

## Grand Avenue Park Master Plan – Meeting #4 Summary

### Overview

The fourth and final public consultation meeting for the Grand Avenue Park Master Plan process was held on Thursday June 8 at George R. Gauld School. Approximately 45 people attended and participated. The objective of the meeting was to confirm design priorities and plans and gather final thoughts and feedback on the park design, budget and construction phasing. The Master Plan design was developed by PMA Landscape Architects and was informed by community input captured throughout the consultation process and reflected on meeting summaries (available on the project website). Jim Melvin of PMA Landscape Architects and Bob Duguid of Toronto's Parks Forestry and Recreation department did presentations and responded to questions and discussion. Participants rotated around the following five stations and design boards asking questions and offering input:

1. Master Plan & Design
2. The Field
3. Circulation & Pathways
4. Ecology
5. Phasing & Budget

This meeting report was written by facilitator Jane Farrow and Jacob Stanescu. A summary of key points from the meeting and requests for information are included below. To stay in touch with the Grand Avenue Park project, please refer to the City of Toronto project website at: [www.toronto.ca/grandmanitobapark](http://www.toronto.ca/grandmanitobapark)

### Summary of Key Points

#### General Support for the Park Master Plan

People expressed general support for the preferred design concept as presented by the design team. Participants said that they felt the team had done a good job of capturing and reflecting the community's ideas and priorities.

#### Community facilities and uses should be prioritized over playing fields

Most of the open house participants wanted to see a greater priority put on building out the community features and amenities before the sports field and that this should be reflected in the planning of the project construction phases and budgeting. The City recognizes the desire to get community amenities on the ground first, and will endeavour to balance these interests as it devises a phasing plan that takes into

account the need for the larger construction and infrastructure deliverables to precede the smaller features.

#### Dogs Off Leash Area is a priority

Concern about the dog off leash area being left until Phase 2. There was a general feeling that a dogs off-leash area should receive a higher priority in the phasing or at least, an interim area be provided

#### Parking Lot

Concern remains that the parking spaces in the park will be used by GO commuters. Strong enforcement and disincentives for long term parking is recommended.

#### 'Less Ugliness - Less Waiting'

Concerns were raised about the timing of the removal of all the greenery and trees in the northern part of the park as part of the soil remediation process. While people understood this was unavoidable, they were concerned that this 'ugly' phase of construction would be lengthy if adequate funding for the subsequent construction phases was not secured before cutting down the trees and shrubs. They strongly recommend planning the soil remediation and initial construction phases closely so that there is 'less waiting time, and less ugliness' to endure for the local community.

### **Questions of Clarification for City of Toronto's Bob Duguid, Parks Forestry & Recreation**

1. What is the timeline on the planned Legion Road extension?
  - a. As of now the timeline calls for detailed planning in 2018-2019, and the build out 2020-2022.
2. Is parks funding allocated for specific parks, or one big pot?
  - a. Ward Councillors submit requests for park funding from City Council. There are various pools of money available, such as Section 37 and other development charges, and other funding programs that are controlled by council as a whole; all specific requests need to be approved by council.
3. What is the difference between Phase 1A and 1B?
  - a. Phase 1A involves cutting down trees, capping the land, grading, and surfacing. Phase 1B is the building out of the first park amenities.
4. Is there a risk City Council will stop funding after phase 1B?

- a. Council can cut funding at anytime, but this plan allows for some of the functional park amenities to be in place after phases 1A and 1B.
5. What happens if after phase 1A, there isn't money to proceed to phase 1B?
    - a. The Parks Department is not likely to move forward unless there is relative certainty about the success of the budget process in regards to phase 1B.
    - b. The goal is for the whole first phase to create a fully usable facility, concentrating on delivering the amenities which are considered priorities, established through the master plan process.
  6. Why is funding not yet secured for the park?
    - a. There needs to be a Masterplan in order to ask the Budget Committee for funding. There are many similar pieces of land that exist in other wards, and a Masterplan will help prioritize Grand Ave Park in the city funding discussion.

## Detailed Feedback

### Station 1: Master Plan Design, Community Programming

#### General Remarks

Participants largely felt that the design was aesthetically appealing and reflected the input of previous meetings. They were anxious to move through to the next stages of planning and construction.

- "This is great, let's do it!"

#### Dog Off-Leash Area

There was some concern that dog use in the park isn't being made enough of a priority in the project's current phasing structure. Some participants felt that the implementation timeline should take dogs and owners who will continue to use the space into consideration.

- A few participants also felt that the planned dog off-leash area is too isolated in the current Masterplan design.
- It was suggested that there should be a temporary dog park in one of the southern multiuse fields while the park is being built.
- It was asked that there be more garbage cans for dog waste right away and during the build out process.
- Two participants submitted written comments expressing disappointment that the dog off leash area was scheduled for Phase 2, and felt it should be given a higher priority in phasing and an interim dog area be provided.

## Parking & Traffic

Some participants felt that putting 'parking in the park' ran counter to the spirit of a good green space master plan. They hoped that someday in the future the parking lot would revert to park uses, perhaps a skate board area or hard court.

- It was explained that the 50 planned parking spots is intended to accommodate roughly four teams (two on the field and two waiting).

Some felt that while the parking lot would offset pressure on local street parking, GO commuters would use the parking inappropriately. Enforcement is recommended strongly. Despite this, it was generally agreed that the parking lot has been sited in the best possible location for now.

- There was a request for barriers to the parking lot that could be closed at certain times.

There was some concern about the potential rise in car traffic and parking demands at and near the park. Residents along Manitoba St said that the two-sided parking is intended to slow traffic but haven't found it effective and would rather speed bumps or something of the like to help calm traffic.

There was concern about the traffic entering and exiting the parking lot and recommended a traffic light be installed at the intersection of Melrose.

## Community Programming and Amenities

There was strong support for the proposed skateboard and adult fitness features, especially given people's sense that there aren't similar amenities nearby.

It was clarified that the Multiuse court will be hard surfaced, and can accommodate a variety of features such as basketball and skateboarding, depending on what is decided in the detailed design consultation (upcoming in the fall/winter 2018).

Several people noted that the small hill/rise between the field and playground would be a great place to sit and watch a movie or performance from, projected in the community plaza area.

## **Station 2: Sports Field**

In the presentation, it was noted that the sports field represents 17% of the park, though a few participants still felt that it took up too much space in the overall park design.

- It was suggested by a couple people that lacrosse was not popular enough to merit field lines though it was clarified that the field will have multipurpose markings to accommodate several sports including soccer.

## Artificial turf vs grass fields

- One person questioned if artificial turf was contradictory to the larger goal of naturalizing the park

- Others raised the point that grass fields become muddy and hard packed quickly and that artificial turf is a better option

#### Permitting

- Some people were concerned that a permitted field would draw many people from beyond the local community, and create traffic congestion
- One person mentioned that at an earlier meeting it was clarified that within the City, a park of its size cannot be only a community park and must satisfy some of the needs of the City at large—most people understood and accepted the rationale
- There was some concern that the park might be permitted all the time and would not be available for non-permit holders/local community members.
- Similarly, there was some discussion about possibly holding a regular (weekly or monthly) time slot for community programming, so the field doesn't become used entirely by recreation leagues and not the local community

#### Lighting

There was some concern about ambient light. It was clarified that the proposed field lighting will point inwards, and further that recreation permits typically end at 22:00h, with the lights being shut off at 23:00h.

- One person was concerned that the park's design has created 'little nooks, which could become a safety concern at night or be used by marijuana smokers', they recommend using lighting in the park to discourage such uses

### **Station 3: Circulation and Pathways**

Positive comments were made about the overall plan for pathways and movement through the park. The circular paths that intersect and flow around and through the park received strong general support, as well as the way that plantings and trees would line some of the routes.

- There was a request to use eco-friendly materials on the pathways and community plaza.
- Concern and questions were raised about the potential for conflict between cyclists and pedestrians, strategies for managing the interaction will be needed
- It was clarified that the main loop around the field and passing the play area is a multiuse trail, not a bike path

### **Station 4: Ecology**

Participants reacted quite positively to the proposed approach to park ecology and plantings. This included strong support for use of native species, prioritizing bird and pollinator habitat and wetland areas. Specific concerns and priorities also included:

- keeping the willow tree
- shade/sunlight exposure and its relationship to the plants/trees
- creating seating so people can relax and enjoy the greenery
- ensuring there are walkways and routes through the forested areas

- visibility and transparency issues with regards to planting density

### **Station 5: Phasing & Budgets**

Funding estimates for the park plan and construction phases run upwards of \$6 million and will take place over several years. Funding for the first step, environmental remediation, has been secured but not the full budget for the park build out. As such, the City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation Division will pursue a phased approach which will be determined in the next project phase (detailed design) and subsequent construction stages.

Questions were asked regarding the sequencing and prioritizing of the park features, for instance, if the playing field could be put in Phase 2 and the playground and dog park put in Phase 1. It was explained by PFR representative Bob Duguid that the sequencing was primarily guided largely by financial concerns with the larger construction and infrastructure deliverables preceding the smaller, secondary features. If the construction phase were done in another order, it would be more expensive and potentially require digging up and redoing parts of the park if done in a different order. Still, according to PFR's Bob Duguid, there may be room to make small adjustments to the sequencing and phasing. To that end, participants expressed a strong preference to prioritize the playground, dog off leash area and community programming and amenity spaces in the phasing approach.

### **Final Group Discussion & Reflection**

- There was general consensus that the Master Plan addressed community needs, priorities and preferences. They look forward to continuing the process in subsequent phases of detailed design and consultation.
- Participants generally emphasized the importance of being able to access and use the park throughout the design and construction phases.
- All participants emphasized the importance of creating an effective parking restriction and enforcement strategy for the parking lot.
- It was clarified that the sports field will be used by teams and leagues requiring a permit, but when not booked, it would be open to park visitors for informal play.
- It was asked how this Masterplan fits into larger city priorities and whether a Community Center could be considered at Grand Ave. Park?
  - It was explained that the allocation of recreation facilities had been considered as part of this consultation process and is outlined in meeting summaries available on the project website.

- Further information about how the City makes decisions for locating such facilities (rinks, tennis courts, community centres) is also available on the City of Toronto website, entitled the Recreation Facilities Master Plan, which is now near completion.