

YONGE STREET LINEAR PARKS IMPROVEMENTS



WHAT WE HEARD REPORT PHASE 1 : CONCEPT PLAN OPTIONS

September to December 2020

Prepared by Dept of Words and Deeds and PMA Landscape Architects
for The City of Toronto



Toronto

PMA

Landscape
Architects

This Report was prepared by Dept. of Words & Deeds, the public engagement specialists tasked with delivering the outreach and consultation on the Yonge Street Linear Parks project. Questions or comments regarding this report should be directed to:

Nancy Chater, Senior Project Coordinator
Parks, Forestry and Recreation
City of Toronto
Telephone: 416-338-5237
Email: Nancy.Chater@toronto.ca

Jane Farrow,
Principal, Dept. of Words & Deeds
jane@janefarrow.ca
647-500-0385



Landscape
Architects

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. Executive Summary	4
2. Project Overview	5
3. How We Engaged	7
Communications Methods	7
Engagement Activities	9
Meeting Objectives and Overviews	9
4. Who We Engaged	13
5. What We Heard	18
Summary of Concept Option Plans	18
I. Stakeholder Meetings	20
II. Indigenous Engagement	27
III. Public Engagement & Online Survey Summary	27
6. Next Steps	41
7. Appendix	42
a. Project website	42
b. List of community stakeholders, Indigenous Engagement participants and Consultant Team	42
c. Online Survey – link to full survey results	43



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Toronto is proceeding with plans to improve George Hislop Park, Norman Jewison Park and Alexander Street Parkette. This work is guided by the 2017 Yonge Street Linear Park Master Plan, which established design principles through consultation with a focus on the creation of continuous accessible pathways, quality seating and site furnishings, maintaining existing trees, adding welcoming lighting and new features, and enhancing safety for all park users.

A comprehensive, multi-step engagement strategy began in September 2020 that included online public and stakeholder meetings, outreach to vulnerable communities, online surveys and email/phone briefings and correspondence. The first phase of engagement in 2020 addressed the development of Concept Plan Options for the three parks. This What We Heard Report covers input and feedback gathered in phase one of public engagement, including a process overview and key findings from each event and conversation.

The key feedback themes that emerged across all sessions are:

- o Prioritizing safety for all park users in the design
- o Pedestrian pathways and access that promote good flow
- o Seating that encourages people to linger and connect
- o Trees, greening and plantings that are attractive and durable
- o Flexibility in design that encourages a variety of uses and programming
- o Lighting that promotes safety and is durable and easy to maintain
- o Public artwork that creatively reflects local LGBTQ2S+ history and intersectionality

In response to COVID-19 public health guidelines, consultations, surveys and briefings were held online, and over the phone and email – no in-person engagement activities were activated.

Refer to Appendix, Part B, for a list of internal City of Toronto stakeholders, external community stakeholders, Indigenous Engagement participants, and project consultant team members.

A full reporting of all engagement activities and meeting summaries is available at the project website: [Toronto.ca/YongeLinearParks](https://toronto.ca/YongeLinearParks)

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

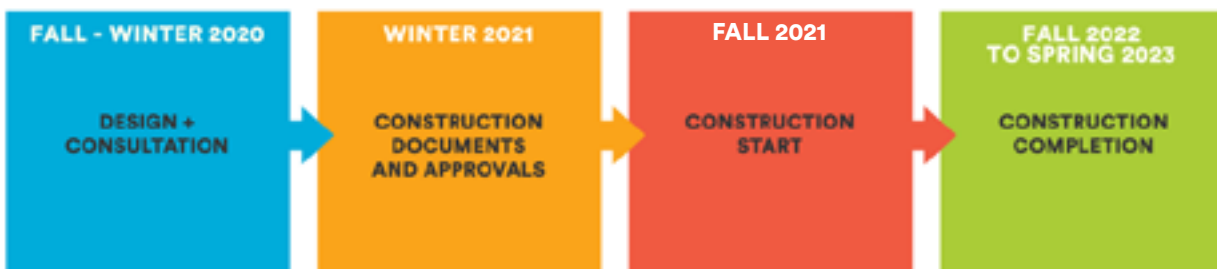
The City of Toronto is proceeding with plans to improve George Hislop Park, Norman Jewison Park and Alexander Street Parkette. This work is guided by the Yonge Street Linear Park Master Plan completed in 2017, which established design principles through consultation with a focus on the creation of continuous accessible pathways, quality seating and site furnishings, maintaining existing trees, adding welcoming lighting and new features, and enhancing safety for all park users. James Canning Gardens was included in the Master Plan and was constructed as a separate project which is now complete.

Since the completion of the 2017 Park Master Plan, the area has continued to see an abundance of high-density development, placing increased demands on all public realm spaces, including streets and local parks. The broader LGBTQ2S+ community will continue to embrace and use the parks – the linear parks in particular acting as venues for annual Pride events. Local residents and visitors use the linear parks as a pedestrian commuting route to Wellesley Station. The current pandemic has placed more pressure on parks as a safe, accessible refuge for vulnerable communities. In summary, the diversity and density of residents in the Church Wellesley neighbourhood has made the implementation of the master plan even more timely, with the intent to revitalize these parks in order to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Parks Background:

The origins of George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks stemmed from the “cut and cover” creation of the Yonge Street subway system in the 1950’s, which runs below the parks. Along with James Canning Garden in the next block south, the three sites first acted as surface parking lots well into the 1980’s. They have since been converted into parks that provide much needed greenspace in the busy downtown core. Located a few blocks to the south, Alexander Street Parkette was developed as a community parkette located on top of a parking garage for the residential building at 25 Maitland Street. While it is not part of a continuous pedestrian system with the Linear Parks, Alexander St. Parkette is part of the same open space corridor east of Yonge St. in the Church Wellesley Village neighbourhood

The Yonge Street Linear Parks project anticipated schedule is as follows:



Landscape Architects

The consultant team is led by PMA Landscape Architects, with The Dept. of Words & Deeds providing public engagement services.

The Yonge Street Linear Park Improvements engagement process is comprised of two phases:

Phase 1: Concept Plan Options

- o Step 1 - Setting the Groundwork
- o Step 2 - Early Concepts Options

Phase 2: Preferred Concept Plan

- o Step 3 - Preferred Concept Plans
- o Step 4 - Announcement of Final Concept Plans



3. HOW WE ENGAGED

Due to COVID-19 and following the recommendations of Toronto Public Health, community engagement was conducted on a variety of online platforms (WebEx and Zoom), digitally (online surveys, email) and on the phone to ensure appropriate physical distancing requirements were met. In general the community was informed of engagement activities through social and print media, listed below:

Communication Methods

Printed Media:

Park Signage: Project information was displayed on twelve (12) notice boards placed on or in the Yonge Street Linear Parks. These notice boards provided information about the project, details about the online survey and joining the virtual public meeting, and how to access additional project information on the Yonge Street Linear Parks Website.



Community Mail out (Postcards): A 5x9 flyer advertising the virtual public meeting, online survey, and project webpage was delivered to 8400 addresses in the neighbourhood through a Canada Post neighbourhood mail campaign.





The virtual meeting notice was also include in the local Councillor's newsletter(s) leading up to the November 2020 virtual meeting.

Digital Media:

Social Media Ads: The City of Toronto used it's Facebook and Twitter accounts to promote the virtual public meeting, and online questionnaire from October 23 to November 29, 2020. Additional social media outreach was supported by PMA and DWD's Twitter and Instagram accounts.

E-Blasts: The virtual meeting was also incorporated in the local Councillor's newsletters and CRG community networks through an accessible e-flyer.

Project Webpage: The City's website acted as a communications portal to inform the public about the Yonge Street Linear Parks. A landing page, toronto.ca/yongelinearparks, hosted all information regarding the project including general information, project updates, a link to the online survey, past consultation summaries and an option to subscribe for plan related e-updates.

Outreach Method	Outreach Activities	Reach
Project Webpage 	A dedicated webpage was developed within the City of Toronto's website to act as an integrated platform for all project related information. Through the webpage, interested people could also subscribe to receive updates and information about the project.	Reached <i>Data unavailable</i>
Community Mail Outs 	A flyer advertising the online meeting and website was delivered to 8,400 addresses in the neighbourhood. The virtual meeting notice was included in the local Councillor's newsletters leading up to the November 4, 2020, virtual meeting.	Reached ~8,400
Park Signage 	Posters displaying information about the virtual community meeting and online survey were placed in key locations near or in the Yonge Street Linear Parks.	Reached <i>Data unavailable</i>
Social Media Ads (Paid and Organic) 	The virtual community meeting and online questionnaire were promoted through the City of Toronto's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts with additional outreach support from PMA and DWD.	Reached ~42,000
Total Reached		Over 50,000



Landscape Architects

Engagement Activities

Phase 1 of the engagement process consisted of:

1) Stakeholder Engagement:

- o Community Resource Group Meeting 1 & 2
- o Buddies in Bad Times staff
- o The 519 staff
- o The 519 drop-in participants
- o Friends of Linear Parks
- o Integrative LGBTQ2S+ Public Art Sub-group

2) Indigenous Engagement

3) Public Engagement

- o Meeting #1 Online survey
- Email, phone and mail-in feedback portals

Meeting Objectives and Overviews

Phase 1 - Step 1 - September 2020: Setting the Groundwork

Engagement Objectives for Step 1: Confirm understanding of who and how the parks (George Hislop Park, Norman Jewison Park, and Alexander Street Parkette) are used now and the goals and objectives of the park renovations – based on the Master Plan, and new and current considerations; establish priorities for park function and programming; establish an updated vision statement for the Yonge Street Linear Parks.

Community Resource Group Meeting (CRG)# - September 21, 2020

Meeting Overview: This first CRG meeting took place virtually with 31 people including City staff, Project consultant team members and community stakeholders who share their knowledge of the neighbourhood in an advisory capacity (for list of members see Appendix). 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 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.



Phase 1 - Step 2 - October 2020 to January 2021: Concept Plan Options

Engagement Objectives for Step 2:

Present and gather feedback from Indigenous community members, stakeholders, members of the public and vulnerable communities on the preliminary park design concepts and refinements of the master plan for George Hislop Park, Norman Jewison Park, and Alexander Street Parkette, and to collect some responses to the high-level concepts for the integrated LGBTQ2S+ public art component.

1. Stakeholder Engagement

Community Resource Group Meeting #2, October 30, 2020

Meeting Overview: A virtual meeting was held on Zoom on Friday, October 30, 2020; 11:00am – 12:30pm to gather feedback from the Community Resource Group on the preliminary park design concepts for George Hislop Park, Norman Jewison Park, and Alexander Street Parkette. There were 20 participants including City of Toronto staff and consultant Project Team members. Fung Lee (PMA) briefly outlined the community outreach and consultation schedule including upcoming consultation with vulnerable communities; summarized the feedback that has been provided to date; and presented the preliminary park design concepts. A discussion of the concepts followed the presentation. Stanislav Jurkovic, an artist procured by the PMA design team, presented preliminary concepts for the integrated LGBTQ2S+ public art component of the design. A second discussion followed his presentation to provide feedback on the public art concepts.

In addition to the Community Resource Group, in order to enhance understanding of how the parks can serve a variety of communities and park users, the following groups were engaged through virtual platforms and interviews to explore how best to design the park for the safety and enjoyment of all:

- **The Integrative Public Art Sub-group – September 28, 2020**

Meeting Overview: A virtual meeting was convened to capture input from the LGBTQ2S+ arts community who represented a breadth of perspectives and experiences. The engagement objective was to hear and understand the local community advisory group's thoughts on how best to spotlight, celebrate, and explore LGBTQS+ themes and history through an integrated art work being developed at George Hislop Park as part of the Yonge Street Linear Parks Improvement Project. Participants were given a short presentation to introduce the project and the design team. Several examples of integrated art were used to guide the discussion with the aim of better understanding what is relevant to the neighbourhood and the City, for this artwork within the larger context of the LGBTQ2S+ experience.

- **Friends of Linear Parks, CRG subgroup – November 16**

Meeting Overview: A virtual meeting with two representatives of the Friends of Linear Parks (FLP) was held on Monday Nov 16, 6 to 6:45 pm. The objective was to capture input from FLP who could not make the regularly scheduled CRG meetings. Members of the design team and city staff were present and received the input offered, answered questions and reviewed the written remarks provided by FLP,



Landscape
Architects

which was then shared with the rest of the CRG via email.

- **Buddies in Bad Times Staff, CRG Subgroup – November 17, 2020**

Meeting Overview: A virtual meeting was held on Zoom on November 17, 2020; 2:00pm– 3:00pm to gather feedback from representatives of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre on the Yonge Street Linear Parks Improvements Project. There were 11 participants including four Buddies staff members, City of Toronto staff and consultant team members. PMA Landscape Architect Fung Lee provided an overview of the design guidelines and objectives and the preliminary design concepts for Alexander St. Parkette followed by a discussion facilitated by Jane Farrow, Dept of Words & Deeds. The objective of the meeting was to draw on insights and expertise of the group as community members that have been working adjacent to, and spending time in Alexander St. Parkette over many years.

- **519 Church Staff, CRG subgroup – December 7, 2020**

Meeting Overview: A virtual meeting was held on Zoom on December 7, 2020; 11:00am– 12:00pm to gather feedback from representatives of the 519 Church community centre staff who work with vulnerable communities that frequent the Yonge Street Linear Parks. There were 6 participants including two 519 staff, City of Toronto staff and consultant team members. The 519 staff in the meeting work with LGBTQ2S+ communities that are homeless, under-housed, street involved, socially isolated and/or experiencing food insecurity. The engagement objective was to better understand the use of park spaces by vulnerable communities and to discuss best practices in design and programming that can help to meet the needs of these communities.

- **519 Church – Vulnerable Communities Feedback – December 2020 to January 2021**

Meeting Overview: The engagement team arranged to have 519 Community Centre staff members do physically-distanced, in-person interviews with 519 drop-in program participants to gain insights about local park experiences by vulnerable community members, including how to improve safety and enhance the park experience from the perspective of those who are experiencing homelessness or live precariously. In total, 27 participants were interviewed by 519 staff, most of which were conducted outside in Barbara Hall Park (next to The 519), with a few taking place during regular 519 outreach in the Church-Wellesley Village neighbourhood. The participants included people who are street-involved and marginally housed, with the remainder being participants accessing a 519 Sunday meal program. Several of these participants indicated that while they had more stability when it came to housing, they were still dealing with the effects of being low-income community members (e.g. food insecurity).



2. Indigenous Engagement - October 21, 2020

Meeting Overview: The purpose of this meeting was to gather input from Indigenous community members on the City's Indigenous Place-Making Initiative for City parks with specific ideas for two park projects. A virtual meeting was held on Zoom on October 21, 2020; 2:30pm– 4:00pm to gather feedback from a group of Indigenous community members on two park design projects: Yonge Street Linear Parks Improvements Project; and Macpherson Avenue Park – a new park currently under design as part of the Green Line. There were 14 participants including City of Toronto staff and consultant team members from the two Park projects. Fung Lee (PMA) provided an introduction to the Yonge Street Linear Parks Improvement project, including the project timeline, a summary of the design concepts that are under development. The objective of the meeting was to draw on insights and expertise of the group and receive input on ideas for Indigenous place-keeping / place-making elements for the two parks.

3. Public Engagement

i) Virtual Public Meeting - November 5, 2020

Meeting Overview: A virtual meeting was held on the WebEx platform on Thursday, November 5, 2020; 6:30pm – 8:00pm to gather feedback from the public on the preliminary park design concepts for George Hislop Park, Norman Jewison Park, and Alexander Street Parkette. There were approximately 67 participants including City of Toronto staff and consultant Project Team members. Facilitator Jane Farrow (Dept of Words & Deeds) introduced the project team, provided an overview of the project timeline and a summary of the consultation and outreach activities, and discussed key points of the feedback received thus far. Lead landscape architect Fung Lee (PMA Landscape Architects) reviewed some historical context of the park locations followed by a presentation of the preliminary park design concepts, showing two options. A discussion of these design concepts followed.

ii) Online Survey - November 4 to 29, 2020

The online survey collected input on the early concept plan options that were developed for the three parks. It was launched at the November 5, 2020, online public meeting and remained open for almost a month. There were 264 respondents.

4. WHO WE ENGAGED

In total, 60 community members attended the virtual public meeting, and 264 individuals responded to the online survey.

Participants from the online survey were also asked to voluntarily provide demographic information. These demographic questions help us understand who this survey reached, and whose feedback we may be missing. If the feedback we collect from these questions shows us that we are only reaching some Torontonians and not others, we can adjust our outreach to be more inclusive.

Online Survey Participant Demographics

Participants of the online survey were asked to provide some demographic information to better understand who was participating and whether any groups in the community were missed as part of this engagement phase.

1. Age

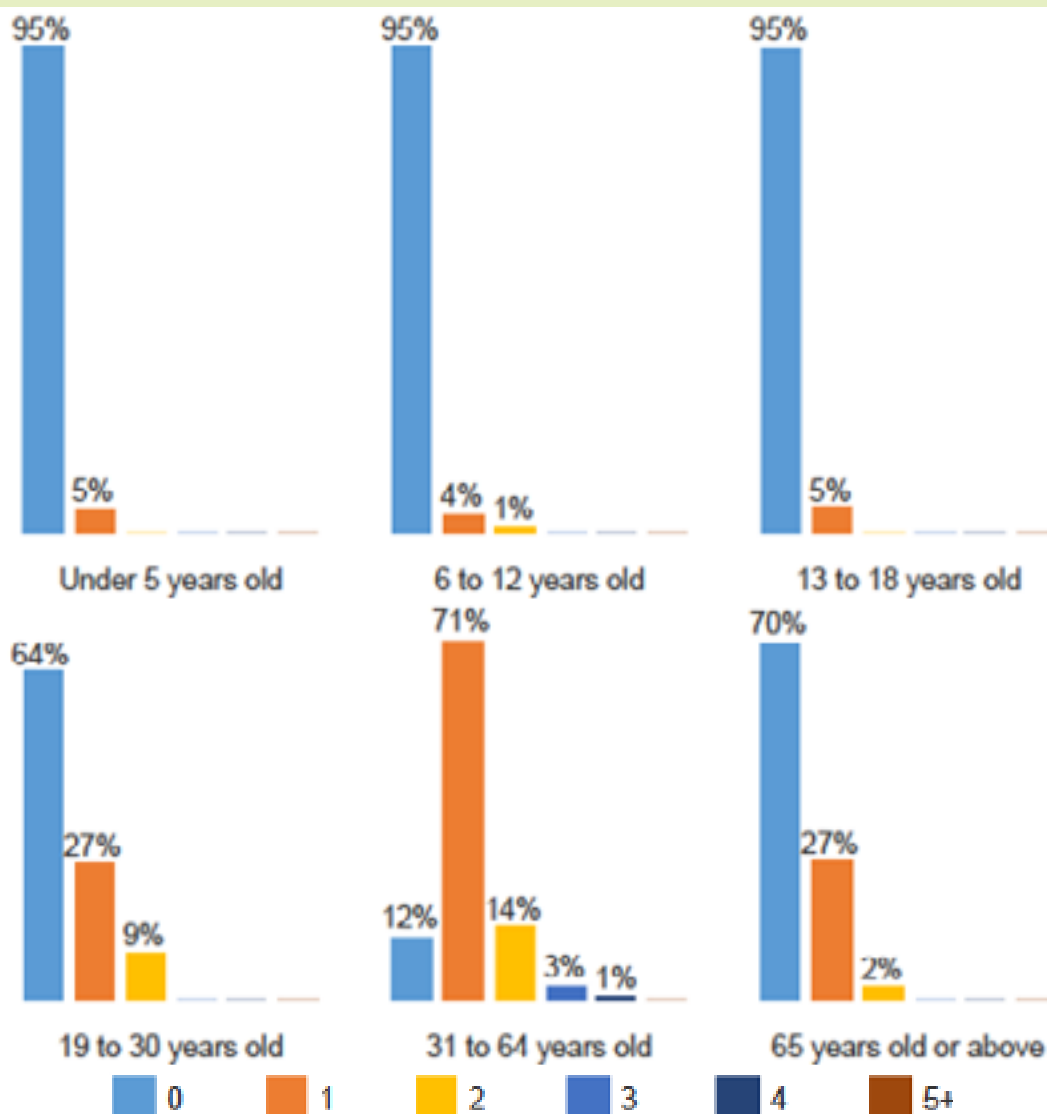


Figure 13. Percentage of participants per age group

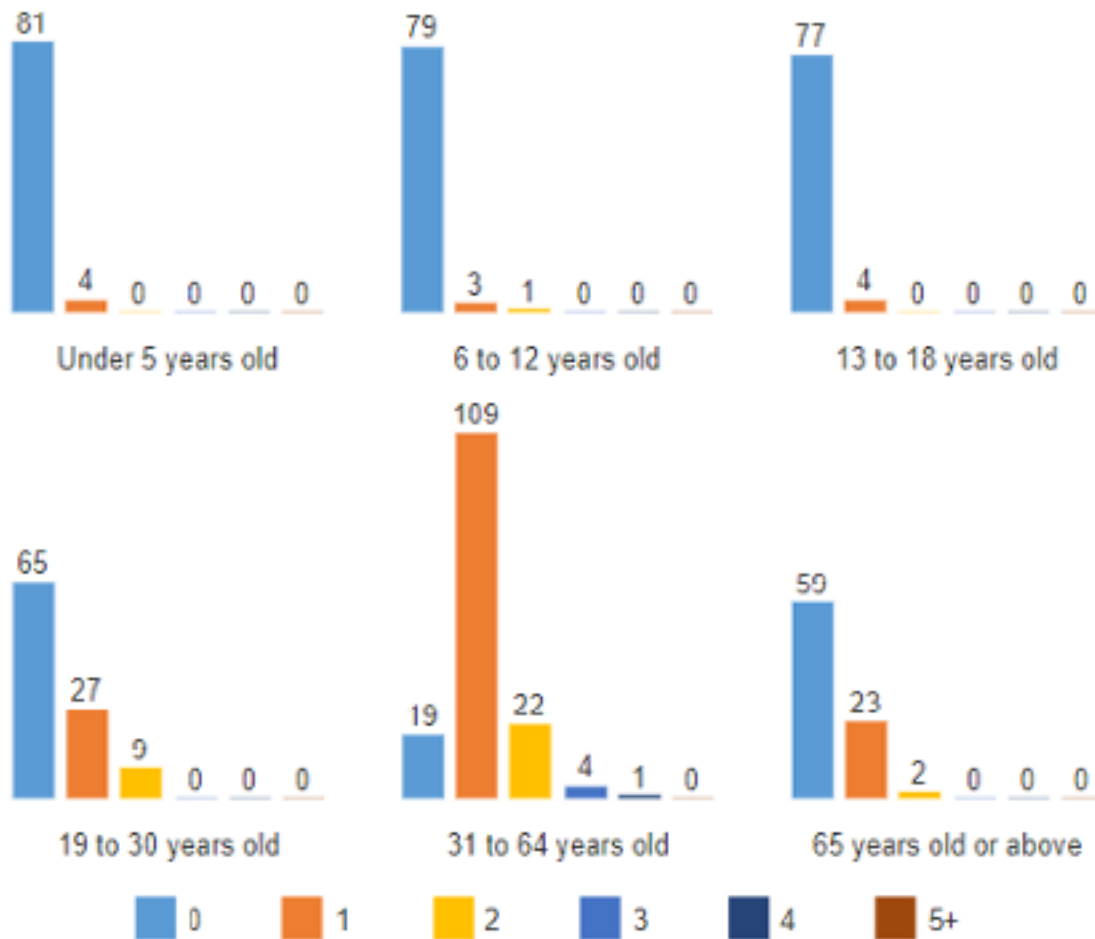


Landscape
Architects

Number of responses per age group include:

- 4 kids under 5
- 5 kids between the ages of 5 and 12
- 4 teens between the ages of 13 and 18
- 45 young adults between the ages of 19 and 30
- 169 adults between the ages of 31 and 64
- 27 seniors aged 65 and above

How many people of each age group participated in this survey?



2. Racial background

Participants predominantly self-identified as white (76% of respondents).

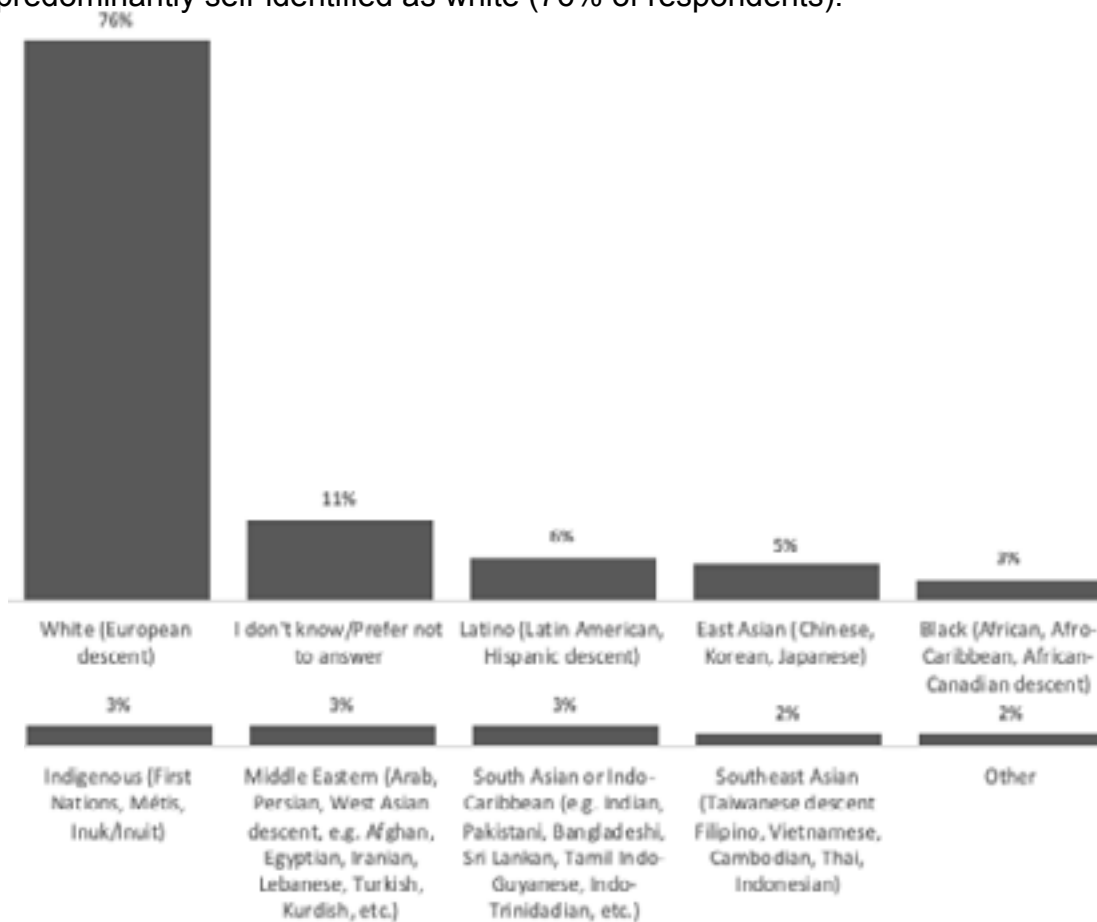


Figure 14. Percentage of participants per racial group

3. Participation by Indigenous peoples

5% of the survey participants identified as being Indigenous to Canada.

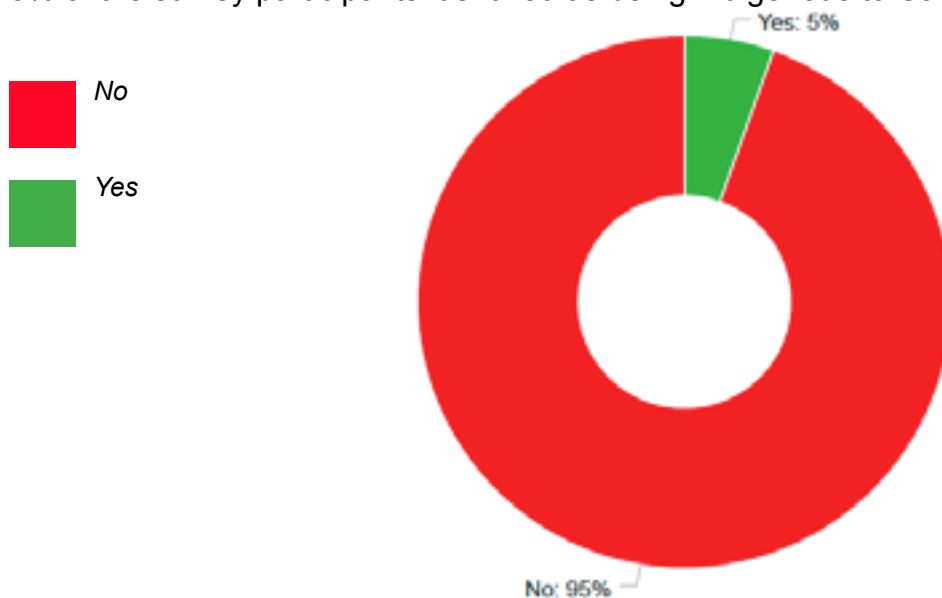


Figure 15. Percentage of participants who identified as being Indigenous to Canada

4. Participation by persons with disabilities

23% of the survey respondents identified as being persons with disabilities.

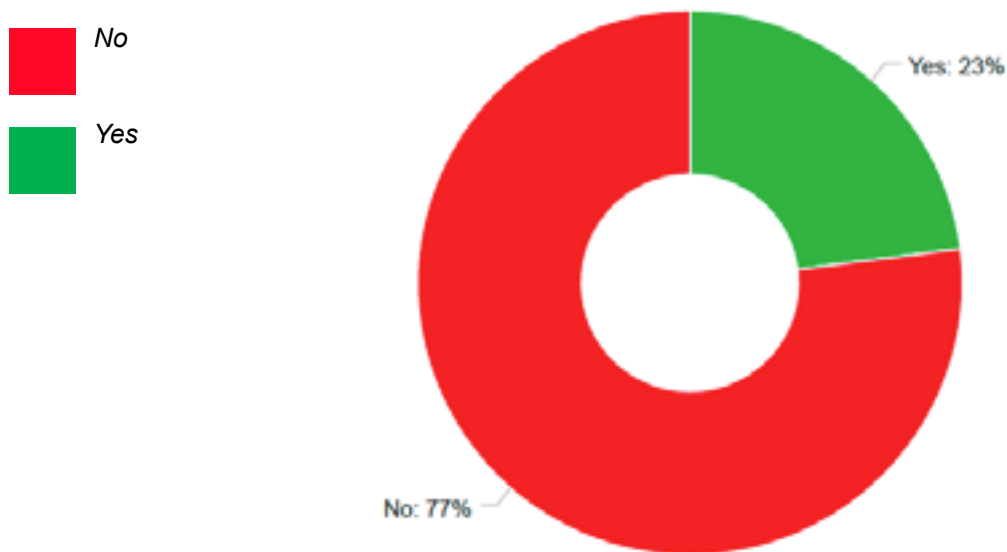


Figure 16. Percentage of participants who identified as being persons with disabilities

5. Home ownership

55% of the respondents were renters, and 44% were homeowners.

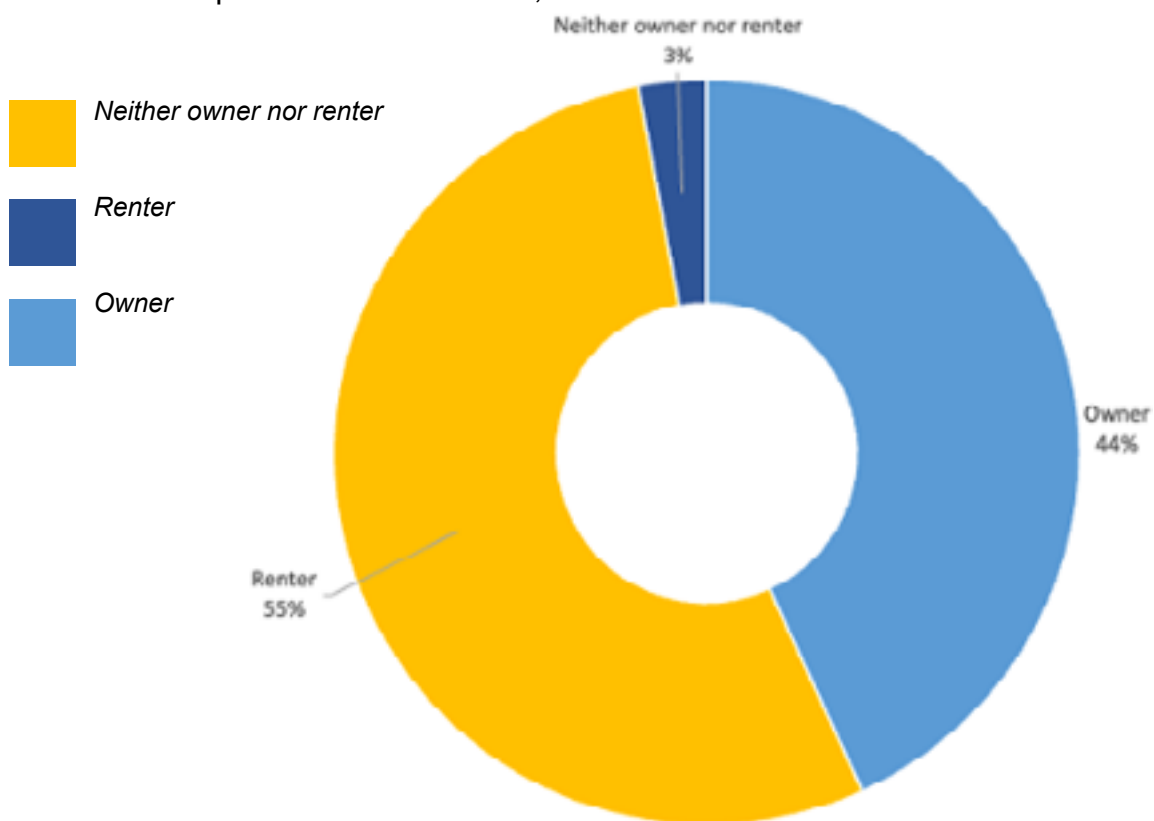


Figure 17. Percentage of renters and home owners among participants

6. Access to outdoors

60% of the respondents' households rely on parks and public spaces for access to the outdoors and 40% have exclusive access to a balcony/rooftop patio.

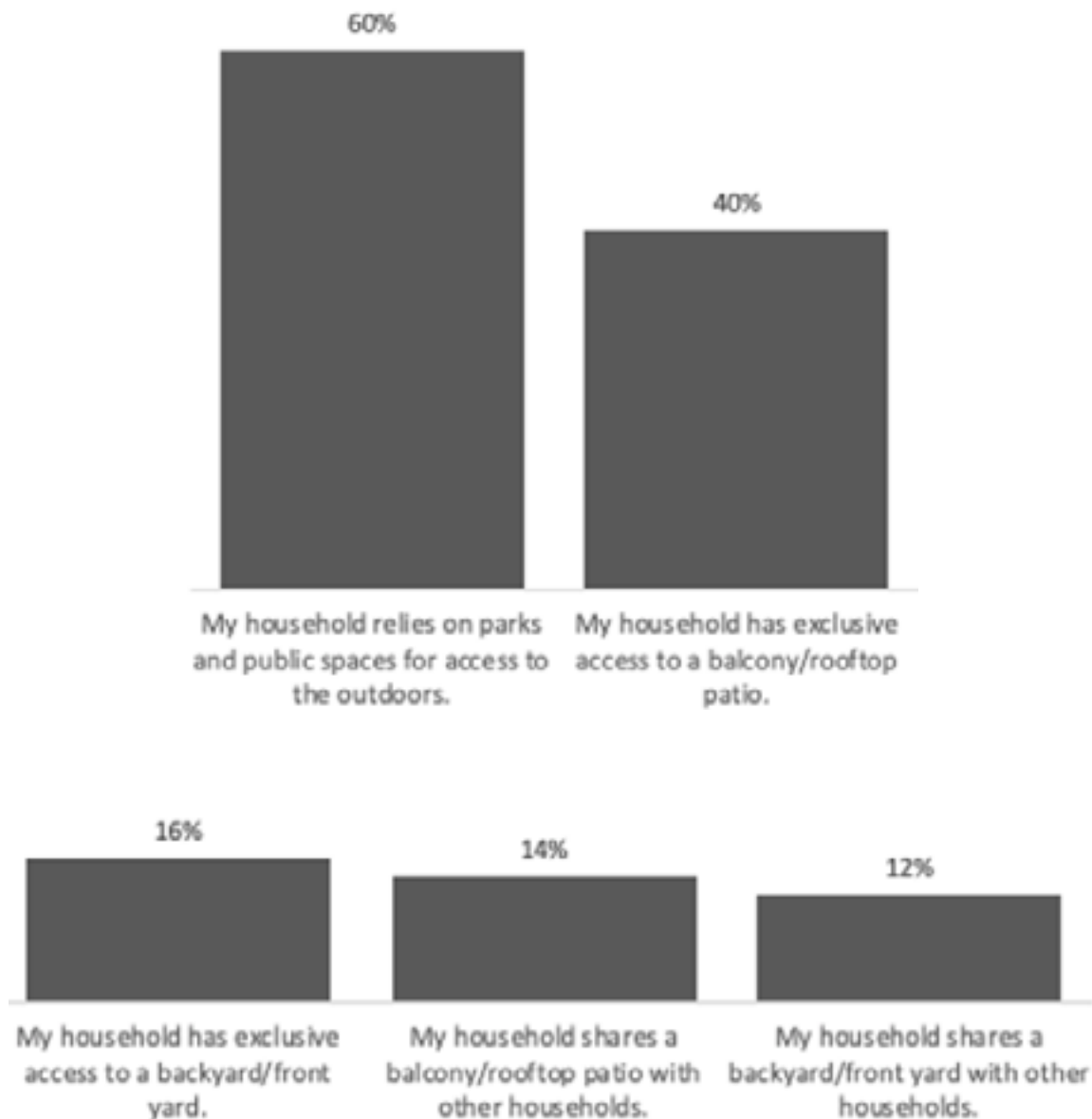


Figure 18. Percentage of participants per types of access to outdoor space

5. WHAT WE HEARD

The overarching design objectives for the project that were established through the whole range of engagement activities during Phase 1 of the park design were to:

- **Promote placemaking** by incorporating the design language and materials which have been established by the master plan and the construction of James Canning Gardens Improvements.
- **Create a continuous accessible pathway** through George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks that connects to James Canning Gardens, complete with lighting, site furnishings, and plantings (trees, lawns & horticulture).
- **Consider potential outdoor performance / gathering areas** for programmed and flexible events.
- **Integrate sustainable features and robust, resilient design** that considers safety and accessibility for all park users.
- **Explore pedestrian connectivity and programming opportunities** to increase foot traffic through the parks and engage with the neighbouring buildings such as Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, Sanctuary, and the Andorre House.
- **Enhance safety in the parks with good lighting and clear sight lines**
- **Include lots of seating with a variety of options**
- **Design to welcome all community members, including vulnerable community**

Summary of Concept Option Plans

Two park concepts were developed and presented to internal and external stakeholders, Indigenous Engagement participants and the public: Concept 1 was called Flow, and Concept 2 was called Nodes. Both concepts placed similar priority on the following design principles and features:

- **Improved safety** – through opening sightlines, additional access points to the parks, improved daily activation opportunities
- **Improved connections to the neighbourhood**, such as creating inviting community entry plazas at the street edges and traffic calming measures to cross local streets
- **Variety of options and places for sitting** – by oneself or in small groups



Landscape
Architects

- **Integrating a playground for George Hislop and Dog Relief Area for Norman Jewison**, complete with a reimagined Barney's fountain
- **Maintaining a generous walkway/ commuting route** through the linear parkettes
- **At Alexander Street Parkette:** creating a central gathering space/ terrace and opening up views and physical access to Sky Gilbert Lane to expand the park experientially into the laneway
- **Integrated LGBTQ2S+ public art** at George Hislop Park
- **Protecting and retaining the existing trees** in the parks
- **Integration of Indigenous approach to natural systems** by introducing bio-swales for drainage that tell a water story

Concepts At A Glance

Option 1: Flow



Option 2: Nodes



George Hislop Park

Norman Jewison Park

Alexander Street Parkette

Figure 1. The plans above show Concept 1: Flow, and Concept 2: Nodes.
Please note: North direction is to the left.

The design approach to Concept 1 – Flow focused on creating a generous north-south commuting route for George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks, with small ‘swells’ in the paving to accommodate seating areas along the edges of the walkway. Plazas were introduced at the street edge with community entry plazas, with no central gathering space. The main features at Alexander Street Parkette were a central lawn space/ terrace and a more urban street-edge plaza. The central lawn space lead to a number of steps to the south that addressed the existing site grade change of 2m from the north end to south end of the park.

The design approach to Concept 2 – Nodes focussed similarly on a generous north-south commuting route for George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks, but also created a main plaza and open green respectively in the centre of the parks in addition to the street edge entry plazas. The main features at Alexander Street Parkette were a central paved plaza space and more of a soft-landscape treatment at the street edge as a threshold to the main plaza space. The existing site grade change in Alexander Street Parkette was accommodated through a number of slightly sloped pathways as well as a few steps in select locations. Both accessible routes, as well as more direct stepped routes are proposed within the park.

What We Heard - Key Points at each consultation event

i) Stakeholder Engagement

Community Resource Group Meeting #1 - September 21, 2020

Key Points

1. Encouraging more activity and a variety of events in the parks will help to improve safety
2. Lighting should be improved to create a safer and more welcoming space for all.
3. Open up the park space and place the furniture and other elements in a way that creates a safe, interesting and welcoming environment
4. Explore opportunities to improve the connection of the parks to surrounding buildings and to Yonge Street.
5. Play areas for children will encourage more activity in the parks and serve the local neighbourhood
6. Ensure the park is designed in a way that is inclusive to all communities.



Landscape
Architects

7. Programming flexibility is important for all communities and all types of activities.
8. Honour Indigenous communities and heritage.
9. The history of the park should be included in the design considerations
10. It is important that the design is beautiful but also sustainable and can be maintained.

Community Resource Group Meeting #2 – October 30, 2020

Key Points

1. Programming: Event spaces have good potential to animate the parks but should be located and designed in way that discourages antisocial activity when they are not in use.
2. Pedestrians: The parks are an important pedestrian through route and the design should take this into account.
3. Seating: Seating steps are not desirable in areas where they may encourage people to gather and use the space in a negative way.
4. Lighting: Lighting should be bright and consistent to create a safe and comfortable environment.
5. Surfacing: Large grassy areas should be reimaged in Alexander Parkette.
6. Play: The Play area near the Children's Aid offices is a positive addition to the park design.
7. Pigeons: Pigeons are a concern for Park maintenance.
8. Public Art: If projections are part of the LGBTQ2S+ public art concepts, these could provide context and beauty but should not be used for commercial purposes.



Landscape
Architects

The Integrative LGBTQ2S+ Public Art Sub-group – September 28, 2020

Key Points

1. Symbols: Symbols can be very helpful to evoke the struggle, resilience and celebration of LGBTQ2S+, but they are often limited by their particular history, their use by corporations, and their specificity.
2. Names: Incorporating names into the artwork is not a priority for the group.
3. Queer Space: The artwork should convey the benefits that the park space has provided for the queer community - a space that enables non-normative ways of being and recognizes what the queer community has brought to the city.
4. The Body: Consider representing the body, love and sex in a way that honours the community members for whom this is important but not in a way that will exclude or alienate others.
5. Interactivity: Create an interactive and attractive artwork that draws people into the park space and encourages people to engage with it in a meaningful way.
6. Education: Explore opportunities for educational programming that would enrich the experience of the artwork.

Friends of Linear Parks, CRG subgroup – November 16, 2020

Key Points

Insights and emphasis on design priorities addressed:

- o Building and property interface
- o Event space and programming
- o Reducing pigeon feeding
- o The importance of play spaces
- o Ensuring park space does not appear privatized
- o Good seating, no defensive design
- o Sustainable stormwater management



Landscape
Architects

Buddies in Bad Times Staff, CRG Subgroup – November 17, 2020

Key Points

Insights and observations about Alexander Street Parkette usage and opportunities included:

1. Design for safety including clear sight lines in the park and remove hiding spots.
2. Create a welcoming inclusive design for all.
3. Improve access between the theatre building and the park space.
4. Create a space that is suitable for occasional professional theatre performances.
5. Accommodate the Buddies accessible ramp entrance on the east side of their building which sits in the park, with an understanding of the theatre operations during events.

519 Church Staff, Community Resource Group (CRG) subgroup – December 7, 2020

Key Points

Insights and observations about how vulnerable communities seek to use park spaces included:

1. The parks are an important space for vulnerable communities.
2. All communities are concerned about safety.
3. All communities are looking for similar things from their parks – a safe, welcoming, attractive green space to spend time in.
4. Safety is improved with more activity and when people know each other.
5. Design can help with separating activity that is less desirable.
6. Spaces that need to be activated to function well will likely attract less desirable activity.
7. Want to advocate for design that helps to foster a sense of ownership and care - and consider how it is monitored.
8. Give adults and children places to play.
9. The small size of the parks can create a feeling of safety.
10. Include design best practices that will accommodate seniors in the community.



Landscape
Architects

Key Points

Insights and observations about how individual vulnerable community members currently use the parks and what park improvements would be meaningful for their use included:

1. How Do You Currently Use the Parks?

- “I currently use the parks as places to breathe with trees and observe what has been happening in the neighbourhood”
- “I socialize, visit people I know in the neighbourhood, meet with friends”
- “I listen to my music, catch up on my social media”
- “They’re a better way to walk in the neighbourhood instead of Yonge Street”
- “I create and like to see graffiti and street art, portraits and murals”
- “Sometimes I use drugs in these parks”
- “Reading, journaling, hanging out, relaxing, napping”
- “I just like being in nature, it’s grounding”
- “Walk through to the subway”
- “Walk my dog, visit the dog park”
- “Drumming (Indigenous)”
- “I sleep in the park. I smoke weed in the park”
- “I used to be in the encampment “
- “Go with my wife for walks to relax”
- “Drum circles, music, chanting and dancing”
- “Bird watching”
- “Watching the dogs play”
- “Swinging in the playground”
- “Avoid crowds on Yonge Street”

2. What Would Make the Parks Safer & More Inviting?

- “Parks would feel safer if communities were safer, it’s the people not the parks that make me feel safe or unsafe”
- “Lights are good!”
- “Disco balls and drag queens and house music!”
- “Having security walking through parks and talking to people and building relationships instead of calling the police”
- “I’d like to see a running track, basketball net, and tennis court”
- “Cops come into the parks at the same time everyday so people clear out of the park at that time. It’s not working. We shouldn’t have to be the one’s policing the park”
- “Get rid of the people dealing drugs”
- “More police”
- “Needle disposal”
- “Security check box (call button) so I can communicate with police”
- “The more lighting the better”
- “Less police, they make me feel like I’m doing something wrong when I’m not. They make me do things more cautiously. Less so because I have white privilege, but I want parks to feel welcoming for everyone”
- “Brighter lighting”
- “More security people (preferred over police)”
- “Community led safety initiatives”
- “Peer led outreach”
- “More art. The parks are boring right now”
- “Community led park ambassadors from local organizations. They can act as a go between with City to advocate for community members”



- “Better lines of vision so I can see my dog and the other people. That way we can watch our dog and be able to see if someone aggressive is coming”
- “A meeting place”
- “Colourful lights”
- “Trans and gay education for everyone!”

3. If you could encounter a City staff member on a regular basis (e.g. biweekly, once a month) in a park who was dedicated to assisting you with your needs, who would that person be (e.g. a social worker, nurse, addictions or mental health counsellor, youth outreach worker, crisis response staff, etc.)?

- “A community health ambassador with dedicated regular availability in city parks could be an incredible way to shift away from policing the poor to integrating our shared resources”
- “A nurse”
- “All of the examples above in rotating shifts”
- “Just people to talk to about general health especially during COVID”
- “A social worker”
- “Police”
- “Community volunteers”
- “A mental health and addictions person”
- “Addictions and mental health counsellor, youth outreach worker, crisis response staff, those would be helpful for the community in this neighbourhood”
- “All of the above!”
- “All of them from organizations in the area”
- “Youth outreach worker since there are a lot of youth living outside in the area”
- “Community led outreach”
- “Needle boxes”
- “Workers that reflect the communities accessing the spaces. Representing different cultures - Indigenous and racialized workers”



Landscape
Architects

- “Someone who knows dogs and can assist in case of emergency, maybe a vet.”
- “First Aid kits for animals and support (like a lifeguard for animals)”
- “Everyone on the list”
- “I’ve had encounters with police in the park which were necessary and good. They got me to CAMH”
- “Elders and a medicine people would make me feel welcome and secure and safe”

Refer to Appendix X for demographic information about the interview participants.

ii. Indigenous Engagement Meeting

Virtual Public Meeting – October 21, 2020

Key Points

Insights and ideas for incorporating contemporary Indigenous culture, heritage information about these traditional territories and design elements to facilitate Indigenous Place-Keeping/Place-Making in the parks included:

1. **Natural Forces:** Work with natural forces in the design instead of hiding them, to bring a message of renewal.
2. Design consideration given to the presence and **movement of animals, rain, stormwater and plant life.**
3. Include Indigenous **history and culture.**
4. **Cultural References:** One feature of native art is taking what is available and abundant and applying time, effort and attention to create something valuable – this practice could be used to create a beautiful park design.

iii) Public Engagement

Virtual Public Meeting #1 – November 5, 2020

Key Points

1. **Safety:** Design should focus on features to improve safety for all visitors moving through, lingering and enjoying the park spaces.
2. **Seating, Lighting and Circulation:** Participants voiced support for finding the right balance of spaces to sit, alone and in small groupings, with nodes and walkways that feature lighting, clear sightlines and plantings that discourages unsafe uses or illicit gatherings.
3. **All Season:** Participants expressed a desire for the park designs to consider and incorporate year-round usage, and options for programming, physical activities and environmental sustainability.



Landscape
Architects

4. **Flexible Spaces:** Participants offered support for programming in the parks while noting the importance of keeping spaces flexible and adaptable for regular and routine park uses.
5. **Quality materials and maintenance:** The importance of quality materials and good maintenance regimes was noted by many who wanted to make sure the parks, the plantings, the seating, lights, surfaces and artworks were kept in a good state of repair for years to come.

iv) Online Survey - November 4 to 29, 2020

The online survey collected input from 264 respondents on the concept plan options summarized above and presented at the November 5, 2020, online public meeting.

Key Points

- Increase proportion of planting relative to paving
- Maintain and increase tree canopy where feasible
- Provide fluid circulation and 'easy paths' through the parks
- Ensure all seating is for the public, provide a variety of options and avoid defensive design

Detailed results from the online survey are summarized below.

1. Park Uses

Respondents were asked which activities they saw themselves doing most often in the Yonge Street Linear Parks. Generally, the survey found that the parks are primary used for commuting, eating a meal or enjoying a beverage, relaxing alone or in small groups in seating areas, enjoying artwork and attending events or community activities.

1.1. George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks

For these two parks, the participants identified commuting, relaxing by themselves, eating lunch/drinking coffee, viewing/experiencing the public art work, and using the seating areas in small groups as the most common activities.



Landscape
Architects

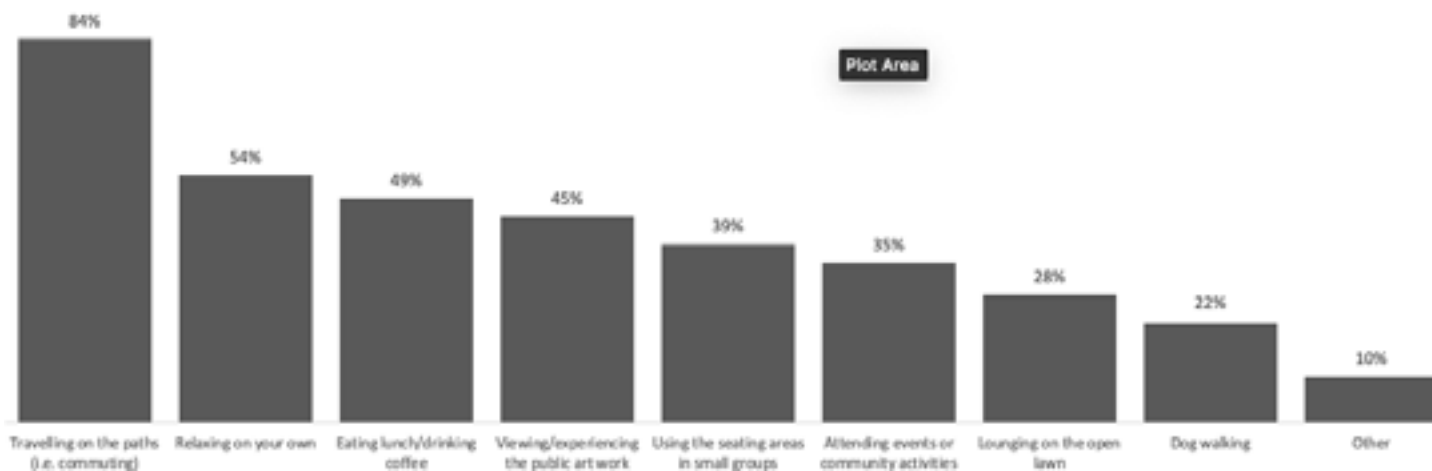


Figure 1. From online survey: Activities participants saw themselves doing in George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks

1.2. Alexander Street Parkette

For this parkette, the participants identified relaxing on their own, eating lunch/drinking coffee/using the seating areas in small groups, attending events or community activities, and lounging on the open lawn as the most common activities.

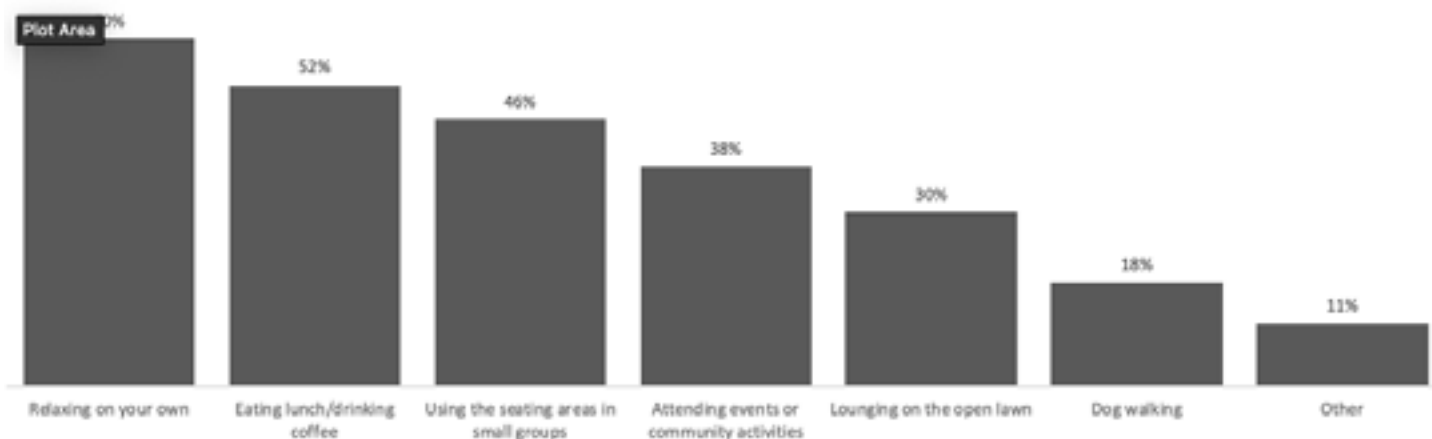


Figure 2. From online survey: Activities participants saw themselves doing in Alexander Street Parkette

2. Important Park Design Features

Respondents were asked which design features were important to them and their household within the Yonge Street Linear Parks. Overall, respondents identified lighting, ecological/naturalized plantings, various kinds of seating options, canopy/shade areas, open lawn space, and special place-making features as the most preferred features.

2.1. George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks

The graphic below (Fig. 3) shows that 86% of the respondents prefer good lighting, 77% prefer ecological/naturalized plantings, 74% prefer different seating options, 67% prefer shade areas, and 58% prefer special place-making features for the George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks.

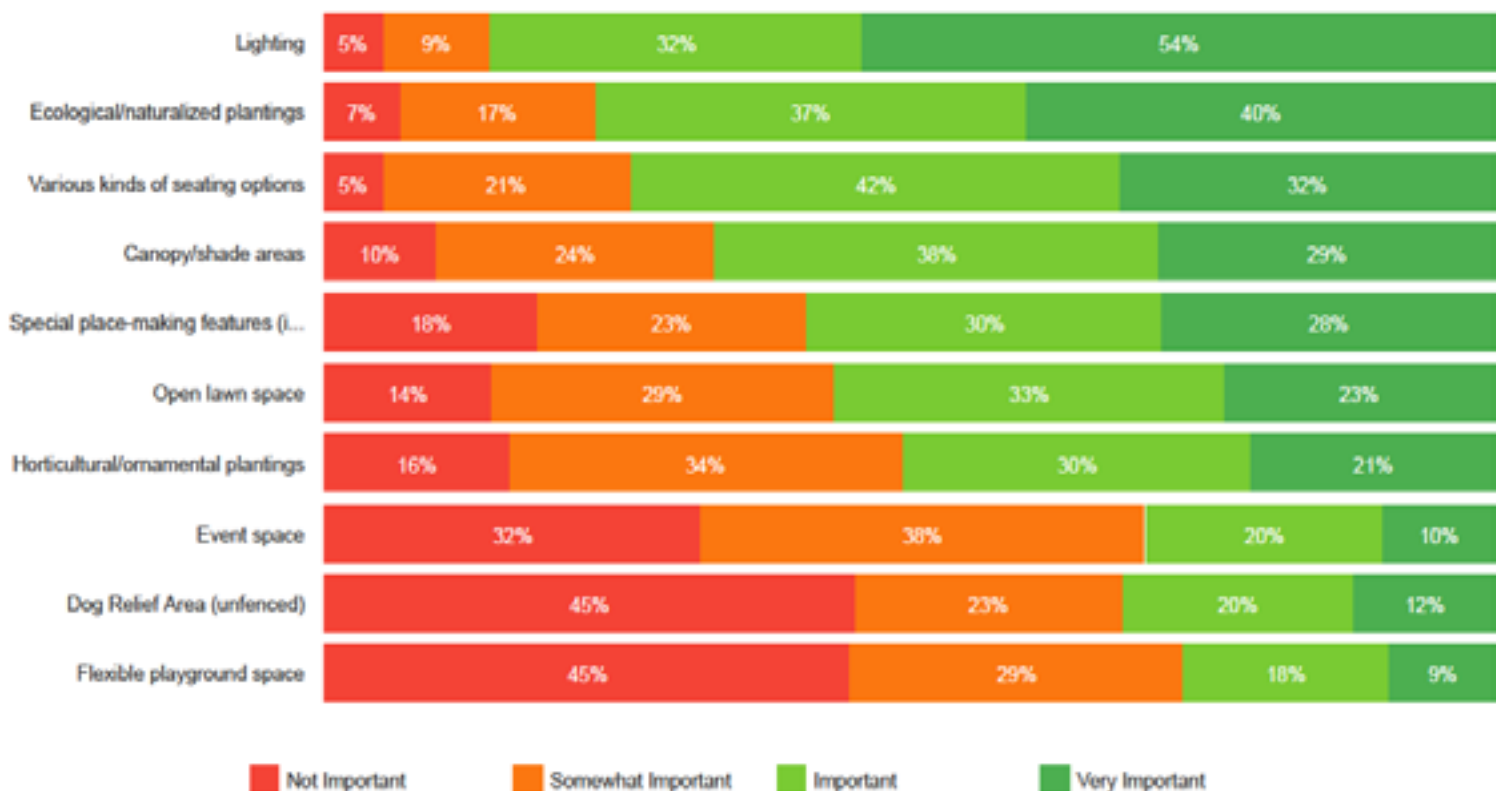


Figure 3. From online survey: Responses to question regarding which design features are important to participants' households in George Hislop and Norman Jewison Parks

2.2. Alexander Street Parkette

The graphic below (Fig. 4) shows that 85% of the respondents prefer good lighting, 73% prefer ecological/naturalized plantings, 70% prefer different seating options, 67% prefer shade areas, and 58% prefer open lawn space for the Alexander Street Parkette.

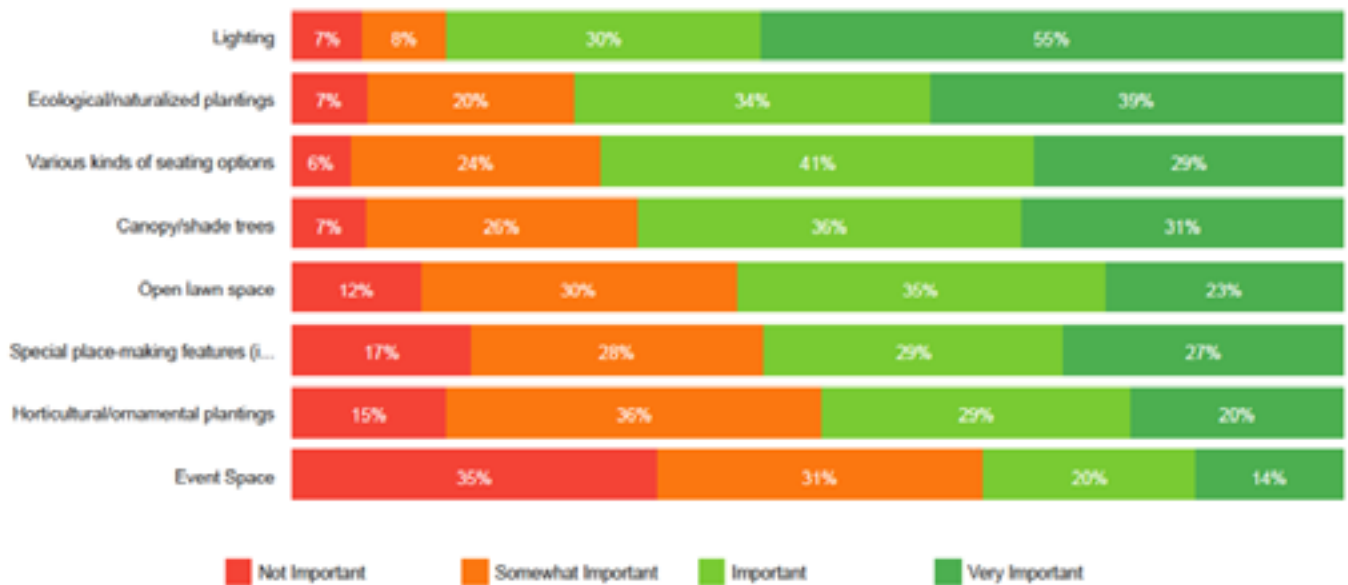


Figure 4. Responses to question regarding which design features are important to participants' households in the Alexander Street Parkette

3. Important Features to Create Connectivity

Enhancing the connections between the series of linked, continuous parks was one of the goals of the design for park improvements. Respondents were asked which design features they thought would contribute the most to creating this experience of connectivity. Uniqueness in programming or amenities in each park, consistent design materials, and large entry plazas that invite the people on the street into the parks were identified as the most important features to create connectivity among the

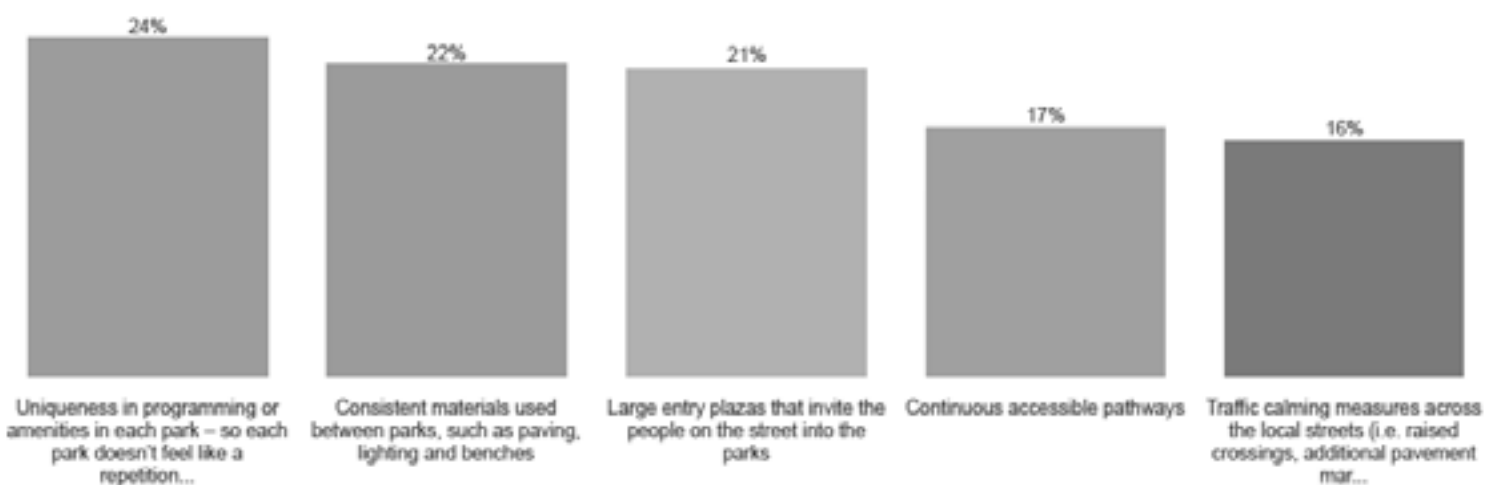


Figure 5. From online survey: Design features considered important by participants for creating connectivity among the parks

4. Important Seating Design Features

Respondents were asked what was important to them when thinking about seating areas in the parks. They identified flexibility to sit with larger groups or for events, and comfortable seating with arm rests and seat backs as the most important. Seating at the edges of the park, and within the interior of the park were marked as being equally important by respondents. Choices that allowed sitting alone or in smaller groups were also identified.

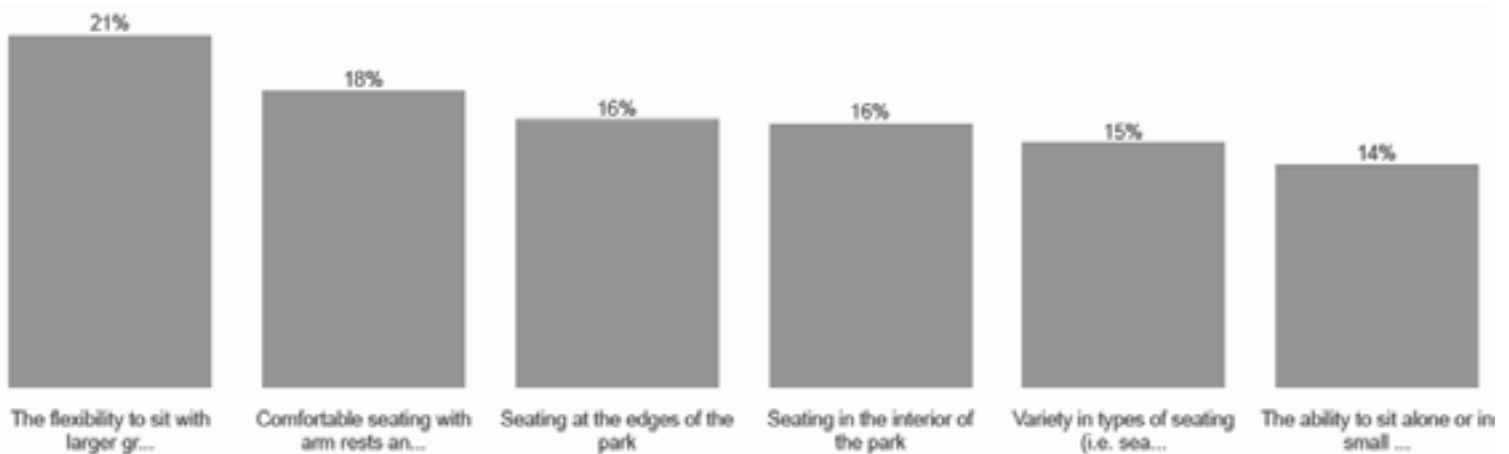


Figure 6. from online survey: Seating design features considered important by participants

5. Feedback on Design Option 1 – Flow

Concept 1 – To recap, Flow focussed on creating a generous north-south commuting route for Hislop and Jewison Parks, with small ‘swells’ in the paving to accommodate seating areas along the edges of walkway. Plazas were located at street edges. The main features at Alexander Street Parkette was a central lawn space/ terrace and a more urban street-edge plaza.

Participants were asked to respond in agreement or disagreement about various design features for this design option for the Yonge Street Linear Parks. The features they found most agreeable and disagreeable are summarized below.

5.1. George Hislop Park

For this park, 83% of the participants agreed that the public café seating along the hotel building façade feels welcoming, and 81% agreed that the additional access point from Biscuit Lane would make them feel safer. The size of the flexible playground area and the location of the playground near Isabella Street received approval from approximately 73% of respondents. The proportion of paving to green space was agreeable to 70% of the respondents.

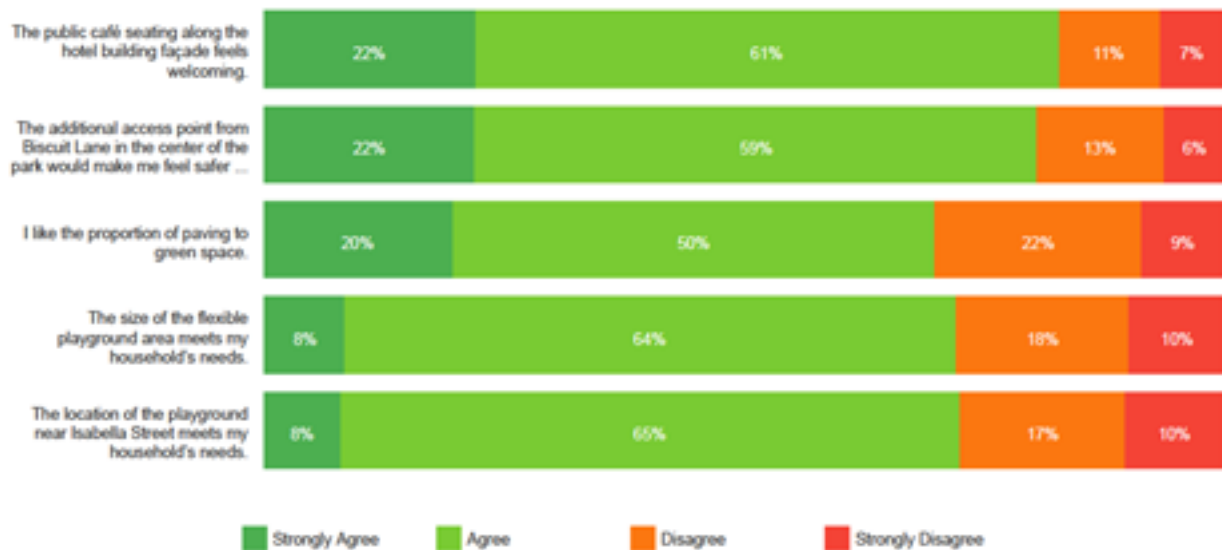


Figure 7. From online survey: Rated preferences for each design element of Design option 1 for George Hislop Park

5.2. Norman Jewison Park

For this park, 76% of the respondents agreed that the location of the Dog Relief Area along the parking lot met their needs, and 69% approved the size of the Dog Relief Area. 65% of the respondents approved of the extent of the open lawn areas in the centre of the park, 61% liked the proportion of paving to green space, and 59% agreed that reducing the visual plant buffer with the adjacent parking lot and laneway will help make the park feel safer.

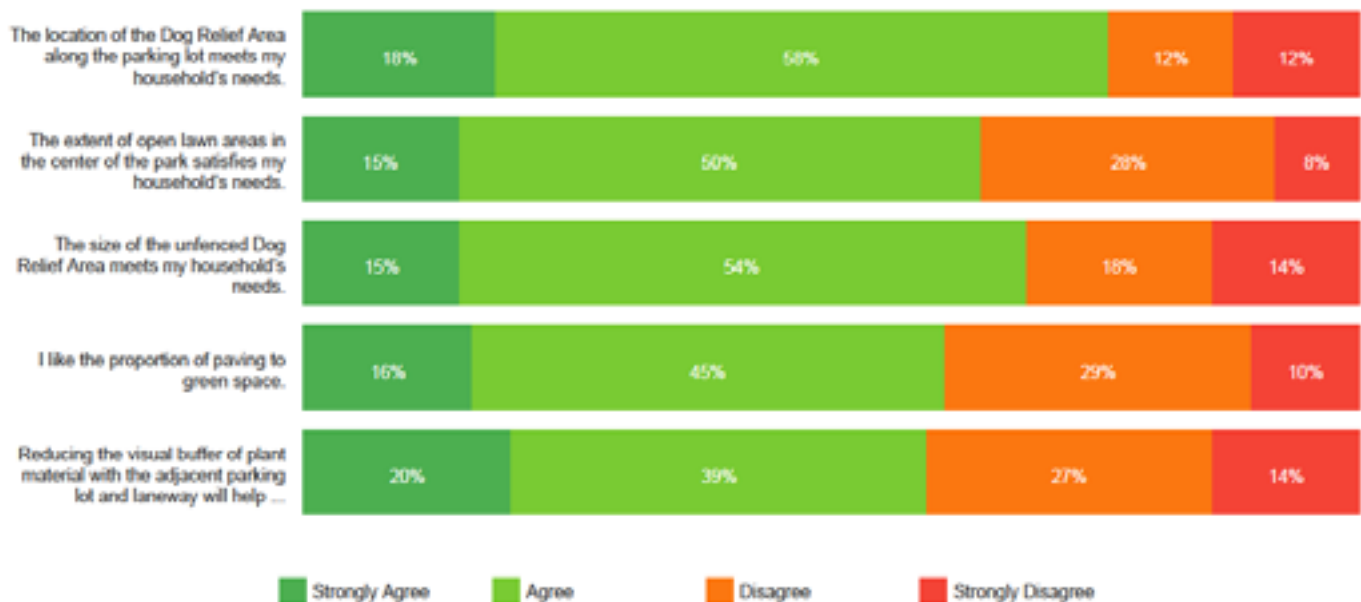


Figure 8. From online survey: Rated preferences for each design element of Design option 1 for Norman Jewison Park

5.3. Alexander Street Parkette

For this parkette, 87% of the participants agreed that the openness of the park in relation to Sky Gilbert Lane will help them feel safer and more comfortable in the park, 84% liked that the community plaza opens directly to the Alexander Street sidewalk, and 81% agreed that the central sloped lawn feels like a welcoming space for daily activities or programmed events. 61% of the participants liked the proportion of paving to green space in the park.

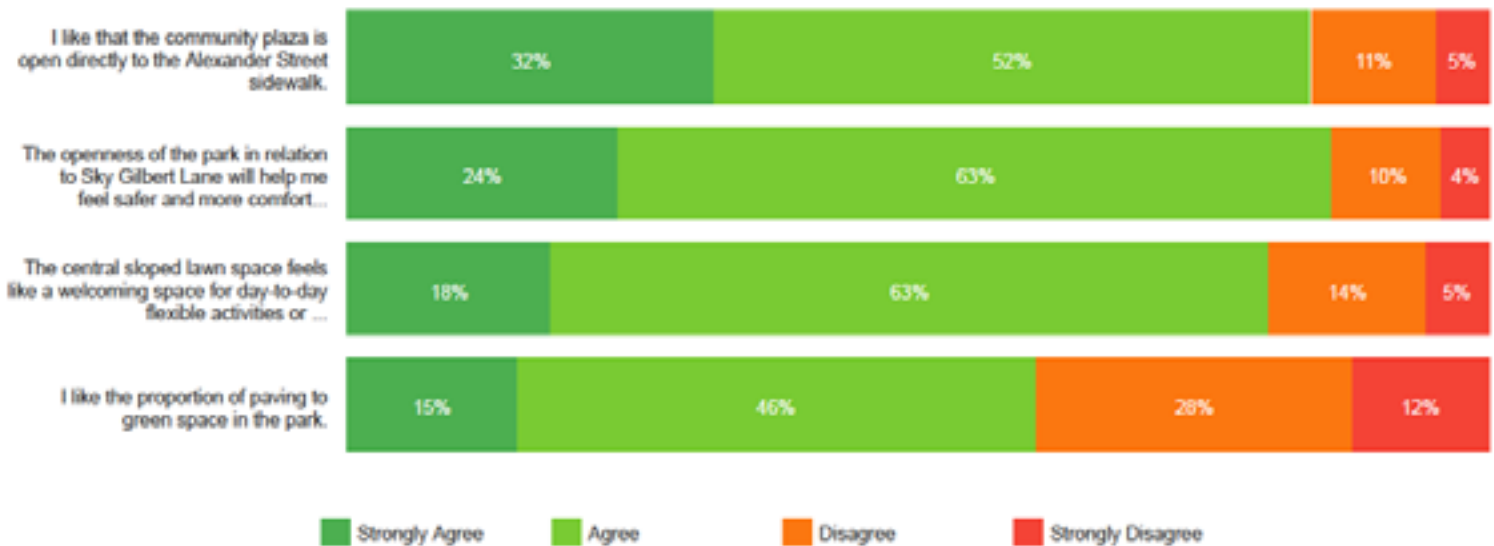


Figure 9. From online survey: Rated preferences for each design element of Design option 1 for Alexander Street Parkette

6. Feedback on Design Option 2 - Nodes

To recap, Concept 2 – Nodes focussed similarly on a generous north-south commuting route for Hislop and Jewison Parks, but also created a main plaza and open green respectively in the centre of the parks in addition to the street edge entry plazas. The main features at Alexander Street Parkette was a central paved plaza space and more of a soft-landscape treatment at the street edge as a threshold to the main plaza space.

Participants were asked to respond in agreement or disagreement about various design features for this design option for the Yonge Street Linear Parks. The features they found most agreeable and disagreeable are summarized below.

6.1. George Hislop Park

For this park, 82% of the participants agreed that the public café seating along the hotel building façade feels welcoming, 73% liked the location of the playground in the central plaza, 72% agreed that the central event plaza with terraced seating and playground is a space they would like to spend time in, and 72% liked the size of the flexible playground area. 60% of the participants liked the proportion of paving to green space.

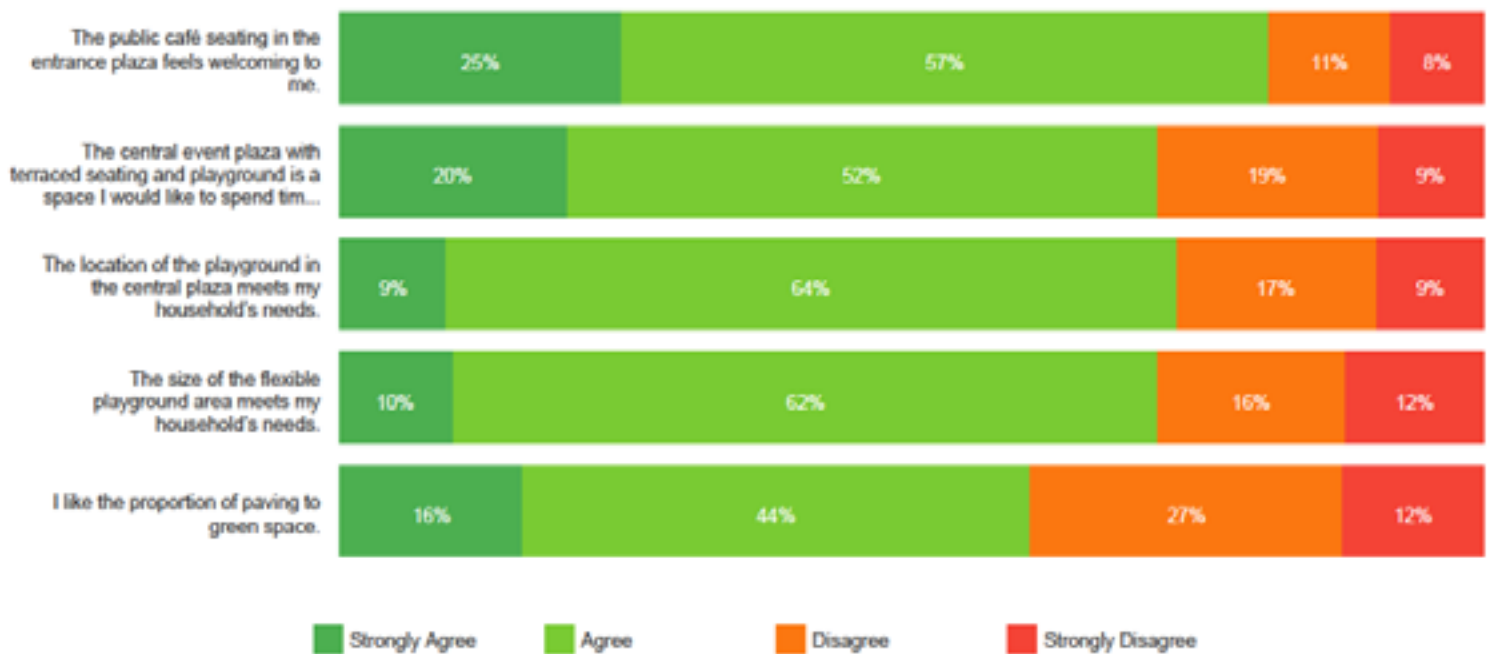


Figure 10. From online survey: Rated preferences for each design element of Design option 2 for George Hislop Park

6.2. Norman Jewison Park

For this park, 84% of the participants agreed that maintaining a partial visual plant buffer with the adjacent parking lot and laneway will help make the park feel safer, and 76% liked the proportion of paving to green space and the extent of open lawn areas in the centre of the park. 70% of the respondents liked both the location of the Dog Relief Area near the Gloucester Street Entry Plaza, and the size of the unfenced Dog Relief Area.

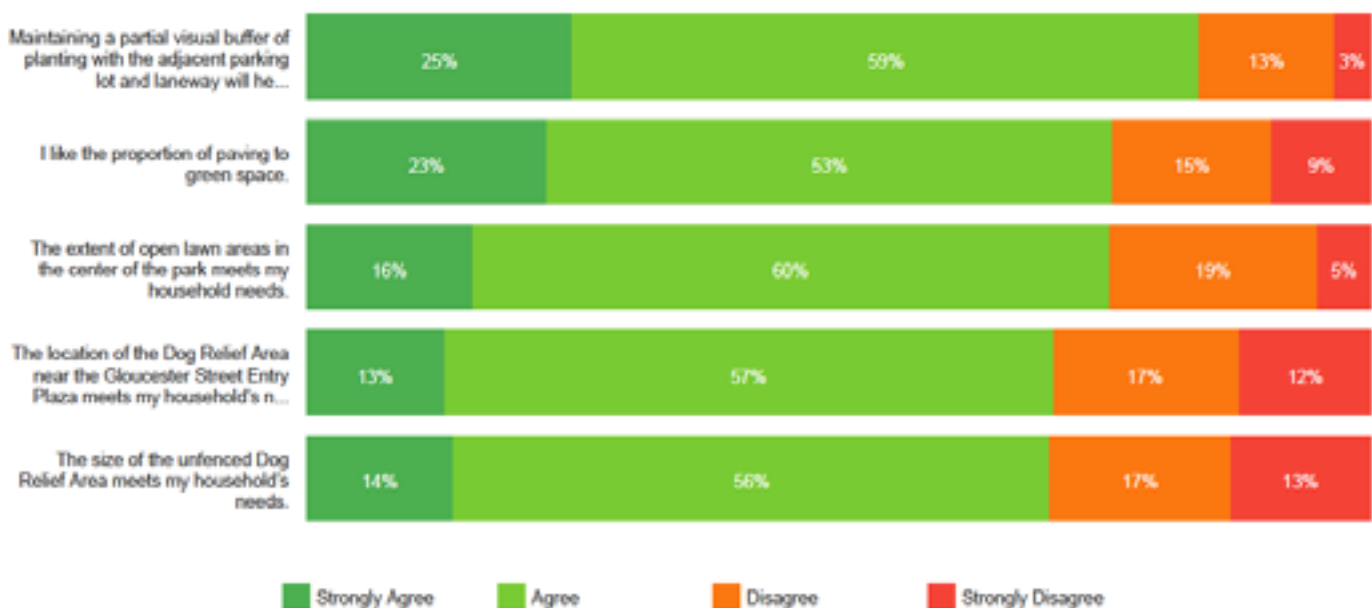


Figure 11. From online survey: Rated preferences for each design element of Design option 2 for Norman Jewison Park

6.3. Alexander Street Parkette

For this parkette, 80% of the participants agreed that the central terraces and large community event plaza felt like a welcoming space for daily activities and community events, 79% liked that the Community plaza is buffered by a forecourt and set off the Alexander Street sidewalk, and 75% agreed that concentrating the event and activity space away from Sky Gilbert will help them feel safer and more comfortable in the park. 68% of the respondents liked the proportion of paving to green space in the parkette.

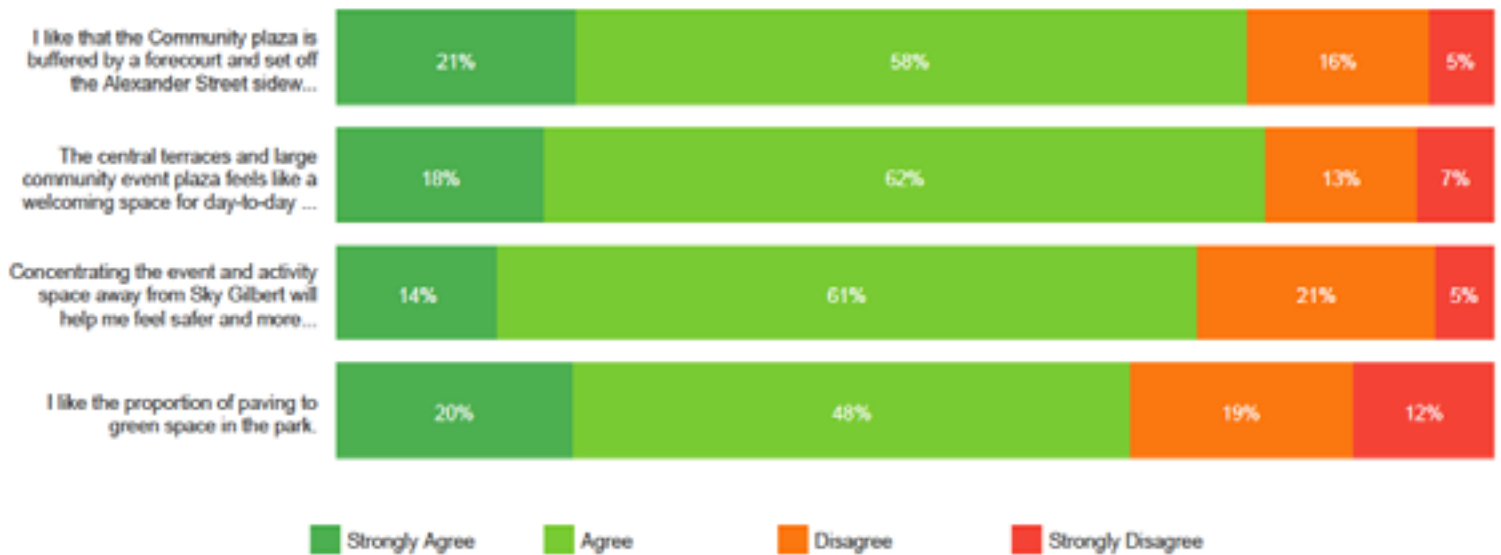


Figure 12. From online survey: Rated preferences for each design element of Design option 2 for Alexander Street Parkette

Public Art Component in George Hislop Park

The public was asked to offer feedback on the preliminary concepts for the integrated LGBTQ2S+ public art component. The following is a summary of the input received from the online survey.

7. Distribution of artwork in park – Comments and suggestions

Participants were asked to provide feedback on artwork that is concentrated in one area versus artwork that is dispersed across the park. Key findings from the responses are below.

7.1. Several respondents (24) indicated preference for dispersed artwork integrated throughout the park. Responses mentioned that dispersed artwork encourages personal discovery and exploration, provides more opportunities for community artists, invites people to walk through the whole park, and offers a variety of visual and sensory experiences. Some key quotes:

“Dispersed artwork is more informal and would create the feeling of a park that is a small wonderland with delightful surprises throughout. It would have a more intimate areas for hanging out, or anonymous for passing through. It may invite or encourage daily activity if the right artifacts were installed.”

“Please disperse it throughout the park! There is no such thing as too much public art :) Please also consider the use of colour throughout. The city is lacking in public spaces that remain vibrant during all months. I would love to see murals, potentially created with help from the local schools, if possible!”

7.2. Some respondents (8) indicated preference for concentrated artwork due to its ability to create focal points, mark spaces for community events, and impart identities to distinct areas of the park. Key quotes:

“Artwork focused in one area creates a stronger focal point - and therefore it becomes more of a destination to visit within the park”

8. Integration of lighting and/or projection in artwork – Comments and suggestions. Participants were asked to provide comments on artwork that integrates lighting and/or projection. Key findings from the responses are below.

8.1. Several respondents (25) indicated that lighting which is integrated within the artwork would be a desirable addition to the parks. Participants pointed to various perceived benefits including decoration, opportunities for play and interaction, safety, opportunities for flexible programming, and the creation of a more welcoming atmosphere at night. Some respondents noted the following points:

“I think lighting is important as it might encourage flow through the park at night rather than it being quiet dark and sketchy”

“Make it fun, full of energy and an invitation to play with others in a public and safe space.”

“The more lighting the better! If it comes in the form of artwork, that would be fantastic. Interactive / kinetic pieces of public art would be a huge draw to these parks, especially considering their proximity to Yonge. They would help animate the space at night as well which would definitely make it more inviting if you were alone.”

“Yes artwork that integrates lighting and projection should be an integral part of the park design. I love protected light artwork. The park will benefit in the winter months by cool lighting installations.”

8.2. Some respondents (13) indicated that lighting and projection were not suited to these parks, specifically due to a perceived risk of lack of maintenance, the preference for a quiet and calm green space, concerns around light pollution, and energy conservation preferences. Key quotes:

“We don’t need another Dundas square with flashing lights and visual noise. It is a park and green space a quiet space to enjoy and escape. “

“Avoid more light pollution and conserve energy.”

“Parks are natural and I feel like projection would spoil the natural atmosphere”

“Not in favour. Could be disruptive to those close by --there is already a LOT of noise and light in this area. Also, results in increased energy usage, which seems irresponsible at the moment.”

8.3. Some respondents (8) were open to the idea of lighting and/or projection integrated within the artwork with some conditions, namely having lights that were not too bright or flashing as they might disturb the surrounding residents and visitors, having a maintenance plan in place, and ensuring energy-efficiency in the installations. Key quotes:

“No flashing lights, please. A park should be calming.”

“I’m concerned about long-term maintenance of dynamic lighting or projection.”

9. Interactive and occupiable artwork versus integrated but more sculptural artwork – Comments and suggestions

Participants were asked to provide feedback on including interactive and occupiable artwork versus integrated, but more sculptural artwork in the parks. Key findings from the responses are below.

9.1. Several respondents (23) indicated a preference for sculptural, integrated artwork in the parks. The primary reasons stated were that sculptural artwork allows for quiet, reflective spaces that can be better integrated within green spaces, facilitates a more personal level of interaction, and allows people to ‘get away from technology’ for some quiet time.

Key quotes:

“Prefer quiet reflective sculptural artwork that don’t take over the small green spaces. Please keep the green spaces green. We already have so little green spaces downtown.”

“I prefer well-curated sculpture, even that embracing the entire landscape of the park.”



Landscape
Architects

“I prefer well-curated sculpture, even that embracing the entire landscape of the park.”

“I question that some of the public art is too distracting and obscure if the goals of the project are to promote indigenous culture & natural and cultural heritage. Perhaps more emphasis on the natural environment with fewer man made elements would have more impact on general wellness.”

“I like the sculptural approach as it more visually appealing and supports the use of the park as a way to get away from technology.”

9.2. Many respondents (18) indicated a preference for interactive, occupiable artwork in the parks. They highlighted that interactive artwork can encourage more daily activity and interaction, ‘bring delight and connection’ with others in the park, be more accessible to a wider group of people, bring joy, and be playful. Some respondents did highlight the need for interactive art to be well-maintained to be effective. Key quotes:

“Artwork that allows interaction tends to bring delight and connection with the people you observe using the artwork in their own way.”

“I am skeptical of the serviceability of interactive artwork over the months and years in an unmonitored public setting.”

“Please make it interactive and playful, people should feel as they are helping to create a space rather than engage with something from a distance.”

“I prefer 100% interactive and occupiable artwork that people can use, it’s a park not a museum.”

“Some interactive art adds a bit of magic for kids of all ages.”



Landscape
Architects

Additional / Email Feedback

Several community members wrote in to ask questions of clarification and offer feedback on aspects of the emerging designs including:

- A recommendation that people experiencing homelessness and other members of vulnerable communities be treated fairly and compassionately in the engagement process, and be welcomed as park users and stewards with quality seating, good lighting and attractive plantings.
- A couple participants wrote to express frustration with the Webex online streaming platform. The Zoom platform has subsequently been approved for usage with City of Toronto public meetings which provides more options for engagement.
- Two participants wrote in to notify the engagement team of some problems they were experiencing reading the visual materials on the survey. The problem was corrected.
- A community resident phoned to note that he did not have a computer and needed ways to phone-in to the online meeting and to receive printed materials, reminding City staff that he was not the only one in this situation as a senior and for those on limited incomes, and to be mindful to remain inclusive in this very digital-focused age.



Landscape
Architects

6. NEXT STEPS

The feedback received during these first stages of public engagement will be used to inform the development of preferred concept plans. These plans will be presented to the public at subsequent steps in the engagement process (Winter 2021).

The next public meeting (virtual) is scheduled for Wednesday February 17 at 6:30 pm. Consult the project website for further details and a link to the meeting.



Landscape
Architects



7. APPENDIX

Project Website address

Detailed Feedback Meeting Summaries for CRG 1 & 2, Public Meeting 1 available here:
www.toronto.ca/yongelinearparks

Community Resource Group Members

Alejandra Andarve, The Sanctuary
Allan Beattie, The Sanctuary
Kim Behrouzian, Friends of The Linear Parks
Daniel Carter, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre
Jodi Cassidy, CAN-Alliance
Shawn Dawdlin, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre
Juliana de Marco, Children's Aid Society
Antoine Elhashem, Inspire
Mo Fayaz, Children's Aid Society
Christopher Hudspeth, Church Wellesley Village BIA
Nikolas Koschancy, Friends of the Linear Parks
Connie Langille, Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
Emily Martyn, Downtown East Action Plan
Bobby MacPherson, Pride Toronto
Stephanie McCracken, Church Wellesley Village BIA
Amber Moyle, Pride Toronto
Robert Packham, Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
George Sovatzis, Anndore House
Curran Stikuts, 519 Church
Paul Farrelly, Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
Reagan Swanson, Arquives

Indigenous Engagement Participants

Larry Frost, Executive Director, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
Brian Porter, Principal, Two Row Architect



Landscape
Architects

Project Team

City of Toronto Staff

Nancy Chater, Senior Project Coordinator

Rajesh Sankat, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator

Design Team

Fung Lee, Principal, PMA Landscape Architects

Dylan Cassidy, PMA Landscape Architects

Hannah Soules, PMA Landscape Architects

Facilitation Team

Jane Farrow, Dept of Words & Deeds

Pauline Craig, Dept of Words & Deeds

City of Toronto Internal Stakeholders

Paulo Fetalvaro – PFR, Capital Projects, Supervisor

Esther Afriat – PFR, General Supervisor, Ward 13

Heidi Weidelich – PFR, Park Supervisor

Paul Brown – PFR, Technical Services

Thomas Bertram – PFR, Supervisor, Tech Services

Loi To – PFR, Parks Ambassador program

Catherine Dean – Economic Development & Culture

Robert Mays - Transportation Services

Tyler Johnson - Senior Advisor,

Constituency & Stakeholder Relations

City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, Ward 13, Toronto Centre

Link to Full Survey here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/8cfe-yonge-street-linear-parks-survey-feedback-summary-nov-2020.pdf>



Landscape
Architects