

The Meadoway Visualization Toolkit

Location: Scarborough, Ontario, Canada

Category:

Communications

Abstract:

The Meadoway, a 16-kilometer existing hydro (power) corridor, has been re-envisioned to integrate meadowlands and urban greenspace, to become one of Canada's largest linear urban parks. This contiguous and vibrant corridor will connect cyclists and pedestrians with nature – from downtown Toronto to Rouge National Park. A seven-year implementation plan will transform this important infrastructural conduit into a lifeline, rich with birds, butterflies, and wildflowers on an unprecedented scale for this urban environment. The project scope was to translate TRCA's vision into spatial, experiential design, imagery and videography, developing a 'Visualization Toolkit' to support robust community engagement and gain additional momentum.

Transforming a Utility to a Multi-Faceted Urban Greenway

The Meadoway Visualization Toolkit reflects a collaboration between our team and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to develop, illustrate and animate the extraordinary story of transforming a largely utilitarian hydro (power) corridor into one of the largest linear urban parks in Canada. In early 2019, the TRCA hired our team to develop a series of story-telling and community engagement tools to invite feedback, garner excitement and further catalyze a seven-year implementation plan. Consisting of conceptual plans, renderings, animations, videos, and interactive engagement exercises, the toolkit was both foundational to the community engagement process and essential to encapsulating the long-term project vision and revealing the ultimate potential of this urban asset as a multi-faceted greenway.

Upon full realization, the Meadoway will enable cyclists and pedestrians to travel between downtown Toronto and Rouge National Urban Park, surrounded by uninterrupted nature and wildlife. Commencing in 2019, this project will take shape over the next seven years, changing an underutilized, largely utilitarian landscape into parkland that serves Ontario communities and rejuvenates the natural environment. Creating the Visualization Toolkit was a year-long, multi-stage process involving iterative sketches, storyboards, community engagement, and outreach activities that informed and shaped the series of renderings, animations, and videos that will continue to promote the project into the future. From engagement to conceptual sketches, the Development Toolkit is a compilation of precedent imagery, existing conditions understanding, and a contextual foundation on which the final visuals are based.

Iterative Visioning

Working closely with Toronto-based planning colleagues, our studio led the development of the scenes and renderings using an iterative approach, from quick hand-sketches atop existing photos, to collaboration with the talented renderer from a partner firm. The sketching process was a useful and highly iterative process for the team to discover the best ideas, solutions, and scale of a design problem. With these sketches, stakeholders, such as TRCA and the public, were able to contribute their knowledge identifying opportunities or constraints as the design evolved.

Public Engagement

We view public engagement as more than just a regulatory requirement; it is a critical part of the design process. The Meadoway corridor crosses many of Toronto's neighborhoods and communities, and its adjacency to schools, community centers, public parks, and places of worship highlights the importance of engagement that is inclusive, extensive, and fully integrated into the design process.

Our studio, the Toronto Region and Conservation Authority, and the larger Meadoway team participated in many public engagement meetings and open houses during the year-long production of the Visualization

Toolkit. Venues included community centers, school campuses, and the outdoors. Each time, we showcased work-in-progress and invited feedback. After receiving comments, our team went back to the drawing board to ensure that the visuals considered every voice.

Our approach to engagement went beyond presentations and panels. To articulate the full potential of a project of this scale and magnitude, we coupled two-dimensional content with an expanded set of tools, including a 24-foot map, Virtual Reality panoramas, a flipbook, and videos. Precedent imagery also played a role in public engagement, supplying useful prompts for participants to express what they did or did not like to see incorporated into The Meadoway design.

Concept

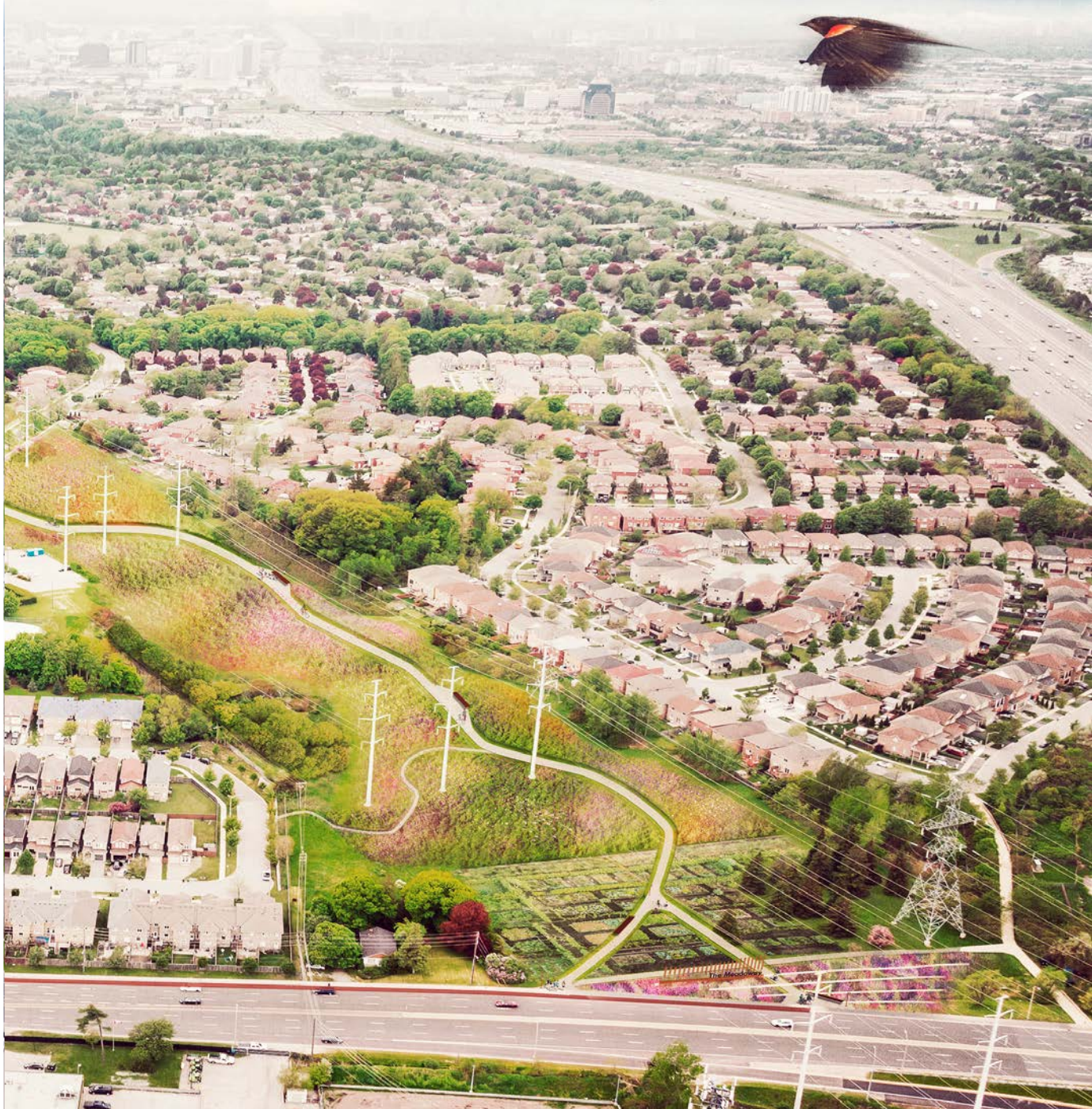
The Visualization Toolkit contains conceptual demonstrations of the design at this stage through twelve renderings of locations throughout the corridor. These range from eye-level to aerial images and capture desired programming, site aesthetics, and demonstrations of typical conditions. These renderings reflect the input of intensive community engagement and highlight noteworthy sites throughout The Meadoway.

Project Scope & Landscape Architect's Role

Landscape architects were instrumental to this effort, as the generation of this Development Toolkit relied on the landscape architects' skills in public realm design, hand-sketching-to-digital visualization, public engagement, and story-telling. The Development Toolkit is thoughtfully constructed and impactful compendium of imagery and animations that will guide the development of a truly transformative Toronto corridor.

The project is worthy of consideration for an award as the outcome of a collaborative, iterative, and integrated design process that gives tangible form to an extraordinary vision. Robust public engagement and feedback is directly reflected in the Visualization Toolkit, ensuring that the vision of this prominent Toronto green space incorporates community ideas and insight from the onset. To achieve this, the graphics and interactive tools span from macro to micro, capturing the full vision at an expansive scale, while incorporating unique community characteristics and immersive experiences across the corridor.

Canada's largest linear urban greenspace



Where is The Meadowway?

Connection Into National Park

Rouge National Urban Park
(North America's largest urban park)

The Meadowway, a 16-kilometer active hydro corridor, consists largely of mowed grasses and little-to-no biodiversity but has potential to be much more.

The corridor crosses over 4 ravines and 7 water courses. It spans 5 municipal wards, 13 neighborhoods and over 60,000 households.

THE MEADOWWAY

Existing Connection To Downtown Toronto

Downtown Toronto

LAKE ONTARIO

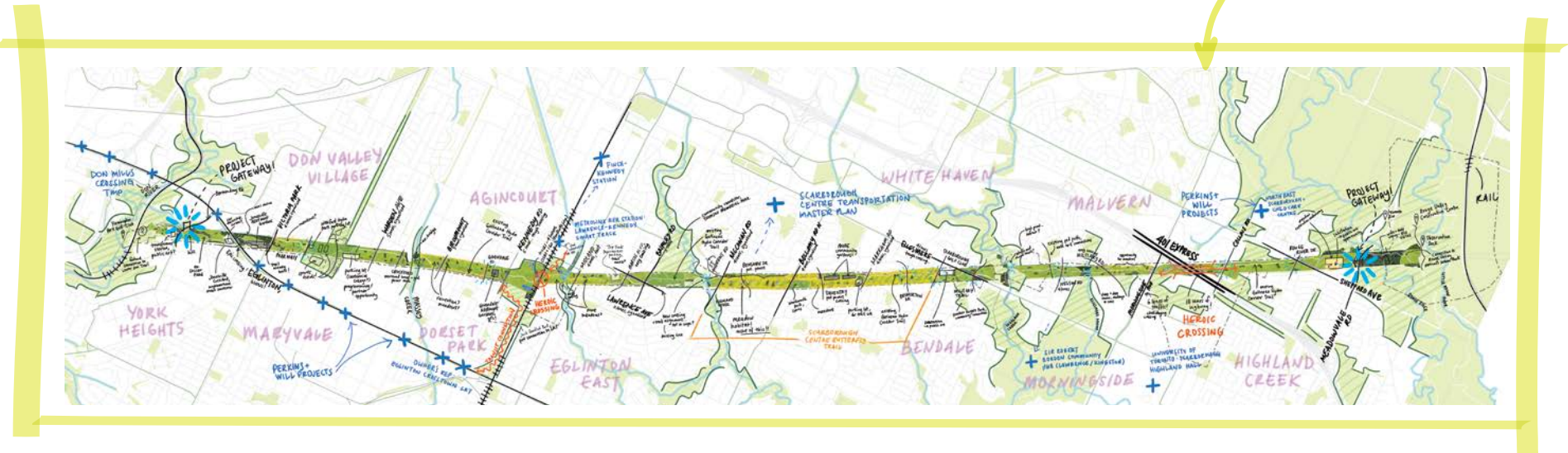
0 1,250 2,500 5,000 Meters



The Solution

The Meadowway is reclaiming infrastructure, revitalizing community, and restoring habitat.

Endless possibilities!



Guiding Principles



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND EDUCATION



BLUEPRINT FOR REVITALIZATION



RECREATION



COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC REALM



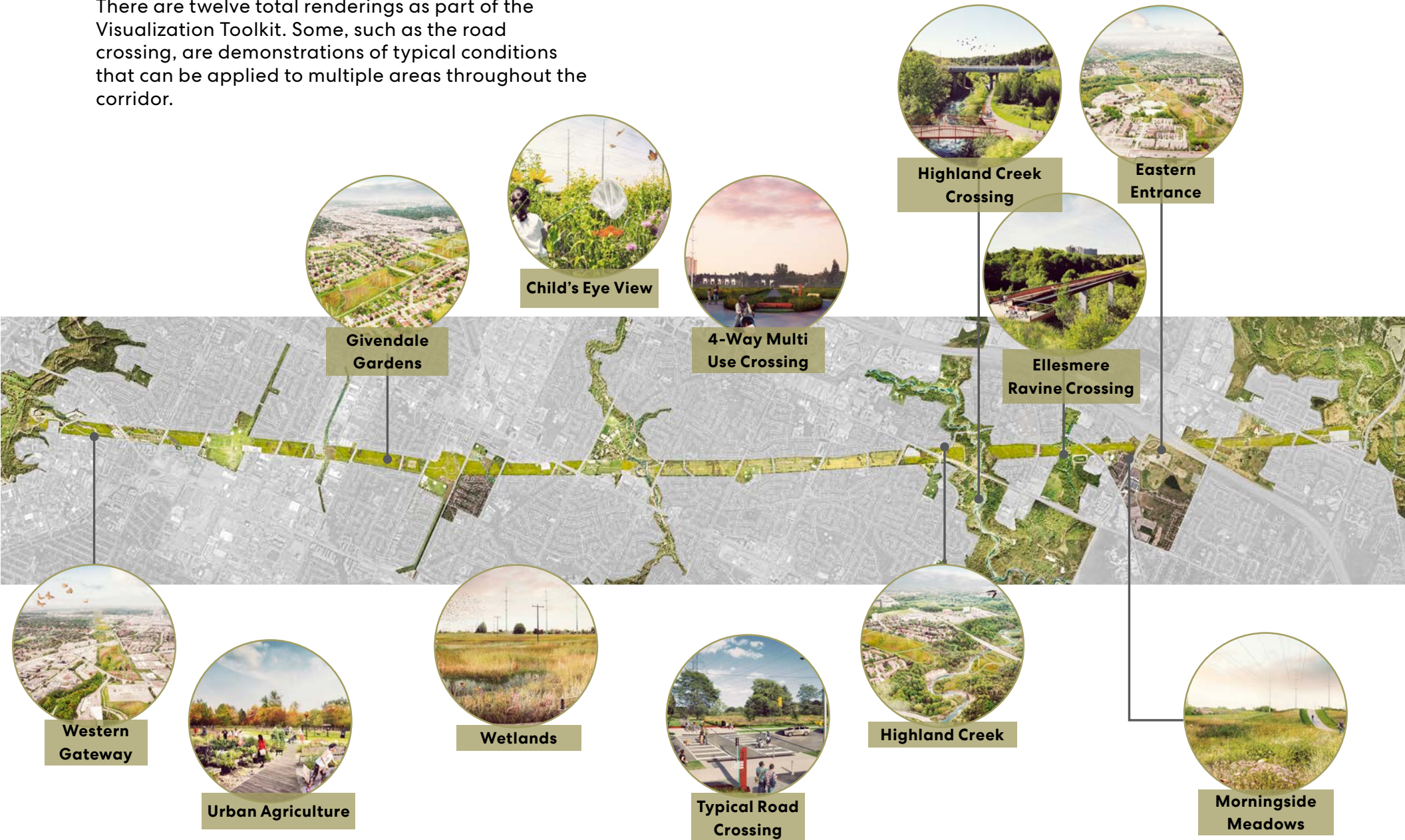
CONNECTIONS



TRANSPORTATION

A Key Map

There are twelve total renderings as part of the Visualization Toolkit. Some, such as the road crossing, are demonstrations of typical conditions that can be applied to multiple areas throughout the corridor.



Morningside Meadows

Key Features:

- ① Increased Biodiversity
- ② Mowed Buffer
- ③ Paved Multi-Use Trail

From monoculture to diverse meadow

In Morningside Meadows and other meadowland across the corridor, mowed grass areas are transformed into dynamic, biodiverse ecosystems.



Western Gateway

Key Features:

- ① Feature Garden Planting
- ② Future Connection to Don River
- ③ Future Connection to Eglinton Crosstown
- ④ Existing Jonesville Allotment Gardens

A vital connection to the Don River Valley and Trail

The Western Gateway gardens will create a grand entrance into The Meadoway and increase community and recreational use.



Child's Eye View

Key Features:

- ① Meadow Habitat

An immersive, educational, and exploratory experience

The meadows are full of learning opportunities. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority leads The Meadoway's education and community learning initiatives. Many of those explorations look like this!



Urban Agriculture

Key Features:

- ① Directional Signage
- ② Variety of Agricultural Opportunities
- ③ Accessible Pathways

Strengthening community and encouraging stewardship

Many existing community and allotment gardens on The Meadoway are widely used. These amenities are supported and enhanced in The Meadoway's continued development.



Wetlands

Key Features:

- ① Wetland Education
- ② Variety of Seating

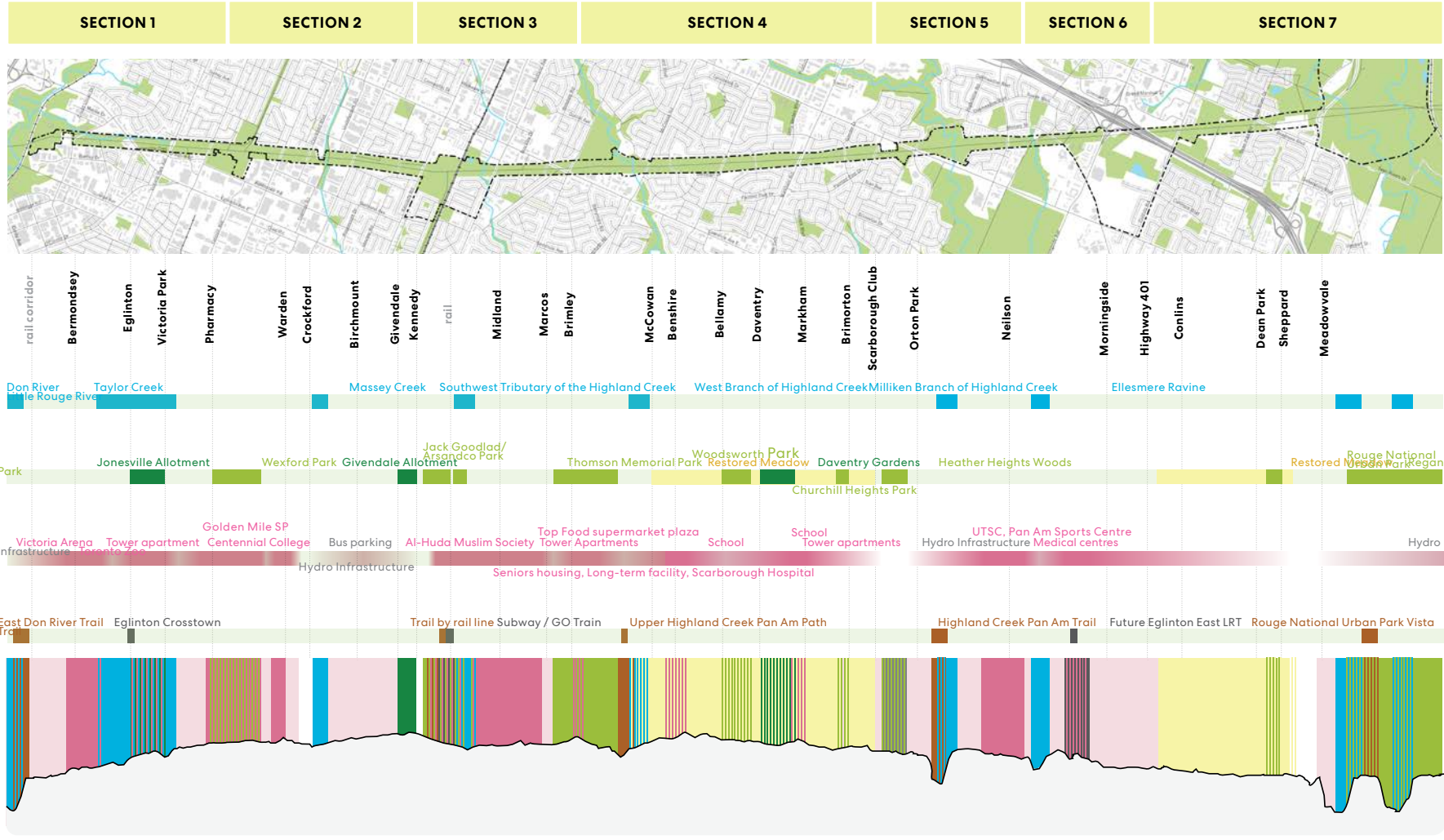
Learning about the range of natural species and habitats that call The Meadoway their home

Areas for future wetland restoration have been identified throughout The Meadoway. These efforts seek to increase biodiversity and improve habitat connectivity, flood attenuation and water quality.



How We Got There

Corridor Feature Catalog



Iterative Visioning

An iterative and highly collaborative design process



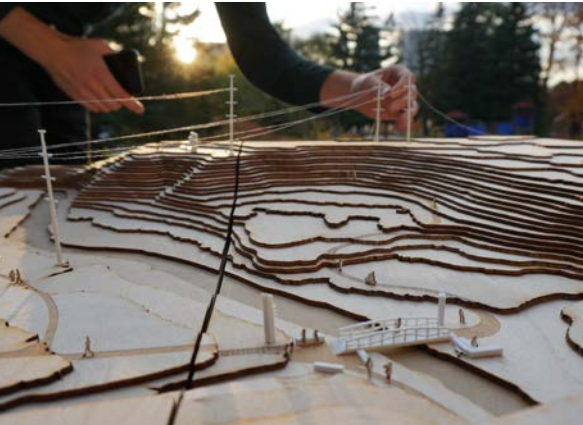
A local crossing providing access to the greater trail network of Toronto



Smaller 4-way community nodes – right in their backyards



Extensive Engagement Process: Inclusive and Innovative



Site models, 24-foot map, and interactive surveys



Virtual Reality

360 rendered views through Virtual Reality allow the public to place themselves within the ravines and creek areas.

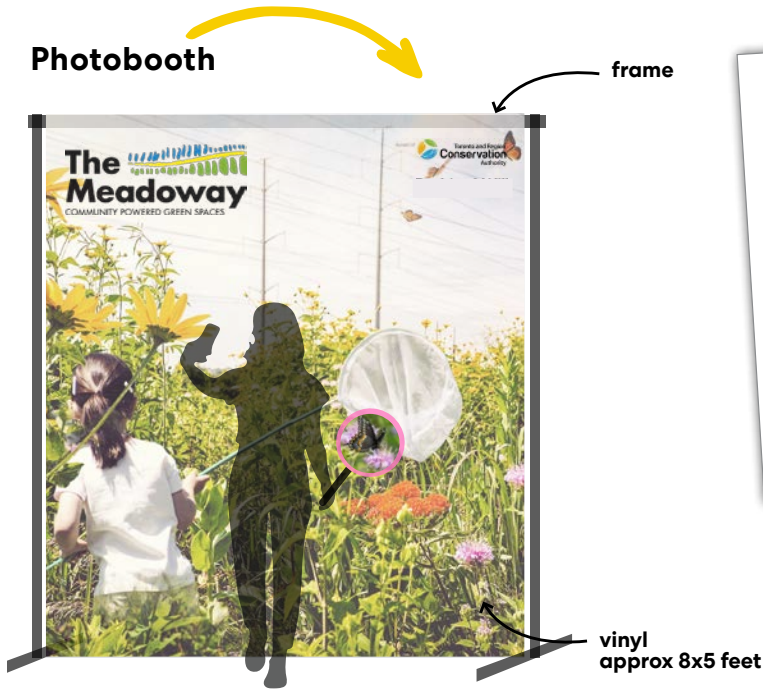


Scan using your phone camera!



Other Tactile Engagement Tools

Photobooth



frame

vinyl approx 8x5 feet

Kids sticker passport



Youth engagement through model making



Interactive flipbook of aerial imagery

