

Grand Avenue Park Expansion Community Walk Feedback Summary

Overview

On Saturday October 29th, over 30 people attended a community walk of Grand Avenue Park led by Jane Farrow, independent facilitator on the project, and Jim Melvin and Leslie Morton, the landscape architects/design team. Sara Udow representing the facilitation team captured the feedback and comments in this report. The walk began at the northeast corner of Grand Avenue and Algoma Road. The group walked along Algoma Road and throughout the park, where we stopped at different points to discuss existing conditions and programming priorities.

Purpose of a Community Walk

Community walks are a participatory method of tapping into the knowledge and expertise local residents bring to the design process. At the start of this walk, facilitator Jane Farrow outlined the purpose of the walk in the context of Phase 1, which is to engage residents in a conversation about existing conditions and the identification of opportunities and priorities for the Master Plan.

Participants

Participants included residents from the area, both from the surrounding low-scale neighbourhoods and the condominiums. There was a range of ages with a variety of interests present, which resulted in a diversity of ideas for the park expansion. This included young children, a teenager, parents and dog owners. Their contributions are reflected in the summary below. Councillor Mark Grimes was also in attendance and assisted in answering questions and offering context to the participants.

A summary of the feedback and questions of clarification are included below.

Summary of Discussion

Residents outlined a number of aspects that they enjoy about the park. These include:

- The varied topography;
- Naturalized areas, including the trees (with an emphasis that they appreciated no concrete);
- Habitat conservation – Many residents mentioned they enjoy seeing a diversity of animals in the park including deer, coyotes and rabbits;
- Natural noise mitigation to the north with trees and to the southeast GO line with the 'rubble' hill.

The naturalized areas and varied topography should be maintained. Much of the discussion centered on the desire to maintain as many mature trees as possible south of the contaminated area and to use these natural features as noise barriers (trees and berms). The desire to preserve trees along Manitoba Street was noted. The design team explained that with the capping required in that area of the park, it will be challenging to retain all the vegetation.

Participants recommended a range of programming opportunities that could accommodate a diversity of users and seasons. At various points on the walk, the group discussed a wide range of programming opportunities for the park. Ideas included:

- a multipurpose sports field;
- An off-leash dog park;
- a community gathering area;

- play areas for children (multi-purpose, multi age play area that could accommodate skateboarding, scooters and biking with rails and small ramps);
- flexible open space (could accommodate activities like parkour and tree climbing for older kids);
- a splash pad;
- a skate park area;
- adult exercise equipment;
- skating trails;
- tobogganing on the berm/hill on the southwest corner.

There was an in depth discussion about the issues and strengths associated with the accommodation of potential sports field(s) in the park, summarized below:

Issues: Many participants had concerns about the accommodation of a sports field. These concerns included traffic congestion, parking and permitting. One participant explained a concern that the residents of the neighbourhood would not be able to use the field with a permitting system. The landscape architectural team discussed opportunities to design flexible smaller, non-permitted fields, which would be used by the community. Other options will be investigated, such as establishing community-use permits.

Strengths: There is a need for additional sports fields in the area. Some residents requested multi-purpose sports fields to accommodate a range of sports and activities.

The design team explained that one sports field would take up less than 20% of the park. The residents also agreed some parking would have to be accommodated but voiced concern about traffic congestion and it taking up too much park space. After further discussion the majority of participants expressed support for the idea of accommodating a maximum of one multi-use sports field.

There was a strong support for the establishment of several entrances into the park, to ease access and enhance safety. For instance, participants liked the idea of incorporating 2-3 entrances into the park on the north side instead of having a large opening to the park. There was also discussion of turning Algoma Road into a trail.

Additional design considerations:

- **Safety and lighting** - Discussion on crime prevention through design including lighting on walkways and ensuring visibility into the park.
- **Connectivity** – Interest in connectivity to Martin Goodman Trail, the GO train and potential shops. This could include more trails throughout the park.
- **Playgrounds next to trees** – Parents discussed the need to have playgrounds designed near mature trees to ensure shade possibilities.

Questions of Clarification

Q: Is it possible to include an indoor community centre in the park design?

A: No – An indoor community centre is not an option.

Q: What will happen to the power lines along Algoma St?

A: Because they are not active, they will likely be removed. The electrical consultant will advise.