

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING SUMMARY

Project: Humewood Park Playground Improvements

Date: December 2, 2019

Time: 6: 30 – 8: 30 PM

Location: St. Alphonsus Catholic School (Gym), 60 Atlas Avenue

Facilitator: City of Toronto staff and Design Consultant

Meeting Purpose

The goal of the meeting was to present and solicit feedback from the community on two concept plan and play equipment options that were prepared by the design consultant based on preliminary consultation with the local Councillor and parent steering committee.

Meeting Notification

Community members were notified of the public meeting through the following methods:

- A notice was delivered via Canada Post to residents in the area
- A notice was also included in Councillor Matlow's e-newsletter

Attendance

Community Members:

Twenty-six (26) people were counted, including seventeen (17) adults and nine (9) children.

Councillor's Office:

Josh Matlow, Councillor, Ward 12

Bailey Bradshaw, Constituency Assistant

Project Team:

Zori Petrova, Serdika Consulting Inc (Consultant)

Peter Didiano, City of Toronto (PFR)

Rachel Weston, City of Toronto (PFR)

Daniel Fusca, City of Toronto (PFR)

Note: Parks Operations staff were notified of the meeting but were unable to attend.

Presentation

Councillor Matlow opened the presentation by introducing the design and project management team, and giving a brief background history on design initiation, the Councillor's financial contributions and projected construction timeline.

The design consultant presented two (2) options for the proposed improvements to the existing playground. It was noted that both options were financially feasible for the current construction budget available of approximately \$200,000. Both options proposed to consolidate the currently segregated play areas into one footprint, increase visibility, arrange equipment so that play activities for ages 2 -5 and 5-12 years are respectively grouped together, introduce more challenging play for the 5-12 group than existing with emphasis on climbing, improve accessibility in accordance with City guidelines, make safety surface compliant with current Canadian Safety and City standards.

Key features of the two design options were presented, including:

In both Options:

- All existing play equipment is retained
- New engineered wood fiber safety surface
- Accessible ramps into playground
- 2 new benches
- New pathway connections
- New sandplay area

In Option 1:

- Playground layout includes a large playspace on the north side of the path, and a second playspace on the south side of the path
- North side of path includes:
 - New senior structure
 - New junior structure
 - New sand play area
 - New seating
- South side of the path:
 - New stationery, pyramid-shaped net climber (more complex/larger capacity than Option 2 net climber)

In Option 2:

- Playground layout includes a large playspace on the north side of the path only
- North side of path:
 - New senior structure (more complex/larger capacity than Option 1 senior structure)
 - New junior structure
 - New sand play area
 - New spinning, cone-shaped net climber

It was explained that the layout and combinations of new equipment in each option were selected to meet the current budget and site constraints. The junior structures are of equivalent value and can be swapped out easily between either option. The net climbers and senior structures in each option are very different in terms of cost and footprint, so they are not easily swapped out.

The proposed play equipment in the two options compared as follows:

Senior Structure (5 – 12 years):

- Option 1 offered more accessible components than Option 2.
- Option 1 had less climbable components than Option 2.
- Option 1 had a more traditional design appearance than Option 2 which had a more contemporary design appearance.
- Option 1 was less costly than Option 2 (allowing it to be combined with the higher cost net climber in Option 1)

Junior Structure (2 – 5 years):

- Play activities offered in both options were different but generally play value offered by both was similar.

Net Climber (5 - 12 years):

- Net climber for Option 1 had capacity for 44 children at one time vs. 14 children for Option 2.
- The Option 1 climber was a stationary structure. The Option 2 climber was a spinning structure.
- The area required for the Option 1 climber was much larger than for the Option 2 climber.
- The Option 1 climber was proposed to be located separately from the rest of the existing and proposed play equipment due to lack of space in the new playground footprint. The Option 2 climber was proposed to be located in the new playground footprint together with all other play equipment.
- The Option 2 net climber was less costly than Option 1 (allowing it to be combined with the higher cost Senior structure in Option 2)

Presentation Reception

After the presentation of the design by the consultant, community members were invited to provide feedback and ask questions.

In general, the proposed Option 1 and Option 2 designs were both well received by the attending adult and children residents.

Specific Discussions

Construction Schedule & Impact on Humewood Park

- Attendees were informed that the construction period would be approximately 6 weeks and would take place in 2020.
- The question was asked if Humewood Park will need to be closed for the construction period. The project team responded that only the construction zone required for the new playground will be closed and that the rest of the park will remain accessible.
- Community members were asked if there was a preferred time window for the construction period. The response was mixed: some residents felt construction should start asap, some felt that the Fall would work best with schedules, some preferred the summer, some preferred shoulder seasons (i.e. early June or early Fall), and some were indifferent. At end of this discussion, it seemed though that the prevailing preference was for construction to start immediately after Labour Day in 2020.

Design Option Preferences

- Most attendees preferred the proposed design Option 2.
- Most attendees preferred the proposed Senior Structure in Option 2.
- Several attendees expressed an interest in exchanging the net climber in Option 2 for the larger net climber in Option 1.
- Most attendees were in favour of the playground to be located entirely on the north side of the path and not take up any green space on the south side of the path, which is used for special events and passive park activities.

Net Climber – Option 1

- There was a prevailing preference for the 44-children capacity, non-spinning climber in design Option 1 to replace the Option 2 spinning climber and be included with the rest of the equipment proposed in design Option 2 on the north side of the path. Attendees were informed that this has feasibility challenges due to the existing topography, drainage provisions, existing utilities (overhead cables), mature trees and space availability. It was also explained that this will also exceed the construction budget available by approximately \$30,000. Community members asked if other similar climbers or climbers with similar degree of risk play could be explored that may have less capacity and a smaller footprint but can fit on the north side and be in budget. There was also a request to investigate if the playground

footprint on the north side and the locations of the other play equipment, spring toys in particular, could be re-configured in any way so that the preferred Option 1 net climber could fit in the playground footprint on the north side.

Net Climber – Option 2

- There was a preference by one community member for the Option 2 climber and its ability to spin and provide more opportunity for interactive play. They also noted that the larger Option 1 climber exists in another park in close proximity and that the smaller spinning climber is therefore more interesting as it provides something different for the neighbourhood.
- There was a safety concern expressed by one community member that there may be a potential risk of a child getting trapped under the bottom of the Option 2 net structure. The project team explained that all new play equipment has to meet specific Canadian Safety Standards in order to be specified and included in a City park.

Existing & New Furniture

- It was noted that all existing benches will likely remain, that one picnic pad and table may need to be removed but could possibly be relocated and that 2 new benches will be added.

Safety Surface

- Attendees were informed that the current sand safety surface in the playground does not meet current safety standards, and will be replaced with engineered wood fiber, which is the current City standard for playgrounds. The Project team was asked to explain what engineered wood fiber is and how it performs. Attendees were informed that the surface is a man-made wood product, that looks like wood chips, can be picked up as it is loose, is safe as a material, knits to form carpet like feel and appearance, is considered to be accessible for wheel chairs, migrates less than sand, and needs to be topped up occasionally.

Existing Trees Removal

- Question was asked if any existing trees will be impacted by the proposed improvements. Attendees were informed that 2 trees may need to be removed to facilitate the proposed design options, specifically a large Cedar and a Buckthorn. Some of the attending children noted that the large Cedar is a much-loved tree, that they climb it and would not want it removed. It was noted, in response, that an Arborist assessment of the existing trees is pending which will evaluate the health condition of the existing trees near and inside the proposed construction zone and that final decisions on trees impact will be made at that time.
- It was strongly emphasized by the Councillor that no healthy and valuable trees will be removed and that the new playground footprint would need to be respectful of all healthy and valuable trees.

Accessibility

- Question was asked if the Senior Structure in design Option 2 was accessible to children with disabilities. It was explained, in response, that all new play equipment has to include accessible play components but that some have more than others. It was further explained that the Option 2 Senior Structure provides for some accessible ground play but it is not 100% accessible and is less accessible than the Senior Structure in Option 1 which has more decks, ground panels and transfer platforms.

Comment Forms

Participants were also invited to fill out a comment form, by selecting their preferred option, and providing additional feedback about their preferences for the park.

The tally of design option and/or equipment preferences was:

- Option 1 (overall): 2
- Option 1 Junior Climber: 3
- Option 1 Senior Climber: 1
- Option 1 Net Climber: 6
- Option 2 (overall): 11
- Option 2 Junior Climber: 1
- Option 2 Senior Climber: 5
- Option 2 Net Climber: 0

Feedback Summary

Feedback was gathered both during the meeting, from the submitted comment forms and in follow up discussions via phone and email with several community members who were not able to attend the meeting. A brief summary of comments received is listed below:

Suggestions:

- Keep the playground on the north side of the pathway so that the open lawn on the south side is preserved for other activities such as soccer, baseball, birthday parties, festivals, etc.
- Consider a more challenging net structure or "risk play" element with more capacity than the one in Option 2
- Consider if the Option 2 layout can be reconfigured to make more space to allow for a larger/higher net climber/spinner option instead of the Option 2 net climber
- Consider putting the new senior structure in another part of the park to prevent too much noise/congestion in one area
- Consider adding more accessible features for children with disabilities
- Consider adding more natural materials/equipment, or elements inspired by nature i.e. wood, logs, boulders, etc.
- Consider using only natural/non-toxic materials

- Ensure that the playground promotes growth, development, problem solving, social interaction, resiliency and appreciation for the outdoors.
- Keep senior and junior play spaces separate
- Preserve swings and spinner bowl if possible
- Preserve all trees if possible
- Consider adding more trees and/or increase shade in the park
- Consider adding a box/area for storage of toys that are otherwise left around the park
- Consider adding a skateboard ramp/quarter pipe
- Consider adding ladders to go up the trees
- Consider adding meadow flowers for pollinators

Concerns that:

- Net climber/spinner in Option 2 does not provide enough risk/challenge for older kids
- There are not enough activities in the new designs for children with disabilities
- Option 1 playspace on the south side of pathway takes up valuable green space
- Park should not be overtaken by the playground as there are other park users who appreciate the park for other activities
- design options do not have enough natural materials/features
- design options do not have enough imaginative or risk play elements
- play equipment has too much use of primary colours
- play equipment has too much metal
- equipment options are too similar to what is already there
- With so many new structures in the same area of the park, there is potential for increased noise that may negatively impact adjacent neighbours

Future Communications

The Community was informed that there are no current plans to hold another public meeting for these park improvements, but that updates will be forwarded to those who provided their contact information to City Staff, via the project webpage, or via the Councillor's Office.

Next Steps

The City will allow approximately two weeks for further comments to be made on the proposed designs. The proposed designs are posted on the project webpage at: www.toronto.ca/humewoodpark.

An Arborist Report will be done to determine the health of the trees that may be impacted in the current design options.

All comments collected will be reviewed and assessed by the City and a preferred design will be developed by the Consultant. The goal is for the preferred design to be developed as soon as possible so that the tender can be issued by March 2020 in order to complete the project in the 2020 construction season.

End of Summary

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