



**OAA HQ LANDSCAPE DESIGN COMPETITION**

**L A M I N A E**

TEAM HONEYLOCUST




MAY 16, 2024

*This project is on the traditional Indigenous territory of the Anishnaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Hndat and most recently, the territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.*

*This territory is part of the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, an agreement between the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.*


*This territory is also covered by the Upper Canada Treaties. We acknowledge that Ontario is home to First Nation, Métis and Inuit people from many territories and we are grateful to have the opportunity to meet and work with them.*

**SITE PLAN**

-  Unit Paving
-  Permeable Unit Paving
-  Crushed Shale Path (red)

**PLANTING LAYERS:**

-  Woody Canopy
-  Drifted Grasses
-  Pollinator Meadows
-  Upland Ground Covers
-  Ephemeral Wetland

-  Gabion habitat column

1. Round gathering area with integrated stormwater management cistern
2. Universally Accessible walkway
3. Primary walkway with wood topped linear bench
4. Tertiary granular path
5. Plaza viewing platform
6. New Bicycle racks
7. Permeable unit paving
8. Unit paving drive aisle
9. Relocated Ontario Architecture Association sign
10. Future electric vehicle charging location
11. Relocated accessible parking
12. Proposed bioswale
13. Retained existing vegetation
14. Gabion Habitat Pillars
15. Vehicle Turn Path
16. Relocated light post



## CONCEPT NARRATIVE

**Laminae** pulls apart the layers from which landscapes are composed, revealing the key elements, systems and relationships that shape the land and our experiences within it. **Vegetation, Water, Land, its Inhabitants, and Time** are all treated with dignity, equal and worthy of respect. The OAA Headquarters is the top inhabitant layer, pulled off the landscape to reveal all that is below. The boundaries, overlaps, and interconnections within and between these layers are where experiences are created. By highlighting these edge conditions, Laminae aims to encourage visitors to appreciate how landscapes function; how they are formed and reformed continuously, and how different layers can impact the forms they take.

The name Laminae comes from the structures within shale, the predominant bedrock in the Don Valley. Slight variations in texture and source material during formation create tiny layers within the stone. These layers are visible to the human eye, an emergent representation of a microscopic force. Landscapes too are an emergent representation; how water flows, seeds blow, fault lines shift, and creatures move leave evidence that is visible to anyone. Our design aims to make these processes clear to everyone, even if this is their first time thinking about landscapes. The final result is a space which is internally cohesive yet detailed, like finely textured shale.

This design integrates artistic elements, diverse plant communities with seasonal variation, pollinator habitats, human accessibility, and low-impact development (LID) principles to create a sustainable, engaging, and resilient environment. Revealing these key elements and their relationships to one another, Laminae aspires to foster a sense of community, support local biodiversity, and promote environmental stewardship.

At the heart of the site is a gathering space on top of a circular stormwater management

cistern. Rather than hide its stormwater management function, Laminae highlights the cistern's location, drawing attention to the manufactured systems that are necessary if we want to develop land for human use while limiting polluted runoff. Situating this sunny gathering space in line of sight from the front door draws people in, out from under the cantilever and into the landscape.

Another key sightline is the view from the rear parking lot, up a pedestrian alley towards the front door and a viewing plaza that overlooks the front of the property. This inviting vista serves as a welcoming first impression, fosters a sense of place and provides an attractive place to congregate, park your bike, and rest a moment before entering the building.

Gabion habitat columns are scattered throughout the site, designed as both art piece and pollinator habitat. These striking structures feature a sturdy wire mesh frame filled with a variety of materials, creating a visually appealing and texturally interesting site element. This not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the landscape but also supports local biodiversity by offering shelter and food sources for vital insect species.

The planting strategy drew inspiration from the natural plant strata of the Don Valley watershed, visually separating the different types of plant communities. These striking drifts weave and flow across the landscape, their plants selected to be suited to specific microclimates within the site. To ensure the site remains engaging throughout the seasons and the years, seasonal change and succession were used to inform plant selection. By prioritizing long-lived native species that thrive at different points throughout the year, Laminae is a living tapestry, where each season brings new colors, textures, and experiences for visitors to enjoy.

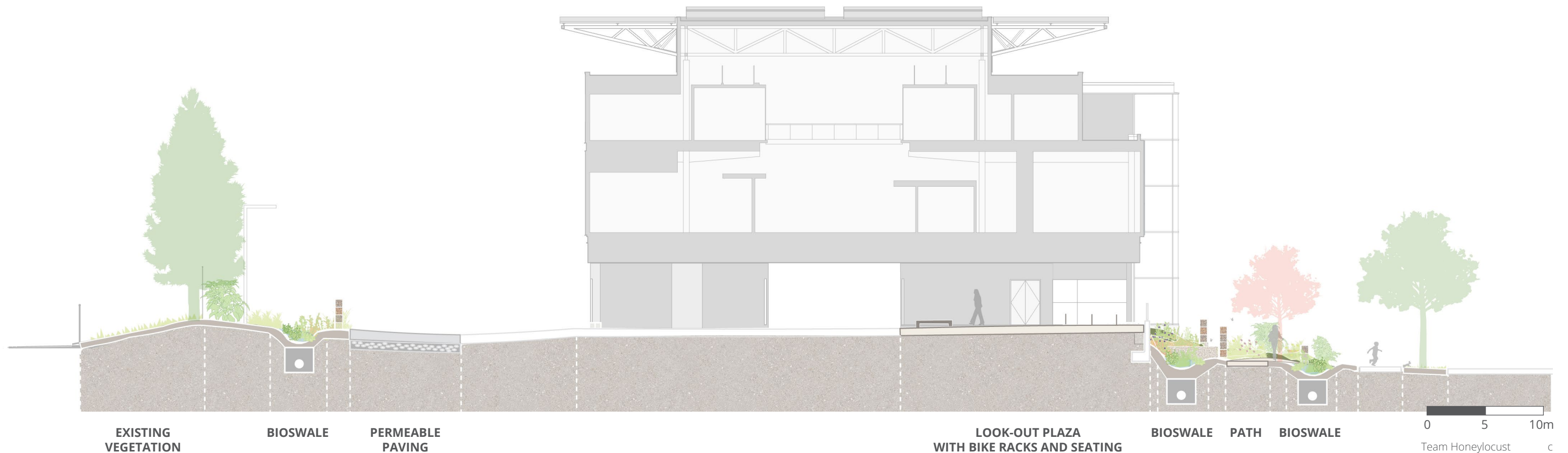
Accessibility is a key factor in the development of the plan, with slopes limited to ensure

ease of movement for all individuals, including those with mobility aids. The inclusion of an extra accessible parking stall near the entrance provides convenient access for visitors needing more space, and orienting their transfer spaces towards a pedestrian corridor ensures other vehicles cannot accidentally encroach into that space.

Low Impact Design (LID) and stormwater management are essential priorities within the landscape. The design incorporates a variety of LID techniques in addition to the cistern to manage stormwater on-site, reducing runoff and promoting infiltration. Permeable paving and a stepped bioswale are implemented throughout the site to capture and filter rainwater, enhancing groundwater recharge and reducing the burden on the municipal stormwater system.

The combination of artistic elements, seasonal dynamics, accessibility, connectivity, and low-impact development principles results in a landscape that is both sustainable and resilient. The use of native plants reduces maintenance requirements and supports local ecosystems, while the thoughtful design of pathways and gathering spaces ensures that the landscape remains usable and engaging throughout the year. The integration of stormwater management features mitigates the impact of heavy rainfall events and enhances the overall health of the watershed.

The OAA Headquarters is an ideal site to expose the layers and systems within a landscape as Architects can have a substantial impact on the land, and what that impact looks like will be based on their values. Architects have the opportunity to be stewards, working in collaboration with Landscape Architects, Indigenous representatives, and other key stakeholders to create designs which respect the land and its processes. Our landscapes need to be more than sod, monoculture shrubs, and isolated street trees if we want to be climate sensitive, socially conscious practitioners. They need to reveal the networks and systems that really build our world.



## INHABITANTS: EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Our approach to inhabitation had three priorities: promote equity, biophilia, and accessibility.

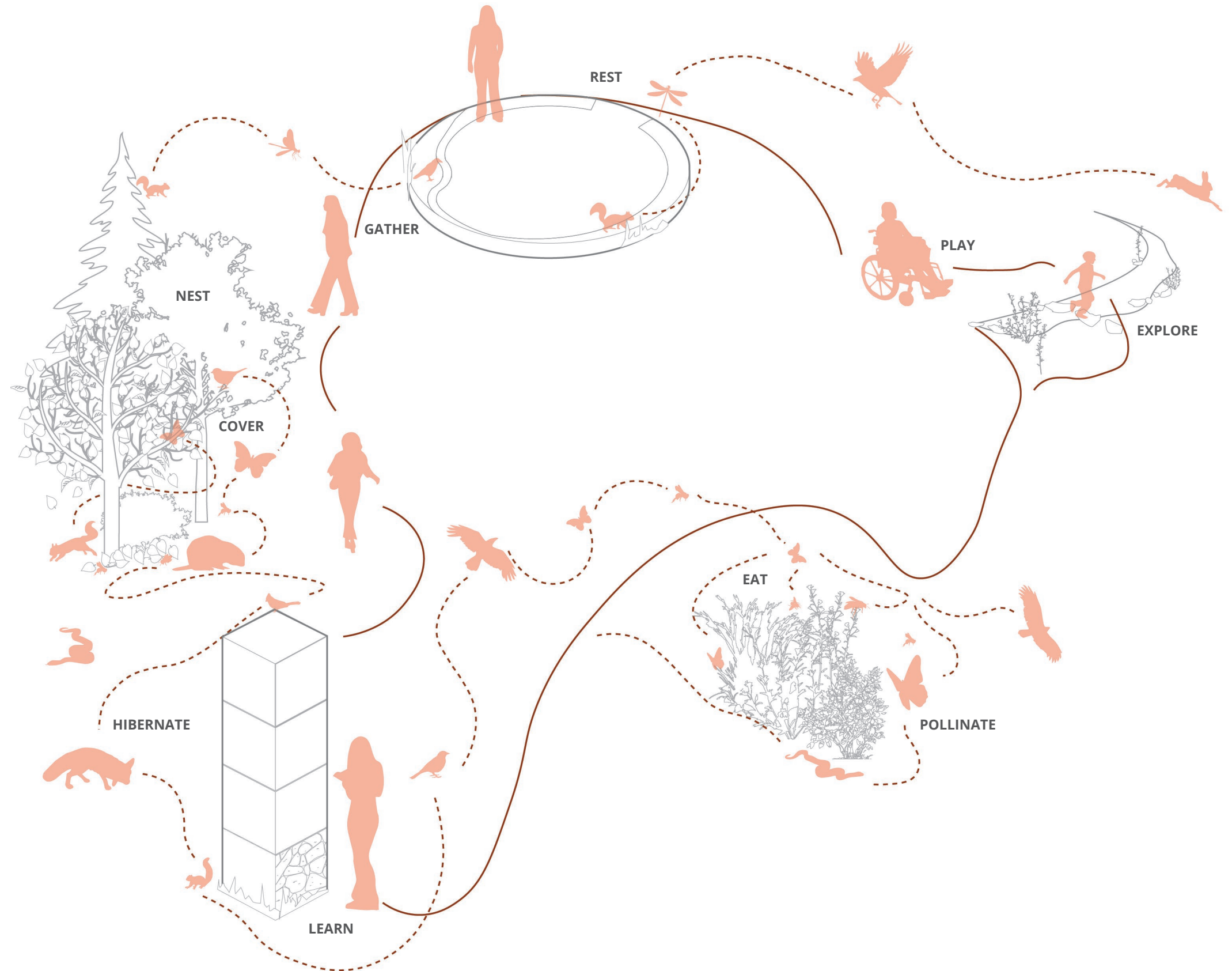
Environmental equity is not only for all kinds of people of different backgrounds and experiences, but also for non-human species who have just as much right to use the land as do people. Making an equitable landscape means considering the needs of all its potential inhabitants, from OAA members gathering to share ideas, to birds gathering seeds, to a lunchtime visitor seeking respite be they human or squirrel.

On a daily basis, the OAA headquarters is a place of work, and best practice workplace design suggests priorities should include promoting clean air, providing opportunities to take breaks, and encouraging physical activity to enhance the well-being and productivity of its occupants.

By incorporating native plants and creating habitats for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife, the landscape provides a serene and engaging environment that can reduce stress and improve mental health. This natural setting encourages employees to take breaks outdoors, fostering a sense of connection to nature and promoting physical activity. Additionally, the presence of green spaces can improve air quality and contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly workplace.

Accessibility was a key factor in the grading choices for this project, with slopes carefully restricted to a maximum of 4.5% to ensure ease of movement for all individuals, including those using wheelchairs or with limited mobility. This gentle grading allows for smooth transitions across the landscape, promoting inclusivity and comfort. Additionally, the inclusion of an extra accessible parking stall near the entrance provides convenient access for visitors with disabilities. These thoughtful design choices reflect a commitment to creating an environment that is welcoming and usable for everyone.

The inhabitants layer aims to understanding the interactions between humans and other living organisms within the environment. . By observing the site through a series of moments, this layer reveals webs of connections that shape ecosystems and influence life



## VEGETATION STRATEGY

Perhaps more than any other, the planting layer is both most dependent on and most impactful to the other layers. The relationship between plants, topography and water, seasonal change, and inhabitant influence generated a planting strategy that is visible at the macro scale, but also has micro variations that are only apparent when observing more closely.

The macro-pattern was inspired by the existing plant communities within the Don Valley, the different strata of a watershed giving their names and characteristics to the categories. These families create the pattern visible within the planting plan, a layered approach designed to respond to changes in slope and moisture content, to appear as one turns a corner and disappear from view as one continues through the site. Prioritizing native species with introduced selections unlikely out-compete native ones, the abridged plant list below indicates the character for the different strata.

On the micro-scale, not every species is suitable to every site condition. The existing coniferous trees, for example, will cause the land near them to be more acidic than elsewhere, a ground cover nearby would need to be adapted to acidic conditions. So while ground covers might be seen in many places, noticing which species is where would take more careful attention.

Similarly, depending on the time of year, different species will be at different life stages. While drifted grass is always present, whether it is May or August will change whether the cool-season *Koeleria* or the warm-season *Andropogon* is most prominent. The brief blooms of the *Trilium* and *Scilla* bring early-spring visual interest, and the showy bark of the *Cornus* and *Carya* provide year-round texture.

By selecting primarily self-seeding herbaceous plants, resilient and longer-lived woody species, and which are suited to anywhere from zones 2-7, this garden will be adaptive

to a changing climate. Our predictions about long-term suitability are at best educated guesses. By planting a wide variety and letting natural processes select which species are best suited, we have the best chance of achieving long-term success in spite of changing temperates and hydrology.

Finally, regarding site maintenance, while some species listed are typically cut back in winter, in the words of Piet Oudolf, "brown is a colour too." The desire to remove herbaceous plants in winter is a colonial understanding of what makes a desirable landscape. Leaving landscapes intact provides insect habitat, winter visual interest, and more closely mimic the natural life cycles of native plants. The suggested plant maintenance is limited to pruning only for keeping clear paths of travel and when safety is a concern.

