

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division

Wabash Community Recreation Centre

Virtual Townhall (Phase 2 of 5)

Meeting Summary

Tuesday, September 22, 2020, 7:00 – 8:00 pm

Via Webex (online and by phone)



Overview

On Tuesday, September 22, 2020, the City's Parks, Forestry & Recreation (PF&R) Division hosted a community townhall for the new Wabash Recreation Centre (CRC). The purpose of the townhall was to resume the engagement process for the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre by seeking feedback on the draft proposed vision, design principles, and design goals. This townhall was part of Phase 2 of the community engagement process for the new Wabash CRC. Phase 2 also included introductory conversations with local stakeholders, a Community Resource Group meeting, and public small group discussions. Summaries of these meetings are available on the project website at www.toronto.ca/WabashCRC.

The townhall was held online and by phone in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of Toronto residents and City staff.

Over 30 people participated online and/or called in over the course of the community townhall using the Webex platform. The presentation slides and the full transcript is available on the project website at www.toronto.ca/WabashCRC. Please note that due to technical difficulties, the recording of this townhall is not available online.

Councillor Gord Perks welcomed participants, opened the meeting with a land acknowledgement and introduced the Project Team. Doug Giles, Senior Project Coordinator with the PF&R Division at the City of Toronto, and Jarle Lovlin, Principal at Diamond Schmitt Architects, delivered an overview presentation. Yulia Pak, a third-party facilitator with Swerhun Inc. facilitated the Q&A period following the presentation. A detailed agenda is attached to this report as Appendix A.

This summary was prepared by Swerhun Inc. Please note that it is not intended to be a verbatim transcript, rather it is intended to capture key discussion points shared by participants at the meeting. This summary was subject to participant review before being finalized. Additional feedback received after the meeting is attached as Appendix B.

This summary does not assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives, nor does it indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of the City of Toronto.

Detailed Feedback

The points below summarize the questions and comments shared by participants during the meeting. Responses from the Project Team are noted in *italics*. The feedback has been grouped under the following themes:

1. Overall sentiment;
2. Environment and sustainability;
3. Connections and mobility;
4. Parking;
5. Culture and heritage;
6. Budget; and
7. Other.

1. Overall Sentiment

Participants generally expressed excitement and support for the new community recreation centre and appreciation for the community engagement process, with considerable insight and advice shared, including:

- Interest and support for a sustainable approach and increased connections of the new centre to the area around it.
- A range of opinions and advice around parking, with some wanting to see more sustainable transportation options and others emphasizing the importance of parking to support social activities and increased programming.
- Interest to know more about the name “Wabash” and its connection to Indigenous culture and history. Advice to engage with Indigenous Peoples on the design and the use of the building.
- Interest in retaining the industrial heritage of the building.
- Interest in partnering with the community for fundraising opportunities to ensure all five Big Moves could be implemented.

2. Environment and Sustainability

Key questions, suggestions, and sentiments related to Environment and Sustainability:

Is it possible to plant only native species of plants and trees in the garden and green space elements of this community center? *We will be working with a landscape architect on this project closely. Overall, the trend is to have native species and drought-tolerant species as priority choices*

Ensure there is a proper ratio of male to female trees for the native species. Not enough female trees to pollinate aggravates allergies. A proper number of female trees could also produce fruits for a potential community kitchen.

Is it possible to have a green roof, solar panels and/or a rainwater adaptive re-use collection system built into the future community center? *In terms of solar panels and green roofs, this would be a Net Zero emissions building, as directed by Council. We will be looking for all kinds of strategies for renewable energy sources to offset any carbon footprint that the building may produce. This is an important priority for this project. In terms of green roofs, the City does have a bylaw requiring green roofs in new developments, however if providing solar panels (either photovoltaic (PV) panels for generating electricity or solar thermal panels for heating water) we would be exempted from the green roof bylaw, because green roofs do not grow well in the shade beneath inclined solar panels.*

HVAC requirements can have a significant impact on the noise levels and the building volume. What are design parameters for geothermal HVAC sound levels, both in interior occupancy spaces and on the exterior area – park and neighbouring residences? *We have not started the design yet, as mentioned before. Generally, for Net Zero buildings loud large fans and HVAC systems are not considered. We will take every measure to make sure that any systems-related noise impact is minimized. Noise is also governed by Ministry of Environment regulations.*

Does the Net Zero building include environmental handling of the construction by-products as the result of demolition and renovation? *Yes, prior to implementation, we will develop a strategy for reclamation and re-use of materials as part of the broader sustainability strategy.*

3. Connections and Mobility

Key questions, suggestions, and sentiments related to Connections and Mobility:

Does this project include any changes to the street in front of the building, such as crosswalks or potential increases in car traffic? *Yes, we will be working with the City's Transportation Division to look at things like entry to the site, parking provision, and traffic flow. This work is done later in the process, for submission as part of the Site Plan Control application to City Planning, once all other development approvals are in place.*

Is there any consideration around the planned West Toronto Railpath connection to Sorauren Park? *Yes, we are aware of it and it is a consideration for the site design, although providing actual connection to the path is out of the scope of this project.*

4. Parking

Key questions, suggestions, and sentiments related to Parking:

How do you reconcile environmental design and the need for parking? *While we will try to encourage sustainable means of travel, like walking and cycling, we recognize that there is a need in the community for on-site parking to support both existing social activities, like the Farmers' Market, as well as increased programming. We also know that given the space restrictions of the site, there is an opportunity to provide only a limited number of parking spots.*

Consider building an underground parking garage within the 30-meter setback zone. *City-built community centres almost never have underground parking because of the extreme cost. Each underground parking stall could be around \$90K, and it could easily add \$20M to the project budget, which would be a challenge for the existing \$40M budget.*

Consider angled parking on Wabash Avenue.

5. Culture and Heritage

Key questions, suggestions, and sentiments related to Culture and Heritage:

Look into the name "Wabash" – what is the context for it and why is this name used for the street? There is a paper from Carleton University stating that "Wabash" is Indigenous in its origin and it comes from the Miami language in the Algonquin family, translating to "water over white stones, "white stone river", or "shining white". The Miami peoples lived in the region which is present-day Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio (USA). The term Wabash is often associated with the Wabash River which flows through Western Ohio and then along the state border of Illinois and Indiana in the USA. Wabash is the Anglicization of the French's spelling of the Miami word Ouabache. Did Wabash Avenue (in Toronto) and/or the surrounding neighbourhood have a historical connection to this area of the USA? Several battles – such as the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 – were fought in the vicinity of the Wabash River. Was there historically a river or waterway in the vicinity of Wabash Avenue in Toronto? It is also important to ensure there is an opportunity for Indigenous involvement with the site both during the planning phase and the subsequent use of the site. Link shared by participant in the chat: "Wabash, Its Meaning and History" by Michael McCafferty

<https://ojs.library.carleton.ca/index.php/ALGQP/article/view/1102/984>

How much of the old industrial building must be maintained? *We have had discussions with Toronto Preservation Services which has asked us to investigate preserving some elements such as parts of the façade and the chimney, as they are planning to designate the building as a "listed" heritage building. The whole building however cannot be preserved "as is" – the interior concrete floors and columns do not lend themselves for use as a community*

centre, which requires large column-free spaces for gym and other large spaces. As well, much of the concrete structure is no longer structurally sound.

6. Budget

Key questions, comments, and sentiments related to Budget:

Is \$40M a sufficient budget to achieve the proposed 5 Big Moves? *In short, no. The team recognizes that the present budget, which would cover standard costs, is not sufficient for some of the atypical costs associated with this project, including Net Zero emissions cost premiums, railway safety and risk mitigation costs and heritage/restoration costs. It is anticipated that with more detailed design and more accurate cost estimates, we will need to have Council approve an adjustment to our budget accordingly.*

Consider fundraising with the community, including grant applications to third-party funders, for the extra budget that might be needed. *We know that the local community has fundraised \$310,000 for the Fieldhouse and the Town Square and we appreciate the level of effort it took; however, the City does not typically fundraise for large capital projects like this new community recreation centre. Once a design is sufficiently developed to allow costing, if estimated costs are in excess of the approved budget – but justifiable – it is not unusual for the City to seek Council approval to adjust the allocated budget to cover the costs. The final decision would rest with Council, on the recommendation of the PF&R Division.*

7. Other

Does this project mean that the other two local community centres – Masaryk-Cowan and Parkdale – are at capacity and/or do not meet the needs of the local population? *This area was identified as underserved in terms of community facilities 21 years ago; and through the recent Facilities Master Plan (FMP) study (which responds to population growth), the need for the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre was identified as a priority. Masaryk-Cowan is a busy facility and does not have a pool. Parkdale Community Centre has some amenity issues.*

Consider a full-sized industrial kitchen and not a small kitchen. The Farmers' Market will need an industrial kitchen.

Next Steps

The Project Team thanked participants for their participation and interest in the process and encouraged them to sign up for the upcoming virtual small group discussions. The facilitator committed to sharing a summary of the discussion with participants in draft for their review before finalizing.

Appendix A – Meeting Agenda

New Wabash Community Recreation Centre

Virtual Community Townhall 2 out of 5

Tuesday, September 22, 2020, 7:00 – 8:00 pm

VIA WEBEX

Purpose: To resume the engagement process for the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre by seeking feedback on the draft proposed vision, design principles, and design goals.

PROPOSED AGENDA

- 6:50 pm** **Technology check**
Please log-in 10 minutes prior to the meeting to do a technology check, if available
- 7:00** **Land Acknowledgement and Introductions**
Yulia Pak, *Swerhun Inc.*
- 7:05** **Opening Remarks & Agenda Review**
Councillor Gord Perks, *Ward 4 Parkdale-High Park*
Yulia Pak, *Swerhun Facilitation*
- 7:10** **Presentation**
- Draft Vision and Design Principles, Doug Giles, *Parks Forestry and Recreation, City of Toronto*
 - Site constraints and Proposed Big Moves -- Jarle Lovlin, *Diamond Schmitt Architects*
- 7:30** **Facilitated Q&A**
1. *What do you like about the draft vision and/or guiding principles? Is there anything you would like to see changed or added?*
 2. *Is there anything major missing or needs to be changed in terms of the site constraints and the proposed Big Moves?*
 3. *Do you have any other advice for the project team?*
- 7:55** **CRG Meeting Dates and Next Meeting**
- 8:00** **Adjourn**

If you have any additional comments / feedback you'd like to share with the project team, please submit them to klamparero@swerhun.com by Monday, September 28, 2020

Appendix B – Additional Feedback Shared After the Meeting

Attached below are feedback submitted after meeting. Any personal identifying information has been removed from the emails below; they have otherwise not been edited.

Emailed feedback #1

I found the consultation to be valuable and very well facilitated. I have the following comments:

- I was pleased with the positive energy and group enthusiasm surrounding this project. I think that's a great indicator that this looks like it will be a great investment for the City and our community.
- I was wondering if future considerations might be given to re-purposing space (if sufficient space exists) for future library facilities to be added. I'm seeing this trend in many communities where it helps families participate in community, recreation and school/leisure reading/business. (I realize this might be a longshot on this space so I'm just throwing it out there.
- I was disappointed with the amount of time that was invested in discussing parking. Our community is very well balanced in facilitating driving (plenty of street parking, no matter what events are going on), walking, biking, and excellent transit. As one who uses all of these methods of getting around, I would hate to see the balance upset by introducing unnecessary additional parking or encouraging more vehicular traffic on a street that's "sandwiched" by a well-utilized community park on the north and an equally well-enjoyed playground and basketball court on the south side. Encouraging more vehicular traffic may introduce risks, especially to young children.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

Emailed feedback #2

Re Commercial/Industrial Kitchen (Item 7, p 4), at the Townhall, the City person said they don't do commercial kitchens because some of the appliances require training to use and so are off-limits to many people. It has been suggested to me by someone with experience with mixed commercial/household kitchens that there can be both appliances with the commercial ones on a separate electrical sub-panel that trained people can enable. This seems like a practical approach that would increase the level of use the kitchen could support.

Thanks for the excellent job you've done summarizing the discussions; I've felt heard.