

**Location:** Regent Park Community Centre- Banquet Room

**Date:** March 20, 2019

**Time:** 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

**Attendees:** Approx. 40 people attended

### Synopsis of Discussion Points

Attendees were enthusiastic about the conversion of the wading pool to a splash pad and long overdue upgrades to the playground.

The focus of much of the night's discussion was on the existing problems within the park. Problems listed ranged from nuisance issues (example: litter, noise, off-leash dogs and excessive dog waste) to more serious safety-and-security issues including drug use on-site and the corresponding discarded drug paraphernalia, broken bottles, prostitution and threat of physical assault. Solutions suggested by attendees included the following:

- Improve lighting (especially in the dark corners of the park)
- Clear brush along fence lines to eliminate hiding places
- Make sure all benches have centre arms to deter vagrancy
- Establish clear site-lines into the park
- Add more trash cans
- Add new by-law signage (litter and dog rules)
- Make sure none of the design elements have impalement points (example: pickets on top of fencing)
- No use of sand and no wood chips in park/ playground (hides needles and broken glass)
- Provided buffer/ space between noisy elements and neighbouring residential properties (i.e. move splash pad and playground away from backyards).

Attendees were generally drawn towards Concept B with its free-form/ curvilinear styled design and circulation system. A strong desire was voiced to maintain the look and feel of a 'Passive Park'. The Community expressed concern that recent and ongoing development throughout the community, including new recreational facilities, leaned predominantly towards an "urban design" aesthetic (like the straight-edge/ angular styling of Concept A) and that Sumach-Shuter Parkette should be different from those sites in both purpose and look.

The Attendees did find a few elements from Concept A desirable and asked if they could be incorporated into the Concept B design. These elements included:

- Fencing off the playground/ splash pad area instead of fencing off the perimeter of the park

# Sumach-Shuter Parkette

## Public Open House Comments Summary

- Opening up the street frontage to make the park more inviting
- There was more interest in having an adult exercise area than the pre-cast ping-pong table.
- Attendees preferred the decorative posts from Concept A over the rainbow painted fence in Concept B (more artistic)

Other reoccurring comments included:

- Leave as many existing trees as possible (acknowledging that some trees would need to be removed due to the health/ condition of the existing trees)
- The new playground should have swings.
- There's enough 'Active' recreation facilities in the neighbourhood already. No need to incorporate sports fields or courts into the design for Sumach-Shuter Parkette.

### Formal Comments Submitted via Questionnaire and/ or Email

Filled in Questionnaires received: 3

Comments received via email after meeting: 4

Preferred Concept (based on formal comments submitted):

- 2 votes for Concept A
- 6 votes for Concept B
- Note: 1 Questionnaire selected both options as preferred (household split on preference)

### Elements or activities you want in the park

- Rainbow fence
- Benches with central arm inside actual park area
- Swings are important.
- Green, green, + more **real** green (not artificial surfaces).
- Sitting, quiet play, natural life.
- Good lighting + sightlines into park; not too tall lights, to not flood light into neighbouring yards.
- Fencing around park so kids, dogs safe from busy streets, and multiple access points into park.
- Multi-purpose for all including passive space for quiet activities (reading, chess tables).
- Leave as many mature trees as possible.
- Pathway that allows passing through the park, rather than winding around the outside.
- Like day-camp for Dixon Hall in the park.
- The park sometimes ends up being a spot for unseemly activities including humans urinating. Proper lighting will hopefully help alleviate this problem.

# Sumach-Shuter Parkette

## Public Open House Comments Summary

- Like suggestion of coloured fence in places. The undulating ones are preferred over all of the same height.
- More seating around trees, especially near the coffee shop are welcome. The opening of the retirement home this year will also help bring out people to the parkette if there is more casual seating available around trees.
- Have more than 4 bike posts. It can often be extremely hard to find sufficient bike parking in the city and it would be much appreciated to have more than 4, if I'm correct about the number of bike posts from what I saw from the drawings.
- With the mature trees, I see the park as being the neighbourhood's backyard. I'd like to see it maintained as natural space – trees, shrubs, natural landscaping material such as wood and stone.
- I think that having the area of benches on the north-eastern corner as they currently are is important to make sure space can be used in different ways at the same time without people feeling displaced, though I don't want to speak on behalf of the current users of those benches.
- I'm wondering if it has been discussed at all to put a fence around the splash pad/playground area. As a parent of two young children, I've always appreciated a space where I know they can't leave especially with a lot of traffic around. I think this could also keep the greater park more dog-friendly while having space where dogs could not go.
- I'd love it to be a place that is dog friendly, has a playspace/splashpad for children and welcomes picnics and neighbourhood gatherings.

### Dog Friendly:

- As a dog owner for almost a year, I've used the park exponentially more now than I did as a parent. The predominant park activity, by my observation, is by dogs and their owners.
- Dog friendliness would include having space for owners to roam with their dog. I'm not looking for a fenced-in gravel space. Just a nice swath of space from the west end to the east end of the park.
- I want the park (other than the playground/splash pad portion) to have off-leash hours e.g. from 6-9 am and 8-11 pm. These are times that children or community groups are unlikely to be using the park. It would make sense to factor this into the design pre-construction since off-leash use of the park will be happening during those hours anyway.
- Install a water fountain/bottle filler with the lower water bowl for dogs.

### Gatherings:

- The trick is having someone organize them. Other parks have farmers markets, art-in-the-park, music, picnic space and tend to be well used.

### Play space:

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## Public Open House Comments Summary

- The more European wood, rock and rope type of playground would be a novel addition to the playspaces in the area.
- A playspace that permits imaginative play/adventures would be good – like a tree house with a tall slide and/or zipline to get down (not the plastic, pre-fab house/slide combo)
- A splash pad rather than wading pool makes a lot of sense. I like the splash pad equipment from concept A better than concept B. When I see kids playing at splash pads, I notice they mostly prefer to gather water to throw at one another, step on the floor jets, run through the spray.

### Good lighting:

- The lighting is adequate, but having fewer shadowy areas at night could discourage some illicit activity

### Art:

- Sculpture or some other art would be interesting

### Seating:

- There are currently two benches, both near the playspace. Assuming the new playspace would get more use, there should be more seating.
- As a dog owner, I use the non-playspace part of the park. It would be handy to have something to sit on (a boulder, tree trunk – to fit into the theme of Concept B)
- Seating near the west side of the park could be used by coffee-drinkers leaving Sumach Espresso

### Garbage Cans:

- There is currently a large garbage container and recycling container at the west opening to the park. There should be additional at the east opening, as well as a green bin for organic waste.

### Drainage:

- The park currently gets very muddy (or, this winter, it had a thick sheet of ice) and could benefit from weeping tile or something that helps drainage of surface water.

### Elements or activities you do not want in the park

- While most elements in the park as suggested in the design are fine, the focus should be on aesthetics. For example, a concrete table tennis table is perhaps not the best use of the space. From my perspective it doesn't have the aesthetic appeal befitting the redesigned park.

# Sumach-Shuter Parkette

## Public Open House Comments Summary

- No audio/ speakers/ loud recorded music.
- Prefer volleyball/ tennis tables on north side of Shuter Street, for active play.
- No concrete table tennis.
- Loose dogs, noise.
- Drug deals, sex trade:
  - Currently there are benches at the north east area that are separate from the park. Adults sit here for non-playground purposes and because of the fencing it's generally ok. But that area will now be incorporated into the park and it would only follow that the people who use that area now will move their activities into the park at night.
  - When by-law officers warn dog-owners that they will be ticketed for having an off-leash dog, dog owners avoid the park for a bit. I notice that this tends to leave the park more open to those who use it for less-desirable use.
- Tobacco/cannabis use:
  - I think it's illegal to smoke near a playground, but both products get smoked by people who use the park for purposes other than having their kids play or their dog exercised.
- Certain play equipment:
  - In many of the playspaces I've gone to with my child, the Spring Riders tend to be broken. Similarly, the see-saws can break at the springs. So I think these might just end up as derelict clutter and suggest not including them.
  - I don't see a need for a large concrete ping-pong table especially now that there's one across the street at the athletic fields.
- Duplication of features in athletic fields:
  - Other than children's play, athletic features should be in the athletic field.
  - Adult fitness, walking loops and outdoor table tennis should be kept to the athletic fields across the street
- Shortcut:
  - Some people use the park to cut the corner of Shuter and Sumach for example by entering at the West opening and exiting at the east opening. I don't feel the park needs to be designed around this path.
  - Many co-op residents take a straight line from the West entrance to the gate leading to the co-op. It would make sense to build in something that would follow a similar path.
- Man-made materials:
  - I'd like there to be predominantly natural materials, although a rubber play surface instead of sand or wood chips makes sense for safety.
- While I like the idea of adding some colour, it would be great if this could be done with art as opposed to a rainbow fence.

### General comments

- Concept A is ugly, sharp edged, industrial. We have quite enough of **that** thank you.
- Fabulous designs.

## Sumach-Shuter Parkette

### Public Open House Comments Summary

- I enjoy being beside the park, I leave windows open in the summer and it is pleasant to hear the sound of kids playing, dogs playing too. All passive activity sounds. Want people to feel safe and encouraged to spend time there.
- There's a proposal to remove trees to make way for the design elements. I **strongly object** to the removal of healthy trees. Instead the design should be modified to accommodate the trees in the plan. Our street is one of the few streets close to downtown Toronto that still retain the large leafy trees. They are not only a pleasure to see during the warmer months and in fall, but also such a relief to the increasing pollution in the city. **Please consider not removing any of the healthy trees from the parkette.**
- I do prefer Concept A since it's more open to the public and will hopefully minimize dog owners using the park as an off-leash park, yet there is the smaller fenced off area for children. I also presume that there are / could be some other sorts of structures to provide a permeable fence type thing (e.g., shrubs, decorative posts) for children's safety to prevent them from running on to the sidewalk? I can't quite tell from the Concept A renderings. The more open design also lends itself to being inviting to the public with fewer places for negative things to take place.
- Regarding the bike rings/posts, I've attached a few pictures of the types of posts that are more functional. Neither option I saw for Concept A or B were practical/functional. Unfortunately just because they look sleek and have an 'urban look' doesn't mean they're functional and therefore there really wouldn't be any point installing them. Note: respondent provided 2 photo examples of preferred bike racks/ rings.
- Our household is split. Like features in both.
- In considering the design options of the park, what sort of evaluation was done of other parks to help inform different aspects of this park? And any consultation with public health for other things to consider, e.g., the built environment, sun safety, healthy public policy, equity considerations, etc.? Note: The Corktown Master Plan evaluated all parks in the Corktown Neighbourhood and informed the proposed design for Sumach-Shuter Parkette. City of Toronto Policies and Parks Forestry and Recreation plans and studies informed the park design.
- The wood and rocks fit well with the existing mature trees, and doesn't replace nature with as much plastic, metal and cement
- We already have easy access to plastic and metal play equipment at Regent Park and Underpass Park, so this would be a nice compliment.
- The "terraced stage" looks like it could be fun to use even if it wasn't being used as a stage by day camps in July or Aug.
- I think that concept B looks like it could work wonderfully and the more neutral colour scheme (at least in the pictures) would set it apart from other parks that are closest to this site where there is a lot of blue.
- I like the splashes of colour in the decorative fence and wood slats for the low concrete walls.
- Activities before we had a child:

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## Public Open House Comments Summary

- It was nice to have a patch of green with mature trees, but it seemed to be used primarily for illicit activities or as a way for people to enter the back of the Co-op property.
- A neighbor had set up a neighborhood picnic at Sumach Shuter Parkette and we participated in what seems to have been the last one.
- Activities when our child was a toddler:
  - We'd use the playground equipment after checking the sand for sharp things. We'd often remove broken glass. Rarely syringes.
  - We'd also use the grassy areas to play ball.
  - It would not be unusual for adults without children to be sitting on the playground benches – not necessarily vagrants, but it seemed odd.
  - It was typical to find empty alcohol containers, cigarette packs, drug baggies and crack pipes.
  - We would often be the only ones at the park, or sometimes another family would stop by briefly. To go to a park with more activity, we would go to Withrow which is a remarkable park.
  - We'd often miss the window to use the wading pool – it's closed on the weekend and it closed by the time we got home during workdays.
- Current activities:
  - We use the athletic field across the street to play with a soccer ball or baseball (unless a game is going on). We don't use the playground equipment very often.
  - I and a number of other dog owners visit the park with our dogs in the morning before work as well as in the evenings or periodically on weekends.
  - Even during cold winter nights dog owners have a presence in the park, which I think helps promote safety. We're trying to "take back the park" simply by being the ones who actually use it all year 'round as well as pick up trash.
  - The day camps leave behind a lot of litter! As do the construction sites (plastic and insulation blow into the park). It's the dog owners who clean it up.
  - There is dog waste in the park – not every dog owner is responsible, apparently. But also, not all of that waste is canine. The south-east area of the park is used as a latrine by people who don't have easy access to a toilet.
- The park is ideal for me to throw a ball for my dog, or have my dog play with other well-behaved dogs – typically during hours that children would not be using the park. I use this park for that purpose because it's close and it effectively has no other use during the times I'm there.
- There are 3 off-leash dog parks a 5 to 10 minute walk away.
  - The one on Power St cannot be used at night (no lighting) and has no drinking water. I have to cross what is effectively a highway off-ramp to get there.

## Sumach-Shuter Parkette

### Public Open House Comments Summary

- The one at Regent Park is a small, fenced gravel space with water. The dogs are usually outside this park rather than inside it. The ones inside tend to be there because their dogs do not get along with other dogs. I'm glad they have a safe space for their dog, but I don't feel comfortable trying to share it.
- The last is in Riverdale Park West. It's a great park but it's too far away to take my dog in the morning or before bed.