

# FORMA

THE MAGAZINE

LET'S SHAPE THE FUTURE TOGETHER!

VOL. 08 — August 30, 2026

## IN THIS ISSUE

Mass Timber Construction  
Cut Building Times by 20%

page 18

Biidaasige Park Toronto

page 34

ENGINEERING

INTERIOR DESIGN

ARCHITECTURE

INNOVATION

EDUCATION

SUSTAINABILITY



## ***A Note from the Founder: Building in Harmony***

*When we started FORMA, our goal was simple and bold: to create a publication that explores where architecture, interior design, engineering, innovation, education, and sustainability meet. We wanted to go deeper than appearances and look at how design affects people, builds stronger communities, and cares for the planet. Now, as we share our August 30, 2026 issue, that mission feels more important and focused than ever.*

*In our cities and natural spaces, architecture is changing significantly. Instead of building without considering the local area, more people choose careful, climate-friendly approaches. Architects, engineers, and builders pay attention to the land before starting projects. This issue highlights their thoughtful choices, creativity, and dedication to the future.*

*In this issue, we feature the opening of ten new acres at Biidaasige Park on Toronto's Lake Ontario shoreline. With guidance from landscape architects and Indigenous knowledge, this project turns old industrial land into a strong, welcoming place filled with wildflower meadows, paddling spots, and public art. It shows what can happen when flood protection, restoring nature, and honouring culture all work together.*

*We also look at how new engineering and building materials are changing our cities. Our story on Mass Timber Construction shows how using prefabricated wood panels can make building up to 20 percent faster and reduce carbon emissions in Canadian cities. At 1120 Ossington in Toronto, this technology builds twenty-five supportive housing units quickly, accurately, and with care for the people who live there. Meanwhile, small projects like The Clinton Laneway Suite show how compact homes can offer full, lively family living without expanding cities.*

*We explore homes that respect quiet places and local nature. Magdalen House stands on timber piles above delicate island dunes. Pine Island Cottage follows the shape of the Georgian Bay bedrock, and Long Lake Cottage is completely off-grid, hidden in the Muskoka forest. These projects show that real sustainability means building lasting homes with a gentle impact on the land. Whether it's the peaceful A-frame of the Wood Retreat or the cozy feel of The Huntsville Lake House, design helps us slow down and reconnect.*

*Tactical urbanism projects like Park(ing) Day Toronto 2026 show that even one parking space can become a green public spot, even if only for a short time.*

*Creating a better future takes creativity, teamwork, and care. Thank you for reading and being part of this conversation. Let us work together to shape what comes next!*

***Let's keep building, together.***

*Giuseppe Gutta  
Founder, Forma The Magazine*

# Table of CONTENTS

ISSUE 08 – AUGUST 30, 2026

Page **04**  
**Magdalen House**  
A Modern Island Architecture

Page **10**  
**The Clinton Laneway Suite**  
A Small Footprint, Fully Lived In



Page **13**  
**Competitions**  
by Buildner

Page **14**  
**1120 Ossington, Toronto**  
Rewriting the Rules of Home

Page **18**  
**Mass Timber Construction**  
Cut Building Times by 20%

Page **20**  
**Wood Retreat**  
An A-Frame Sanctuary



Page **24**  
**The Huntsville Lake House**  
A Muskoka Retreat

Page **28**  
**Pine Island Cottage**  
An Island Home That Listens Before It Speaks



Page **32**  
**Driftwood Oak**  
by Transformer Table

Page **33**  
**Competitions**  
by Terraviva

Page **34**  
**Blidaasige Park**  
Ten new acres of sunlight unfurl along Lake Ontario



Page **40**  
**Park(ing) Day Toronto 2026**  
September 18–20, 2026

Page **42**  
**Long Lake Cottage**  
A Muskoka Retreat Grown From the Bedrock



On Havre-Aubert Island, where the Atlantic meets the land and the dunes change a little each year, a small house stands quietly. It does not try to outshine the white sand, salt-bleached grasses, or the ever-changing horizon. Instead, Magdalen House fits into this fragile part of the Magdalen Islands, drawing on local knowledge to answer a common question:

**how do you build a place worth protecting without harming what makes it special?**

Before making any plans, the architects spent time simply observing. Havre-Aubert Island is made up of layers: the ocean, the beach, shifting protected dunes, a wind-shaped bluff, and finally the plateau where people have always settled, safely away from the shore.

Each layer has its own fragile ecology that can be easily harmed. That's why the house sits only where the ground is strong enough, on the most stable part of the plateau, set well back from every important line, even more than the view.



# Magdalen House

## A Modern Island Architecture



Design: Atelier L'Abri  
Photography: Alex Lesage

## A HOUSE THAT BARELY TOUCHES THE GROUND

Rather than digging into the dune for a foundation, part of the house and its large terrace are lifted above the ground on timber piles. Wood takes the place of concrete, and careful planning replaces heavy digging.

The benefits may be quiet, but they are real. Less soil is disturbed, less vegetation is lost, and the ground stays mostly untouched. Foxes still cross the grass at dusk, and birds still nest along the bluff, undisturbed by their new neighbour above.



The house's shape is borrowed from tradition, not newly invented. It follows the Magdalen house style, which islanders perfected in the late nineteenth century as their answer to the Acadian house. It has a simple gable roof, a compact one-and-a-half-storey frame, and uses materials strong enough to handle wind and salt. None of this was designed to be trendy. It was built to last, showing a practical example of what we now call climate-resilient architecture, made long before the term existed.



Magdalen House keeps the traditional shape but shows it in a quieter, simpler way. When you drive along the island's coastal roads, the shape looks familiar. If you look closer, you'll notice every detail has been softened, simplified, and updated for today. It is more a continuation than a replica, showing that a building tradition can keep evolving without losing the qualities that made it work from the start.

## TRADITION TRANSLATED



Cedar shingles cover the roof and walls, left untreated so the wind and salt can naturally turn the wood a soft, silver-grey. This helps the house blend quietly into the landscape, while giving it a weathered character that feels connected to the coast.

The terrace and its supporting piles are made from eastern hemlock, chosen for its strength in a coastal climate. Stainless-steel mesh guardrails withstand salt air and require little maintenance. Inside, pine floors and panelling meet North American stone underfoot.

Almost nothing here was added just for looks. The lighting comes from a Quebec maker, the millwork from a craftsman on nearby Cap-aux-Meules Island, and every piece of art and ceramic on display was handmade in the Magdalen Islands.

## A PLAN BUILT AROUND STILLNESS

Inside, the house is built around a single efficient core. The kitchen, utility spaces, bathroom, and stairs to the mezzanine are grouped together, leaving the rest of the space open. The plan wastes almost no space.

The living spaces face west, looking out to the sunset and the sea. The bedrooms face east to catch the morning light. A double-height living room and large windows bring the dunes and horizon inside, making the modest space feel open without making it bigger.



## DESIGNING WITHIN ISLAND LIMITS

Nothing arrives on Havre-Aubert Island easily. Every board, worker, and fixture has to be brought over. This reality shaped as many decisions as any design idea.

Working closely with local contractors and craftspeople turned that challenge into an advantage. The result is a house truly suited to island life, not just placed on it. Limits, handled carefully, improved the design instead of weakening it.

Magdalen House was never meant to lock the island's style in the past. It treats tradition as something alive, able to adapt, accept new ideas, and keep its character over time.



On this fragile coastline, the house quietly shows that real sustainability is not just about materials or energy use. It is also about whether a home can be cared for, fully lived in, and eventually passed on.



Life here follows the island's pace. Soft morning light enters through the east windows, and evenings end with golden light over the dunes. There are no dramatic moments, only the quiet comfort of a house that feels right.



**This is the real legacy of Magdalen House: it proves that the most sustainable home is one you care about enough to pass on.**





## The Clinton Laneway Suite

### A Small Footprint, Fully Lived In

Design: Lanescape  
 Exterior Photography: Gabe W. Media  
 Interior Photography: Ron Adriano

Backyards are becoming some of the most interesting places to build in Canadian cities. Laneway suites, compact homes set behind the main house facing the daily activity of the lane, raise a simple question: how much life can fit into a small space? On a modest urban lot, the Clinton Laneway Suite answers this with quiet confidence.

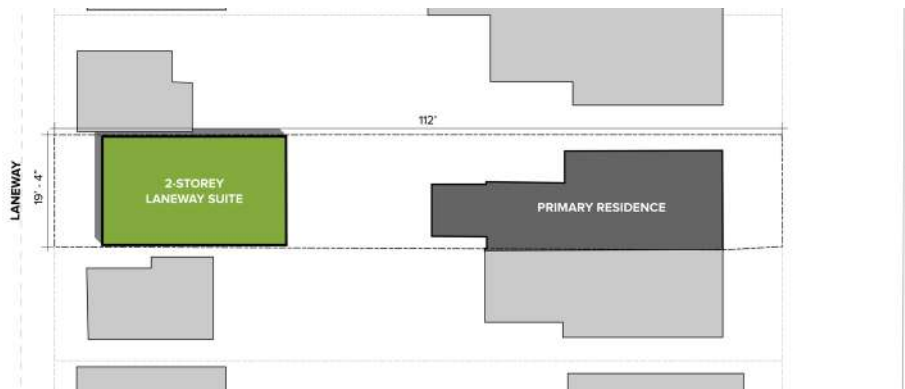
This two-storey suite was built for a couple raising a child. It is a home designed for real life, not just show. Every square foot is used well. Storage fits under the stairs, light comes in from above, and every detail is considered. The result feels much bigger than its size suggests.

## A House Sized for Real Life



Downstairs, the suite brings everyone together in one open room. The living, kitchen, and dining areas combine into a single open-concept space. White oak millwork adds warmth to the walls, contrasting with the clean white countertops. Matte black hardware and plumbing fixtures add a subtle, grounded touch to the design. The kitchen works just as well for quick weeknight dinners as for slow, relaxed mornings.

Practicality is as important as design here. A storage room off the main living area opens to both the laneway suite and the main house. This small but thoughtful feature lets two households share what they need without doubling up. A covered canopy protects bikes and gear at the entry, and a compact mechanical room and closet keep less attractive essentials out of sight.



Upstairs, the suite changes from shared spaces to private ones. The second floor has two bedrooms, a full bathroom, and a compact main suite with its own ensuite. There is also a flexible 85-square-foot room that can serve as a home office or an extra bedroom as the family's needs change. A stacked washer and dryer are tucked into the hallway, using the space without the need for a separate laundry room.



## A Private World Upstairs

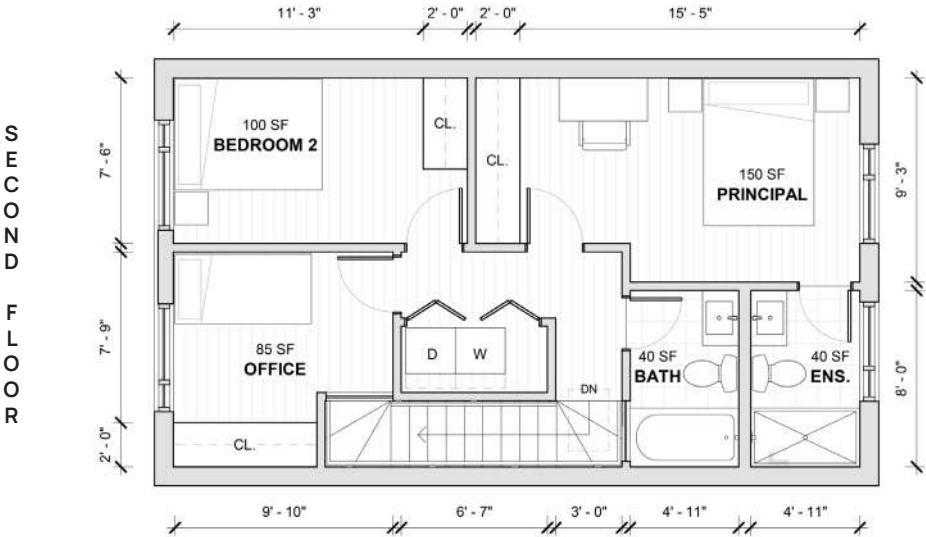
An upper floor behind a house can often feel dark and hidden, but here it feels bright and open. Skylights are carefully placed to bring daylight down the stairwell, reaching corners that might otherwise be in shadow.

A sculptural white oak handrail, supported by slim black steel brackets, catches the light as it curves through the home. This turns a simple staircase into one of the suite's special design features.



From the laneway, the suite has a calm, modern look. Dark fibre cement siding covers the upper part of the home in charcoal, giving it a strong presence against the sky. Below, warm cedar makes the entry more inviting, with black-framed windows and a slim canopy that protects the front door from the weather.

This is where the suite shows personality. The front door is painted a bold, iconic green that stands out against the dark siding and cedar boards. This choice nods to the colourful doors found throughout the neighbourhood. It's a modern take on a traditional detail, showing that a new home can still fit in with the street's character.



## Building Small, Building Smart

The Clinton Laneway Suite was completed for just over \$500,000 before HST, including everything from the foundation and services to the final millwork, finishes, and construction management. It shows what is possible on a modest urban lot. Nothing feels too much, and nothing feels left out. Every choice, from the shared storage to the skylit stairwell, has a clear purpose.

As more cities allow backyard housing like this, the Clinton Laneway Suite quietly makes the case for building small, building smart, and building for the people who will actually live there. It is not just a floor plan meant to impress on paper, but a home designed for real, everyday living.

Architecture Competition

# RE:FORM

New Life for Old Spaces

EDITION #3

Registration Deadline: September 10, 2026

[architecturecompetitions.com/reform3](http://architecturecompetitions.com/reform3)



For decades, the default solution to spatial challenges has been to build from scratch. What if the most sustainable, innovative solutions aren't found in new construction, but in reimagining what already exists?



**Prize Fund**  
€ 10,000



**Registration Deadline**  
10 September 2026

Architecture Competition

# PAVILION ATLAS

2026

Design a story of your country!

Registration deadline: September 16, 2026

[pavilionatlas.com](http://pavilionatlas.com)



A country is far more than a set of borders or a flag—it is a collection of whispers, rituals, conflicts, and aspirations. Pavilion Atlas 2026 is a global call to architects and thinkers to strip away the national clichés and replace them with spatial narratives. How do you build the “feeling” of a culture?



**Prize Fund**  
€ 20,000



**Registration Deadline**  
16 September 2026

ARCHITECTURE COMPETITION

# UNDER BRIDGE #2

20TH BUILDNER AFFORDABLE HOUSING CHALLENGE

Registration Deadline: September 17, 2026

[architecturecompetitions.com/underbridge2](http://architecturecompetitions.com/underbridge2)



As cities rapidly expand to accommodate booming populations, urban planners and architects are locked in a relentless pursuit of space. We build higher into the sky and stretch further into the suburbs, continually redefining our vertical and horizontal limits.



**Prize Fund**  
€ 8,000



**Registration Deadline**  
17 September 2026

BN Er

# UNBUILT AWARD

2026



This competition is a sanctuary for the “what if”—a global stage dedicated to the boldest ideas that remain, for now, off the grid and on the boards. We celebrate the architectural alchemy that occurs when creativity is freed from the practicalities of the construction site, allowing for pure, visionary exploration.



**Prize Fund**  
€ 100,000



**Registration Deadline**  
23 September 2026

Kingspan
ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

# MICROHOME

2026

PRIZE FUND  
100,000 €

Registration ends: September 30, 2026

[microhome.info](http://microhome.info)



Microhome invites you to design a complete living experience inside a 25-square-metre footprint. Open to all, the contest values intentional design, material innovation, and circularity. You must create an efficient, warm, and humble space set in any urban or wild landscape chosen.



**Prize Fund**  
€ 100,000



**Registration Deadline**  
30 September 2026

## Looking for a design challenge?

The clock is ticking! Every month, we round up exciting BUILDNER COMPETITIONS with approaching deadlines.

**What are you waiting for?**

Grab your sketchbook and register before time runs out!

Think you've seen it all?  
Scan to unlock the full lineup.



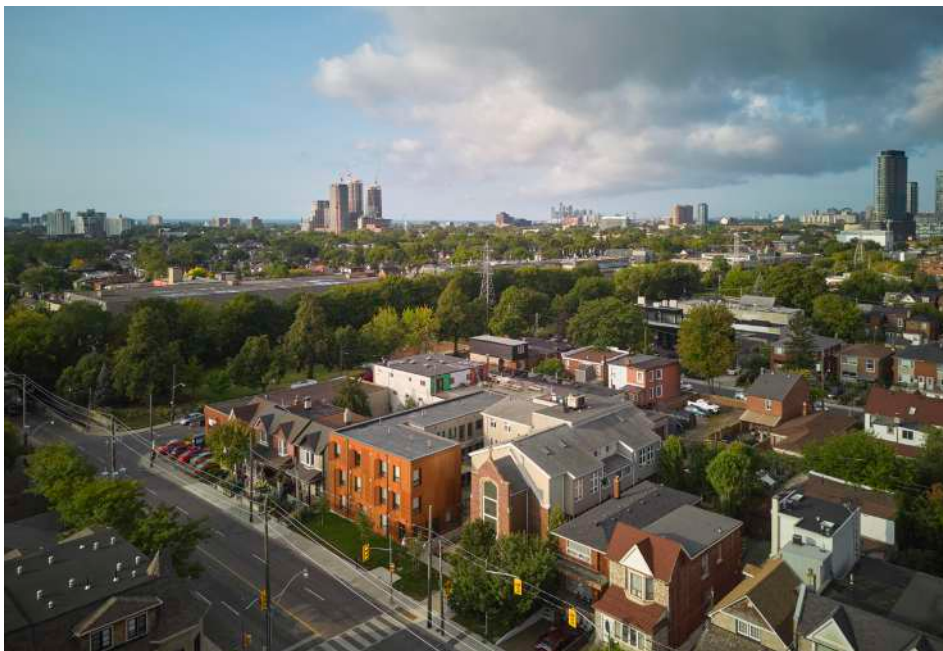


1120 Ossington, Toronto  
Rewriting the Rules of Home

Design: mcCallumSather  
Photography: Liron Weissman & Riley Snelling

On a narrow piece of land in Toronto's west end, twenty-five people are moving into homes of their own. 1120 Ossington stands three storeys tall, its warm terracotta front next to a former church that has supported the community for years. This small building makes a big statement: a home built quickly, using timber and precise planning, can still feel like it was made with care.

Every home begins somewhere, and this one began with a leftover piece of land. 1120 Ossington sits on a narrow strip next to a church that had already been turned into supportive housing. Instead of changing the block or asking the neighbourhood for more than it could offer, the project filled an empty space. Twenty-five new homes were added without new service lines, expanding the building's footprint, or disrupting a street that was already settled. In a city where land is scarce, and need is great, choosing to be careful with space is a design decision in itself.



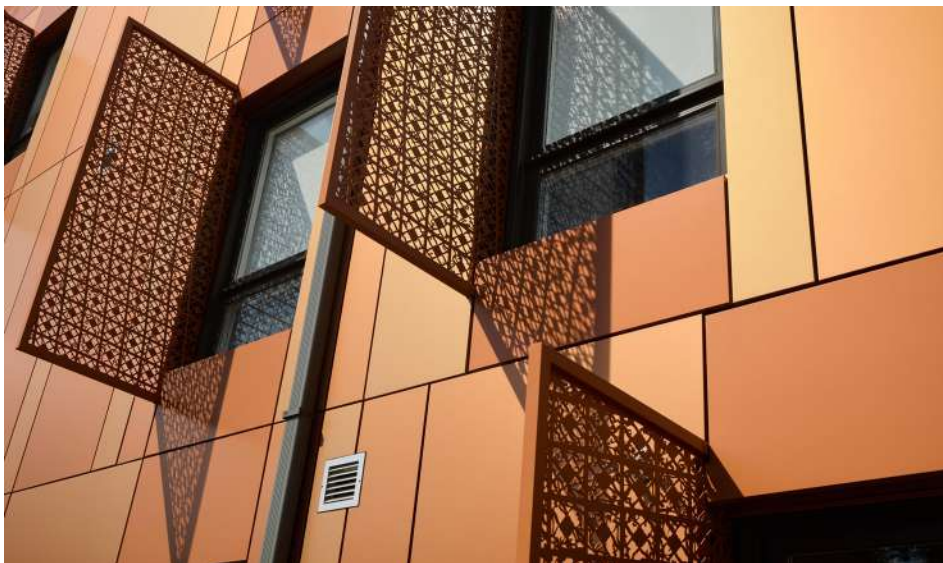
## Picking Up Mid-Sentence

When the architecture firm McCallumSather joined the project, the most difficult discussions were already finished. The city had approved the plans, and the building's shape and street appearance were largely decided. What was left was the more challenging behind-the-scenes work: turning an approved idea into a real building on a narrow lot within a short timeline and without disrupting the surrounding block. This involved creating technical drawings, coordinating with consultants, and using a construction method still uncommon in supportive housing: prefabricated mass timber, built off-site and then assembled on Ossington Avenue like putting together a finished puzzle.



## Raised in Only Seventeen Days

Before any panels arrived at the site, the real work had already started in a fabrication facility, where computer-guided saws cut each piece to the exact size needed. Element5 created the building's frame and outer walls from three-ply cross-laminated timber, using wood from Ontario forests. Each panel was made to precise measurements, ready to be set upright and secured in place. The frame and outer walls were built in just seventeen days. On such a narrow lot in an established neighbourhood, this speed was not just impressive—it was necessary to avoid major disruption. The construction sequence was carefully planned, with the back of the building going up first to make space for the crane, then moving to the front.



On a project like this, precision is more than just an engineering term. It means keeping promises down to the smallest measurements. Partway through construction, one interior wall shifted about three inches, just enough to give a kitchenette the clearance needed to meet accessibility requirements. It was a small change, easy to miss on the drawings. But it shows something important about even the most technical prefabricated buildings: the difference between a house and a home often comes down to a few inches, and someone needs to care enough to find them.



## Quiet Efficiency, Lasting Comfort

Good design continues after move-in day, and so did the planning for 1120 Ossington. The building was designed to go beyond the standards of the federal Rapid Housing Initiative. It surrounds residents with a high-performance exterior and a Passive House-rated foundation slab, both made to keep energy use and utility bills as low as possible. Early models show the building will use about 40 percent less energy than Canada's national code requires. A building automation system will monitor performance after residents move in, making sure the savings are real. For people who cannot afford surprise bills, this quiet efficiency is a real gift.

Each of the twenty-five units at 1120 Ossington is self-contained, with its own kitchenette and private bathroom. These everyday features add up to something bigger: independence. Shared spaces in the building are used for community programs and resident support. This everyday support helps turn the building into a home, not just an address. The building strikes a careful balance. It is private enough to feel like your own space, but connected enough that support is always close by.



Outside, metal screens designed by artist Leo Krukowski soften the building's look. The patterns are inspired by Indigenous and local plant life that once grew on this land. They read less like decoration and more like a signature, proof that a technical, fast-tracked building can still carry a sense of place and look like it belongs exactly where it stands.

1120 Ossington is not the answer to Toronto's housing crisis. With just twenty-five homes, it is only a small step given the city's huge need, and no one claims otherwise. What it does show is that using timber, prefabrication, and careful attention to detail can help build quickly while still focusing on the people who need homes. Built one panel, one inch, and one home at a time, it quietly proves that speed and care can work together.





# Mass Timber Construction

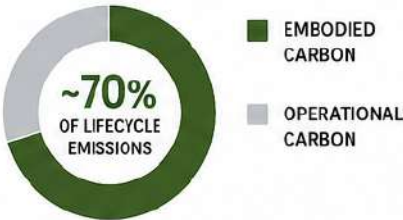
## Cut Building Times by 20%

At Surrey Memorial Hospital in British Columbia, a critical-care tower stands out for its timber-and-glass design. The entrance is covered by a canopy made of glulam beams. Ten years ago, most engineers would not have chosen this material for a hospital.

Now, this is just how buildings are built in Canada.

### EMBODIED CARBON MATTERS MOST

By 2050 in Canadian cities with clean electricity grids



Wood stores the carbon a tree absorbed, locking it away for the life of the building.

For a long time, the main challenge for mass timber was not engineering, but regulation. For many years, national and provincial codes labelled wood as combustible. This rule limited most buildings to six storeys, regardless of how well the material performed in fires or earthquakes. Things changed in 2020 when the National Building Code of Canada introduced a new category for encapsulated mass timber. The height limit increased to twelve storeys, and provinces like Ontario have since raised it to 18. There was already an example. Brock Commons Tallwood House, an 18-storey timber tower at the University of British Columbia, completed in 2017, was once seen as a unique project requiring special approval. What used to be rare is now becoming common.

### BUILDING HIGHER, BUILDING FURTHER

Maximum permitted height for encapsulated mass timber construction



Taller buildings are just part of the story. The bigger change is in how these buildings are made. More often, they are built in factories instead of on muddy construction sites. Glulam beams and cross-laminated panels arrive cut to precise measurements, with windows and doors in place and connection points checked before leaving the factory. Each piece comes with instructions and arrives on-site in the order it will be installed. The benefits are clear. Mass timber can reduce construction time by up to 20%. Factory building has cut total project timelines by up to half and lowered costs by 20% or more. Quebec City's Origine tower, thirteen storeys tall, was built in just four months. Fewer workers on-site also means less noise and disruption for nearby neighbourhoods, a big advantage in busy areas.

Every building has two types of carbon. Operational carbon comes from the building's use, such as heating, cooling, and lighting. Embodied carbon comes from making the building, including manufacturing, transporting, and installing all its parts. In cities with cleaner electricity like Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, embodied carbon is expected to make up most of a new building's emissions by mid-century. This is where wood has an advantage. Concrete and steel produce many emissions during manufacturing. Timber stores the carbon trees absorbed as they grew, keeping it locked in for the building's lifetime. When combined with other smart material choices, building with wood can reduce embodied carbon by up to 40%.

The environmental argument depends on the forests that supply the wood. In this area, Canada stands out, with more third-party certified, sustainably managed forests than any other country. The industry is working to make the supply chain more traceable so developers or future residents can know exactly which forest their building materials came from.

Mass timber first became known for landmark towers and unique cultural buildings. Now, its biggest opportunity is in more everyday projects. Canadian cities urgently need what planners call the missing middle: apartment buildings with four to twelve storeys between single homes and high-rise towers. This is the perfect size for mass timber construction. Using standardized panels and repeatable layouts could make timber a regular choice for multi-family housing, instead of something special or unusual.

This change also affects jobs. There is a shortage of skilled trades across the country, and mass timber buildings typically require fewer on-site workers than concrete or steel buildings. It also has a regional impact. Unlike concrete, timber's supply chain includes forests, sawmills, and factories, spreading work across rural and Indigenous communities rather than concentrating it in just a few urban job sites. Cultural landmarks such as the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre and the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute show a growing trend: Indigenous leadership in forestry, licensing, and manufacturing, not just in construction.



Canada's manufacturing sector is expanding to meet demand. Over twenty specialized facilities across the country now make cross-laminated timber and glulam, grouped into regional hubs from British Columbia to Ontario and Quebec. Still, much of the cross-laminated timber used in Canadian buildings is imported from Europe. The Canadian industry is working quickly to change this. The goals are ambitious: increase the domestic sector to \$1.2 billion in annual revenue by 2030, double that by 2035, and capture about a quarter of the global market rather than just importing products.

You won't see any of this in a building's marketing photos: the code hearings, the CNC files, or the certification audits. What people notice instead is much simpler—warm light shining through glulam beams, quiet where construction noise used to be, and walls that were once trees.



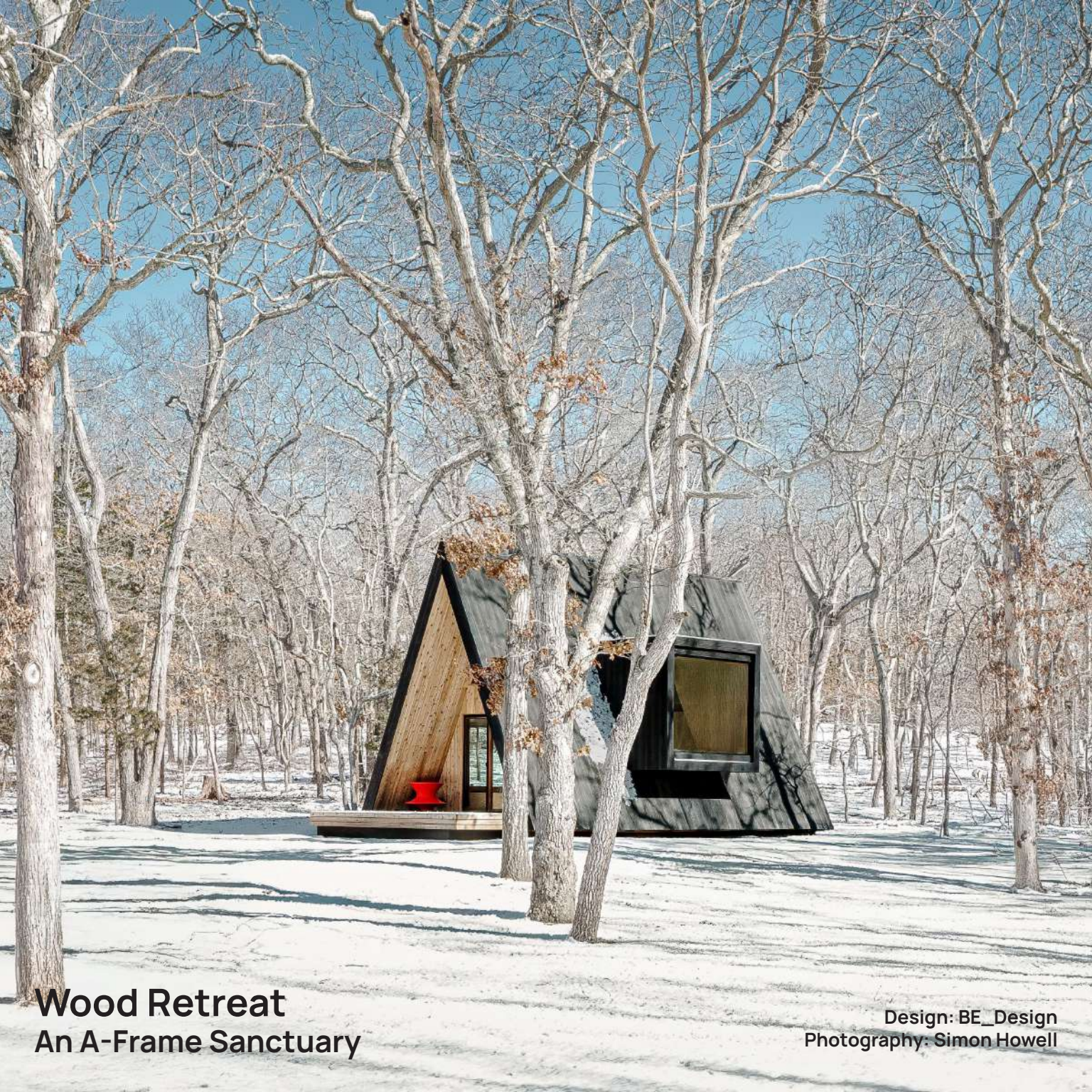
**20+** SPECIALIZED FACILITIES  
ACROSS CANADA  
PRODUCING CLT & GLULAM

Regional hubs from British Columbia  
to Ontario and Quebec.



- ✓ Ideal for 4–12 storey residential buildings
- ✓ Smaller on-site crews
- ✓ Less disruption in dense urban areas
- ✓ More jobs in forests, mills and manufacturing—especially in rural and Indigenous communities

The growing use of wood marks an interesting and gradual change in Canadian architecture.



**Wood Retreat**  
**An A-Frame Sanctuary**

Design: BE\_Design  
Photography: Simon Howell

In the quiet woods of Springs, just past East Hampton, a 600-square-foot building stands among the trees. It was built for a yoga teacher who leads breathwork, meditation, and heat-and-cold practices. This place feels more like a sanctuary than a house. As wellness becomes as much about our spaces as our routines, this retreat poses a simple question:

**what does a room feel like  
when its main purpose is to  
help you slow down?**

## A Roofline Borrowed From the Sky

The answer comes in the form of an A-frame. Instead of looking like a rustic ski cabin, it has a shape more like a temple. The steep, triangular roof leads your gaze upward, while the solid base stays connected to the ground. This design reflects a yoga teacher's lesson: stay grounded as you reach higher. The tall ceiling benefits sight and sound. The open interior lets sounds from gong ceremonies move freely through the space, rather than collecting in corners.

On either side of the main volume, a pair of cantilevered niches pushes gently outward into the forest. These small extensions are part window, part room, framing the woods and offering quiet spots to sit in stillness. They are set just far enough from the centre to feel private. Their design creates a sense of movement with spaces to retreat and reach out, similar to how the body moves during yoga practice: first contracting, then releasing.

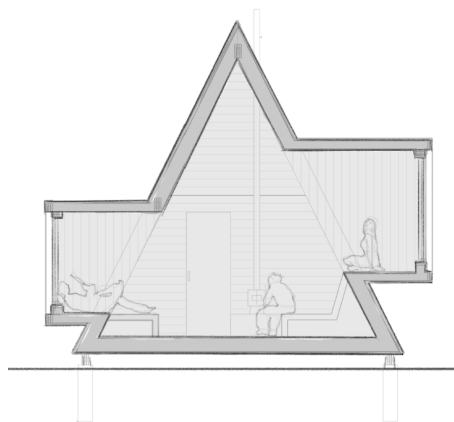
Inside, the retreat is kept simple and undecorated. Every surface is minimal, encouraging you to focus only on your breath. Built-in cushioned platforms serve two purposes: seats for morning meditation and quiet storage for mats and props at other times. This way, practice tools can be put away as soon as they are not needed. This approach is a form of hospitality. The room is designed to make the person, not the furniture, the focus.



The layout adapts to different uses. During the day, it serves as a studio for guided sessions. At night, it becomes a quiet space for overnight retreats. This flexibility is important for a teacher whose sessions last hours, not just minutes. The room needed to support both movement and stillness without feeling like two different spaces.

## A Room That Changes With the Day

Wellness starts before you enter. A covered porch welcomes each visitor, offering a quiet, sheltered moment between the outside world and the calm inside. This small architectural detail has a big impact. It gives you a moment to arrive before practice starts.



On the other side of the cabin, a more private porch leads to an outdoor shower, a sauna, and an ice bath. This extends the wellness ritual beyond the cabin and into the open air. The order is intentional: first heat, then cold, then stepping into the open forest. This follows the contrast-based practices used in restorative traditions. Going from the sauna's heat to an icy plunge and then out among the trees involves the body in a way a single room cannot. The entire property becomes part of the experience, not just the cabin.

The materials also reflect a balance between the inside and the outside. On the exterior, scaly charred Accoya wood covers the building. This timber is durable, sustainably sourced, and chosen to withstand many Hampton winters with little maintenance. Inside, the atmosphere changes completely. Warm yellow cedar, chosen for its ability to handle humid summers, covers the walls along with low-maintenance plywood. Together they create a space that feels grounded, calm, and gently warm underfoot.



At 600 square feet, “Wood Retreat” was never meant to impress with its size. Instead, its strength comes from its simplicity: a rising roofline, an entryway that invites calm, and a sequence of heat and cold that refreshes the body from the outside in.



This retreat quietly reminds us that architecture does not always need to impress. Sometimes, its best purpose is to create space for stillness and for the people who seek it among the pines of Springs.



## The Huntsville Lake House

### A Muskoka Retreat

Design: Studio P Interiors  
Photography: Kosta Bratsos

On the shores of a Huntsville lake, in the peaceful Muskoka region, a family created something more unique than a cottage: a home designed to help everyone slow down. Studio P Interiors took on the challenge for a busy household with demanding jobs, active teenagers, and packed schedules. They designed a retreat where generations can gather, leaving the noise of daily life behind.



### A Threshold That Asks You to Pause

The slower pace begins as soon as guests walk in. High ceilings lift your gaze above exposed beams and warm wood finishes. Ahead, large windows stretch from floor to ceiling and open onto the lake, drawing visitors forward. The arrival never feels rushed; the space was designed to encourage people to pause before they start talking.

At the centre of the home, the kitchen, dining room, living room, and bar form one open space. Family and guests can move easily between cooking, talking, and relaxing without feeling limited to one area. Consistent use of materials connects each area, keeping the energy steady and ensuring every corner feels intentional.

### One Room, Flowing Into the Next

Away from the bright, open gathering spaces, the primary bedroom feels different. Darker wood covers the walls and ceiling, making the room quiet and cozy. This contrast is intentional. It shows a home designed for lively family dinners can also offer peaceful, slow mornings.

## Architecture in Service of the View

In the living and dining areas, tall A-frame ceilings meet a wall of windows. Instead of competing with the wide lake views, the architecture lets them stand out. The outdoors is no longer just a view through the window. It becomes part of daily life, visible from the sofa, dining table, and kitchen island.



## Materials Pulled Straight From the Forest

Every material choice in the home connects to the surrounding land. Hickory flooring, chosen early for its warmth and natural grain, sets the tone for the rest of the space. White oak, walnut, and tongue-and-groove ceilings add wood tones, giving the space depth without making it feel heavy. Green accents in the kitchen and bar reflect the forest outside.



Studio P made an unusual choice in the kitchen by leaving out upper cabinets. They used spacious lower storage and a hidden appliance garage to keep counters clear and the room calm. A few floating shelves and one display cabinet add enough personality to the space, giving it character without taking away from its calm feel.

A stone fireplace anchors the main living area, rising from a bench-like base to the ceiling peak. Covered in textured stone and built into the surrounding woodwork, it serves as both a functional centerpiece and a quiet example of craftsmanship. Perfecting the details took months of work with the architect, especially where several roof peaks meet in the wood-covered ceilings.

# The Philosophy of Quiet

*"Quiet to me means designing with intention. Everything has a place and purpose. When you remove unnecessary visual noise, you create clarity and allow people to focus on what matters most. There can be a misconception that quiet spaces are simple to create. In reality, every proportion, material, and detail must be carefully considered. The goal is not to do less, but to refine every element until only what is necessary and meaningful remains."*

Priya Mitrovic, Principal Designer.



For principal designer Priya Mitrovic, the calm running through the house was never accidental. It was the entire point.



## A Home That Gets Out of the Way

In the end, the Huntsville lake house is not designed to impress guests or demand attention. Instead, it stays in the background with clean lines, thoughtful materials, and a floor plan that gives daily life room to breathe. This lets the family do what the house was meant for: slow down and spend time together.



# Pine Island Cottage

## An Island Home That Listens Before It Speaks



Design: Gren Weis Design Studio, Bureau Tempo & Thom Fougere Studio  
Photography: Alex Lesage



In the heart of Georgian Bay, Ontario, a family retreat sits quietly at the water's edge. It fits naturally on its rocky perch, looking like it grew there. Pine Island Cottage stretches across a secluded island, following the natural stone instead of working against it. Here, architecture is about paying attention and showing restraint, a lesson especially relevant as more designers look to the land for guidance.

## A House That Grows From Stone

The cottage seems to grow out of the island instead of just sitting on it. Its floors step down to follow the natural rock formations, working with the land rather than changing it. Bureau Tempo and Thom Fougere Studio designed the interiors as a series of gathering spaces. Each area is shaped by the routines of family life and the natural textures of the Canadian Shield. The result is a home that feels both rugged and peaceful. It is so connected to its setting that it seems part of the granite beneath it.



Luxury design often tries to smooth out every edge. In this case, the architects did the opposite. There is a stone seat, rough, textured flooring that grips your feet, and the surprise of rain coming inside. These small details help people feel closer to nature, and the design embraces them instead of hiding them. Wood-grain walls, wrought-iron handrails, and flamed stone floors all share a natural, honest feel. These materials help guests stay connected to the present.



The design approach is clear as soon as guests walk in. A low, oak-lined entry with a pebble-shaped door handle gives a preview of the textures inside. From there, the house opens gradually. The floors step down, the ceilings rise, and the materials become lighter, creating a sense of anticipation until the main living area appears.



The kitchen best captures the spirit of Pine Island Cottage. A fieldstone island, which looks like a rocky shoreline, anchors the room. It is designed more as a place for gathering than just a functional space. Custom cabinets of white oak, walnut, and limestone surround the island. The ceramics, cookware, and linens were chosen carefully. Nearby, a market-style pantry displays food openly, with trays angled for easy access to the pewter bar. Lighting was also considered an important material, not just an extra detail. A heavy-timber dining table and bench face the sunken living room, where a double-sided fieldstone hearth warms both the inside and the screened porch, connecting the whole ground floor.



At the centre of the home, four areas come together: the kitchen, dining room, living room with a fieldstone hearth, and an outdoor porch. These spaces encourage the kind of togetherness that a family cottage is meant for. The bedrooms, on the other hand, are set higher on the island to give some quiet and privacy when needed.

*"The design process for the cottage was as beautiful as the final product, with many personal discoveries alongside the client and site-specific cues that directly informed our decision-making. The kitchen island as a ritualized gathering point was one such instance – it became not only an experiment with materiality, but also a highly functional element of the kitchen."* — Thom Fougere.

A glass raised breezeway leads guests from the busy shared spaces to the private areas. This change is felt in both mood and materials used. The floors change from concrete to wood, then to locally sourced Eramosa stone treated to look aged and weathered. On one side are a guest bedroom and a children's room with bunk beds. On the other side are a private office and the main bedroom suite.

"Lighting was often at the heart of the decision-making process. We did not want to disturb the serenity of the darkness on the island, and how finishes would feel when very dimly lit was paramount in selecting materials." — Adam Robinson, Bureau Tempo.

The main bedroom also shows the same careful restraint. Oak-lined storage sits one end, while custom closets with rug fronts hanging on iron frames soften the space visually and acoustically at the other end. Fieldstone appears again behind the bed and vanity, reflecting the kitchen below. In the bathroom, a custom double-basin stone sink, a flamed stone shower floor, and a ceramic tub create a space meant for slow, relaxed routines.

## A Sanctuary For Rest

Pine Island Cottage does not force the landscape to change. Instead, the house adapts by terracing, bending, and softening to fit the island. Every material, from the flamed stone to the hand-forged ironwork, was chosen not only for how it looks, but for how it ages, weathers, and feels underfoot. This is a home built to be touched as much as seen. Looking back on the process, Thom Fougere said that one idea guided him most: simplicity. He believes that a small, careful touch can have the biggest effect.



## A PASSAGE TOWARD PRIVACY



Pine Island Cottage shows that the most memorable spaces are not the boldest, but the ones that let nature take the lead. This gives families a place to gather, warm themselves by a local stone hearth, and feel completely at home, even if just for a weekend.



# Driftwood Oak by Transformer Table

Driftwood has a quiet quality. Its wood becomes soft-edged and pale, shaped by time and water. Transformer Table created its new finish, Driftwood Oak, to capture that feeling. It is a design statement and an act of restraint, showing that something remarkable does not need anything new.

Driftwood tells a story no factory can copy. It is bleached by the sun, smoothed by salt water, and shaped over years of slow movement. Transformer Table bases its palette on this quiet look: a warm beige base, off-white highlights, and a hint of grey. The matte finish lets light settle into the surface rather than reflect off it.

Instead of using new materials, Transformer Table made Driftwood Oak from high-quality off-cuts left from its own manufacturing. This timber would otherwise go unused. Each piece meets the same durability standards as the rest of the catalogue, so customers do not have to compromise in quality or performance.



## Fits Easily in Any Room

This finish works well in a clean-lined midcentury living room or a relaxed coastal retreat. It is now available for the Transformer Dining Table, the Round Collection, and the Nova Collection.

## A Tree Planted for Every Table

With a new partnership with Tree-Nation, a tree is planted for every order. Based on recent sales, this could mean about a million trees next year. Each customer gets a digital certificate and can track their tree's growth online, making every purchase a small, visible act of restoration.

In the end, Driftwood Oak reflects its inspiration. Timber is found again with care and given a second life that stands out. Reclaimed off-cuts become refined surfaces, and every order means a new tree. These two small acts show that meaningful design rarely needs anything new. As Transformer Table says, there is always **"room for more"**.



At La Albufera Natural Park, architecture's most powerful statement is a whisper. Nidos de Agua challenges designers to create a microarchitecture pavilion that bridges the gap between human perception and an incredibly fragile Mediterranean wetland ecosystem.



**Registration Deadline**  
**11 September 2026**



**Prize Fund**  
**€ 8,000**



Design is rarely about a single object; it is about the conversation between elements. The Situér Milano Design Challenge invites designers to move beyond the standalone piece and conceptualize a coordinated mini-collection speaking one sophisticated language.



**Registration Deadline**  
**02 October 2026**



**Prize Fund**  
**€ 7,000**



Imagine a village with no land—just the rhythmic pulse of tides beneath wooden planks. This is Torosiaje, an Indonesian Bajau settlement. The Call of the Sea competition seeks not a luxury resort, but a profound bridge between two distinct worlds.



**Registration Deadline**  
**09 October 2026**



**Prize Fund**  
**€ 9,000**



Designers must create a new visitor centre and subtle landscape interventions at Argentina's Sacred City of Quilmes. The primary goal is to respectfully blend modern architecture, natural terrain, and ancient Diaguita-Calchaquí heritage.



**Registration Deadline**  
**16 October 2026**



**Prize Fund**  
**€ 9,000**



Designers are asked to transform a historic Italian estate in Bedizzole into a vibrant modern retirement community. The project blends heritage preservation with contemporary accessibility to create an ecosystem of private, social, and healing wellness spaces.



**Registration Deadline**  
**23 October 2026**



**Prize Fund**  
**€ 10,000**

### Looking for a design challenge?

The clock is ticking! Every month, we round up exciting TERRAVIVA COMPETITIONS with approaching deadlines.

#### What are you waiting for?

Grab your sketchbook and register before time runs out!

Think you've seen it all?  
Scan to unlock the full lineup.



Design: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates  
Photography: Giuseppe Gutta & Andrew Williamson (aerial)



**Biidaasige Park**  
Ten new acres of sunlight unfurl along Lake Ontario

Not long ago, Toronto's eastern shoreline was covered with scrapyards, rail lines, and chain-link fences. Few people paid attention to this land. Today, it's Biidaasige Park: sixty acres of wildflower meadows, a paddling cove, and open-air sculptures, all on an island mostly built by hand. On July 24, 2026, ten new acres opened to the public. This is the biggest step yet in a project that, for twenty years, has combined flood protection, ecology, art, and Indigenous knowledge into one vision.



Some landscapes are created in just one season. This one took almost twenty years, guided from the beginning by the landscape architecture studio Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. Such a long timeline is rare in public design, and it shows in the park's calm, layered atmosphere. Beneath the meadows and coves lies an impressive piece of engineering that many people might miss. Ookwemin Minising, the island where the park sits, was built as part of the \$1.4 billion Port Lands Flood Protection project, funded by all levels of government. Now, it protects 174 hectares of Toronto, including South Riverdale and Leslieville, from major flooding. Most visitors won't notice any of that infrastructure. It simply forms the ground beneath the park.

## Twenty Years for One Island



Biidaasige doesn't hide its industrial past. The Atlas Crane, a 300-ton marine cargo machine from 1961, still stands over the park's new western side. It's no longer used, but now it's a landmark instead of just a leftover. Parts of the old Marine Terminal 35 building are now part of the landscape, and Old Fire Hall 30 is used for community events instead of being torn down. The park doesn't pretend the Port Lands were always beautiful. Its design lets the area's working history stand alongside what's new.



For the first time, this shoreline is open to people instead of keeping them away. Canoe Cove, a sheltered paddling area with a pebbled landing, gives kayaks and canoes easy access to Lake Ontario. This was never possible on this industrial edge before. A large event lawn for up to 3,000 people is now open to concerts, markets, and picnics. Nearby, a new 250-metre section of the Water's Edge Promenade extends the shoreline walk to a spot where you can see a wide view across the harbour to the downtown skyline.



One of the most important things about Biidaasige Park is how deeply Indigenous knowledge is woven into it. It was part of the project from the very beginning, not added at the end. Biidaasige, pronounced bee-daw-si-geh, means “sunlight shining toward us.” Ookwemin Minising, the island’s name, means “place of the black cherry trees.” Both names came from an Indigenous-led naming circle organized by the City of Toronto, well before any construction began. That involvement continues throughout the park. A Fire Holder and a series of Teaching Signifier Sturgeon Stones, designed by artist Solomon King with Brook McIlroy, are built into the park’s paths. Two Row Architect added Directional Compasses and Marker Trees to help visitors find their way and reflect traditional ways of reading the land. A permanent structure called The Drum will host ceremonies, gatherings, and celebrations for as long as the park exists.



*“Biidaasige Park is more than a beautiful new gathering place; it is a reflection of what can be achieved when we work together to honour our Treaties, the land, the water, and the stories that have always belonged here. This park is located on Toronto Purchase Treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We are proud to have contributed our knowledge, history, and teachings throughout the development of Biidaasige Park, and we hope that everyone who visits will gain a deeper appreciation for the history of this place and the importance of protecting and restoring the natural world for future generations.”*

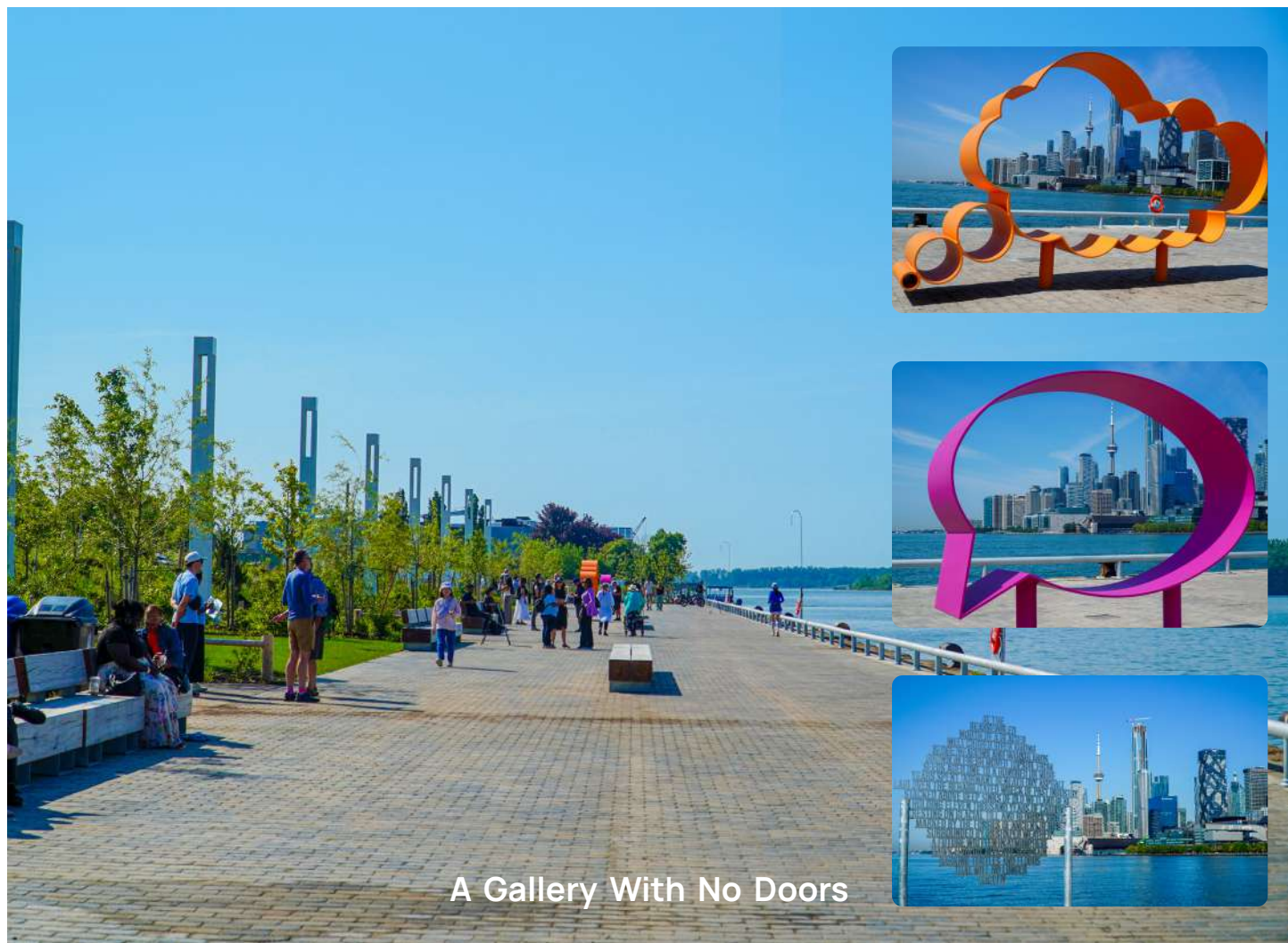
Margaret Sault, Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.



## Biidaasige is restoring the ecosystem

More than a million plants and 5,000 trees have revived wetlands, shoreline, and fish habitat. The Don River now meets Lake Ontario through the naturalized one-kilometre Don Greenway. Early monitoring has already recorded more birds and pollinators, including the return of Great Blue Herons and Razorbills, signalling a healthier and more resilient urban ecosystem.





The Lassonde Art Trail runs the full length of the park. It's a four-kilometre open-air gallery with fifteen permanent and rotating artworks, and two more coming this fall. The founders describe it simply: an experience anyone can walk into, with no ticket and no door. British artist Ryan Gander's sculptures seem to rise from blocks of raw armourstone, each shaped like a timekeeping device from a different era. This creates a quiet meditation on human time in relation to the site's much older, glacial history. Alexa Kumiko Hatanaka sends a school of flagpole fish streaming through the air, modelled on species returning to the restored Don River and inspired by traditional Japanese koinobori streamers. Lisa Hirmer's mirrored, text-covered Lodestar reflects the changing landscape around it. Virginia Overton offers something gentler: a working weathervane wrapped in native juniper. Along the harbour promenade, Hank Willis Thomas's oversized speech-bubble and thought-bubble sculptures invite visitors to step, quite literally, inside a frame of the skyline. This fall, two more permanent works will be added by Cree artist Kent Monkman and by Monira Al Qadiri.

The formal opening on July 24 brought together a wide range of leaders at the same stretch of shoreline. Federal, provincial, and city officials stood alongside Chief Margaret Sault of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, whose remarks on treaty, land, and water gave the day its centre of gravity. The celebration didn't end with the ribbon cutting. The following weekend, Toronto offered free public programming in the new section: guided walking tours, Indigenous cultural workshops, hands-on art-making, and paddling on Canoe Cove, with free shuttles to Evergreen Brick Works. What could have been just a photo opportunity became an open invitation for the whole city to walk the newly dedicated ground.

*"Completing the Port Lands Flood Protection project work, opening Biidaasige Park and the new mouth of the Don River has marked a turning point for the city's relationship with the lake. We have now moved from setting the stage for revitalization to bringing the next wave to life. People can now experience one of North America's most ambitious waterfront transformations firsthand—from new trails, public art and gathering spaces to restored natural habitats and access to the water. Toronto's eastern waterfront is no longer a promise on paper; it is a place making shape in real time, with new parks, new connections, and future neighbourhoods."*  
George Zegarac, President and CEO, Waterfront Toronto.



Biidaasige Park is not finished, and neither is the island beneath it. Five more acres are still to open, and over the next twenty-five years, Ookwemin Minising is expected to grow into a green, mixed-use neighbourhood with about 21,000 residents and 2,900 jobs. Waterfront Toronto has already started looking for builders for the island's first 700 homes. In March 2026, the federal and provincial governments agreed to share the cost of a new Waterfront East Rapid Transit Line. This new infrastructure will eventually connect this once-forgotten corner of the city to the rest of Toronto.

In the end, Biidaasige Park isn't just about the land itself. It's a shoreline returned to paddlers and picnickers, to herons and black cherry trees, and to a Nation whose knowledge shaped it from the very first name. The eastern waterfront is no longer just a promise on paper. It is a real place, taking shape now, where the city and its lake are quietly learning to meet each other again.





## Park(ing) Day Toronto 2026 September 18–20, 2026

**Where a Parking Spot Becomes a Public Square. One Weekend a Year, the City Remembers Who Its Streets Are For**

Every September, something quietly radical happens along Toronto's curb lanes. Metered parking spots, usually just asphalt rectangles for parked cars, are covered with grass, set up with folding chairs, and opened to anyone passing by. This is Park(ing) Day: part protest, part block party, part design experiment. For one weekend, it lets the city imagine itself in a new way. From September 18 to 20, the event returns for its most ambitious year yet, as cities everywhere start to ask the same question: who are our streets really for?

The story starts in San Francisco in 2005, when a design studio called Rebar tried a small act of civic mischief. They paid for one parking meter, rolled out grass, set up a bench, and planted a small tree where a car would normally be. The setup lasted two hours, as long as the meter allowed. But the idea stuck around much longer: in most cities, a parked car gets more space than a person.

A Small Gesture That Refused to Stay Small That afternoon of borrowed curb space quickly spread beyond San Francisco. Today, Park(ing) Day is celebrated in over 35 countries, all following the same simple idea: take a parking spot, even for a short time, and give it back to the public. The rules are simple, and the spirit stays the same.

Toronto's chapter started in 2022, when Dubbeldam Architecture + Design transformed the parking outside its studio into something new. There was landscaping, workout classes, yoga mats, food carts, and neighbours stopping to chat. The event was so popular that it left a lasting mark on the block. Those four parking spaces are now a small public parkette, a part of the city changed by one afternoon's experiment.

What started as one event has grown fast. In 2023, there were five independent projects. In 2024, more than thirty activations were registered. By 2025, people all over the city were taking part. Architecture firms, artists, nonprofits, student groups, and regular residents have all claimed their own spots, each seeing the same empty parking space in a different way.

Getting involved for 2026 is simple. You can register an activation on the Park(ing) Day Toronto website, apply for a micro-grant to help fund your idea, and look at past projects on Instagram for inspiration. Activations can last for one day or all three, from Friday the 18th to Sunday the 20th, so hosts can match their plans to the resources they have.

If you ask what a parking space can become, last year showed many answers. On one block, there was a tiny house. On another, an open-air library and a storytelling space appeared. In other spots, there were pollinator gardens full of bees, live performances that brought crowds to the curb, and fitness classes that reached into the street. All of these ideas shared the same simple stretch of pavement.

Urban planning scholar Donald Shoup once described this imbalance in a single line, and organizers still use his words to explain why it matters. Park(ing) Day doesn't make its case with policy papers. Instead, it uses grass, folding chairs, and a few hours of unexpected company to show that a street can hold people just as easily as it holds cars.

Much of this growth comes from the Park(ing) Day Toronto Grants Program, which launched in 2024 thanks to Dubbeldam, SvN Architects + Planners, Arup Canada, DIALOG, and Fast + Epp. Grants of up to \$500 help pay for materials, plants, seating, signs, and activities. These small amounts can turn a big idea into an event people want to attend. Community groups, students, artists, and individuals can all apply, and organizers say they especially like projects that are inclusive and truly built by the community.

**Small Grants,  
Big Ideas.  
Grants of up to  
\$500**



Park(ing) Day 2024 - Parking Stop\_TMU Students.  
Photography: Bruno Belli.



Park(ing) Day 2025 - Dubbeldam Architecture + Design.  
Photography: Bruno Belli.



Park(ing) Day 2024 - Mutable Spaces\_BNKC.  
Photography: Bruno Belli.



Park(ing) Day 2025 - Gow Hastings.  
Photography: Bruno Belli.



Park(ing) Day 2025 - Arup.  
Photography: Bruno Belli.



Park(ing) Day 2025 - TMU activation.  
Photography: Bruno Belli.

What started as one paid meter in San Francisco and one studio's curb in Toronto has turned into an open invitation. As Park(ing) Day Toronto gets ready for its biggest year yet this September, the offer is still the same: claim a spot, roll out the grass, and see what happens when a street makes space for people instead of cars.



## Long Lake Cottage

A Muskoka Retreat Grown From the Bedrock



Design: Dubbeldam Architecture + Design  
Photography: Riley Snelling

## Where a Year of Camping Became a Lifetime of Living Outdoors

On a quiet peninsula in Muskoka, where the water is calm and motorboats never pass, a cottage blends into the landscape as if it has always been there. Long Lake Cottage, created by Toronto's Dubbeldam Architecture + Design, began not with drawings but with a year of camping on the land. The result is an off-grid, multigenerational retreat where nature, family, and accessibility were considered together, not as separate challenges.

Before building, the homeowners lived on the land. They camped there for a year, watching how sunlight moved over the water and where the wind gathered along the ridge. Their patience shaped the design. Every choice, from the building's shape to its orientation, came from observing the site.



Most cottages put bedrooms above the living areas, but here the architects did the opposite. The shared spaces are upstairs, reached by a bridge. Five bedrooms are downstairs, tucked under the ridge and hidden from view. This design ensured everyone in the family, including someone who uses a wheelchair, could access every room. A sixth bedroom and a fully accessible bathroom are upstairs so that everyone can be part of the main living area.

## A House Turned Upside Down



Lower Level Floor Plan



Upper Level Floor Plan

*"We designed the cottage with the living spaces upstairs and bedrooms below to preserve the natural contours of the site and ensure accessibility for the entire family. This slightly unorthodox arrangement emphasizes the retreat's connection to nature, with communal spaces in the tree canopy and private areas within the forest floor."*

Heather Dubbeldam, Dubbeldam Architecture + Design

## A Living Room That Floats Above the Forest

After crossing the bridge, you enter a large open room. The living, dining, and kitchen areas blend under a wall of glass, so you're always close to views of the lake or forest. A concrete hearth anchors the space, inviting people to gather around its warmth like a campfire. One wall has a seventeen-foot built-in bench with hidden storage, making the window seat a cozy spot to relax. Above, a ceiling of western hemlock boards adds warmth and quiets the room.



White oak cabinets and engineered stone counters give the kitchen a calm, simple look. A long island with a bar sink separates cooking from gathering, but no wall divides them. Sliding doors open to a wraparound deck with retractable bug screens on the west and south sides. Outside, a wood-burning fireplace matches the one inside so that you can enjoy the space even after summer ends.



Downstairs, the atmosphere changes from social to peaceful. A hallway with five bedrooms leads to a final view of the lake. Each bedroom opens to the forest with floor-to-ceiling glass and has its own private door outside. This design turns a shared hallway into a more private, quiet space.



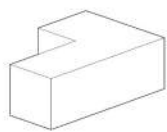
The west main bedroom opens to the sunset, while its outdoor shower honours the family's year of camping here.



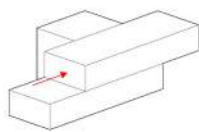


Two decks sit at different spots along the building, extending the design outdoors. The lower deck stays cool in summer, shaded by the floor above. It sits beside a bedrock outcrop, where lake breezes pass through. In one corner, two teak swings create a quiet spot for conversation by the rock.

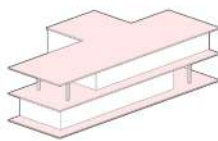
Long Lake Cottage is powered completely by solar energy and is built with sustainably harvested wood, some of it from nearby sources. The outside is covered in greyed cedar and charcoal-stained spruce, helping the cottage blend into the trees. Inside, oak floors and oil-rubbed hemlock create a warm, simple look. The hemlock ceiling boards continue from the interior to the exterior, connecting the spaces. The cottage is fully winterized, so it's meant to be lived in all year, not just visited in summer.



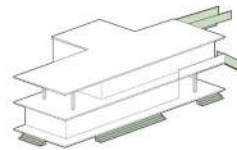
FORM



SHIFT



EXTENSIONS



CONNECTIONS



VIEWS

Long Lake Cottage shows that spending a year observing the land can create something no amount of planning could. By paying attention to the site and letting family, accessibility, and natural materials guide the design, Dubbeldam Architecture + Design has built more than just a retreat. They have created a home that feels like it truly belongs in the forest.





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