

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Oakwood St. Clair Parkland Study Virtual Open House Meeting Summary

November 24, 2021

Prepared By:

Michael O'Neill,
Program Standards & Development Officer - Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division
Paul Farish,
Manager, Planning Section - Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division
Pablo Muñoz,
Senior Public Consultation Coordinator - Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division



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Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Oakwood-St. Clair Parkland Study Open House that was held on November 24th, 2021.

The meeting was attended by approximately 80 community members.

The presentation shared at this meeting and more information about the project can be found on the project webpage at www.toronto.ca/OakwoodStClairStudy

Meeting Goals

Over the last year, the City has been studying the parks and outdoor public spaces in the neighbourhoods surrounding the Oakwood Avenue-St. Clair Avenue West intersection to identify opportunities for improvement. The findings of this study will guide short and long-term improvements to the local park system, including expanding and improving existing parks, acquiring new parks and fostering more inclusive and connected parks. The goal of the open house was to:

- **Present key findings** from the study process and consultation to date that informed the development of recommendations
- **Share recommended actions** to improve existing parks, create new parks, and improve access and connections between parks and other public spaces.
- **Hear feedback from the community** on the emerging recommendations before finalization of the Oakwood-St. Clair Parks Plan

Meeting Promotion

The meeting was promoted through:

- Paid social media advertisement on Facebook and Instagram geo-targeting the study area.
- Project webpage updates.
- Deputy Mayor Ana Bailao and Councillor Josh Matlow's social media.

Feedback Summary

Project staff presented the engagement process, findings and emerging recommendations, 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

Questions regarding recommendations to: Expand existing parks, introduce new parks, introduce new outdoor recreation facilities, and enhance existing parks and outdoor facilities.

Q: How can Mt Royal Parkette can be expanded? The original design for Mt Royal Parkette called for the development of a retaining wall to create a larger flat table of land and that would have cut it off from the street which is on a hill and created a large wall perfect for graffiti. When the park architects actually visited the site, they realized this was an impractical. Unless you are planning to purchase the neighbouring houses, I am unclear how expanding this parkette is viable.

A: Our priority is to build off of the parks that we have, as opposed to starting something new. It is generally easier to develop and operate a meaningful, programmable park space when expanding an existing park as opposed to acquiring a stand-alone property elsewhere. Mt Royal Parkette has been identified in the southeast quadrant as a key park. We would have to purchase adjacent residential properties to expand the parkette. This will have to be a long-term or opportunistic exercise given the character of this neighbourhood (e.g. existing homes).

Q: When is the Parks team going to commit to public Key Performance Indicators? Speed to delivering green space like the number of people using the park from different age groups, these could be helpful ways. We need increased accountability from the City in all these aspects.

A: Thank you for this comment. We do track KPIs for the parks system at the City-wide level and will include some in the final Oakwood-St. Clair Parks Plan. We are tapping into new sources of data that provide a sense of use and user groups and are excited to include that in our planning.

Q: How are the recent condos helping with creating new parks in the area? Isn't this a by-law?

A: Development is required by Provincial legislation and City by-law to provide parkland on the development site, off-site or as cash-in-lieu of parkland. The by-law sets out the amount of parkland that is required, depending on the proposed uses in the new development, number of proposed units and size of the development site. When the City receives cash-in-lieu of parkland, it is allocated to fund parkland acquisition and improvement projects.

Q: The parking lot south of Roseneath Park, north of the No Frills, sits empty most of the time. Can the park be expanded and improved? Hopefully before the estimated 2029 date listed for Roseneath playground changes?

A: Thank you for this comment. We are aware of this site and the opportunity to expand the park. You're correct that the parking lot belongs to No Frills. It is a great opportunity if it works. This is certainly something on the radar for us. We will provide updates when appropriate on any acquisitions and real estate transactions.

Q: Can we get more details on the improvements in mind to connect Earls court Park to the streetscape?

A: The Oakwood-St. Clair plan identifies the general need for improvements to create a better interface between Earls court Park and St. Clair Avenue West. Our colleagues in Transportation Services are making improvements right now including a street wall with benches and enhanced paving. Work is also underway to improve pathways in the park, including a connection to the St. Clair West and Caledonia intersection. Further improvements (for example, making the pedestrian entrance and pathway to the west of the tennis courts more prominent) will be considered but the specific types and design of improvements would need additional focused study.

Q: What about parking for the area? If you turn one of the few green P parking lots into a park, how will people come to the area, park and roam the area?

A: Any decision to convert a Green P parking lot will consider the impact on parking supply and the users of the lot and will require local consultation. Some Green P lots are heavily used and serve important community needs and businesses; others are not as heavily used. The City is undertaking a review of its parking portfolio city-wide, accounting for changes in travel patterns, technology, etc., and will consider alternate uses where appropriate. Decisions will be made based on the optimal use of public land.

Q: Surely the priority for the limited funding to this area should be west of Oakwood, and not to revamping the extremely nice, recently built Wychwood Park or enhancing the already excellent park coverage in the wealthier areas east of Oakwood. [Several questions and suggestions like this were made asking the City to prioritize the west side of the study area since it has the lowest greenspace and park provision].

A: There are different needs in different sections of the study area, which require different responses. In terms of access to parks, we know that the area west of Oakwood has very low parkland provision per person, and that many people in that area have to walk further to get to parks. However, areas to the east of Oakwood are parkland deficient as well (slide 22). All this is to say that most of the study area is in need of parkland, and we will be pursuing several opportunities to add new parks or expand the ones we have. Because of how land acquisition opportunities come up, we cannot state an order in which new parkland will be acquired, but we will be working on multiple opportunities at once – both those listed on slides 35 and 36, and other locations we are unable to share at this point (including some identified by the community). Within the area west of Oakwood, we recently acquired the new park at 261 Nairn Avenue. We are also investigating expansions of Charles Brereton Park and the new park at 261 Nairn Avenue and evaluating other City-owned land.

In terms of improvements to the parks and public realm network, we know there are particular needs in the neighbourhoods west of Oakwood Ave – for example, a lack of tree canopy and a gap in playground provision. This is why the bulk of our tree planting initiatives are also focused on the west of the study area (see slide 42), and we will focus our efforts to deliver new playgrounds in the west.

Q: Our street has requested speed bumps on our street and there's been no success from door to door surveys. What else can be done to push through this important safety initiative?

A: As you identified, [requests for speed bumps](#) are typically initiated by surveys, petitions or public meeting in coordination with the local Councillor. Our parks team is in ongoing conversation with Transportation Services about improvement to streets including traffic calming measures like speed bumps; they are aware of locations that have been identified through consultation.

Q: Hi and thank you for all you are doing for our community. Another question: will we have to rent the fire pits?

A: To use fire pits in Toronto's parks, a permit is required which can be obtained online or by calling PFR Client Services. A fee is required for the permit. More details can be found on the [City's website](#).

Q: When will we get a new green space? I am unsure how helpful it is to the community and taxpayer dollars to spend all this time trying to make the limited spaces better. We need increased access to new spaces. This is where taxpayer dollars need to be spent right away.

A: Additions to the park system in the Oakwood St.-Clair area are already happening, including the addition of a new park on Nairn Ave. Because of how land acquisition opportunities come up, we cannot state an order or specific timelines for the acquisition of new parkland, but we will be working on multiple opportunities at once – both those listed on slides 35 and 36, and other locations we are unable to share at this point (including some identified by the community). The parkland study will help the City ensure that spending in the neighbourhood is strategic and maximized to address community needs.

Q: Tell me who was in charge with deciding on the parks equipment for Hillcrest Park? It was a waste of investment dollars and has turned an interesting park into a boring space that has no interest to anyone over the age of 4. What consultation was done there?

A: The playground was designed with input from the community, and the recommended concept was selected by attendees at a public meeting on March 4, 2020 through a vote. That said, concerns about the playground's equipment were communicated to the City, and extra funding was made available in May 2021 to install monkey bars. We have noted feedback from the Oakwood-St. Clair Study about ensuring play opportunities are provided for older kids and tweens / teens, and this will be reflected in the plan.

Q: On the corner of McRoberts and Innes, there has been plan for developer (Frontdoor Developments) to build a park. What is status of project? Thank you!

A: Construction on the park will begin in spring 2022 and based on a design vetted through public engagement it will include a children's playground, shade structure, and benches. More information is available on the [project website](#).

Q: Is the Green Line project already complete? What is happening with that?

A: Planning for the Green Line is complete, but implementation is still ongoing. Engagement was recently completed for three projects that are part of the Green Line project: a new park at Macpherson Avenue, an expansion of the Geary Avenue Parkette, and a new playground in the Geary Avenue Parkette. Construction for these projects is planned to begin in the spring/summer of 2022. More park expansion and improvement projects will be delivered in the coming years. More information is available on the [project website](#).

Questions regarding recommendations to plant more trees and improve spaces for dogs.

Q: The trees on St Clair Avenue are small and some have died. Is that because of the roots underground? Do they have enough space? Between Lansdowne and Oakwood.

A: We will follow up with our Urban Forestry colleagues. It could be design, lack of proper irrigation, including not receiving enough water, or salt coming off the roadway.

Q: What concrete steps are planned to address the inadequacy of green space for possible Dog Off-Leash Areas (DOLAs) in the Oakwood-St Clair West area?

A: As noted on slide 43, DOLAs will be considered for new and expanded parks where appropriate, taking into account factors like the park size, context, distance from other DOLAs,

community feedback at the design stage, and the City's [People, Dogs and Parks – Off-leash Policy](#). However, it is important to note that the area furthest from existing DOLAs (the north-west portion of the study area) is also an area with a substantial gap in parkland in general, and gaps in other amenities and facilities, such as playgrounds, that also need to be considered for new and expanded parks.

Q: What can we do about TDSB locking dog owners out of the green space?

A: The TDSB is responsible for managing access to their green spaces, and the types of permitted uses. Dogs are not currently allowed on school property per TDSB policy. The project team will ask if the TDSB has decided to proceed with a proposed pilot for allowing dogs in certain areas of their schoolyards, and will raise concerns regarding public access in general to school yards. We will also continue to investigate collaborating on improvements to school yards in exchange for guaranteed community access outside of school hours.

[Questions regarding recommendations to work with civic partners to improve the public realm and to work with school boards and councillors to enhance schoolyards.](#)

Q: What is to happen with Loretto College playground? There was a push to turn the south west corner to a playground for kids in the area.

A: The TCDSB has told us that master planning and design work is underway for the site; however, it has been delayed because of the pandemic. They recently informed us that they do not have any updates to share at the moment. We will continue to be in touch with the TCDSB, including by sharing feedback we've received related to school site improvements.

Q: Is improvement at the Santa Chiara parkette on the table? Is it too difficult since it is owned by TCDSB?

A: Improvements are not off the table, depending on what they entail. We have heard a number of comments from the community about Santa Chiara Parkette, including that it is not always accessible to the public outside of school hours, and that the addition of trample-resistant plantings would be a good idea. These are relatively simple issues to address and we will be bringing them forward in the plan and in conversations with the TCDSB.

Q: Can we look at the city helping TDSB redo their schoolyards? Rawlinson is undertaking a campaign which needs support.

A: We recognise that school grounds play a very important role in the parks and open space network across the city, even more so in this area given the relatively low parkland provision. The City does partner with school boards to make improvements to their facilities, providing that community access outside of school hours can be guaranteed. Regarding Rawlinson Community School, the City has provided financial support for improvements to the outdoor areas in exchange for guaranteed public access outside of school hours. Phase 1, completed in 2020, included replacement of play equipment, asphalt surfacing, reconfiguration and updated irrigation of the multi-purpose field, and addition of a pathway to accommodate pedestrian through traffic from Charles Brereton Park. Phase 2, scheduled for 2022, will include play equipment upgrades and a seating area. The Oakwood-St. Clair Parks Plan will recommend investigating other opportunities to partner to deliver needed improvements at other school sites in the area with provisions for public access outside of school hours.

Q: My kids go to Rawlinson. Parents/caregivers donated money to improve the playground and grounds. Without these donations, we would not have had the improvements over the past two years. Since it was mentioned, can this be opened up to the community – not just parents – to increase financing, hence quality of improvements? Can the community donate to improvements to the field at Oakwood Collegiate as well? (Assuming we have access to TDSB property).

A: As the City does not have jurisdiction over school sites, we would recommend reaching out to the school principal to investigate opportunities for community fundraising for school grounds improvements. Regarding Oakwood Collegiate, the Oakwood-St. Clair Parks Plan will recommend investigating opportunities for the City to partner with the TDSB to deliver improvements to the school grounds in line with the Oakwood Collegiate Master Plan. There is the potential to include improvements to the sports field in such a partnership, provided community access can be guaranteed outside of school hours.

Comments and Suggestions

C: The single most important aspect of a park is for it to exist. The lack of urgency in delivering immediate Band-Aid solutions to the lack of green space is deeply disappointing. TDSB owns all the green space in our neighbourhood. This needs to be a priority in immediately getting access to these. The policing and paternalism from the TDSB cannot continue.

C: Councillor Matlow - TDSB locked all playgrounds during the pandemic. So talking about the pandemic and parks as critical is pretty ironic. (There were no parks anyway).

C: The shade feature at Wychwood Barns was installed by the community. I know because I was part of the committee that fundraised the dollars. It took the city two years to install.

C: The survey was extremely poorly done. I would highly recommend not citing data from this survey. The fact that key questions were not asked means that the data validating unmet needs is very skewed.

C: Some of the parks belong to parks, but we look after these locations. I would suggest asking all of the utilities to put murals on all of their utility boxes to prevent graffiti.

C: Please work with St. Matthew's United Church on Indigenous Placemaking and Placekeeping. There is a Healing Garden already there.

R (Councillor Matlow): We are working with St Matthews, working to develop the first national healing forest that would connect many different points through our community.

C: Please make sure that part of the tree planning is the possibility of putting in fruit trees where appropriate. This adds to any community.

C: It's disappointing to see how clearly the area west of Oakwood and north of St. Clair, in particular west of Dufferin, is deficient in parkland, greenspace and tree canopy. And yet the only proposal is a tiny park on a busy arterial and another, potential tiny park on an even busier arterial (basically at the intersection of Dufferin and St. Clair). I do understand that other options are being explored in the neighbourhood itself and this is longer term work. Wonder if a potential, interim solution in some of this area is the greening of laneways - permeable paving, planters, even the "dead-ending" of certain laneways to allow for tiny greenspace within the community.

R: All great suggestions; you will see in the next section of the presentation [Slide 45] that we want to work with colleagues in transportation to take advantage of different areas in the public realm - safe streets and laneways. We are already acting on those recommendations.

C: I disagree with the Norton and Dufferin Green P as a suitable park location. It is an area that is suitable for development but not for a park. I urge PFR to reinvest in other areas of North Corso.

C: I fully agree that dogs are out of control in parks and around the city. The dog lobby was loud and clear on earlier calls but they must be respectful of people first. We cannot put dogs before people

C: The reason behind this tension is because there are not enough DOLAs. In my street alone (Glenholme) - there are 20 new puppies. Where are people supposed to take their dogs?

C: I would like to bring attention to Oakwood Ave itself - there is no tree canopy and major speed issues.

Next Steps

- Winter 2022: Release final Parks Plan on project webpage.
- Spring 2022-onwards: Plan implementation and shift to project-specific engagement.

Contact Us

For any questions or additional comments please contact:

Michael O'Neill

Telephone: 437-214-4809

Email: moneill@toronto.ca