

Re-imagine Downtown's distinct districts with parks at their hearts

PARK DISTRICTS

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Park Districts re-imagine Downtown's distinct districts with parks at their hearts

A Park District is a cohesive local network of parks, streets and other open spaces centered on one or more significant community parks that serve surrounding neighbourhoods. Each Park District will have a unique identity with a focus on supporting community life.

Neighbourhood parks and accessible open spaces have a rich and varied history in the Downtown. Over time, they have evolved into discrete and distinct places, each with their own form and character that together contribute to the unique identity of their surrounding neighbourhood, or district. Today, many of these places are small or isolated and cannot offer all the programs and functions that residents, visitors and workers look for in their public realm.

A Park District provides an opportunity to create an expanded and improved ensemble of neighbourhood parks, streets and other open spaces. Park Districts will be designed as a cohesive whole, with the goal of supporting community life by providing a range of connected and accessible experiences and programs within easy walking distance of all residents and workers. A great variety of existing legacy parks exist in the Downtown. These parks can act as anchors within each Park District and have the potential to expand and connect to adjacent streets and other open spaces to create a more vibrant, legible and expansive parks and public realm network for all Downtown districts.



Kensington Market-Alexandra Park, Toronto, Canada



Cabbagetown-Riverdale, Toronto, Canada



The Queen's Park Precinct, looking south along University Avenue to the Civic Precinct, Toronto, Canada



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 <i>The Civic Precinct</i> | 13 <i>The Garrison Parks-Fort York</i> |
| 2 <i>The Queen's Park Precinct</i> | 14 <i>Bathurst Quay-Coronation Park-Ontario Place</i> |
| 3 <i>The Garden District</i> | 15 <i>West Rail District</i> |
| 4 <i>St. James Town</i> | 16 <i>Old Town-St Lawrence-Distillery</i> |
| 5 <i>Cabbagetown-Riverdale</i> | 17 <i>University of Toronto*</i> |
| 6 <i>The Grange John Street Roundhouse Park</i> | 18 <i>Regent Park*</i> |
| 7 <i>Ryerson University</i> | 19 <i>Corktown Parks*</i> |
| 8 <i>Bay Cloverhill Loop</i> | 20 <i>West Don Lands*</i> |
| 9 <i>'The Pits' (Christie-Bickford)</i> | 21 <i>Lower Don Lands*</i> |
| 10 <i>Ramsden Park-Yorkville</i> | 22 <i>Lower Yonge-East Bayfront*</i> |
| 11 <i>The Annex</i> | 23 <i>Central Waterfront*</i> |
| 12 <i>Kensington Market-Alexandra Park</i> | |

** Park Districts 17-23 have been developed through other planning documents*

Six strategies outline general principles and design directions to guide a series of initiatives that reinforce the Park Districts vision through focused interventions.

RE-IMAGINE TORONTO'S DISTRICTS WITH PARKS AT THEIR HEART



Trinity Bellwoods Park, Queen West's "backyard", Toronto, Canada

Park Districts group together parks and open spaces with connecting streets that together form the heart of the various neighbourhoods in the Downtown. They provide an opportunity to establish legacy neighbourhood parks as the focal point of Downtown districts. Park Districts are both a neighbourhood resource and a city-wide attraction. This approach offers a chance to put parks front and central in the planning and evolution of our districts, responding proactively to the needs of our growing city.

What we heard:

- Focus on quality in the design and maintenance of our neighbourhood parks and public spaces.
- Enhance finer grain connectivity between parks and public spaces.

EXTEND THE REACH AND CONNECTIVITY OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS



Wellington Place, plans from 1837 reveal a unique dumbbell pattern of park squares, connected by a green boulevard, Toronto, Canada

Provide a broad range of experiences and programs in a number of smaller parks with high-quality connections. Great connections can make the park experience more accessible to the surrounding neighbourhood and beyond. This may include transforming neighbourhood streets and laneway connections to expand pedestrian and cycling facilities where feasible, and extending a park's experience beyond its boundaries through the extension of park design details and materials into surrounding streetscapes.

What we heard:

- Encourage active transportation and mid-block / laneway connections between public spaces.
- Extend park edges to spill out into surrounding streets.

IMPROVE AND EXPAND PARKS WHERE POSSIBLE AND CREATE NEW ONES



Moss Park and the Armoury, Toronto, Canada

Explore park acquisition opportunities to expand public space within the Park Districts. Strategically acquire new parkland and improve and expand existing parks. If land is not available directly adjacent to existing parks, look to acquire park parcels that are strategically located within the broader park and street network to establish a coherent neighbourhood open space system. Prioritize securing land that has prominent public street frontages and that contributes to broader strategies of connectivity and use.

What we heard:

- Acquire more parkland; identify locations based on a 5-10 minute walk for all residents.
- Make better use of what we have by improving and expanding existing parks.

RECONFIGURE NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS TO RESPOND TO 21ST CENTURY NEEDS



Refresh: A Vision Document for Allan Gardens, prioritizes adapting the park to meet 21st century needs, including more diverse and intensive levels of use, 2017

As funding becomes available, invest in Park Districts, recognizing their potential as a city-wide resource. Re-design should maintain inherent character and qualities while expanding the flexibility of use, ensuring design and form can respond to changing demographics and new generations of users and uses. Prioritize flexible uses, recognizing that space constraints demand more out of each square metre of park to enhance its benefit to a growing and diverse population. Develop partnerships with Indigenous communities to ensure meaningful, appropriate placemaking.

What we heard:

- Support for multi-seasonal, multi-functional parks.
- Consider changing and diverse demographics; diversity needs to be at the forefront in the design and programming of our public spaces.

**PRIORITIZE BLUE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
IN THE DESIGN OF OUR PARKS AND STREETS**



Tåsinge Plads, a climate-adapted urban green space that absorbs rainwater and creates a place for people to experience and interact with water, Copenhagen, Denmark

Prioritize blue (water-based) and green (urban forest, greenway, pedestrian and cycling priority) infrastructure in the retrofit or design of our parks and streets. Experiment with the variety of landscapes that are possible and necessary in a 21st century city, including absorptive landscapes that manage stormwater and reveal and celebrate our unique position as a waterfront city. Make water a key driver in the design of our parks, streets and other open spaces, such as laneways and schoolyards. Exceed standards to establish the next generation of best practices for a 21st century resilient city.

What we heard:

- Consider climate change and create resilient landscapes.
- Support for green and blue infrastructure and enhanced biodiversity.

**CREATE NEW AND PROTECT EXISTING 'SUN
RESERVOIRS'**



Sunlight in Corktown Common, Toronto, Canada

Design the edges of parks and buildings around Park Districts to recognize significant city parks as 'Sun Reservoirs'. These prominent parks can become destinations where Torontonians can head to enjoy great access to natural sunlight.

What we heard:

- Support for protecting access to sunlight in Downtown parks, streets, neighbourhoods, squares, schoolyards, playgrounds, and the waterfront.
- Balance sun protection with the need for growth.

“Make sure the streets have lots of sunlight, trees, greenery and quiet so we can actually enjoy them and use as a respite from the hustle and bustle of life.”

– TOcore Consultation



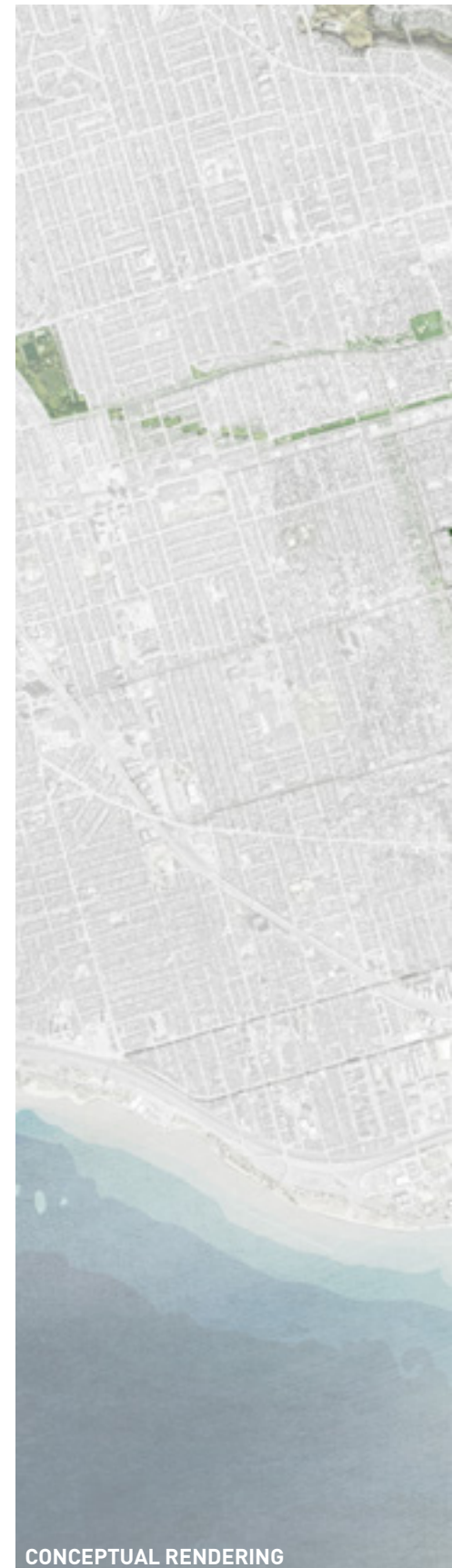
Sunlight in the revitalized Grange Park, Toronto, Canada

Park Districts are the opportunity to put the park front and central in the planning and evolution of our districts, responding proactively to the needs of our growing city.

PARK DISTRICTS

- 1 *The Civic Precinct*
- 2 *The Queen's Park Precinct*
- 3 *The Garden District*
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CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



Map showing proposed Park Districts, Toronto, Canada

The Civic Precinct

Celebrate Toronto's civic buildings with a cohesive, connected and pedestrian-oriented public realm.



University Avenue offers the opportunity to connect the Civic Precinct with the Queen's Park Precinct and become a major promenade and park focus for the Civic Precinct, Toronto, Canada

As a Great Street, the vision for University Avenue re-configures the roadway to create a grand bosque park on the Avenue's eastern edge, integrated with existing parks, landscaped setbacks and other open spaces. The proposed linear park connects two significant Park

Districts together and establishes a major promenade and park focus for the core, including a new garden gateway to the Civic Precinct at University Avenue and Queen Street. Building on this transformation, the Civic Precinct vision celebrates and connects our civic



(right) Place de la République's re-design creates a cohesive, inviting pedestrian plaza, including a new cafe pavilion, water features and over 150 trees, Paris, France

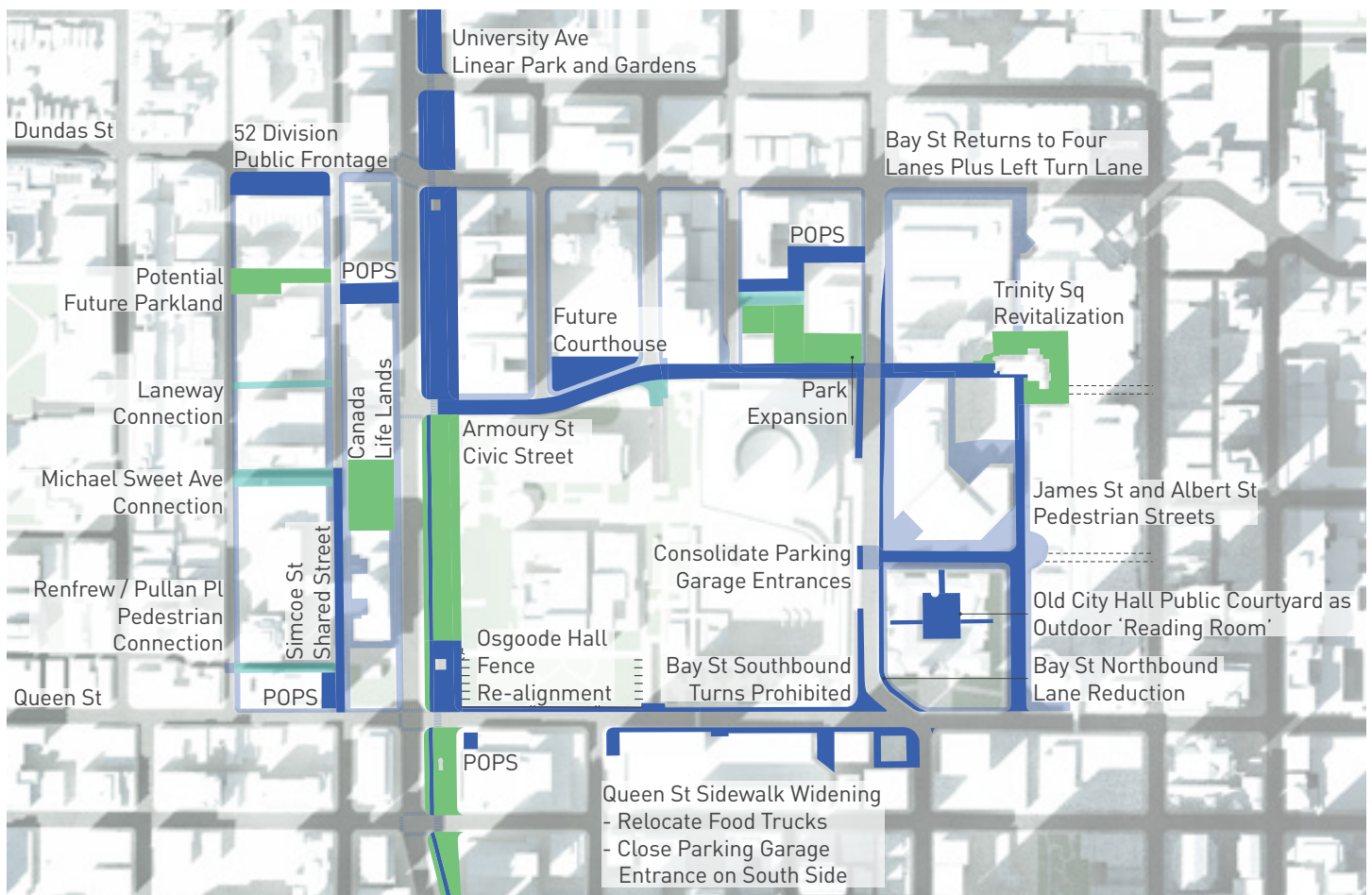
CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



The Civic Precinct, Proposed Concept

buildings from Campbell House to Old City Hall with a cohesive, connected green frontage, inviting public life into their open spaces. Design the district with a strong focus on the pedestrian realm and safe cycling by linking disconnected open space elements, creating

shared and / or pedestrianized streets (where feasible) and establishing new mid-block connections. Consider consolidating parking garage entrances to open up the west side of Bay Street and south side of Queen Street, creating more space for public life to unfold.



The Civic Precinct, Proposed Concept Plan

- Hardscape public realm project
- Green public realm project
- Sidewalks and safe crossings
- Servicing and vehicular access

(right) A model for the Civic Precinct, Karl Johans Gate's expanded streetside pedestrian areas, gardens and large-canopy tree rows create a strong lush green facade for the district, Oslo, Norway



Goals

Celebrate Toronto's civic buildings with a cohesive, connected and pedestrian-oriented public realm centred on Nathan Phillips Square. Strengthen the identity of the precinct as Toronto's premier civic destination drawing tourists and supporting public gatherings through events such as cultural celebrations and assemblies.

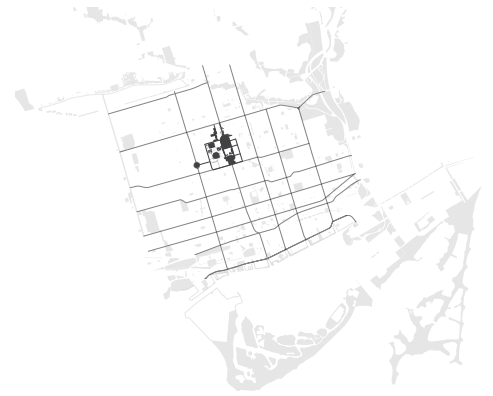
- Create a new public place within Nathan Phillips Square that contributes to the restoration of Indigenous identity.
- Create an improved frontage along Queen Street (both sides of the street) from Campbell House to Old City Hall that connects and emphasizes heritage features of the precinct.
- Design the district with a strong focus on the pedestrian realm by linking disconnected open space elements, creating shared and/or pedestrianized streets (where feasible) and establishing new mid-block connections.
- Rethink Bay Street from Hagerman Street to Queen Street to allow it to look and function as a part of Civic Precinct.
- Integrate Old City Hall, Trinity Square, the new courthouse, Campbell House, the Canada Life building and 52 Division into the precinct.
- Create inviting gateways through intersection improvements at Queen and University, Queen and Bay, and University and Armoury Street
- Connect the Civic Precinct to the Queen's Park Precinct through a University Avenue linear park (see Great Streets – University Avenue).

Actions

- Undertake a Civic Precinct Public Realm and Public Art Master Plan with city-wide public engagement.
- Collaborate with Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre and other Indigenous organizations to locate the Restoration of Identity sculpture in Nathan Phillips Square and undertake associated Indigenous place-making.
- Explore opportunities for shared-use agreements with Canada Life, the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Toronto Police Service for improved public access to their open space assets within the precinct.
- Study the feasibility of closing the City Hall parkade entrance on the south side of Queen Street and undertaking associated streetscape improvements.
- Coordinate public realm improvements with investments in Old City Hall's transformation.

The Queen's Park Precinct

Celebrate Ontario's Legislature Building and surrounding heritage structures and landscapes with a cohesive, connected and pedestrian-oriented public realm.



The Broad Walk in Regents Park, a model for a pedestrian and cycling park route in a restored and connected Queen's Park, London, England

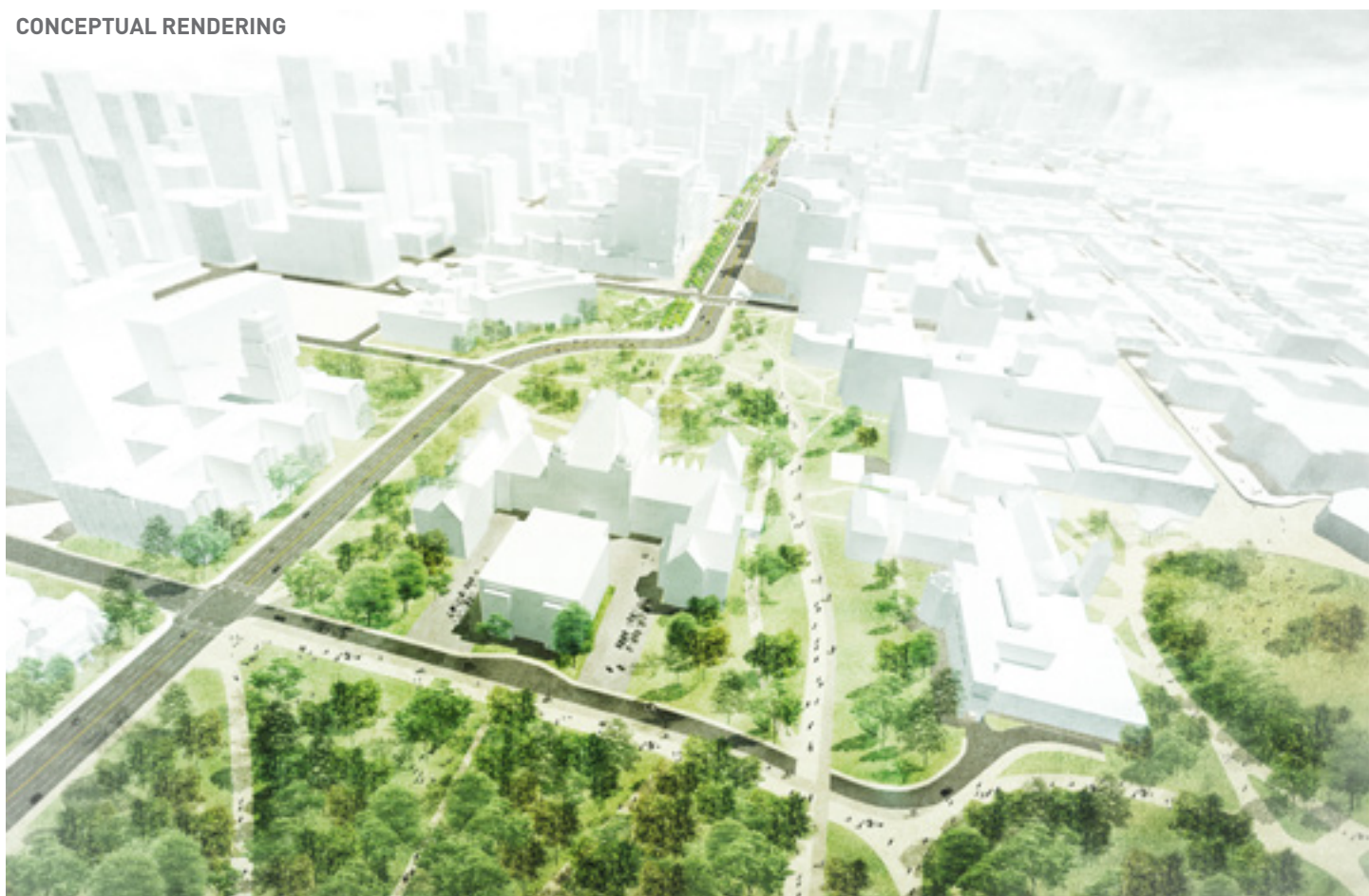
Connect the Queen's Park Precinct to the Civic Precinct and University of Toronto by extending the University Avenue linear park into Queen's Park as a park route for pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed park route concept restores and enhances the 'park' in Queen's

Park and its relationship to Ontario's Legislature building, while re-connecting these to surrounding significant parks and open spaces. The proposed concept connects future cycling facilities on University Avenue to the Hoskin-Wellesley and Bloor Street



(right) The Royal Parks provide 'green' routes in London, taking pedestrians and cyclists away from traffic and through some of the most attractive areas of the city, Hyde Park, London, England

CONCEPTUAL RENDERING

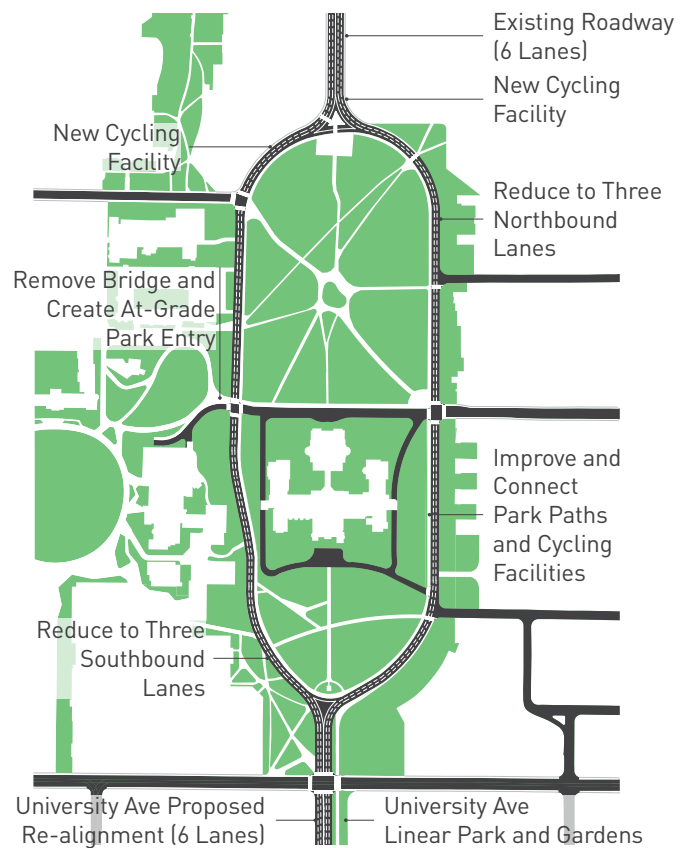
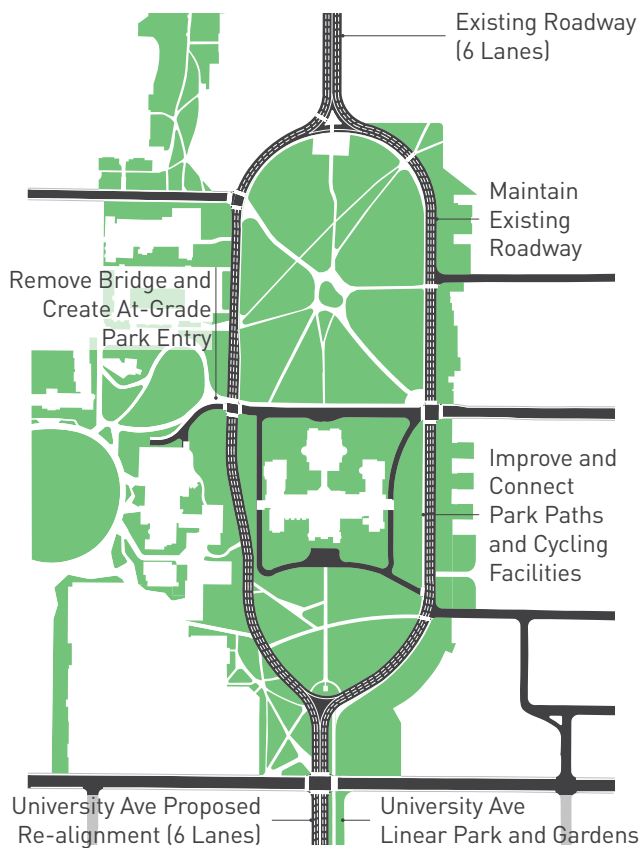


The Queen's Park Precinct, Proposed Concept

bike routes. Consolidating vehicular movement and creating an at-grade park entry at Hart House Circle and Wellesley Street improves safety and connectivity, while maintaining road capacity and servicing access to all buildings and landscapes. Imagine a connected civic

ensemble of public spaces from the Civic Precinct along University Avenue to the Queen's Park Precinct, with a restored and connected Queen's Park as the heart of the Queen's Park Precinct – the northern bookend of a truly transformative public realm experience.

(below) Proposed options for the Queen's Park Precinct



Proposed Option A: Maintain existing roadway; improve connections for pedestrians and cyclists

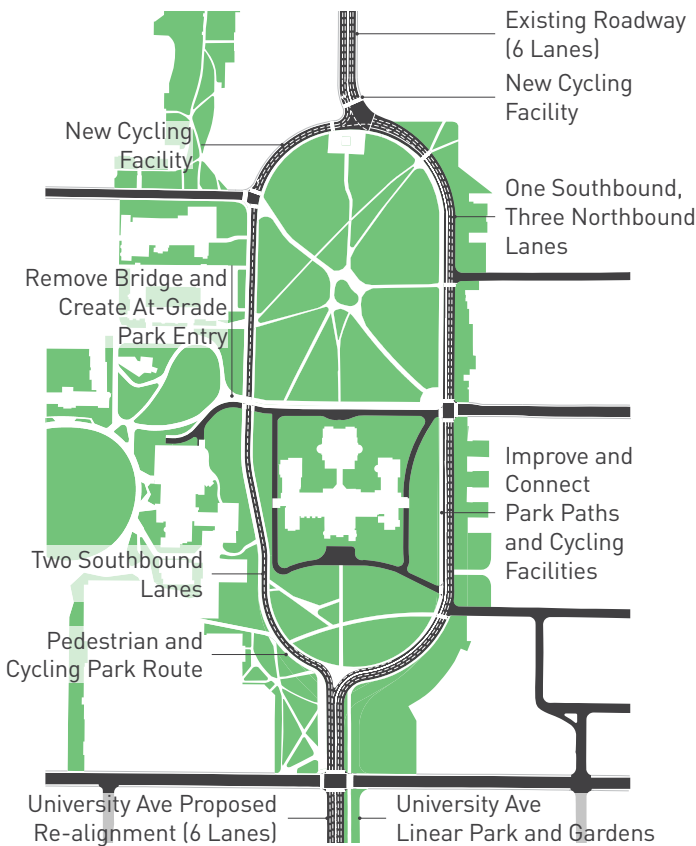
- Maintain the existing roadway – four northbound and four southbound lanes on Queen’s Park Cres.
- Remove bridge and create at-grade west park entry at Hart House Circle and Wellesley St to enhance safety and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Improve and connect park paths and cycling facilities where feasible.

Proposed Option B: Reduce number of lanes; improve connections for pedestrians and cyclists

- Reduce number of lanes to three northbound lanes and three southbound lanes, consistent with the vision for six lanes on University Ave to the south and the existing six lanes to the north.
- Remove bridge and create at-grade west park entry.
- Use space gained in the right-of-way to improve and connect park paths and cycling facilities.

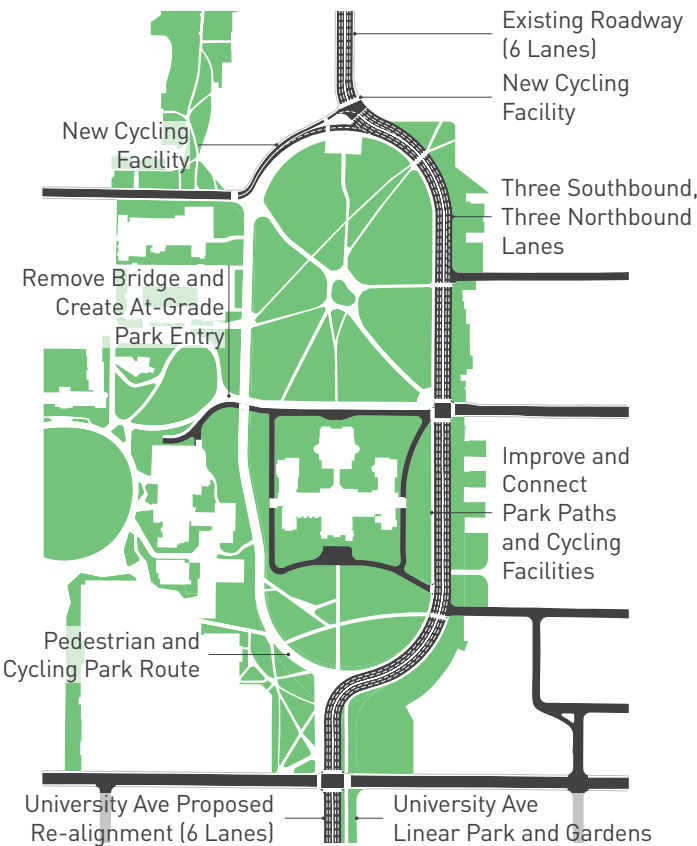


(right) Bird's Eye View of Queen's Park, 1876, showing Taddle Creek and a continuous park connection between Queen's Park and the University of Toronto campus on the park's west edge, Toronto, Canada



Proposed Option C: Re-balance north and southbound lanes; create a park route on Queen's Park Cres West

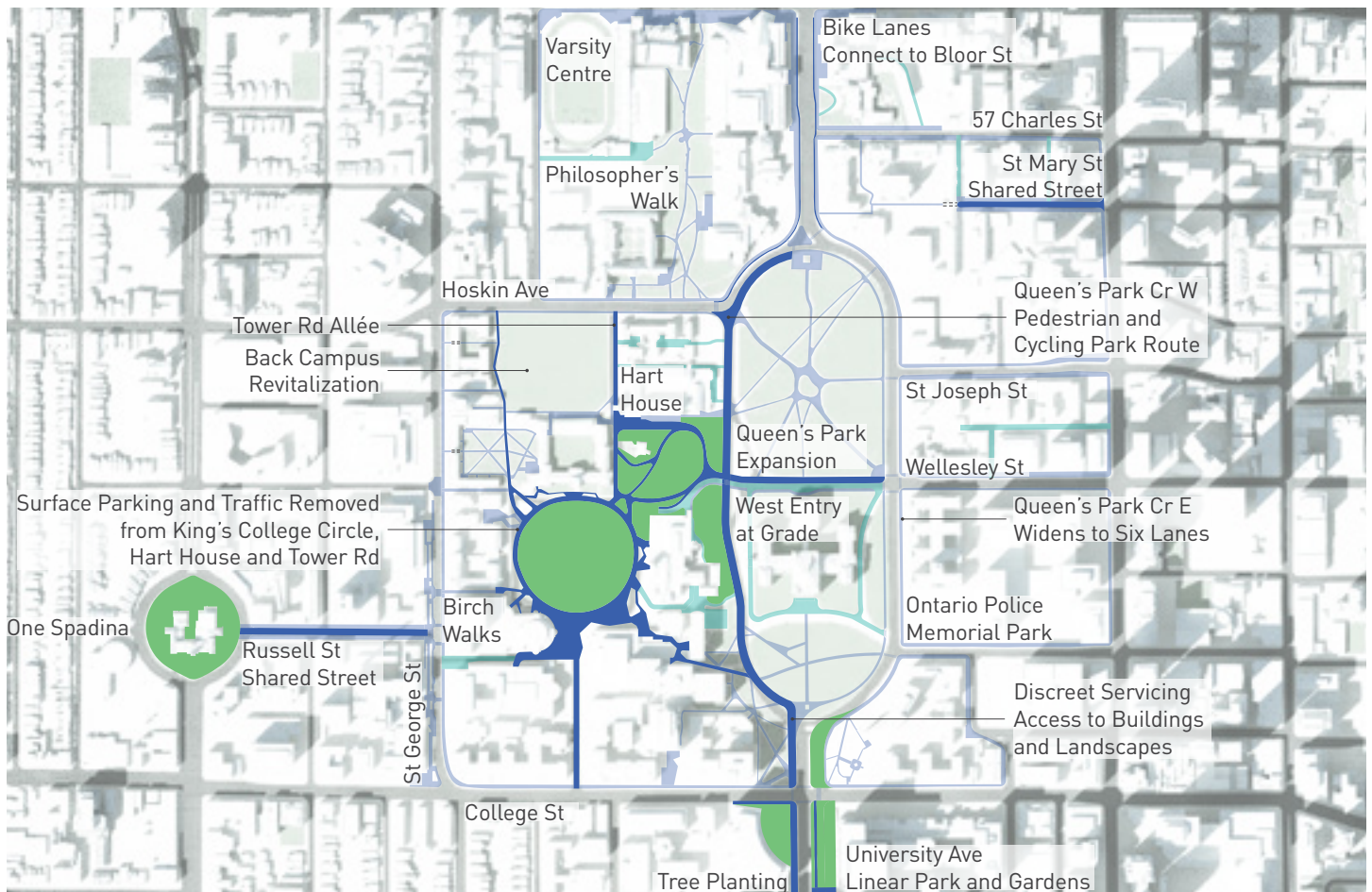
- Re-balance Queen's Park Cres with two southbound lanes on the west side, and one southbound and three northbound lanes on the east side.
- Create a pedestrian and cycling park route on the west side and provide servicing access.
- Remove bridge and create at-grade west park entry.



Proposed Option D: Consolidate north and southbound lanes; create a park route on Queen's Park Cres West

- Consolidate three northbound and three southbound lanes on Queen's Park Cres East.
- Create a pedestrian and cycling park route on the west side and provide servicing access, creating a continuous park experience between Queen's Park and the University of Toronto campus.
- Remove bridge and create at-grade west park entry.

TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA 4. PARK DISTRICTS



The Queen's Park Precinct, Proposed Concept Plan

- Hardscape public realm project
- Green public realm project
- Sidewalks and safe crossings
- Servicing and vehicular access

(right) *The Central Park Mall, a North American model for the pedestrian and cycling park route, New York, United States*



Goals

Celebrate Ontario's Legislature Building and surrounding heritage structures and landscapes with a cohesive, connected and pedestrian-oriented public realm. Strengthen the identity of the precinct as a setting for the Provincial Government, and to support tourism and public assemblies.

- Integrate into a cohesive whole the major open spaces within the Precinct, including the forecourt south of the Legislative building, the side yards, and the open spaces around Queen's Park.
- Re-imagine the west crescent as a Park Street that prioritizes pedestrians and cyclists, improves safety and enhances connectivity to the University of Toronto open space network.
- Create inviting gateways to the precinct through intersection improvements at College and University, Queen's Park Crescent where it meets Wellesley, Hoskin and Queen's Park North, and at Bloor and Avenue Road.
- Connect the Queen's Park Precinct to the Civic Precinct through a University Avenue linear park (see Great Streets – University Avenue).
- Limit surface parking and the impact of vehicles in the Precinct.

Actions

- Undertake a Queen's Park South Public Realm Plan and Technical Feasibility Assessment, including advancing the preliminary engineering and cost of potential options for improvements to the public realm in collaboration with the Legislature and the University of Toronto, with city-wide engagement.
- Undertake a technical study to design options for the Queen's Park Crescent West and Wellesley / Hoskin intersections.
- Coordinate public realm visions and both the short and longer term improvements being considered through the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan with the Queen's Park North Management Plan and the University of Toronto Secondary Plan processes.