

Grand Avenue Park Phase 1 Improvements

Public Information Meeting

June 13, George R Gauld Junior School

Meeting Overview

On June 13 approximately 50 people attended a public information meeting at George R. Gauld Junior School in Etobicoke. The meeting was hosted by the City of Toronto to review recommendations from the Grand Ave master plan, preliminary ideas for Phase 1 Improvements, and to discuss priorities and next steps for Phase 1 Park Improvements. The park master plan design and recap was presented by members of the PMA Landscape Architect design team, Leslie Morton and Jasmeen Bains. The City of Toronto's Bob Duguid from Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Daniel McCreery, a senior engineer from Engineering and Construction Services provided additional context and updates about local infrastructure projects. A representative from Councillor Mark Grimes' office was also present. The meeting was facilitated by Jane Farrow with notetaking support from Rochelle Basen, Maddy Macnab, Kurt Mungal, and Jacob Stanescu.

Meeting summaries from the public engagement process to date are available for review on the City of Toronto Project website here: [Grand Manitoba Park Meeting Summaries](#)

Key Points

- There is a strong desire for features of the park to be visually pleasing as well as useful. This includes thoughtful consideration of materials in the children's playground, dog off-leash area, and parking lot.
- The increased capacity of the park as a result of park improvements will have an impact on the surrounding neighbourhood, especially as it relates to traffic management, parking, light, and noise pollution. Efforts should be made to mitigate potentially negative outcomes for the park's neighbours.
- The park circulation and entryways should be designed in order to facilitate good pedestrian and active transportation connections, now and in the future. This would include multi-use trails connecting to local transit, GO stations and the nearby ravine system.

Detailed Feedback

Park Infrastructure and Facilities

The Master Plan stipulates what facilities will be included in the design of the park. PMA staff presented the Master Plan and offered more specific design elements that have been developed since its previous presentation. Participants were invited to ask questions and offer feedback.

Sports Field

Participants asked about what sports would be played on the multi-use field and which organizations can permit it. One parent asked how she could know which leagues would use the field so that she could sign her children up to play close to home on the new field.

One participant suggested that storage space for sports equipment be considered in any future field house plans and designs. They referenced issues with a temporary trailer/storage unit at Colonel Sam Smith Park that teams use to store equipment—the participant does not like this solution because the trailer/storage unit is “ugly” and “blocks the view of the lake.”

Several participants expressed concern that the proposed time to turn off flood lighting on the field (as late as 11 pm during the summer), was too late:

- Concerns were expressed about sleep being disturbed for adults and children

City of Toronto response: PFR and the design team are taking into account concerns about the lighting footprint including shortening the evening hours of lighting and using deflectors.

Dog Off-leash Area (DOLA)

There was general agreement that a temporary DOLA was desirable and well situated. A few participants raised concerns about the pea gravel surfacing saying it is hard for dogs to run in, and does not stay clean.

- One participant suggested from experience with a nearby dog park that when the gravel becomes unsightly or smelly, people will take their dogs to other areas, often not designated off-leash areas
- A positive example of a dog park on the lakeshore that uses wood chips- smells nice, and chips are replaced often
- One participant suggested keeping it as turf

City of Toronto response: We will be developing a temporary DOLA that conforms to present PFR standards, which call for pea gravel surfacing, a fully fenced off area and double gated entryways. In Phase 2 a permanent DOLA will be designed and built in the area known as Parcel H (in the south eastern corner of the park) based on current PFR standards at the time

Bathrooms

Participants felt that public washrooms located in the park were generally desirable, especially if they were kept open at convenient times and during times when the field is being used.

- PFR staff explained that parameters and options for bathroom facilities are still under discussion in the next phase.

Seating & Benches

Participants suggested that there should be many benches, in convenient locations in order to have a place to stop and stay, or to rest, not just to pass through.

Swimming Pool

One participant suggested a swimming pool would be suitable in the park, especially for children and older adults.

- The City determined and shared with the community during these consultations that this area meets servicing standards for the provisioning of recreational facilities including swimming pools. Please see Grand Avenue Park Master Plan Presentation Part 1 on the project website, specifically pages 17 to 21, which provides an overview of facilities in the area. [Grand Manitoba Park Master Plan Part One](#)
- For more information on how the City of Toronto determines community needs and allocates recreational facilities, please see the recently completed Facilities Master Plan on the City of Toronto website. [Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan](#)

Multi-Use Trails

Participants expressed strong support for a current and ‘future-proof’ design for the park pathways and entrances that would ensure well designed, accessible pedestrian and active transportation access to the park. They offered the following related input:

- The multi-use trail through the park “cannot dead-end at Legion Road”
 - Trails should continue over Legion Road to connect with the nearby GO station
 - Trails should provide pedestrian access along Legion Road down to creek
 - Trails should be connected to existing Mimico trail system
 - Developers should contribute to community infrastructure and trails
- PFR staff explained that the South Mimico Pedestrian Trail project is taking these concerns and options into consideration in its ongoing planning and the community outreach. People were advised to stay in touch with the project through various engagement processes underway or to be started in the coming months including those organized by TRCA, Metrolinx and the City of Toronto (including the Bonar Creek upgrades and Legion Road extension).

Traffic Management and Parking

Participants expressed concerns that the new facilities in the park will bring increased traffic to the area and increase pressure on parking on residential streets:

- Sports field will attract people, especially those in cars bringing equipment
- People will drive through residential streets to get to the parking lot, may require crosswalks and/or speedbumps to manage this
- Commuters using the Mimico GO station will use the parking lot
- Location of the parking was raised as a concern for the residents residing on Grand Ave

To these concerns, staff offered the following responses:

- Parking lot will add 50 new parking spots to keep parking off of residential streets
- Parking lot location was determined during the Master Plan process and vetted with Operations. The southern location for the parking lot is the most suitable because of the

flow of traffic on Manitoba and environmental concerns (poor soil bearing capacity) in the northern portion of the site. (see Consultation and Meeting Summaries on the project website for further detail).

- Traffic control inquiries including speed bumps and crosswalks should be directed to the councillor's office to take up with the City's transportation services
- Inappropriate use of the parking lot by GO customers will be mitigated by hours of operation and time limit enforcement

A few participants raised concerns about traffic congestion caused by nearby private development projects (condo developments, Legion Road extension etc.), including trucks and heavy equipment.

Phasing and Budgets

Participants inquired about timelines and funding regarding:

- Environmental remediation the north end
- This work will take place in Phase 1 and will require part of the existing parkland to be closed although some areas of the park will remain open throughout this work.
- Legion Road extension
 - This project is in its early stages and public information meetings will follow in the coming months.
- Phase 2 funding
 - PFR staff are waiting for more information about when the land in Parcel H will be conveyed to the city. When this is known, funding requests will be made. This will not have an impact on Phase 1 work and funding.
- One participant asked for greater transparency and clarity about how the park is being funded and what part of the budget is being covered through development charges and levies.
- Residents expressed concerns about the timing and staging of construction of the Park conflicting with 251 Manitoba Street development.

Ecology and Environmental Sustainability

Several participants asked about ecological concerns involved in the park design and the impact on birds and wildlife:

- A few participants noted that there were coyotes in the nearby ravines (that also come to the park itself) and a plan for managing their population, including relocation, should be considered.
- It was noted that the tree removals in the north end of the site, due to the required environmental remediation process, will be substantial. The City responded by explaining that the landscape design calls for replanting trees, shrubs and plants that will create habitat for wildlife including birds and pollinators

Playground

Initial feedback on the playground design and priorities was sought through small table discussions where participants discussed the options presented by PMA Landscape Architects. Additional input is being sought via an online survey launching in August 2018 where respondents can weigh in on specific playground details, types of play and the design palette.

The following feedback on priorities, general principles and types of play were offered at this meeting:

General Playground Design

- Children should be consulted in design process
- Some play equipment should be big enough that teenagers and adult fitness classes can use it (note this is will be implemented in Phase 2)
- Fitness apparatus like the one at the Lakeshore park should be included in design (note this will be implemented in Phase 2)
- the play areas should function and offer activity options in all seasons, including winter
- a covered gazebo that can be permitted for special events is desirable
- the play areas should be accessible for parents and children with different abilities

Formal Play

- Playground equipment should suit different age groups including teenagers
- Monkey bars and zip line are very popular and desirable
- Slides should be made of material that does not conduct heat (especially stainless steel), and play area should be in the shade to keep it from getting too hot
- There are musical instruments at nearby Jeff Healey Park, some felt these were not desirable in this area, there are already undesirable noises from the GO train and highway
- Webbed rope climbing structure is preferred, like at Amos Waites park except not as tall
- Swings (including a “saucer” swing) should be included since there are not any nearby and are enjoyed by all ages & abilities
- Kiwanis Park on West Mall has large circle structure with five pivot points that’s very popular
- Rocking spring toys are not popular, prefer teeter totter, tires, swings
- Chalk walls do not get used, end up being just a slab of concrete
- Park in Burlington has a “treasure hunt” game built into playground that’s very popular
- Rock climbing features should be included in the design
- Ground should be a mix of rubber and natural materials (note - specifically poured in place rubber was preferred for softness and bounciness, with reference to image of Ramsden Park)
- A few participants felt that enclosed structures like the High Park playground are safer than the stand-alone climbing features

Natural Play

- Natural play is beneficial to a broad age range of children and matches park aesthetically
- Some concern over mess created by sand and wood chips (eg. Trinity Bellwoods) though was also mentioned that children enjoy this
- Some concerns about the maintenance of the natural play areas to avoid garbage collecting

- Natural play areas can become muddy, also mentioned that children enjoy this featured
- Incorporate more formal structures into the natural play area, including wood and rubber equipment, though wood features can give splinters
- Outdoor classroom at George R. Gauld Junior school is a good example

Water Features

- Natural water play area at Dufferin Grove becomes a “mud pit,” chaotic; though again participant noted that children seem to enjoy it
- Participants like the idea of a creek, but worry it will “act like a gutter” and collect debris
- Creek is good for toddlers and young children, older children can use splash pad
- Creek base layer would need special treatment to make sure should the water was contained
- Splash pad should have a timer or other manual way to dispense water instead of a hose, or else too much water creates a muddy mess
- Creek needs to be cleaned frequently but splash pad drains itself, is lower maintenance
- Creek and splash pad could be integrated, with creek draining off of splash pad
- Jets with different levels of power should be incorporated in the design to appeal to different age groups
- Metro Zoo splash pad was cited as good example of water play
- Rubber or another softer alternative to concrete should be installed on the playing surface of the splash pad- request for information on what materials are available
- Questions about wading pools were raised though it was explained these features are no longer available with City of Toronto due to hygiene and maintenance issues.

Playground Safety

- Playground is adjacent to Grand Avenue, need more barriers to protect children from fast-moving traffic
- A barrier of some kind or fence could provide safety around the playground, but may not be aesthetically pleasing
- fencing with gate was suggested for consideration; low walls along Grand side to stop smaller children
- Picnic tables and seating between the playground and the road could act as a barrier
 - PMA clarified that there is seating planned on east side of the playground to keep kids from running into the multipurpose trail. There are also picnic tables planned for the west side of the park where parents can sit and watch their kids.