

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Wabash Community Recreation Centre Community Resource Group (CRG)

Meeting 4 Summary

October 14, 2021



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Attendees

Community Resource Group Members

The following organizations applied to participate in the Community Resource Group. All organizations that applied for membership on the CRG were accepted. Those who were able to attend are **bolded** below.

Organizations

Friends of Sorauren Park

Garden Avenue P.S. Parent Council

Mentoring Junior Kids Organization (MJKO Boxing)

Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC)

Parkdale Jr. / Sr. Public School

Parkdale Residents Association

Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents Association

Sorauren Farmers' Market Association

St. Vincent De Paul Elementary School

West Lodge TCHC community

Youth Outreach Worker (Ex-Officio)

Elected Officials and Staff

Meri Newton, Office of Councillor Gord Perks

City of Toronto

Ashley Wilson, Senior Project Coordinator, Capital Projects

Alex Lavasidis, Senior Consultation Coordinator

Cheryl MacDonald, Manager, Community Recreation

Ronda Murphy, Supervisor, Community Recreation

Eric To, Supervisor, Community Recreation

Consultant Team

Jarle Lovlin, Diamond Schmitt Architects

Marcin Sztaba, Diamond Schmitt Architects

Leslie Morton, PMA Landscape Architects

Yulia Pak, Swerhun Inc

Khly Lamparero, Swerhun Inc

This summary is not intended to provide verbatim accounts of discussions. Rather, they summarize and document the key points made during the discussions, as well as the outcomes and actions arising from the CRG meeting.

Introduction

On Tuesday, October 14, 2021, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division (PF&R) at the City of Toronto hosted the fourth Community Resource Group (CRG) Meeting for the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre. Representatives from five local organizations, Councillor Gord Perks' Office, as well as members of the project team attended and participated in the meeting.

Meeting Goals

The purpose of the fourth meeting was to share and seek feedback on the development of the draft preferred building and landscape design, suggestions for programming, and feedback on the draft materials to be presented at the Phase 4 public meeting. The meeting agenda is attached to this summary as Appendix A.

Overview

The summary is structured to reflect key topics of discussion:

1. Questions of Clarification
2. Feedback about Building Design
3. Feedback about Landscape Design
4. Feedback about Programming
5. Feedback about Indigenous Engagement

This summary was written by Swerhun Inc., a 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.

Key Themes of the Discussion

The following key themes were shared by CRG members during the discussion. These key themes are intended to be read along with the more detailed feedback that follows in the remainder of the summary.

- Some participants said that they liked the fire pit, the design of the gathering space at the Town Square with hilled seating, as well as both exterior and interior design of the building.
- In terms of the building design, participants discussed the importance of using sustainable materials, such as mass timber. Participants also discussed the need for a café and a direct access from the community kitchen to the Town Square. Concerns regarding universal change room design were also noted.
- In terms of the landscape design and exterior elements, participants discussed the importance of lighting and community safety. Participants also shared a range of considerations and suggestions regarding the farmers' market, trees and plantings, parking, and the off-leash area.
- In terms of programming, participants discussed the need for outdoor recreation spaces, particularly for youth and encouraged the team to explore opportunities for such spaces utilizing the flat surface of the Town Square.
- Participants were interested to learn more about Indigenous engagement and urged the City to explore opportunities to incorporate Indigenous design and commemorate the history of First Nations.

Summary of Discussion

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*.

Questions of Clarification

- **Is there already a permission from Metrolinx for the crash barrier?** *We've stressed from the beginning that a crash barrier is required by Metrolinx. We would need a crash barrier regardless of where we build on the site because of the location of the existing building and because we are building a property with an Assembly Occupancy level. The strategy we've developed is a combination of a berm and a barrier, which gives us extra space and is landscape-friendly. We are still in the process of getting approval from Metrolinx and the City of Toronto for this proposed strategy and design.*
- **Is the length of the pool decided on? 25 metres seems too short.** *The approved lap pool size is 25 metres. 50 metre pools are usually competition pools, they are very expensive to build and maintain, and would not really be suitable for the type of use intended for this recreation centre. We are also constrained in terms of space and budget.*
- **How tall is the running track?** *We have a design standard for 8 metres minimum of clear unobstructed height in the gym, and the height of the suspended running track will be 4 metres above the gym floor.*
- **How much of the city skyline view would be left from the north and the west end of the park? Have you developed a visual of this view to show what would be visible in terms of the skyline? That view is a big part of the park and many park users come to enjoy it.** *We went through an extensive site and building placement, recognizing that it is important to limit the amount of building within the park. A lower building, two stories at least, would use up much more park space – and that's the trade-off we are working with. We're not building in the highest portion, but in the lowest portion of the park, although the four-storey building may obscure some parts of city view in certain vantage points. The building is placed alongside the rail corridor and stacked, to preserve as much of the park as possible.*
- **What about Indigenous engagement? The decisions made will have impact on the generations ahead. How is that taken into consideration in the design of the building?** *We are consulting with the Mississaugas of the Credit and one local Indigenous community member as part of the Local Indigenous Advisory Circle, as well as an Indigenous Youth organization. In terms of planning for future generations, we have heard about importance of sustainability of the building. Another big take-away is to provide space that is friendly to both elders and youth – a space where people feel they belong, where stories can be shared, and knowledge can be passed. Respecting and thinking about future generations is a very important aspect of design.*
- **What are the plans for the oven and the shipping container storage located in the park? It would be useful to continue having the Fieldhouse provide the storage function.** *These elements are out of scope for this project but are really important considerations that we can pass on to our colleagues in Parks, Forestry, and Recreation. From the beginning, we knew preserving the Fieldhouse was really important for some members of the community, and it is a big consideration in the preferred design option.*

Feedback about Building Design

Sustainable materials

- **There was a big mandate at the beginning of this project to be as carbon neutral as possible. Some of the other larger community centres are almost entirely built with Cross Laminated Timber (CLT). It looks like there is some wood framing proposed for the design, but it also seems like there is a lot of concrete. What materials will be used?** *Diamond Schmitt Architects is a big advocate for using mass timber. There are a number of building code and occupancy level considerations that influence our ability to use mass timber for this particular project. Currently, the approach is for the gym and the pool to be made completely out of mass timber. We are not pursuing concrete to a large extent – only for foundations. This building will be a net zero carbon building, so we are trying to limit the use of materials that are not carbon neutral, including concrete, as much as possible. We are also looking at renewable energy solutions and passive systems, including photovoltaic rooftop panels, earth tubes, stack effect for natural ventilation and reducing demand on building systems. The white cladding you see in the presentation is a placeholder, and we haven't developed the material selection yet.*

Universal Changeroom design

- **In the past universal changerooms had been met with community concerns. Many residents, including young families and seniors, raised concerns about the proposed universal changerooms in Mary McCormick Recreation Centre in terms of accessibility and having a gathering space while changing. The design of rows of small cubicles makes it hard to change, especially for seniors. Such design also precludes people from gathering and having conversations, and changerooms usually serve that function for community members.** *It is standard city practice for washrooms and changerooms to be universal in all new community recreation centres. It has arisen from the need to ensure inclusivity and family-oriented facilities. We have examples that show clear advantages of flexibility of use without diminishing privacy. We can arrange the tour for Canoe Landing Community Recreation Centre to look at the examples of universal changerooms that are fully accessible, private, and allow families to stay together.*
- **A closed off design of universal changerooms make it easier for children to hide, may result in a lack of ventilation in the middle, and makes it easier for the water to get caught in between the individual stalls.** All universal change stalls are open at the bottom to provide proper drainage, as well as open at the top to ensure proper ventilation is maintained.

Outdoor connection with community kitchen and café

- **Explore opportunities to provide direct access to the community kitchen from outside the building to better integrate with the farmers' market.** *It's a great suggestion that we can look into at the next stage of development.*
- **Consider designing a space for an indoor café that opens up to the Town Square that could be used for community groups.** Currently a cafe is not a part of the building program.

Feedback about Landscape Design

Farmers' market

- **Ensure there is a proper space for loading and unloading, as it is a big priority for the farmers' market.** *Providing actual loading / unloading space is within the City's Transportation Services purview, so it is outside of the scope of the project. However, we*

designed the edge of the site along Wabash Avenue as a rolled-up curb to allow farmers' vans and trucks to stop for loading and unloading.

- **A dedicated loading and unloading space could have a great permanent canopy made up with all the trees that need to be moved to accommodate the path to and the actual zone and/or have artistic design incorporated into it.**
- **Consider incorporating recessed grommets to install vendor tents to avoid using weights to hold tents in place for the farmers' market.**

Off-leash area

- **Avoid using wood chips and soil as a material for the new dog park and consider other environmentally friendly options.** These materials are used in Cedarvale dog park and create conditions similar to a wet barn, causing many issues.
- **Consider moving the off-leash area to a space beside the rail.** *The area next to the rail corridor does not provide sufficient space for an off-leash area and is required to be bermed as part of the railway crash mitigation strategy.*

Lighting and community safety

- **Enhance community safety with proper lighting on the site, particularly in the dog park, the parking lot, and the area along the rail tracks.** *Yes, community safety and security are top of mind. We will be looking at opportunities to improve lighting not just on the site but also along the paths leading to the community centre. We also must carefully think about light pollution. We will use lighting that won't emit light upwards and will be fairly contained.*
- **Ensure there is a fire hydrant nearby to protect this beautiful building.**

Trees

- **It looks like some of the trees will be removed and reconfigured on the Town Square, particularly the trees between the Fieldhouse and the square. There are some mature trees, as well as memorial and adopted trees that should be seriously considered.** *We looked at tree removal to ensure we have the same width sidewalk that extends into further in the park. The trees will be assessed and relocated to better ensure their long term survival, as well as additional trees planted.*
- **Consider trees of different heights as cessation plantings on the east side of the building towards the rail tracks for a nicer view and to use it as a noise buffer.** *Important to note that there is currently a Metrolinx noise barrier that will remain there.*

Parking

- **Consider City signage that protects parking for vendors on Wabash Avenue for the day of the farmers' market (currently Mondays).**
- **Ensure there is designated staff parking.**
- **Explore ways to limit residential parking.**

Feedback about Programming

Outdoor recreational spaces for youth and others

- **Youth need outdoor spaces to gather and be physically active.** For example, basketball is big in the Parkdale neighbourhood – it brings youth together and helps foster a strong sense of neighbourhood. Many also come to the park to exercise. Consider installing workout structures similar to the ones along the Lakeshore Boulevard.

- **Utilize the flat surface of the Town Square for outdoor recreational activities, particularly for kids and teenagers.** The Town Square is already used by kids to learn how to bike and by a pickle ball league. For teenagers, a basketball net can easily be put in there or other interesting, augmented spaces could be explored. *We can explore having a multi-purpose hard surface. We want to soften the edges and have more shaded seating. We could also investigate creating tiered placed benches with metal edging to create a skate spot.*
- **Consider providing more artificial ice surface, for example, that can be used for other sports in the other three seasons.**
- **Ensure the membership for such outdoor spaces is accessible to all.** Outdoor activities promote physical and mental health.
- **Consider incorporating a retractable screen on the Town Square for community movie nights.** Currently, Friends of Sorauren Park uses an inflatable screen. It would be great to design a space that has or allows building in a big retractable screen in the future. Perhaps it could be done mimicking the existing train shed.

Feedback about Indigenous Design and Commemoration

- **Consider opportunities to integrate Indigenous design inside the building, particularly in the pool area to avoid a lot of white space that might cause glare.** *Thank you for your suggestion – we'll explore such opportunities in the next stage. Allowing adequate natural light is an important consideration and we have put a lot of thought into the angle of the exterior panels in the swimming pool as a safety aspect to control incoming light.*
- **Consider a commemorative plaque honouring the First Nations of this land translated into English.**

Next Steps

The project team thanked participants and committed to sharing a draft summary of the meeting before finalizing to ensure accurate reflection of feedback shared. They encouraged the CRG members to participate and share with their networks information about the upcoming public meeting and the online survey. The project team also informed participants that they will follow up about a tour of the recently completed Canoe Landing Community Recreation Centre for the CRG members. The tour is being organized based on the interest CRG members have shared at the third CRG meeting back in June, with a particular interest in seeing the kitchen. Information about the tour date and time will be shared once confirmed by the City.

Contact Us

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

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Appendix A – Meeting Agenda

Wabash Community Recreation Centre

Phase 4 – Draft Preferred Building and Landscape Design

Community Resource Group Meeting 1 of 2

Tuesday, October 14, 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, suggestions for programming, and feedback on the draft materials to be presented at the public meeting.

PROPOSED AGENDA

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

Yulia Pak, Swerhun Inc.

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. What type of activities would you like to participate in at this community recreation centre? Does the proposed design support the activities you'd like to participate in? Do you have any design 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?

8:20 Next steps

8:30 Adjourn

Appendix B – Participant Submission After the Meeting

After sharing a draft of the summary with CRG members for review, the facilitation team has received additional feedback from a CRG member over email. This feedback is included below and is unedited other than to adjust formatting.

Feedback from Sorauren Farmers' Market Association:

We have an Indigenous Climate Action Initiative (funded in part by the City of TO Climate Action Fund Grant) beginning at Sorauren Farmers' Market this year and this Indigenous-led project was to culminate in a medicine garden but the City has not approved our use of Sorauren park at this time for the garden due to the upcoming Wabash development. We are working with Miinikaans and Carolynne Crawley and I am wondering if there is any room for us to be part of the conversation about the proposed rooftop garden as this might be a perfect fit for the medicine garden.

At present the market donates produce during the growing season to Na-Me-Res, Native Men's Residence, and we were hoping to create this garden in order to add medicinal herbs to our weekly offerings as well as a teaching tool, to raise awareness for Indigenous Climate Action etc.

Let me know if you need me to send more info.