

HVRA – Brunswick-College Parkette Design Competition

Judge's Comments

Steven Webber, Land Use Policy Planner

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The corner of Brunswick and College is currently an underutilized and unappealing space. A thoughtful and pragmatic overhaul would make this an attractive and inviting space.

Keeping in mind that I'm a planner, and not a design professional, my assessment focuses on:

- design that is appropriate for the space
- ease of access (particularly for those with mobility challenges)
- relationship with College and Brunswick, permeability of the site
- function as a gathering spot for socializing
- unique elements

My top choice is Brunswick Bend (#4)

The plan very effectively connects with College Street and uses the street life as a form of entertainment. Also, the open space links up with the Brunswick sidewalk adjacent to Kensington Gardens. This is a well thought out layout that is safe and accessible for everyone, including those with mobility challenges. There is plenty of seating for socializing and the curves create an interesting setting. Additionally the relationship between the benches and the pathway produces something akin to a promenade. The greenery is very appropriate and compliments, rather than overwhelms the location. This is a barrier-free setting where I could take my father, who is a resident in Kensington Gardens, without any problem.

My second choice is Green Weaver (#13)

Very functional and addresses the basic requirements. Excellent circulation, well-placed seating and good use of trees and other vegetation. I particularly like the idea of the solar tree, not so much for this specific structure, but because it provides a focal point and conversation piece that fits with the scale of the site. The café and employment centre are unrealistic and would have to be removed from future revisions. (He said later that he would have revised his verdict upwards, if had not mistakenly thought this to not allowed.)

My third choice is Intersections (#16)

The idea of opening up the space has merit. The garden beds are visually welcome and represent an excellent use of the eastern portion of the site. The vegetation addresses the vent issue/grade separation and enhances the bare building wall. I like the flower bed, it's similar to the layout on the High Line in New York City. The well-defined connection with the rest of Brunswick ties the site into the adjacent neighbourhood. This is designed more as walkway as opposed to a parkette. Revisions would have to be made to include seating space.

In fact, I would be very supportive of a proposal based on the Green Weaver scheme, but replacing it the café/centre with the vegetation included in the Intersections alternative.

One element I would like to see included in the Brunswick Bend is some type of art work that would create a focal point in the parkette. The solar tree in Green Weaver, or the pieces included in several other proposals would introduce a unique element and pay homage to local artists.