

Queen's Park North Donation - Concept Plan Update Report - Supplementary Report

Date: June 24, 2026
To: City Council
From: City Manager
Wards: 11- University-Rosedale

SUMMARY

This supplementary report responds to a request from the Infrastructure and Environment Committee at its meeting on June 10, 2026 to report directly to City Council with additional information regarding the Queen's Park North revitalization project.

Queen's Park North is Canada's oldest municipal park and one of the most significant green spaces in Toronto's downtown. It is a signature park, defined by its extensive tree canopy, cultural heritage landscape, and long-standing role as a place of gathering, expression, and reflection.

The planned revitalization, supported by a donation from the Weston Foundation, is intended to enhance the park as a green oasis while advancing excellence in design, ecological stewardship, education, animation, and collaborative governance.

In response to Committee direction, this report:

- Outlines the approval process for the detailed design of the concept plan, and
- Identifies opportunities to showcase the revitalization of Queen's Park North.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the Project Governance Structure (section A), the composition of the detailed design working group (section B), detailed design process (section C), and the phased approach to showcasing the project (section D) in this report and direct the Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency

Service and Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Services to ensure these elements are fully integrated into the project.

2. City Council direct the City Manager to develop and implement a corporate process for receiving, evaluating, resourcing, and governing donation proposals for signature capital projects that align with Council-approved priorities and demonstrate significant civic value and broad public impact.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no immediate financial impacts resulting from the recommendation in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on June 10, 2026, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee amended item [2026.IE30.8](https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.IE30.8) - Queen's Park North Donation - Concept Plan Update Report, from the General Manager, Parks and Recreation and Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry. As part of that decision, Infrastructure and Environment Committee requested the City Manager to report to the June 24, 25, and 26 meeting of City Council with a supplementary report that outlines the approval process for the detailed design of the current concept plan and identify opportunities to showcase the revitalization of Queen's Park North.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.IE30.8>

At its meeting on March 25 and 26, 2026, City Council adopted recommendations for the *Update on the Weston Foundation Donation for Queen's Park North Revitalization* that authorized staff to negotiate a donation agreement of up to \$50 million with the Weston Foundation and a tri-party agreement with the University of Toronto, subject to approval of an updated Concept Plan. City Council also directed staff to report to Infrastructure and Environment Committee in June 2026 with an updated Concept Plan, draft terms of reference for the Queen's Park North Advisory Body, and additional information on the business plan for the proposed food and beverage component. Further direction included advancing an Urban Forest Management Plan and a Public Art Plan.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.EX29.3>

At its meeting on March 26 and 27, 2025, City Council authorized staff to negotiate and execute agreements with the Weston Foundation to support community engagement, design, and delivery of improvements to Queen's Park North, and directed staff to report back in Fall 2025 with an implementation update and recommended terms of a donation agreement.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.CC28.1>

COMMENTS

Overview

The proposed revitalization of Queen's Park North provides an opportunity to strengthen and showcase one of Toronto's signature public spaces.

Following City Council direction in March 2026, staff advanced a range of Council-directed studies and engagement activities to inform the updated Concept Plan and future operating model for Queen's Park North.

This work included advancement of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), a draft Statement of Significance, a public art framework, a food and beverage (F&B) feasibility assessment, and consultations with the Design Review Panel, the 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee, and a third phase of City-led public and stakeholder engagement. Feedback received through these processes directly informed revisions to the Concept Plan presented to Infrastructure and Environment Committee in June 2026.

At its meeting on June 10, 2026, Committee requested additional clarity and directed staff to report back to the June meeting of City Council on the approval process for the detailed design of the current concept and to identify opportunities to showcase the Queen's Park North revitalization.

A. Project Governance Structure

The next phases of the revitalization project will be directed by an internal staff governance structure led by the Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency Services and Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Services (DCMs).

The DCMs will chair regular meetings of the Project Leadership Table for project updates and decision-making attended by division heads and project leads from City Planning, Communications, Corporate Real Estate Management, Economic Development and Culture, Environment, Climate and Forestry, and Parks and Recreation. Leadership from other relevant divisions will be included where appropriate.

The Project Leadership Table will provide direction and decision-making oversight for the project team. The project team includes City staff positions dedicated to the project, combining expertise in landscape architecture, urban design, forestry, partnerships, construction management, community engagement, project management and more. The project team also includes staff from across City divisions whose work is coordinated through the staff Technical Advisory Committee.

The project team will be adjusted as needed to reflect the requirements of each phase of work. In preparation for forthcoming phases including detailed design, construction and implementation of the new park governance framework, the City will retain an Executive Project Manager who will lead the project updates to the Project Leadership Table, chair the Queen's Park North Detailed Design Working Group (see below), collaborate with donor representatives and the University of Toronto, and be

responsible for the project schedule and project delivery. The Executive Project Manager reports to the DCMs.

The Project Leadership Table will make decisions at defined design milestones identified in Table 1 below. This evidence-based decision-making will be informed by information presented by the project team from the ongoing Council-directed studies (e.g. Urban Forestry Management Plan), comments from the Design Review Panel, input from the Queen's Park North Detailed Design Working Group (DDWG) and feedback from the community engagement process (see Appendix 1). Community engagement activities and updates throughout the detailed design phase will support an open, transparent exchange of project information and stakeholder feedback.

The Deputy City Managers and Executive Project Manager will meet regularly with the donor and the University of Toronto to address emerging issues and support timely advancement of the project. The project governance structure is calibrated to ensure there is ongoing alignment among the three parties and clear City leadership on key decisions.

The Project Leadership Table, chaired by the DCMs, will be accountable for decision-making on behalf of the City during the detailed design phase. As parties to the future tri-party agreement and donation agreements, the University of Toronto and donor will be accountable for parallel decision-making within their own organizations as the project progresses.

The project governance structure applied to the Queen's Park North project will inform the refinement of the City's approach to the governance, project management and resourcing of other significant inter-divisional capital projects. Staff will develop and implement an approach to receiving major capital donations and advancing donation-supported projects.

The project governance structure is illustrated in Appendix 1.

B. Detailed Design Working Group

As recommended in the June 8, 2026 report to Infrastructure and Environment Committee, City staff will convene the Queen's Park North Detailed Design Working Group to review all elements related to the concept and provide structured stakeholder input into the development of detailed design, the draft Terms of Reference for the future Queen's Park North Advisory Body and other matters in keeping with City Council direction. The Urban Forest Management Plan Phase 2 workplan including developing tree protection strategies will be available to the Working Group as detailed design advances. The Working Group serves an advisory function to support decision-making by the City's Project Leadership Table.

The DDWG will be chaired by the Executive Project Manager. Staff from relevant City divisions will participate in presentations and discussions at the DDWG.

The Detailed Design Working Group will include thirteen members representing the University of Toronto, the donor, residents and other experts appointed by the City. The

DDWG is proposed to include the following membership composition described in Table 1. Member appointments will be selected by the Deputy City Managers for Community and Emergency Services and Infrastructure Services.

Table 1: Detailed Design Working Group Composition

#	Stakeholder	Notes
2	University of Toronto	Associate Director, University Planning and Director of Building Services, Grounds, and Trades
1	Donor Representation	
1	Bay Cloverhill Community Association	
1	Friends of Queen's Park North	
3	Project Focus Group Member	Appointed from members of the Trees and Nature, Heritage, 2SLGBT+ and Student focus groups
2	Expert Advisors	Independent professionals appointed by the City from landscape architecture, urban design, forestry and other relevant professions
1		Independent architecture expert advisor appointed by the City
2	Councillors	Local Ward Councillor and Chair of Infrastructure & Environment Committee
13	TOTAL	

As directed by the Infrastructure and Environment Committee, City staff will establish the terms of reference and administrative operations for the DDWG. The Terms of Reference will confirm the mandate for the group, roles and responsibilities for members, meeting procedures, the meeting schedule and alignment with project schedule milestones and other matters. Following completion of the detailed design, the Queen's Park North Advisory Body will be initiated by the Project Leadership Table.

Staff recommend Council approval on the concept elements that are outlined in Appendix 2 to the report (June 8, 2026) from the General Manager Parks and Recreation and Executive Director, Environment, Climate, and Forestry (Queen's Park North Donation - Concept Plan Update Report <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.IE30.8>) and listed here:

- Learning forest: designed to protect root zones from compaction and minimize new impacts to trees
- Elevated tree path
- Restoration zones
- Opportunities for Indigenous placekeeping throughout the park, including at key locations: developed with First Nations and Indigenous communities
- Heart of the park as a flexible public gathering space
- A year-round café in a permanent structure
- Public washrooms as a separate structure from the café
- Flexible performance platform
- Water feature
- Commemorative garden
- Running path
- Relocated King Edward VII sculpture
- Pedestrian crossing improvements

The final execution of these elements will be determined by the detailed design process and decided by the City's Project Leadership Table. The final execution of these elements will be informed by expert guidance, Council directed studies, assessment of any required lease amendments, and additional feasibility studies. The overarching character and sense of place of the park as a green oasis and urban forest in downtown Toronto will be the guiding principle of the detailed design.

Neighbouring Institutions Working Group

The Neighbouring Institutions Working Group (NIWG) was established in July 2025 as part of the City-led design engagement process. Members represent the educational and cultural institutions that surround Queen's Park North, including the University of Toronto, University of St. Michael's College, Regis College, Victoria University, Trinity College, Hart House, The Royal Conservatory of Music, the Royal Ontario Museum, The Gardiner Museum and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

City staff will continue to engage the NIWG at key milestones during detailed design. This will ensure ongoing input on design development and coordination with surrounding institutions. The NIWG will also contribute to the development of the programming framework to be brought forward to City Council in 2027.

C. Detailed Design Process

The detailed design phase will be delivered through a structured, milestone-based process that integrates stakeholder input at defined points while maintaining schedule discipline.

Design development will proceed through four formal submission stages (30%, 60%, 90% and 100%). At each stage, the design consultant will advance drawings and technical documentation, which are then reviewed through a coordinated process led by the City. All comments are compiled by the City project team into a formal comment matrix.

Design development will be informed by parallel work streams, including the Council-directed studies such as the Urban Forestry Management Plan, cultural heritage work, public art plan, food and beverage feasibility assessment, and assessment of required amendments to the lease to ensure that the design can be implemented. In consultation with the Chief Planner and other relevant City officials, staff will ensure that during the detailed design phase of work, up-to-date information is available regarding underground utilities and other servicing required for the proposed café.

The process is designed with three consistent steps at each milestone:

1. Structured input (time-limited)

Design packages are circulated concurrently to:

- City divisions and technical agencies
- University of Toronto
- The Detailed Design Working Group

The Detailed Design Working Group meets at defined points to review specific design elements or themes and provide advice. Additional input is sought from:

- First Nations partners at each milestone
- The Neighbouring Institutions Working Group at key points

All input is requested within a defined review period aligned to the project schedule.

2. Consolidation and assessment (City-led)

City project leads compile comments into a formal comment matrix. The Project Leadership Table reviews and confirms City directions, informed by:

- Technical requirements and City standards
- Council-directed studies (e.g. Urban Forest Management Plan)
- Design Review Panel advice
- Structured stakeholder input

3. Direction to consultant and design advancement

A single, coordinated set of City directions is issued to the design consultant once approved by the Project Leadership Table. The consultant revises the design to address confirmed directions. The updated design advances to the next milestone.

This approach ensures that:

- Stakeholder input is consistently incorporated at each stage of design
- Feedback is transparent and traceable through the formal comment matrix
- Design progression remains efficient, with input gathered within defined timelines rather than on an ongoing or ad hoc basis.

The Detailed Design Working Group plays an advisory role in this process. It provides focused input on key design matters but does not replace or duplicate the City's formal review and decision-making processes.

The Project Leadership Table, chaired by the Deputy City Managers, retains accountability for all City decisions at each milestone. The donor and the University of Toronto, as partners to the project, are engaged throughout the process to maintain alignment and support coordinated advancement of the design.

Following final acceptance at the 100% stage, the design will be approved for tender and proceed to construction procurement.

City staff will host Community Update Meetings at key milestones and provide regular updates through the project website, project listserv and information on-site in the park. Additional community outreach activities will take place in preparation for and during construction.

Staff will report back to City Council in the first quarter of 2027 with a project update report, including updates on detailed design, construction, programming framework and the development and implementation of the governance model.

D. Showcasing and Communicating the Project

Queen's Park North is one of the most significant parks in Toronto and will be subject to an innovative revitalization that enhances its character as a green oasis and showcases design excellence and ecological stewardship. The City's communications approach for the revitalization project is intended to provide clear, consistent information to the public throughout the various stages of design, construction and post-construction implementation. The strategy will highlight opportunities for ongoing community involvement and showcase the layers of ecological significance, cultural significance, history, design and collaboration in creative, engaging and educational ways, building a sense of community enthusiasm.

Throughout the detailed design phase, the City will continue to provide opportunities for the broader public to remain informed and engaged, including community update meetings, regular online updates, and targeted outreach. This work will complement the structured input received through advisory and working group processes.

Similar to the launch of other large park projects like Biidaasige Park and Centennial Park, the objective of the City's communications will aim to:

- Help people understand the size and importance of the project, and how it will benefit Toronto's environment, economy, and communities both now and in the future.
- Showcase what makes the space unique and special.
- Share stories about the people and communities who will use the space to create an emotional connection and show the project's real-life impact.

- Highlight activations, events and project milestones for public participation and awareness.

Since the revitalization takes a trees and nature-first approach, the strategy will focus on celebrating the park's most unique characteristic, its mature and diverse urban forest.

Throughout each phase, the City will capture the importance of tree protection, ecological restoration and strengthening the long-term health and resilience of this vital urban ecosystem. A focus will also be placed on the long-term stewardship and management, programming and Indigenous placekeeping, ensuring the park continues to thrive as a cultural and ecological anchor for the city.

Project implementation will take place over several years. The communications strategy is guided by a proactive, milestone approach, highlighting the progress of the project through phases:

Phase 1: Concept and Design – building a foundational concept and detailed design with community that balances quiet natural preservation with accessible, people-centred spaces and embeds Indigenous culture, history, and storytelling throughout the park.

Phase 2: Construction Progress – providing timely updates on the progress made and changes on-site while protecting the park's trees, addressing construction impacts and maintaining welcoming spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Phase 3: Opening Celebration – together with stakeholders, partners and community, celebrating milestones of the revitalization, including construction completion.

Phase 4: Park Activations and Updates – keeping park users updated on an ongoing basis that highlights the park's unique features and the enhanced approach to programming, operations and maintenance.

As the project develops, individual communications plans will be developed to capture the current phase of the project. Throughout Phase 1, the communications plan focuses on four main themes:

- Fostering a world-class park for Toronto
- Protecting and improving the park's trees, plants, and natural areas for the long term
- Showing how public feedback helped shape the project
- Generating excitement for the project vision, to make the park an extraordinary public space for people and nature throughout the seasons

Information will be shared through media, social media, the City's webpage, newsletters, community partners, and public engagement activities.

The project process to date has captured a wealth of information on the natural and cultural significance and history of the park as well as individual stories. This information will be shared with the public in engaging formats including in the park (e.g. interpretive signage, QR codes), online on the park webpage and in interactive materials. The

project team will work to identify near-term opportunities along these lines to engage the public in parallel with construction.

Through clear and consistent communication, the City will support public understanding of the project, demonstrate responsiveness to feedback, and build awareness and confidence as the revitalization progresses.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1 - Project Governance Diagram

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