

Grand Avenue Park Expansion Public Meeting 1 and Community Walk Meeting Notes

Public Meeting 1 Overview

On Monday October 24th, approximately 50 people attended the first public meeting as part of the Grand Avenue Park Expansion Master Plan. The majority of attendees were residents from the local area. The purpose of this meeting was to: provide community participants with an overview of the master plan process and context; introduce the design team; share the initial background research conducted by the landscape architects; and gather input on park programming priorities.

The meeting was held at George R. Gauld School, and included welcoming remarks by Councillor Mark Grimes. Bob Duguid, Senior Project Coordinator for Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) gave an introductory presentation that provided an overview of the site, other City initiatives that are proposed in the area (Bonar Creek Water Management System, Legion Road Extension to Lakeshore Boulevard, South Mimico Trail), and policy context for the park. Jim Melvin, Principal of PMA Landscape Architects, presented initial background research, including the results of a City-led survey that asked participants to share priorities for the park. Questions of clarification and small-table discussions on four themes followed, facilitated by independent facilitator Jane Farrow. This meeting report was written by the facilitation team of Jane Farrow and Sara Udow. The discussions covered four main topic areas:

1. Existing Site Conditions;
2. Survey Results, Programming Priorities;
3. Connectivity and Context;
4. 'Wild Card' (Other)

Participants also shared written feedback on comment forms (see Appendix A). A summary of key points from the meeting, detailed responses to the questions of clarification and detailed meeting notes from the small group discussions are included below. All requests for information will be reviewed and provided at the next Public Meeting.

Summary of Key Points

More Park, Less Parking. Many participants stated a strong preference for open park space with minimal parking. This preference was also expressed as a desire for a 'neighbourhood-scale park, not a citywide park.' While parking was a major concern voiced throughout the meeting, there was also recognition that the park would require some parking based on programming needs (such as a sports field or Dog Off Leash Area), as well as to accommodate individuals with accessibility issues. The design should therefore consider how to incorporate parking with minimal adverse effects on traffic congestion and without taking up a large amount of park space and to not burden the neighbourhood streets with overflow parking.

Efforts to maintain and/or re-introduce trees/naturalized areas should be a priority. There was an overall appreciation of the natural green space/habitat that currently exists in the park. While many of the trees to the north of the site will require removal due to the capping process of the contaminated area,, there should be efforts to maintain as many trees as possible and to re-establish naturalized areas.

Many programming priorities, including a community gathering area, were identified. There were many different ideas for park programming. Many participants agreed with the top priorities identified in the survey results (including a children's play area, splash pad, dog off-leash area, naturalized areas, recreational facilities). In addition, a majority of residents suggested that community gathering spaces/seating areas should also be a priority to hold events and festivals.

Encourage natural noise barriers to the north and south. The trees to the north, the 'rubble hill' to the southeast and the trees/swales to the south act as natural noise and visual screens to the surrounding streets and railway line. In the redesign, utilize natural features (trees, berms, landforms) as noise mitigation.

Connectivity to other trails/natural spaces should be considered. There is a growing network of green spaces and trails in the area including the Martin Goodman Trail. There are therefore increasing opportunities to develop connections to these different spaces. In addition, connections to the GO station to the south should be considered.

Ensure the consultation process is transparent and open. Some residents voiced frustration of having too many consultations in the area without seeing how their input has affected change. This process will ensure transparency and accountability throughout the process. The park expansion master plan will take into consideration the feedback from the community, the City's broader goals and priorities as well as the site's capacity. The project team will ensure the residents are kept up to date on the park redesign process and the decisions being made.

Questions of Clarification

Q. Based on the survey's findings, 70% of people who use the park live within a 10 minute walk. Why then is parking in the park required?

A. No parking volume has been determined. This is the first consultation in a four-phase design process, which includes many opportunities for input. Throughout this process the design team will listen to public feedback on parking. The design team will also consider feedback from other sources as well, including those who responded to the survey, other residents in the area and the City of Toronto's overall priorities for the area.

Q. How many sports fields are being proposed and what types will they be?

A. This is still undetermined as we are still collecting feedback and priorities about what the park will include. Councillor Grimes has received petitions and requests from Rugby and Lacrosse associations to incorporate a sports field.

Q. What is the plan for parking along Manitoba Street? There is too much parking already happening on the street.

A. We will take this into consideration as we explore options for the park and parking.

Q. When will remediation/environmental assessment be completed?

A. Stage 2 'Intrusive' work has been completed by Terrapex (the environmental consultant) and they are now working on the risk assessment and reporting stage of the provincial environmental process. Terrapex will be working with the design team and PMA to feed them information relevant for the master plan. The timeline for completion is undetermined because this process is based on Ministry of Environment (MOE) requirements and is not determined by the City. The approximate timeline is late 2017 or early 2018.

Q. How much will the environmental assessment/remediation cost and who is going to pay?

A. Cost is to be determined. The City of Toronto will pay for the EA and remediation.

Q. What is the breakdown of the demographics in the area (including those who participated in the online survey) and where can this be found?

A. A more comprehensive report including demographics in the area will be available in the coming weeks as part of the public consultation process. A summary of the demographic makeup for Ward 6 is available here: <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=664abe4436161410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>.

Q. When will Legion Road be completed?

A. Council has approved the budget, design to begin in 2020.

Q. What is the designation of this park (Community, Neighbourhood, Regional)?

A. The City uses this scale as a guideline only because each park space and surrounding area is different. The City takes into consideration the size of the park, location and facilities and amenities in the surrounding area when determining the park classification. Because of the size of the park (5 hectares), it will likely include multi-purpose field(s).

Q. What is the budget for the park expansion? What are the costs of programming (ie. how much is a splash pad?)

A. The park budget will be determined through the master plan process. City council has approved roughly 1.3 million in funding to initiate the project. This is in addition to the budget allocated for the environmental assessment.

Q. Has the new development on Portland been factored into the demographic makeup of the area? Can the development fund the new park?

A. Depending on density, the developers will be required to contribute to Section 37 (community benefits contributions). The amount of money and how it will be allocated is to be determined because it is in the approval stage now.

Additional Information from City of Toronto: Should community benefit contributions be required, the allocation to park development, and other community services' capital improvements, and amounts, will be determined by City Planning and Councillor Grimes' office.

Q. A new condominium development close to the park has set aside 1.2 million dollars in Section 37 funds. How has this/will it be spent?

A. Councillor Grimes noted that this has not been decided.

A Request for more information is noted.

Q. Are crosswalks being considered in the scope of this project?

A. We will consider all aspects of AODA compliance and barrier free access into the park. These considerations also include consideration of safe entry to the park (Crime prevention through environmental design methods). Signalized crosswalks are determined by City of Toronto transportation engineers (not the design team), but we would like feedback on pedestrian safety and where crossing into the park is currently a problem.

Q. Has a community needs assessment been completed for the area?

A. There is a broad needs assessment underway as part of the PF&R Facilities Master Plan for the City.

Q. Can we get more information on the former waste treatment site, and how the contamination is measured and how decisions around soil capping are made?

A. The City and its environmental consultants are following Province of Ontario, Ministry of Environment (MOE), laws and regulations under the Environmental Protection Act, to ensure that any and all potential risks to human health and ecology are mitigated, and that the site is compliant with MOE's criteria for parkland use. A Request for more information is noted.

Q. Will the redesign of Grand Avenue Park incorporate coordination with green spaces elsewhere (ie. Ourland Park)?

A. There were greenway connections incorporated into the Mimico Secondary Plan but this did not include Ourland Park. Potential connections to other trails could be considered as part of this process.

Q. Is Algoma Street included in the property lines for the park?

A. Algoma St east of Grand Avenue will become parkland.

Q. Considering the diversity noted in the survey, can a hardscape, community square/gathering space be created?

A. This is a possibility and these inputs/ideas are exactly what we are looking to hear from the community.

Q. Comment: One resident mentioned they are tired of many years of consultation in the area.

A. Consultation fatigue is a real issue and we will try to keep the process as transparent, open and useful as possible so you can feel your input is being heard.

Additional Requests for Information to be brought forward in Public Meeting #2. (from the small discussion groups)

- What does “capping mean”?
- Did the survey ask people what specific kind of sports fields they wanted?
- Where could potential “allotment gardens” go? Is it possible given brownfields?
- How does the community programming in Dufferin Grove Park get funded? Is there funding for something like the community kitchen there for Grand Ave. Park?
- Request for clarification about the proposed trails in the vicinity of Grand Avenue Park.
 - o What stage of planning are the Greenway and the Mimico Creek trails currently at?
 - o Is it already decided that the Greenway trail will run along the south end of Grand Avenue Park?
 - o Will the TRCA's Mimico Creek trail go under or over the train tracks?
 - o How will these different trails affect the budget of the Grand Avenue Park Master Plan (Mimico Trail, Proposed Greenway)?
- There was a request for information about the new development on the Northeast corner of the park. Will this new development's shadow affect the park?
 - o The planning department may be able to provide more information. A request for more information is noted.

Detailed Feedback

Existing Site Conditions

- People said that they like that the park at a neighbourhood-scale (not district wide);
- Residents stated that they enjoy the trees around the park and wanted to make all efforts to save what they could as part of the design process
- People said they like the naturalized area as it creates a natural sound barrier to the north and would like noise mitigation efforts maintained.
- The rubble area to the southeast and the current waste transfer site also serves as a natural noise barrier. They state that they'd like to replace the pile with dense trees and landforms.
- Congestion and parking along Manitoba St are issues. There is a need for traffic calming. “It feels like a parking lot.” There are concerns about more people coming to the neighbourhood and impacting the street parking.
- Maintain neighbourhood accessibility to the park.

Survey Results, Programming Priorities;

Survey Notice

Some participants mentioned they didn't know about the survey and when they learned about it, submissions were closed. They suggested that future surveys be advertised via the Councillor's newsletter.

Programming Priorities

Sports field

- Some residents were concerned that a sports field would increase congestion and parking problems in the area
- There was concern that a sports field could bring be too bright at night if lighting was on
- Some participants offered support for a multi-sports field as part of a complete park design, recreation facilities, running and walking tracks were also mentioned. Some people suggested that a multi-sport field was preferred because it could accommodate many different sports including lacrosse, rugby, soccer and so on.

Naturalized Areas

- Concerns that a new "naturalized" area will not be as aesthetically pleasing as the current area.

Dog Park

- Concern that the dog park would be too small. "It should be large enough to accommodate both large and small dogs". E.g. the dog park in Colonel Sam Smith Park was used as a good precedent to follow.
- Important to separate children from dogs off leash was very important
- "People need to clean up after their dogs"

Splash pad

- Questions were raised as to whether a splash pad required washrooms to be installed, which might require onerous maintenance and staffing costs.
- Questions about splash pad safety and whether a paid supervisor was needed

Community gathering space

- In addition to the priorities identified in the survey (above), a square or gathering space for events (music, markets, arts activities) was voiced as a top priority for the park as it could help maintain a community "vibe" of the place
- This could include a communal seating area (picnic benches).
- This area should be a central location within the park well served by pathways

A community garden

- Flowers that people can tend to, not just naturalized areas, could be considered.
- Could allotment gardens be considered?

Other ideas for the park:

- Birdhouses like in Humber Bay Park.

Connectivity and Context

- **Rail corridor is a major barrier.** Opportunities to address this barrier included:
 - o Residents living south of the Metrolinx corridor should be considered in terms of access to the park, whether through the Mimico Creek trail, a bike and pedestrian friendly Legion Road connection or another option. A crossing provided, ideally at David Hornell Junior School, across from Grand Ave Park. Likely a tunnel would be the only option over the train tracks (because of future electrification of the tracks).
 - o Some participants felt that, even with the Legion Rd. extension, a separate biking and walking only path would be a strong asset.
- **Mimico GO station** – There is a need for better access, especially to the south. Look at the Port Union + Rouge Hill GO station as a precedent for a well-connected GO station.
- **More transportation/connectivity options for the neighbourhood.** There is a sense of being isolated and not well connection to local transportation.
- **Crosswalk locations:** Ideal spots would be in the centre of the park at Algoma Road, potential other location at Melrose Street.
- **Trails:** Would like to connect to the Martin Goodman Trail.
- **Fences are currently a barrier** – There is a desire increase permeability into the park.
- **Parking concerns for GO Train users** - There was some concern that if parking is going to be allotted for Grand Avenue Park it may cause GO train users to park at Grand Avenue instead of the existing GO lot. Participants asked that this be taken into consideration — in terms of capacity and enforcement — if parking is to be part of the new park design.
- **Active Transportation** - Participants were generally in favour of more walking and cycling connections to, from and around Grand Avenue Park. Concerns about Legion Road as an off-ramp for the Gardiner. Residents suggested they wanted to make it **pedestrian/cyclist access** only. Councillor Grimes explained that the future road has already been approved so this is not possible. However, the sentiments regarding active transportation have been noted.
- **Bus Transportation:** 76B could go up New Castle and stop at the GO station. Prince Edward bus could also be better connected with neighbourhood.
- **Accessibility** - Participants agreed that increased accessibility will be a major a positive change to the park.

'Wild Card' (Other Issues)

Safety

- Concerns regarding loitering in community gathering space.
- Suggestions to ensure enough lighting for the park to be safe.
- Concern for safety of people running on the side of the streets. Incorporate a track into the sports field so people can run/walk in the park.
- Concern for people "living under trees".
- One person proposed speed bumps to slow down traffic.
- Questions regarding supervisors for programming.

- The **naturalized area** is important (trees; native habitats; strong ecological component) and therefore recommendations that Department of Forestry should be involved.

Appendix A: Written Comment Forms – Public Meeting #1

	Public consultation and park master plan process	Existing Conditions:	Community priorities, programming options	Connectivity and Context	Additional Comments
FORM 1	For next meeting, answer to how \$1.2 million is to be spent	Environmental issues to be remediated	Community involvement	Community involvement	Timelines and costing very important
FORM 2					Would like a playground and splashpad, protected from dogs
FORM 3	Keep us engaged!		Preserve green space (trees) in the park. Existing trees provide immense benefits. Replanting the area with young trees is not the same. Leverage the expertise of the Forestry division. No sports field as there are already many close by – less than 2 km distance	Butterfly/ pollinator - support native biodiversity. Provide habitat for wildlife and endangered species such as bees. No parking – crosswalk near Portland and Agoma	
FORM 4		To have a green space with enough trees for sunny days	To put benches and flower beds / to have public washrooms in the park	To be able to walk trails to Lakeshore Road and Parklawn Road	To have a park like James Gardens
FORM 5	Need to consider development in the neighbourhood in connection with other parkettes and greenways Use of school field for big field activities	Crosswalks Environmental assessments Traffic calming	Playground Park programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yoga in the park, Farmers' markets Painting in the park etc... Family oriented condo development	Build parks that work and support each other ie. Basketball parkette, soccer field at the school Good planning to encourage walking & cycling	Make a flexible space for many demographics keeping the local community as the priority