# Liberty Nature Park

## A Park of Movement, Memory, and Renewal

Aerial
Looking south from Liberty Street, viewing the main event space, mist plaza, and the iconic washroom pavilion.

## Narrative

Liberty Nature Park draws its inspiration from an enduring resident of Liberty Village: the chimney swift.

For generations, chimney swifts have nested and gathered among the neighbourhood's brick industrial buildings, becoming silent witnesses to Liberty Village's many transformations. Long before factories and rail corridors arrived, this landscape was part of a larger ecological system of forests, wetlands, streams, migratory routes, and Indigenous movement networks. As the landscape evolved through industrialization and urbanization, the chimney swift remained, adapting alongside the city while maintaining its annual migration patterns across continents.

*The chimney swift becomes both symbol and guide.*

Like Liberty Village itself, the swift embodies resilience, adaptation, movement, and continuity. Its journey links past and present, ecology and culture, arrival and departure. Most importantly, it reminds us that this place has always existed within larger systems of movement, connecting land, water, people, and wildlife. Our concept seeks to reveal these hidden connections.

Rather than imposing an entirely new identity on the site, Liberty Nature Park proposes to carve back layers of the urban fabric and expose traces of the ecological systems and natural narratives that have always existed beneath. The design reveals a hidden nature quality that has been obscured but never lost, creating renewed connections between the sky above, the earth below, and the human experiences that exist in-between. The chimney swift becomes the heritage connector throughout the design. Its presence links Indigenous histories of movement, the industrial evolution of Liberty Village, contemporary urban life, and future ecological regeneration. Through the swift, the park becomes a living expression of continuity.

The result is Liberty Nature Park: a place where humans, animals, water, plants, culture, and community coexist within a shared landscape. The park becomes the next chapter in Liberty Village's story, continuing and expanding the relationships between nature and culture that have always defined this place.



**Classic Park Structure**
Introverted, centralized, and static
Prioritizing a gathering space at the centre

**Inverted park structure**
Extroverted, contextual, and flexible
Prioritizing vegetation at the centre

## Vision

**Introduce a New Nature Experience**

Liberty Nature Park will be the green heart of Liberty Village.

More than a neighbourhood park, it challenges conventional expectations about what an urban park can become. Rather than organizing the site around a large paved gathering space surrounded by areas of planting, Liberty Nature Park reverses this formula. Here, nature occupies the centre. People move around, through, and into it.

This ambitious ordering transforms the park into something greater than the sum of its parts. The landscape becomes a living, breathing ecological system that continually evolves and surprises.

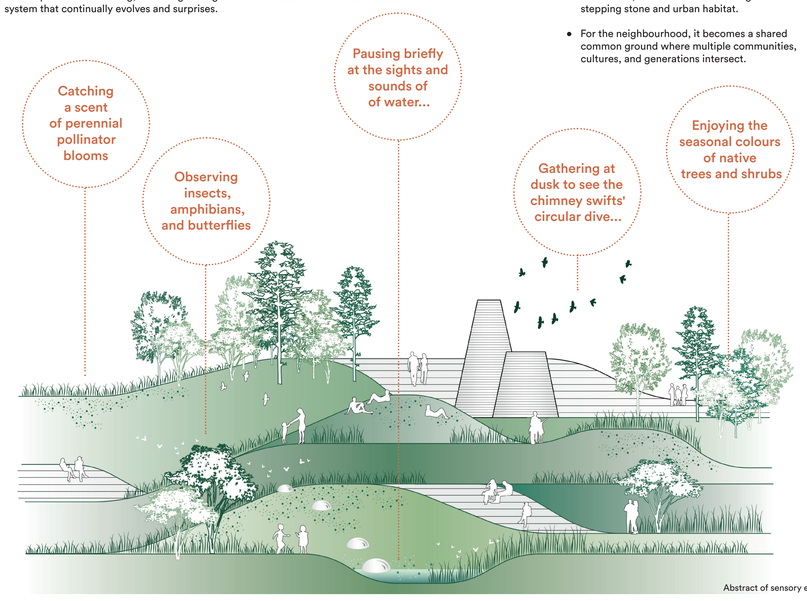
**Maintain Liberty Village's Distinct Identity**

Liberty Nature Park reflects Liberty Village's identity as a place of adaptation, movement, and continual reinvention. Inspired by the neighbourhood's layered ecological, Indigenous, and industrial histories, the design draws on the symbolism of the chimney swift, expressed through migration-themed public art and chimney-inspired pavilion forms. Stone, wood, and weathered steel reference both natural and industrial heritage, while planting, landforms, and boardwalks reconnect visitors to the wetlands and waterways that once defined the site, creating a landscape that is deeply rooted in place and oriented toward the future.

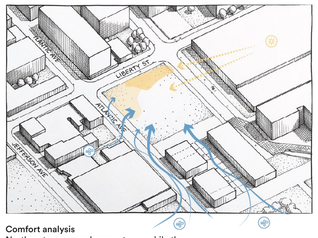
**Create an Important Link**

Just as migratory species rely upon connected networks of habitat, Liberty Nature Park serves as an important urban and ecological connector. The site exists at the intersection of movement corridors that continue to evolve through transit investment, intensification, active transportation, and neighbourhood growth. Liberty Nature Park becomes a waypoint within these larger systems.

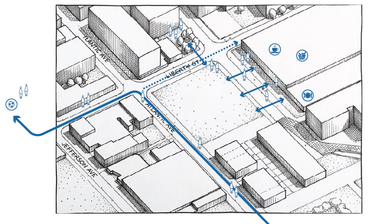
- For people, it provides a place of rest, gathering, reflection, and social life within the daily rhythms of Liberty Village.
- For wildlife, it functions as an ecological stepping stone and urban habitat.
- For the neighbourhood, it becomes a shared common ground where multiple communities, cultures, and generations intersect.



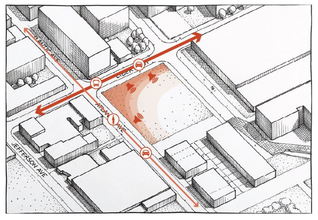

Abstract of sensory experiences




**Comfort analysis**
Northeastern corner has most sun, while the dominant winds are coming from the south and southwest.




**Main flows and connections**
Pedestrian flows are focused on Atlantic Avenue and Liberty Street, while important connections are found towards the East and North.




**Current activity**
Liberty Street holds the main traffic activities with cars, buses, and other vehicles, while Atlantic Avenue holds the secondary flow.

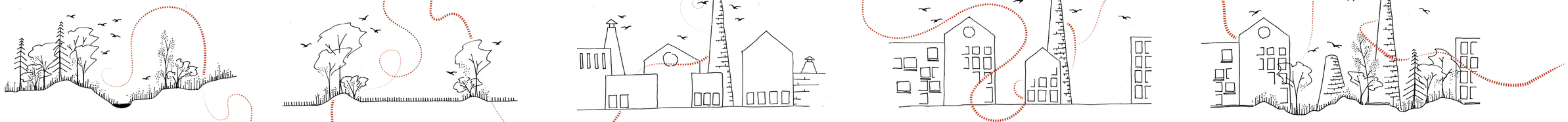
**Site Analysis**
The 34 Hanna Avenue site is surrounded by several external factors - all which guide the design and programming of the future park.

Dominant winds from the south and southwest, the sunny northeastern corner, pedestrian flows, and vehicle activity all inform the distribution of the park's functions, from active spaces to quiet pockets, and density to openness.

To accommodate the varied program requirements, the park design takes these contextual relations into consideration and the park edges become critical to accommodating varied uses of space.

**Contextual Programming**
Placing the more active spaces towards the northeast, shielding the inner core with dense vegetation, benefiting from the pedestrian flows and guiding visitors in from the East. All resulting in the design and layout of Liberty Nature Park.

**Site Timeline**
The sketched timeline below takes us through the different eras of Liberty Village, visualizing the historic layers hidden underneath today's pavement - discovering the ever presence of the chimney swift.



**Historic Landscape**
A natural site defined by gentle ravines, wetlands, woodlands, and meadows, with in tact native plant communities and influenced by Indigenous ways of being.

**Agricultural era**
A growing settlement saw opportunities in the land for agricultural purposes and raising livestock.

**Industrialization**
A rapid industrialization marked with high productivity, efficiency and a new skyline punctuated by chimney and industrial structures found its' way to the neighbourhood.

**Urban development**
Industrial structures gave way to housing, offices, and retail - bringing with it urban life and the need for a functional parking lot.

**An aim for co-existence**
Along this journey, the design for Liberty Nature Park aims to uncover and unite all historical layers, creating heritage and ecological awareness, while catering for multiple species.



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figureground

Liberty Street

Atlantic Avenue

Hanna Avenue

Section B

Section A

Section A

Section B

Bus Stop

Barrier-Free Washrooms (2)

Entrance Plaza

Seating Pocket

Bottle Fill Station

Universal Washroom

Swift Tower Mechanical Room

Storage Pavilion with Green Roof

Covered seating

Flexible Event Space 730 sqm

Bike parking

Boardwalk path

Event Plaza with Mist Feature

Lunch break

Amphitheatre Seating

Seating Pocket

Lunch break

Playful Water Jets

Artwork *Between Sky and Water*

Bike parking

Open lawn

Play & Activity Pocket 120 sqm

Play steps

Seating Pocket

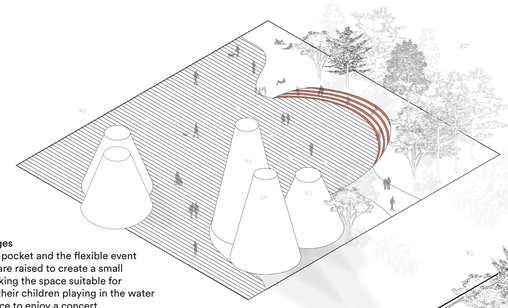
Coffee break

Bike parking

**Site Plan**
Liberty Nature Park contains a diversity of spaces, of both urban and ecological character, relating activities to its near context, creating awareness industrial heritage and ecological history.

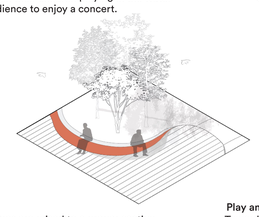
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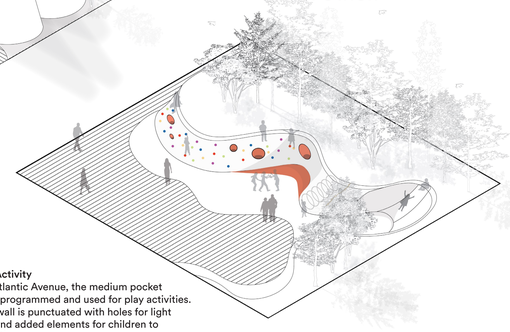


The green heart is emphasized by a series of constructed urban edges with elevated terrain, enabling diverse opportunities for engaging with the park and with each other.

**Amphitheatre Edges**
Within the largest pocket and the flexible event space, the edges are raised to create a small amphitheatre, making the space suitable for parents to watch their children playing in the water mist, or an audience to enjoy a concert.



**Seating**
The smaller edges are raised to a proper seating height, allowing visitors to rest momentarily or enjoy a coffee break with friends and colleagues.



**Play and Activity**
Towards Atlantic Avenue, the medium pocket edges are programmed and used for play activities. The edge wall is punctuated with holes for light climbing and added elements for children to engage with.

## Programming & Layout

**Nature at the Core**

The design of Liberty Nature Park begins with a simple but transformative idea: *place nature at the centre and civic life around it.* Many urban parks pull visitors from active edges into a paved central space. Liberty Nature Park inverts this model.

The park's core is a richly layered nature landscape designed around ecological systems. Forest, meadow, wetland, and pollinator habitats form an interconnected interior that supports biodiversity and creates immersive experiences for visitors. Meanwhile, the edges become dynamic social zones.

Shaped by expressive organic forms that respond to surrounding activity patterns, the boundaries between park and streetscape naturally blur. The edges belong equally to the public realm and the park itself.

Along Liberty Street, Atlantic Avenue, and Hanna Avenue, these sculpted edges create a sequence of unique spaces including seating alcoves, play environments, and community spaces.

This continual rhythm of expansion and compression creates movement and energy around the perimeter while drawing people naturally toward the ecological core. At every scale, the park encourages discovery. The experience is one of moving between city and nature, activity and calm, openness and enclosure, arrival and exploration.

**Site Program**

At its core, Liberty Nature Park is about relationships: Relationships between nature and city. Relationships between past and future. Relationships between people and place.

Programming within Liberty Nature Park is guided by the concept of the ecological waypoint. The park design recognizes that human stories and ecological stories are inseparable. The journeys of chimney swifts, Indigenous communities, industrial workers, immigrants, artists, families, and residents all become part of a larger narrative of movement and belonging. Public art, architecture, landscape, and ecological systems work together to tell this story.

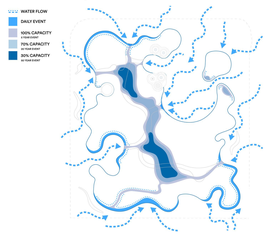
The landscape supports multiple forms of occupancy simultaneously. Rather than concentrating all activity into a single gathering space, program elements are distributed through a variety of micro-environments and social settings. The ecological core accommodates education, exploration, bird watching, seasonal discovery, and immersion in nature.

Throughout the year, changing seasons continually redefine how the park is experienced. Just as the chimney swift returns each year to familiar places altered by time and season, visitors will discover an evolving landscape that rewards repeated visits. The park becomes a reflection of Liberty Village itself: diverse, adaptive, layered, and continually evolving. A place where the story of the city and the story of nature once again intersect.

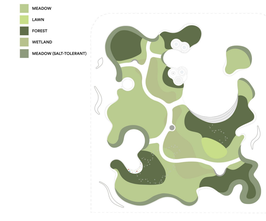
Daily Activity




Stormwater Management




Vegetation Typologies




## Planting Approach

**Biodiversity at the Core**

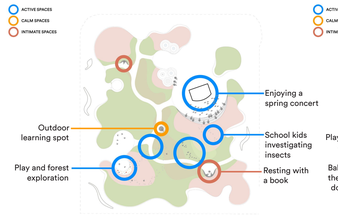
The ecological heart of Liberty Nature Park is conceived as an interconnected network of native woodland, meadow, wetland, and pollinator habitats.

Rather than relying upon decorative planting alone, the park establishes layered ecological communities inspired by the native landscapes of the Carolinian forest that characterizes this part of Toronto. The chimney swift serves as the park's ecological ambassador, but the design supports a much broader range of species.

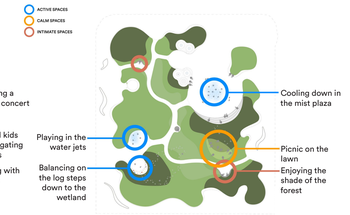
The objective is not simply to attract wildlife into the park, but to establish Liberty Nature Park as an important ecological stepping stone within Toronto's growing urban habitat network.



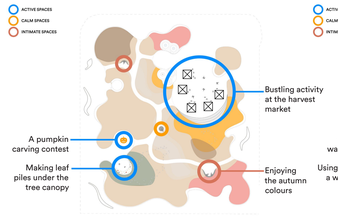

Spring Activity



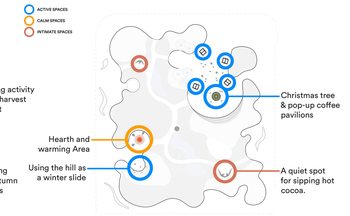

Summer Activity




Autumn Activity




Winter Activity




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figureground



**Inside the Green Heart**
Stepping on the boardwalk path reveals the public artwork. Dense areas of trees and shrubs are interspersed with open meadow and a lush wetland that has the capacity to absorb seasonal flooding and daily stormwater.



Swifts diving into the chimneys at dusk



The powerful up-stream salmon run

# Between Sky and Water

**Public Art**

*Between Sky and Water* gives sculptural form to the movements that connect Liberty Nature Park to a much larger living world. At the centre of the park, a gathering of Chimney Swifts sweeps through the air. Their flight bends, spirals and dives. As the flock descends toward the landscape, their wings pull in towards their bodies, birds become fish, and sky flows into water. The vertical form touches down and releases a stream of abstracted fish that continues across the ground, swimming metaphorically upstream through the park's low lying stormwater landscape. In this metamorphosis, one state flows into another.

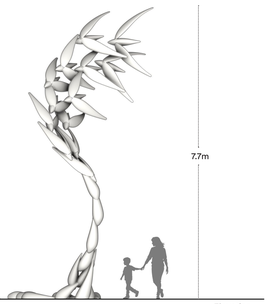
The transformation connects two remarkable ecological journeys of this place.

Chimney Swifts migrate across continents and have adapted to the chimneys and industrial structures of neighbourhoods such as Liberty Village for nesting and communal roosting. Their spectacular circling and funnel-like descent into chimneys is one of the species' most distinctive collective behaviours. The Chimney Swift is currently classified as Threatened in Ontario.

In the waters below, salmon undertake another extraordinary journey: leaving Lake Ontario each fall and moving upstream through tributaries such as the Humber River and Don River to spawn.

Within this artwork, these separate migrations become one continuous movement: from sky to earth, from earth to water, and through water upstream.

This movement extends the central idea of Liberty Nature Park. The park is conceived as an urban waypoint within interconnected systems of human and ecological movement, a place where nature occupies the centre and visitors move around, through and into an immersive landscape of forest, meadow, wetland, stormwater and habitat. Rather than sitting apart from this landscape, the artwork emerges from within its ecological heart. It becomes another experiential layer in the park's discovery landscape, encountered gradually along the winding boardwalk and revealed between planting, topography, water and sky.




Elevation



The chimney swifts and salmon are symbols of movement and migration, and a translator of eras past.

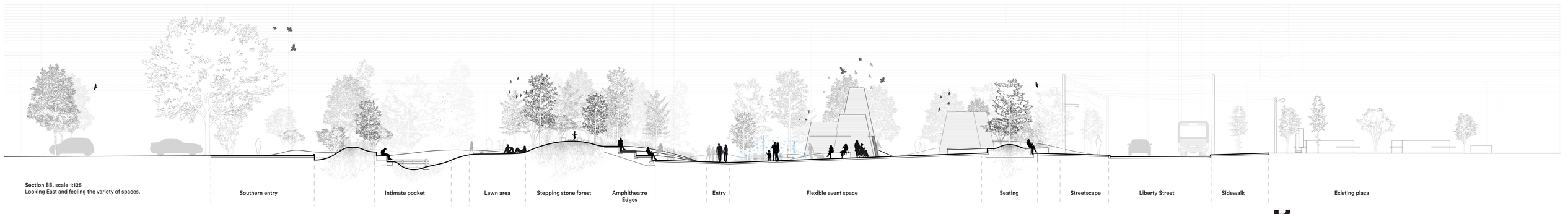




Polished stainless steel reflects the natural surroundings




Section AA, scale 1:125
Looking South and experiencing the shifting terrain.




Section BB, scale 1:125
Looking East and feeling the variety of spaces.



PMA Henning Larsen SOCA STUDIO OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE figureground



**Flexible Event Space**
Arriving from the northeastern corner a view of the flexible event space opens up, revealing the amphitheatre seating and architectural washroom pavilions, bringing a breeze from the water mist before guiding you into the green heart.

## Material Palette

**Nature and Industry**

Liberty Nature Park's material palette is rooted in ecology, industrial heritage, and a strong connection to place. The landscape itself becomes the primary material expression, with planting, soil, water, and habitat creating an immersive, seasonally dynamic environment. Stone serves as the park's foundational architectural material, used for paving, edges, retaining elements, and seating to organize movement and support gathering. Wood is integrated into seating surfaces to add warmth and comfort. Weathering steel is applied selectively within the boardwalk and pavilion awnings, referencing Liberty Village's industrial character while providing contemporary contrast.

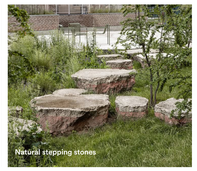
Together, these durable, natural materials create a park identity that is authentic, resilient, and deeply grounded in its local context.


Textured granite paving, large scale


Textured granite paving, small scale


Slim steel decking profiles

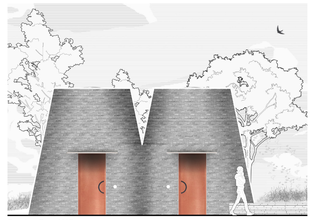

Limestone edges


Natural stepping stones

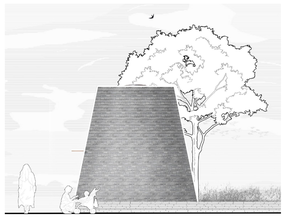

Wooden seating

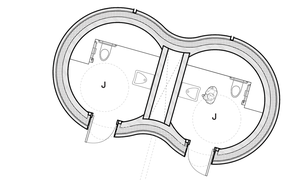



**Context Plan, Scale 1:1000**
Liberty Nature Park is set in the heart of Liberty Village, writing itself into the neighbourhood of chimneys, creating an ecological stepping stone to Toronto's network of large parks and green space.

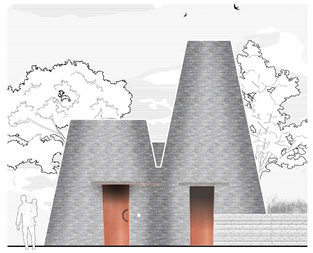


**Barrier-Free WC**
Elevations 1:75

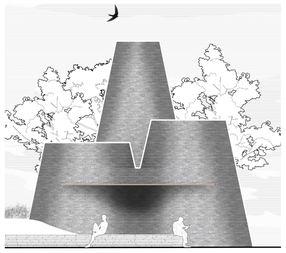


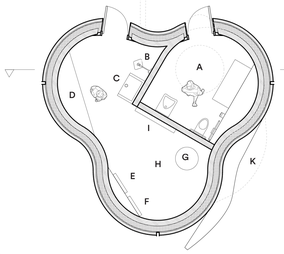



**Plan,** 1:75

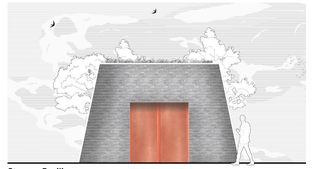


**Universal WC**
Elevations 1:75

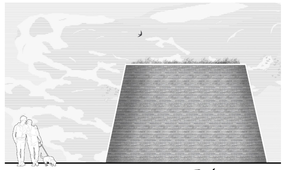


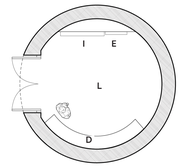



Plan 1:75



**Storage Pavilion**
Elevations 1:75

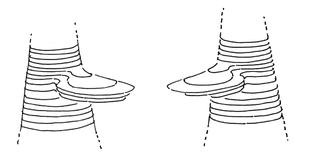




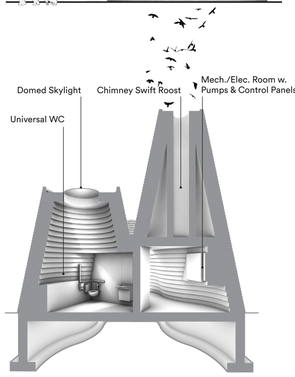

Plan 1:75


Canopy Inspiration

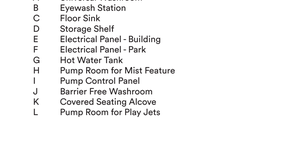

Facade Inspiration



Shade awnings are concieved of as mushrooms on decsaying tree trunks, whereas the stone facade echoes the natural materiality and rhythm of limestone bluffs of Toronto's ravines — both of which make up the natural habitat of the chimney swift.

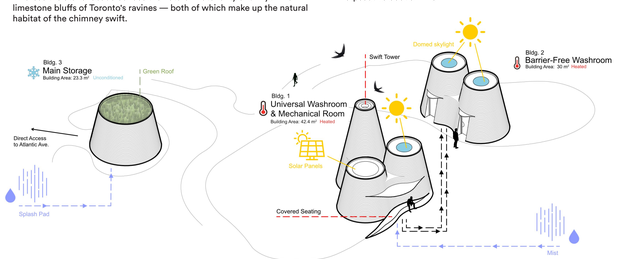



**Universal WC**
Perspective Section 1:75




A Universal Washroom
B Eyewash Station
C Floor Sink
D Storage Shelf
E Electrical Panel - Building
F Electrical Panel - Park
G Hot Water Tank
H Pump Room for Mist Feature
I Pump Control Panel
J Barrier Free Washroom
K Covered Seating Alcove
L Pump Room for Play Jets

Plan Legend




## Washroom & Park Pavilions

**Connecting to the Industrial Area**

The washroom buildings function as both essential infrastructure and civic landmarks. Inspired by the vertical forms of the industrial chimneys that once defined Liberty Village and the aerial movements of the chimney swift, the buildings rise from the landscape as a series of sculptural cylindrical stone volumes. These distinctive architectural elements establish a highly visible identity for the park from surrounding streets while also performing ecological and functional roles.

Following the spirit of movement and journey, the program is decentralized over 3 slight pavilions of various diameters and heights rather than one combined large building. Doing so enables each pavilion with greater agility in coalescing with nature and landscape.

The pavilions become contemporary interpretations of swift habitat structures while simultaneously housing mechanical systems, embracing natural light, and serving as landmark features visible from surrounding towers and streets.

At ground level, the building anchors community life by integrating seating, shelter, gathering spaces, and opportunities for informal occupation. Rather than functioning as an isolated utility building, the rising structures become part of the landscape itself – Architecture, nature, and public life weave into a single experience. The buildings act as both beacon and destination, helping draw visitors into the park while reinforcing the broader narrative of migration, movement, and ecological coexistence.

**Materials, Structure and Sustainability**

Informed by indigenous thoughts towards nature and how to decolonize a 19th century industrial site, as well as the goal to provide low carbon and net zero architecture, the cylindrical volumes of each pavilion are clad in Ontario limestone masonry units. These masonry units will be sized to match the Ontario Size Modular Brick, the standard dimension found across Liberty Village; this stone masonry reinterprets the architectural legacy of industrial brick buildings while using a local and low embodied material.

The structure of each building is also composed of larger load bearing stone masonry; a significantly more adaptable and sustainable material than concrete or steel. Since stone is a highly resilient, cleanable, and durable material, these structural walls also double as interior finishes. This minimizes construction sequencing and waste, while maintaining a cohesive aesthetic on the interior and exterior.

Additionally, the thermal mass of the structural stone minimizes the cooling and heating load of the pavilions supporting net zero operations.

Outside of these innovations the design assumes a standard rainscreen wall assembly composed of a structural stone framework with R-36 Insulation and finished with exterior stone masonry. The roof framing is constructed of douglas fir dimensional lumber which is also a low carbon material, it features R-60 rigid insulation. The slab on grade features R-15 rigid insulation throughout, supporting a comfortable and efficient building envelope.

The design proposes highly durable and easily cleanable polished concrete floors, stainless steel washroom fixtures and wall panels at the squared-off areas of the otherwise cylindrical washrooms. The buildings are electrically heated without the use of natural gas, and feature passive cooling strategies through the stack effect. Each private washroom has its own skylight creating a dramatic experience while minimizing the need for artificial light during the days. Above the mechanical room is the tallest tower within the pavilion, and is designed as an artificial habitat to support a new Chimney Swift population in Liberty Village.

*Building 1* is the largest and tallest of the three structures and located adjacent to the main plaza. Extending above the storage space is the artificial swift tower; an artificial habitat to support a new Chimney Swift population in Liberty Village. At Plaza level, a covered seat alcove to support small pedestrian gatherings.

*Building 2* includes two barrier-free washrooms and is located directly across the pathway from building 1 for intuitive wayfinding and efficient below grade servicing.

*Building 3* is the only unconditioned building, and comprises the main storage space for the park as well as pumps for the children's water feature. The storage building is conveniently located with direct access to Atlantic Avenue allowing for the seamless delivery and storage of larger equipment.

**Functionality, Systems, and Use**



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