

CDI and the Sky-o-Swale

By Anne Gloger, Storefront Principal and Director

Over the years I have been inspired by so many people and initiatives in the neighbourhood of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park...it is truly the Little Community That Could!

Community Design Initiative is one of those inspirational projects that makes me go to work each day with optimism and hope for a neighbourhood that has had some very difficult times.

What inspires me is to see the local youth gather weekly over many months with their architect and design mentors (from ERA, sustainable.TO and archiTEXT) to learn and explore just how, through carefully thought out design, they could have an impact on their immediate environment.



These dedicated and talented youth have designed various parts of The Storefront, from a resource centre to a spectacular commercial grade kitchen known as the Eco-food hub.

In 2012, they took on a new challenge. As part of a larger youth led landscape design project, The Storefront was funded by Live Green Toronto to build a bioswale to filter, slow down and harvest rainwater. The local youth, however, were faced with the disappointment of learning that the soil at The Storefront was unsuitable for such a venture. Undeterred, one of the youth proposed to their architect mentors that, since another part of their landscaping plan was to build a shade structure, that they design a shade structure with a bio-swale on top...and the Sky-o-swale was born!



We've all learned so much from the CDI youth. I know that I've learned that giving youth the tools they need to design their community centre and surrounding property, generates not only great ideas, but momentum, creativity and ingenuity. What started out as a relatively simple project grew into an unprecedented feat of design and engineering. The fantastic structure that is the sky-o-swale would not have existed if it weren't for the passion, dedication and collaboration of those youth, their architect and design mentors, engineers, contractors, funders and donors.

Beautiful and iconic, the sky-o-swale, like everything at The Storefront, is a complex interconnection of people and purposes. The artist's rendering of the sky-o-swale inspired MLSE to invest in another youth design project: their first ever multipurpose sports court! The sky-o-swale that harvests rainwater for use in the thriving community garden is the same structure that acts as a community stage to showcase local theatre and musical talent! The sky-o-swale not only provides shade it acts as seating for the inspirational, youth-designed, colourful sports pad that will capture the community's imagination for years to come.

Above all, the sky-o-swale is an icon. It stands where once a rusty, abandoned water tower acted as a community landmark. The water tower, once a symbol of neglect, has been replaced by the sky-o-swale, as a symbol of our faith and pride in youth creativity, a symbol of collaboration in a community where anything is possible!

The Sky-o-swale opened beside the East Scarborough Storefront, in the inner-suburban neighbourhood of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park on August 20th 2014.



Architect: ERA

Engineer: Blackwell Engineers

Contractor: Direct Construction

Funders: Toronto Community Foundation fund holders the J. Douglas Crashley Fund and the James Rutley Grand Memorial Fund and Live Green Toronto.

The CDI youth are ready to sink their teeth into their next project...actually expanding The Storefront's building...The Storefront is currently looking for ways to fund this ambitious project.