
XOXO DOWNSVIEW

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MARCH 11, 2022



FINAL SUMMARY

APRIL 8, 2022

Overview & Objectives

On March 11, 2022, members of the XOXO Advisory Committee (XOXO-AC) gathered online to learn about XOXO Downsview projects of the past and those which are emerging. The meeting also provided an opportunity for XOXO-AC members to meet each other and for the XOXO Engagement Team, led by the Dept of Words & Deeds, to gather feedback and ideas on two nascent projects: a call for proposals for the XOXO Downsview Wind Rose and fencing weaving collaborations.

The meeting was attended by a total of thirteen members, including representatives from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, North York Arts, and both Northcrest Developments and Canada Lands Company. Two additional staff members from Northcrest also attended as observers.

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

Meeting Opening & XOXO Overview Presentation

During a round of introductions, Chris Eby from Northcrest and David Anselmi from Canada Lands expressed their enthusiasm for the future of arts and culture on these lands and their commitment to using XOXO to foster local creativity for the benefit of future generations.

Following introductions, Jane Farrow and Mia Hunt from the Dept of Words & Deeds provided an overview of XOXO Downsview and its roots in the id8 Downsview engagement process. They discussed the XOXO pilot projects, which began in late summer 2021 and outlined the projects' focus on local, young and emerging creators, people from Indigenous and African, Caribbean, Black communities, and collaborations with North York-based organizations. Images were shown of the pilot projects: the painted paths; Wind Rose; Ulysses Curtis mural; audio tour stops; and the web-based Downsview Stories content. The development and guiding principles of the XOXO Workplan were discussed and an overview of the XOXO Jury Pool members was presented.

The emerging plans outlined included: potential collaborations with Indigenous artists recruited through the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation’s Culture and Design Advisory Committee; installations of interactive mirrored prisms, called “the Lens,” which may be located in or near Downsview Park; regular arts and culture-focused public site walks, including those planned for Jane’s Walk and Doors Open; the potential for additional mural projects on walls or paths; a call for proposals to reimagine the Wind Rose’s 32 square arches; and fence weaving collaborations.

Key Feedback

Discussions focused on the call for proposals for the Wind Rose and possibilities for fence weaving. XOXO-AC members were also asked for their first impressions on the XOXO projects so far.

Overall, XOXO-AC members were excited about the XOXO pilot projects and how they have animated the site and brought people together. Suggestions included ways to bring more attention to the installations and especially to the audio tour so more people could learn about the heritage and cultural context of the site.

Emerging plans for the Wind Rose 2.0 were embraced, especially the focus on young creators. XOXO-AC members asked for the mentorship and career development potential of the project to be enhanced, including possibilities of working with local high schools. Members suggested offering support to participants through the process and exploring ways to promote and pair the young creators involved with design teams that apply. They shared that the call to young creators should be fairly open and encourage multidisciplinary proposals. It was specifically suggested that the call cultivate and catalyze a desire for artistic expression and local creativity.

XOXO-AC members told us that the jury which judges the submissions should include experienced cultural producers and those with expertise in public art installations, and individuals with local knowledge of the diverse Downsview community.

Members saw potential for community art collaborations in fence weaving projects. They shared a range of ideas for fence weaving, related to:

- materials – from strips of reflective material to biodegradable ones that would return to nature through time;
- content – with an emphasis on local history and culture; and
- process – including involving youth, professional artists, and community members through co-creation.

Detailed Feedback

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

XOXO-AC members expressed excitement about the XOXO Downsview pilot projects. When asked about first impressions, they lauded the new sense of discovery in and around Downsview Park. One likened it to an Easter egg hunt

or treasure hunt. The installations and audio tour were discussed as “amazing” and “interesting” and were said to make the walk from Downsview Park subway station into Downsview Park entertaining and enjoyable. The projects encouraged participants to look around more – to take in their surroundings – and called attention to the artistic nature of the neighbourhood.

Members suggested using more above-ground-level signage in the future to bring attention to the installations and audio tours, saying the QR codes on the ground were not always visible. Suggestions also included adding more audio tour stops to highlight the local historic context and architecture.

WIND ROSE 2.0

The emerging plan for the Wind Rose presented to the XOXO-AC would see a call for proposals issued to high school, college, and university students in creative fields across the GTA, as well as interns and those early in their careers. Participants would be asked to reimagine all 32 square arches of the Wind Rose with a new installation. Six winning teams would be offered the chance to see their projects realized on the Wind Rose in Downsview Park, each for a period of between six weeks and three months, to be determined.

XOXO-AC members were asked to provide feedback on the overall approach, participants and outreach, the content of a design brief to participants, and the qualities in the jury members chosen to judge the submissions.

Overall thoughts on approach

XOXO-AC members were particularly excited by the mentorship potential of the Wind Rose and the learning opportunities it would afford young creators. Getting this first call for proposals right was discussed as important to lay the foundation for future collaborations and to generate audiences. This project, it was said, would become an important part of the XOXO project archives. Some XOXO-AC members generously offered to review the call for proposals and design brief before it is issued.

Thoughts on participants and outreach

XOXO-AC members expressed appreciation for the focus on students. They were also excited about fostering participation from the local community. There were suggestions to expand the call to young people who aren't in formal training programs – those who don't have the resources to attend those programs. Local arts high schools were suggested as places to provide extra support and encourage participation, though it was also noted that it's proving very difficult for artists and organizations to connect with school staff and teachers to achieve these objectives.

As part of this, some XOXO-AC members suggested enhancing the career development and career exploration potential of the Wind Rose 2.0 project. Suggestions included working with local high schools to establish a credit program for the school curriculum. This could entail both student and teaching

training. Such a focus would formalize the learning journey and training that this project might bring, including learning about local history and the technical aspects of design. In this way, it could become a regularized component of local school programming. It could also be made into an e-course that anyone could take. In school, it could result in school credits, out of school, it could result in a certificate.

Whether formalized as part of the school curriculum or not, XOXO-AC members encouraged providing additional support to young participants. This could include making space for conversations between participant teams and the jury so participants could express their ideas verbally and have opportunities to refine their proposals. Members agreed that project storytelling is important and impactful and these young people need every opportunity to learn how to do this effectively.

XOXO-AC members discussed the size of creative teams pitching Wind Rose proposals and wanted the XOXO team to consider removing limits on the number of participants per team, allowing them to be as small as one and with no upper limit.

Promoting the process and the Wind Rose 2.0 participants was also discussed as a benefit to participants' career development. Ideas included partnering with local radio stations to give young creators exposure. These may include local radio stations focusing on Indigenous and African, Caribbean, Black communities. Promoting the call in multiple languages was also discussed.

Thoughts on Wind Rose 2.0 design brief

When asked which principles, values, or themes should be included in the design brief to Wind Rose 2.0 participants, XOXO-AC members generally advocated for fewer limits or guidelines. Members shared that the Wind Rose call should energize people's imagination and catalyze a desire to see and create art in a way that activates a place of community in Downsview. It was said that the installations could create a sense of longing and ownership for locals in Downsview. This especially resonated with people at this time when COVID is receding.

XOXO-AC members also advocated for keeping the design brief broad, especially as it concerns materials and disciplines. Some wondered if performance could be included in the installations and wanted the XOXO team to consider some sort of in-person launch event for each installation, to give people the chance to celebrate and connect. Members also asked the XOXO team to consider how interactions at the site could be documented so people could connect to the location without being there. This would make the Wind Rose more accessible.

Members noted that the proposals should consider the seasons and weather, be made of resilient materials, be visible from a distance, and engage the community in some way.

Jury qualities and expertise

Members of the XOXO-AC were asked what qualities and expertise the first jury should have to evaluate the Wind Rose proposals. A number of qualities were mentioned including a deep understanding of the diverse cultural contexts of the artists and ability to appreciate different cultural lenses. The jury would benefit from having experience as cultural producers and with public art installations, and local knowledge of the Downsvue community. Indigenous representation would help understand the connections to the land. Someone noted that the process could be enhanced by communications expertise on the jury. The process would also benefit from a technical review to ensure safety and accessibility.

FENCING WEAVING

The emerging plans for fence weaving include a pilot led by Chris and Greg Mitchell, the artists of Born in the North who created “The Traveler and the Turtle” – the Indigenous flags on the current Wind Rose. The Mitchell brothers will be curating Indigenous participation for a section of fence by the Hangar. In the future, XOXO fencing installations may also be designed by local artists or by the XOXO team to highlight the XOXO initiative and Downsvue Stories. The possibility of using fence weaving as a creative workforce development project was discussed. XOXO-AC members were asked for their overall thoughts on this approach and if they had experience with workforce development initiatives. They also shared ideas on material, content, and process.

Overall thoughts on approach

XOXO-AC members universally embraced the idea of fence weaving. They described it as “fun” and “energizing.” Members discussed it as a great opportunity for teaching, for conversations, and to celebrate local arts and culture. Transforming the vast stretches of fencing was enthusiastically described as converting something negative into a positive.

Thoughts on materials

Members had many ideas for possible materials, including: using recycled, biodegradable, or upcycled materials; highlighting materials made by manufacturers in Downsvue; using natural materials that decay over time and perhaps attract birds; “put in” cups; incorporating reflective materials that illuminate with headlights or staged light sources and may show new perspectives on the woven content; and using a mix of media. Members noted that the lifespan of the installation should be no longer than the lifespan of the materials used. They were excited about the development of a unique Downsvue approach to fence weaving over time.

Thoughts on content

There was excitement about incorporating local history and cultures into the content of the weaving projects. XOXO-AC members suggested drawing

from patterns of cultural textiles, fractals, basket weaving patterns, geometric shapes, and highlighting local leaders and stories in the designs. Incorporating Indigenous knowledge and cultural content was also discussed enthusiastically, including drawing motifs from wampum belts. Members discussed building different narratives and connections in different installations.

Process, including workforce development

XOXO-AC members were excited about the fencing weaving pilot curated by Born in the North, and also thought that fence weaving offered many community engagement opportunities. Suggestions included co-created banners, youth engagement activities, calls for local artists, engagement with seniors and cultural groups, and partnerships with established creators. Members thought that fence weaving would bring about the local community's passion and enthusiasm; they saw it as a way for people to play and be part of the creativity of Downsview.

We heard that the artists involved in fence weaving projects and others should be celebrated and made visible. The artists should be seen through their work and part of creating the story of Downsview.

Generally members believed that the concept would be the hardest part and that training people to execute the fencing weaving would be fairly straightforward.

Question of Clarification

Where will the XOXO project be located? What is the border of the site?

The XOXO pilot projects, which were launched with ArtworxTO's Year of Public Art, are all located in and around Downsview Park, The Depot and the Hangars. As land closer to the runway and Bombardier facility becomes available, XOXO projects will have more space to work with. Currently, some imagined fence weaving projects may extend as far as Wilson Avenue and Sheppard Avenue.

Wrap-Up

Representatives from Northcrest and Canada Lands told members that they were impressed by the group and excited for possibilities on these lands. Before closing, members were thanked for sharing their experience and expertise and a future site visit was also discussed.

Participants

CANADA LANDS COMPANY

David Anselmi

NORTHCREST DEVELOPMENTS

Chris Eby

Mitchell Marcus (observer)

Ian Hanecak (observer)

MISSISSAUGAS OF THE CREDIT FIRST NATION

Caitlin LaForme

NORTH YORK ARTS

Christina Giannelia

XOXO-AC MEMBERS

Ashley Beerdat

Kayode Brown, Just B Graphic

Renee Castonguay, STEPS

Lydia Hernandez, Sketch

Phyllis Novak, Sketch

Tracey Prehay, ArtworxTO

Adriana Salazar

XOXO-AC MEMBER REGRETS

Patrizia Libralato, Toronto Biennial of Art

Michael Vickers, Brampton Arts

XOXO-AC ALTERNATES

Maziar Ghaderi

Sari Zon, Art Starts

DEPT OF WORDS & DEEDS

Jane Farrow

Mia Hunt