park

Burnside Skatepark – Portland, United States

Jim Deva Plaza – Vancouver

The plaza, commissioned by the City of Vancouver, is a street conversion that connects the commercial activity of Davie Street to the residential stretch of Bute Street. The space was created by redesigning the block into a single continuous surface that invites people to sit and spend time relaxing in a busy urban centre. The plaza is home to a mix of activities and local events.



- Vancouver's first pavement-to-plaza project
- The conversion from street to plaza creates a vibrant and shared community gathering space

Jim Deva Plaza – Vancouver, Canada

An Example of a Process to Activate Local Places

There is untapped potential in Downtown Toronto, in the parkettes, laneways, schoolyards, churchyards and cemeteries, vacant lots, rail and hydro corridors, remnant infrastructure, waterfront slips, streets and parking lots. Here is an opportunity to re-imagine these spaces, improve their design, and bolster stewardship by implementing a unique process of design and operation, based on highly local needs.

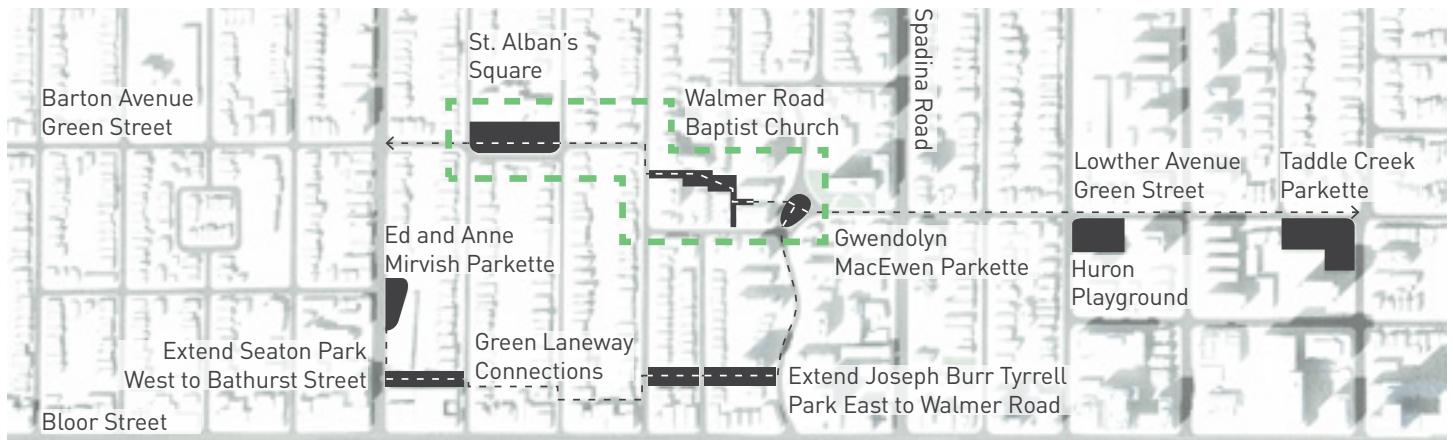
Many existing models can inform this type of process, such as the Public Space Incubator in Toronto, the Plaza Program and GreenThumb Program in New York City, and the Pavement to Parks Program in San Francisco. These programs are designed to test new, innovative ways to bring under-utilized public spaces to life. In order to unlock the potential of Downtown Toronto's under-utilized local places, the following key components should be considered to ensure impact, neighbourhood relevance, and long-term viability.

- **Governance:** Empower a cross-agency team to ensure a coordinated approach to local places and their multifaceted needs, finding synergies and opportunities.
- **Operator Selection:** Local places require local stewards, makers and doers to keep them fresh and relevant. Operators are the stewards of the space, responsible for maintenance and programming.
- **Hard Infrastructure:** Local places come alive with a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure. Hard infrastructure are the physical components, often built into and around the space by the city (e.g. roadway improvements, pedestrian lighting).
- **Soft Infrastructure:** Soft infrastructure offers opportunities to test ideas and includes often temporary components that change and adapt to new opportunities and changing neighbourhood demographics (e.g. events, arts, cultural uses).
- **Opportunities to Collaborate:** Partnerships with local groups, artists, designers, collectives, non-profits, institutions, businesses, and registered charities help to ensure a sustainable, accessible, and inclusive approach.

(right) The revitalized Market Lane is a narrow but critical linkage in the urban fabric of downtown London, Ontario, connecting Covent Garden with Dundas Street, London, Canada



Connecting Local Places: On the Ground Example



Showing potential for a connected network of local places in The Annex, Toronto, Canada

Site Selection:



Hard Infrastructure:



Soft Infrastructure:



Partnerships:



Demonstration of the key components that should be considered to unlock the potential of under-utilized local public spaces, Toronto, Canada

TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA 5. LOCAL PLACES



Aldo van Eyck and the City as Playground, beginning in 1947, more than 700 public playgrounds were created in parks, squares, and derelict sites throughout the city, "a spatial experiment that has (positively) marked the childhood of an entire generation" (Merijn Oudenampsen), Amsterdam, Netherlands

(right) Beuningenplein Playground, constructed on top of a new parking garage in 2011, Amsterdam, Netherlands



Goals

Re-imagine local public spaces to better support community life and meaningfully contribute to the expansion of our parks and public realm system.

- Re-imagine local public spaces, improve their design, and bolster stewardship by implementing a unique process of design and operation, based on local needs.
- Support new, innovative ways to bring under-utilized public spaces to life.
- Partner with local groups and collaborators to ensure a sustainable and inclusive approach.
- Support flexible design and programming that can change and adapt to new opportunities and changing neighbourhood demographics.
- Leverage additional financial and in-kind contributions from local philanthropists, institutions, businesses, or others.
- Partner with school boards to transform schoolyards into public spaces outside of school hours.
- Preserve and enhance natural and cultural landscape heritage elements in local public spaces.

Actions

- Implement a unique process of design and operation for local public spaces.
- Partner with local groups and collaborators to ensure a sustainable, accessible, and inclusive approach.
- Support new, innovative pilot projects and public space activations.
- Ensure flexible design and programming that can be refined and enriched over time.
- Preserve schoolyards and partner with School Boards to enhance community access through shared-use agreements.
- Continue to monitor public life in the Downtown's local places.
- Continue to upgrade the physical form and condition of local public spaces.
- Empower a cross-agency team to ensure a coordinated approach to local places, finding synergies and opportunities.

