

OAA Landscape: A Layered Renewal

In its current condition, with its manicured lawns and concrete surfaces, the site does not properly reflect its richly layered history and ecology as part of the Don Valley corridor. But biodiversity, creativity and programmatic diversity can take over the site's denuded slopes and paved surfaces, creating new amenities, expanding existing habitats, and managing stormwater. The redesign prioritizes sustainability, accessibility, biodiversity, and community engagement, creating a welcoming and environmentally conscious space for visitors and wildlife alike.

The site has witnessed an incredibly diverse history. Human settlements in the area date back thousands of years, evidenced by the nearby discovery of tools by Indigenous Peoples. These Indigenous groups were attracted to the Don Valley due to the resources provided by the river (The Anishinaabemowin name for the river is believed to be Waasayishkodenayosh.) Local plant species, many of which are specified in this design, provided sustenance, building materials, and medicine. Pottery was crafted from the clay deposits found along the banks of the Don. Wendat communities emerged along the river starting around 1300 AD, bringing with them the practice of agriculture. By 1700, the Mississaugas had also migrated into the region, which had also been home to the Haudenosaunee .

Since the dreadful 1787 'Toronto Purchase', during which the lands were misleadingly taken away from Indigenous Peoples, the Don Valley has played many different roles, from farming community, transportation corridor, crafting and manufacturing hub, to leisure park, and host to sanatoriums and informal settlements. The ecology of the valley has suffered through its recent history, but remains resilient and diverse, and the site can play a role in its preservation. TRCA reports provide further information about the cultural and ecological richness of the place.

The landscape redesign strategy channels the diversity of the place, and works through a layered approach that overlays many different bottom lines: from enhancing pedestrian and vehicular circulation, to water management, flora and habitat restoration, and fostering

diversity, creativity, and interpretation.

Pedestrian Circulation.

The plan aims to improve pedestrian access by creating immersive and accessible paths and social spaces, including "The Circle", a flexible space for day-to-day life and for gatherings, and "the expanded lobby" which connects the main approach, parking and dropoff zone to the building entrance. Landscape lighting and Linear ceiling lights guide visitors towards the entrance, and benches are provided for resting. The paths immerse visitors in nature, offering different experiences based on the site's landscapes.

Vehicular Circulation.

The redesign proposes a circulation loop for efficient access, drop-off zones, and parking spaces, including provisions for electric vehicles and bicycles. Options for optimizing the northern slope are explored to enhance site efficiency (one which expands the building plinth to manage runoffs and optimize parking and loading.)

Water Management Strategy.

A low-impact development strategy that increases site porosity, planting, and channels all site runoffs within wetland bioretention cells for stormwater management. The design transforms the entire site into a living water management system.

Flora and Habitat.

Native plant species from the Don Valley are chosen to expand habitats on site and increase biodiversity. The design incorporates wetlands,

meadows, and forest nodes to support local wildlife, and invites traditional harvesting and craftsmanship practices of cultural significance. The site's native plants offer year-round beauty, from spring ephemerals to vibrant summer wildflowers and autumn foliage. Plants' dormant Winter form provide shelter and sustenance for wildlife. Sustainable practices minimize maintenance, including the use of native and drought-tolerant species, minimal drip irrigation systems, and periodic inspections. Dividing and harvesting events engage the community in maintenance activities.

Spaces for Diversity, Creativity, and Interpretation.

The site and its multiple new outdoor 'rooms' serve as a cultural and educational amenity, fostering creativity and interpretation through flexible social spaces and permanent educational markers that can tell important, and often hidden stories of the land and of the enduring presence of its Indigenous people.

It should be accessible and welcoming to all, inviting diverse user groups by offering a variety of changing events, installations and exhibitions.

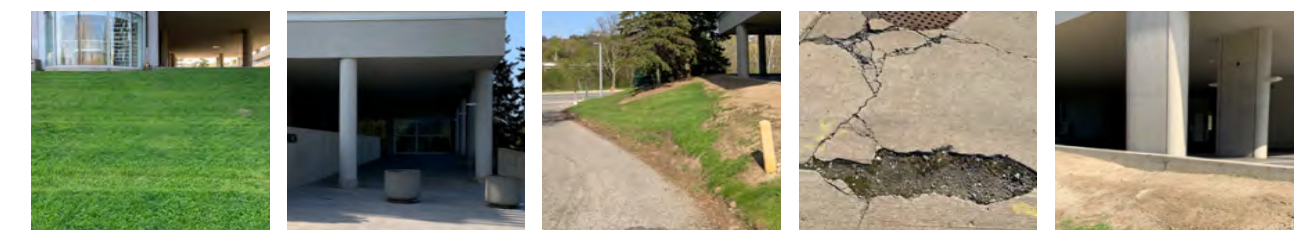
Materiality and Reuse.

Sustainable paving materials are chosen for durability and environmental impact. Broken concrete and pavers, as well as hardscape from renaturalized areas are reused in gabion walls and other infrastructural elements, reducing waste and adding local character. These gabion can be used as retaining walls, habitat walls, dividers and benches.

A Layered Identity

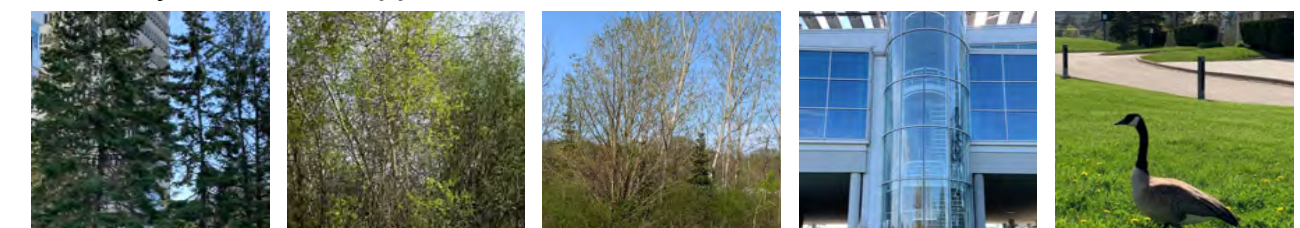


A Few Concerns



Lack of planting, character and water management | Narrow, cavernous access, uncondusive to gathering | Neglected and eroding northern edge | Surplus of paved, non-porous areas in disrepair and not accessible | Impractical and inefficient parking layout with no sheltered dropoff

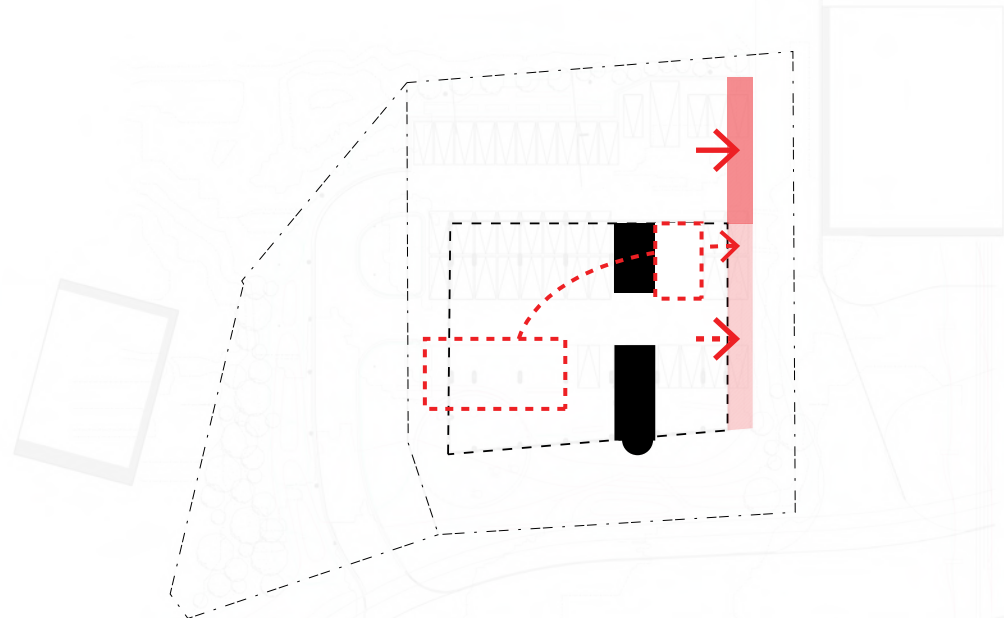
And Many Connective Opportunities



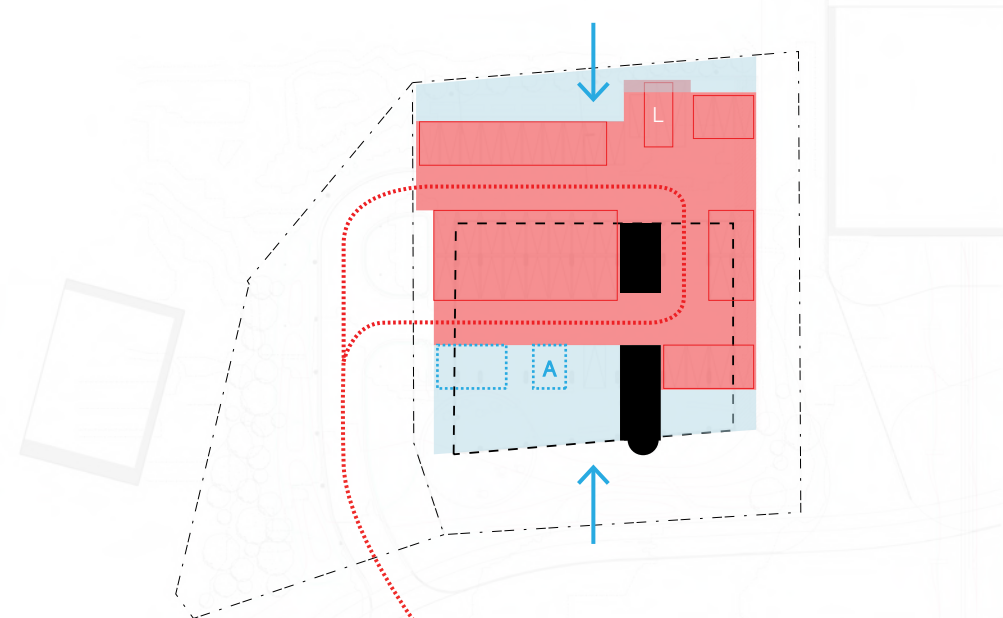
Coniferous hub on site | Southern buffer | Don valley ecosystem | Visual connections | Habitat for local wildlife

A Layered Renewal

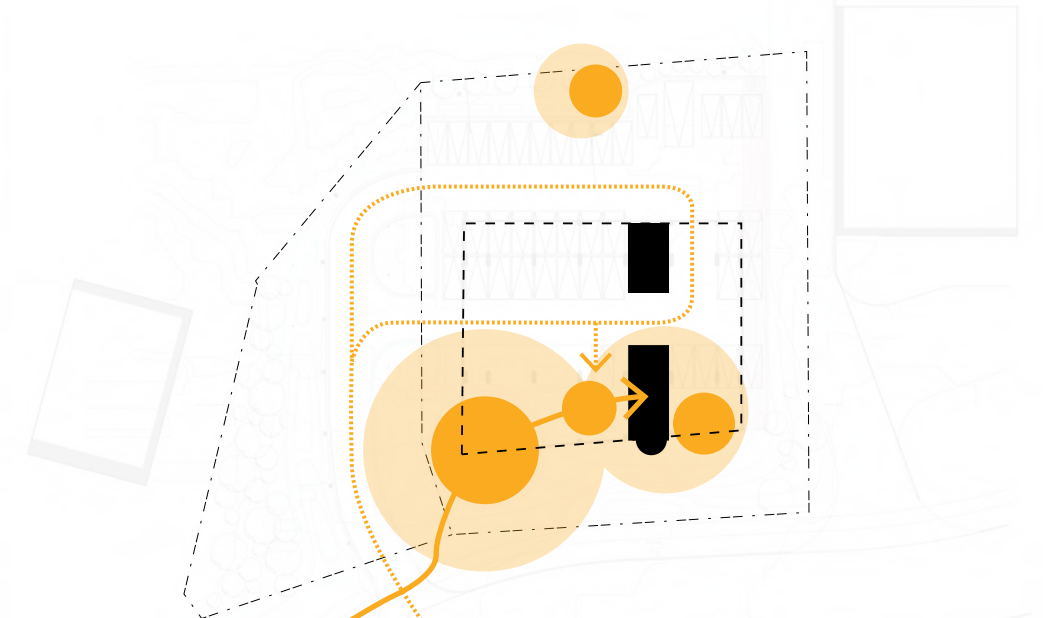
Optional step: Full or partial plinth expansion to collect runoffs and increase maneuvering space, planted areas and public spaces.



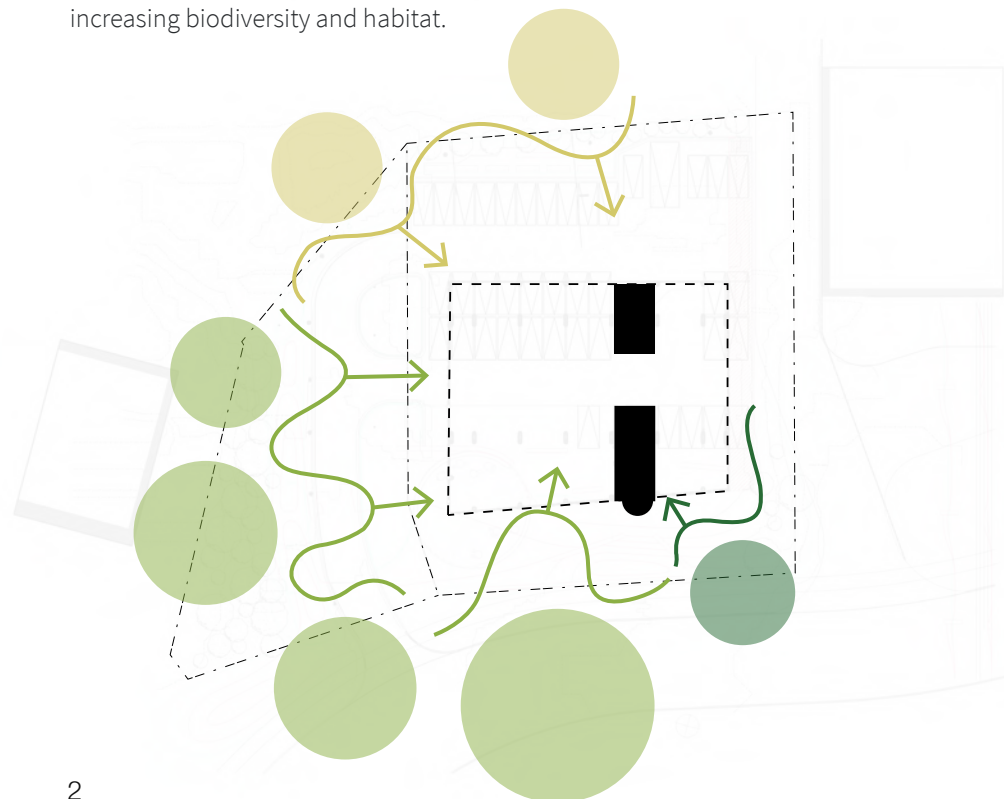
Step 1: Reconfigure parking layout to create loop, allow sheltered dropoff, facilitate loading, and maximize planted and public spaces.



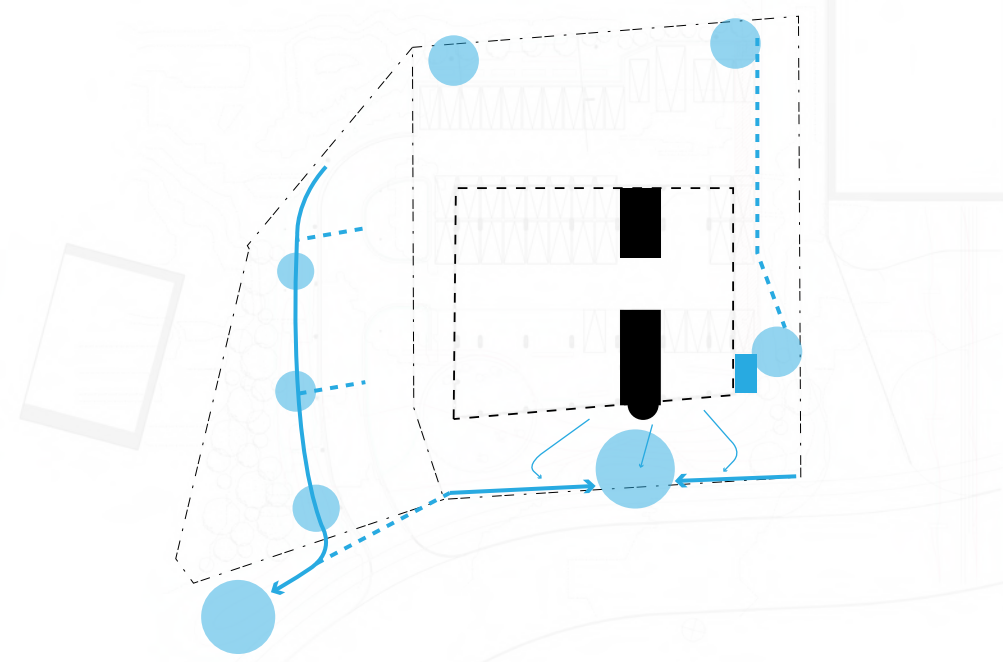
Step 2: Optimize pedestrian circulation and accessibility, and create new shared spaces open air or covered 'rooms' for day-to-day use, events, etc...



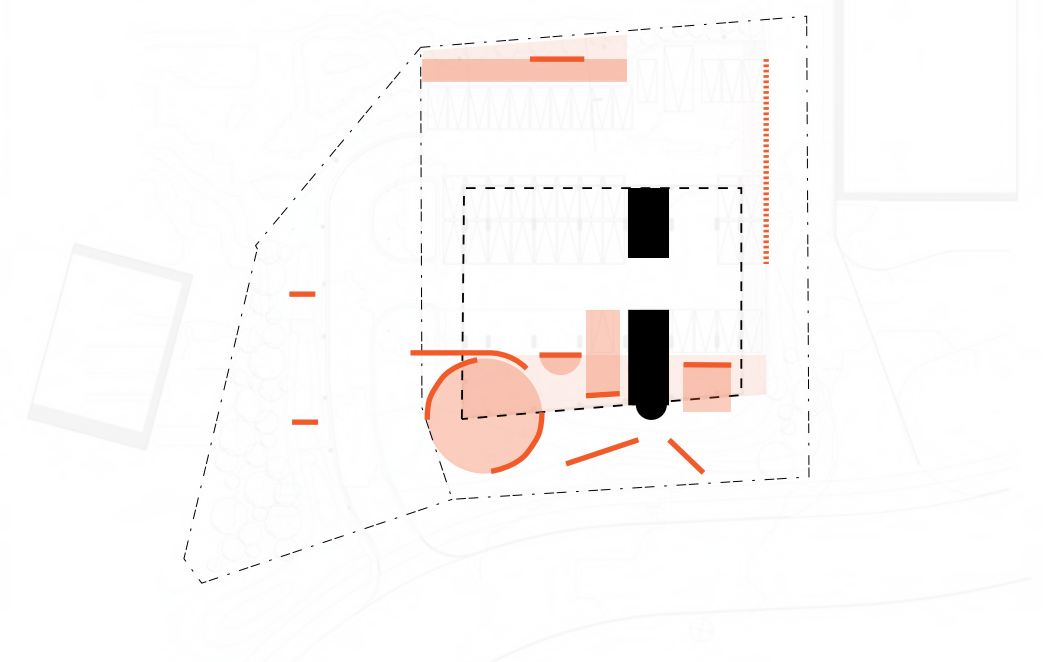
Step 3: Invite surrounding Don Valley landscapes onto the site, increasing biodiversity and habitat.



Step 4: Using the local landscapes, manage waterflows and maximize onsite retention and reuse.



Step 5: Activate the site's flexible 'rooms' through changing art installations, seasonal events, educational activities, and a permanent infrastructure of gabions and markers that tell stories of the site and its people.



Social spaces:

- 1 - Accessible entrance path from sidewalk to main entrance (1:20)
- 2a - The Circle (Main path)
- 2b - The Circle (Gravel areas)
- 3 - The Expanded lobby
- 4 - The Terrace
- 5 - The Experimental garden

Support spaces:

- 6 - Vehicular dropoff
- 7 - Accessible parking
- 8 - Charging stations
- 9 - Loading space
- 10 - Expanded truck maneuvering space

Naturalized Edges:

- 11 - Slope of the Don
- 12 - Water retention edge
- 13 - Coniferous corner
- 14 - Optional full or partial plinth expansion with planted block retaining wall / art space
- 15 - Existing Thicket

