



### Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting 1

Thursday, November 26, 2015

8:30am – 11:00am

North Toronto Memorial Community Centre

200 Eglinton Avenue West

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## OVERVIEW

On November 26, 2015, the City of Toronto hosted the first of three Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) meetings as part of its Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. The mandate of the SAG is to provide a forum for information sharing, feedback, guidance, and advice to the Project Team at key points during the consultation process. The SAG is composed of a number organizations representing a range of interests and expertise. All of the organizations have either a citywide lens/mandate and/or represent a large recreational user group. Representatives from 14 organizations participated in the meeting (see attached participant list).

At this first meeting, SAG members were provided with an overview of the Master Plan Process and the project team's views on parks and recreation facility challenges. Following these presentations, SAG members engaged in a facilitated discussion guided by a series of focus questions (see attached agenda for more detail).

This summary was written by Swerhun Facilitation, a third-party facilitation firm that is part of the consultant team led by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (MBPC). This report is not intended to provide a verbatim transcript of the meeting but instead provides a high level summary of the perspectives and advice provided by participants during the facilitated discussion.

This summary was subject to participant review prior to being finalized

## SUMMARY OF ADVICE

The perspectives and advice provided by SAG members has been grouped into the following three categories: Challenges; Scope; and Process. Questions of clarification asked by SAG members are integrated throughout the summary below with responses from the project team denoted by *italics*.

### Challenges

The six challenge sub-headings below are taken from the project team's presentation. SAG member perspectives and advice in response to the four focus questions (see attached agenda) have been organized by challenge.

#### *Responding to a Changing City*

**A SAG member suggested that it will be important to take into account demographic changes in both high growth areas as well as those resulting from lower-level intensification (e.g. the redevelopment of detached houses with stacked townhouses).**

- Both types of growth have implications for school boards and presumably will as well for parks and recreation facilities.

- One place to look for data on lower-level intensification could be the Toronto Real Estate Board's recent report on home starts and sales.

**A SAG member sought clarification on the data sources that will be used to track and project demographic changes.** *The project team will use census data, the City's population projections, the Wellbeing Index, and the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy.*

### **Reshaping Facilities to Fit Evolving Needs**

**SAG members provided advice on potential sources of information the project team could use in determining the evolving needs for parks and recreation facilities, both during the Master Plan process and throughout its implementation.**

- It was suggested that the project team could disaggregate and compare usage data with demographic data to understand who is using City facilities and who is not, what's pulling people in to City facilities and what barriers exist that may be keeping people out.
- During implementation, it was suggested that the City could prepare a list of facilities that are up for investment and start facility-specific consultation processes at an early stage.

### **Providing Quality Facilities**

**SAG members suggested that providing quality facilities could include greening buildings to make them more energy efficient and planning for flexible facilities/spaces to better respond to evolving needs/limited capital dollars.**

- The former use of shipping containers at the Malvern Family Resource Centre to store winter activity equipment was cited as an example of being flexible in the provision of facilities.
- Flexible space was also discussed as a means of providing facilities that serve a number of different needs, promoting integration while maintaining separation between uses where appropriate (e.g. quiet areas for seniors with other areas that are more lively/active).
- Following the meeting, a SAG member provided a comment via email suggesting that as facilities are retrofitted, built, and improved, the work should consider climate change and extreme weather adaptation and mitigation (e.g. energy reduction, conserving/managing water, etc.).

### **Working with Others to Meet Needs**

**Several SAG members talked about looking at examples of ongoing partnerships and drawing lessons from them.**

- One SAG member noted that the United Way has built seven community hubs across Toronto, and advised that creating a community hub involves both a onetime capital investment as well as significant ongoing operating resources.
- Another SAG member noted that the 519 is going to create a new centre and that it may provide many lessons on how to build and retrofit spaces for inclusion and how to communicate where money is spent and how it is meeting specific needs.

**SAG members suggested that co-location of services with parks and recreation facilities can help maximize responding to community need for recreation and social services.** It was suggested that the City look at all the assets within Toronto that are publicly owned (e.g. school properties) when considering the geographic distribution of facilities and how needs can be met in a flexible manner.

**One SAG member commented that there are times when it appears that City owned and operated facilities receive resources for upgrades prior to other facilities that the City owns but does not operate.**

## Improving Accessibility for Everyone

**SAG members spoke of accessibility and inclusion at a number of scales, from parks and recreation facilities as a great social leveler to specific facility designs that inhibit access to people with disabilities.**

- One SAG member talked about how building inclusive spaces to respond to the specific needs of one group can also help respond to the needs of other groups with similar needs, specifically citing how inclusive spaces for LGBT communities are also inclusive for women and different ethnic groups.
- This member also talked about how making existing facilities more inclusive could start with improvements to signage, changes to washrooms and other smaller changes with lower capital costs.
- Another SAG member talked about accessibility challenges created by specific facility designs, like the materials used for the surfaces of tracks and fields that impede people in wheelchairs from using them.

## The Funding Challenge

**Several SAG members suggested that the funding challenge could be reframed to express the value and return on investment that parks and recreation facilities provide.** They felt that there could be an opportunity to better position parks and recreation within the city, highlighting the physical, mental and social health benefits and resultant money saved on other social service spending.

**These SAG members felt that the value of parks and recreation facilities could be articulated through a number of means, including:**

- Drawing on existing parks and recreation studies and policy positions, including the Federal Government's minister mandate letters, the Framework for Recreation in Canada, the Province's Sport Plan, and an upcoming Federation of Canadian Municipalities report on the state of parks and recreation in Canada.
- Considering the framing, trends, metrics and results of Toronto-focused quality of life and social planning reports, studies and tools, including Vital Signs, Urban HEART, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

**One SAG member suggested that the study take Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces (POPS) into consideration as a means of potentially reducing the future burden to the City of state of good repair capital outlays.** This SAG member further suggested that should POPS be used to provide facilities, there may be an opportunity to offset development contributions to parks and recreation facilities funding.

## Scope

**SAG members sought clarification on the scope of the Facilities Master Plan, including:**

- Will the Master Plan commit to maintaining existing assets? *The Master Plan will look at the costs of maintaining existing assets and identify differences in the full cost of facilities of different ages and types. It is not an exercise in identifying assets to be sold.*
- What kinds of park facilities are included in the scope? *The park facilities that are included in the Master Plan scope are generally things that can be permitted – things like sports fields and basketball courts. Park furniture like benches and fountains are outside the scope of the Master Plan.*
- Are water-based recreational activities that take place on/adjacent to waterfront parks included in the scope? *Things like marinas and dragon boating facilities are not included in the scope.*

## Process

### **SAG members sought clarification and provided advice on the Master Plan process, including:**

- How is the Facilities Master Plan connected to the implementation process for the Recreation Service Plan? How can community groups who were involved in the Service Plan be involved in the Master Plan? *The Master Plan will take the recommendations from the Service Plan and other specific recreation strategies into account. The City recognizes that facilities can often be an answer to gaps in service provision. The City is also interested in broad participation in the Master Plan process and has reached out to groups involved in the Services Plan. Please let us know if there are any additional groups that you think should be involved.*
- It will be important to get the views of City staff that manage facilities. How will they be involved? *There is a parallel internal consultation that will be happening throughout the Master Plan process to ensure that Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff at all levels are engaged.*
- Will private sector recreation providers be included in the process? *One of the focus groups will likely be aimed at private partners and funders – groups like Maple Leafs Sports and Entertainment. We will also be looking at things like condominium recreation facilities and how they are currently accessed and could be accessed in the future.*
- Make sure that there are ways for youth to participate in the process, including both those that are and are not accessing facilities. One way to reach out would be to ask staff and community organizations who know communities well to go out to youth to seek their feedback (e.g. the United Way has 13 neighbourhood groups that could be used to help get the word out and seek feedback).

## NEXT STEPS

The meeting concluded with a brief overview of next steps in the process. SAG members were asked to help get the word out about a public survey that will run from November 30<sup>th</sup> to January 24<sup>th</sup>. SAG members were also told that a series of topic-specific focus groups and public town halls are currently planned for February and March 2016, with the second meeting of the SAG tentatively scheduled for April. SAG participants were asked to provide any additional feedback on the meeting materials by December 4<sup>th</sup> for inclusion in the SAG Meeting 1 summary.

### Stakeholder Advisory Group Participants

The following is a list of Stakeholder Advisory Group members to date. Those organizations that participated at SAG Meeting 1 are signified by **bold text** (organizations are listed alphabetically).

1. **The 519**
2. **Boys and Girls Club of Toronto**
3. **Building Industry and Land Development Association**
4. **CivicAction**
5. **COSTI Immigrant Services**
6. Lifesaving Society of Toronto
7. **Park People**
8. **Parks and Recreation Ontario**
9. Parks, Forestry and Recreation Disability Steering Committee
10. **Social Planning Toronto**
11. **Toronto Foundation**
12. **Toronto Local Immigration Partnership**
13. **Toronto Sports Council**
14. Toronto Youth Cabinet
15. **United Way Toronto and York Region**
16. **YMCA of Greater Toronto**

### Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting 1 Agenda

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|---------------|---|
| <b>8:30am</b> | <b>Sign-In and Light Refreshments</b>   |
| <b>9:00</b>   | <b>Welcome</b><br>Janie Romoff, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City of Toronto  |
| <b>9:05</b>   | <b>Introductions and Agenda Review</b><br>Alex Heath, Swerhun Facilitation  |
| <b>9:20</b>   | <b>Master Plan Overview</b><br>Matt Bentley, Project Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City of Toronto   |
| <b>9:40</b>   | <b>Parks and Recreation Facility Challenges</b><br>Steve Langlois, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants  |
| <b>10:00</b>  | <b>Facilitated Discussion</b><br><br><u>Focus Questions:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What are you hearing from your members / networks about the current state of parks and recreation facilities?</li><li>2. What are the most significant trends or factors that are (or should be) shaping the provision of parks and recreation facilities?</li><li>3. What is the most important thing that the Master Plan should achieve?</li><li>4. Do you have any suggestions to strengthen the Master Plan process?</li></ol> |
| <b>10:50</b>  | <b>Wrap Up &amp; Next Steps</b>   |
| <b>11:00</b>  | <b>Adjourn</b>  |