

St. Andrew's Playground Improvements

Public Engagement Summary – Phase 1 Conceptual Design PUBLIC MEETING 1, PARK POP-UPS, and SURVEY

Consultation Details

Public Meeting

Date: September 18th, 2019 (6:30 pm to 8:00 pm)

Location: Metro Hall, 55 John Street

Pop-Ups

Dates and Times:

- September 26th, 2019 (11:30 am to 1:30 pm)
- September 30th, 2019 (11:30 am to 1:30 pm)
- October 2nd, 2019 (4:30 pm to 6:30 pm)

Location: St. Andrew's Playground, 450 Adelaide Street West Attendance

Project Team

- Nancy Chater, Senior Project Coordinator at City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation Capital Projects
- James Roche, Partner at DTAH
- Elnaz Sanati, Landscape Architect at DTAH
- Liz McHardy, CEO at LURA Consulting
- Alexander Furneaux, Community Engagement Coordinator at LURA Consulting

Attendees

- Eighteen (18) people attended the public meeting.
- One hundred and eighteen (118) people attended the pop-ups over three days.
- Eighteen (18) people completed the online feedback or submitted their feedback by email.

Consultation Summary

Consultation Purpose

- To present and gain feedback on concept options for St. Andrew's Playground improvements.
- To provide an update on anticipated project scope and schedule through to construction.
- To present next steps.

Format

Public consultation on Phase 1 Conceptual Design of the St. Andrew's Playground Improvements project entailed a multi-pronged approach combining feedback from one (1) public meeting, three (3) park pop-ups, and one (1) online feedback form.

Public Meeting

Participants began arriving prior to the meeting start time and were welcomed to sign-in and indicate whether they wish to receive project updates. Participants were provided with a meeting agenda as well as a hard-copy feedback form. At 6:30pm participants were asked to take their seats. Liz McHardy (LURA Consulting) delivered the land acknowledgement then introduced Councillor Joe Cressy who spoke briefly about the process that led to the proposed improvements to St. Andrew's Playground. Liz McHardy (LURA Consulting) then led a brief round of introductions. Following these introductions, James Roche (DTAH) provided an overview of the project team's analysis of St. Andrew's Playground in its current form in relation to the neighbourhood surrounding it, accounting for anticipated growth and development in the area. This analysis led to the presentation of two design concepts for the park which James Roche introduced and guided the audience through, noting key differences and potential design opportunities for various areas of the park. At the end of the presentation, there was a short opportunity for the audience to ask questions of clarification about the presentation before beginning the facilitated table discussions.

For the remainder of the meeting, participants were asked to circulate between four (4) tables. At each table, a project team member facilitated an open discussion of one of four elements of the conceptual designs. These tables were organized into discussions of:

- Trees and Horticulture;
- Play and Water;
- Dogs Off Leash Area (DOLA); and
- Gathering Spaces and Seating.

Participants were asked several questions about the two conceptual designs. These questions were:

1. What do you like about Concept Option 1 Play Plaza?
2. What can be improved about Concept Option 1 Play Plaza?
3. What do you like about Concept Option 2 Play Ribbon?
4. What can be improved about Concept Option 2 Play Ribbon?
5. What would you like to see included in each of the following spaces?
 - a. Trees & Horticulture;
 - b. Play & Water;
 - c. Dogs Off Leash Area (DOLA); and
 - d. Gathering Spaces and Seating.

Following the round-table discussions, attendees participated in a plenary discussion highlighting ideas that resonated strongly with them from the table discussion. To close, the project team provided an overview of the next steps and the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 pm.

Pop-Ups

Three “pop-up” meetings were held in St. Andrew’s Playground to engage with and collect input from a broader range of community members who may have been unable to attend the public meeting but use the park. Each pop-up included nine project information boards – one (1) introducing the project, four (4) with aerial images and renderings of the two (2) conceptual designs, one (1) with precedent images that have inspired design elements in the two (2) conceptual designs, and three (3) feedback boards. The feedback boards presented the same questions asked at the public meeting held on September 18th and posed on the online survey. At all three pop-ups there was at least one representative from the City of Toronto, DTAH, and LURA Consulting who attended for the full two hours. Project team members led participants through the project boards, answering questions about the project, and encouraging and recording feedback from participants. Project team members also handed out project cards to participants and passersby which encouraged people to fill in the online feedback form by October 6th and provided a link to the project webpage.

Online Feedback

An online feedback form was live on the City of Toronto project page from September 30th, 2019 to October 6th, 2019. The online feedback form included the same questions that were discussed at the public meeting and at pop-ups. A link to the presentation slides that were presented at the public meeting was provided at the top of the survey. [Download the Presentation Slides from Public Meeting 1 \(7.93MB\).](#)

Advertisement

Public Meeting

The public meeting was advertised through the following communications channels:

- Flyers were posted in St. Andrew’s Playground on Wednesday September 11th, 2019 advertising the September 18th, 2019 meeting. These flyers were posted at key locations such as entrances to the site, the Dog Off Leash Area, the playground, and the central seating area near the pergolas. Flyers were also sent by the City of Toronto to be delivered to addresses in the vicinity of St. Andrew’s Playground however it was discovered following the meeting that these were not delivered by Canada Post.
- The project website advertised the public meetings.
- The Councillor Cressy's website announced the meeting.

Pop-Ups

The pop-up meetings were advertised through the following communications channels:

- Flyers were posted in St. Andrew's Playground on Tuesday September 24th, 2019 advertising the September 24th, 30th, and October 2nd pop-up meetings in the park. These flyers were posted at key locations such as entrances to the site, the Dog Off Leash Area, the playground, and the central seating area near the pergolas. Flyers were also distributed by mail from the City of Toronto to addresses in the vicinity of St. Andrew's Playground.
- A Canada Post mailout of flyers went to over 7000 addresses to publicize the 3 pop-ups.
- The City project website advertised the public meetings.
- Social Media:
 - DTAH shared the project material and online survey through their Twitter account.
 - The Garment District Neighbourhood Association (GDNA) shared the park pop-up flyer.
 - LURA Consulting retweeted both DTAH and the GDNA.

Online Feedback

The online feedback form was promoted through the project website, at the park pop-ups, and through social media.

Questions of Clarification

The following questions were asked during an open format question and answer period during the public meeting.

1) How was the size of the Dog Off Leash Area determined?

Keeping Dog Off Leash Area in the park and making a new one the same size as the existing space was discussed in the preliminary public consultation in 2018. The keeping the existing size allows for a balance of park uses, meeting the needs of multiple park users today and in the future.

2) Has there been any consideration for removing portions of the fence along Adelaide Street West to provide more access on this park edge?

Removing the fence was considered, however the fence is retained in both concepts because there are no designated crossing points on Adelaide Street West between Brant Street and Portland Street. Retaining the fence is intended to discourage crossing Adelaide Street West mid-block as well as provide some separation between park uses and vehicle movements.

3) What is the construction timeline for the project?

Construction is anticipated to take place from May to November 2020, however the construction schedule will be confirmed once a contractor is awarded the project.

4) Has there been any consideration for the connection to Brant Street? The presentation showed greening of Brant Street on Page 9.

Slide 9 illustrates the 2018 Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan for a portion of the West Rail Park District. Park Districts are areas of focus located within the Downtown Secondary Plan area emphasizing a plan for quality and connectivity of urban parks. The concept plans address the Brant Street edge with a new seat wall and the removal of fencing, to open up the connection to the street. A summary of the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan can be accessed from the City of Toronto’s website. [Download the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan summary \(5.13MB\)](#).

5) Are washrooms being considered for the park?

Washrooms are not being considered within the footprint of the park as they pose significant maintenance and safety challenges, and take up valuable park space. Washrooms will be available in the redeveloped Waterworks building on the north edge of the park.

Feedback Summary from Public Meeting 1, Park Pop-Ups, and Survey

The following provides a summary of feedback provided by community members from the first public meeting, three park pop-up meetings, and online feedback form on the two conceptual designs (Figure 1). This section is organized by engagement question and by feedback themes.



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

Concept 1: Play Plaza

The following feedback responds to Questions 1 and 2 concerning the overall design of the Play Plaza conceptual design (Figure 2).

Design elements that work

- Clearly defined paths and activity areas help organize the space for park users.
- Playground location helps caregivers supervise children at play.
- Good balance of hard and soft landscape areas.
- Like the seating options in central plaza as a social gathering space.

Design elements to improve

- Concern that not enough space is provided near the Waterworks food hall exit to accommodate increased volumes of foot traffic and seating.
- Potential conflicts between plaza and play areas for those without children who want to use the plaza.



Figure 2. Play Plaza Conceptual Design

Concept 2: Play Ribbon

The following feedback responds to Questions 3 and 4 concerning the overall design of the Play Ribbon conceptual design (Figure 3).

Design elements that work

- Ribbon design is creative and unique.
- Separates plaza uses from the play area creating more defined uses of each space.
- Suggestion to continue the ribbon to Maud Street.

Design elements to improve

- Park entrances should be prominent and inviting.
- Several participants expressed concerns that the grass may be walked on heavily by people taking a shortcut across the lawn towards the Market Hall. The preferred concept plan should consider a pathway through the centre to anticipate these movements.
- The plaza in this design is too close to the Waterworks building.
- The play area is too close to Adelaide Street West posing a risk to children.
- Several participants were concerned this design over-prioritizes play by spreading play structures over a wider area. This spread-out design may also make it difficult to supervise kids playing.



Figure 3. Play Ribbon Conceptual Design

Spaces

The following feedback responds to Question 5 concerning the design of various spaces in the park across both conceptual designs.

Green Spaces

Trees

- Increase the tree canopy while maintaining some sunny areas.
- Tree canopy should provide shade over the Dog Off Leash Area throughout the day.

Horticulture

- All vegetation proposed for the park should be native and hardy to minimize City maintenance.
- Ground-level vegetation should be considered as an alternative to fences and other barriers. This type of vegetation could also be used to reduce noise and provide some visual screening.
- Participants identified that community vegetable gardens should not be considered for this park (this use was not included in either of the two conceptual designs).

Landscaping

- Improvements should minimize ground disturbance to protect existing trees.
- Some minor changes to the topography of the park should be consider opportunities for seating and play on these landforms.
- Landforms may should be considered as an alternative to fencing.

Play and Water

- Strong support for removing the fence around the existing play area as long as play activity is concentrated in one area such as in the Play Plaza design.
- Play structures should emphasize natural play, play for all ages, and be unique.

Dogs Off Leash Area

Size

- Concern that the size of Dog Off Leash Area does not anticipate growth of the neighbourhood's dog population.
 - Existing Dog Off Leash Area is already very heavily used.
- Not all dog owners can use the Dog Off Leash Area for their dog due to some aggressive dog behavior, size differences, and concerns about un-neutered dogs.
 - A few participants suggested two separate Dog Off Leash Areas, one for small dogs and one for large dogs.

Location

- Some dog owners were concerned about placement of the Dog Off Leash Area next to Adelaide Street West as the noise caused by traffic cause dogs stress, while traffic presents a danger to their safety if they were to escape the Dog Off Leash Area.
- Participants suggested alternative locations that were more central or closer to the Waterworks building.

Design Elements

- Strong support for additional seating, shade from trees, dog water fountains, and dedicated dog waste organic bins.
- Concerns about the use of a granular surface due to the potential for injury on paws, ingesting the gravel, and how hot the surface becomes in the summer.
 - Several dog owners identified the St. Andrew's Playground Dog Off Leash Area is popular because it uniquely offers a woodchip base.
- Visual screening using plants should be used to buffer the Dog Off Leash Area from the streets.

Gathering Spaces and Seating

Lighting and Electrical Outlets

- Improved lighting essential to a more aesthetically welcoming and safe park.
- Suggestion to illuminate the trees from below.
- Suggestion to illuminate the pathways and key destinations such as plazas, play areas, and the Dog Off Leash Area to keep the space activated into the evenings.
- The lighting strategy should be careful not to over-light the park.
- Electrical outlets would be beneficial to help individuals or groups program the space.

Seating and Gathering

- New seating and gathering spaces essential to improving the park so that it can meet current and future demand from park users.
- Important to include a mix of seating types that allow for individual and social seating.
- Wood deck seating was well supported for its multi-purpose role in protecting tree roots, preventing dogs from urinating close to the tree, providing seating under the shade of the tree, and providing an elevate area free of dog urine and feces.
- Wavy seating is fun, interesting, and provides back support.
- A mix of seating should be explored across the site including the use of landscape as a seating opportunity.

Signage

- Signage should help visitors navigate the site, directing people to amenities the park provides as well as those found in the Waterworks building such as washrooms.

General Feedback

- Some participants raised concerns about frequently finding discarded drug materials in the park.
- A few participants were concerned about the presence of street involved people in the park.
- Many participants, particularly dog owners expressed concern that the park would be fully closed during the construction period.

Areas of Divergent Opinion

Participants provided strong commentary in support and in opposition to certain elements of the conceptual designs including the following.

Green space

Respondents were divided on how much groundcover should be devoted to soft and hard surfaces. Advocates for additional hard surfaces referred to the high use of the park and the impacts this is having on grassy areas and soil that is being trampled and damaged by both humans and dogs. Conversely, supporters of maintaining green spaces felt it is important to keep as much soft surfaces in parks, especially in areas of the city where much of the ground cover is already asphalt and concrete.

Play and Dogs Off Leash Area

Respondents generally discussed how much space to dedicated to the play area and the Dog Off Leash Area as being at the expense of the other. Advocates for a larger play area suggested the Dog Off Leash Area should be made smaller, whereas dog owners frequently suggested the play area should be smaller to accommodate a larger Dog Off Leash Area.

Plaza Location

Respondents provided a mix of feedback on the plaza and seating relative to its location near the Waterworks Food Hall. While respondents acknowledged that it is a logical placement to include the plaza next to the building as a place to sit, eat, and gather, they also raised concerns that even though the plaza is public property, its proximity to services provided by a private entity may have the effect of giving the space a more corporate and less welcoming feel.

Water

Respondents were divided on the value of a water feature, with some seeing this feature as a valuable central feature that could be programmed during the year when the water is not running. Conversely, respondents also vocalized their concerns about whether this is an effective use of space for a feature that has a limited seasonal use and would require lots of maintenance.

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.

The second phase of consultation will present the Preferred Concept Design for St. Andrew's Playground drawing on feedback received in Phase 1 to refine the design of the park.

Appendix A - Meeting Agenda

St Andrews Playground Improvements

Public Meeting Agenda

Wednesday September 18

6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Metro Hall (55 John Street), Room 310

Meeting Purpose

- To present and gain feedback on concept options for St Andrews Playground improvements.
- To provide an update on anticipated project scope and schedule through to construction

Agenda

6:30 Welcome and Meeting Agenda Review

6:35 Presentation: Project Background and Concept Options

- Project overview and purpose.
- Review of feedback gathered to date, which has informed the concept options.
- Presentation of the concept options.

6:55 Questions of Clarification

7:00 Station Discussions (4 Rotations)

12.5-minute rotations through the following 4 stations, providing feedback at each on Concept Options 1 & 2:

- Trees and Horticulture
- Play and Water
- Dogs Off Leash Area (DOLA)
- Gathering Spaces and Seating

7:50 Closing Plenary

Participants will have the opportunity to share key insights from their table discussions through a facilitate 'report back' to all meeting participants.