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Award

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH
TO DESIGNING COMMUNITIES

du TOIT ALLSOPP
HILLIER | du TOIT
ARCHITECTS LIMITED

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ON THE COVER The Mississauga Garden Park and Visual Arts Mississauga building, Mississauga, Ontario — an integrated design of du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited.
Cover and above photo by: KC Armstrong/Bottlerocket Photography.

System J from Global Contract



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du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited

MAKING CITIES GREAT COMMUNITIES

Seeking excellence in all dimensions of their work, the 30-member team at du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited in Toronto, design buildings, landscapes and communities with an approach that is interdisciplinary. The breakdown is that du Toit Allsopp Hillier (DTAH) looks after landscape architecture and urban design, while du Toit Architects looks after the architecture arm.

From model to rendering to reality: Queen's Quay Central Waterfront, Toronto.



The company lists its areas of expertise as urban design; buildings, including academic, residential, recreational and long-term care; landscapes, including urban squares, campus precincts, municipal parks, private gardens, institutional grounds and parks; campus planning, waterfronts, streetscapes and bridges.

"The core of our business is urban design work," says John Hillier. "The urban design work is what links us. We have different disciplines, but it is a collaborative effort. We work together, which is different than a lot of larger firms where things are more departmentalized."



At du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited, all the disciplines are dealt with in an integrated approach that has proven successful.

With seven principals: Roger du Toit, Robert Allsopp, John Hillier, Brian Brownlie, Mark Langridge, Peter F. Smith and Joe Lobko and one associate, Adam Nicklin — the collaboration has proven its value in the number of repeat customers, the many national and international awards received and their success in design competitions. Each partner brings to the table his own perspective and background knowledge.

"This is a true studio environment," says Brian Brownlie. "Everyone feeds off each other. Partners are very involved in projects and it is very collaborative. There is a high ratio of partners to staff here and the partners participate in the work as well as everyone else. We are actually fairly conservative in how we promote ourselves and tend to let our work talk for us."

The company has been chosen for national and regional awards by the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects for 2007, including two National Merits for work on the Toronto Central Waterfront and Quay to the City projects. The company is also the recipient of honourable mention from the Canadian Institute of Planners for a site capacity and long-term development plan for the parliamentary and judicial precincts in Ottawa.

The Toronto Central Waterfront and Quay to the City projects are being done in joint venture with West 8 of Rotterdam. Their winning entry in the Toronto Central Waterfront Design Competition proposes an ecologically productive "green foot" to the city, in the spirit of the archetypal Canadian shoreline of trees, a dock and a mirrored lake, in the form of three key layering elements. The first layer is the primary waterfront, a 59-foot-wide, tree-lined, public promenade and boardwalk along the water's edge, with timber footbridges across the slips. The second layer is the floating waterfront, with pontoon piers extending from the water's edge promenade, and a large boardwalk island in the shape of a maple leaf. This also contains a water-lily wetland designed to treat storm water. The third layer is Queen's Quay Boulevard and the slip ends in a



Clockwise: University of Oshawa, Oshawa; Rideau pedestrian bridge, Ottawa; L'arche Dayspring Chapel, Toronto; the du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited team.



continuous tree-lined pedestrian mall and an extension to an existing recreational trail beside a storm-water filtration gallery. Deeper down, an interceptor pipe receives the downtown core's combined sewer flows and transmits it to a converted silo building for treatment. At the slip end, public spaces and undulating wooden decks are cantilevered over the water.

Quay to the City was an experiment in reclaiming public space by West 8 and DTAH and the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation. For 10 days in August 2006, the two east-bound lanes of Queens Quay were closed and replaced with two kilometres of lawn, 12,000 red geraniums and an archway composed of 600 bicycles. Quay to the City was created to allow the public to imagine the proposed transformation of Queens Quay Boulevard, which forms a major piece of the Toronto waterfront proposal.

"Competitions are great," says Nicklin. "They are taxing financially and physically, but they really raise the discussion around design and bring a new energy into the studio. I think the waterfront competition has been good for Toronto and it has put design at the forefront of people's minds."

The principals of du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited do not take anything for granted, even though they are appreciative of the awards and accolades received for the firm's work.

"You have to keep surprising people with what you do," says du Toit, who is currently involved in a university campus planning project in Kuwait as part of a large Canadian-led consortium. "The things that would get awards five years ago wouldn't necessarily win today as the bar keeps getting raised higher and higher."

Roger du Toit started the company in 1975 and says it began as an offshoot of the company, John Andrews International.

"John Andrews was one of the top 10 architects in the world," says du Toit. "He went back to Australia to work on some high-profile jobs and I stayed here. John Hillier joined the company in 1977. Bob Allsopp joined in 1979. In 2000, Brian Brownlie, Mark Langridge and Peter Smith joined as partners. In 2006, we had

two significant changes with Adam Nicklin joining as an associate and we merged with Joe Lobko Architects. We had done a number of projects with Joe and saw similarities in his thinking that matched ours."

This collaboration with Lobko is evident in the Evergreen at the Brickworks project in Toronto, where an industrial facility, largely abandoned since 1989, is to be transformed into a sustainable village that ties together nature, culture and community. Through adaptive re-use of the heritage site by replanting of native species, green building design and ongoing education, discovery and play, the village will demonstrate how nature can be invited back into the city. New uses for the ensemble of industrial heritage buildings will include a native plant nursery, discovery centre, restaurant and demonstration gardens. Pathway connections will invite visitors to move freely between village elements, and the reclamation of an existing rail bridge to the east will enable pedestrians and cyclists to connect directly to the city.

"Making cities great communities is our intent," says du Toit. "We have also done a lot of work in Ottawa and feel quite proud of the effect we have had on the nation's capital."

In 1985, du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited created the long-range development plan for the parliament, the precinct and the Supreme Court. The plan covers Parliament Hill, the Judicial Precinct centred on the Supreme Court, the library and Archives Canada and the area south along Wellington Street. The central thrust of the plan is to show how existing facilities can be expanded and upgraded without compromising the visual integrity of the precinct. The study defines the environmental capacity of the site in order to determine the maximum amount of additional building and ancillary facilities that would be consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the unique qualities of the precinct. Development that is consistent with the further enhancement of national symbols is planned above ground, while other potentially disruptive features are sited below grade and integrated with a new circulation concourse system. As a true example of the services the firm can provide, du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited provided landscape architecture, urban design, architectural and master-planning services to the development plan.

With the great deal of activity that is always underway at du Toit Allsopp Hillier | du Toit Architects Limited, communication is key and everyone is encouraged to provide input and ideas. Monday mornings at the 50 Park Road office will see staff gathered for the weekly meeting in the boardroom where everyone is updated on the progress of projects. Partners also hold regular meetings to share information and ideas.

It is also a firm that welcomes input from students who do work placements with the firm. "We always have at least one student here," says Nicklin. "We not

only teach the students, but we learn from them, too."

The integrated company has also worked on a high-profile project in Mississauga, Ontario, that included the creation of a new Visual Arts Mississauga facility within Mississauga Garden Park, a multi-phased garden and park development that is approximately 150 acres and is situated adjacent to the Credit River in the centre of Mississauga. The project won the firm the Award of Merit for Architecture in the 2006 Mississauga Urban Design Awards. The Visual Arts building contains five flexible studios, administrative support spaces and a public comfort station designed to accommodate park visitors. A number of LEED initiatives were incorporated into the building including a large green roof and extensive use of natural daylight.

The company's work on the Mississauga Garden Park project also included the renovation of existing heritage buildings, an extensive network of trails, parking, storm-water management and a diverse range of gardens.

The partners are excited about working in cities such as Toronto, Mississauga and Ottawa. "We are all interested in making great cities," says Nicklin. "We have the good fortune to work on projects that matter."

du Toit says he is pleased with the progress of the company over the past 30 years. "I feel very fortunate that we have work that we enjoy doing for its own sake, and I feel fortunate in the partners and staff that I work with." ■

