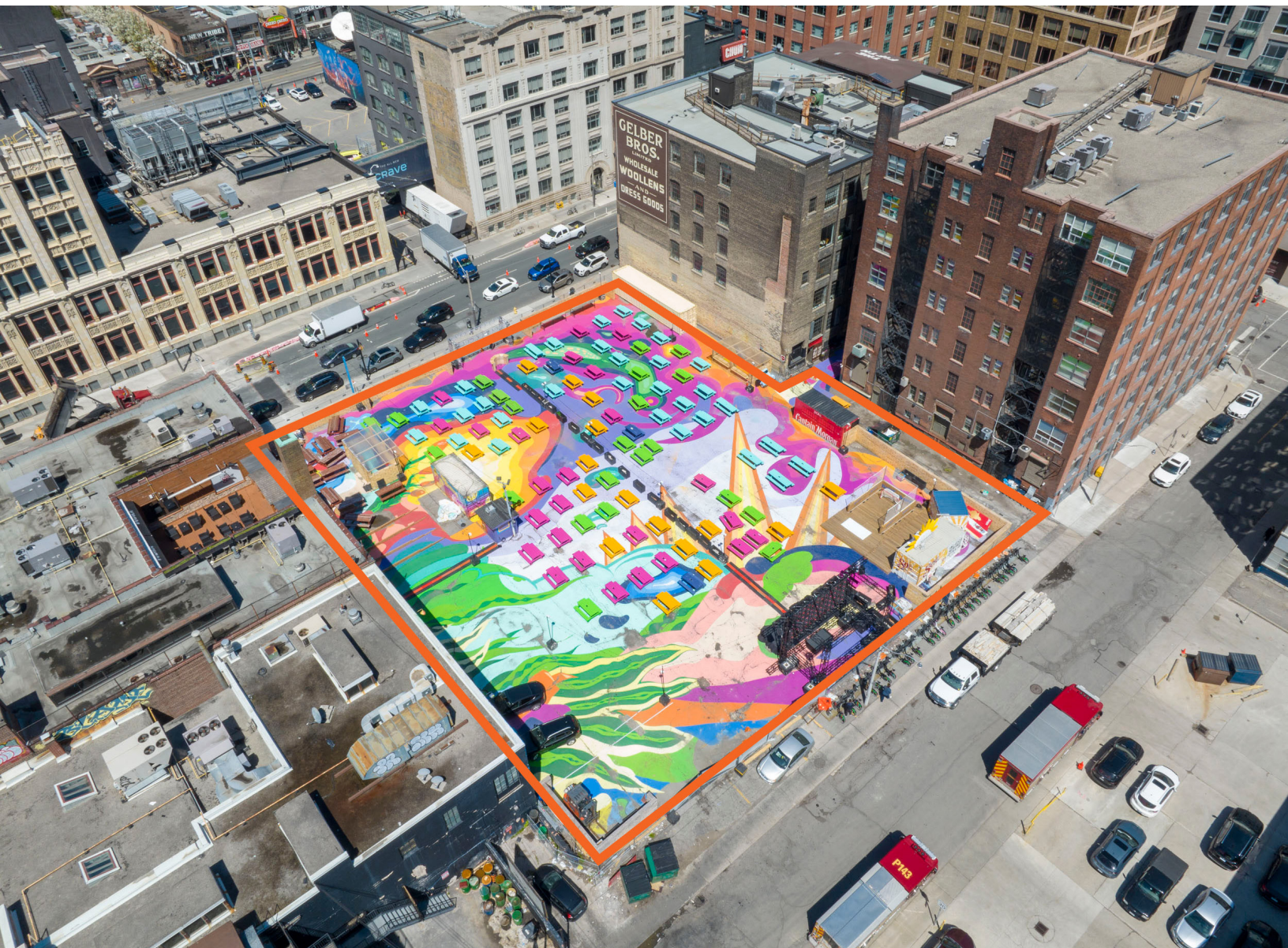


229 Richmond Street West Park

DESIGN COMPETITION

JURY REPORT

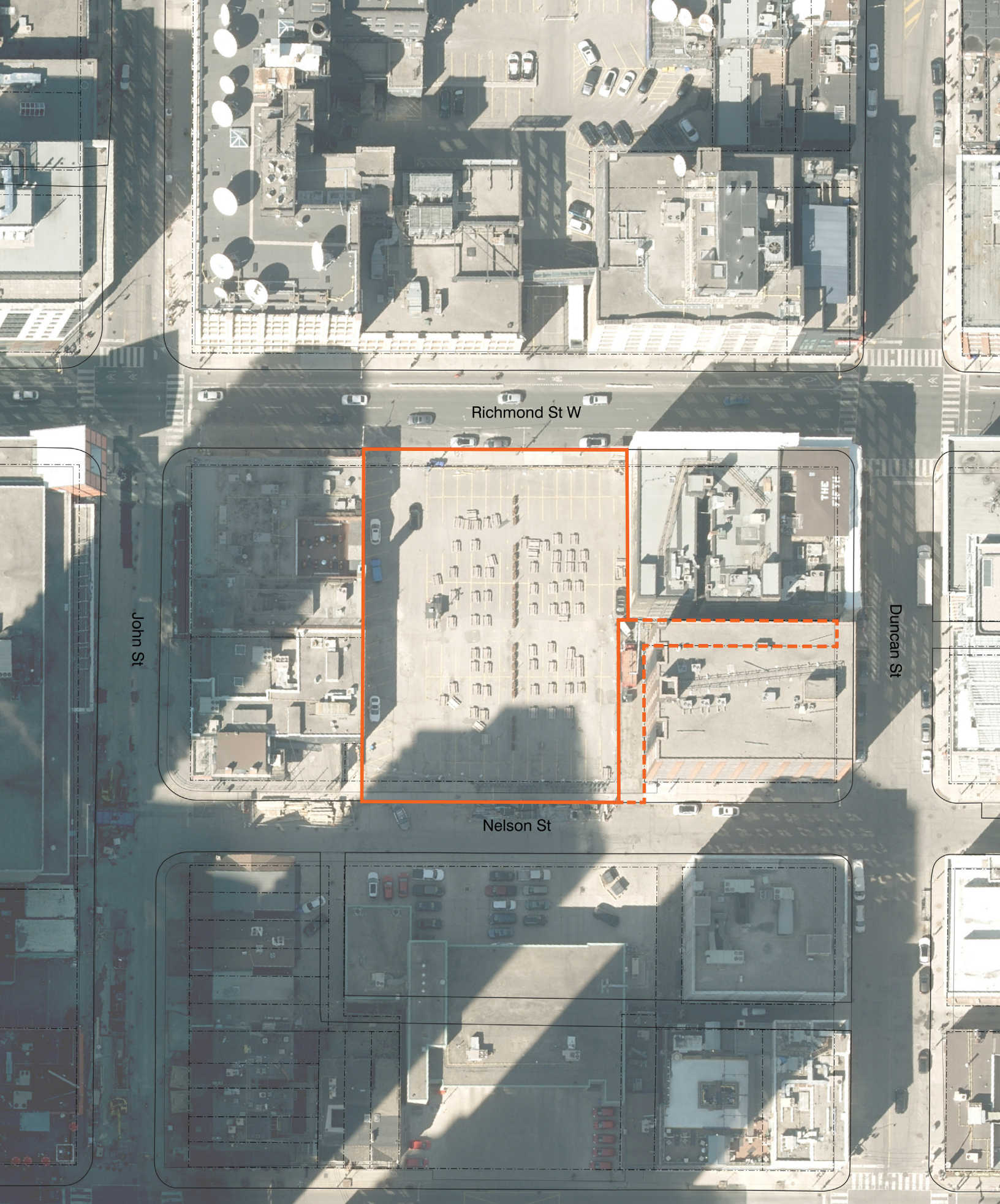
DECEMBER 18, 2023



The jury and city staff preparing this report acknowledge the land we are working on is the traditional territory of many Nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

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Airphoto of the 229 Richmond Street West site

1 Project

The park design competition site is a 2,600 square metre parcel located at 229 Richmond Street West, between Richmond Street West to the north and Nelson Street to the south. It includes the adjacent laneways. A design and construction budget of \$10,000,000 has been secured for this park with an additional \$1,100,000 secured for enhancements to the streetscape and laneways.

The King Spadina neighbourhood in downtown Toronto has one of the lowest parkland provision rates in the city at 5.5m² per resident (using the 2016 census) and 1.8m² per resident and employee, compared to a city-wide average of 28m² per resident and 18m² per resident and employee. Close to 16,000 people live within a 0.5km radius around the site, and 52,000 more work in this area. This project will create much needed parkland in the rapidly growing neighbourhood.

The future park is located in an important cultural hub close to the Toronto International Film Festival Lightbox, Bell Media HQ, the Art Gallery of Ontario, OCAD University, 401 Richmond, Princess of Wales Theatre, Royal Alexandra Theatre, Roy Thomson Hall, and the Artscape Sandbox, and adjacent to the planned John Street Cultural Corridor.

The site is also part of the King-Spadina Heritage Conservation District (HCD, under appeal) which is an evolved historic district, with a concentration of late 19th and early 20th century residential and commercial buildings, 3 historic parks, and a network of laneways. Subsequent waves of development saw the regeneration of the District through the adaptive reuse of residential and commercial buildings for a variety of uses, including nightclubs and bars. In the last 20 years the condominium boom has transformed the area.

Two major developments are planned adjacent to the site. To the west, 241 Richmond Street West will retain and integrate heritage facades into new 36-41 storey buildings and incorporate a mid-block connection through to John Street. A 61-storey mixed use building is proposed on the south side of Nelson Street with a 5.5 m wide mid-block connection between Adelaide Street West and Nelson Street. The ground floor of this building will have a community space and paramedic station.

Eight design goals form the foundation of the design for the new park at 229 Richmond Street West. They ask that the new park:

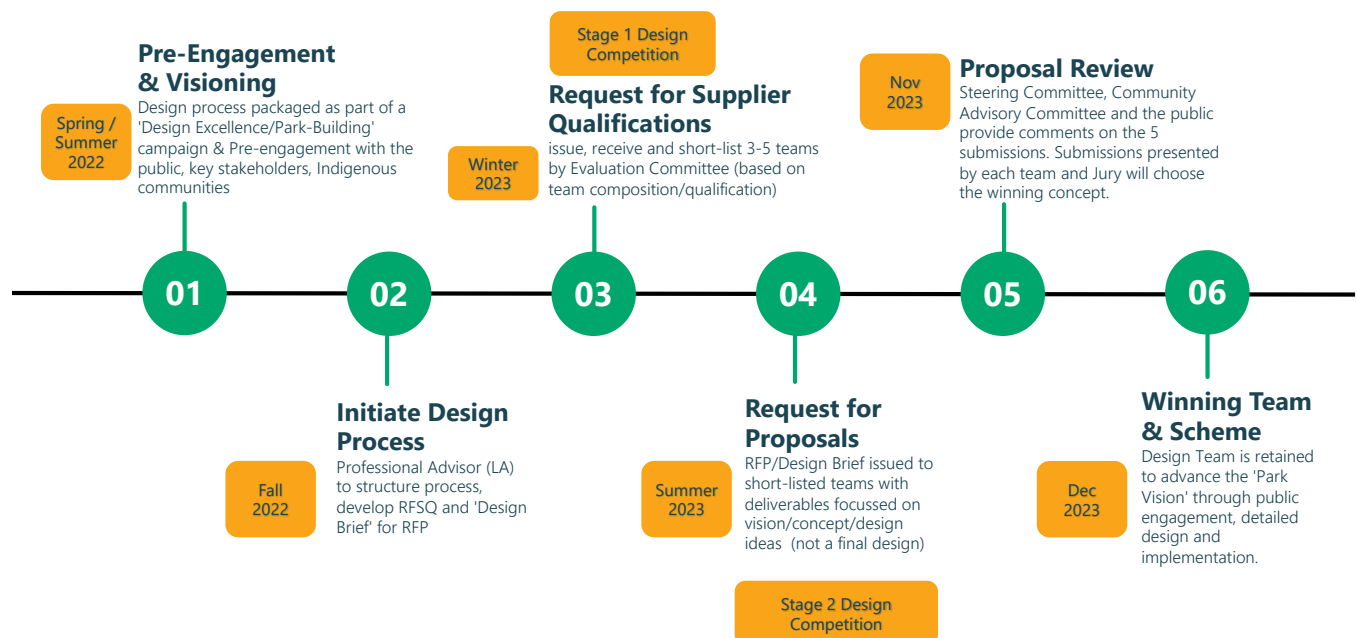
- be a place of culture;
- be a reflection of the neighbourhood;
- be a green oasis;
- incorporate Indigenous Placekeeping;
- integrate public art;
- represent design excellence;
- set new standards for sustainability, including Net Zero; and
- welcome a diverse community of users.

This report summarizes the competition process and provides the jury comments and decision on the winning submission.

2 Competition Process

The City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) opted for a design competition to heighten the profile of the project and to celebrate design excellence. 229 Richmond Street West represents one of the City's most significant park acquisitions in downtown in recent decades and has a significant budget allocated for design and construction.

In 2022, The City began with pre-engagement and visioning to gather input on the design goals and program. Following the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects *Guide to Design Competitions (2019)*, PFR set up a two stage design competition. Donna Hinde, Principal at The Planning Partnership, was retained as the Professional Advisor to oversee the process.



Competition process diagram

Stage One: Request for Supplier Qualifications (RFSQ)

The RFSQ was advertised around the world via professional landscape architecture societies and trade publications. The RFSQ asked for a Landscape Architects in good standing with the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects to gather teams that included:

- An architect/architectural firm that is a full member in good standing with the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA);
- A professional artist or artist team; and,
- An Indigenous design partner with experience or expertise in Indigenous Placekeeping. This person could also fulfill other roles on the team, such as the artist, architect or landscape architect, but should have specific expertise in Indigenous Placekeeping.

A non mandatory Bidders Information Session was held on February 9, 2023.

The RFSQ asked teams to submit:

- a statement explaining the team's unique approach to the design of 229 Richmond Park;
- the team's understanding of the site context and identify key design issues and challenges;
- the team's understanding of the design goals and how they will be interpreted through design;
- the team's approach to Indigenous Placekeeping;

- a description of the team including the key landscape architecture staff, architect, professional artist or artist-team, Indigenous design partner and additional team expertise (engineering, cost consulting, public engagement, urban/streetscape design, heritage interpretation, climate positive design and green infrastructure);
- team strategy; and,
- experience.

The City received 18 submissions. A five-member evaluation committee made up of City staff and the Competition Advisor reviewed the submissions based on 19 evaluation criteria included in the RFSQ. The five highest rated teams were shortlisted and invited to participate in Stage 2.

Stage Two: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Five teams were shortlisted and invited to respond to the Request for Proposals:

West 8 Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, hcma Architecture and Design, Native Art Department International, MinoKamik Collective, ARUP, KG&A, ERA Architects, A.W. Hooker.

O2 Planning and Design and OLIN Studio, Omar Gandhi Architects, Michel De Broin, Re:imagine Gathering, Saffy, WSP Engineers, Entuitive, L'Observatoire, ERA Architects, A.W. Hooker.

PMA Landscape Architects and SLA, Gow Hastings Architects, Ned Kahn Studio, Tàmmaro Art/Design, SAFFY with Ridge Road Consulting, WSP Engineers, RWDI Consulting Engineers, Marcel Dion Lighting Design, ERA Architects, Vermeulens Cost Consultants.

DTAH Architects, Paul Raff Studio, Trophic Design, Monumental, ARUP, Melanie Sifton, Marshall Murray.

Public City Architecture, Sook Yin-Lee, Seán Carson Kinsella, Blackwell Structural Engineers, Thomas Fekete Ltd, TYLin, Postma Consulting, Wolfrom Engineering Ltd and J Neufeld.

The City held a Bidders meeting and a site tour on June 28, 2023.

The teams were invited to submit:

- Design Booklet;
- Letter of Introduction and Executive Summary;
- Design Narrative and Park Name;
- Design Drawings for the park, washroom, public art and Indigenous Placekeeping;
- Toronto Green Standards Checklist; and,
- Class D Construction Cost Estimate;

The RFP outlined the scope of work in eight phases. A fixed design fee, set at a percentage of the estimated construction cost, was provided to all teams. Each team was asked to include a work plan that allocated the fixed fee. The work plan and fees were not evaluated.

Each team was invited to present their concept to the jury on November 15, 2023.

Stakeholder and Community Feedback on the Design Concepts (RFPs)

In October 2023, Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR) staff and the Competition Advisor met with Parks Maintenance and Operations, the Steering Committee, the Community Advisory Group, the Indigenous Affairs Office and the local Councillor to hear technical feedback on the submissions. PFR also held an online public survey. An outside Cost Consultant was retained by the City to review the cost estimates included in each submission.

The **Steering Committee** included City of Toronto staff from:

- the project team from Parks Planning and Strategic Initiatives;
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation Asset Management, Environment & Energy;
- Corporate Services, Environment;
- Economic Development and Culture - Public Art;
- Transportation Services;
- Heritage;
- Urban Design;
- Toronto Green Standards; and,
- Community Planning.

A **Community Advisory Group** included key stakeholders in the area with representatives from:

- Muskrat Magazine;
- Parks People;
- Queen Street Business Improvement Association;
- Spacing Magazine;
- Toronto International Film Festival;
- Toronto Downtown West Business Improvement Association;

- Garment District Residents' Association;
- 8-80 Cities;
- Artscape;
- Toronto International Film Festival;
- Toronto Art Foundation; and,
- Toronto Outdoor Picture Show.

Local residents and Deputy Mayor and Ward 10 Councillor Ausma Malik were also on the Community Advisory Group.

From October 10-29 the **public** was invited to share input on the shortlisted submissions through an online survey with illustrations and descriptions provided by the design teams. The city received 1, 546 responses. The results are posted on the project web page.

The Professional Advisor and PFR staff prepared a Technical Report summarizing the feedback from stakeholders and the public and circulated it to the jury.

Based on the input shared during the meetings, the city provided specific questions to each team to consider addressing during their presentations. Questions were circulated one week before the day of presentations.

3 Evaluation

The Professional Advisor and PFR staff organized a 5-member design jury to select the winning submission. Jury members were:

- **Fadi Masoud**, Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Landscape Research at University of Toronto John H Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design
- **Jennifer Nagai**, Partner at PFS Studio and Landscape Architect (Jury Chair)
- **Nancy Prince**, Chief of landscape architecture, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) and Landscape Architect
- **Ryan Rice**, Executive Director and Curator, Indigenous Art at Onsite Gallery.
- **Tim Scott**, Architect and retired Principal at Forrec Architects Limited and Natale and Scott Architects

The jury thoroughly reviewed each submission as outlined below:

- Jury members reviewed and scored the submissions against eleven weighted criteria as outlined in the RFP. The completed evaluations, including comments, were submitted to the City before presentations.
- On November 15th, the teams presented their concepts to the jury.
- On November 15, 2023 in response to their impression of the presentations and discussion about each submission, each juror adjusted or confirmed their previously indicated scores.
- On November 16, 2023, the jury collectively discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each submission, the presentation, and the

response to the City questions provided in advance. The jury reviewed the evaluation matrix for each.

- The jury also reviewed each of the 8 goals provided by the City as identified in Appendix A of the RFP. As the jury discussed the goals, each juror was asked to choose one submission they felt best addressed each goal. Each juror was asked to only select one submission per goal.
- Of the five submissions, the highest ranking were further discussed with respect to how well each responded during their presentation to the questions they were provided in advance.
- The jury reviewed the results of the stakeholder and community engagement for each submission including the comments and ranking.
- The jurors submitted their final adjusted evaluation scores, and there was a final group discussion.

Each juror confirmed their first choice and the final selection was made based on a majority decision.

4 Jury Recommendation and Comments

A note about Indigenous Placekeeping

The jury noted that each team addressed the park goal of incorporating Indigenous Placekeeping in a different way. For example, Wàwàtesí provided an Anishinaabe narrative centred on the Seven Stepping Stones teachings. Waasamoo-mitigoog / Electric Forest based their plan on the form of sacred trees that have importance to many First Nations, incorporating broader Indigenous representation, and proposed a sacred fire. River Park recognized the importance of engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people later in the design process to embed Indigenous cultures into the park, and therefore put off making concrete proposals at this stage. The broad range of approaches created a challenge to the Jury in assessing this important goal.

The premise of Indigenous Placekeeping in context to design competitions is new and a shared foundation for meaningful discussion should be provided by the City. The Jury felt that in future design competition more direction is required. For example, what does it mean to be inclusive, which First Nations should be represented, which language or languages should be included, and whose story should be centered, in a land rich with many diverse Nations and stories?

The Jury advises that in order to move the design forward in the coming phases, a deep relationship with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people that will access and enjoy this park must be built. The City will turn to the *2022-2032 Reconciliation Action Plan* to provide the framework for this future engagement and relationship building.

Wàwàtesí

West 8 Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, hcma Architecture and Design, Native Art Department International, MinoKamik Collective, ARUP, KG&A, ERA Architects, A.W. Hooker

The jury recommends Wàwàtesí as the winner of the design competition by a majority vote.

The West 8 team rose to the the challenge of meeting the eight ambitious design goals while communicating a clear and poetic narrative, written with a sensitivity that was manifested in the design. They used the design competition to challenge conventions around public space and public art.

The team's rigorous analysis of the City's event requirements provided a clear rationale for their unique solution: to create a second level for the park with the Balcony. The team had a thoughtful approach to providing a green oasis, with particular attention to the location of trees, the planting palette, and the intent to provide shade tolerant planting in the microclimate under the under the Balcony. Jury members felt that West 8 and Minokamik Collective worked interactively as team, and that the Seven Stepping Stones teachings should be privileged even more in the design going forward. The jury appreciated that the team addressed the unhoused in a dignified way, truly meeting the goal of welcoming a diverse community of users.

Regarding the relationship between architecture and landscape, the cluster of pavilions were well positioned and integrated into the park concept, fitting with the narrative and integrated approach presented in the team's submission. While the submission included a strategy towards meeting Carbon Net Zero, the building design did not move past best practice, which is not sufficient in today's climate crisis.

Jury members were impressed by the thorough responses to the Juror's questions and the team's commitment to working with the City to resolve issues.

The City's Steering Committee was concerned with the ambitious approach to public art, which included a 10-year program of curation. While the jury appreciated that showcasing a range of diverse art would encourage return visits to the park, they understood that the ambitions may not align with the City's capacity to run such a program.

The City's Steering Committee was concerned with the height, size and winter maintenance of the Balcony, noted that its location may need to be adjusted to allow greater flow from north to south, and expressed concern about the use of the space below. The jury shared those concerns. However, most jury members appreciated the intent to create more space in the park and liked that the Balcony functioned as a porch connecting the pavilions. The jury appreciated the idea of the Balcony as "canvas" and was intrigued by its potential to support public art, exhibitions, and events.

The Jury has concerns about the above and offered the following qualifications, which should be taken as advice in design development:

- The ambitious 10-year curation program for public art is not likely feasible given current City staff and resource requirements. Look at scaling back the plan or focusing on permanent art work.
- The height and scale of the Balcony will need to be adjusted to ensure it is not a barrier and pedestrian flow is maintained through the park.
- Ensure the Balcony has a delicate and beautiful form, so that it doesn't become imposing infrastructure on the site.
- Pay careful attention to accessibility throughout the site.
- Re-consider the central lawn, looking for options that will be more maintainable in a downtown setting.
- Ensure the Seven Stepping Stone teachings are prioritized and lead the project.



- 1 The eastern gateway
- 2 The balcony – an elevated platform from which to watch and perform
- 3 The riverbed playscape
- 4 The grove of birch trees
- 5 The green – a lawn
- 6 The source – a public washroom
- 7 The canvas – the balcony's underbelly, a canvas for projected art and ongoing curation by Native Art Department International
- A Richmond Street improvements
- B Nelson Street improvements
- C Area for TIFF screen

Site Plan for Wàwàtesí



Eye-level rendering of Wàwàtesí in fall, looking south into the park from the Richmond Street entrance

River Park

O2 Planning and Design and OLIN Studio, Omar Gandhi Architects, Michel De Broin, Re:imagine Gathering, Saffy, WSP Engineers, Entuitive, L'Observatoire, ERA Architects, A.W. Hooker

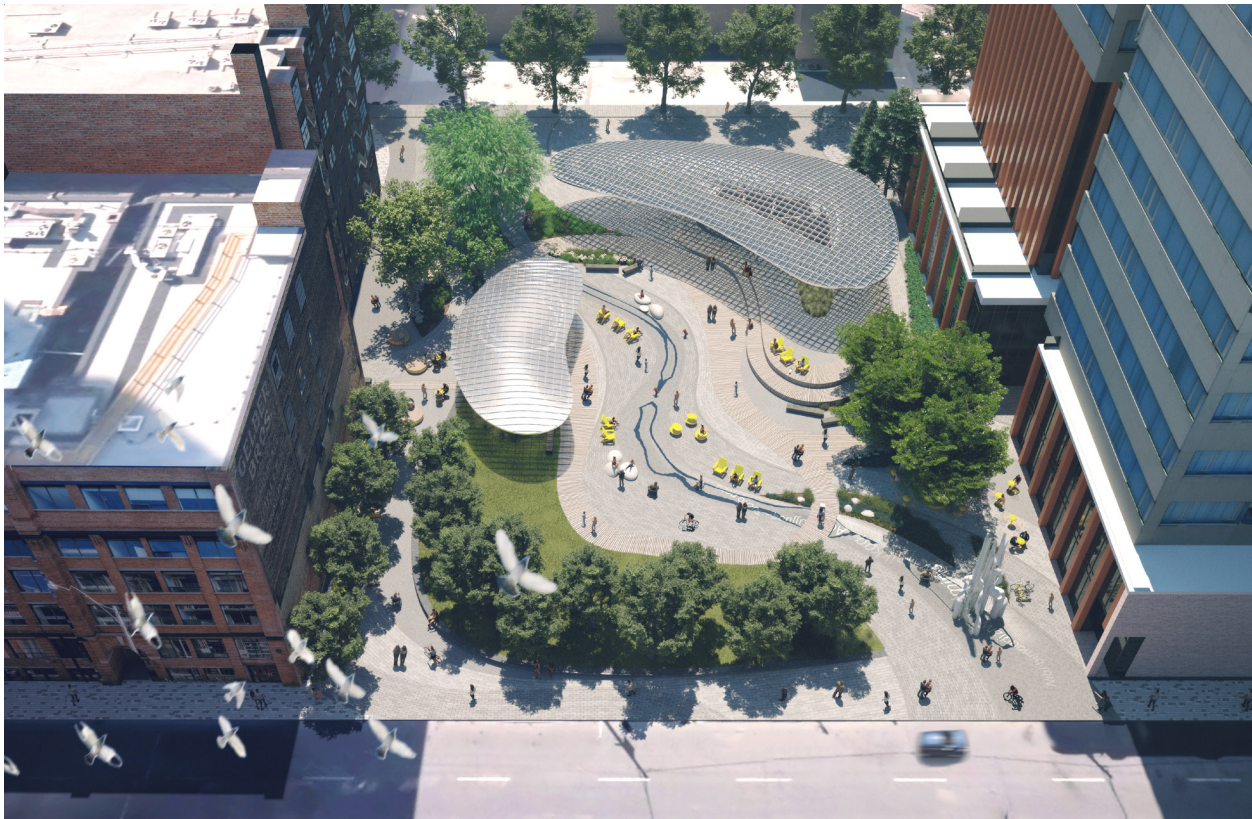
The jury noted that the concept had a subtle poetic quality to the emergence of water, placement of public art and pavilions, and granularity of spaces. The jury appreciated that the team took a position delivering a primarily hard surface space, with a threshold of green, and that the scheme could accommodate large events. The concept offers a place for repose that can be experienced from different perspectives, evolving and shifting along the abstracted central river. The jury valued the multi directional design approach of the pavilions and the creation of an iconic gateway from the south. The jury commented on the tangible quality of the art work and the opportunities for the art to act as thresholds into the park.

Jury members were concerned about the size and dominance of the pavilions and the construction cost. The jury noted that the park will already be in shade, questioning the need for large canopies. There was also a lack of information with respect to achieving Carbon Net Zero, or the approach to sustainability. The jury was concerned about

the team's comment during the presentation that meeting the Carbon Net Zero target would compromise design excellence.

The jury shared the City's Steering Committee's concern with respect to the clarity of the "river" and how it would be interpreted, seen, and interacted with by the park users. Given the site's rich and layered history, the concept did not fully address the uniqueness of the site. The jury felt there was great potential for the site based on how the concept was described in text, however some of the ideas did not get translated into the conceptual design. While the jury appreciated the team's decision to create an understated landscape, they commented that the scheme could have benefited from a stronger landscape approach.

The jury commended the quality of the illustrations and the graphic material the team prepared. However, the illustrations were uneven in the ability to capture the intended character of the scheme.



Birds-eye view rendering of River Park looking down into the park from Richmond Street

oneSky Park/Bezhig Giizhig

PMA Landscape Architects and SLA, Gow Hastings Architects, Ned Kahn Studio, Tàmmaro Art/Design, SAFFY with Ridge Road Consulting, WSP Engineers, RWDI Consulting Engineers, Marcel Dion Lighting Design, ERA Architects, Vermeulens Cost Consultants

The jury commended the team on the clear and evocative illustrations in this submission. The team embraced the idea of maximum nature, with a commitment that was uncompromising. The jury appreciated the thoughtful approach to planting and the creation of a verdant urban park, however, they were concerned about accessibility within the natural areas.

The idea of burying the washroom within the landform was an intriguing concept that the jury supported. The creation of the stepped terrace to provide access and occupiable space was very well received. The results of the public survey indicated a preference for schemes that focused on trees and planting. The public showed a preference for oneSky, with many citing that it provided the most green space of all the submissions.

Jury members were concerned that access to the washroom was down a narrow alley with the potential for safety and security issues resulting from the lack of surveillance into the building. The jury questioned the need and use of the breezeway space. Jury members felt that the washroom building wall along Nelson Street

created a barrier to access from the south. These concerns were shared by the City's Steering Committee.

The jury felt that the submission did not provide the same level of information regarding Carbon Net Zero as other submissions, so it was difficult to determine if the team was reaching the City's imperatives.

The jury appreciated both public art installations, but felt they were disparate. Some felt the Aqueous Veil installation was too large, ominous, and not generated from the specifics of this site. There were also concerns about the materials and the kinetic nature of the installation. The jury shared the concerns of the City's Steering Committee relating to the location of the Woodland Wall on the Nelson Street washroom, outside the park.

The team's commitment to provide an opportunity for park visitors to experience nature within the downtown core was beautifully illustrated and the jury appreciated the legibility and thoughtful approach to landscape by this team.



Birds-eye view rendering of oneSky Park/Bezhig Giizhig looking down into the park from Richmond Street

Nookomis Garden

DTAH Architects, Paul Raff Studio, Trophic Design, Monumental, ARUP, Melanie Sifton, Marshall Murray

The Jury agreed that this concept was thorough, carefully considered and were intrigued by the compelling big idea: the Open Hand public artwork that was completely integrated into the design. It created an evocative, tactile sculptural topography that promoted interaction and informal opportunities for play, seating and gathering.

Despite some concern about the legibility of the 'open hand' at grade, the jury appreciated that it would be legible when looking down on the park from nearby buildings and that it would become more apparent over time as people revisited the park. While some jury members found the illustration of the oak woodland forest in the palm of hand evocative, only a single tree was proposed, and jurors felt more could have been done to create a lush landscape.

The pavilion was conceptually well executed, tucked into the landscape with design strategies that were clear and thoughtfully considered. Specifically, the team understood that "best practices" are no longer adequate to address carbon net zero targets and that decisions must begin with a rigorous assessment of materials and assemblies, bringing carbon focused innovation to conventions of small building design. The Jury commended the team's commitment to a creative and comprehensive sustainability strategy.

Although the jury appreciated the team's acknowledgment of operational needs, they felt there was too much hard surface included in the park. Jury members commented on the lack of variety in the routes through the park and noted that there should have been some larger gardens and narrower paths, to create varied experiences within the park.



Birds-eye view rendering of Nookomis Garden looking southwest down into the park from Richmond Street

Waasamoo-mitigoog / Electric Forest

Public City Architecture, Sook Yin-Lee, Seán Carson Kinsella, Blackwell Structural Engineers, Thomas Fekete Ltd, TYLin, Postma Consulting, Wolfrom Engineering Ltd and J Neufeld

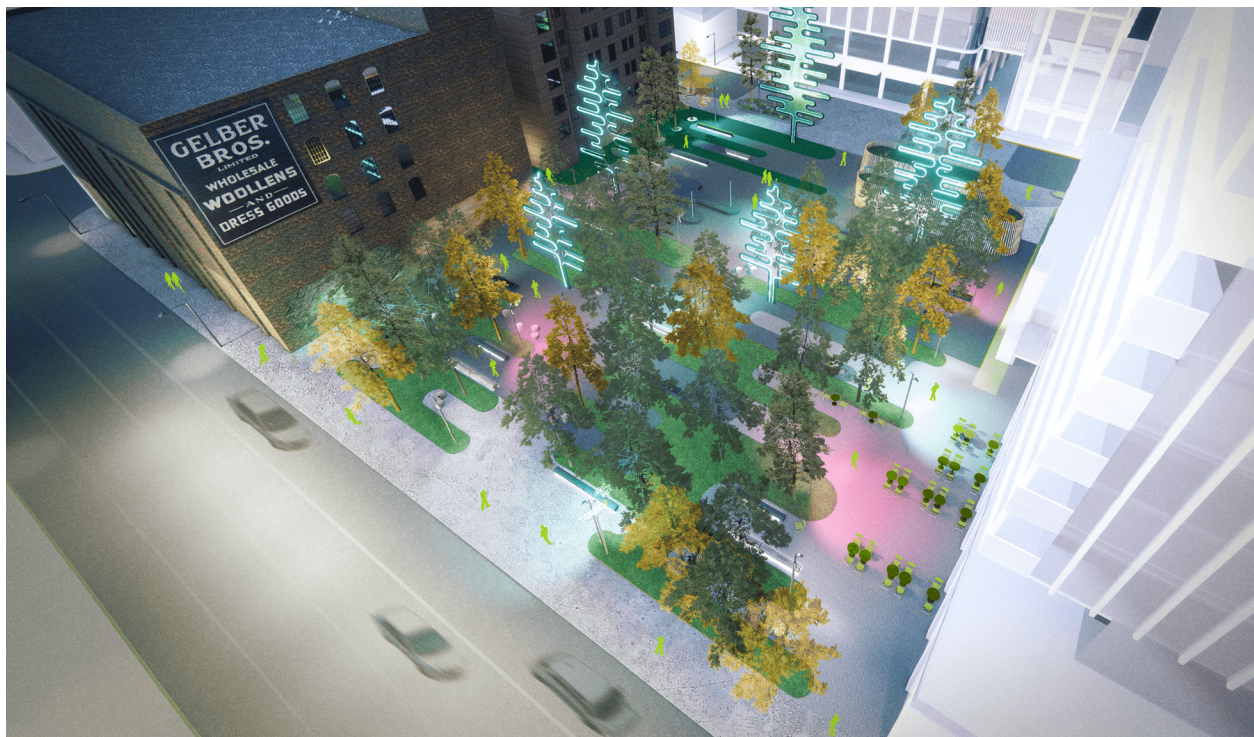
Jury members felt that this submission truly caught the spirit of what a cultural corridor should be with their futuristic ode to the Much Music culture lab. This submission spoke to the heritage of this area, and it successfully captured the Much Music energy and spirit and manifested it in multiple ways through design and programming. They felt that this design could animate Richmond Street, and function as a “natural cultural lab” incorporating many possibilities.

In addition, they felt that Indigenous Placekeeping concept was inclusive, using symbols and plantings that are known as medicine coast to coast, and proposing a sacred fire.

The jury shared the City’s Steering Committee concerns with respect to the height of and maintenance required for the sculptural trees. Some jury members were concerned about the width and length of the paved enclaves and the implications on access, maintenance, and safety. While the jury appreciated the Indigenous

cultural inspiration for the use of white pines and cedars, they were concerned about their viability in the urban environment. Overall, the jury and the public commended the team for proposing a significant amount of planting. Most jury members felt that the team had seeded an exciting idea with much room to grow and evolve.

The jury applauds the provocative and bold graphic expression and attention to lighting which honours the cultural spirit of Much Music and the John Street corridor. The jury also appreciated the excellent presentation.



Birds-eye view evening rendering of Waasamoo-mitigoog / Electric Forest looking into the park from Richmond Street

