



RECONNECT

TUP Toronto 2023 Conference Report

March 18, 2023



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1 ABOUT 1UP YOUTH CITY BUILDERS



1UP Youth City Builders

1UP Youth City Builders is a youth leadership program that brings together secondary school students in Ontario to celebrate and incubate city-building ideas.

The 2023 conference theme was **Reconnect**, a dialogue between youth and city builders about how we renew our relationships with the land, transform existing spaces, and reimagine our transportation systems for a world that is entirely different from what we knew before. The conference explored the post-pandemic changes we see in our towns and cities and youth's role as citizens in this new future.



2 CONFERENCE SNAPSHOT



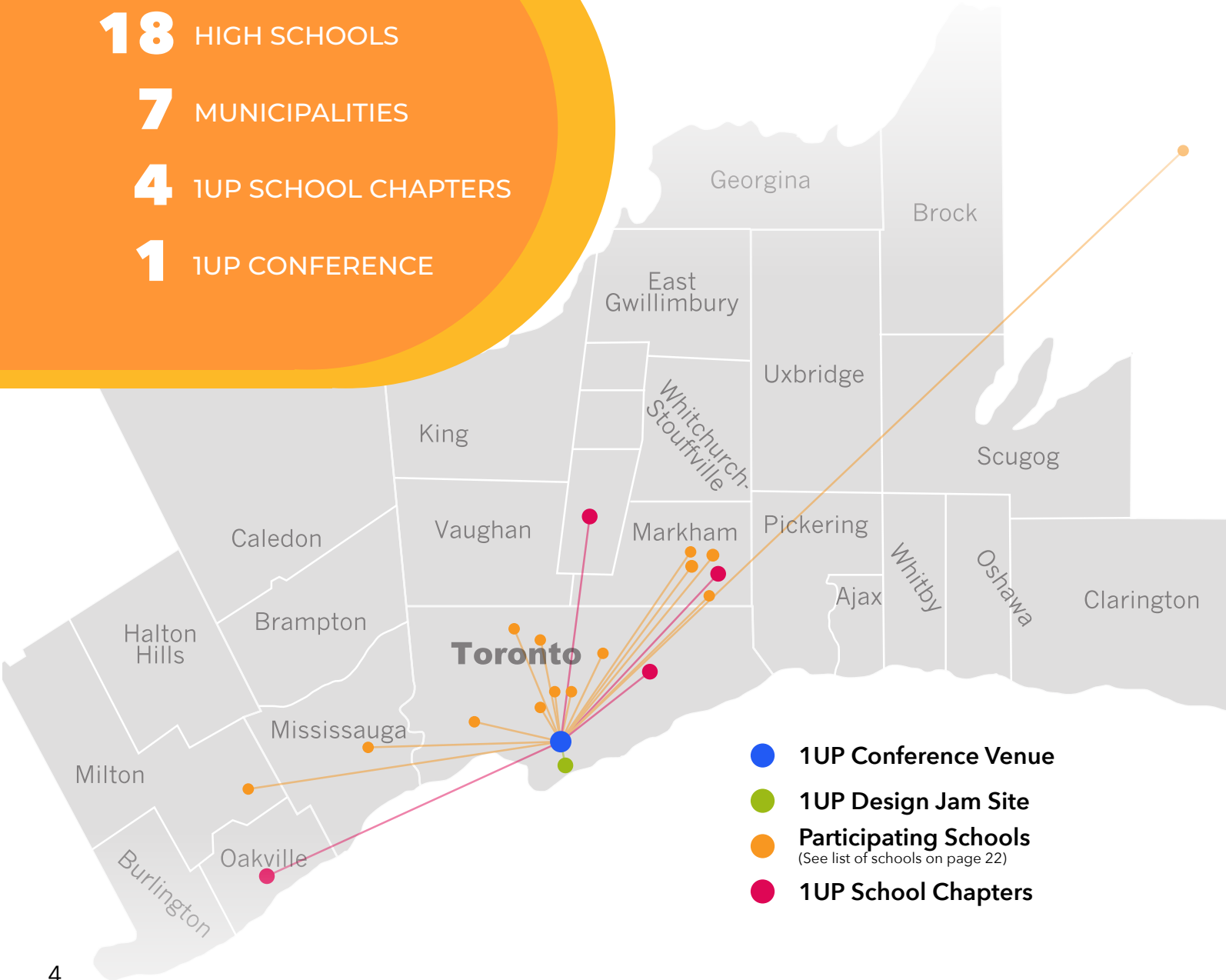
30 STUDENTS

18 HIGH SCHOOLS

7 MUNICIPALITIES

4 1UP SCHOOL CHAPTERS

1 1UP CONFERENCE



3 1UP SCHOOL CHAPTERS

In the 2022-2023 school year, student leaders from four high schools took on the challenge to become 1UP Fellows. They led their school chapters to create and implement community design-build projects to address a specific issue that they identified in their communities.

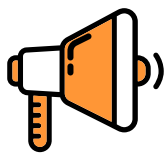
Each school chapter was provided with a 1UP Starter Kit, a mentor, and a \$200 project stipend to kick start their project. While their work continues until the end of the school year, the 1UP Fellows presented project updates at the 1UP Toronto 2023 Conference to inspire others to take on the challenge in the new school year.



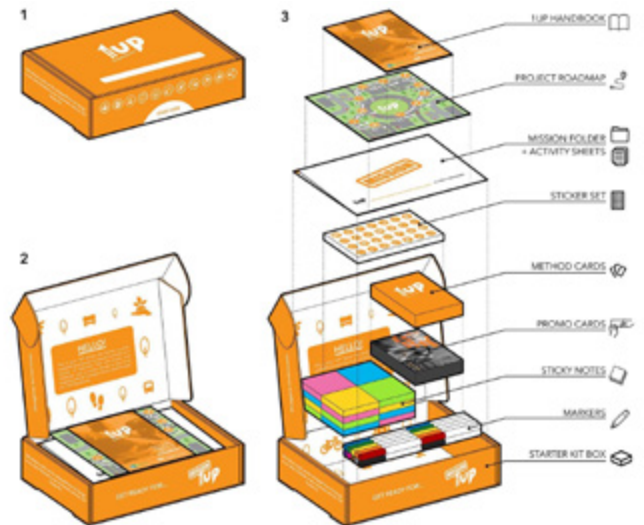
Design solutions to improve a public space in a neighbourhood



Build prototypes to test the school chapter's ideas and get feedback from real users



Pitch the chapter's project at the 1UP Toronto Conference to maximize reach and impact



The **1UP Starter Kit** is a free toolkit provided to each school chapter to help start their project.

White Oaks Secondary School

Fellow:

Daniel Sun

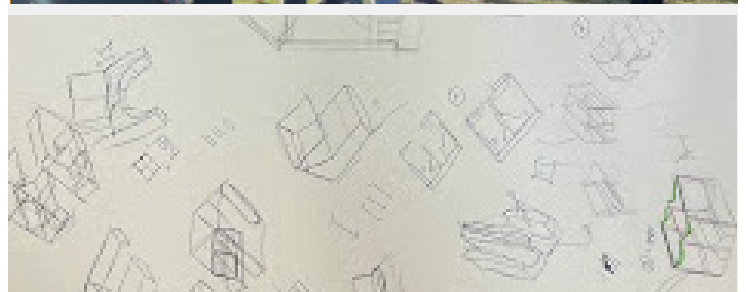
Mentor:

Reka Sivarajah



“How might we build creative and inviting outdoor seating in order to provide more eating and studying areas for students at our school?”

A common issue within the school is the lack of seating in the school during lunchtime, as the library and cafeteria are often completely packed. To solve this problem, the 1UP school chapter came up with the solution to construct outdoor seating designs surrounding parts of the White Oaks field. The school chapter proposes that having outdoor seating will not only fix the lack of seating problem but also allow students to interact, study, relax, and communicate with each other.



Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute

Fellows:

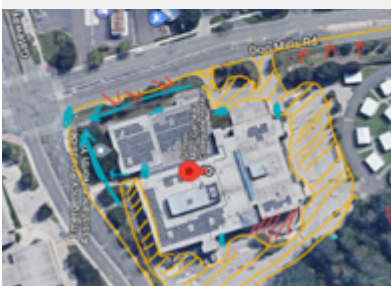
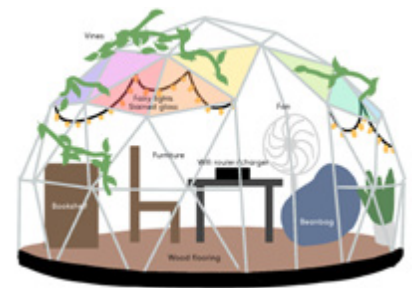
Angelina Bai &
Ivy Liu

Mentor:

Lauren An

“How might we improve the outdoor space at our school?”

Through interviewing and surveying the student body, teachers, mentors, and analyzing the layout of the given space; a common issue within the school is the lack of fresh air and facilities which causes concern for the learning, mental, and physical health to the students. To solve this problem, the 1UP School Chapter proposes to first build a dome tent study space and then consider incorporating a fitness area in the future.



Richmond Green Secondary School

Fellow:

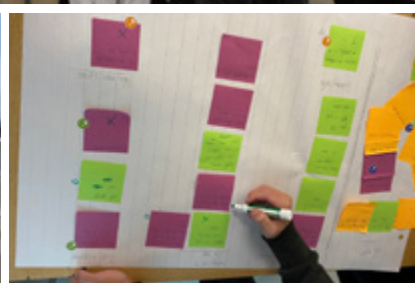
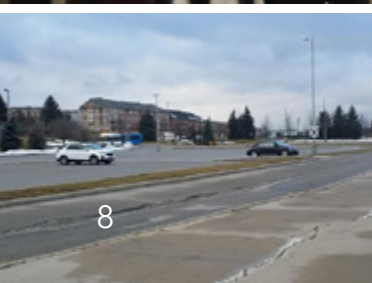
Chloe Guan

Mentor:

Shikha Jagwani

“How might we reduce congestion while improving efficiency in the front of the school/parking lot area?”

A common problem within the school is traffic between private vehicles and buses during peak hours which often results in slow and congested lanes in and out of the area. To successfully regulate and control the flow of traffic in front of the school building, the 1UP school chapter proposes to utilize creativity and art to design markings and signs that could be placed around the front of the school. Additionally, internal work to coordinate bus timings and paths can be taken to have students exit the building at staggered times.



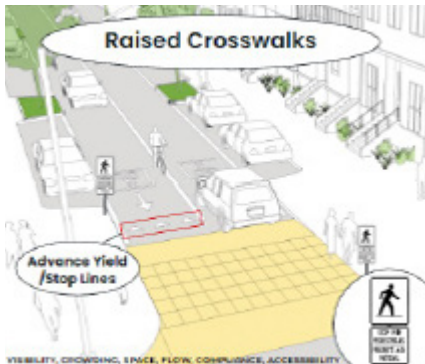
Fellows:

Amy He

Mentor:

Matthew Graystone

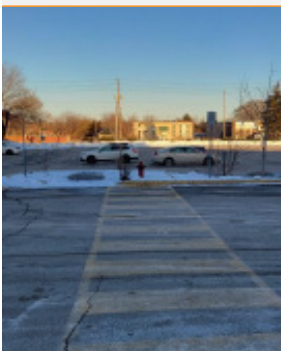
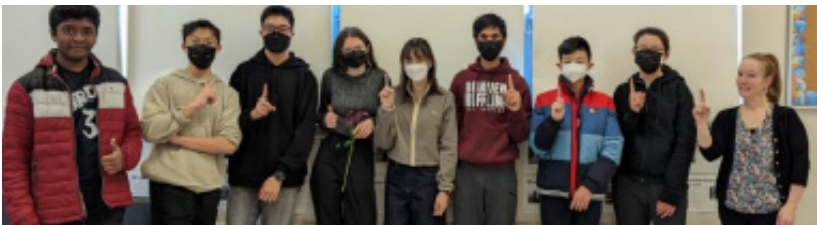
Milliken Mills High School



“How might we reduce fatalities and provide safe transportation for every pedestrian?”



This design proposal focuses on the lack of safety students experience when crossing the crosswalks on campus. Students from the 1UP school chapter interviewed fellow students about their thoughts on ways to improve the crosswalk safety issue on campus. A common fear involved incidents regarding automobiles. To solve this problem, the 1UP school chapter came up with proposing improved crosswalks in 3 different locations on site. Specifically, they proposed to improve markings followed by yield-to-pedestrian signs, and tactile pavings.



4 1UP CONFERENCE DESIGN JAM



The 1UP Design Jam is a 4-hour student design competition for real-life urban challenges. Students at the conference were assigned into teams of four to six, to tackle a case challenge provided by our Design Jam partner, The Bentway Conservancy. Each team was guided by facilitators and had access to a Design Jam Partner representative in the room available for consultation on the case challenges. Each team was tasked to design one of four groups of personas provided in the case challenge.

The desired outcomes of the 1UP Design Jam were:



To develop greater empathy and curiosity in youth of current challenges in our communities.



To create imaginative youth-led solutions for our partner to consider implementing or incorporating.



To apply a user-centered approach to solve real-world community challenges.



Design Thinking Model

The 1UP Design Jam took inspiration from the Design Thinking model, which is a creative, human-centred approach to problem-solving and innovation. The model follows several steps:

Empathize

Understand the place, people and problem.

Define

Identify a specific challenge to address within a greater issue.

Ideate

Brainstorm possible solutions.

Prototype

Build and test a physical model of a solution.

Pitch

Present the solution to others for feedback.



DESIGN JAM PARTNER: THE BENTWAY



The Bentway Conservancy

The Bentway Conservancy is a not-for-profit organization based in Toronto. With a mission to transform the space underneath the Gardiner Expressway into a vibrant public space that unites communities and highlights the diverse culture within Toronto.



Waterfront ReConnect

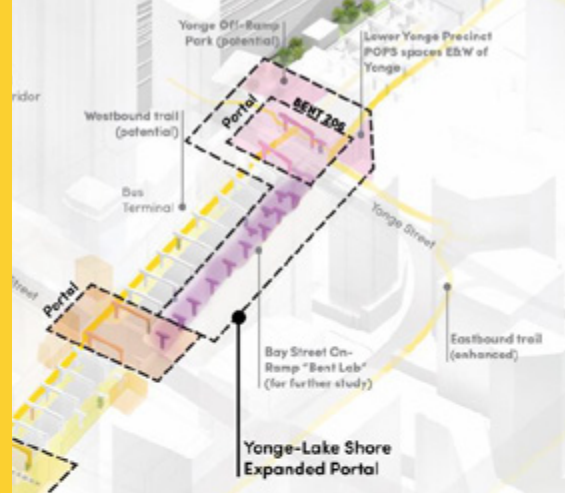
The Gardiner Expressway is a major highway that cuts across downtown Toronto. From a regional perspective, the Gardiner is an essential connection between the Greater Golden Horseshoe area and the core of the city itself. Locally, however, the Gardiner is a physical and psychological barrier between the city and Lake Ontario. As neighbourhoods along the Gardiner continue to develop rapidly, there is a need to address this barrier at key locations and transform the currently hostile spaces underneath the Gardiner into great public spaces.

Waterfront ReConnect is an ongoing initiative led by The Bentway Conservancy to address this challenge.



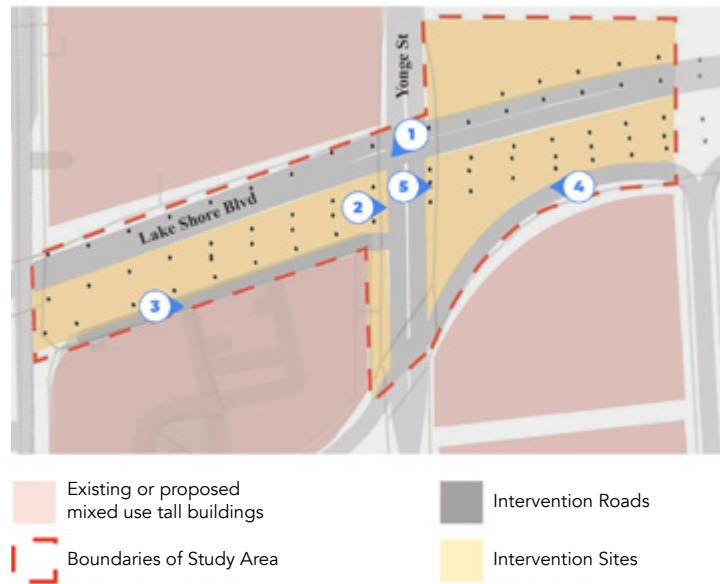
Design Jam Challenge:

How might we create a safe and comfortable space for all visitors that serves both as a public space and a portal to the waterfront?



The Site: Yonge Portal

The Design Jam site is located in the area where the Gardiner Expressway crosses over Yonge Street. Currently, there is an off-ramp on the north side of the Gardiner, and a diagonal intersection (Harbour Street/ Lake Shore Boulevard East) to the south. Pedestrians and cyclists currently need to cross the street at least 3 times within this area and travel underneath the wide concrete expressway structure overhead.



Typical Bentway Site Conditions



GARDINER ROOMS



PATH + CAP



POCKET PARKS



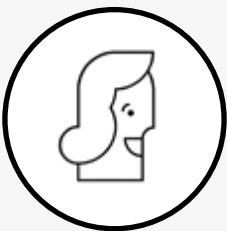
PORTALS

DESIGN JAM PERSONAS

GROUP 1 PERSONAS



CHRISTINA is a 36 year-old woman who lives in a high rise along the waterfront with her wife, Penelope, who works at the local Starbucks. Originally from Oakville, she moved into the city to pursue a Bachelors of Arts in Professional Communications from Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU). After graduating from TMU, Christina went on to receive a Certificate in Social Media Marketing from George Brown College. Since then, she's been building her career working at a corporate public relations firm. This 9AM-5PM schedule keeps her busy, however she works from home so she is able to walk her two corgis (Neville and Daisy) three times daily. On the weekends, Christina and Penelope enjoy spending time outdoors, checking out new restaurants in the neighbourhood, and catching their favourite teams play at the Rogers Centre or Scotiabank Arena.

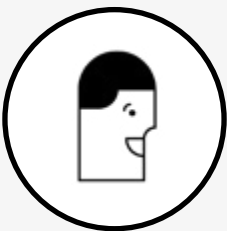


ANNIE is a shelter user at Adelaide Resource Centre for Women. She is 60 years-old and enjoys people watching, reading at the library, and visiting the lake. She often walks down Yonge Street to access the waterfront. She is a transit user, often looking for somewhere to warm up during the winter months. She connects to public wifi to contact her friends and family. Annie is often looking for water fountains, public bathrooms, and places to read and rest. Mobility is a struggle for Annie, so she is often slow-moving, especially along busy streets. Dimly lit streets and spaces make it difficult for her to walk at night.

GROUP 2 PERSONAS



SAMEERA is a 35 year-old urban planner at a private planning and design firm in Toronto. She is a graduate from the planning programs at both Toronto Metropolitan University and York University. She is a community advocate for Toronto's Somali Community as well as an active member of the Black Planners and Urbanists Association of Canada. She lives in a high rise condominium along the waterfront with her partner and one elementary school-aged child. Her full time work keeps her busy, especially with her daily TTC commute. In her off time, she enjoys spending time in parks with her kid, as well as discovering new cultural amenities in the city. Sameera is a Muslim who is always looking for new opportunities to practice and engage with her faith in public.



KANISHKA is a 26 year-old man who recently immigrated to Toronto from Sri Lanka. He is an avid sports fan, often taking advantage of city parks to play frisbee, soccer, or use the outdoor fitness equipment sometimes provided. Kanishka is slowly getting acquainted with life in Canada while living in Toronto's inner suburbs. He hopes to eventually continue his academic career in Canada through attending graduate school at one of the universities in Toronto. Currently, Kanishka is working as a bike courier and commutes to the downtown core by bike everyday to be able to fulfill more orders in less time. Kanishka has a passion for photography, and is happy to have the opportunity to see and capture different parts of the city through his work. However, the limited bike-friendly infrastructure, less-than friendly drivers, and precarious nature of his work present everyday challenges.

DESIGN JAM PERSONAS

GROUP 3 PERSONAS



ARTHUR is a 15 year-old high school student at Jarvis Collegiate Institute. He moved to Canada from China with his family at the age of 4 and now lives in a condominium with his two parents along the waterfront. Arthur enjoys playing soccer on his school's team and works part time in the deli at the Farm Boy near his condo. Arthur wants to play soccer with his friends outside of school, but finds it difficult to coordinate a time and place to do so. Arthur enjoys walking and biking downtown because it allows him to explore all the different cultures that have made home in Toronto. Arthur hopes to soon start exploring the city outside of the downtown core.

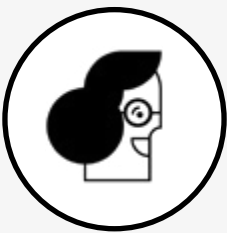


BARBARA is a 44 year-old electrician, she lives with her husband and two high schoolaged step-daughters. Her husband, Matt, is an emergency room nurse at North York General Hospital, commuting to and from downtown everyday. Barbara enjoys taking long walks with her dog, cooking for her family, and listening to music. Barbara is an Indigenous woman and wants more open spaces in her community to support sacred fire practices. Barbara drives a truck with her electrician equipment and sometimes has a hard time navigating downtown streets.

GROUP 4 PERSONAS



LAKSHMI is a 19 year-old first year student at the University of Toronto. They are studying Human Geography and Environmental Science. Lakshmi lives with their mother and younger sisters in a condo at Yonge St and Lakeshore Blvd. In addition to attending university full time, Lakshmi works part time at H&M in the Eaton Centre and helps care for their younger sisters while their mom works long hours. When they're not busy with school, work, and family commitments, Lakshmi likes watching films, going to different art galleries within the city, and spending time with friends. Lakshmi is just starting to acquaint themselves with the nightlife in the city, and is looking to start building a community for themselves within it.



GABRIELLA is a 25-year old woman living and working in the city's downtown core. She immigrated to Toronto from Colombia when she was 18 years old and had just graduated high school. Since then, she's started working in communications at a local non-profit organization. Gabriella rents an apartment in a high-rise along the waterfront and walks 15 minutes each day to get to work. She enjoys trying new foods, biking, and reading in local parks. Even though she has been in Canada for a few years, she is still struggling to build a community and make friends.

TEAM PITCHES

FIRST PLACE: TEAM 6

To address the design jam problem, Team 6 urged to create a community space where an array of diverse cultures was presented in a safe manner.

THEMES

Diversity: Team 6 wanted to include plants from around the world around the waterfront area, in addition to having a pillar covered in cultural murals to fully represent diverse communities.

Safety: Team 6 also argues the importance of adding lights around the waterfront area so it is safer at night.

Accessibility: Lastly, to prevent traffic and safety of pedestrians, Team 6 wanted to add new pedestrian walkways.

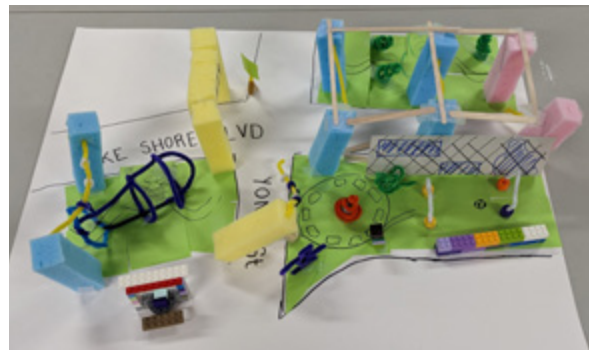
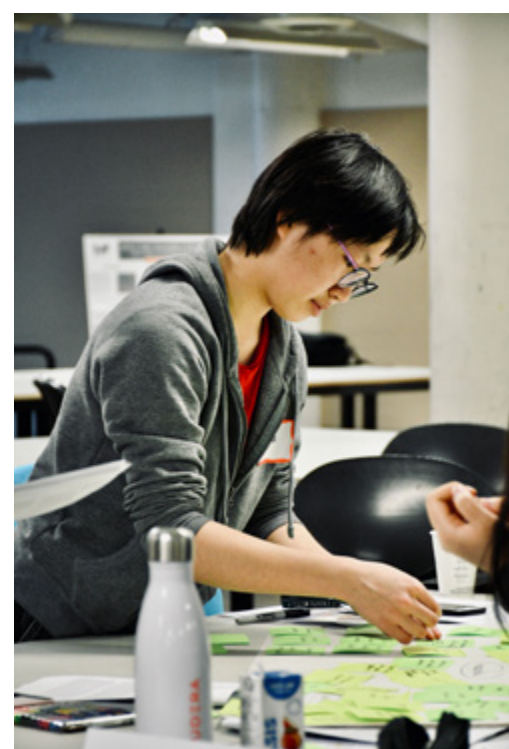


TEAM PITCHES

PEOPLE'S CHOICE: TEAM 7

To address the design jam problem, Team 7 urged to connect people of different cultures to the waterfront. This would include having more open spaces, specifically, culturally connected spaces to the city and the waterfront.

Additionally, safety should also be addressed where the implementation of lights and lit-up road signs would be encouraged. There is also a mixed-use sports pad which would be a place to pursue sporting passions. Finally there would be lit up signage in order to promote the use of the Bentway at night, as well as a calming sound deck which would be created through the use of wind chimes.





STANDOUT IDEAS



MOBILITY

- Protective path to accommodate mobility
- Mixed use biking and walking paths
- Bridges from Yonge to Lakeshore to safely cross
- City maps/Transit maps
- Bike racks



GREENERY AND ILLUMINATION

- A path with lit up signs, as well as plants
- Lighting the pathways to help people feel safe
- Greenery that cuts through a multipurpose field



COMFORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

- "Warming center" for the winter
- New pedestrian walkways to promote safety, as well as adding extended and fenced off bike lanes
- Narrower roads and street signs to widen pedestrian spaces



CULTURE AND HERITAGE

- Community centre garden
- Artwork representing different cultural backgrounds
- Vendors from different cultures



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BENTWAY CONSERVANCY

The 1UP Toronto Conference and particularly the 1UP Design Jam provided a platform for youth to shape the built environment around them in a fun and creative way. The ideas that each student team proposed within such a short period of time demonstrated their level of thoughtfulness and consideration for the users. We have summarized some key themes that emerged from the student teams' ideas. We hope that the Bentway Conservancy will consider incorporating them.

COMMON THEMES

- Emphasis on inclusive spaces to connect people of different cultures
- Lots of focus on safety, particularly the importance of lighting
- Encourage diversity through murals and artworks
- Focus on greenery and planting in the waterfront area

NEXT STEPS

1. Partner with local artists and communities.

Showcase artworks that celebrate the diversity of the community through community events/ exhibitions.

2. Lighting under the Gardiner Expressway.

Conducting lighting assessment to better understand needs.

3. Gather feedback from diverse communities.

Focus on the perspectives and needs of diverse communities to ensure that the public space under Gardiner Expressway is inclusive to all and work with local community groups and ethnic communities in Toronto.

5 PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Agincourt Collegiate Institute
Bloor Collegiate Institute
Elmwood School
Elsie Macgill Secondary School
Glenforest Secondary School
Humberstone Collegiate Institute
Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute
Markville Secondary School
Milliken Mills High School
Monsignor Fraser College
North Toronto Collegiate Institute
Pierre Elliot Trudeau High School
Richmond Green Secondary School
University of Toronto Schools
White Oaks Secondary School
William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute
York Mills Collegiate Institute

6 THANK YOU SPONSORS!

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