

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Wabash Community Recreation Centre

Public Meeting (Phase 4 of 5)
Meeting Summary

January 2022



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Overview

On Wednesday, November 3rd, 2021, over 100 people participated in the fourth virtual Public Meeting for the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre (CRC). Hosted by the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) Division at the City of Toronto, the design team presented and collected community feedback on a draft design for the new centre. The draft design was developed through previous phases of community consultation. Feedback collected at this public meeting will be used to help refine the design for the new Wabash CRC.

The public meeting was held on Zoom with options to join online or call-in. Appendix A includes a meeting agenda and Appendix B includes the list of project team attendees. The presentation slides, meeting recording, full transcript of the meeting, and summaries of additional community consultation events for this project are available on the project website at www.toronto.ca/WabashCRC.

The summary is structured as follows:

Questions and feedback received during the meeting, including:

1. Short Summary of Discussion
2. Feedback and Questions about the Draft Preferred Building and Landscape Design
3. Next Steps

Feedback received prior to and following the meeting

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 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.

Questions & Feedback Received During the Meeting

1. Short Summary of Discussion

The following key points provide a high level summary of the meeting discussion. More detailed feedback is included in section 2, below.

- **Appreciation for the work done to date and support for the draft preferred design.** Several participants thanked the team for the ongoing work, said they like the draft preferred design, and shared excitement for progress being made towards building the community centre. One participant expressed concern regarding the results of the previous survey as the survey did not adequately show the view impacts of the proposed designs.
- **Interest in the landscaping design and opportunities to address existing issues.** Participants commented on existing landscaping issues and opportunities to address these issues through the process. Landscaping issues discussed were generally related to drainage and tree management.
- **Interest in specific design features and building uses/amenities.** Participants were keen to learn more about a variety of topics related to the building design and future uses/amenities, including the proposed pools, the building façade and colour, heritage preservation, construction impacts and timing, storage, and the existing dog park.

2. Feedback and Questions about the Draft Preferred Building and Landscape Design

As part of the presentation, the project team shared the draft building and landscape design. Participants' feedback on the draft design is summarized below. Feedback shared by participants appears first, followed by comments/responses provided by the project team in *italics*, where provided.

Building design and amenities

- **Support for the design.** Several participants said they like the draft design and appreciated the work done by the team to date to develop the design. Some said they particularly appreciated the attention paid to environmental sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint.
- **Questions and feedback about the proposed pool.** One participant asked if there will be a wading pool in the building that elderly people can use. There was also a suggestion to consider installing adjustable floors in the pools to accommodate different age groups and activities. *The team explained that there will be a leisure/wading pool that will have a stepped or beach entry and will be very accessible for children and seniors. The team also explained that the lane swim pool will have a larger shallow area to accommodate a variety of activities for different age groups.*
- **Question and feedback about the building façade and colour.** A participant asked if the team had preliminary ideas about the colour of the building. Another participant commented that they like the treatment of the existing brick building because the chipping layers of paint reveal its history. *The team explained that the colour is yet to be determined and that there are many possibilities. Considerations include complimenting the existing building and aligning with the energy and carbon sustainability goals.*

- **Questions about the steel train shed's preservation.** A participant asked if the steel train shed attached on the south side of the Linseed building has heritage value and if it could be preserved. *The team explained that they will be meeting with Heritage Preservation Services to ensure all heritage requirements are understood and met and that they will discuss the status of the steel train shed with them when they meet.*
- **Concern about visual impacts of the building on city views from the park.** One participant representing one of the local residents' associations shared concerns that the preferred design would result in a building that will limit the view of the City from the park. *The building has been located through an extensive and transparent site plan process that will limit its encroachment on park space. This concern was paramount and has resulted in a four-storey building at the edge of the railway corridor that may limit views to the city skyline from some vantage points in the park.*

Off-leash Area

- **Suggestions to improve the dog park surface and amenities.** There were concerns shared about the existing surface and limited shade in the dog park. There were suggestions to replace the surface material, improve drainage, and provide more shade. There was also a suggestion to consider an all-year dog washing station. *The team responded that the current surface is the standard surface use for City off-leash areas. Surfacing options and improved irrigation systems will be considered through the redesign.*
- **Concern about existing drainage issues.** A few participants shared concerns about drainage in the park including, on the north and south sides of the dog park. There was also a concern that poor drainage would negatively impact the proposed Indigenous ceremonial and gathering space. *The team explained that it is likely that much of the drainage issues are a result of a cap below the surface of the off-leash area. A geotechnical consultant will be gathering and sharing more information. Part of the redesign will include sub-drainage improvements to ensure there is proper drainage for the site.*

Town Square and other park amenities

- **Questions about storage for park and Town Square activity equipment.** Participants were interested to know how storage will be dealt with, noting that the existing shipping container provides much needed storage for park activities, including PF&R sports programs, Farmers' Market equipment, and the 16-foot-long rink boards for the natural ice rink. *The team explained that they are aware of the need to provide storage and that one of the functions of the community recreation centre will be to provide storage for activities in the building and on the site. They also noted that a final solution has not yet been decided but it will continue to be investigated.*
- **Suggestion for future paving to accommodate recreation use of the Town Square.** A participant shared that the existing Town Square paving is useful for setting up pickup games, especially pickleball. They suggested that the new plaza have similar paving patterns to help delineate the setup of games without having to use sport specific painted lines.

Trees and plantings

- **Concerns about existing trees and suggestions about tree management.** A participant shared concerns about trees on the north side of the park near the soccer field. They said they are invasive and, in some cases, present safety concerns. There was interest in maintaining recently planted trees on the west façade of the existing Linseed building, planting additional trees on the grass slope, and maintaining the grove on the east side of the Fieldhouse. *The team explained that an arborist will be doing a full report on trees and*

that they expect that any hazardous trees or trees in poor health will be removed and replaced with native species.

Parking and traffic

- **Questions about traffic management.** There was interest in understanding if/how traffic is being considered, especially additional traffic that may result from people driving to/from the new Community Centre. *The team explained that traffic and vehicular access is a challenge that is being considered as part of the process and that traffic studies will be completed to minimize impacts as much as possible.*
- **Concerns about limited parking for residents.** A few participants shared concerns about on-street parking issues in the area. One participant said local residents on Lukow Terrace are finding it more and more challenging to find parking near their homes and suggested that on-street parking be permanently reserved for local residents. *Councillor Gord Perks explained that this is an issue separate from the design of the community recreation centre and said his office would follow-up with the participant to discuss this issue further. The contact details of other participants that shared an interest in connecting with the Councillor to discuss neighborhood parking and traffic were shared with the Councillor's office following the meeting.*

Process and construction

- **Question about the completion timeline.** There was interest to know if the 2026 timeline for completion is realistic. *The project team explained that the current schedule anticipates completion by 2027 and that at this point they see this as being realistic.*
- **Questions about construction's impact to park use and access.** There was interest in understanding if/how park use will be impacted by construction of the community recreation centre, specifically if access would be limited during construction. *The team explained that construction will occur in phases and details of this are yet to be determined. They also said they anticipate that the park will be fully accessible during the first half of the construction with some limitations occurring during the second half of the construction.*
- **Differing opinions were shared about the process.** One participant raised concerns about the process, commenting that they felt the previous engagements did not adequately show the view impacts of the preferred design and that the last survey was used to validate decisions already made driven by a specific community group. Several other participants expressed disagreement with that point of view, noting the process has been comprehensive.

3. Next Steps

The project team thanked participants and committed to sharing the presentation and a summary report of the meeting. They encouraged participants to continue to use the survey for additional comments and feedback and/or send emails.

Feedback Received Prior to and Following the Meeting

The project team received feedback by email prior to and following the public meeting. The feedback received is summarized below.

- **Ensure connection to the West Toronto Railpath is possible.** There was interest in seeing a pedestrian/cycling connection established from a planned bridge along the West Toronto Railpath to Sorauren Park and the future community recreation centre. There was also some concern that the Angler site design option presented in Phase 3 may preclude the possibility for this connection by removing space needed to establish the connection.
Response from the project team: We are mindful of the community's interest in the bridge that could connect the West Toronto Railpath to Sorauren Park, however, the connection to the rail path is not part of this community recreation centre's scope. That said, the design proposed for the Angler option would not preclude the connection to bridge in the future.
- **Concern about inequity related to the proposed location of the community recreation centre.** One person said that Roncesvalles does not need its own exclusive community recreation centre as there are three existing community centres within a 10-to-15-minute walk of the site (Mary McCormick, Parkdale, and Masaryk Cowan). They suggested that, at a minimum, the new community recreation centre should be built further north and be accessible by transit.

Response from the project team: Needs for the new Community Recreation Centre (CRC) at Sorauren Park were identified as part of the 1999 Big 5 study that was approved by Council, see link: [City of Toronto, City Council Legislative Documents](#).

The report identifies the Wabash location as a previously identified suitable location for a CRC. The rationale for a CRC was based on criteria including;

- *the current and future socio-demographic profile of the communities;*
- *the current supply and use of recreation facilities serving the study area;*
- *the public's perception of the need for facilities as expressed in random sample surveys of community residents, focus groups with individual and community agencies, questionnaires returned by cultural and recreational user groups, key informant interviews and public meetings*
- *leisure trends; and results of previous studies dealing with leisure needs in each study area.*

It is anticipated that the new facility will also serve the broader surrounding community including Parkdale. Accordingly, outreach to residents and communities beyond the immediate neighbourhood has been done, including groups from Parkdale such as Parkdale Residents Association, Mentoring Junior Kids Organization (MJKO Boxing), Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC), West lodge TCHC community, Parkdale Jr. / Sr. Public School.

- **Pool design safety and hygiene considerations.** A respondent shared feedback about the proposed pool design, relating to cleansing showers and pool depth. Related to cleansing showers, the respondent commented that gender specific changerooms allow for comfort and privacy when showering and therefore invite and permit effective cleaning prior to entering the pool. They also noted that gender neutral change rooms with showers on the pool deck/vestibule are less effective in this regard. In relation to pool depth, the respondent commented that lap pools need to a specific minimum depth to allow for safe lap swimming. They said that at 3 feet, the shallow end of the lap pool is not accommodating neither safe nor comfortable for swimming.

Response from the project team: Regarding the comment about hygiene for showering prior to use of pool, there's only a requirement for the City to provide showers but there's no language indicating what a "prescribed cleansing shower" would entail. Even if there was, it would be very hard to enforce to what lifeguards can visually see. Further, there's no correlation between what the format of the showering space is to how thorough a patron would shower. Regarding the comment about the depth of lap pool, this will need to be evaluated on a case by case build. For the purposes of this project, the standard can be between 3 feet to 3.5 feet for multi-type use and non-Olympic competitive pool. Increasing the minimum lane pool depth to 3.5 feet is possible. This pool will follow FINA (Fédération Internationale de Natation) standards for pool depth. A minimum depth of 1 meter (3.28 ft) in the shallow end is required, and 1.35 meters (4.43 ft) is required if starting blocks are provided.

- **Provide community services and facilities at the new CRC.** One person commented that there is an opportunity to provide community services at the future community recreation centre, which are needed in the area. Types of services described include sports and recreation facilities, places for live music and events, and healthcare facilities (e.g., for vaccines).
- **Incorporate technology.** There was interest shared in incorporating digital technology in the design of the community recreation centre. Of particular interest was integrating a large format LED feature in the outdoor element of the community recreation centre that could be used for a variety of events, including summer movies in the park. Other ideas related digital technology included incorporating ultra-broadband integration, media labs, digital connectivity and communications, digital signage, digital studios, kitchens with cameras, Bluetooth audio, and HDMI connections.

Response from the project team: While design work involving A/V (audio/visual) systems is still months away (we are currently gathering feedback on building massing – the general location and orientation of the new Centre), when it does come time to design the Centre's new A/V, we will review these suggestions with the design team. The design team includes a digital media consultant, and the City's IT division will also be involved in the A/V design elements. The Recreation and Aquatics team, informed by the community engagement feedback, will outline A/V programming needs. We will be asking for more detailed, room-specific feedback in future rounds of community consultation (e.g., suggestions for kitchen features, pool features, outdoor space features, etc.). We will keep in touch when design of the A/V systems start.

- **Consider developing the project site as an artistic and creative hub.** A member of the public who is a part of an arts and entertainment company in Toronto proposed partnering with the City to develop the site into a facility for a “new Parkdale Arts Hub”, where it would provide classes in music, art, design, and many other creative areas and serve as a community theatre/gallery space. They said that the biggest issue affecting creative communities at present is the lack of facilities for practice and rehearsal. An arts hub would support the large community of artists in Parkdale/Roncesvalles and those who would like to learn and develop artistic and creative skills.

Appendix A – Meeting Agenda

Wabash Community Recreation Centre

Phase 4 – Draft Preferred Building and Landscape Design



Public Meeting

Wednesday, November 3, 2021, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Via Zoom

Meeting Purpose: To share and seek feedback on the development of the draft preferred building and landscape design and suggestions for programming.

PROPOSED AGENDA

6:30 pm **Land Acknowledgement, Welcome, Introductions & Agenda Review**

Yulia Pak, Swerhun Inc.

Councillor Gord Perks, Ward 4 Parkdale-High Park

Ashley Wilson, Parks Development & Capital Projects, City of Toronto

6:40 **Presentation: Draft Preferred Building and Landscape Design**

Alex Lavasidis, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City of Toronto

Ashley Wilson, Parks Development & Capital Projects, City of Toronto

Leslie Morton, PMA Landscape Architects

Jarle Lovlin, Diamond Schmitt Architects

Marcin Sztaba, Diamond Schmitt Architects

- Overview of the project
- Overview of the consultation process to date and key feedback received
- Draft preferred building and landscape design
- Timeline and next steps

Questions of clarification

7:10 **Discussion**

1. What are your thoughts on the draft preferred building and landscape design? What do you like? Do you have any concerns and suggestions on how to address them?
2. Does the proposed design support the activities you'd like to participate in? Do you have any suggestions to support those activities?
3. Do you have any other advice for the City and the design team as they refine the preferred building and landscape design?

8:25 **Next steps**

8:30 **Adjourn**

Appendix B – Project Team Attendees

City of Toronto

Ashley Wilson, Senior Project Coordinator, Capital Projects
Alex Lavasidis, Senior Consultation Coordinator
Daniel Fusca, Manager, Public Consultation
Cheryl MacDonald, Manager, Recreation
Howie Dayton, Director, Community Recreation
Travis Bailey, Supervisor, Aquatics
Suzanne Hajdu, Senior Project Coordinator, Construction Management and Capital Projects

Consultant Team

Jarle Lovlin, Diamond Schmitt Architects
Marcin Sztaba, Diamond Schmitt Architects
Leslie Morton, PMA Landscape Architects
Yulia Pak, Swerhun Inc.
Stephanie Quezada, Swerhun Inc.
Matthew Wheatley, Swerhun Inc.

Elected Official and Staff

Councillor Gord Perks, Ward 4, Parkdale-High Park
Meri Newton, Office of Councillor Gord Perks