
XOXO DOWNSVIEW

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SEPTEMBER 12, 2022



SUMMARY

OCTOBER 18, 2022

Overview & Objectives

On September 12, 2022, members of the XOXO Advisory Committee (XOXO-AC) gathered online to learn about the arts and culture projects happening on the Downsview lands – including the XOXO Downsview projects developed with the Committee’s input since the last meeting in March – and to discuss the approach to the emerging fence art project. The meeting was attended by a total of nine members, including representatives of the landowners, Northcrest Developments and Canada Lands Company.

The following is a summary of the discussions that took place. These notes were reviewed and approved by participants before they were finalized.

Presentation of Arts & Culture Projects

LANDOWNER PROJECTS

Following a round of introductions, an overview was provided of the recent changes to the XOXO Workplan. These changes were made to clarify how the landowners will be guided by the Workplan’s principles in their own projects on the Downsview lands. This set the stage for Mitchell Marcus, from Northcrest, and David Anselmi, from Canada Lands, to provide updates on the arts and culture projects happening on their respective lands.

Mitchell provided an overview of Northcrest activities, including:

- bi-monthly free community events that centre on local artists and culture-makers, which build on the Downsview pilsener/Beer Diversity event and will include a drone show in November, s’mores and songs in the Winter, and a cycling event in the spring;
- developing the Bay 12 hangar as a place that combines commercial attractions, a visitors centre, and incubation, residency, and community rental space; and
- events on the runway starting in summer 2024, which balance commercial and community benefit, including public art, green projects, and space for open play.

Mitchell explained how Northcrest will endeavour to apply the XOXO principles even in commercial projects, by hiring locally and providing special days for the local community to see shows, for example. The landowner is also looking towards more permanent public art programs and initiatives as the site builds out in the late 2020s.

David from Canada Lands explained the concurrent and overlapping initiatives between his team and Northcrest's as the two work together through the secondary plan process. He also discussed the Public Art Master Plan, which will soon be discussed with the City and will guide public art on the id8 lands. This will be overlaid with district by district planning, which will incorporate arts and culture in different ways.

A similar process is currently taking place in the Sheppard District, and David explained that Canada Lands is also currently working with Centennial College and institutional partners on the aerospace campus restoration, which incorporates arts and culture. The school program in Downsview Park was also described as a way to creatively engage youth people, and sees about 10 thousands students per year.

XOXO DOWNSVIEW PROJECTS

Following the landowner presentations, Jane Farrow and Mia Hunt from the Dept of Words & Deeds provided an overview of the XOXO Downsview projects which have developed with the Committee's input since the last meeting in March 2022. These included:

- the XOXO Site Walk for XOXO-AC and Jury Pool members, which drew 30 participants and provided an opportunity to view current installations and imagine projects and possibilities for the future;
- the Play on the Runway event, on June 26, which drew around 2,000 people to ride, run, jump, dance, and soak up the Downsview airports' open tarmac with free ice cream in hand, as part of North York's 100th birthday celebration;
- the XOXO Downsview Pilsner, developed in collaboration with North York-raised Ren Navarro from Beer Diversity and Red Tape Brewery, with artwork by Adeymi Adegbesan drawn from the ArtworxTO ALL STYLES BIPOC mural curated by Danilo Deluxo;
- the Fabric of Community installation on the Wind Rose, which explores Downsview's patterns of journey and arrival with 136 mandalas crocheted by eight Latina women living in North York and 500 ribbons with local stories of making home here;
- the Downsview Stories edition of the Wind Rose, which highlights Downsview's diverse history; and
- the Emerging Designer Competition for the Wind Rose, which launches this fall, and now includes more mentorship components and supports to encourage participants from more diverse backgrounds and levels of experience.

Key Feedback from Discussions

WIND ROSE COMPETITION

Members were encouraged by the additional support for young and emerging artists. Many stepped forward to provide mentorship through the process and committed to sharing the formal call for proposal through their networks.

FENCE ART

Since the launch of XOXO Downsview, participants – including XOXO-AC members – have been asking for animation on the long stretches of fences on the Downsview lands. Following feedback gathered after the XOXO Downsview site walk, the XOXO team presented the AC with an emerging approach to fence art. The team outlined a plan to:

- partner with six local arts organizations to identify participant artists – North York Arts, Sketch, ArtStarts, JustBGraphic, MuseArts, Cinemascope;
- have organizations select artists following the guiding principles of the XOXO Workplan;
- see 25 works of local art printed on acrylic sign boards, shaped as Xs and Os;
- hang works on fencing around the Downsview lands;
- print works in multiple, so each piece will be replicated in various locations; and
- keep works on the fences for approximately a year.

XOXO-AC members were asked for feedback on this process, on the issue of compensation of participating organizations, and on the potential for a creative brief.

Members expressed support for this approach of identifying artists and for collaborating with organizations who have strong connections to local arts communities. The project was described as a good capacity-building activity and a low-barrier opportunity for deserving artists. In contrast, putting a formal call out, especially for such a small commission, was discussed as potentially deflating for some artists, especially whose applications are unsuccessful. As presented, the fence art project was discussed as a good mentorship opportunity.

On the question of paying organizations for their recommendations, some members agreed that this was part of the mandate of the organizations and that this small amount of work needn't be paid. For others, these sorts of asks draw down on the limited resources of arts organizations and fail to recognize the journey and expertise of individuals tasked with this work. It was agreed that a nominal fee would honour the experience of those making recommendations and offset any potential cost to the organization.

On the question of an artistic brief, the Committee members agreed that the call should follow the XOXO Workplan, but otherwise be open. The success of the ALL STYLES BIPOC mural was discussed as successfully emerging from an open brief. The Workplan alone, it was said, opens up possibilities for artists from different

communities to tell overlapping stories. The members expressed enthusiasm and excitement for what may be proposed.

BALANCE OF CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY ARTS

In response to the presentation of Northcrest's approach to arts and culture, Committee members discussed the relationship between corporate projects and community arts, earnestly and pragmatically. While some expressed a degree of deflation on renting out big spaces to international corporate entities, overall we heard support for a fluid relationship between private money and local projects. These relationships, it was said, could still allow local people to feel ownership and pride in the projects. Members recognized the value in having projects that are not just small and local, but grander in scale, which still create opportunities for local work.

Mitchell discussed the challenges of balancing investment now with holding off for longer-term and more permanent arts and culture projects. Having a 30-year project demands both short and long-term planning and careful consideration of who should invest and when, he explained. In the short-term, Northcrest is holding off on investing in indoor space and, instead, investing in the runway, which offers great opportunities now in its current iteration, but will become less available in the next 10 years or so as surrounding development takes place.

Committee members commented that the runway is the biggest engine to develop community projects and that it made sense to have larger commercial tenants inside in the long-term, especially as many not-for-profits in the art community rely on government grants that have a 3-5 year lifespan. Some told us they hoped that, as the runway is shared with corporate interests, it would have a dedicated space or time for the local community and would still involve community organizers.

Members discussed the merits of investing in short-term infrastructure. Many agreed that support for local arts should ideally be more permanent, but that interim and short-term support was also essential to many emerging artists. As such, members encouraged Northcrest to convert some of the Bombardier office buildings into short-term, low- or no-rent arts spaces, even if it was just for a few years. They stressed the importance of just being upfront about the impermanence. The result of gentrification through short-term arts initiatives were also raised.

OTHER FEEDBACK

Members expressed appreciation that the Workplan is a living document and asked the XOXO Team to check in at each AC meeting to ask if further changes should be made.

We heard calls to ensure that arts and culture projects include communities on all sides of the Downsview lands, including the Ancaster neighbourhood. Promotion and inclusion should be wide-reaching.

Wrap-Up

Before closing, members were thanked for continuing to share their experience and expertise. It was noted that those who stepped forward as mentors will be contacted soon and notes from this meeting will be circulated for approval.

Participants

CANADA LANDS COMPANY

David Anselmi

NORTHCREST DEVELOPMENTS

Mitchell Marcus

XOXO-AC MEMBERS

Ashley Beerdat

Kayode Brown, Just B Graphic

Renee Castonguay, STEPS

Lydia Hernandez, Sketch

Patrizia Libralato, Toronto Biennial of Art

Tracey Prehay, ArtworxTO

Michael Vickers, Brampton Arts

XOXO-AC MEMBER REGRETS

Christina Giannelia, North York Arts

Caitlin LaForme, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

Adriana Salazar

DEPT OF WORDS & DEEDS

Jane Farrow

Mia Hunt