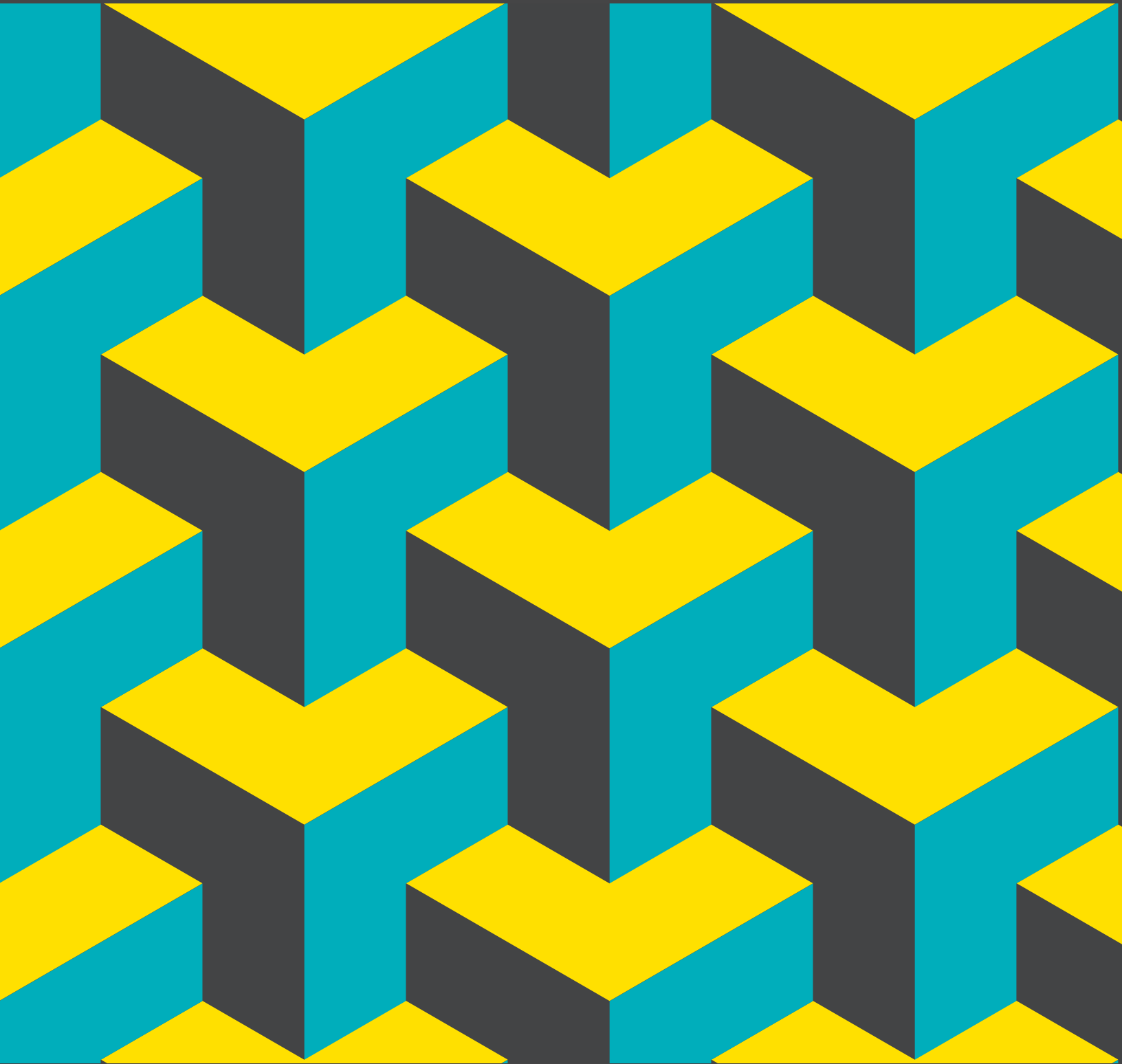


diac

# DESIGN IMPACTS FRAMEWORK



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## JULY 2021



PHOTO BY ROY HARRIS

ARTSCAPE WYCHWOOD BARNS



PHOTO BY WATERFRONT TORONTO

SUGAR BEACH



PHOTO BY DENISE MUIZTER

THE BENTWAY

# Impacts, Indicators and Metrics Emerging from 3 Toronto Placemaking Projects

In 2020, the Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC) developed a Framework to explore critical impacts of design. These impacts apply to all types of projects across all of the design disciplines. DIAC decided to demonstrate these impacts by focusing on design interventions in Placemaking. Successful Placemaking involves a focus on economic prosperity, social wellbeing and environmental sustainability – the fundamental principles of all good design. DIAC wanted to understand how specific design interventions create positive impacts that can be assessed and measured and how these impacts can be applied to other Placemaking projects.

In Phase 1 of this research, DIAC’s cross-disciplinary design working group identified the positive design interventions in 3 Toronto Placemaking projects:

**Artscape  
Wychwood Barns**

**Sugar Beach**

**The Bentway**

With further analysis, these positive impacts of design can be applied not only to the built environment, but also to industrial design and communications projects. DIAC created a Design Metrics Table as a guide to identifying the indicators and metrics involved in valuing these impacts for the design sector, their clients and other stakeholders in the community.

# CRITICAL IMPACTS OF DESIGN





# Design Embodies the Vision

**For any physical environment, product or communications system, there should be a marketing vision and an engineering/technology vision. But there should also be a design vision. It is the designer who is concerned with managing the human interface. The designer adds economic and social value by posing the critical question: What can this project be?**

The design vision is clearly illustrated in these 3 Placemaking studies. The projects reflect a response to the challenge: How can an underutilized space be repurposed and revitalized? We can identify the design vision as a critical but possibly undervalued contribution by the design team. In each case, the design vision inspired the creation of a unique place where none existed before.

Artscape Wychwood Barns transformed an abandoned streetcar shed into a vibrant arts and culture hub for the St. Clair West neighbourhood. Sugar Beach turned a dismal parking lot into an iconic destination by the lake. The Bentway reclaimed a desolate and deserted strip of land under the Gardiner Expressway and re-imagined the space as an animated linear park. Each of these transformations reflects a strong design vision that has contributed to both economic potential and enthusiastic user engagement and therefore to the overall impact of these projects.

## Key Performance Indicators:

- Attracts visitors
- Increases land value
- Converts land to higher use

## Metrics:

- Count visitor numbers
- Compare land value before/after the project
- Track real estate values in the community



## Design Enhances Functionality

**Good design enhances functionality and improves the performance of a product, service, physical space, wayfinding or communications system. But for design interventions to succeed, functionality should be a collaboration between the developers and enablers of the system and the users who have the direct experience of their own needs. The strategic design process begins with a close observation and careful analysis of user needs for any given project. The insights from this process (seeing the challenge and/or opportunity through the eyes of both the designer and the user) enables the designer to collaborate with other enablers of functionality to deliver breakthrough innovation that will lead to increased economic and social benefits.**

In Placemaking what constitutes the functionality dimension is the Programming. What is this place's purpose? What activities go on there? How do the design interventions provide the canvas for programmers to deliver the experience and value of the space to visitors? This contribution of design to Placemaking should be celebrated. But it should also be recognized that designers need to work in collaboration with programmers to orchestrate and animate the space so that it works for a wide variety of community users and visitors.

According to Alex Bozikovic, Architecture Critic of the *Globe and Mail*: “Seeing other humans doing a variety of things in a beautiful setting” creates a sense of place. (*Globe and Mail*, Jan. 23rd 2020). In our three case study projects, what draws people to these spaces is the underlying design concept that facilitates integrated programming.

For Artscape Wychwood Barns, the inspired decision to maintain the original five barns (artists studio barn, covered street barn, community barn, green barn, and the shell of barn 5) and offer a variety of strategically planned activities in each zone attracts and engages diverse visitors. To take full advantage of this concept and reach out to the surrounding St. Clair West - Wychwood neighbourhood, the Wychwood Barns Community Association (WBCA) was established when the new facility opened in 2008. WBCA oversees community-focused programs and events and a community-run gallery on the site.

At Sugar Beach, on a sliver of land by the lake, the design-led opportunity for programming is more informal. The design concept integrates a sandy space with beach chairs and umbrellas, a plaza with candy-striped giant rocks and three grass mounds, and a promenade to the water, creating zones for a variety of activities. In this case, the users (families, community organizations, visitors of all ages) bring their own ideas and activities to the space. These range from comfortably sitting in the shade of the pink umbrellas for an hour of reading, to watching their children play around the fountain feature or organizing a public entertainment event. The plaza affords a dynamic space for such public events while the giant rocks provide the perfect vantage point from which to view the entertainment. All of this unfolds against the backdrop of boats passing on the lake.

The Mission of the Bentway is to “re-imagine how we build, experience, activate and value public space together”. The design concept fully facilitates year-round activities with a skating rink, skateboarding park, moveable stage, picnic tables and benches. In this case, the Bentway program staff worked closely with the design team at Public Work to ensure that the space could deliver outreach to the community and innovative program options all through the year. According to The Bentway Design Lead at Public Work: “*The Bentway fuses public space design and programming to create a pioneering urban landscape conceived to support new platforms for creative expression and public experience.*”

**Key Performance Indicators:**

- Creates a destination/ a local community hub
- Supports arts and culture organizations
- Offers diverse and innovative activities to a wide variety of users
- Provides jobs for local residents

**Metrics:**

- Survey local residents, other visitors, businesses and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) on the impact of the programs and events
- Track the level of community engagement, visits and repeat visits

# 3 Design Creates Brand

**Brands create economic value. Brands generate positive impact by building awareness and by fostering a sense of pride and emotional connection with local and international stakeholders. That is not a new idea. However, the way in which design builds brand value deserves closer attention. Design interventions create iconic branding elements for places, buildings, interiors, products, services, and communications systems that help to create design-based Intellectual Property (Design IP). The concept of Design IP is a powerful tool to establish strategic positioning and international recognition.**

In each of the 3 Placemaking studies, iconic design lends unique character elements and helps to build strong brands. The signature design elements in these projects create brand value for the public realm and for the surrounding real estate.

The wayfinding system of Artscape Wychwood Barns - its signature chimney with coloured rings echoing the colour-coded signage for the five barns, the historic photos and original street signs and numbers – creates personality for the space and evokes a past era in the community. (The first barn was erected in 1913.)

At Sugar Beach, the resilient but delicate fibreglass pink umbrellas, shaped not like beach umbrellas but rather like genteel Parisian parasols, present a picture-perfect escape by the lake, in stark contrast to the industrial landscape of the Redpath Sugar Factory next door. As a further extension of the brand, Daniels Waterfront engaged Claude Cormier, the landscape architect of Sugar Beach, to bring the pink umbrellas concept to their City of the Arts development across the street.

For The Bentway, the concrete “Bents” under the Gardiner, once seen as an obstacle, now display art work and provide the sculptural anchor for the weaving linear park.



## Key Performance Indicators:

- Connects people to place
- Fosters pride in local residents
- Builds local/ national/ international recognition
- Attracts media attention
- Enables developers to leverage established brands for new projects

## Metrics:

- Value the Brand using brand valuation tools
- Calculate Return on Design Investment (RODI) by leveraging brand identity in commercial applications
- Review local/ national/ international media coverage
- Assess number and demographics of visitors



PHOTO BY ENTRIO

Front entrance of Artscape Wychwood Barns with colour-coded chimney stack and giant numbers designating each of the Barns.



# Design Embeds Environmental Benefits

**Design interventions add value to spaces, buildings, interiors, products, services and communications systems by minimizing environmental impacts and by integrating green strategies and technologies into the design.**

Design integrates a range of environmental benefits in these 3 projects. In addition to the cultural and economic benefits, the architectural design of Artscape Wychwood Barns invested in green building technologies to create a LEED Gold certified project with ground source heating/cooling, a buried cistern for rainwater storage, recycled siding and a white roof.

Sugar Beach cleaned and revitalized a brownfield site on a priority strip of Waterfront land. The project earned one of the first LEED for Neighbourhood Development (LEED ND) Gold certifications in Canada. Integrated into the design is an innovative sustainable landscape architecture feature: the use of underground Silva Cell installations to provide soil for 33 mature Maple trees.

The Bentway added environmental value in a different way. As stated in a joint Environmental Study Report by the City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto: “The Bentway Under Gardiner is rooted in creating a new relationship with the Gardiner Expressway; enhancing the value that the Gardiner presents to the community beyond transportation.” (City of Toronto. Waterfront Toronto. The Bentway: Project Under the Gardiner. Environmental Study Report. January 2017. Dillon Consulting, Urban Design, page 83.) The report also noted that the Bentway has mitigated any negative environmental impacts during construction and implementation.

Fall day at The Bentway with program activities in full swing.

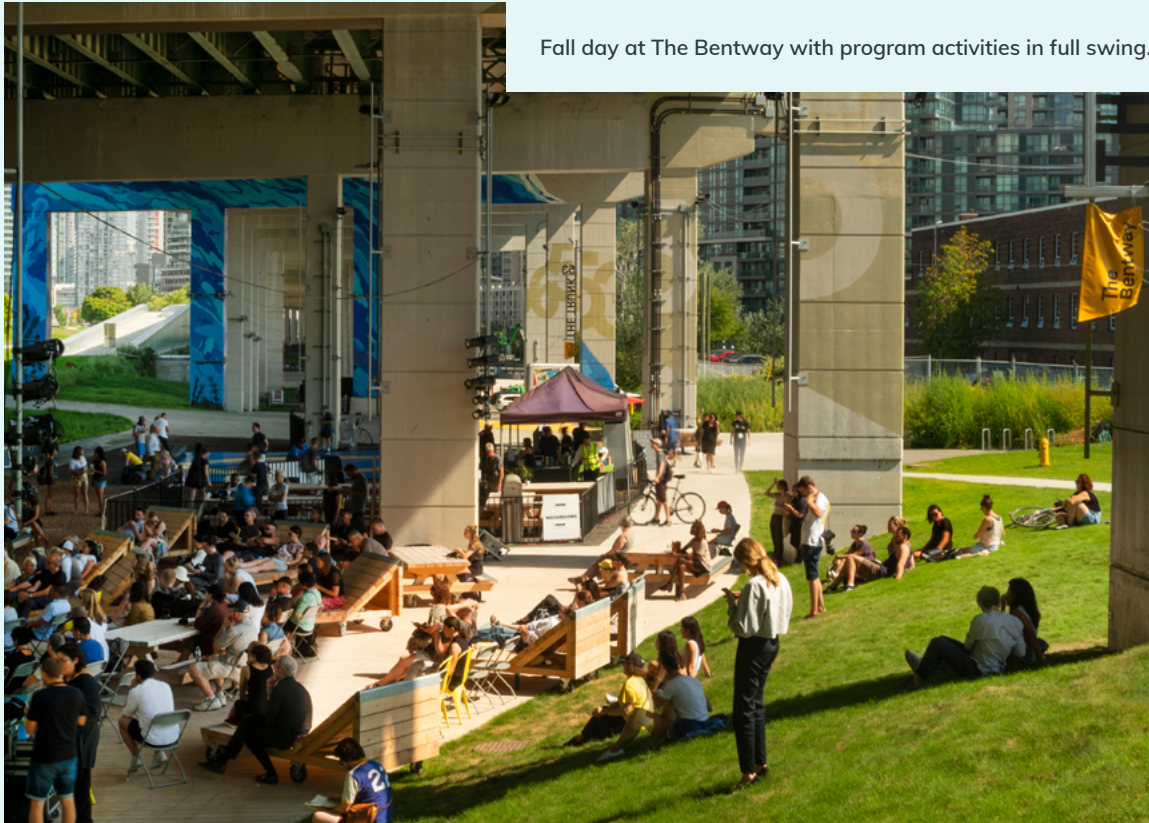


PHOTO BY NIC LEBOUX

## Key Performance Indicators:

- Cleans brownfield sites
- Reclaims wasted land
- Diverts abandoned buildings from landfill
- Minimizes energy, water and waste expenditures
- Captures environmental benefits in the design with the active involvement of designers
- Creates research opportunity to assess environmental strategies in the public realm
- Showcases green technologies for business, government, schools and other stakeholders

## Metrics:

- Rate the project by LEED criteria (for buildings/neighbourhoods)
- Calculate the added value created by integrating green technologies into the design
- Track maintenance costs for heating/cooling, water and waste over time



# Design Promotes Health and Wellbeing

**Design interventions create places, buildings, interiors, products and communications systems that are accessible, stimulating and easy to navigate. These interventions enhance physical and mental wellbeing by reducing stress and engaging users more deeply.**

Design interventions in public places contribute to health and wellbeing by drawing people to these spaces and by promoting community engagement, social interaction and physical activity in a safe, stress-free environment. In particular, it is the design elements of these projects that can engage visitors both physically and emotionally, encouraging repeat visits and an active use of the space. The design interventions in these 3 projects provide full accessibility and offer opportunities for recreational and cultural activities. They offer a strong connection to community, memories of cultural heritage, proximity to nature, visual stimuli in a novel and beautiful setting and a sense of enjoyment and delight.

The physical structure of Artscape Wychwood Barns provides access to arts and cultural organizations and healthy food options. Many cultural organizations have happily made their home base at Artscape Wychwood Barns, encouraged by the creativity reflected in its physical environment and its proximity to artists' live/work studios on the site. The structure of the Barns has supported the health-promoting urban agriculture activities of The Stop food bank with a year-round, weekly Farmers Market, a greenhouse, community food program, youth programming, community gardens, and a bake oven on the site. The Barns also provides a volleyball court, a skating rink, a children's water play area and an off-leash dog park for the community.

The design of Sugar Beach invites visitors to slow down and take a break. The beach chairs shaded by pink umbrellas, the sand and the unobstructed view of the lake encourage people to relax, tune out the frenzied activities of the city and enjoy the setting.

With its ingenious design, The Bentway has created a new found space for skating, skateboarding and many different recreational, arts and cultural activities.



Aerial view of Sugar Beach with pink umbrellas, chairs and sandy beach with Maple trees..

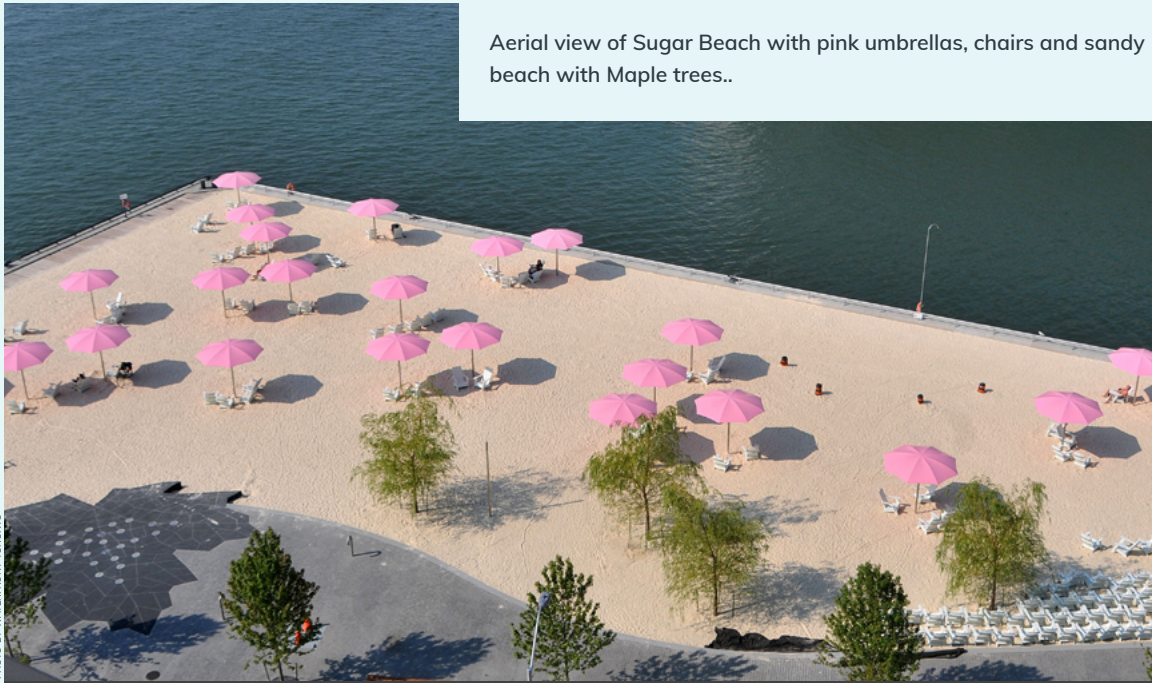


PHOTO BY WATERFRONT TORONTO

### Key Performance Indicators:



- Provides a comfortable, safe, inclusive and stimulating environment
- Encourages socialization, outdoor exercise, longer stays and repeat visits
- Promotes community engagement by diverse users
- Reduces stress and elicits deeper responses to nature, art and other stimuli in the public realm

### Metrics:

- Assess the project by Well Standard criteria
- Track visitor usage for physical activities and social interactions
- Survey visitors about their experience of the space and the positive impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing

*Vision. Functionality. Brand. Environment. Health and Wellbeing. These are the five impacts of design interventions in the DIAC Design Impacts Framework. We hope that this Framework will help designers and their clients to conduct more meaningful conversations and to measure the positive value of their work together.*

# DESIGN IMPACTS FRAMEWORK: Summary of Impacts, Indicators and Metrics

IMPACTS	1. VISION 	2. FUNCTIONALITY 	3. BRAND 
INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracts visitors</li> <li>• Increases land value</li> <li>• Converts land to higher use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a destination/ a local community hub</li> <li>• Supports arts &amp; culture organizations</li> <li>• Offers diverse and innovative activities to a wide variety of users</li> <li>• Provides jobs for local residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connects people to place</li> <li>• Fosters pride in local residents</li> <li>• Builds local/national/ international recognition</li> <li>• Attracts media attention</li> <li>• Enables developers to leverage established brands for new projects</li> </ul>
METRICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Count visitor numbers</li> <li>• Compare land value before &amp; after project</li> <li>• Track real estate values in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey local residents, other visitors, businesses and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) on the impact of the programs and events</li> <li>• Track the level of community engagement, visits and repeat visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value the brand using brand valuation tools</li> <li>• Calculate Return on Design Investment (RODI) by leveraging brand identity in commercial applications</li> <li>• Review local/national/ international media coverage</li> <li>• Assess volume and demographics of visitors and their reasons for coming</li> </ul>

# DESIGN IMPACTS FRAMEWORK: Summary of Impacts, Indicators and Metrics

IMPACTS	4. ENVIRONMENT	5. HEALTH AND WELLBEING
INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleans brownfield sites</li> <li>• Reclaims wasted land</li> <li>• Diverts abandoned buildings from landfill</li> <li>• Minimizes energy, water, waste expenditures</li> <li>• Captures environmental benefits in the design with the active involvement of designers</li> <li>• Creates research opportunities to assess environmental strategies in the public realm</li> <li>• Showcases green technologies for business, government, schools and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a comfortable, safe, inclusive and stimulating environment</li> <li>• Encourages socialization, outdoor exercise, longer stays and repeat visits</li> <li>• Promotes community engagement by diverse users</li> <li>• Reduces stress and elicits deeper responses to nature, art and other stimuli in the public realm</li> </ul>
METRICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rate the project by LEED criteria (for buildings/ neighbourhoods)</li> <li>• Calculate the added value created by integrating green technologies into the design</li> <li>• Track maintenance costs for heating &amp; cooling, water and waste over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the project by Well Standard criteria</li> <li>• Track visitor usage for physical activities and social interactions.</li> <li>• Survey visitors about their experience of the space and the positive impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing</li> </ul>



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Editor: Arlene Gould, Strategic Director, DIAC  
Design: Costa Leclerc Design