



**YORK STREET PARK +
REES STREET PARK
DESIGN COMPETITION**

Jury Report

3 October, 2018

Michael Van Valkenburgh, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (Jury Chair)

Neil Hrushowy, City and County of San Francisco

Jane Hutton, University of Waterloo

Matthew Hyland, Oakville Galleries

Janna Levitt, LGA Architectural Partners

October 3, 2018

We, the members of the Jury for the York Street Park and Rees Street Park design Competition, are pleased to provide this report summarizing our deliberations. Overall, we were pleased with the quality and effort reflected in the submissions for both parks and we commend all the proponents for their work. Rees Street, especially, was a difficult site to design for and all the teams put tangible effort into the designs.

Parks and their design help to define the life of a city. They leave a lasting impression on visitors and are the sites of meaningful interactions and enduring memories. We see the selection of the designs of York Street Park and Rees Street Park as a way to influence the life of Toronto as a city.

Before our deliberations, the proponent teams made presentations to the Jury. We also heard from representatives of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the City of Toronto Technical Advisory Committee and from Waterfront Toronto Staff who compiled the Public Feedback Report. We also received a peer review by a third party cost estimator of the costing for each of the proposals as submitted with the designs. These perspectives informed our deliberations and provided important insight into community and stakeholder understandings of the sites.

For each park site, it was with some effort that we narrowed our selection to two favourite schemes and chose between them. We have identified the runners up for each of the sites with an honourable mention because the schemes had great merit and provided an important counterpoint in our deliberations.

We are very excited about the design and execution of these two parks and their contribution to the waterfront and to the City of Toronto.

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YORK STREET PARK

Winning Entry:

Love Park

By Claude Cormier et Associés (Montreal)

The Jury found that this proposal was simple, elegant and timeless. Love Park engages the beautiful natural materials and elegant forms of a classic urban park and creates a contemporary and charming design that responds to all the requirements of the brief. The scale of the design fits the scale of the site and creates a beautiful fifth elevation: the park as seen from the surrounding towers.

The Jury enjoyed the general scale at the centre which opened a window to the sky, that with its shaded edge will make it appealing in both summer and winter.

The classic approach also offers great possibilities for public art in this design that should attract great artists and give them creative scope.

The Jury noted that this proposal was preferred by the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and Public alike.

The Jury was not convinced that the water feature could successfully double as a plaza and suggested the following qualifications and conditions, which should be taken as advice in the development of the design:

- Animate the water feature with year-round uses (e.g. potential model boating in summer & recreational skating in winter).
- Remove the pavilion to create more space for picnic tables and/or public gatherings. Accommodate mechanical uses above ground with any other interior uses in a smaller structure.
- Consider reducing the size of water element to create more gathering space.
- Add tables and chairs for eating.
- Increase the tree canopy considerably.
- Include sustainability features such as bioswales and integrated stormwater management approaches, and demonstrate the resilience of the park design to flooding.

Honourable Mention:

York Forest

By Stephen Stimson Associates Landscape Architects (Massachusetts) + MJMA (Toronto)

The Jury felt that this design was a beautiful response to the request in the brief for an immersive green experience. The incorporation of a narrative about water and water use into the landscape translated

into a proposal for a beautiful feature. The juxtaposition of dense nature with skyscrapers was compelling.

Nevertheless, the Jury felt that the incorporation of a functioning wetland on this site would impose onerous operating obligations on Parks, Forestry and Recreation and reduce the usable area within the park. The Jury felt that while the vegetation was nurturing and embracing, the park was too inwardly focused and could have been better connected to its surroundings. The Jury also found that there was no easy way through an interior that seemed too dark and dense.

Park Vert

By Agency Landscape + Planning (Massachusetts) + DAVID RUBIN Land Collective (Philadelphia)

This design was clear and well-organized and the Jury appreciated the simple singular move expressed by the tree walk. The tree walk was seen as a thoughtful way to draw in the history of the ramp, and the potential of ascent and promenade through the tree canopy was felt to be a special and delightful experience.

The Jury was not convinced, however, that the tree walk was the right proposal for the scale of this site. The dead-end of the ramp was felt to pose a safety challenge, and the structure was demanding from a maintenance and operations perspective. Overall the Jury found the scheme well-developed and elegant, however they felt that the tree walk might have worked better as an element in a larger park.

BYOT

By Hapa Collaborative (Vancouver)

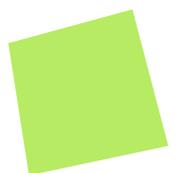
This proposal was informed by a very clear analysis of parks around the City of Toronto. The Jury appreciated the emphasis that the designers placed on the recreational needs of the neighbourhood.

It was felt, however, that the park design was residual to the gesture of keeping the off-ramp as there was no change to existing formal configuration of the plan. The Jury felt that the contrast between the forested area and the bents led to a lack of integration of the two landscapes. Also, the amount of hard surface in this proposal was unnecessary and did not address the request for an immersive green experience.

Gardiner Green

By PLANT Architects (Toronto) + Mandaworks (Stolkholm)

This design told a very beautiful and enticing story about vegetation and plant growth and maintenance. While the Jury appreciated the attention paid to programming the bents, they felt that this overtook other parts of the park design. The Jury felt that the circulation within and through the park lacked legibility and that the landforms around the edges too high, leading to a visually impermeable space that did not feel welcoming. The Jury would like to have seen a more developed proposal for water and found it difficult to imagine how public art could be integrated into a space that was so aesthetically defined and full.





REES STREET PARK

Winning Entry:

Rees Ridge

By wHY Architecture (New York) + Brook McIlroy (Toronto)

The Jury was impressed by this large singular move to address the relationship of Rees Street Park to the Gardiner expressway. This proposal is a bold concept for a difficult site – it pushes back and can hold its own against the Gardiner. It was felt that Rees Ridge would change the relationship of the waterfront to the downtown by visually removing the Gardiner for one long city block. This proposal, alone among the entries, achieved the appropriate scale and proportion for this challenging site.

The design brief for Rees Street Park requested an emphasis on play and on community uses. This proposal includes exciting potential for program opportunities and events that will satisfy the needs of local residents. The proposal also allows for flexibility for art integration and creates less limiting opportunities for artists than other designs.

The Jury felt that Rees Ridge was multi-functional, thoughtful about winter and summer uses, and will make a strong addition to the ensemble of parks along Queens Quay as a unique and complementary space. The proposal also addresses the future storm water infrastructure requirements for the site.

The Jury has concerns about the cost and complexity of this proposal and offered the following qualifications and conditions, which should be taken as advice in the development of the design:

- The north side of the ridge must address Lake Shore Boulevard and create an inviting and safe experience for all users on the street.
 - The design should include no tunnels and no dead ends, opening up “cuts” to Lake Shore Boulevard for safety.
 - Park-like slopes, ramps, and other features required by AODA should be appealing, realistic and avoid looking like access ramps to a building.
 - The top walkway must be lower than the Gardiner expressway and also be shielded from it.
 - Remove the large cantilever at the east end of the ridge, as it is difficult to operate as a public space and costly to construct.
 - Reconsider the waterfall or integrate it better into the landscape.
 - Provide more slopes that are occupiable.
 - Bolster the role of the landscape design within the team and enhance the landscape and planting plans.
 - Create sample 1:1 models of the slopes and vegetation in advance of construction for Waterfront Toronto / Parks, Forestry and Recreation to approve.
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- Make the western edge of the site more permeable and open at-grade apertures at each corner.
- The Jury supports the team's interest in indigenous engagement in the design.
- Aspects of this project feel like a building. When complete it must feel like a lush landscape.
- The play value must be enhanced through greater attention to equipment, surfaces and range of users.
- Project must come in on budget.

Honourable Mention:

Rees Street Free Forest

By SCAPE Landscape Architecture (New York)

The Jury appreciated the appealing collection of landscape types and local ecologies presented in the Rees Street Free Forest proposal. The softness of the ideas/experiences was appealing and the design of the Market Plaza in this scheme was particularly good. The emphasis on planting and growing a healthy tree canopy was appreciated, placing an appropriate investment in the living landscape. The Jury felt that the open lawn offered the right scale and location for such a public open space.

Nevertheless, it was felt that the proposal attempted to include too many elements into a site with constraining proportions. It was felt that the scheme could have been simplified and that opportunities for diagonal movement across the space were lacking.

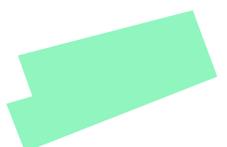
The Jury was not fully persuaded by the rustic material palette. Although the forest theme and materiality was appealing, the Jury wished for a better articulation and refinement of some of the features, particularly the play fence. The Jury was concerned about the capacity of the scheme to offer the extraordinary play opportunities required on the waterfront.

The Nest

By Snøhetta (New York) + PMA Landscape Architects (Toronto)

The Nest proposal addressed all the programming requirements successfully and was appealing from all four frontages. The sense of enclosure produced by the building and hillside created a space that was pleasing to the Jury and this proposal created a graceful diagonal circulation that the Jury appreciated. The collaborative approach to working with artists was unique among the proposals and would likely yield, it was felt, good opportunities for artists and successful public art.

Nevertheless, it was felt that the proposal included too great a proportion of hard surfaces for a community park, and the concept of the nest was not manifested enough in the design. The Jury also felt that the proposal felt fragmented and divided, like two separate parks.



Rees Landing

By Stoss Landscape Urbanism (Boston) + DTAH (Toronto)

Rees Landing proposed a bold conceptual framework for the Rees Street park site that the Jury felt allowed for a great deal of flexibility in the design. This was a potential benefit in dealing with the future storm water management infrastructure. The innovative and experimental approach to programming was appreciated for its playfulness and originality.

While the scheme was innovative, the Jury felt that it was not site-specific and did not have the strength to stand beside the Gardiner. Overall the Jury felt that the vision for the site was too abstract, without the necessary clarity to further develop the design.

Down North

By PUBLIC CITY Architecture (Winnipeg + Toronto)

The Jury appreciated the creative design of this park and the contemporary and graphical approach of the proposal. The winter-positive landscape proposed in this design was appreciated and the Jury found that the team had a well-developed and integrated approach to stormwater management. It was felt that the playful presentation and approach to design indicated that this team completely understood and met the requirements for integrated play for this site.

This scheme included significant staffing and operational requirements that the Jury thought would be problematic for Parks, Forestry and Recreation. It found that the toboggan run was not multifunctional or realistic year-round within a community park. They also found that the proposal contained lots of built form and hard surfaces, but not enough greenspace for the site.

