

Old Bricks, Green Fix

Aldrich Pears and Associates

A Toronto brick factory finds new life as a centre for urban renewal and sustainable design.

From 1889 to 1984 the Don Valley Brick Works was one of Canada's pre-eminent brickyards. At its peak the Brick Works produced more than 43 million bricks a year, and was largely responsible for providing the material that gave Toronto its distinctive brick character after the Great Fire of 1904 and through the first half of the 20th Century.

Today the Brick Works is a 40-acre site that includes a 12-acre 'industrial pad' containing 16 abandoned masonry and steel buildings as well as the Weston Quarry Gardens, created in 1996 by Toronto Parks Forestry

and Recreation and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

The Quarry Garden has been transformed into a wonderful if somewhat hidden, landscaped oasis primarily accessed via the industrial pad that serves as the public face for the site as a whole.

Evergreen, a national not-for-profit organization with a mandate to enhance our understanding of the importance of nature in our growing cities, has been selected by the City of Toronto and the Conservation Authority



as the organization to lead the redevelopment of this unique site.

In bringing the site to life, Evergreen Brick Works will utilize green design using the site's physical diversity to demonstrate a wide range of sustainable practices, methods and technologies. These include:

- » Demonstration gardens showcasing the latest innovations in school ground greening, restoration of public lands and pesticide-free home landscaping;
- » Responsible water management, including rainwater capture for garden irrigation, washrooms, ice rinks and construction of a storm-water management pond;
- » Environmental best practices showcasing the newest technologies from green roofs and solar panels to living walls and geothermal heating;
- » A Ravine Centre that encourages and enables visitors to find, explore and steward the 26,000 acres of ravine that make Toronto unique;
- » Interactive displays and paths that help visitors learn about geology, industrial heritage, ecology and urbanization;
- » A food experience that shows local foods as a positive alternative to unsustainable fast food and "factory farms," with gardening and cooking programs designed to both entertain and educate;
- » One-of-a-kind cultural spaces for special events, theatre performances, art exhibitions, film, conferences, music, weddings, and more; and



Above: The redevelopment connects the site with the Don Valley.

Opposite: The only new building surrounding landscape and built history.

- » Four seasons of outdoor fun, including four kilometres of walking trails, wetlands and wildflower meadows. In winter, garden paths will become skating trails.

In order to develop such a dynamic site, Evergreen selected a large, multi-disciplinary design team including architects, landscape architects, interpretive designers, engineers, ecologists and artists, led by Joe Lobko of du Toit Architects Ltd./du Toit Allsopp Hillier (reference list of team members below).

"This design for Evergreen Brick Works reflects the work of a team whose diversity of perspectives and experience parallels that of the place itself," says Lobko. "This is a challenging project on a number of levels starting with its rich industrial history and the many challenges and opportunities of adaptive re-use, the need to restore the landscape within the industrial pad as part of an ongoing re-greening of the Don Valley, the need to address the site's location within a flood plain, as well as the tremendous ambition of

the Evergreen program and its desire to help us look forward towards a more sustainable future."

The design has evolved from an understanding of the site that includes:

- » The inherent potential implied in the confluence of Evergreen's mandate to bring nature back into our cities and its new national home in the heart of Toronto's Don Valley, one of the city's most significant natural features;
- » An understanding of the site as a village, and all that this suggests with respect to diversity of form, use and space;
- » An understanding of the 16-building industrial pad as a threshold between the primary space of the Don Valley and the eddy-like sanctuary of the quarry garden beyond and the need to ensure that this transition become as porous as possible with respect to the development of landscape and the movements of visitors to the site; and

Core Goals:

The Future of Cities - Evergreen Brick Works' programming will challenge its visitors to examine how the smallest and largest decisions influence the environment. It will foster ideas, discussions and solutions, integrating sustainability into every facet of urban life.

Social Enterprise - From programs specifically geared to at-risk youth to the commitment to a self-sustaining operating plan, Evergreen Brick Works will be an incubator for new ideas, creating economic, social and environmental benefits and returns.

Heritage Preservation - Evergreen Brick Works will honour and build on the site's deep archaeological, industrial and natural significance by adaptively re-using existing heritage buildings and by animating the historical treasures it contains.

Connecting Communities - As a gathering place for individuals and families to learn about the ravine ecosystem, local foods, native-plant gardening, green design and much more, Evergreen Brick Works will enable people to come together to bring nature back to our cities.

» An approach to adaptive re-use and new building design which emphasizes a light touch and a loose fit, with the aim of ensuring the adaptability of the site to changing ideas of program and occupation for many years to come.

The recently-announced design scheme proposes the adaptive/reuse of all 16 buildings currently on site, the development of a range of public spaces, and the insertion of a new "incubator" building within the base of an historic storage facility to house Evergreen's new home as well as the offices of community organizations, on-site partners and like-minded social organizations. This new building, designed by Diamond and Schmitt Architects, is intended to become LEED-Platinum certified and demonstrate how leading-edge sustainable design strategies can be incorporated into a "living" building that can accommodate an ever changing expression to reflect the goals of Evergreen and the unique architectural and ecological heritage of the site.

By including Vancouver-based interpretive planners AldrichPears Associates as part of the design team, Evergreen ensures that the restoration of these 16 heritage buildings will capitalize on this unique opportunity to educate people on the important role nature plays in providing a healthy and enjoyable life in urban environments.

If Bricks Could Talk

Projects involving adaptive reuse and sustainable building design provide a unique opportunity to educate the public on responsible building practices while inspiring behavioral change.

Through interpretation, the adaptive reuse of the Brick Works site will reveal the meaning and relationships of Toronto's natural and

cultural heritage. Buildings on the site retrofitted with green features provide additional interpretive opportunities. Through interactive displays, visitors learn more about the green roofs, solar panels, living walls, geothermal heating and naturalized landscape of the Brick Works site.

AldrichPears Associates (APA), specializing in planning and design for visitor centres, museums, science centers and other cultural attractions, worked with Evergreen and other members of the design team to develop an interpretive plan for the site. The plan illustrates how the themes of nature, sustainable design, culture and history are interpreted for visitors. The basis of the plan evolved from an APA-facilitated visioning workshop involving Evergreen, its partners and the project's stakeholders.

Isaac Marshall, a principal at APA, explains why an emphasis on community consultation and partnership development was critical for a successful, effective plan: "The potential constituency is huge. This project is emotionally charged for many people. Neighbours, former Don Valley Brick Works (DVBW) employees, Evergreen staff, potential partners and collaborators, artists, and marginalized communities all have a vested interest in how it turns out. The key way to make sure all perspectives are represented is to invite everyone to participate in the design process. When we hear directly from the constituents what their needs are we can provide complementary experiences that contribute to their community."

As far as interpretive planning goes, the site offers many learning opportunities. "Every element of the site is a story waiting to be revealed," says Marshall. "[This] history can help us understand who we are and where we're going."

The trails lead visitors past the layers of natural resources that provided the raw materials for

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PROJECT TEAM

Architecture

du Toit Architects	Team Lead
Diamond and Schmitt Architects	Building 12
E.R.A. Architects	Heritage Architects

Landscape Architecture

du Toit Allsopp Hillier
Claude Cormier Architectes Paysagistes

Public Art/Design Assistance

Ferruccio Sardella	Visual Artist
David Dennis Design	Lighting

Engineering, Sustainability, Technical Assistance

Halsall Associates	Structure, Sustainability
Stantec Consulting	Mechanical/Electrical
Totten Sims Hubicki Associates	Civil
CH2MHill Canada	Environmental
The MMM Group	Flood Modelling
BA Group	Transportation
Curran McCabe Ravindran Ross	Costing
Leber Rubes	Life Safety
Dougan & Associates	Ecology
J.S. Coulter Associates	Acoustics
Archaeological Services	Archaeology

Public Interface

Aldrich Pears Associates	Interpretive Planning
A+A Adams and Associates	Signage

Construction Management

Eastern Construction

Evergreen Brick Works is a \$55 million project, including a \$35 million construction budget. The project's design goals will be implemented through a long term phasing plan, with phase one opening in the Fall of 2009.



Evergreen Gardens, open to the sky beneath the historic steel trusses of Building 15, is intended as a flexible outdoor space where water play and seasonal planting in warmer months is mixed with ice skating and hot chocolate in winter.

the bricks that built the city. At the same time, these layers reveal the geological history of the region. In addition, “[the] buildings and equipment that have been off-limits to the public for so long are brimming with industrial and cultural significance,” says Marshall. “For example, the DVBW was primarily staffed by new immigrants to Canada. What a unique opportunity to reflect on their challenges and draw parallels to contemporary immigrant experiences?”

For Evergreen, the Brick Works site is an opportunity to show how “nature and culture influence the design of our cities, and how human actions in turn are influencing the environment and our urban fabric”.

While building a relationship between visitors and the site’s historical, cultural and natural riches, Evergreen will also draw attention to their own work in the community – one which “engages people in creating and sustaining healthy, dynamic outdoor spaces”. To facilitate all these goals, APA developed

themes that will guide the stories and the interpretive exhibits’ physical design: When we cultivate enduring relationships with nature we can shape sustainable cities; In Toronto, brick making equaled city making; Our limited resources make us more creative; and Nature constantly shapes and reshapes communities.

Ultimately, the Evergreen Brick Works site aims to inspire visitors to apply the lessons learned about sustainable urban living to their own lives. “If you want to inspire people to take action in their communities, notes Marshall “...you have to provide them with information and experiences that allow them to reflect on the relevance of the subject to their own lives. Once they realize how they might be affected then they will act.”

The brick-making factory that once helped build Toronto is well on its way to contributing to a conceptual rebuild of the city’s sustainable future.