

First Parliament Project

Phase 1 Engagement Executive Summary

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MASSLBP

Submitted to City of Toronto, Real Estate Services

Submitted by MASS LBP Inc.

Phase One Engagement Executive Summary

1. Background

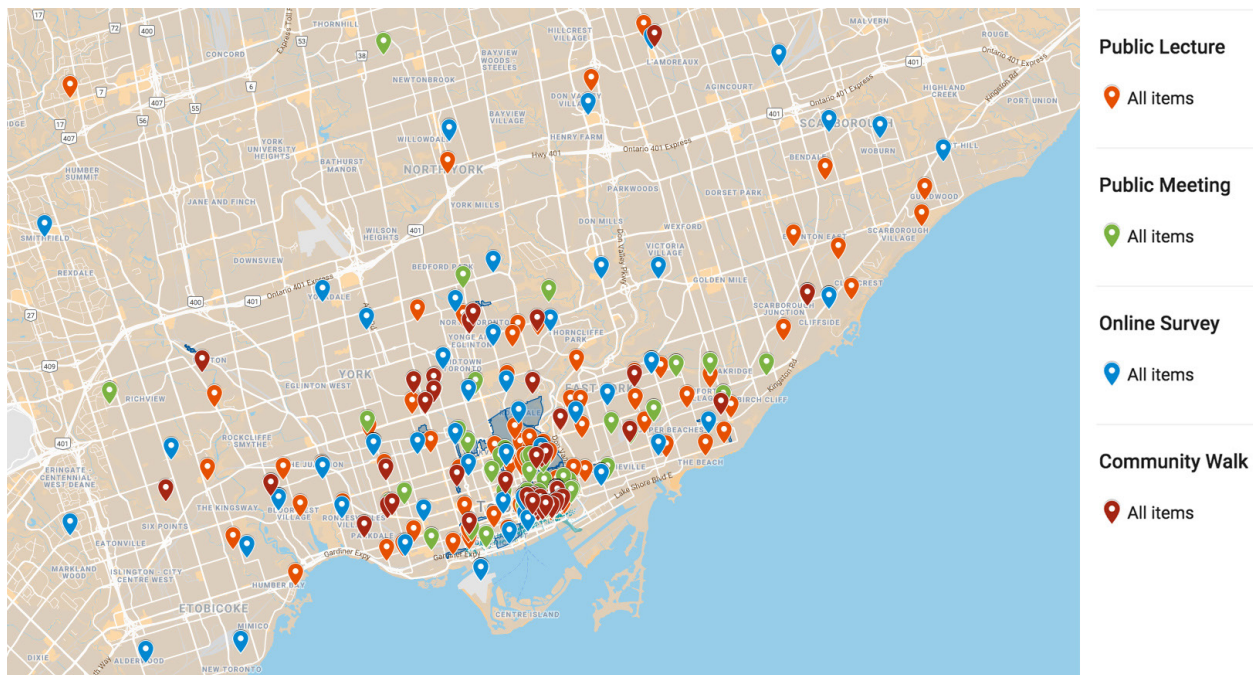
The City of Toronto's Real Estate Services Division undertook consultations to engage the public on the development of a Heritage Interpretation Strategy (HIS) and a Statement of Significance (SOS) for the First Parliament site. The purpose of the engagement process was to introduce the site's history to the public, detail the next steps of the planning process, and provide opportunities for public input and involvement in the planning of the site's historical interpretation.

2. Recruitment and Outreach

Approximately 500 people took part in five engagement activities between January and March 2018: a public lecture, an experts workshop, a public workshop, a community walk, and an online survey.

A project website provided information about the pertinent process, site, history, and engagement activities. Local stakeholder groups, residents' associations, and historical organizations across the city were invited —by phone and email— to participate throughout the process. These organizations were also encouraged to use their own networks and membership to inform the public about the project and engagement process. These efforts were promoted via the City of Toronto's Planning Division Twitter account and also supplemented with Facebook advertising.

Based on the location information provided by participants for the individual engagement activities (as shown on the map below), there was broad interest across Toronto, with a concentration near the site.



3. Engagement Process Overview

3.1 Public Lecture - February 6, 2018

Purpose:

- Convene everyone interested in or curious about the site and the project;
- Announce the project;
- Define the purpose and scope of the project and the engagement process; and
- Initiate outreach and promotion.

Participants: 220

What we heard:

Preserving and accurately conveying the dynamic history of the site, especially its use for the Parliament buildings, was important to participants, given its relevance to the development of the region.

Participants stressed on creating opportunities for visitors to understand the fragile archaeology of the site.

Suggestions were made for the team to develop a more conceptual approach to interpretation by uncovering personal stories related to the site and incorporating them in the interpretation strategy.

This also meant the interpretation strategy should rely less on physical attributes and artifacts, given their fragility and the risk of contamination.

Participants stressed that Indigenous communities must be consulted to ensure that their histories are also included as part of the interpretation narrative.

3.2 Experts Workshop - February 28, 2018

Purpose:

- Convene experts with specific and other contextual information about the site;
- Identify ideas and gaps in the project team's initial research; and
- Create guiding principles to help guide the Heritage Interpretation Strategy.

Participants: 24 / Knowledge Experts

What we heard:

The need to research the lesser-known histories of early settlers in the area, such as Non-British, Non-French, Indigenous, and black slave settlements, was highlighted.

Legislation from the Parliament Era that influenced the history of Toronto and Ontario was deemed especially relevant and worth highlighting.

Participants wanted the interpretation strategy to focus on personal stories from each era, such as the daily lives of residents in the Town of York, prisoner experiences at the Home District Gaol, and the labour history of the Consumers' Gas Company.

A list of 10 principles to guide the project team's work was finalized. Some of these stipulated that the site be: accessible to everyone, open to evolving continuously, diverse in terms of the stories it conveys, and respectful in the way it represents history.

Participants agreed that the site should be engaging enough to appeal to visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

3.3 Public Workshop - March 8, 2018

Purpose:

- Convene anyone interested in or curious about the site and the project;
- Identify ideas and gaps in the project team's initial research; and
- Identify goals for future 'ideal' experiences if participant visited the site.

Participants: 80 / Open to the public

What we heard:

The workshop generated over 170 discussion points to guide the team's work.

Indigenous culture and history was one of the most popular narratives, with many participants expressing interest in understanding the Indigenous treaties and agreements that impact the region.

Other narratives included the daily governance of Upper Canada, the social history and prison conditions at the Home District Gaol, the environmental impacts and the experience of labourers during the Consumers' Gas era, and the labour history of the railways.

Participants stated that an "ideal" visitor experience would require the site to be physically accessible and should employ language that is easily understood by a diverse set of people. It should also be community-oriented, include educational and interactive tools, and contain information on all eras, including Indigenous histories that are told not only through buildings on the physical site, but also online and through interactive displays.

3.4 Online Survey - March 19 to May 9, 2018

Purpose:

- Broaden and supplement the face-to-face participation in engagement activities;
- Identify participants' interests and priorities;
- Identify participants' motivations for visiting historical or heritage sites; and
- Map out participants' initial preferences for how they would want to experience the site.

Participants: 119 complete; 58 incomplete

What we heard:

Given the relevance of the site to the founding of the city, respondents deemed the recovery and heritage interpretation process as important.

Respondents were most interested in the heritage eras and stories of the First and Second Parliament Buildings.

Indigenous histories linked to the site were also of high interest.

Most of the other narratives presented, such as the Home District Gaol (Jail) and Consumers' Gas, also appealed to the participants.

Major motivators for visiting a heritage site were love for history and the desire to experience it first-hand and on-site.

Respondents emphasized that an enjoyable learning process that would help them understand the daily lives and social experiences of people in the past would contribute to a fulfilling visitor experience.

Participants preferred traditional and non-technological methods for experiencing the site, irrespective of age.

3.5 Community Walk - March 24, 2018

Purpose:

- Convene anyone interested in or curious about the site and the project;
- Broaden and supplement the face-to-face participation in engagement activities;
- Provide context for the project and site within the community;
- Understand how participants would want the site represented in the community; and
- Identify participants' interests and priorities.

Participants: 55 / Open to the public

What we heard:

Participants agreed that the site should be integrated with other heritage areas and monuments in the region.

Participants were especially interested in the Consumers' Gas era of the site, and were curious about the experience of labourers and the industrialization of Toronto.

Participants wanted to know more about the geographical makeup of Toronto at the time of British colonization, and how the boundaries and shorelines have since changed.

Participants were interested in the Indigenous histories and untold stories related to the site.

Some participants referenced other heritage sites that they considered successful examples of heritage interpretation, and expressed a desire for the site to emulate or incorporate features of their design.

4. How the Engagement Information Will Be Used

This individual engagement activity reports and this summary report were submitted to the City of Toronto, and project team members: DTAH, EVOQ Architecture, and Lord Cultural Resources. The recommendations and information documented during the engagement activities were used to inform the development of the Heritage Interpretation Strategy (HIS) and, less so, the Statement of Significance (SOS) amongst other historical and planning considerations.