

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Silver Creek Park Improvements

Virtual Public Meeting
Meeting Summary

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Contents

Introduction	2
Meeting Goals	2
Meeting Promotion	2
Feedback Summary	2
Questions and Answers	2
Suggestions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Next Steps	7
Contact Us	7

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Silver Creek Park Improvements virtual public meeting that was held on October 26, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was attended by approximately 60 community members.

More information about the project can be found on the project webpage at

www.toronto.ca/SilverCreekImprovements

Meeting Goals

The City is improving Silver Creek Park and will be engaging the community on the new park design. The improvements will provide new park amenities for the community to enjoy for years to come. The goals of this virtual public meeting were to:

- Present the proposed concept design for the park improvements.
- Answer questions about the design.
- Discuss the proposed design and collect community feedback.
- Encourage participation in the online survey to collect more detailed feedback.

Meeting Promotion

The meeting was promoted through:

- Paid social media advertisement on Facebook and Instagram
- Park signage
- Project webpage updates
- The local Councillor's office

Feedback Summary

Project staff presented a project introduction and overview, followed by a discussion session. A copy of the presentation is available on [the project webpage](#). Questions (Q), answers (A), comments (C), and responses from staff (R) are presented below as summaries. This is not a verbatim transcript.

Questions and Answers

Q. What is the amount being allocated to these improvements?

A. The total project budget is \$575k (approved by Council) and includes all hard and soft costs including design, permitting, testing, and construction. Current costing exercises project that this project is within budget, with the shade structure excluded. Project cost will be confirmed once the project is sent out to tender and bids are received. Some items may need to be included as provisional items (i.e. will be included if budget permits). This is in part due to COVID-19 and the resulting volatility of the construction market. Additionally, the "loop" design acts as a spine to which all programs are attached. This strategy allows for pieces to be added in time if not all features can be included in the current scope of work.

Q. How were the proposed park features being presented today chosen for the design? Are cost-benefit analysis completed for each feature (e.g. ping-pong tables)?

A. The local Residents' Association, Friends of Silver Creek Park, initiated this project by bringing a request for park improvements to the local Councillor in 2018. The requested improvements were based on a community survey completed by Friends of Silver Creek Park, in coordination with the former City Councillor. Park staff and the current Councillor's office

reviewed the list of requested features to ensure they are suitable and appropriate for this park. There is an anticipated increase in population density in this area, so effort is being made to ensure the improvements create a park that is inclusive for a range of ages and demographics, by improving upon and expanding the program in the park.

R. (Councillor Holiday) The features being proposed are not radical or risky. Many of the features proposed are ones that are generally well-used in any neighbourhood park. We know the playground is well-used, so we know playground improvements will be well used. The purpose of the meeting tonight, the online survey, and this engagement overall is to hear from community members if there are things we should remove or include in the design. What is being proposed was chosen to provide a little something for everyone.

Q. Why is the pool not included in the project scope?

A. Any repair to the pool is not included in this project. Pool repair comes from State of Good Repair Capital funds, which are a separate funding source from this improvements project. The funding for this project comes from development-related funds.

Q. Will there be any lighting for evening use?

A. Lighting will not be included in the scope of this project. Generally the City only introduces lighting into community parks when the paths are used as primary routes to provide access to public services and destinations such as transit.

Q. When will the park be closed for construction?

A. As the park is still being designed and a contractor has yet to be hired, it is too early to set precise construction dates. The construction will be completed as quickly as possible to minimize impacts to the community.

Q. Many community members are older adults who need shade, seating, and accessible pathways to access and enjoy the park. What are the accessibility features of the proposed park improvements for adults with special needs and mobility challenges?

A. The pathways will all meet Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards. There will be benches around the loop to provide seating for those who need rest while moving along the pathway. The benches will have arm rests and backs to meet AODA standards. There is an accessible group swing that will be added for children of various abilities. There will be a ramp into the existing playground and the outdoor exercise area. The outdoor exercise equipment can be used in various ways for people of all skills and abilities. At least 25% of the picnic tables at each location will be accessible. A cedar weave is being considered for the wood chip surfacing in the existing playground, which provides an even more accessible surface than currently exists. There will also be relocated and new trees that will provide more shade as they grow, near seating areas. If the public would like more accessible seating, those can be added. For example, the proposed tables with umbrellas have the option to remove seats. This would allow people with mobility devices to pull right up to the table without any barrier.

Q. Will pathways be maintained during the winter?

A. As this is not a route of travel to a transit point, school, or other facility, this is not a primary path and therefore would not be maintained during the winter.

Support for Proposed Park Improvements

Some participants noted support for the following proposed park improvements:

- Pollinator garden.
- Exercise area.
- Shade.

- Picnic tables and benches (though some want fewer picnic tables and benches due to perceived safety and litter concerns).
- Safety and accessibility improvements, including the looping pathway.
- Building on the existing park features.
- The looped path around Site 1.
 - Allows space for children to ride their bikes or scooters.
 - Increases accessibility and safety to the site for all ages and abilities.
- Preserving some open park and greenspace for play, picnic blankets, trees, etc.

Suggested Additions to the Park Improvements

- Pathways:
 - A connecting path from site 1 to site 2 to improve accessibility through the park, as currently the ground is uneven, posing an accessibility barrier for those with mobility challenges or strollers.
 - R. This pathway cannot be added to the project scope at this time due to budget constraints. The plan will not prevent the ability to accommodate this path in the future. Any future pathway between sites would need to address or avoid the swale (lower, wet area) on-site, and should not be placed in the ball diamond outfield, as this would pose a safety risk. Currently, the accessible route to move between site 1 and site 2 would be to use the sidewalk which goes around the park. This route is not significantly longer than an additional pathway through the park would be.
 - C. A participant noted that the suggestion for an accessible pathway through the park would be to increase accessibility into the various parts of the park, not just to decrease the amount of time it takes to move through the park.
 - R. Accessibility to park features is a major concern, which is why the proposed pathway loops through all of the new park features, to ensure they can be accessed by all park users.
 - C. A participant noted they do not feel there are mobility challenges with the current park pathways and that those who need to can go around the outside of the park to access the other side.
 - Pathway width that allows park users, including children on tricycles to pass one another in opposite directions.
 - R. All new pathways will be 3 metres wide. This ensures the access requested, and is required for maintenance vehicles. Existing pathways are 2.5 to 2.8 metres wide.
 - Including an entry path from the sidewalk to site 1 that does not require users to walk through the parking lot. There is currently no access to the park entrance from the sidewalk along Strathdee Drive. Pedestrians must walk through the parking lot to get to the park, which is a safety concern.
 - C. A participant noted there is entry into the park that avoids the parking lot, from the sidewalk near the pool.
 - R. Consideration will be given to adding a pathway connection from the sidewalk to the existing pathway entrance, bypassing the parking lot.
- Splash pad or wading pool.
 - C. There are no splash pads or wading pools in the immediate area for young families. The pool has fairly long wait list.

- R (Councillor). A splash pad is outside the scope of this project. A splash pad is low on the priority list for this park as there is already an outdoor pool on-site. While it is understood that access to and use of an outdoor pool differs from a splash pad, they do both provide cooling in the summer. Over the long-term, there are plans to build water features at various locations across the city, based on geographic gaps in services, and anticipated growth in demand based on population changes. Based on a needs assessment and distance to water features, other communities have been identified as high priorities for new water amenities. Water feature improvements are not currently planned for this location. Additional water features could be planned for this park in the future.
- Dog Off-Leash Area.
 - R. This is outside the scope of these improvements as the current project budget does not allow for the implementation of a large dog area including new surfacing, fencing and irrigation. A dog off-leash area would need to be initiated as a separate project. This location would also need to be reviewed by Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Dogs Off-Leash Area group to determine its suitability. Community members are welcome to contact the Councillor's office to voice their interests in this program.
- Basketball Court.
 - R. A basketball court is currently outside of the scope of this project due to budget and space constraints. The compatibility with other programming would need to be considered to determine if basketball would be appropriate for this park. Basketball was not included in the initial program for these park improvements.
- Bocce court.
- A public art feature or an item of discovery.
- Solar lighting features to deter crime and park misuse.
- Memorial trees.
- More of the following proposed additions:
 - Picnic tables.
 - R. These can be added if the budget allows. There are currently six picnic tables planned for inclusion in the park improvements, 25% of which are accessible and some of which also include an umbrella for shade.
 - Seating around amenity areas, including next to the pool (near Wincott Dr.).
 - R. These can be added if the budget allows.
 - Garbage receptacle areas.
 - R. The design team will consult with the maintenance team to determine optimal locations for garbage and recycling stations.
 - New trees between site 1 and site 2.

Suggested Changes to the Park Improvements

- Move the pollinator garden away from the children's play area to prevent stings.
 - Consider repositioning near site 2.
- Ensure proper drainage at ping pong tables. Concrete pads at table tennis areas in other parks do not drain well, and should be a consideration for implementation at this park.
- Remove the ping pong table from the plan. Some feel these are not well-used in other parks and will not be well-used in this park.

- R. Alternative games tables or other features comparable in scale and cost can be considered based on the feedback collected at this meeting and through the online survey.
- Ensure the new park features are made of damage-resistant materials.
- Maximize views of sunsets.
- Some want more seating areas and picnic tables to improve accessibility and create more space for picnicking and families, while others want fewer seating areas to prevent loitering and litter.

Concerns with the Proposed Park Improvements

- Some community members have security and safety concerns related to the proposal to add new features and seating areas in the park. This park has had a history of crime, with police called to the park multiple times, along with a history of rowdy late-night loitering in the park which is disruptive to neighbours. There is concern that new park features, especially the site 2 seating area, will potentially encourage crime, loitering, or parties at night.
 - R. Adding new features that increase the park's use creates more "eyes on the park" which helps improve safety and prevents misuse of park facilities. Parks close at 11 p.m. and should not be used after this time.
 - R. (Councillor) The Councillor's office will have a conversation with police to understand if they have any concerns around the park improvements. The thinking on the east side of the park is that the seating area will go nicely with the library, as currently, users will get a book from the library and sit on the grass in that area to read. Abnormal uses happen at every park, and we hear about them often. We understand there needs to be a balance of the risks and benefits to new park improvements. We appreciate and take your point about the potential for negative outcomes related to these park improvements, and those will be considered moving forward.
 - R. Park designers do take safety into consideration, for example to ensure there are no blind corners in the park, and to maintain open sightlines when possible. We can consult with Toronto Police Services and have a local officer review the designs as well.
 - C. Other community members noted that they like the addition of benches in the park and would like more.
- Rodents in the park are a concern, potentially attracted to the mulberry trees.
- There is concern that currently, the park contains litter, and that additional park users will create more litter.
 - R. There are planned waste receptacles near the shade canopy and south end of the playground. The designers will consider including another set of waste receptacles on the north side of site 1, near the picnic table area.
 - R. Parks maintenance have standards for regular park visits. In spring and fall staff visit more frequently for grass cutting than in the summer, which is when visits are focused on litter pickup. Parks staff coordinate with solid waste pickup, who also provide insight into good locations for waste receptacles. They will be consulted for this park as well.

Local Insight into Park Conditions

- The proposed location for the drinking fountain is where portable restrooms are often placed.

Concerns with Online Survey

- Review the survey questions for clarity to ensure the responses cannot be misinterpreted. Ensure it is easy for participants who take the survey to share that they prefer **fewer** picnic tables and **fewer** seating options.
 - Staff will revise the survey accordingly, following the meeting.

Next Steps

Next steps include:

- Community members can complete & share the online survey by November 9.
- Where possible and appropriate, the proposed design will be refined based on community feedback.
- A meeting and survey summary will be posted to the project web page when complete.
- Construction is currently anticipated to take place from Summer 2022 to Fall 2022.

Contact Us

For questions or comments related to this project, please contact:

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