

St. Andrew's Playground Improvements

Indigenous Place-making Opportunities Workshop – Phase 1 Conceptual Design

Meeting Details

Date: Wednesday October 9, 2019

Location: Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, 168 Bathurst Street

Time: 9:00am-10:30am

Attendees

Project Team

- Nancy Chater, City of Toronto
- Elnaz Sanati, DTAH
- James Roche, DTAH
- Liz McHardy, LURA Consulting
- Alexander Furneaux, LURA Consulting

Attendees

- Viviane Recollet, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre
- Beth Luttenberger, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre
- Ayelen Liberona, Parent/Educator at ALPHA Alternative School
- One additional representative from Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre was present but did not provide contact information.

Meeting Summary

Meeting Purpose

- To present and gain feedback on concepts options for St. Andrew's Playground improvements.
- To provide an update on anticipated project scope and schedule through to construction.
- To identify Indigenous place-making opportunities in the park's design improvements.

Meeting Process

The meeting began at 9:00am with Viviane Recollet (Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre) welcoming meeting attendees and smudging to prepare for the meeting. Viviane Recollet passed an eagle feather around the circle for each person to introduce themselves individually.

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Liz McHardy (LURA Consulting) provided a brief introduction to the St. Andrew's Playground Improvements project, and then passed the floor to Nancy Chater (City of Toronto) who spoke to the City of Toronto's Indigenous Place-making Initiative. This was followed by a brief explanation from James Roche and Elnaz Sanati (DTAH) about the two conceptual designs (Figure 1) for St. Andrew's Playground.

Following this presentation, meeting attendees had an organic plenary discussion about the two concepts, identifying opportunities for Indigenous place-keeping/making to be articulated through the Preferred Design Concept being developed by DTAH.

The meeting finished at 10:30am. Participants were thanked for their time and input, they were also invited to the upcoming stakeholder meeting on October 21st 2019, the public meeting on October 24th 2019, and to visit the project website to learn more about the project's development. The team also committed to meeting with the group again to further discuss the Indigenous place-making opportunities in the park as the park plan is developed.



Figure 1. The Conceptual Designs for the St. Andrew's Playground included the Play Plaza (left) and the Play Ribbon (right).

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Feedback Summary

This section presents the feedback received directly from meeting attendees during the plenary discussion and has been organized thematically. This summary is not intended to be a direct quote of comments, but instead an overview summary of feedback.

Trees

- Request that space be made for a tree planting ceremony during the construction phase of the project.
- Desire to know what will happen to the two trees identified in the arborists report to be removed. Meeting attendees suggested that to honour the fallen trees, the wood from these trees could be salvaged and kept for a sacred fire, perhaps in this park or in another local sacred fire
- Request to know and participate in the selection and planting of new trees and vegetation in the park, with input from knowledge keepers. Meeting partners can identify some of these knowledge keepers for the City's team

Ceremonies and Teachings

- Participants identified that there are limited-to-no opportunities for fire ceremonies to take place through the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre; improvements to St. Andrew's Playground presents an opportunity for this park to provide space to support fire ceremonies and freedom to be on the land. Fire teachings are also important for community members to share with youth.
- Story circle should be close to the fire pit, but not at the centre of the circle. Nothing should obstruct visual sightlines between members of the circle.
- The story circle, fire pit, and any other ceremony spaces should be in a quieter location (away from the Market Hall, play areas, the dogs off leash area, and any patios) but not isolated completely from activity. It was suggested the north-west corner might meet these criteria.
- Story circle and fire pit should be on a flat grassy surface.
- Nancy Chater noted that adding a fire circle to the park needs to be reviewed by Parks operations staff and is subject to their sign-off. If included the fire pit would follow the City's standard permitting process. Information about fire pit permits is available online on the [City of Toronto 311 fire pit permits webpage](#).
- Important to learn from the landscape for exploration and learning.
- Water jets do not do justice to the sacredness of water.

Sacred Medicines

- The medicine wheel garden is important in supporting programming and ideally a sizeable area in a sunny location could be identified for tobacco (eastern direction) , cedar (southern direction), sage (western direction), and sweetgrass (northern direction) to grow (these must be arranged in particular orientations aligning with the medicine wheel).

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- Sacred Medicines as well as other plants perform an important role in learning with the living environment.

Meaningful Representation

- Opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs should be explored in the Market Hall.
- City of Toronto should look to Indigenous artists (such as Chief Ladybird and Lady Aura or others) when considering commissioning any Indigenous art. A list of Indigenous artists was sent to the City of Toronto following the meeting.

General Comments

- Avoid concentrating Indigenous cultural elements in one space within the park. Elements should be close for ease of programming, but can be dispersed somewhat throughout the park to avoid making one area the “Indigenous section”.
- Needs to be continued collaboration between the City of Toronto and Indigenous community members throughout and after construction.
- Important to involve individual knowledge keepers, artists, and entrepreneurs in the execution of this and other projects. Particularly knowledge keepers should be compensated for the consulting services they provide for projects as you would a technical consultant.
- The Indigenous cultural place-making elements in the park discussed in this meeting need to be implemented in coordination with Indigenous community members to fine tune the scale and placement of these components
- Indigenous community members noted that the conversation served an important purpose to provide space to hear what elements are important to them.

Next Steps

The project team will host a second phase for consultation on St. Andrew's Playground Improvements. These meetings include:

- An invited stakeholder meeting on October 21, 2019 – 10:00 am to 12:00 pm (noon), Metro Hall, 55 John Street, Room 308.
- A public open house to be held on October 24, 2019, 6:30 pm to 8:00 p.m. at Metro Hall, 55 John Street, Room 308.

Following these meetings, the City of Toronto and DTAH will maintain dialogue with Indigenous Community Members on detailed design components such as the planting plan and planting list being prepared by DTAH for the City of Toronto. Future meetings will be planned between the City of Toronto, DTAH, and additional Indigenous community members to discuss details of design and implementation of Indigenous place-making in the park.