

# the bentway

2024-25 Annual Report

A large crowd of people is gathered in a public space, likely a park or plaza, under a large concrete bridge structure. The scene is captured during sunset or dusk, with warm, golden light. In the foreground, several individuals are dancing, including a man in a red and black striped shirt and black pants, and a woman in a black top and black boots. A young girl in a blue and white striped dress is also visible. The crowd extends into the background, where more people are watching or participating. The bridge structure is made of concrete and has some graffiti on its pillars. In the distance, city buildings are visible under the twilight sky.

together  
in public space

We acknowledge that we operate on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit and the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, the Métis, and many other Indigenous nations.

Toronto is now home to many diverse Indigenous people. We recognize them as the past, present, and future caretakers of this land. We pay our respects to all who have gathered and will continue to gather in this place. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work together to care for The Bentway lands and act as stewards of the space.

The first phase of The Bentway is located on lands that are part of Fort York National Historic Site, recognized by the Government of Canada as being of national significance.

Cover Image: Attendees at The Bentway's Opening Night Party, May 2024.

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welcome

## letter from our co-executive directors

**THE NATURE OF** infrastructure is changing. When the Gardiner was built sixty years ago it served a single purpose—to move cars in and out of the city—but Toronto has evolved, becoming a place with more complex needs and opportunities. Our city now requires critical urban infrastructure that serves us both physically and *socially*.

Where others might see only concrete, together we saw opportunity. We recognized the importance of connective, social gathering spaces for the waterfront's growing communities—spaces that allowed neighbours to meet, visitors to feel welcomed, volunteers to give back, and the city to celebrate all that makes Toronto unique.



**David Carey and Ilana Altman**  
Co-Executive Directors

The Bentway is a project that is transforming Toronto and is reflective of its distinct spirit. With partners like you, we are leading a movement that demonstrates how an outdated piece of infrastructure can be transformed with imagination to fundamentally redefine a city's health, identity, and ambition.

Your support over 2024-25 has empowered us to make bolder choices as we upscale our impact, painting with a Bentway palette across the downtown core, and balancing big ambition with a strong commitment to local character, radical accessibility and public health.

This is the bent-way; the Toronto-way.

As a supporter of our work, you are part of a community of civic leaders, agents of urban change who are ensuring cities and citizens everywhere can thrive.

We invite you to relive some of our favourite 2024-25 moments in this Annual Report and to consider getting more deeply involved in The Bentway in the year ahead. Thank you for your continued support!



# a softer city

9

public art commissions

40

workshops and events

164K

program visitors

293M

earned media impressions

**MODERN CITIES ARE** often thought of as hard, fast-paced, and alienating places. Not just because of the concrete and steel that built them, but with social isolation on the rise, cities are becoming increasingly difficult places to live.

The Bentway’s Summer 2024 program, *Softer City*, explored “softness” as a means of humanizing our cities, connecting communities, and creating space for collective repair. Together, we asked:

- How can we reimagine city-building based on new, softer strategies?
- How can public art and shared spaces contribute to the well-being of neighbourhoods?

The program proposed a series of soft encounters —with our city, our infrastructure, and one another.

Read on to relive some of our favourite moments and continue onwards to explore the program’s marquee events: *Dominoes* (p. 15) and *Yoga with Adriene* (p. 25).



Participants of *Walking:Holding* at The Bentway.



***Walking:Holding***

Rosana Cade's project was a unique, experiential performance that invited audience members (one at a time) on a guided walk through the neighbourhood, where they encountered and held hands with a series of people along the way. It was a gentle invitation between strangers, provoking the question: what happens when we open our hands to each other in public?



***Tracings***

Anishinaabe artist Nico Williams applied “patches” (made with woven fabric and jingle cones) to the chipped sections of the Gardiner’s concrete columns, incorporating traditional Indigenous regalia designs. This collective mending reminded us of the ongoing importance and responsibility of care for our infrastructure, and by extension, care for one another and our city.



***Holding Space***

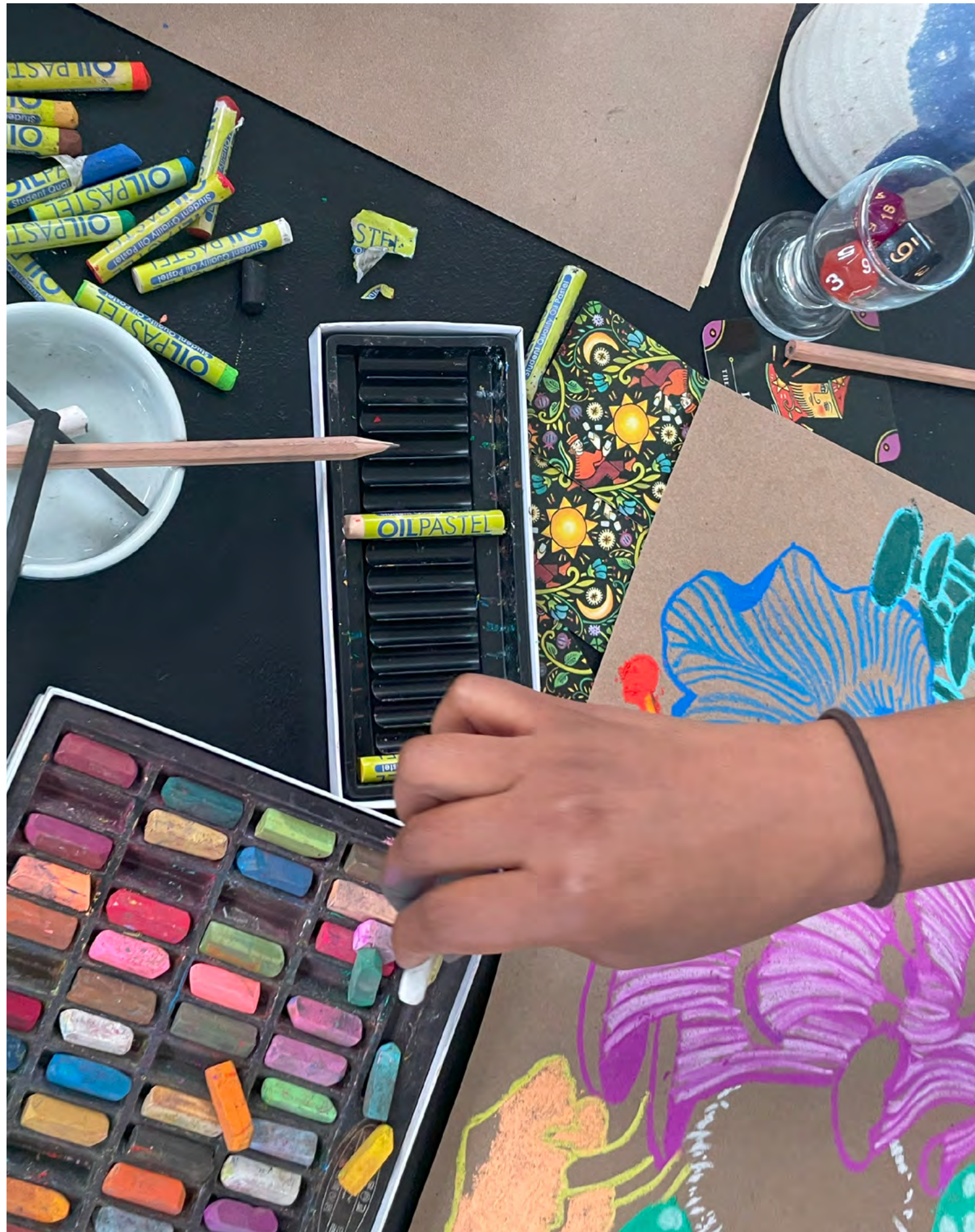
Nnenna Okore created a new intimate space for connection within the monumental architecture of The Bentway. Woven within scaffolding, Okore used Ankara, a versatile African fabric, to embody a deep sense of identity and community. Vivid fabric hues juxtaposed with the Gardiner’s hard edges and softened the concrete infrastructure, inviting visitors into moments of warmth, reflection, and shared experience.



***Wind Ensemble***

Toronto-based artist Heather Nicol’s interactive work captures the movement of the wind and energy of the city. Brightly coloured windsocks danced overhead while windchimes echoed throughout. Vibrant podiums invited visitors to add their own voices to this chorus, encouraging moments of pause, reflection, and connection to the surrounding landscape.





## Social sketching

Launched last year in partnership with Noble Space, our free (and sold-out) weekly Art Socials welcomed participants of all ages and abilities to explore a range of artistic techniques together, including screen-printing, watercolours, letterpress, and more. The series fostered creativity, connection, and a sense of community through shared artistic practice.





public space as a strategy  
to combat loneliness



71%

reported that Bentway visits improved  
their physical health

62%

reported that Bentway visits improved  
their mental health

59%

reported that time at The Bentway  
enhanced their sense of belonging

64%

reported that time at The Bentway  
improved their sense of social connection

**DRAWING FROM THE** *Softer City* learnings, our  
*Rx for Social Connection* report helped reveal the  
essential role public spaces play in the public health  
ecosystem.

Here, The Bentway teamed up with research  
partners from Gehl (New York) and the Dalla  
Lana School of Public Health (at the University  
of Toronto). Through observations, surveys, and  
interviews, the findings revealed that public spaces  
and public programs are critical health tools to not  
only promote well-being, but reduce feelings of  
loneliness.

 [Read \*Rx for Social Connection\* here.](#)

“

Public space is a  
key ingredient in the  
inclusive, joyful city  
making recipe.

”

Julia Day  
Partner and Director, Gehl New York





# well-being, social connection, and public space

Reflecting on a rich collaboration, The Bentway’s Co-Executive Director Ilana Altman spoke with Julia D. Day (Partner and Director, Gehl New York) and Dr. Kate Mulligan (Founder and Scientific Director of the Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing; Associate Professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health) to chat about our shared research into the power of public space.



Julia D. Day, Partner and Director, Gehl New York.



Kate Mulligan, Founder and Scientific Director, Institute for Social Prescribing; Associate Professor, University of Toronto.

**ILANA (IA):** You each bring a unique and important lens to this work. What motivated you to partake in this research and what inspired the development of *Rx for Social Connection*?

**JULIA (JD):** The Gehl team is always looking for opportunities to form interdisciplinary partnerships and gather evidence that highlights the power of public space in addressing our physical or mental health, economic opportunity, or safety. While Gehl has led several assessments to document impacts of public space on access to play or sense of belonging, we had not done so in partnership with a school of public health. This presented a unique opportunity to tell a more compelling story about the power of place on our health.

**KATE (KM):** As a health geographer, I’ve seen how deeply our health and wellbeing are shaped by relationships—with other people, with place and nature, with arts and culture, and with ourselves. When healthcare and public space folks join forces like this, we can unlock new ways of thinking, doing and being, to build stronger and more connected communities.

**IA:** Kate, your team led the Public Health Survey, engaging visitors to better understand how The Bentway’s spaces and programs affected their sense of wellbeing and connection. What stood out to you most in the responses from community members?

**KM:** We learn a lot when we simply ask people what’s important to them, and really listen to—and act on—what they value. What stood out from this survey was how simple people’s needs are: many said just being at The Bentway made them feel less alone, that comfortable seating and accessible paths helped people connect and feel at ease, that volunteering gave them a sense of purpose and contribution. It’s a reminder that simple, thoughtful designs and programs can go a long way toward welcoming people and showing that they matter and belong in public spaces.

**IA:** Julia, your team led the Public Life Observation Study, analyzing visitor movements and activities on site. Were there any findings from this work that were unexpected or surprised you?

**JD:** The findings affirmed the importance of the most standard of urban design features, such as human scale lighting, greenery, and seating. Yet what stood out for us was that the research also illustrated how important these physical qualities are to our sense of connection and belonging. Another was the importance of both hard and soft infrastructure in making a place inviting. Yes, we need quality in the physical design of a place, but we also need reasons to visit a place—we need invitations and culturally sensitive programs that draw us out of our homes or away from screens and making connecting and lingering feel easy, safe and fun.

 [Read the full Q&A with Julia, Kate, and Ilana here.](#)





an act  
of urban joy

300+  
volunteers

8,000  
giant dominoes

21K  
attendees

2.5km  
path to lake ontario

**TO CLOSE OUT** the *Softer City* program, we produced one of our most ambitious and resonant projects to date. *Dominoes*, created by Station House Opera, brought Torontonians together in an epic act of urban joy and community building.

Over 21,000 attendees joined to witness the unfurling of 8,000 giant-sized domino blocks, hand-placed along an epic 2.5km path. This kinetic social sculpture stretched from King West to STACKT Market, through Canoe Landing Park and Choice Properties' West Block, under the Gardiner, in and out of local businesses and homes, and ending spectacularly with a plunge into Lake Ontario.

The project brought together hundreds of volunteers and linked diverse communities along the waterfront in a symbolic as well as physical chain of cause and effect. A fleeting event, *Dominoes* left a lasting impression on all those who experienced it, demonstrating the immense potential of art to inspire and connect communities, bringing a sense of exuberance and civic pride to the streets of Toronto.



[Watch the full "fall" here.](#)







# magic ingredients for *Dominoes*

 [Read more about the behind-the-scenes action that made \*Dominoes\* possible.](#)

## Creative spark

“This project has always been about connecting different parts of a city, so that all the different kinds of people, communities, and activities happening in a city are seen as part of a whole organism rather than separate.”

— Julian Maynard Smith, Founder, Station House Opera



## Happy, dedicated volunteers

“This was one of those beautifully co-created Bentway projects; nearly all of our volunteers lived nearby. This was by the neighbourhood, for the neighbourhood. When you talk to these incredible people you get to be excited about the project, and then you hear that excitement reflected back. It’s always a great reminder of why we’re doing what we’re doing.”

— Jeremy Forsyth, Producer, The Bentway

## Building blocks

“Deploying 8,000 blocks along over 15 site hubs was infinitely complicated, and rewarding. I’ve always been drawn to opportunities where I could directly communicate with audiences in public spaces and break down the gallery walls that sometimes can feel impenetrable between contemporary art and the public. *Dominoes* as a project is such a simple idea, but it was so effective in connecting with its audiences. It’s about the effect of one thing impacting another, and how we create personal relationships that together build something bigger.”

— Ben Freedman, Producer, The Bentway



## Hard work behind-the-scenes

“The logistics of organizing this project was such a massive undertaking and a huge effort for our entire team. As producers, our team is often so focused on the nuts and bolts, the checklists and spreadsheets and schedules. This project taught me that you have to get out of the weeds and put your head in the clouds a little.”

— Stephanie Dudek, Manager, Production & Events, The Bentway



# partners in placemaking

On the heels of a wildly successful partnership with Choice Properties to produce *Dominoes* in 2024, Orit and Ilana sat down to celebrate the magic of this project and chart a path forward for future collaborations.



Orit Sarfaty, Vice President Sustainability and Placemaking, Choice Properties.

**ILANA (IA):** We were delighted to have Choice as the Presenting Sponsor of *Dominoes*, one of our most resonant and far-reaching projects to date. Can you share more about what excited Choice about this project and what the partnership meant for you?

**ORIT (OS):** Choice is dedicated to creating places where people thrive. Through our social impact work and placemaking efforts, we seek to transform our neighbourhood retail centres into the hearts of their community. We wanted to support such an exciting effort and weave West Block into the broader neighbourhood in a fun and dynamic way.


**IA:** As a real estate trust, you are uniquely invested in how communities grow through placemaking and social cohesion. How has your partnership with The Bentway informed your approach to working in community at your other sites across the city?

**OS:** From design to implementation, there is this energy and dynamism that we’ve all come to expect from programs and exhibitions under the Gardiner. That’s been inspiring for us as well

in our own efforts to build community through placemaking. We believe that everyone, no matter where they are and what they’re doing, is entitled to an injection of joy in their lives. All the more so when it’s unexpected and woven in the span of day-to-day routines like grabbing groceries for Sunday dinner at one of our retail centres. The Bentway has succeeded in making a space that may have been overlooked become the centre of joy, community, and fun!

**IA:** What advice would you have for other private sector companies wanting to partner with not-for-profit organizations like The Bentway in achieving their social impact goals?

**OS:** We believe in community because it’s the right thing to do and also because it is at the centre of our business. For any company that relies on a thriving neighbourhood for its employment base, its future shoppers, tenants, or investors, partnering with like-minded not-for-profit organizations like The Bentway is a no-brainer.

 [Read the full Q&A with Orit and Ilana here.](#)

“  
**As Presenting Sponsor for *Dominoes*, what a thrill for Choice Properties to be part of the action! The feeling during *Dominoes* was electric. For me, it really defined why we are in the work of real estate.**  
”

Orit Sarfaty  
Vice President Sustainability and Placemaking, Choice Properties



# moving together

The Bentway's recreational programming continues to serve as a meaningful antidote to social isolation, welcoming visitors to gather, move, and commune together in public.

Highlights from last year include:



## Dancing

We kicked off the summer season with our beloved Opening Night Party, complete with a massive city-scaled line dance led by queer icons, SPURS.



## Rolling

With help from our friends at SUSO Skate, The Bentway transforms each summer into a top roller skating destination, complete with onsite rentals, lessons for novice skaters, and monthly Roller Skate Parties that lit up the trail with energy.

## Chasing

Fun-filled mornings started with Dino Specialists teaching participants about dinosaurs through song, dance, storytelling, and games. Then, kids set out on an exciting, non-competitive chase to recapture “runaway dinosaurs”. The smiles were impossible to resist!



## Howling

Indeed the cutest day of the year, The Bentway's annual Howl-oween event invited hundreds of local families and their dogs to celebrate “spooky season” at our popular Halloween pup parade. Prizes were awarded for the most creative costuming.



yoga with adriene



“

Working with The Bentway is a unique experience because of the interdisciplinary aspect to their work. They care about people and community on multiple levels and that care is translated into a blend of both creativity and professionalism that you just don’t get everywhere.


”

Adriene Mishler  
Yoga with Adriene

**KNOWN FOR HER** immensely popular “Yoga with Adriene” YouTube channel, global wellness icon Adriene Mishler inspires millions of people around the world to practice yoga from the comfort of their homes (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic).

As part of our *Softer City* program, The Bentway welcomed Mishler to Toronto for a rare, in-person communal yoga session, attracting over 2,000 participants, including attendees from as far away as Mexico!

The transformative event created a powerful moment of softness, collective care, social connection, and restorative movement against the backdrop of Toronto’s urban downtown. For many, this event offered a unique opportunity to practice in public for the first time.

 [See Adriene’s practice in action via this recap reel.](#)







“

I have done events  
all around the globe  
and my experience with  
The Bentway blew me  
away and raised the  
bar for all of my future  
partnerships.

”

Adriene Mishler  
Yoga with Adriene



## winter @ the bentway



**70**  
winter care kits created and  
distributed to those in need

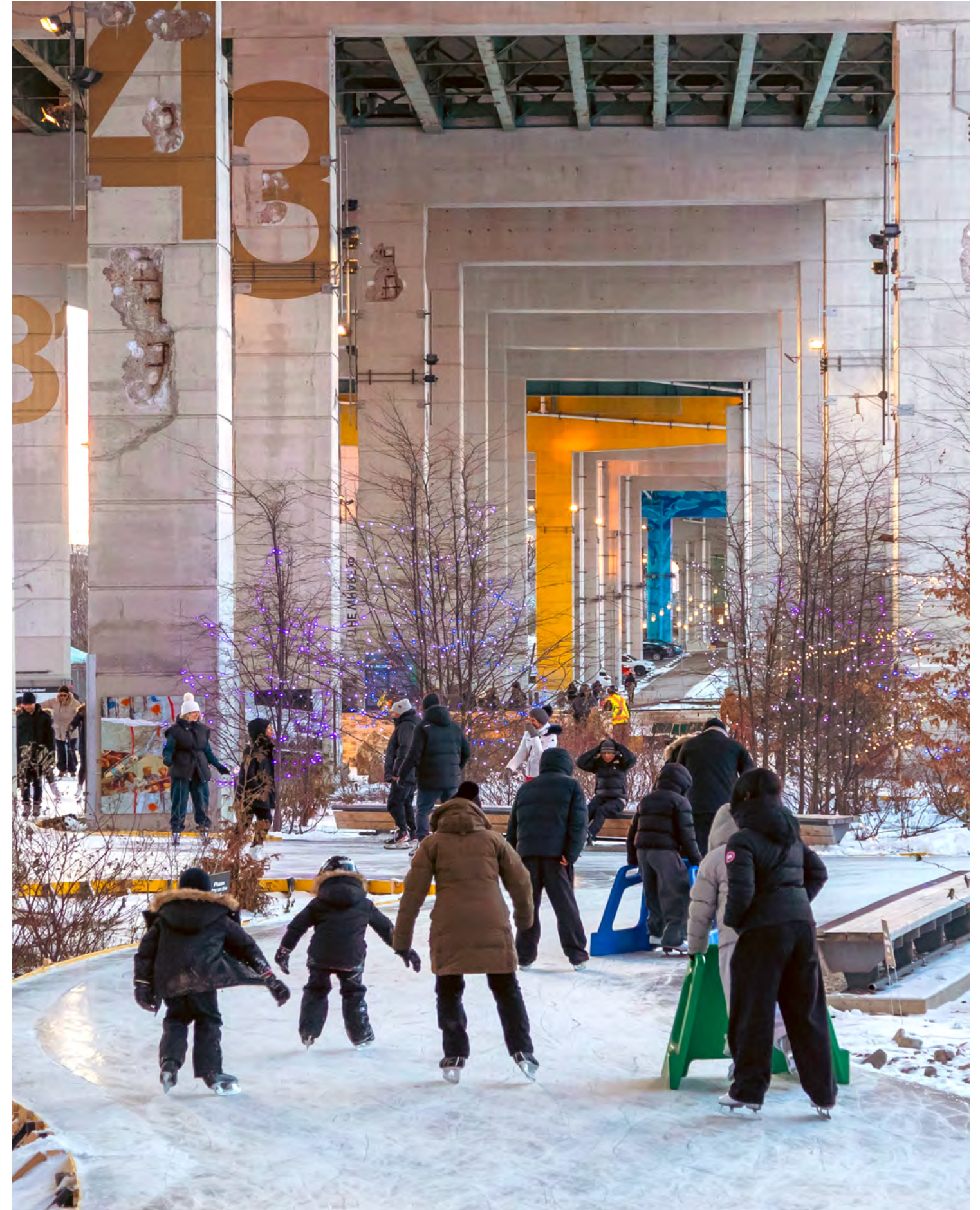
**300**  
zamboni runs to help  
maintain safe ice

**5,500**  
cups of hot chocolate  
served

**9,000**  
pairs of skates rented

**OVER 50,000 ATTENDEES** took to the ice along our figure-eight skate trail last year, offering an essential platform for Torontonians looking to socialize and stay healthy during the cold, dark winter months. Beloved seasonal activities returned as well, including free skate rental nights, free hot chocolate nights, Polar Bear Skate, and more, inviting our community to embrace the joy of winter together.

Continuing The Bentway's tradition of pairing winter fun with artistic programming, we animated the trail with *Resurfacing* by Jessica Thalmann. Co-presented with Exhibition Place, the work reimagined striking images of the Gardiner Expressway through layers, tears, and folds, reflecting its history and ongoing transformation.





# in the neighbourhood

Our close neighbour, Chris Glover (MPP Spadina-Fort York), can often be seen gliding along our Skate Trail in the winter. He has become a great champion and a dear friend of The Bentway team. Chris took some time to chat with our Facilities Manager, Michael Clarke, about skating, public space, and a changing neighbourhood.



Chris Glover, MPP Spadina-Fort York.

**MICHAEL (MC):** What does a place like The Bentway mean to you personally, and how do you see it touching the lives of the constituents you represent?

**CHRIS (CG):** The majority of people who live in Spadina-Fort York live in high rises. The Bentway Skate Trail provides an opportunity for condo dwellers to get outdoors and socialize with their community. It gives people a chance to get some fresh air and exercise in a very unique space.

**mc:** When we opened in 2018, it seemed to signal the start of how Toronto can think of old infrastructure in new ways. What do you think communities everywhere can learn from The Bentway story?

**cg:** Ken Greenberg had the vision to see the potential of the derelict space under the Gardiner. The Bentway is such a gorgeous space and has become almost cathedral-like. There is so much more potential yet to be discovered in the city.

**mc:** Our Winter 2025-26 season is fast approaching, and we're excited to welcome new skaters to our site. If people haven't yet taken a spin around the trail, what would you tell them that they might not know about the experience of skating under the Gardiner?

**cg:** It's a great way to meet people! Many who are new to the country may be afraid of winter and this shows that winter can be wonderful and something to embrace. Tell people to tell their friends to get out there!

 [Read the full Q&A with Chris and Clarke here.](#)

“  
The Bentway has turned a very cold and unpleasant space into a beautiful welcoming hub that people can use year-round.  
”

Chris Glover  
MPP Spadina-Fort York





# unlocking the gardiner

Phase 1 of The Bentway was just the beginning!



**THE EXPRESSWAY RUNS** elevated for 6.5km and past 17 downtown neighbourhoods, moving more than 140,000 vehicles every day. But how can a highway be *more* than a highway?

This year, we continued to advance our creative work to further unlock opportunities along the Gardiner's length. In April, Toronto City Council adopted the Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan (UGPRP), formally marking The Bentway's next chapter as leaders on a comprehensive vision for underutilized public spaces below and adjacent to the highway, from Dufferin to the DVP.

Together with city-builders like you, we can reimagine how this piece of infrastructure can connect, perform, and inspire.

Image of Bentway Phase 1  
designed by PUBLIC WORK.



in development:  
a second bentway site



“

Our goal is to create an iconic, vibrant and sustainable public space that embodies The Bentway’s vision. Partnering with Brook McIlroy, we are excited to combine our firms’ expertise in creating transformative, high-impact public spaces, bringing to life a truly extraordinary new space for Toronto.

”

Isabel Castilla  
Associate Partner, Field Operations

**WE RECENTLY KICKED OFF** design work for a new hub site, The Bentway Islands, which will transform a 120,000 sq ft space at the foot of Spadina Avenue.

After a rigorous RFP process, The Bentway was proud to select Canadian architects Brook McIlroy and their partners at Field Operations, the renowned NYC landscape architecture firm known for their work on The High Line.

The Bentway Islands will offer new opportunities for recreation, play, culture, and retail, while setting a new benchmark for climate-conscious, inclusive design. A multi-layered engagement process is guiding the project, including deep responsive consultation with Indigenous communities, local residents, local social services, and the City of Toronto.

Image of Bentway Phase 1 designed by PUBLIC WORK. The Bentway Islands will include amenities such as a multi-use path, landscaping, and flexible spaces for gathering, events, and play.





# incorporating indigenous design, histories, and knowledge

As part of this work, we're proud to collaborate with Brook McIlroy's Indigenous Design Studio to meaningfully place Indigenous design, landscape, and history within the space.

Robert McKaye (Senior Manager, Planning and Design) had a recent exchange with Ryan Gorrie (Principal, Brook McIlroy) to discuss our ongoing work together.



Architect Ryan Gorrie.

**ROBERT (RM):** The Bentway is thrilled to be working together with your team on the design of The Bentway Islands. To start, can you tell us more about Brook McIlroy's Indigenous Design Studio—who you are, how do you work, and how you approach your practice?

**RYAN (RG):** The Indigenous Design Studio at Brook McIlroy is a specialty area of practice that focus' on supporting Indigenous practitioners in connecting with projects that seek to embed Indigeneity within the design and delivery. The studio also strives to create a collaborative environment with non-Indigenous practitioners within Brook McIlroy as well as other firms we team up with.

**RM:** The project aims to meaningfully integrate Indigenous perspectives, narratives, and design principles into the public realm. Why is this important for cities today – particularly in shared public spaces?

**RG:** As many are aware the ongoing impacts of colonization has led to an erasure of Indigenous presence and identity, from scales of the

individual to whole territories. While this has been acknowledged via various avenues such as the TRC and UNDRIP, the uptake varies from place to place. Public spaces offer the opportunity to render Indigenous presence visible and integral to the everyday of all who use the space. Cities are often built on places where Indigenous nations had previously settled or moved through regularly as part of their territory. It follows that the enduring presence of these nations should be part of the experience of these places within the urban context.

**RM:** Can you talk about your findings at the Bentway Islands site? How does the Indigenous Design Studio engage important stories and histories?

**RG:** Topics that have emerged from site and consultation include original shoreline, flora and fauna from the area, land acknowledgment, Indigenous nations representation/history and artist/vendor spaces. Overarching themes related to animal-human connection, plant relationships and embedding Indigenous layering throughout the site all became part of the conversations around ideas.

**RM:** The project also looks to Indigenous present and futures in Tkaronto, and once complete, this site will welcome tens of thousands of visitors every year. What do you hope visitors feel, learn, or reflect on when they visit The Bentway Islands?

**RG:** I hope that visitors will see and feel Indigenous presence directly, they will learn more and want to find out more. I hope people will understand what it means to be in relation to people, other than human beings and the current and historical context. I hope that people will return for annual events in all seasons to see how dynamic the site and programming can be. Finally I hope that other cities will take notice and lead opportunities within their own contexts, that this might be a lasting model for bringing together various layers of culture, history and inhabitation.

 [Read the full Q&A with Ryan and Robert here.](#)





## the gardiner corridor alliance: a new bentway community

**Last year we launched the Gardiner Corridor Alliance (GCA), a new Bentway community made up of developers, designers, planners, and other professionals working to transform the 6.5km stretch of land along and adjacent to the Gardiner.**

“

**The Gardiner Corridor Alliance is about people — about all of us — coming together to imagine and build a better city.**

”

Daniel Winberg  
Bentway Board Member



# introducing the gardiner corridor alliance

Together, our shared impact falls in the fastest-growing area in the country. With 44 active and recently-completed projects, the corridor is also anticipating completion of the Ontario line, redevelopment of the Port Lands, and major construction to repair the Gardiner.

Daniel Winberg, a new Bentway Board member, recently connected with Dave Carey (Co-Executive Director) to reflect on the GCA and what he’s looking forward to as we continue to grow.



Daniel Winberg, COO of Rockport Group.

**DAVE (DC):** Why launch the Gardiner Corridor Alliance (GCA), and why now?

**DANIEL (DW):** We’re at a pivotal moment in Toronto’s evolution. The Gardiner corridor is undergoing a once-in-a-generation transformation, with over 44 active and recently completed private developments, major civic projects like the Ontario Line and Port Lands redevelopment, and the City-approved Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan. The GCA was launched to bring together the people shaping this future — across sectors — to collaborate, share ideas, and ensure we’re building something truly impactful, and building that together.

**DC:** What sort of companies are part of the Alliance, and where are they having impact?

**DW:** Alliance partners represent a huge range of fields with impact from Dufferin to the DVP, from Liberty Village to the Port Lands, including: real


estate; finance; architecture, design, and planning; law; engineering; construction; and public agencies. Collectively, our shared impact falls into the fastest-growing area in the country.

**DC:** We kicked off the GCA with an incredible launch event earlier in 2025. Tell us about that.

**DW:** The launch was a powerful moment: not just a celebration, but a statement of intent. We heard from incredible speakers like Jason Thorne (Toronto’s new Chief Planner), Saad Usmani (Toronto Region Board of Trade), Mary Rowe (Canadian Urban Institute), and your colleague Ilana Altman (The Bentway), each offering a unique perspective on the corridor’s potential. It was inspiring to see so many leaders come together around a common cause, and to feel the energy of a new alliance forming.

**DC:** We’ve got a wonderful set of inaugural GCA partners, including Choice Properties, Aird Berlis, EllisDon, Wallman Architects, and of course your own Rockport Group. If someone wanted to support or get involved with The Bentway—as a GCA member or otherwise—what would you say to them?

**DW:** I would say—“let’s go”! The Bentway is more than a public space, it’s a movement. Whether you’re a developer, designer, or simply someone who cares about the future of Toronto, there’s a place for you here. The GCA offers access to a network of like-minded city-builders, professional development, exclusive events, and the chance to help shape one of the most exciting urban transformations in Canada.

 [Read the full Q&A with Daniel and Dave here.](#)



# growing the movement

As always, our enduring impact and vision are fuelled by a strong network of collaborators, funders, and community advocates.

## Steadfast champions

Multi-year partnerships with champions like the City, Maxine Granovsky Gluskin and Ira Gluskin, Balsam Foundation, Manulife, the Arrell Family, and Dream Community Foundation were essential to our continued planning and growth. Their long-standing belief in The Bentway propels us forwards.

## Returning partners

We were delighted to welcome back a wealth of returning supporters such as TD Bank Group, Barbara & Dougal Macdonald, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Canada Council for the Arts, and Ontario Trillium Foundation.

## New supporters

And finally, The Bentway warmly established new relationships with a new generation of friends, including:

- Choice Properties
- David Dattels & Jen Grant
- Liza Mauer & Andrew Sheiner
- New Partners at Indigenous Curatorial Collective, Trust for Public Land, and Buddies in Bad Times





supporters' event:  
in conversation with the high line



“

The Bentway and Manulife have shared values and goals when it comes to supporting people and the planet in a sustainable way and helping local communities reach their fullest, healthiest potential. We’re excited to see the expansion of the work The Bentway is doing to transform and reimagine the possibilities of hybrid infrastructure in Toronto.

”

Joanna Marcovici  
Director of Community Investment, Manulife  
*Pictured Above*

**OUR SUPPORTERS JOINED** us in May 2024 as we welcomed The High Line (NYC) to Toronto for a meaningful conversation about The Bentway’s future, hosted at Steam Whistle in partnership with ULI Toronto.

Our Co-Executive Directors, Dave Carey and Ilana Altman, were joined onstage by Asima Jansveld, Chief Program and Engagement Officer at Friends Of The High Line, to look at global models of industrial reuse and how Toronto can unlock new civic possibilities beneath the Expressway.

This event was supported by Manulife and The Waterfront BIA, who have both been long-time supporters of The Bentway’s growth.







“

Our waterfront business community continues to be strong supporters of The Bentway and its vision for improving the underside of the Gardiner Expressway. In partnerships we’ve always found their team to be both creative and industrious in finding solutions to improve the spaces under the highway.

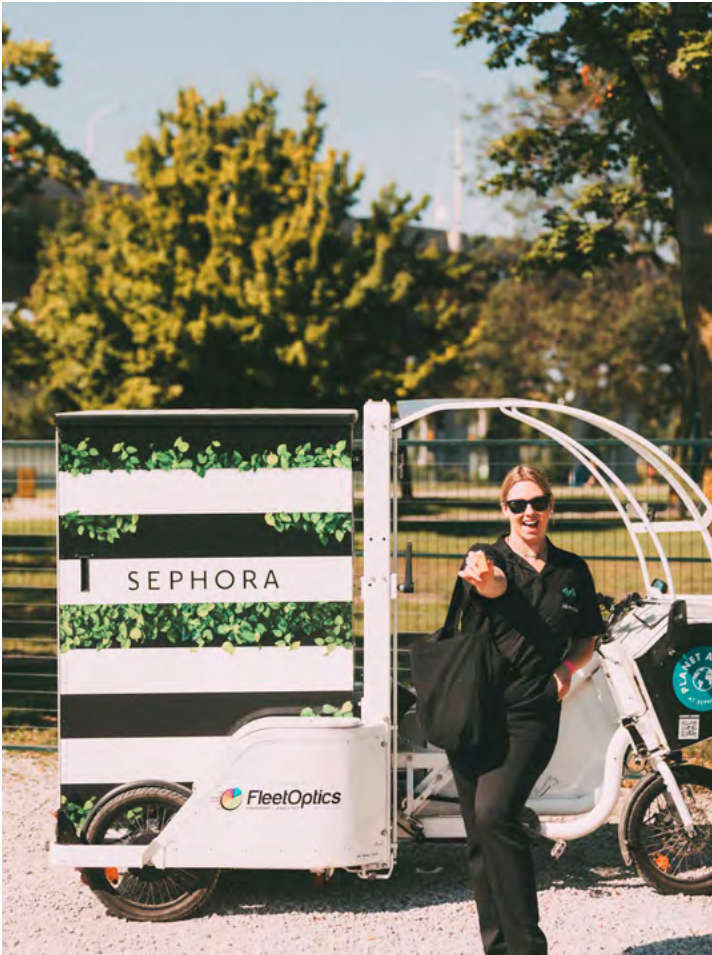
We look forward to continued success with their Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan and Gardiner Corridor Alliance in the coming years as post-Gardiner-rehab conversations are finalized.

”

Tim Kocur  
Executive Director, Waterfront BIA



sephora @ the bentway



**IN A NEW** corporate partnership, Sephora’s *Beauty at The Bentway* opened in June 2024, transforming an underused space at the eastern edge of our Phase 1 site into a dynamic, community hub.

Outfitted with welcoming community assets like bike racks, benches, and tables, plus 42 different plant species, the space invited neighbours and visitors alike to pause and connect with their surroundings. Alongside the installation, a series of free community classes activated the site, offering hands-on workshops in Kundalini-inspired movement and Kintsugi pottery.

This partnership highlighted The Bentway’s collaborative spirit working with diverse partners to create new opportunities for connection and civic engagement.





warm words from  
bentway visitors  
and neighbours



“ [Your] art and cultural programs makes me proud to live near a space that is elevating public art... The diversity of the programming makes me feel that the organization is valuing different people and different approaches. ”

Melika Saeeda  
Neighbourhood Resident and Artist



“ I really hope we can expand public spaces under the Gardiner. Reclaiming this unused space benefits the entire city physically, mentally and financially. ”

Respondent, Public Health Survey



“ This is the thing Toronto needs more of. With the city’s intensification, Bentway-type assets are critical to recovering the “livable city” aspect of Toronto. ”

Bentway Visitor, Summer 2024





our supporters

A big Bentway-sized thank you to all those who helped our work thrive in 2024-25.

Founders

- Artscape
- City of Toronto
- Judy & Wil Matthews
- Ken Greenberg
- Mayor John Tory
- PUBLIC WORK
- The Bentway board, staff & volunteers
- Waterfront Toronto

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- Buddies in Bad Times
- Exhibition Place
- Indigenous Curatorial Collective
- Trust for Public Land

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- Government of Ontario
- Ontario Arts Council
- Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund
- Ontario Trillium Foundation





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# our financials



# introducing our new board treasurer

Rita Said reflects on her recent appointment as our new Board Treasurer during a crucial period of transition and planning-for-growth. She sat down with our staff’s financial Controller, Tessa Chan, to discuss what drew her to the organization and what opportunities lie on the horizon.



Rita Said, District Vice President, Scotiabank.

**TESSA (TC):** Before joining the Board as Treasurer, you sat on our Finance & Audit Committee for several years before. What initially drew you to The Bentway?

**RITA (RS):** Since moving to Toronto, The Bentway is now local to me and it has become so clear that communal spaces are key to our city. They bring people together and connect us.

**TC:** How does your experience in commercial banking and risk management shape what you bring to The Bentway?


**RS:** The experience I have in commercial banking provided me with a deep understanding of creditworthiness and capital structures, enabling sound oversight of The Bentway’s budgets and funding strategies. From a risk management perspective, I bring a forward-looking perspective, while anticipating emerging risks that could impact long-term sustainability.

**TC:** Let’s look ahead. What are some Bentway opportunities we can look forward to this year?

**RS:** On a very practical, financial front, we’re continuing to diversify our revenue streams, including enhanced focus on earned revenues (like event rentals and low-cost ticketing models), which is in itself an opportunity to strengthen financial resiliency.

We’re designing a second hub site, The Bentway Islands, which is a chance to grow our impact and footprint.

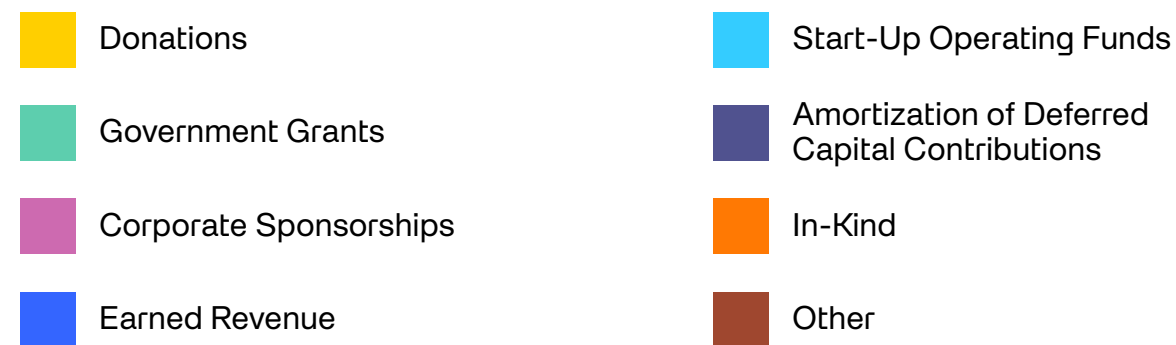
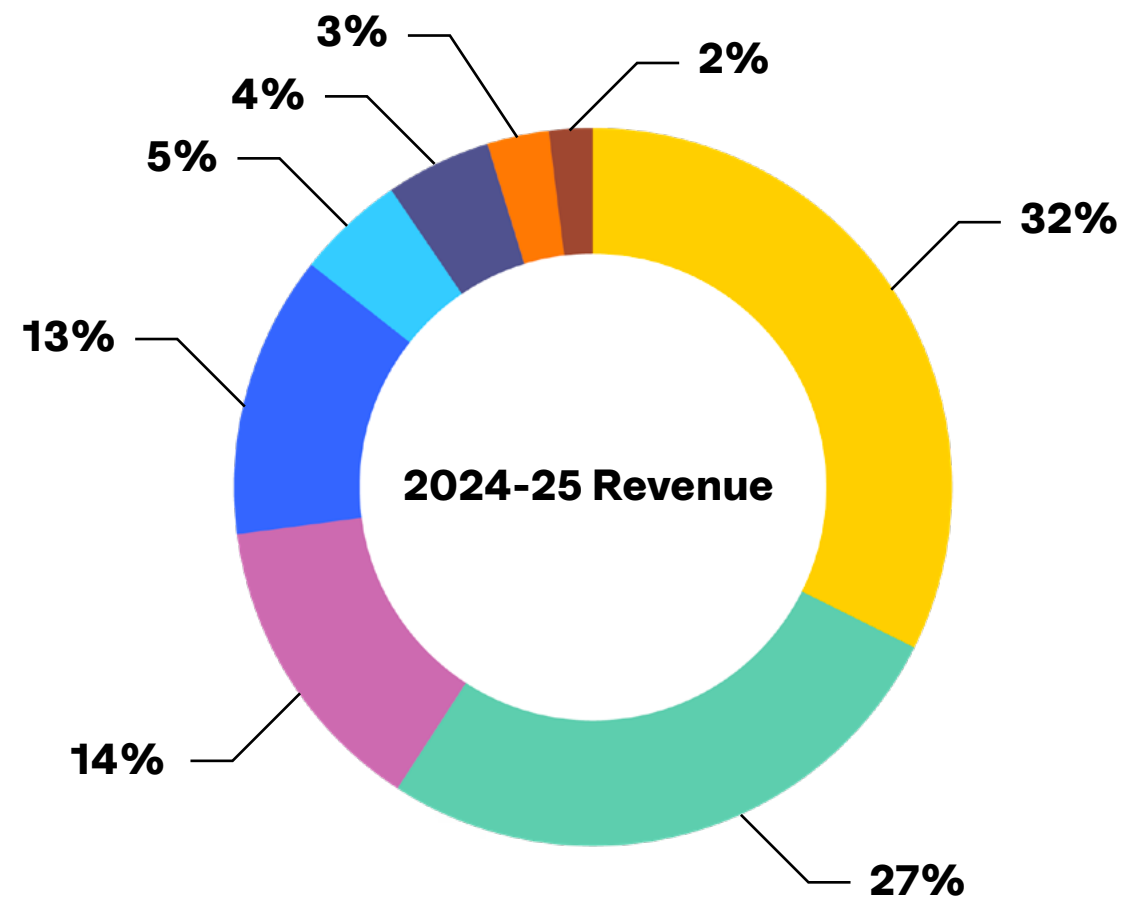
And lastly, the role we’ll play in FIFA World Cup 2026 next summer is particularly exciting. Last year we were named as co-host site for Toronto’s FIFA Fan Festival. It’s game on!

 [Read the full Q&A with Rita and Tessa here.](#)

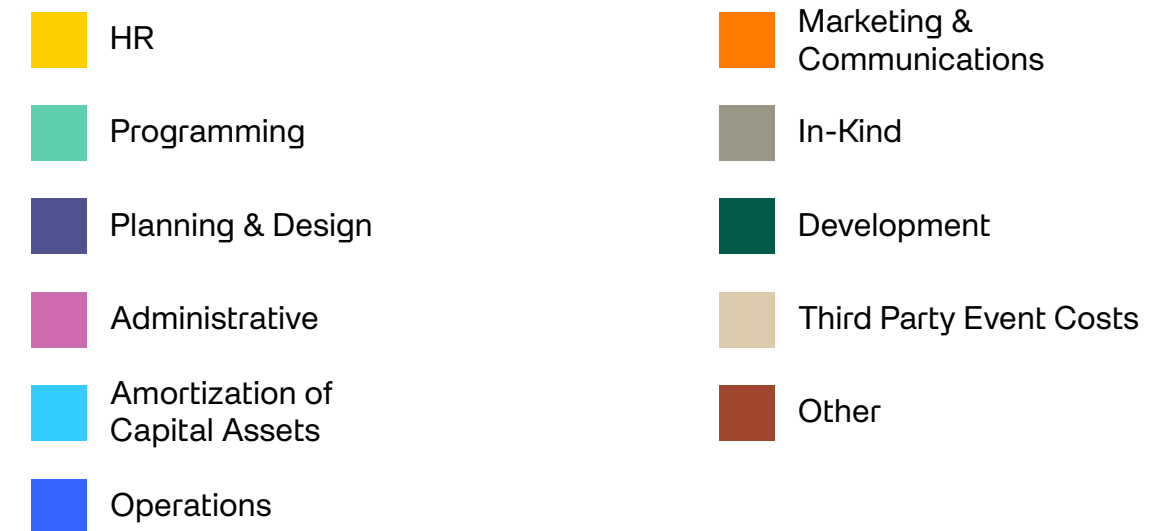
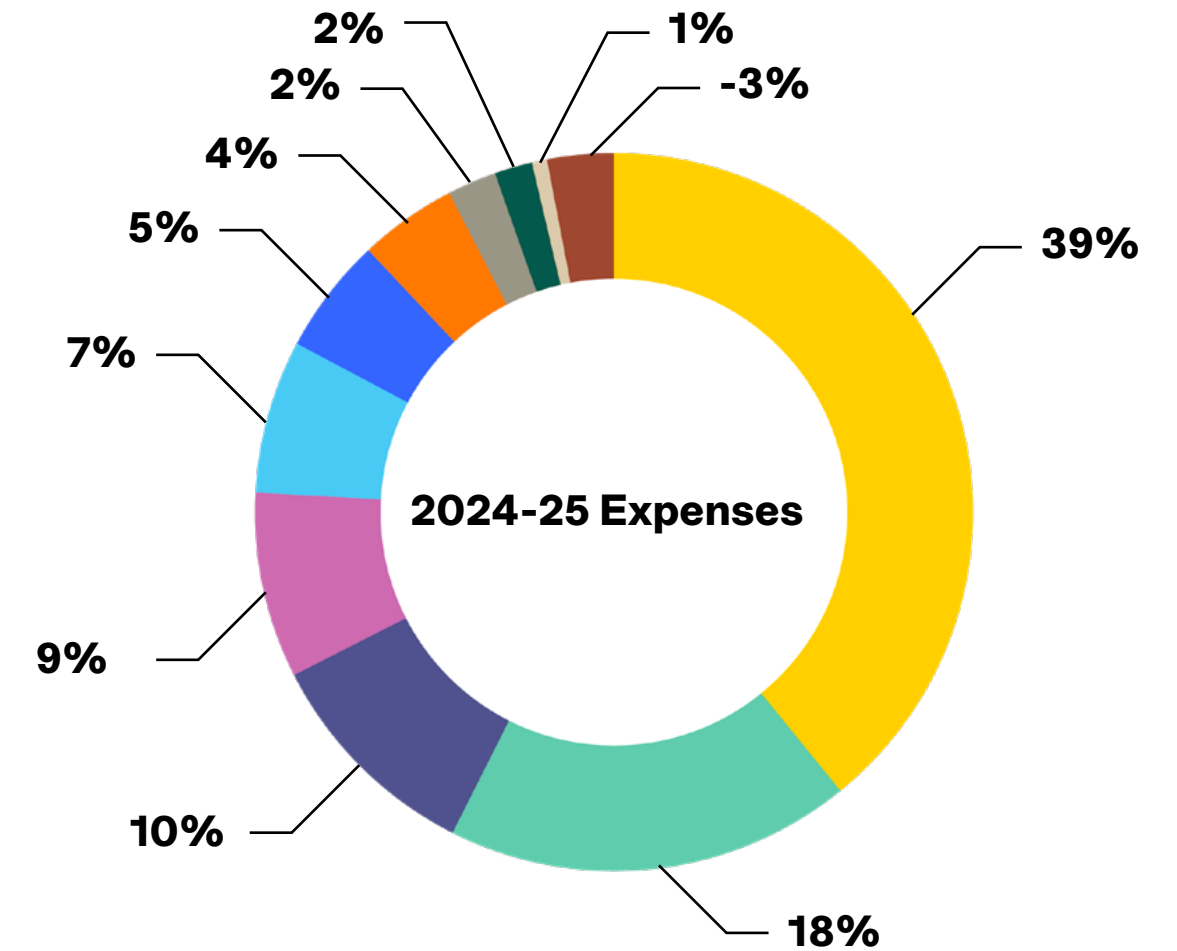
“ Even though we live in a large city, I believe we are all in some way searching for our community that can understand us and where we feel supported by one another. ”

Rita Said  
Bentway Board Member





2024-25 fiscal year running April 1 to March 31.



2024-25 fiscal year running April 1 to March 31.



# our team

## Board

**Daniel Shearer** *(Board Chair)*  
Chief Marketing Officer, Maple

**Drew Sinclair** *(Chair, Capital Projects Committee)*  
Founding Principal of SvN Architects + Planners

**Raja Khanna** *(Chair, Governance & Nominating Committee)*  
Executive Chair & Co-Founder, Dark Slope

**Rita Said** *(Chair, Finance & Audit Committee)*  
District Vice President, Scotiabank

**Ann Bowman**  
Chair, National Gallery of Canada Foundation

**Barbara Macdonald**  
Founder, Barbara Macdonald Interior Design

**Daniel Winberg**  
Chief Operating Officer, Rockport Group

**Gabe Gonda**  
Managing Director, Strategy and Communications, Teneo

**Jane Pepino**  
Counsel, Aird & Berlis LLP

**Pierre Olivier**  
Regional Managing Director, Hatch

## Emeritus members

**Judy Matthews**  
Judy and Wilmot Matthews Foundation

**Ken Greenberg**  
Principal, Greenberg Consultants

**Wil Matthews**  
Judy and Wilmot Matthews Foundation

## Recent Board alumni

Krystal Koo

Mark Keil

Mary Rowe

Munira Ravji





Current staff

David Carey  
Co-Executive Director

Ilana Altman  
Co-Executive Director



Alex Rand  
Manager, Programming

Alice Moores-Rodgerson  
Coordinator, Fundraising and Partnerships

Anna Gallagher-Ross  
Senior Manager, Programming

Benjamin Freedman  
Producer

Cezzane Ilagan  
Coordinator, Planning and Design

Dylan Jackson  
Urban Ranger

Jaime Meier  
Coordinator, HR and Administration

Jeremy Forsyth  
Producer

Jessie Farewell (On parental leave)  
Manager, Fundraising and Partnerships

Josh Harskamp  
Manager, Planning and Design

Kate Wivell (Parental leave coverage)  
Manager, Fundraising and Partnerships

Kris Dearlove  
Urban Ranger

Liana Shaw  
Manager, Marketing and Communications

Megan Kammerer  
Associate, Programming

Michael Clarke  
Manager, Facilities

Renee Castonguay  
Associate, Programming

Robert McKaye  
Senior Manager, Planning and Design

Roger Kao  
Supervisor, Facilities

Stephanie Dudek  
Manager, Production

Tessa Chan  
Controller

Recent staff alumni

Alison Uttley

Jennifer Qu

Jorge Guzman

Katarina Prystay

Sarah Konowal

Simi Ogunsola







# appendix



# additional resources

**Q&A with Research Leads for Rx for Social Connection**  
<https://thebentway.ca/stories/well-being-social-connection-and-public-space/>

**Rx for Social Connection Report**  
[https://thebentway.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Rx-for-Social-Connection\\_by\\_The-Bentway\\_Gehl\\_Dalla-Lana.pdf](https://thebentway.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Rx-for-Social-Connection_by_The-Bentway_Gehl_Dalla-Lana.pdf)

**The Bentway presents *Dominoes* by Station House Opera**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdoeJ9lXqw>

**Behind-the-Scenes of *Dominoes* Q&A**  
<https://thebentway.ca/stories/magic-ingredients-for-dominoes/>

**Q&A with Orit Sarfaty (Choice Properties)**  
<https://thebentway.ca/stories/partners-in-placemaking/>

**Yoga with Adriene at The Bentway**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUYIKrgRS8I>

**Q&A with MPP Chris Glover**  
<https://thebentway.ca/stories/in-the-neighbourhood/>

**Under Gardiner Public Realm Plan**  
[https://undergardinerprp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Under-Gardiner-PRP-Vision-and-Opportunities-Report\\_2024.pdf](https://undergardinerprp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Under-Gardiner-PRP-Vision-and-Opportunities-Report_2024.pdf)

**Q&A with Ryan Gorrie (Principal, Brook McIlroy)**  
<https://thebentway.ca/stories/incorporating-indigenous-design-histories-and-knowledge/>

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action**  
[https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

**UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIP)**  
<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/index.html>

**Q&A with Daniel Winberg (Bentway Board Member)**  
<https://thebentway.ca/stories/introducing-the-gardiner-corridor-alliance/>

**Q&A with Rita Said (Bentway Board Member)**  
<https://thebentway.ca/stories/introducing-our-new-board-treasurer/>

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Jennifer Qu: 9, 10

Jonathan Gazze: 24 (top), 51 (bottom), 56

Kirk Lisaj: 7 (top)

Mila Bright Zlatanovic: 29, 30, 32, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 52 (top), 65, 66, 67, 68

Nic Lehoux: 3, 34, 36, 52, 58

Samuel Engelking: 6, 7 (bottom), 8, 54

Sarah Holman: 19 (bottom), 20 (top)

SUSO Skate Co: 12

Tony Serwatuk: 24 (middle)

Waterfront Toronto: 39, 40



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The Bentway Conservancy

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**the bentway**