

Grand Avenue Park Expansion Public Meeting 2 Summary

Overview

On Wednesday December 7th, approximately 40 people attended the second public meeting for the Grand Avenue Park Expansion Master Plan. The purpose of this meeting was to:

- provide an update report on environmental assessment and management strategies;
- follow up on information requests;
- review community feedback and priorities to date;
- present and review emerging design ideas and possibilities for discussion and feedback.

The meeting was held at George R. Gauld School, and included welcoming remarks by Councillor Mark Grimes. Leslie Morton, a Principal of PMA Landscape Architects, presented three initial design options based on the design team's research and the feedback on priorities received from the public (based on the first public meeting, the community walk and online feedback). Michael Osborne of Terrapex, an environmental engineering firm, presented an overview of the environmental assessment process. Questions of clarification and small-table discussions followed, facilitated by independent facilitator Jane Farrow. The small table discussions focused on 1) clarification around the environmental assessment process and 2) a review of the design options developed by the design team.

This meeting report was written by the facilitation team of Jane Farrow and Sara Udow.

A summary of key points from the meeting and requests for information are included below. All requests for information will be reviewed and responded to at the next public meeting.

Summary of Key Points

Design Group Discussion



Summary

- Three design options were presented - Concentrated, Dispersed, Nodes (see above illustrations) Participants discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the placement of program elements, their relationships to each other and connectivity within the park and the surrounding sites.
- No clear preference for one site design emerged, though there was general support for the programming elements being recommended.

Comments on overall park design

- Participants were generally supportive of a park design that featured a system of connected pathways and accessible entryways with appealing sightlines, viewsheds, plantings, shrubs and trees.

Participants saw benefits to all three designs, favouring certain elements from each one.

- Option 1 – Concentrated: Some considered this design the safest option because of its openness and visibility from many different locations.
- Option 2 – Dispersed: The separation between the playing field and the other features was viewed as favourable, as some perceived it to provide privacy benefits and mitigation from noise and light pollution.
- Option 3 – Nodes: This design was favoured for its integration of naturalized areas and its aesthetic appeal.

Below is a summary of key comments on the specific programming features:

Parking

There was no consensus on parking location, number of entrances or number of parking lots:

- Some participants favoured having the parking lot located away from the playground for safety concerns. However it was also noted that the playground must be easy to access.
- There was concern that if parking were to be located on the park's east side, condominium visitors would occupy spaces. Others preferred parking on the east side to shift parking from the single-family homes. There were additional concerns that should parking access come off from Manitoba street it would conflict with the vehicular entrance of Mystic Pointe Lofts.
- It was suggested that two smaller parking lots could help the flow of people in the park, preventing congestion. Others felt that two lots could increase congestion within the park and surrounding area.
- Many suggested that options for parking enforcement should be considered in the design (such as nightly closures).
- There was a suggestion to explore on-street parking instead of incorporating all of the parking spaces within the park boundary. Some participants requested that the number of parking spaces be reduced altogether.

Playground

- Participants were interested in assessing the playground location based on:
 - a) ease of access for children;
 - b) increased safety; and
 - c) best lighting.

- Some participants preferred placing the playground closer to Grand Avenue because lighting from the streetlamps would increase safety. Others thought placing the playground close to Grand Avenue would be less safe due to road traffic.
- Some participants preferred the playground around the large existing trees to provide shade for the children

Open Green Space

- There was support for placing the open green space at Grand Ave and Manitoba Ave in order to increase accessibility and hide other park features such as the parking lot and washroom facilities.

Dog Off Leash Area

- There was support for a dog off-leash area that would be separated from the areas designed for people visiting the park (such as the playground and other social spaces).
- Participants were not opposed to having two separate areas for large and small dogs.

Multipurpose Field

- It was suggested by some that the sports field was best placed closer to the southwest corner of the park or pushed east to allow for a larger, uninterrupted naturalized area in the north and west end of the park.
- Some participants felt that the sports field took up too much space in the park.
- Many participants agreed that organized sports could be beneficial to the community if traffic, noise, and light pollution were mitigated. One resident opposed the sports field altogether.

Naturalized Area

- Natural plantings, including trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers were considered a top priority. Many participants preferred the naturalized areas as opposed to ornamental gardens.
- A large, uninterrupted naturalized area is preferred by most participants.
- There was a request that in the next public meeting the design team would provide additional information and time to consider the elements and design of the naturalized areas.

Toboggan Hill

- Participants were generally in favour of the proposed tobogganing hill. Some participants suggested that the tobogganing hill be used as a picnic area in the spring-summer months.

Teen Programming

- Some participants proposed that the area for teenagers should feature benches, picnic tables, and sports activities such as basketball, skateboarding and/or ping pong.

Community Gathering Spaces

- Participants suggested that the community gathering spaces include areas for BBQs, movie nights, music and other social activities. It was further recommended that the community gathering space play a central role in the park design, acting as the 'heart of the community.'

Connectivity

- Some participants expressed preference for pathways through naturalized areas.
- Most participants preferred the curved pathway design next to the rail corridor as opposed to the straight path.
- Cycling was identified as a priority. Many participants requested cycling trails throughout the site. A few participants expressed concerns about the speed of bicycles. Wider paths with different surfacing to accommodate bicycles and rollerblades with separation lines are recommended to address this concern.
- Requests were made to create connections with neighbouring green spaces.
- Safe walking and cycling connections between the park and the GO station were deemed important by many participants.

Additional design considerations

- Participants requested more information on available options for public washrooms in the park. Safety and distance from the playground were cited as top concerns when considering public washrooms;
- Noise Buffering with dense plantings along Manitoba Avenue is encouraged;
- Different types of seating (berms, benches and picnic tables) are welcomed;
- Winter activities to ensure an all-seasoned park, including additional options other than tobogganing was encouraged by many;
- Additional multipurpose spaces such as hockey and tennis courts were encouraged by some participants.

'Park Friends' Approach

- There was interest in the "Friends of the Park" community approach promoted and supported by organizations like Park People. More information can be found at:
<https://parkpeople.ca/project/friends-of-city-parks>

Environmental Group Discussion

The environmental discussions were centered on clarifications and updates regarding environmental management, site conditions, assessment, habitat and ecology. Participants were especially interested in hearing the most up to date information about soil contamination on the site and the on-going Provincially mandated remediation efforts.

Concern about clean soil

All environmental investigation and remediation for the former Mimico Sewage Treatment Site is complete. Environmental engineering consultants from Terrapex (Michael Osborne and Steven Ruminsky) and Senior Environmental Project Manager from the City of Toronto (Janice Green) explained that the soil in the area occupied by the former sewage treatment plant, south of Algoma, had been thoroughly tested for contaminants, assessed, and capped with three feet of clean soil all in compliance with Provincial regulations.

Some residents asked why the City capped the soil instead of removing it. It was explained that the Province of Ontario enacts environmental standards and regulations and 'soil capping' is a scientifically accepted method of containing remaining contaminants while ensuring the safety of people using the park.

Concerns regarding the construction waste pile at the southeastern corner of the park (also known as the 'rubble hill' or 'coyote mountain')

- Participants inquired about the state of the soil, stone and rubble piles adjacent to the northeast and southeast corners of the park. It was explained that this debris originates from the condo site to the north and responsibility for the testing and removal of these piles was the owners and developers. The rubble pile to the north sits on privately owned land is not part of the future park. The rubble pile that sits on in the southeast is included in the boundary of Grand Avenue Park. Both rubble piles will be removed in the future.
- Residents specifically requested that this waste pile be removed and not be used as capping for the park. They further wanted to ensure that waste from new construction would not be dumped on or near the park. City staff assured participants that this was not part of the plan for the park redevelopment and furthermore, would not be permitted by Provincial regulations.
- Some participants voiced safety concerns about the 'rubble hill' and felt it should be fenced in and security maintained more pro-actively.
- Others inquired about the possibility of using the rubble hill for future tobogganing. It was clarified that this wouldn't be possible as the rubble hills will be removed, but that a tobogganing hill could still be included in the park master plan using clean fill and soil.

Preference to maintain trees on site

- Terrapex and the City will investigate opportunities to preserve existing trees in the northern section of the park. It was agreed that saving the larger, healthy trees would be preferable wherever possible, noting that a three foot cap of new soil will make this challenging.

General Questions of Clarification

Timeline

Q: What is the general timeline for the park's redevelopment?

A: The master plan for the park is scheduled for completion in late Spring 2017. The actual redevelopment depends on the Environmental Assessment timeline, park development phasing, and council approved budgets for park development.

Q: How does this park timeline compare to the timeline of nearby (condo) development (e.g. Mimico-Judson)?

A: The development timeline for the condo site is not yet been announced by the developer, and is ultimately to be determined by the developer.

Q: Is there an update on the timeline of the Legion Rd. extension?

A: The present estimate for completion of the Legion Road extension and Bonar Creek Storm Water Management project is 2022. This date is subject to change and updates will be provided as the project advances.

Costs and Budgeting

Q: What is the cost estimate for the redevelopment of the park?

A: The park design has not gone through a formal budgeting process yet. This will take place once the Master Plan design and consultation process is complete and the community has weighed in on design and programming priorities.

Q: Would future Section 37 money from the Mimico-Judson development be applied to the cost of the park?

A: That is yet to be determined.

Q: There was \$1.2 million set aside for community benefits. Where is that money from?

A: The \$1.2 million is Section 37 money from the development on Manitoba Dr. and Legion Rd. The allocation of that money is still to be determined. The \$1.2 million is separate from the money that is presently council approved for Grand Avenue Park.

Q: Is there information available on the cost of park amenities (e.g. how much does a tennis court, vs. a sports field, or a pool cost?)

A: The costing of park amenities is part of the master plan process. More information about this will be made available as part of the design process.

Q: How are the costs of environmental management or remediation factored into the park budget?

A: There is a separate budget for environmental remediation.

Q: Has a remediation budget been sent to Council?

A: Yes, funds for site remediation have been approved.

Requests for additional information and discussion at next Public Meeting

Environment

- A few participants asked where they could access the Environmental Site Assessment reports.

Design Concerns & Questions

- Does the multipurpose field's sidelines factor into the 12% of total park area?
- If a running track were developed around the multipurpose field, would a fence be required?
- Can design team provide a more detailed description of what the naturalized areas could look like?
- Can lighting placement and options be discussed in the next phase of the park's design?
- Is it possible to get an update from TRCA about the progress of the Mimico Creek Trail?
- Would it be possible to build a full outdoor community swimming pool or natural ice rink?
- What are the city's priorities regarding public washrooms associated with the sports field?