

## Introductory Conversations: Aggregate Feedback Summary August 26, 2020 – October 13, 2020

This document provides an aggregate summary of feedback received during 16 introductory conversations with local community stakeholders as part of the broader community engagement process for the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre

The aggregate summary is based on a synthesis of all individual summaries of introductory conversations. It focuses on points of common ground and captures varying opinions, where they were noted. Please note that individual summaries of introductory conversations have been distributed for participant review before being finalized.

The purpose of the introductory conversations was to resume the community engagement process for the new recreation centre, introduce the project team, understand community priorities and interests in regard to this project, and share the public engagement process and upcoming public engagement events.

The table below provides an overview of the introductory conversations in a chronological order.

#	Date	Stakeholders	Format
1	August 26	Miranda Kamal, <i>Mentoring Juniors Kids Organization</i>	Video call
2	August 26	Eva Webster, <i>Native Child &amp; Family Services</i>	Phone call
3	August 28	Ric Amis, <i>Parkdale Residents Association</i> Mark Campbell and Norman Kolasky, <i>Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents Association</i>	Video call
4	September 1	Joël Campbell, <i>Friends of Sorauren Park</i>	Phone call
5	September 2	Felicia Gopaul, <i>Ward 4 Youth Outreach Worker</i> Damian and Naya, <i>local students</i>	Phone call
6	September 2	Dan Fisher, <i>St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School Parent Council</i>	Phone call
7	September 2	Cathy Gatlin, <i>Kids First Multi-Sport Program, West Lodge TCHC Community</i>	Video call
8	September 3	Migs Bartula and Jelena Zaric, <i>Parkdale Junior and Senior Public School Parent Council</i>	Phone call
9	September 3	Anne Gleeson, Erica Spenser, and Haida Gebru, <i>Garden Avenue Public School Parent Council</i>	Phone call
10	September 3	Helen Acraman and Eric Lee, <i>Sorauren Farmers' Market Association</i> Veronica Feihl, <i>Roncesvalles Village BIA</i>	Video call
11	September 4	Tsering Norzom Thonsur, <i>Parkdale Intercultural Association</i>	Phone call
12	September 8	Joël Campbell, Kathy Allan, Nancy Kay Clark, <i>Friends of Sorauren Park</i>	Video call
13	September 9	Flordeliz Dandal, <i>Kababayan Multi-cultural Centre</i>	Phone call
14	September 9	Liz Leason, <i>Sorauren Park Sports Association</i>	Phone call
15	September 10	Mercedes Sharpe Zayas, Beryl-Ann Mark, Ana Teresa Portillo, Victor Willis, <i>Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre &amp; Parkdale People's Economy</i>	Video call
16	October 13	Carolynne Crawley, <i>Msit No'kmaq</i>	Phone call

## Aggregate Feedback

- 1. General support and interest in the project.** Overall, participants were supportive of the project and many stakeholders indicated that they were interested in participating in the project moving forward.
  - Many participants said they were happy to see the much needed and the long-awaited new community recreation centre happening and were excited to see it built in their lifetime. Many participants expressed a strong desire to see the community recreation centre built as soon as possible.
  - Some were cautiously optimistic, emphasizing the need to recognize and build on the long consultation history and previous studies for the new community recreation centre at the site and great community effort to bring the site to life with the Town Square and the Fieldhouse.
  - No major objections to this project were raised.
- 2. All ages.** Many participants emphasized the importance of having programming for all ages, including youth and seniors. Some participants noted that there are not enough youth-gearred programs in the area, particularly for teenagers, and it's important for teenagers to have a spot to gather, hangout and play sports. Some participants noted that there is a growing population of seniors in the area that should be accommodated. Finally, some suggested a "walk safe" program for younger kids from south Parkdale, where a walk guard could bring children from a school to the recreation centre.
- 3. Equity.** Many participants discussed the importance of equity and the importance of ensuring the new community recreation centre serves and reflects the diversity of the broader community of Parkdale. Some participants emphasized socio-economic equity, stressing that access to programming should be free-of-charge, as for many Parkdale residents even a nominal fee is a barrier and the hours of operation need to work for working families (e.g. open on holidays and evening). Equitable hiring of local residents should also be considered. Others emphasized the accommodation of cultural equity, noting that the population in the broader area is diverse. The design of the spaces needs to recognize and accommodate various cultural practices to encourage the use of the new facilities, such as girls-only swim program with windows fully covered, prayer rooms, and non-shared access to female change rooms, especially since there is a large Muslim population in this community.
- 4. Building for the future.** Many participants said it was important to build for the future accounting for the changing demographics and changing population needs, planned changes to the connections and public realm, as well as advancing technology. The design also needs to be flexible enough to be able to accommodate uses we are not able to foresee now.
- 5. Heritage.** There was a range of opinions shared about the heritage. Some participants said that preserving as much of the industrial and cultural heritage of the building is particularly important to the community. Some participants indicated that heritage was not of a particular priority or interest to their groups and should be carefully balanced with other priorities in terms of the budget allocation.
- 6. Public Art.** Some participants were interested in the public art part of the project, advising the City to go through public consultation process of what the community would like to see on the site and commissioning local artists to do the work. One stakeholder group was interested to see if the community could become a partner in sourcing and delivering public art.

- 7. Broader, more inclusive approach to planning.** Several participants highlighted the housing affordability crisis in Toronto and the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has shown the importance of public assets to health and resiliency of communities. Siloing different resources/uses does not work. The Parkdale Community Hub is currently in the works which will have a cluster of facilities including a public library, community centre, park, TCHC, and parking lot to serve the different needs of the community. Consider how the Wabash Community Recreation Centre can strengthen and support the planning of the Parkdale Community Hub or do something similar with multiple actors involved, specifically around ways to include and provide more deeply affordable housing.
- 8. Parking is an important consideration for the community.** There was a range of opinions shared about parking. Many participants discussed the need for providing more parking on-site. The neighbourhood is already experiencing parking challenges during Market Mondays, so finding creative solutions to provide more parking will be important. Some participants urged the City to prioritize pedestrian and bike-friendly design.
- 9. Flexibility with site constraints.** To increase the limited building space, some participants urged the City to explore opportunities to widen the site boundary to the North going onto the dog park and seek exemptions for the 30-meter setback requirement from the railway.
- 10. Town Square and Fieldhouse.** Some participants raised the importance of ensuring the social functions of the Town Square and the Fieldhouse are preserved in the new community recreation centre design and during the construction. Some participants also noted that the community has invested a lot of effort in redeveloping these community assets and bringing them to life. Some participants urged the City to preserve as much of the Town Square and the Fieldhouse as possible and explore creative solutions to accommodate this request.
- 11. Indigenous participation and outreach.** The City needs to take the first step in reaching out to Indigenous peoples and follow the protocols in place for engaging Indigenous peoples. It is important to bring multiple Indigenous voices to the table, as one Indigenous organization cannot speak for many different Indigenous groups and communities in Toronto. Make sure that Indigenous people are compensated for their participation, knowledge sharing and advice to not perpetuate colonial practices of getting Indigenous knowledge without providing compensation. The City has a list of community-led Indigenous organizations and should use that list to reach out.
- 12. Trees.** A few participants suggested considering how to best preserve trees at the site, particularly the 50 trees that were planted and adopted by the local families. Some participants urged the City to preserve as many trees as possible, particularly the more mature trees right by the building. One participant recommended replanting species native to Ontario.
- 13. Program data.** Look at data on program demand over the years to ensure programming and the centre's design meet the demand of the local community. Having an environmentally friendly and aesthetically beautiful building is nice, but it should be functional.
- 14. Pool.** There is a range of support for the inclusion of a pool in the new community recreation centre. Many participants were glad to have a pool included, but one participant does not see the need for it since pools are extremely expensive to install and maintain, and there is also a small size pool in Parkdale.

## 15. Engagement Process:

- It is important to ensure that there is a diversity of voices, interests and lived experience represented in the Community Resource Group and the broader consultation process.
- It is hard for many South Parkdale residents to attend public meetings due to work and other obligations. Connect with residents through local organization leaders and be flexible on when and how to meet with people. Consider consulting the kids and not the parents and provide participants with snacks or pizza.
- Given the diversity of cultures in this community, provide translations for materials shared and live interpretation for consultation events to help reduce barriers to participation. Tibetan, Hungarian, Tamil, Spanish, Mandarin, and Tagalog are languages suggested for translation.
- The best way to reach youth is through social media, especially during the pandemic. Use existing City of Toronto youth outreach channels.
- When talking about the design goals to the public, be transparent and ensure it's clear that not everything can be accommodated and what the trade-offs with each choice are so they can make informed decisions. Not everyone will get everything they want.
- Webex is a very crude system so we would prefer using Zoom for the public meetings.
- Reaching out to people by mail is a good idea since there is a real challenge for community members in Parkdale to access a computer or the internet.