



Grange Community Association
www.grangecommunity.ca

March 25th, 2025

Re: CC 28.1 - Queens Park North Philanthropic Partnerships

We have reviewed the staff report regarding the proposed donation from the Weston family for Queens Park North.

We heartily endorse the principles and sentiments outlined in the letter to Council from the Harbord Village Residents Association.

Given the short supply of open green space in the downtown core, this important site should retain qualities which provide environmental protection for forestry attributes and bird habitat. We fail to see how events and event infrastructure will provide this protection. These activities must be limited in scale and frequency.

Recently the Grange Community Association worked with the Art Gallery of Ontario, OCADU and others regarding the revitalization of Grange Park.

Central to this process was:

- the establishment of an advisory group to oversee the process;
- the development of a design brief (copied as an appendix);
- A commitment to regular community/neighbourhood consultation;
- That the process be community led.

Among the principles agreed upon, was that Grange Park continue its tradition of providing a place for contemplation and that advertising signage be prohibited. It was also agreed that events/programming be limited to ensure that the park remains accessible at all times to the neighbourhood and to that end criteria for permits were agreed upon.



We urge City Council to be mindful of the impact of overuse and to ensure meaningful community engagement as you move forward with this donation.

We are a neighbourhood directly south and are members of the University of Toronto's Community Liaison Committee. As such we are prepared to participate in the consultation process.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ceta', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Ceta Ramkhalawansingh
President, Grange Community Association

Appendx A – Grange Park Design Brief: 2009



Appendix A – Design Brief for Grange Park

DESIGN BRIEF FOR GRANGE PARK (2009)

Vision Statement

“A restoration and revitalization plan for Grange Park that will be green, strikingly beautiful, resilient, sustainable, accessible, interactive as well as providing a place for contemplation while welcoming all neighbours, residents and visitors to our community by utilizing design excellence, state of the art conservation techniques and outstanding works of art.”

Background:

Grange Park is a two-hectare greenspace in downtown Toronto. The park was originally part of the Grange estate built in 1820 by the Boulton family, who played an influential role in developing the young city of Toronto. The area now known as Grange Park served as the Boulton family's front lawn, with a pathway leading from John Street to the front door of The Grange house and an elliptical path for carriages. These pathways remain in the park today, as a testament to its heritage.

In 1910, Harriette Boulton Smith bequeathed The Grange house and estate to the newly founded Art Gallery of Toronto, for the purposes of building an art museum on the property. In 1911, the Gallery entered into an agreement with the City of Toronto to operate the land south of Grange House as a public park. This agreement still stands between the AGO and the City, and Grange Park has become a well-loved and well-used neighbourhood park.

In the mid-1970's, Grange Park was expanded through the South East Spadina Part 2 Plan process through the closure of Grange Road (from Beverley to John) and John Street (from Stephanie to Grange Road), to establish the area that comprises the park today.

Grange Park currently serves a daytime population of approximately 5,000 people including neighbourhood residents, local office workers, college students, families and seniors. The park is within a 5-minute walk of a number of social housing communities serving 3,000 residents, who depend on Grange Park as their primary outdoor space or “backyard”. The park is versatile for its small size, providing a pastoral setting for individuals to relax, as well as a place for outdoor activities for daycare groups, children's camps and afterschool groups. It is a favourite destination for dog walkers, tai chi practitioners, cyclists and parents/grandparents with young children who spend hours in the wading pool during the summer and at the playground year round. It's a pleasant shortcut between Dundas and Queen Streets for pedestrians and cyclists. The large lawn in the middle of the park attracts spontaneous bouts of soccer, Frisbee playing and catch, and depending on the year, an outdoor ice rink. And the large trees provide a cool and quiet spot to read, snack and snooze during hot summer days.

Due to ongoing restrictions in City funding, Grange Park, like many inner city public parks, has deteriorated – uneven pathways, dilapidated benches and playground equipment, extensive areas of bare ground, poorly maintained trees.



Grange Park has a remarkable potential to be revitalized into a welcoming and versatile park that serves its diverse local community as well as a distinctive greenspace destination that reflects its history and unique juxtaposition with the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ontario College of Art and Design and other important neighbourhood institutions – University Settlement and St. George the Martyr Church.

In an unprecedented spirit of cooperation between local residents and the AGO, facilitated by Councillor Adam Vaughan, a Grange Park Advisory Committee has been formed to move the revitalization project forward. The 15-person Committee, co-chaired by AGO Vice-President Rupert Duchesne and Councillor Vaughan, reports to the AGO Board of Trustees and includes representatives from the AGO, OCAD, University Settlement (a community centre at the south end of the park), St. George the Martyr Church (located immediately south of the park), City of Toronto Parks department, local residents and two at-large members with expertise in development. The AGO has committed to finding the funding for the revitalization of Grange Park and serving as the managerial lead for the project. This innovative and collaborative approach to park revitalization is being carefully watched as a model for future projects.

Starting Points: Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities

Strengths

- Rich and interesting history – 1800's to present
- Well loved and well used by diverse user groups
- Natural beauty, existing mature trees, nice 'moments'
- Essential recreational and green resource
- Major institutions with bold new additions – AGO, OCAD
- Timing, interest and potential for transformation
- Galvanizing leadership at institutional/civic/community levels
- Presence of strong and engaged residential community
- Presence of community serving agencies, University Settlement. St. George the Martyr Church, and the Toronto Community Housing Co-operation

Weaknesses

- Currently run down and poorly maintained – City resources stretched
- Safety concerns
- Size a challenge for intensity of use and competing demands
- Awkward edge conditions on perimeter
- Mature trees vulnerable to loss

Opportunities

- Unprecedented alliance of the local residents, Art Gallery of Ontario, City Hall, and neighbouring institutions to work together to improve the park
- AGO leadership will seek out a distinctive multi-use design that reflects the park's "art-zone".
- Reconfiguration of the eastern entrance to Grange Park from Grange Road
- Expansion of Grange Park through the rezoning of 4 Grange Road to parkland.



Realizing Grange Park's full potential:

The overall approach will be to keep the majority of the park landscape relatively simple and unencumbered and improve its basic ingredients: well-tended, healthy lawns, trees, understory plantings and gardens and well designed paths, paths and paving, furnishings, lighting, irrigation, and 'green' sustainable features. Flows and circulation need to be carefully considered in relation to desire lines and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Within this powerful but simple green landscape frame, there is an opportunity to unlock Grange Park's latent potential to be a park of local, regional *and* national significance. In the spirit of great urban parks, Grange Park can serve as a rich common ground for community use and accommodate a broader spectrum of users and visitors.

This green oasis must accommodate an active program of recreational and community activities addressing the needs of diverse users including younger children, youth, seniors and people with disabilities. It must pay tribute to the unique ethno-racial heritage in the community and create a safe and welcoming environment. The security of children's play areas and the availability of clean and safe public washrooms are important considerations.

The park design will also exploit the potential for synergies within its larger context. Looking from the surrounding city into the site, Grange Park forms a natural cultural 'crossroads' at the intersection of vital neighbourhoods, great cultural institutions including the AGO and OCAD, historic neighbourhood serving institutions such as the University Settlement and the St. George the Martyr Church, with a direct sightline into the park from John Street.

Given that Grange Park is a relatively small park, a sophisticated park design is required that overlaps and connects diverse needs. Rather than attributing a separate space to each use, this approach will seek to accommodate diverse needs in multipurpose settings, including art, traditional play elements, water features and gathering spaces. This will contribute to Grange Park's distinctive character. It will take inspiration from its users and from great parks with a powerful artistic dimension and integrate the arts in a 'creative playground' for all ages, for the mind, the senses and the body as in Chicago's Millennium Park with the 'Crown Fountain' by Jaume Plensa, and the 'Cloud' by Anish Kapoor.

While it is anticipated that interactive sculpture may be concentrated in certain areas to free up much of the park landscape, it may be desirable in meeting the full range of user needs for some of the play features to flow out into other areas of the park establishing a family of related areas as part of the park's 'furniture'.

Bearing in mind the park's location and context, it will accommodate some opportunities for events and performances but these will be controlled both in terms of design and operations to respect the parks unique dual nature as both neighbourhood park and cultural destination.

Each of the edges of the park needs important consideration and there are significant opportunities to improve on the park's currently awkward boundary conditions. There is an important heritage dimension with the historic relationship to Grange House which the park design should address. The design will incorporate the 4 Grange Road property and establish a continuity of green space from the existing park to Butterfield Park and McCaul Street, with regard for necessary access to University Settlement and



security regarding the children's play areas. There are also opportunities to forge new relationships with surrounding properties, most notably the AGO, OCAD, and St. George the Martyr, allowing the sealed edges to be selectively opened in a way which is sensitive to impacts on the park.

Existing Environment:

The existing natural and built environment of the park tends to divide the park into three natural zones and two built areas that inherently welcome different types of activities (see attached map):

ZONE A - Quiet and Shady - This area has a pastoral quality with a well established tree canopy. It lends itself to sitting out and informal recreational uses with the potential for more planting beds, shade-tolerant grasses and alternatives to turf for groundcover. This character can be strengthened with trees located off the main path. Secondary and tertiary paths can be incorporated into the redesign of this area of the park. The paths will allow pedestrians to meander under the tree canopy in the shade, but will also direct movement away from ecologically sensitive areas. Mulch or fencing can be used around the trunk of the trees as a technique to protect root zone.

ZONE B – Great Lawn - This more open area has the most potential to be the Great Lawn of the park. It receives the most amount of sunlight during the growing months, which is the best condition for turf. This lawn can serve a variety of recreational purposes as the major sunlit gathering space in the park. There may be some sensitivity around altering the historic axial path leading to Grange House and this will have to be handled carefully. Under-storey growth around trees at the perimeter of the lawn area can form helpful buffers that provide vegetative diversity.

ZONE C – Interactive Play Sculpture – This area lends itself to providing the most active programming in the park. Considering the size of the park and the established landscape characters of zones A and B, this is an ideal area to concentrate the interactive play sculptural pieces framing the Great Lawn (the existing wading pool and playground are located here). The provision for interactive play should take into account that toddlers require an area somewhat separated from that for older children with comfortable sitting areas for parents and consideration given to security. The north east corner of the park is currently underutilized and has the potential in association with more active use in the George Reid House and a possible future link to OCAD to form a secondary gathering area away from the major pathway intersection of the park.

Area 1– Crossroads Hub - This area is the major 'crossroads' in the park where the major east-west and north-south movements intersect. It has the potential to form an active hub and plaza-like gathering space and sitting out area for all park users.

Area 2 – John Street Promenade - The John Street approach is a key connection to Queen Street and a very important entrance to the park from the south. It provides a well used area for park users to sit along its edges and enjoy watching the passing flow.



First steps:

The first step for the revitalization project was to assess the existing environmental health of the park and identify measures that could be taken to improve its natural strength and resilience. PMA Landscape Architects were engaged to conduct an audit of the trees, turf, soil and sunlight. The study confirmed that the park is in generally good health, despite some maintenance neglect. 90% of the 169 trees are healthy (16 trees have been identified for removal for safety reasons). The soil is good quality loam, but subject to compaction due to the active use of the park. The existing grassy areas are subject to bare patches due to extensive use and lack of sunlight. Overall, insufficient sunlight is getting into the park to adequately sustain the trees and turf.

The PMA report presented a Conservation Use Plan that identified a three-part strategy to strengthen the park's natural environment:

- Immediate Actions to be undertaken to improve the parks health
- Future Use Planning and Re-Design recommendations
- Ongoing Maintenance recommendations

The Immediate Actions as recommended in the Conservation Use Plan including removal of dead trees and trees in poor health; soil de-compaction, fertilization and mulching and pruning. All of the immediate actions may be undertaken independent of any redesign activity for the park. Steps are currently underway to refine and coordinate this program of enhanced maintenance activities with the City of Toronto Parks Department, Forestry and Recreation Division to be carried out in the spring and fall of 2009.

The Future Use Planning and Re-Design recommendations address the basic ingredients of the park landscape. The size of the park and the intensity of its use pose a challenge. Examining the tree canopy, soils and the ability to maintain healthy lawns, illumination and patterns of use, the Plan identifies areas of the park which are best suited to hard and soft surfaces, desire lines connecting more active areas and types of planting. These recommendations and observations will be taken into account as designs are prepared for the revitalization of the Park.

Next Steps

The AGO in partnership with GPAC has proposed a new process to restore and revitalize the park in consultation with the City of Toronto. This arrangement which will be formalized in an agreement with the City will give the responsibility of fund raising and project management of the design and implementation of the park revitalization to the AGO working with GPAC. Fundraising activity is underway. While dependent on fundraising the intent is for park design to begin during the summer of 2009 with work on the park beginning in the summer of 2010 with work to be completed in 2011.



Ongoing Maintenance on Completion of the Restoration

The Ongoing Maintenance recommendations in the Conservation Use Plan call for an annual program of pruning, root protection and regular re-planting. This will be incorporated in an annual Maintenance Program working with the City Parks and Recreation Dept. to complement its scheduled operations for the Park.