TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA 4. PARK DISTRICTS

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

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

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

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

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 (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.

**TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA 4. PARK DISTRICTS**

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

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

* Park Districts 17-23 have been developed through other planning documents
Map showing proposed Park Districts, Toronto, Canada
As a Great Street, the vision for University Avenue reconfigures 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 Civic Precinct at University Avenue and Queen Street. Building on this transformation, the Civic Precinct vision celebrates and connects our civic buildings with a cohesive, connected and pedestrian-oriented public realm.
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
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).

**Goals**

**Actions**

- 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.

(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
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.

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...
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.

(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
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.
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.
The Queen’s Park Precinct, Proposed Concept Plan

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