

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Wabash Community Recreation Centre Public Meeting (Phase 3 of 5) Meeting Summary

Tuesday, May 11, 2021, 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Via Zoom (online and by phone)



Overview

On Tuesday, May 11th, 2021 over 187 people participated in the third Public Meeting for the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre (CRC). Hosted by the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) Division of the City of Toronto, the purpose of this meeting was to share and seek feedback on the draft site design options. These options were developed based on the project Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves established through the first two phases of the community consultation process and the existing opportunities and constraints of the site. The goal of the site design process is to establish a building "footprint" (size and configuration) and building location to best weave the new building into the existing fabric of the site. Feedback shared at the meeting will be used to help inform the development of a single site design for the new Wabash CRC.

The public meeting was held on Zoom with options to join online or call-in. Councillor Gord Perks welcomed participants. Nicole Swerhun, a third-party facilitator with Swerhun Inc., opened the meeting with a land acknowledgement and introduced the Project Team. Doug Giles, Senior Project Coordinator with PF&R, Alex Lavasidis, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator with PF&R, and Jarle Lovlin, Principal at Diamond Schmitt Architects, delivered an overview presentation. A facilitated Q&A period followed the presentation. See Appendix A for the meeting agenda and Appendix B for list of project team attendees. The presentation slides, meeting recording, and full transcript of the meeting will be posted on the project website at www.toronto.ca/WabashCRC once available.

This public meeting was part of Phase 3 of the community engagement process for the new Wabash CRC. Phase 3 engagement also includes meetings with the Community Resource Group, a public online survey (with mail-in hard-copies available by request), and focused engagements with local youth and Indigenous peoples. Summaries of these engagements will be posted on the project website once available.

The summary is structured as follows:

1. Short Summary of Discussion
2. Feedback on the Site Design Options
3. Questions of Clarification
4. Next Steps

This summary was written by Swerhun Inc., third-party facilitation firm retained by the City to help support community engagement for this project. This summary is not intended to be a verbatim transcript; rather it summarizes key points of discussion shared by participants during the meeting. This summary was subject to participant review before being finalized.

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.

1. Short Summary of Discussion

The following key points are intended to be read along with the more detailed feedback that follows in the remainder of the summary.

- **Overall, participants appreciated the design options and the work to date.** Participants said that the work reflects public feedback and the concerns raised by the community.
- **The most support was expressed for the Angler option, followed by the Pivot option.** The most frequently raised reason for this support was the fact that these options would have the smallest footprint and therefore least impact on the existing park.
- **Several participants asked questions about how much of the existing Linseed Oil Factory building would be retained.** The City team confirmed that none of the design options retain the entire building. The building has a long history of being “added to” over time. The critical external pieces that will be kept include the smokestack and elements of the façade, as required by municipal and provincial legislation.

2. Feedback on the Site Design Options

As part of the City’s presentation, they shared five draft site design options. Participants’ feedback on the draft options are summarized below.

Design options preferences

- **Overall participants preferred designs that had a smaller footprint to minimize impact on the park.** Both the Angler and Pivot options were preferred because they offer a smaller footprint extending from east to west, and some said they would prefer the option with the smallest footprint. One participant suggested building higher if necessary.
- **Many support the Angler option.** Many participants thought the Angler option best compromises on the preservation of the dogs off leash area and keeps the Fieldhouse and its activities so as not to interrupt current programming. Other participants preferred the Angler option because it has the least impact on the park and doesn’t create hidden space (a potential safety risk).
- **Some support the Pivot option.** Some participants preferred the Pivot option more because it seems to have a smaller footprint, it has no impact to the Dogs Off Leash Area, and there’s a potential to project movies or bounce balls against the building wall.
- **Little support for the Sidebar or Gallery.** One participant said they disliked the two options as they are aesthetically displeasing and negatively impact the sunlight to the park by casting shadow on the parkland north of the building addition.

Parking and traffic

- **Mixed opinions on parking.** Some participants prefer to not have public parking available, while others think public parking can be useful for park visitors and residents. If the design did incorporate parking, one participant suggested to make it paid parking to limit the number of drivers, while another participant expressed concern for those who may not be able to afford paid parking. Another participant is worried about those with mobility issues if parking were not accessible on the site. *We’ve been consistent from the beginning of the process stating that this facility will not have a lot of parking available given its urban location. City policy also mandates the encouragement of other forms of transportation such*

as public transit and cycling. Additional note, underground parking will not be considered. Almost none of the existing City of Toronto community centres (about 1%) have underground parking as it is extremely expensive and would greatly exceed the budget for this project.

- **Some concern with the built environment bringing more traffic flow to the area, specifically along Wabash Avenue to Macdonell Avenue.** One participant asks if there will be any safety considerations for expanding the sidewalk on that intersection as it is already a car safety risk. *Normally, any developer is responsible for improvements to the public boulevard (between the site's property line and the curb at the road), so we will be installing or upgrading the public sidewalk within the public boulevard. Beyond that, it is the responsibility of City Transportation Services to address (e.g. traffic flow). We will share these notes with Transportation Services and start a conversation with that team. Councillor Perks added that once the site design option is selected for further development, there will be a deliberate effort to make the north side of Wabash where the community centre meets the boulevard more pedestrian-friendly and think about the impact out onto the street. There are some physical geography issues with that particular corner as there are existing properties and include some of Metrolinx's land. It is part of Councillor Perks' workplan to re-evaluate traffic flow in the whole area.*

Acknowledgement of Indigenous history and culture

- **Ensure the building celebrates, recognizes and uses the meaning behind the Indigenous word, Wabash, in its design and architecture.** Indigenous communities should be consulted as Wabash is an important term for many Indigenous communities. *We are exploring different approaches to ensure the space is appropriate for the Indigenous community's uses such as smudging and to reflect the enduring Indigenous presence. To date we have consulted different Indigenous groups, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC), ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency, and two local Indigenous residents to see how we can make the space more welcoming for the Indigenous community. We appreciate you bringing this to our attention. There's a lot to be said in a name and we think recognizing the meaning behind the word is a poetic starting point for the building and adds another layer of exploration. The name Wabash also has a history with the community already. However, right now we have not looked at the building stylistically, but we will do so during the building design phase (next phase) while also continuing Indigenous consultation.*

Environment and greenspace

- **Support for additional green space incorporated into the design.** Include natural elements in the interior design, on the second-floor deck and include a green roof with pollinator gardens. *The design team aspires to make the building as permeable as possible, by connecting activities outside with the activities within the building. It will include big windows with edge connections to sit and animate the outside places as well.*
- **Support for no size reduction of the Dogs Off Leash Area.** For the Angler option, participants suggested reducing the 17% encroachment on the dogs off leash area and expanding the dogs off leash area 3-5 meters to the north. A participant noted that there is seasonal flooding on the north end of the dogs off leash area that should be addressed. *Redesigning the entire park is not included in our scope for this project, but if building the new community centre negatively impacts the park, including the dogs off leash area, we will make the necessary reparations.*
- **Some concern about the carbon impact of the building.** One participant said 'Net Zero' is a specific designation, and moving green spaces and trees impact stored carbon

emissions. The project team should consider timber as it is a lighter building material and how the building encroaches on the park as ways to reduce its carbon footprint.

Unfortunately, trees do have to be removed due to construction. City policy dictates that trees that are removed from the park need to be replaced with a 3:1 ratio with new trees. We are committed to be environmentally responsible. We are going to make the carbon impact as low as possible, including exploring mass timber. There are no schematic designs yet, but we aim to have a Net Zero Green House Gas Emissions building as required by City Council.

Retention of existing building

- **Some confusion on how much of the Linseed Oil Factory will be retained for redevelopment.** Participants would like to know the rationale for retaining the current building as it is in bad shape, while some asked why the team couldn't retain the bricks and incorporate them into a new building instead of keeping the whole building itself. *Heritage requirements at both the Provincial and City level will require designation of the building as a heritage structure, and the team is mandated to maintain the building as a heritage City asset. None of the design options propose retaining the entire building. The most recent additions on the north will be removed, however the façades of the rest of the (older) building and the smokestack will be retained. The interior structure (concrete columns and floor slabs) will be removed and replaced, with wider column spacing to accommodate new, larger spaces and programming uses (e.g. gymnasium and large multipurpose rooms). The new interior structure will support the existing retained façades and we will be upgrading the exterior walls to create a high performing envelope that will have better energy and sustainability characteristics.*

Other design suggestions

- Build a tree picnic area with shade for younger children to enjoy the shade behind the baseball diamond.
- Build a coffee shop in the ground space to attract more people to the park.
- Incorporate the Linseed Oil Funnel as an art piece on the property.
- Pull the pool south to lessen the impact on the park – *The project team has not developed a detailed design yet. At the next stage of consultation, once an option has been selected, the design will be refined with community input.*

3. Questions of Clarification

The following is a summary of questions, answers, and suggestions shared at the meeting. Responses from the project team (where provided) are noted in *italics*.

Budget and cost

- **What is the rationale for securing additional budget for this project?** *When the budget was originally established, we used a number for a typical community centre, but it didn't factor in the additional costs specific to this project. Site-specific costs include: cost of restoring the Linseed Oil Factory, costs to attain net-zero emissions, cost of building a crash-wall due to the proximity to the railway and environmental consulting costs due to the change from industrial use to community use. As part of Council's approval of the last capital budget in February, the budget was right sized to factor in these additional costs.*
- **Is the Angler option \$20 million more expensive than the others? Are all the plans similar in square footage?** *No, the Angler option is not necessarily more expensive than the other options. The budget was increased \$20 million because all of these designs are more expensive than the amount originally budgeted. The options have identical building*

programs and have very similar square footage, and none of the options have been priced yet.

Other factors to consider

- **How has the COVID-19 experience influence how the project team is thinking of the future of this building?** *There hasn't been a lot of discussion yet about the future design of recreational spaces with COVID-19 in mind. COVID-19 precautions are at the operational level – such as limiting the number of people using the facilities. Discussion with mechanical engineers about air circulation and filtration are sure to occur in the upcoming design stages.*
- **A recent consultation with Metrolinx supports the idea of a bridge that connects the rail path to Sorauren Park. Has the team considered the impact of that bridge into the designs?** *While we are not incorporating bridge components into the designs, we are mindful of the community's interest in the bridge and are not proposing anything that would interfere with a bridge in the future, if one is provided by others.*

Design

- **How will current activities, like the farmers' market be accommodated with the 5 different options?** *The farmers' market would be accommodated regardless of the chosen design; the intent is to not displace any current activities but reinforce them. Three out of the five options retain the Town Square in the same location. There has been interest in developing new space in the new building for the farmers' market to function during the winter months.*
- **Which design option impacts the walking and running path?** *Each design impacts the running track to a different degree. However, none of these designs are set in stone and will likely change when the design team turns its attention to landscape design.*
- **Which option has gallery space available?** *Each of the options have the same program elements. There is a big interest in supporting an art display type space for the arts and culture and it's something the design team will be exploring.*
- **Will another pizza oven be built on the south-east corner?** *No, we are not proposing a second pizza oven.*

Other questions

In addition to sharing feedback verbally, participants were able to ask questions and/or provide comments using the platform's chat feature. Questions in the chat that were not answered by the project team in the meeting are listed below, including responses from the project team added after the meeting.

- **Is there a shipping and receiving area?** *There will be an outdoor Type "G" Loading Space (required by Zoning regulations) and an indoor Receiving Room to facilitate unloading of items delivered to the centre by trucks using the Loading Space.*
- **Will the bathrooms and changerooms include a gender-neutral space?** *The aquatic change rooms will be gender neutral areas. Please see Appendix C for more information on Gender Neutral Change Rooms.*

- **Can the public areas be designed to be space friendly and smart technology friendly?** *Unclear what this means specifically, but the City incorporates public Wi-Fi and a variety of audio visual components into its contemporary community recreation centres.*
- **What programs will be registered?** *More details on programming will be provided in future stages of the process, but there would be swimming lessons and recreation programs (which will be a combination of registered and drop-in).*

4. Next Steps

The project team thanked participants and committed to sharing the presentation and a draft summary report of the meeting in the coming weeks. They encouraged participants to continue to use the survey for additional comments and feedback. The project team expects to be back for the second week of July with an announcement of the site design option selected for further development in conjunction with the community.

Appendix A – Meeting Agenda

Wabash Community Recreation Centre
Phase 3 – Site Design Options



Wabash Community Recreation Centre
Phase 3 – Site Design Options

Virtual Public Meeting 3 out 5

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Join the Townhall [VIA ZOOM](#) or participate by phone: dial 647-558-0588, meeting ID: 816 1425 3169 (a participant ID is not required)

Meeting Purpose: To share and seek feedback on the draft site design options.

PROPOSED AGENDA

6:30 Land Acknowledgement

6:35 Opening Remarks, Introductions and Agenda Review

Councillor Gord Perks, *Ward 4 Parkdale-High Park*

Nicole Swerhun, *Facilitation Team, Swerhun Inc.*

6:45 Overview of the Site Design Options

- Doug Giles and Alex Lavasidis, *City Parks Forestry & Recreation*
- Jarle Lovlin, *Diamond Schmitt Architects*

7:30 Facilitated Q&A and Participant Feedback on the Options

1. What are your overall thoughts on the site design options?
2. What aspects of the designs do you like and don't like?
3. Are there any other factors we should consider as we move from multiple Site Design Options to one single site design concept for the new Wabash CRC?

Any other comments?

8:25 Wrap-Up and Next Steps

8:30 Adjourn

Appendix B – Project Team Attendees

City of Toronto

Doug Giles, Senior Project Coordinator, Capital Projects
Alex Lavasidis, Senior Consultation Coordinator
Daniel Fusca, Manager, Public Consultation
Cheryl MacDonald, Manager, Recreation
Paula Jacobi, Manager, Aquatics
Dan Nicholson, Manager, Community Planning, City Planning
Patrick Miller, Planner, Community Planning, City Planning
Howie Dayton, Director, Community Recreation

Consultant Team

Jarle Lovlin, Diamond Schmitt Architects
Marcin Sztaba, Diamond Schmitt Architects
Andrew Keung, Diamond Schmitt Architects
Nicole Swerhun, Swerhun Inc
Athavarn Srikantharajah, Swerhun Inc

Elected Official and Staff

Councillor Gord Perks, Ward 4, Parkdale-High Park
Dusha Sritharan, Advisor, Policy and Constituency, Office of Councillor Gord Perks
Mary Newton, Office of Councillor Gord Perks

Appendix C – Information on Gender Neutral Change Rooms

Gender neutral change rooms are an open inclusive space allowing people of any gender, gender identity and/or gender expression to use the space at the same time. They have become an industry standard and the City has successfully implemented them in new and revitalized community recreation centres, the very first being the award winning Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre.

This design approach responds to feedback from parents with children over the age of 7 who could not be accompanied in a gender specific change room by a parent of the opposite gender (i.e. male parent could not accompany a female child 8 years of age) and did not want their child changing alone.

It also responds to feedback from transgender and non-binary patrons who do not feel safe changing in open air, gender specific change rooms.

The gender neutral design has created inclusive change spaces for aquatic and gymnasium users with intentional design approaches to address safety and security of users. As each new project advances, staff and consultants consider user feedback and engage with community users.

Considerations for this space include:

- Privacy cubicles of varying sizes for changing (family and individual)
- Lockers
- Open shower area
- Enclosed AODA shower and washroom spaces

Gender neutral change rooms provide:

- ✓ Better sight lines from the pool deck into the change room for staff to enhance patron safety
- ✓ Children and caregivers the ability to use the same space so children do not have to enter a separate change room on their own
- ✓ Enhanced change room cleanliness as one side of the change room can be put out of service for cleaning while the other side is open for programs simultaneously
- ✓ Greater flexibility in delivering and transitioning different types of programs. For example: Gender specific programs can be offered at the same time as gender non-specific programs
- ✓ Enhanced response time as staff can enter the change room without hesitation and provide first aid immediately to a patron in the event of an emergency
- ✓ Enhanced privacy as patrons are able to change in a privacy cubicle rather than an open area