

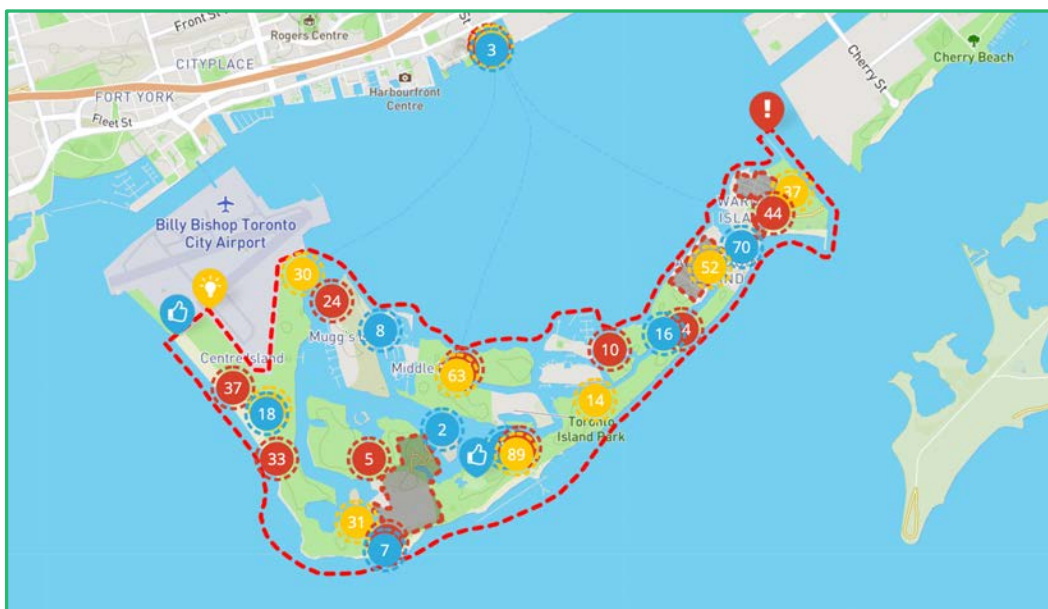
Toronto Island Park Master Plan

Phase One Social Pinpoint Synthesis

Overview

Between March 17th and April 9th, 2021, the City of Toronto’s Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division (PFR) hosted an interactive online mapping tool to seek feedback and suggestions about Toronto Island Park as part of Phase One of the Toronto Island Park Master Plan. Over 4500 people interacted with the map, sharing 793 specific comments and showing support or disagreement with comments shared by giving them a thumbs up or thumbs down. In addition to people that shared comments, over 11,000 people visited the site.

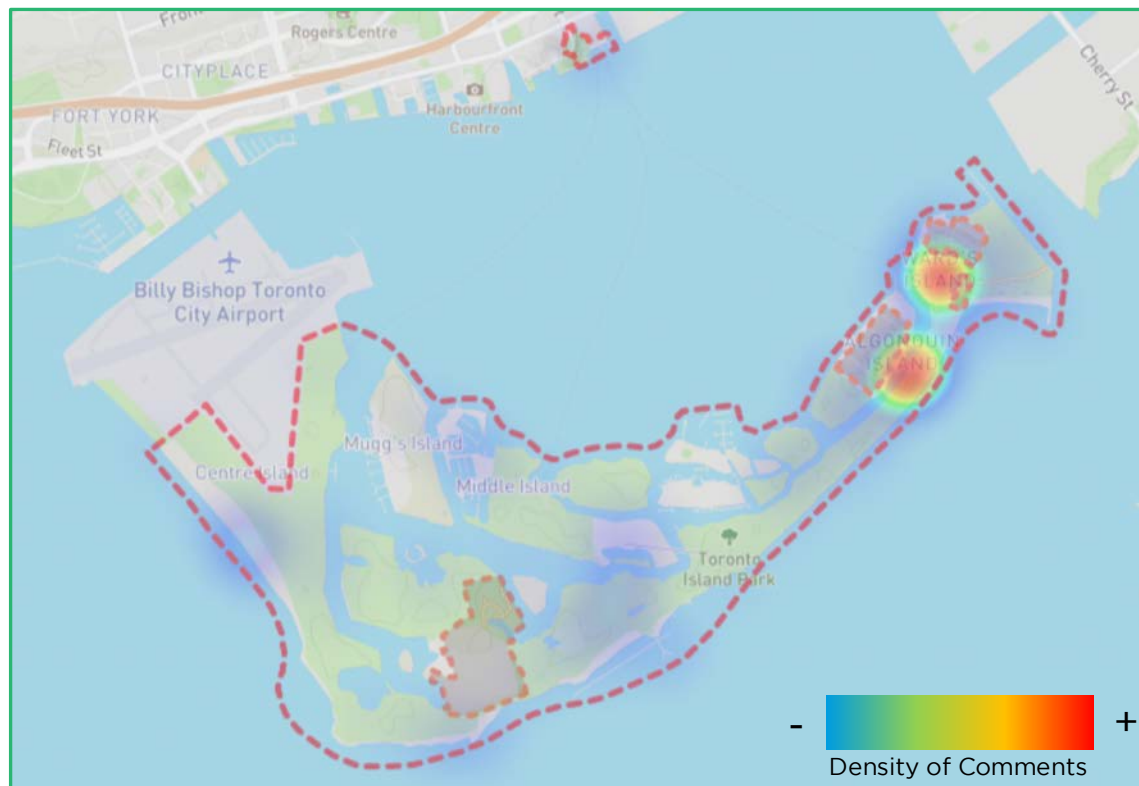
The interactive map asked respondents to share what’s working well that should be preserved, what’s not working well that should be improved, and opportunities that the Toronto Island Park Master Plan should consider, by dropping pins on different locations.



Summary of Feedback

The following is a synthesis of the feedback and suggestions shared about Toronto Island Park, organized into the questions that Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division invited respondents to comment on, including what's working well, not working well, and opportunities the Master Plan should explore. Respondents also shared other feedback.

Feedback on what's working well



Respondents shared 156 comments identifying what they like on Toronto Island Park. The areas with the highest density of comments about what's working well were at the east end of the park, with many comments specifically about the Island Café and the Toronto Island Stand Up Paddle boarding (SUP). Key themes in what respondents said is working well were:

Key local businesses on the island are cherished and should be expanded. Several respondents said that the Toronto Island Stand Up Paddle boarding (SUP) and the Island Cafe are good examples of how local business should operate on the island - by offering unique, relaxing experiences, selling high-quality goods and services, and being locally operated. Others also mentioned the Island Bike Rental, Upper Deck Restaurant, and Water Taxis.

Toronto Island SUP is a big asset to the island park and the city. It's a locally run business with a stake in keeping the island green and getting Toronto residents excited and educated about the nature in our backyard. This is exactly the kind of business I hope the master plan accommodates for!

Some existing amenities and attractions are important and should be maintained. Several of the amenities on the Island hold special meaning to respondents, who said they offer a sense of nostalgia, especially parts of Centreville and the Franklin Gardens. Respondents also mentioned other amenities that should be preserved, including boardwalks, Island Natural School, the disc golf Course, Algonquin Island Association Clubhouse, Ward's Island Association Clubhouse, and the Waterfront Montessori School.

The neighborhoods at Ward's Island and Algonquin Island are important to the park's character and should be retained. Many said that residential portions of the Island have a quirky and peaceful atmosphere which make them enjoyable to walk or cycle through. The historical plaques, gardens, and older homes add to the unique character of the neighborhoods.

"Wild spaces" throughout the island are important and should be protected and remain untouched. Many said the untouched areas throughout the Island, including the Algonquin Island ESA, the wetland behind Doughnut Island, and parts of Snake Island, are unlike any other in Toronto, offering an opportunity for quiet and to connect with nature. These areas and the wildlife that inhabit them should be protected and remain wild spaces.

The Island's beaches are important gathering places – they should be protected and improved. Many respondents said Hanlan's beach, specifically the clothing option portion, is an iconic location for Toronto's LGBTQ2S+ community offering welcoming and accessible spaces. Hanlan's requires additional care to maintain the size of the beach given the levels of erosion, and more amenities such as washrooms, showers, and food service. Some mentioned the beaches at Ward's Island and Gibraltar Point as more family-friendly and quieter options.

This beach is an important gathering place for the LGBTQ+ community and a unique space within Toronto. It should be preserved and enhanced (e.g. with improved nearby washrooms, food services, and bike parking). Please make sure any plans preserve the atmosphere!

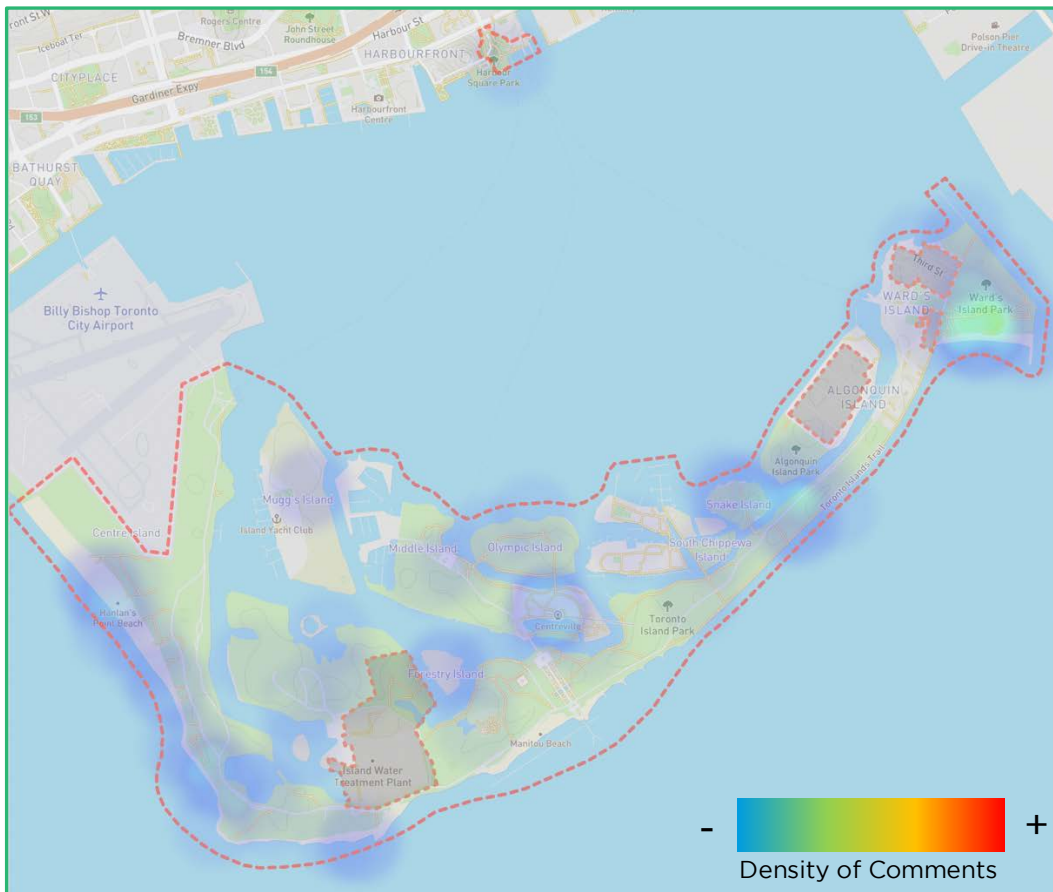
Continue to ensure access to recreational boating. A few enjoy boating in and around the island and rely on the docks, dock wall, moorings, and boating clubs (e.g., the Toronto Island Sailing Club, Toronto Island Canoe Club, and Toronto Island Marina) to store, dock, and use their boats. Boating should be more accessible to all visitors

Mixed feedback on residential areas on the island. Some shared appreciation for residential areas on the island and hope to expand residential access to more Torontonians, while a few said that there should not be private residences on the island.

Feedback on what's not working well



Respondents shared 254 comments identifying what they don't like on Toronto Island Park that should be improved. Areas with the highest density of comments included Hanlan's Point, Ward's Island, the Jacky Layton Ferry Terminal, and the Avenue of the Islands, which were mostly focused on beach erosion, the lack of or state of amenities, ferry management, noise, and overcrowding. Key themes in what respondents said isn't working well were:



Degradation of the island's natural areas is an issue. A number of ecological areas and functions are at risk of degradation due to increased human use and the impacts of climate change. Maintaining, preserving, and protecting the naturalized parts of the island from further development should be a priority. The map above illustrates the areas with higher densities of comments about the degradation of natural areas, about which respondents said:

- *Consider ways to protect wildlife populations*, including the Piping Plover at Hanlan's Beach, fish and amphibians in the duck and trout ponds, birds and mammals in Environmentally Significant Areas near the Water Treatment Plant, and nesting birds near Mugg's Island.
- *Address beach erosion since many of the beaches are shrinking.* Due to flooding and increased human use, the beaches at Hanlan's Point, Gibraltar Point, and Ward's Island are losing sand fast, shrinking the beach. The sand dunes at Hanlan's Beach are especially fragile and require additional attention.
- *Flooding continues to impact the island and should be addressed.* Sections of Lakeshore Avenue, areas near the Sunfish Cut, and the boardwalks are prone to flooding and require better flood protection beyond sandbags or other interim measures.

- *Reduce garbage and other forms of pollution.* There is an increasing amount of garbage throughout the island, especially single-use plastics at the beaches. Boat paint, noise, and smoke are other pollutants the Master Plan should consider.
- *Protect environmentally sensitive areas,* especially the Algonquin Environmentally Significant Area. Wild spaces should remain wild.
- *Reduce the amount of mowed lawn by planting dense shrubbery and trees instead.*
- *Address invasive species such as fire ants and ticks throughout the park.*

The north part of the Hanlan's beach and the area of scrub to the east are important for migrating and nesting birds. Protection for nesting species such as the Piping Plover should be integral to the Master Plan.

Some facilities are in a poor state of repair and need updating. Many respondents said that some of the park's facilities are under used, in poor condition, or scarce in certain areas. Suggested improvements to facilities include:

- Upgrade existing washrooms and adding new, winterized washrooms in high traffic areas such as the beaches.
- Adding more seating, picnic tables, and benches.
- Increasing signage throughout the park for better wayfinding and adding temporary signage in the fall and winter indicating which amenities are closed for the season.
- Adding more bike racks and moving the bike rental near the ferry terminal for easier access.
- Improve the fountains by allowing visitors to enter them and making them amenable for play.
- Hire more maintenance staff to clean garbage and address animal droppings.
- Protect Artscape from flooding and upgrade the facility.
- Clean up the Toronto Island Marina, which has become a "dumping area" for old boating equipment, garbage, and other waste.
- Revitalize the boardwalks.

The island can be hard to get to and navigate – consider ways to make it more accessible.

Several respondents said getting to and navigating the island is difficult, especially because of ferry service and management. Respondents suggested improvements to make the Island more accessible, including:

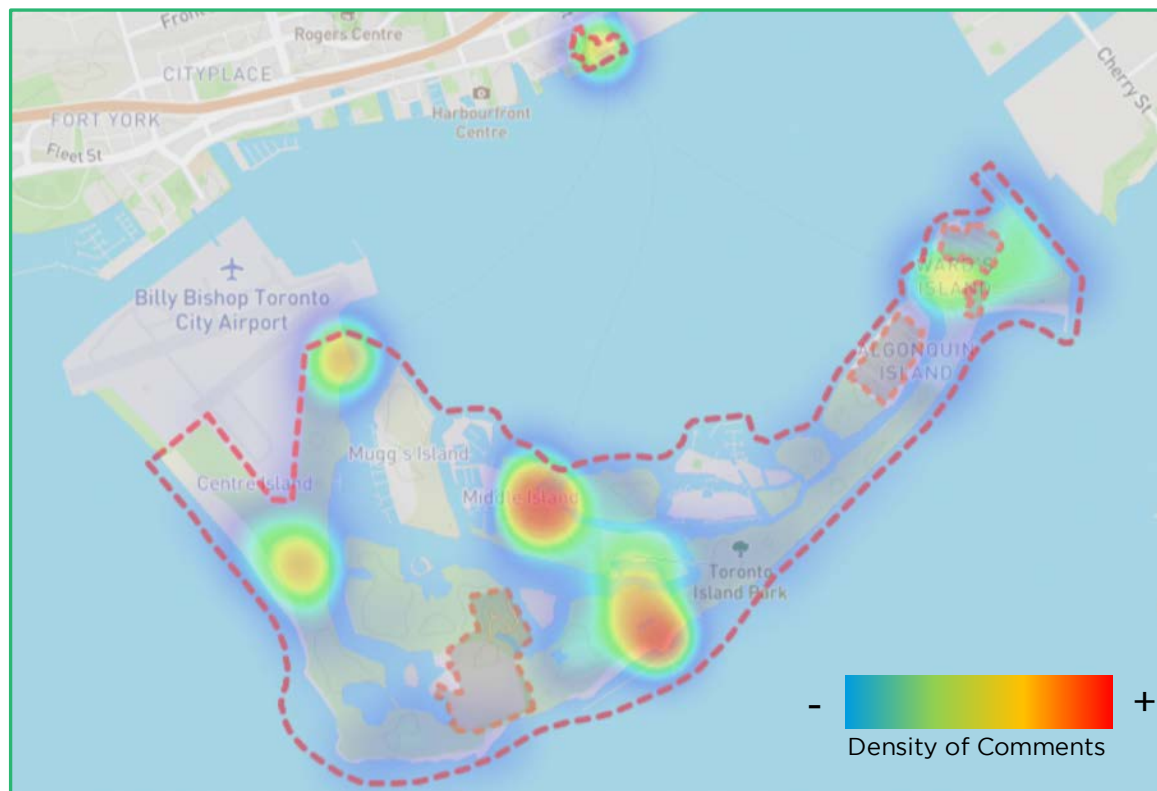
- *Improve ferry service and management*, by managing queues better to reduce crowding at the boarding and discharging areas; offering more access points and bigger ferries; providing 24/7 service year-round with more options in the winter; and building more seating and weather shelters at the terminals.
- *Consider opportunities for new connections to the Island*. Many respondents said they would prefer a fixed pedestrian link to the Island. Others said, however, that a fixed link would negatively impact the Island by overcrowding it. Some suggested more places to launch a personal watercraft would also improve access to the island.
- *Improve navigation around the Island*, by widening walkways and segmenting them for pedestrians and cyclists; maintaining the island as a car-free community; bringing Bike Share to the island; and adding a pedestrian connection to Mugg’s Island.

The Island is becoming increasingly noisy and overcrowded, especially its beaches. Many said noise and overcrowding are impacting the atmosphere of the park and in some cases creating safety concerns. Some said beaches are being used more and more, with litter, public drinking, and noise impacting the quiet atmosphere of the Island Park. Others said large party boats and other watercraft produce significant noise and often come too close to the shoreline, suggesting extending the boat exclusion zone further out. In some cases, the large number of boats near the shore and number of people wanting to get in the water can make for dangerous swimming.

Food options are limited and should be expanded. Some want food options that are more affordable and reflective of Toronto’s diversity. Consider adding food trucks and avoid chain restaurants.

Avoid significantly developing or commercializing the island. Most respondents want the island to remain a park and to stay untouched, without large developments including condos, residences, or commercialization.

Opportunities the Master Plan should consider



Respondents shared 394 comments identifying opportunities or suggestions they would like to see explored through the Master Plan. The areas with the most opportunities were Centreville, the Avenue of the Islands, the ferry terminals, and Hanlan's Beach, which focused on new amenities, programming, and connections to the island. Key themes in respondents suggested opportunities were:

Incorporate new, diverse amenities to improve visitor experiences. Several want to see new amenities to offer more seamless, enjoyable, and accessible experiences on the island. Although these comments were spread across the island, many were focused on Hanlan's Beach, Manitou Beach, Ward's Island Beach, the Centre Island Ferry Terminal, Wards Island Ferry Terminal, and Avenue of the Islands. Respondents suggested the following amenities:

- *Cleaner, more accessible washrooms, change rooms, and showers.* Many want to see additional washrooms throughout the island, and a combination of washrooms, change rooms, and outdoor/indoor showers near the beaches. Facilities should be physically accessible, gender inclusive, and family friendly.
- *Fire pits, grills, and pizza ovens.* Many respondents want to see more fire pits, open-air barbecues, and community pizza ovens that can be rented but maintained by the City with less regulations to encourage use.

- *Multipurpose spaces for community use.* Many want to see rentable meeting and event space available year-round for arts-based activities or other community uses. Consider incorporating a well-designed amphitheatre with minimal noise impact for performances and shows.
- *Seating and viewing areas,* including additional seating throughout the Island like picnic tables and benches, as well as observation areas overlooking the water, cityscape, or natural areas.
- *Opportunities for overnight stays,* such as small cottage rentals, overnight campgrounds, AirBnBs, and/or a small boutique hotel.
- *Winterized amenities and facilities.* In order for the park to be a year-round destination, amenities and facilities should be winterized, including winterized washrooms, ski rentals, winter skating areas, and more.
- *More rentals and small shops.* A few want to see more rentals, including boats, kayaks, umbrellas, or bikes. Others want to see more shops and restaurants, particularly small tuck shops where you can purchase basic essentials such as sunscreen or towels.
- *Bike locks and bike storage areas* to support cyclists.
- *A dog off-leash area.*

Year round, accessible bathrooms, gender neutral, with change rooms, infant change supports, temperature adjustable to really hot showers, drinking fountains, bottle fillers, and public saunas for winter swimmers

Explore opportunities for new connections to the island. Several respondents said equitable access to the island is a priority, and the Master Plan should consider ways to reduce barriers to access. Respondents had differing perspectives on opportunities for new connections, including:

- *Mixed perspectives on establishing a fixed connection to the island.* Most respondents who want new connections are in favor of establishing a pedestrian or cycling bridge. This bridge could connect at Cherry Street, Bathurst Quay, or the Leslie Spit. In addition to the bridge, some suggested considering a TTC-operated gondola or using the underground tunnel connecting to the Island Airport. A few, however, said a fixed link to the Island would be detrimental to its carrying capacity and unique character.

- *Support for Bike Share integration.* Several respondents said integrating the park into the Bikeshare network would improve access to the Island.
- *Consider new water connections.* Some respondents are in favour of adding more docks or slips for boats, personal kayaks, or paddleboards to get to the Island. One participant suggested adding a ferry terminal in the Port Lands.

Consider ways to activate new and diverse programming throughout the park, especially those that serve a diversity of audiences and interests, potentially by building new facilities to support additional programming or repurposing existing facilities. Respondents had suggestions for new programs, including:

- *Adding more facilities for sports and recreation* including ping pong tables, ice-skating rinks, cross-country skiing, snow-shoe rentals, cricket mounds, fields for soccer and ultimate frisbee, a skate park, or a basketball court. Consider building a sports and recreation centre and repurposing the existing tennis court.
- *Supporting activities for all age groups* by adding more “adult” focused activities like scavenger hunts or a more age-inclusive amusement park; strengthening existing programming for children and youth like the hedge maze, overnight camping, the programs offered through the Island Natural School, or through community-based agriculture; and protecting space for senior recreation by preserving Ward’s Island as an artistic and cultural space.
- *Creating spaces for arts, music, and culture* by enabling artists to host pop-ups, sell art, or put-up murals; providing facilities for festivals, concerts, and other live music; or creating space for other social activities such as dance classes or picnics.

Offer more affordable, diverse, and nutritious food options. Several respondents said better food service is a priority. Suggestions included food trucks, food marketplaces, more patio restaurants, food options that reflect the cultural diversity of Toronto, and more restaurants licensed to serve alcohol. Some said it is also important to have healthier options – consider dedicated space for community gardens and plant-based food options.

Focus on “refreshing” or “revitalizing” the Island. Many respondents said it was important to refresh existing amenities, facilities, and infrastructure in a poor state of repair rather than further develop the island. Respondents suggested focusing on a number of key areas, including Centreville, boardwalks, playgrounds, the lighthouse, senior’s centre, mini putt, Toronto Island Marina, Artscape, fountains, beaches, and the Toronto Water Building. Throughout the park, consider refreshing walkways, adding flowers and trees, and ensuring amenities are accessible for people with disabilities.

Improve ferry service and management. Many said expanding and improving ferry service is important. Consider expanding ferry service with additional evening and weekend hours or operation 24/7. In terms of fares, some respondents suggested making the ferry free-of-cost, integrating the ferries with the TTC and PRESTO, and diversifying fare options so users can purchase day and group passes. Improvements should be made to amenities near ferries, including providing tourist information, adding heated waiting areas, and a better queue management system to avoid long wait times.

Can we please add more options for people to come to the Islands? Although, the ferry ride is nice, coming to this location from outside of the city core, getting on and off the ferry is not pleasant, to say the least. As an example, imagine how majestic a ferry ride from Humber Bay Shores to the Islands would be!

Promote sustainability and protect the island ecosystem by implementing flood mitigation in sensitive areas; testing innovative ideas for sustainability including floating trash cans, adding greenhouses, adding a butterfly habitat near Hanlan's; replant trees to help as a noise buffer between the airport and to protect against erosion; protect wildlife habitats; and more. One participant suggested the whole Island should be an environmental sustainability hub, showcasing sustainability practices and educating visitors about its ecosystems.

Improve pathways and wayfinding. Some said pathways and trails on the island should be repaved, widened, and separated for cyclists, runners, and walkers. These paths should flow into each other and have different elevations to create a dynamic system. A few supported improved pathways and wayfinding, giving trails Indigenous and non-Indigenous names.

Strengthen Hanlan's Point Beach and protect its role in Toronto's LGBTQ2S+ community. Although many respondents appreciate the clothing optional designation at Hanlan's, many want to see this designation expanded further south or for a part of the beach to be designated as "nudists only." Others suggested including signage and design elements which acknowledge the beach as a queer space like a rainbow pathway, arch, or artwork by LGBTQ2S+ artists.

Be innovative and experimental through the Master Plan. Some respondents said it was important that the Master Plan focus on high-quality architecture that prioritizes creativity and usability, while also highlighting the Island's natural landscape and beauty.

Consider how to address the impact of the airport on the park. Many said noise pollution and the amount of space the airport takes up should be considered. Some said that excluding the airport from the Master Plan could miss an opportunity to think about the park holistically.

Improve emergency services without increasing policing. A few said access to police and other emergency services throughout the island was inconsistent, while others said that, while safety is a priority, policing should not increase, especially at Hanlan’s Point beach.

Consider ways to incorporate Indigenous Placekeeping, potentially through identifying dedicated spaces for Indigenous communities on the inner islands (e.g., Snake Island or Mugg’s Island) for spiritual and cultural gatherings. Prioritize partnership and extensive consultation with Indigenous communities and leaders.