



## YONGE ST. LINEAR PARKS IMPROVEMENTS Community Resource Group Meeting #1

### Community Resource Group (CRG) Meeting 1 Overview

On Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, thirty-one people including members of the CRG, City staff and Project consultant team attended the first CRG meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to draw on the insights and expertise of the CRG to reconfirm and refresh the 2017 Master Plan for the Yonge Street Linear Park System.

The meeting was held virtually as a video meeting using the Zoom Platform. The meeting began with welcome remarks from the Project Manager Nancy Chater, (Senior Project Coordinator, Parks Forestry and Recreation), followed by introductions of the Project team and all group members, and a presentation provided by Fung Lee, (Principal, PMA Landscape Architects). The presentation provided an overview of the 2017 Master Plan, the existing opportunities and constraints within the park spaces and some ideas about the goals, vision, and objectives for the park system to help inform the design concept options that will be developed. (The presentation was distributed via email to participants following the meeting.) The discussion was structured by a series of questions that were put to the group to clarify the information presented and gather feedback on the following general themes:

- Designing for safety
- Designing for daily use
- Designing for community events
- Reactions to the Master Plan refresh ideas

A summary of the key points that were raised, detailed responses to the questions of clarification, and a list of meeting participants are included below. This meeting report was written by the facilitation team of Jane Farrow and Pauline Craig.

### Summary of Key Points

**Encouraging more activity and a variety of events in the parks will help to improve safety.** Many participants expressed strong support for encouraging more activity in the park and a variety of uses which, they agreed, would help to improve safety. A design that inspires and encourages a park space that is ‘populated’ and frequented by many could help take pressure off local organizations to ‘program’ the space as a

way to keep it busy and animated. Still, several groups present at the discussion were keen to continue offering programming in the park spaces, with improved amenities and spaces. The design should consider this as a goal.

**Lighting should be improved to create a safer and more welcoming space.**

Several participants mentioned they would like to see improvements made to the lighting in the park. Locations within the park and the connections to and from buildings like Buddies in Bad Times Theatre were noted as needing better lighting. Parks like James Canning Garden were identified as an example of lighting design that improves a sense of security and should be considered a priority in these parks.

**Open up the park space and place the furniture and other elements in a way that creates a safe, interesting and welcoming environment.**

There was an overall appreciation for opening up the park spaces at the entrances and throughout the parks to clear sightlines, do away with entrapment zones where people could be cornered, and remove obstacles that could become potential hiding spots.

Suggestions were made to include seating in small groups rather than seat walls to discourage large gatherings that could intimidate some park users. Many group members expressed an appreciation for opening up the entrance spaces and some saw this as an opportunity to start a compelling narrative for the parks that would represent the surrounding communities. The design should prioritize opening up the park spaces while still providing a variety of elements including sitting, perching and resting places to sit and enjoy events.

**Play areas for children will encourage more activity in the parks and serve the local neighbourhood.**

Some group members expressed a desire to see areas created for children to play. Representatives of the Children Aid Society pointed out that some parents come to the area to visit their children on court sanctioned visits and that a play area in these parks is much needed and appreciated.

**Ensure the park is designed in a way that is inclusive to all communities.**

The communities surrounding the parks are very diverse and these communities use the park in many different ways. Group participants expressed a strong desire to create a park design that is flexible and can facilitate these different uses to welcome all communities including people of all ages and abilities, including those from vulnerable communities. Several participants noted that the existing dog park location was not working well but were in favour of the new proposed location. They felt that a formal dog relief area would help to keep the park cleaner and more inviting for everyone. The idea of a small area where people could gather and appreciate different kinds of performances or art events was also well received by the group. Some noted that a flexible design should be prioritized that allows for everyday park visit usage as well as performance type events. It was recommended that a 'raised stage' be avoided as they are not as adaptable or flexible for uses other than performance. Improvements to adjacent properties that back onto the park were also put forward as a way to better connect those properties visually and create a more welcoming atmosphere. There

were also requests for drinking fountains, and consideration of public washrooms. The design should recognize the many different ways the park space may be used and aim to welcome all communities.

**Honour our indigenous communities.** Some group members felt it was very important to see indigenous communities honoured in the park design. This could include design themes but also elements like furniture to enable small community gatherings. The project team is working with the City of Toronto's Indigenous Affairs Office to organize Indigenous consultation and talk about Indigenous place making in the parks.

**The history of the park should be included in the design considerations.** Some participants noted the cultural significance of Norman Jewison and wanted to see something included in the design of Norman Jewison Park to honour the film director and the history of the area as a centre of film production and media. The design should consider celebrating this history.

**Explore opportunities to improve the connection of the parks to surrounding buildings and to Yonge Street.** The idea of creating better connections between the parks and the surrounding streets was well received by the whole group. Some participants noted that improving street access to parks could open up the potential for more flexible community space to animate the parks and revitalize the neighbourhood. A connection north from Alexander St. Parkette to Maitland Street was raised as having been historically secured through a site plan agreement. This connection was intended to connect directly to the existing diagonal walkway through the parkette. The project team will look into this further.

**It is very important that the design is beautiful but also sustainable and can be maintained.** Group members were keen to see an attractive design that can be effectively maintained and have minimal impact on the environment by including green space in an area of the city where this is much needed. James Canning Park was cited as a good example specifically in terms of lighting, design elements, and children's play area. Maintenance and sustainability should be considered in the design process.

### Questions of Clarification

**Q: With the park providing an important pedestrian route between Charles and Isabella – can we keep a pedestrian walkway open during this planning phase?**

A.: At George Hislop Park in particular, it is challenging to maintain a walkway because it is a curvy path – there are challenges with fencing the pathway and we do not want to create any entrapment zones.

**Q: How do the Inspire Awards fit into Hislop Park, is it public art or a different concept?**

A: Inspire Corporation is one of the community stakeholders on the project. Inspire Corporation initiated the idea of including an LGBTQ2S+ artwork with a memorial aspect in the park and will be attending the LGBTQ2S+ subgroup workshop to discuss it further.

### **Meeting Participants**

- Alejandra Andarve, Artist in Residence, The Sanctuary
- Allan Beattie, Executive Director, The Sanctuary
- Jodi Cassidy, CAN Alliance
- Greg Cook, The Sanctuary
- Shawn Daudlin, Managing Director, Buddies in Bad Times
- Juliana De Marco, Health & Safety, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- Henri Dyck, Toronto Police
- Antoine Elhashem, Inspire Awards
- Paul Farrelly, Resident
- Mo Fayaz, Director of IT & Property, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- Monica Gupta, Downtown East Action Plan.
- Nikolas Koschany, Friends of The Linear Parks
- Joie Lamar, Inspire Awards, the Q Experience
- Connie Langille, Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
- Amber Moyle, Pride Toronto, Director of Sponsorships & Special Events
- Alan Nikiloaus, Friends of The Linear Parks
- Robert Packham, Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
- Sarah Power, CAN Alliance
- George Sovatzis, General Manager, The Anndore House

### **Project Team**

- Nancy Chater, Senior Project Coordinator, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR)
- Rajesh Sankat, Senior Consultation Coordinator, PFR
- Paulo Fetalvero – Project Supervisor, PFR Capital Projects
- Esther Afriat, General Supervisor Ward 13, PFR,
- Troy Ford, Parks Ambassador Program Coordinator, PFR
- Catherine Dean, Economic Development and Culture, Public Art Officer
- Tyler Johnson, City of Toronto, Councillor Wong Tam staff
- Fung Lee, Principal, PMA Landscape Architects
- Dylan Cassidy, PMA Landscape Architects
- Hannah Soules, PMA Landscape Architects
- Stanislav Jurkovic, uoi, artist, on PMA design team
- Jane Farrow, Facilitator, Dept of Words and Deeds
- Pauline Craig, Notetaker, Dept of Words and Deeds

*This meeting report was written by the facilitation team of Jane Farrow and Pauline Craig.*