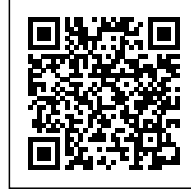




BENTWAY STAGING GROUNDS

Posted on July 23, 2024 by Gabriel Sastre



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Bentway Staging Grounds

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Bentway Staging Grounds is a new type of public infrastructure that blends art and education, public space and experimentation, repositioning unused space beneath the Gardiner Expressway as a site of environmental regeneration.



The design team, led by architectural designer Tei Carpenter (Agency-Agency, NYC) and architect/artist Reza Nik (SHEEEP, Toronto), transformed the vacant site into a living laboratory that educates visitors about urban ecology and stormwater management. The installation collects runoff water from the highway above and leverages it to irrigate oversized planters in the space below. The planters hold flowering native plant species such as milkweed, agastache, and yarrow.

ISSN : 2575-5374

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The water filtration and retention helps to reduce the risk of local flooding and prevents contaminants from polluting Toronto's gray water supply while growing an ecological environment. Three large-scale scaffolding towers act as landscape buffers and new landmarks along Lake Shore Boulevard, showcasing a rotating program of public art that responds to the site's unique conditions. A network of ramps and elevated walkways allow visitors to travel deep into the space as an extension of Canoe Landing Park to the north.

ISSN : 2575-5374

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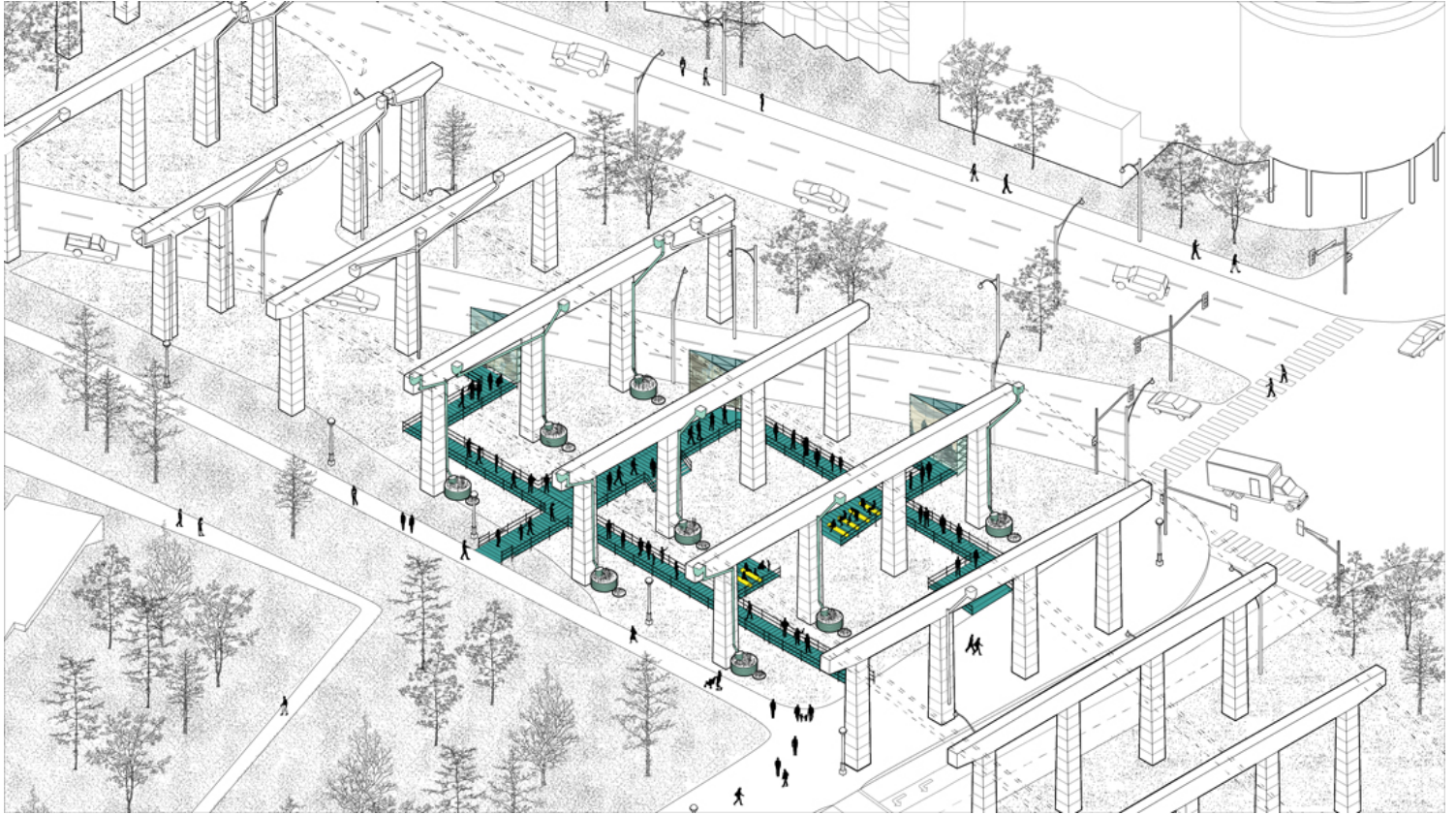
The project restores the site's historic, pre-industrial condition as a wetland on the shore of Lake Ontario that supported an ecosystem of freshwater plants and animals, birds, insects, and fish. It also reinvigorates the space, increasing safety for pedestrians and vehicles, enhancing visual and acoustic comfort, and building new connectivity to the nearby waterfront. Lessons learned from the experimental gardens will inform both the future Bentway-led redevelopment of this site, as well as continued opportunities along the Gardiner corridor. These strategies could one day be applied to the full 6.5km length of the Gardiner Expressway's elevated section.

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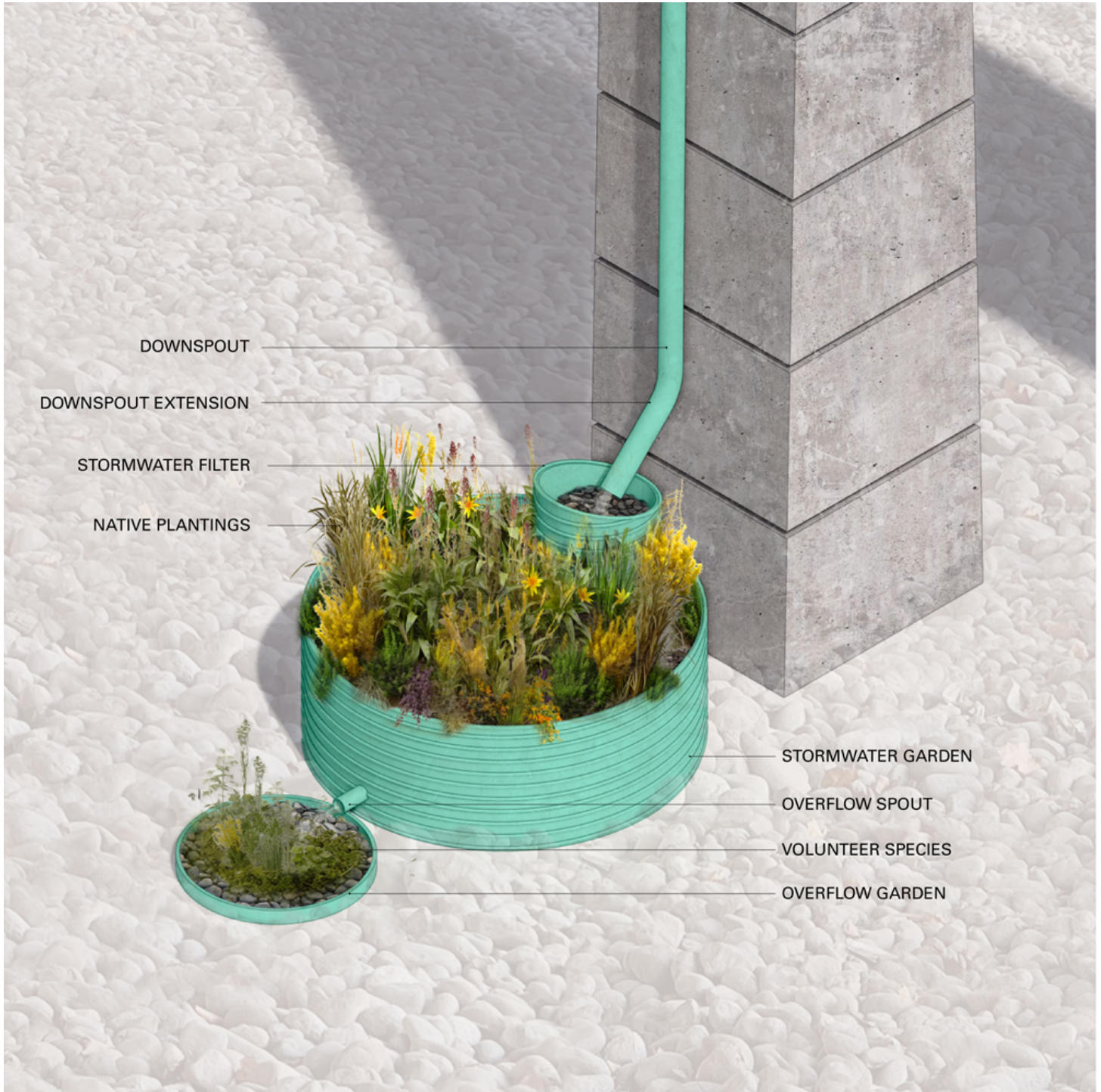


The project builds on the success of Bentway Phase 1, and underscores The Bentway's commitment to creating new public opportunities under the Gardiner Expressway. Through artistic, ecological, and recreational experiences, The Bentway is testing and demonstrating these opportunities in real time, and demonstrating how both in Toronto and around the world, creativity can transform declining spaces and infrastructure into inspiring public assets.

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