

Beach and Toronto Island Park Accessibility

Presentation to Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Background

Purpose:

The purpose of this presentation is to provide the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee an update on accessibility at Toronto's beaches ([2024.EX18.11](#)) and at Toronto Island Park ([2024.EX18.12](#)).

Summary:

- Parks, Forestry and Recreation considers waterfront accessibility through:
 - Improving access and connectivity as well as providing accessible experiences on land, at beaches and in the water.
 - Enhancing visitor experience by creating safe and comfortable spaces, upgrading park facilities and amenities, designing park spaces to ensure universal accessibility needs and requirements.

Accessibility at Toronto Beaches

Operating Toronto Beaches

- Parks, Forestry and Recreation maintains Toronto's waterfront for public access year-round, this includes inspections and maintenance to ensure obstructions that may impact access are managed.
- There are 10 supervised swimming beaches in Toronto, eight of which have received the Blue Flag Award. Lifeguards provide supervision during designated times from June to early August and from mid-August to September.
- Toronto's waterfront parks include accessible benches and picnic tables wherever feasible.
- Accessible beach mats enabling access are also currently in place at:
 - Woodbine
 - Sir Casimir Gzowski
 - Budapest
 - Ward's Beach on Toronto Island.

Assessing Beaches

- The Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG) outline the essential features that render a beach accessible, including continuous, uninterrupted access from parking areas or accessible pathways to the water's edge, beach-accessible facilities such as washrooms and change rooms, and specialized features like beach mats to facilitate mobility device access to the shoreline.
- Beach accessibility is assessed through a multi-faceted approach that considers compliance with the TADG and other regulatory frameworks, user experience, and on-site evaluation of Parks, Forestry and Recreation assets.
- This ensures a comprehensive understanding of how our beaches meet accessibility standards and provide equitable access for all users.

Investing in Beach Accessibility

- Parks, Forestry and Recreation is working to procure accessible beach mats for installation at the City's ten supervised swimming beaches in 2025. As a part of the capital program, any washroom upgrades near beachfronts will also incorporate improved accessibility.
- An accessible washroom and a boardwalk at Bluffer's Park Beach is underway to be completed in 2025.



Investing in Accessibility

- The Parks, Forestry and Recreation Ten-Year Capital Budget and Plan includes annual funding for Accessibility initiatives in various buildings and parks. All new or expanded assets incorporate accessibility components where applicable.
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation also actively monitors funding opportunities and has a successful track record of securing intergovernmental funds for specific projects. This proactive approach ensures the necessary resources are in place to support enhanced beach accessibility.

Accessibility at Toronto Island Park

Toronto Island Park

- Parks, Forestry and Recreation strives to ensure Toronto Island Park is a place for everyone with limited or no obstacles and barriers to getting there and getting around the Island itself. This includes accessing dock areas, ferries, buildings, and park amenities, as well as the Island attractions, beaches and the many natural experiences the Islands have to offer.
- The Island currently includes various accessibility features:
 - Year-round ferry services: operating accessible ferries between the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal and the Toronto Islands, ensuring year-round connectivity.
 - Accessible amenities: many public washrooms are equipped with ramps and feature wheelchair-accessible stalls.
 - Vendor accessibility plans: Island vendors are required to develop and implement accessibility plans that adhere to provincial and city accessibility guidelines.

Toronto Island Park Master Plan

The Toronto Island Park Master Plan was adopted by Council in July 2024, which is a 25+ year plan that prioritizes accessibility and equitable access to the overall experience.

Key Recommendations:

- Enhanced water transportation: new electric vessels and ferry landing upgrades for better accessibility.
- Improving access and connection: wayfinding improvements and accessible connections.
- Enhancing visitor experience: safe and comfortable spaces to ensure universal accessibility and upgrading park facilities and amenities.
- Elevating equity and belonging: accessible movement through the park, accessible program delivery and additional partnerships to include accessible options.

Recommendations are intended to be adapted and implemented over time as priorities are established, budgets are approved, and the detailed plans are coordinated to ensure alignment with other Island improvements.

Ongoing Engagement Efforts

Engagement

- Parks, Forestry and Recreation ensures meaningful public engagement by incorporating engagement with facility users, including users with assistive devices and mobility aids, local community members and stakeholder groups, local Councillor, to ensure the process is iterative and responsive to local needs.
- The division leads its own community steering committee, comprising members of staff, representatives of community organizations, and individuals. The Committee acts as a consultation body who support the mission to be a fair and equitable service provider to all.
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation also engages and collaborates internally with other City divisions to ensure the amenities and features being planned/designed/constructed remain accessible.
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation will continue to engage with the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee on future projects.

Thank you