

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Alexandra Park Improvements

Public Engagement Summary Report

March 2022

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Alexandra Park Renewal Public Meeting that was held on March 28th, 2022 from 7:00pm to 8:30pm.

The meeting was attended by 35 community members, including Councillor Joe Cressy.

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

Meeting Goals

The City has been working towards improving Alexandra Park, located at 275 Bathurst St., at the southeast corner of Bathurst Street and Dundas Street. The park improvements are proposed to include upgraded pathways, lighting, seating/gathering areas, and a refurbishing or repurposing of the existing volleyball court pad, and repurposing of the existing ball diamond to another facility. The goal of the public meeting was to:

- **Present key findings** from the study process that informed the development of recommendations
- **Share recommended actions** to improve the existing Alexandra Park site facilities and park features, and improve access and connections to and within the park.
- **Hear feedback from the community** on the recommendations before finalization of the Alexandra Park Renewal design

Meeting Promotion

The meeting was promoted through:

- Paid social media advertisement on Facebook and Instagram geo-targeting the study area.
- Project webpage updates.
- Councillor Joe Cressy's social media platform(s).

Feedback Summary

Project staff presented the engagement process, a project overview and draft recommendations, and a proposed renewal plan, 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, including additional comments and questions received after the meeting concluded. This is not a verbatim transcript.

Questions and Answers

Questions regarding recommendations to: Expand the existing park, Introduce new outdoor recreation facilities, and enhance existing park and outdoor facilities.

Q 1: Will tennis or ping pong tables be included?

A: We are exploring additional options with tables in the Renewal Plan and the addition of a ping pong table is being considered, due to their area consumption tennis courts are not being considered.

Q 2: Considering the existing condition of the park, and that the park is located next to one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city and that this area will be adding a massive amount of residents in the Alexandra Park revitalization, it seems that a much more substantial upgrade is justified - why aren't we looking at something much more substantial similar to e.g. the renovation of Grange Park?

A: (Councillor Cressy) That's a great comment, and I just want to mention that as part of the revitalization that's happening with Alexandra Park, we are actually adding in a new park. So there's actually from a park's perspective two pieces here: 1, which isn't on tonight's agenda, a new signature destination park that will be built and designed in the Alexandra Park area. The other piece is that, if there is feedback or ideas here on how we could improve this park that is exactly what we want to hear. This park has an enclosed rink, an outdoor rink that isn't enclosed, a swimming pool, a skate park, a splash pad, a playground, and we know it can be much more. So two comments here, let's dream bring and the other is that there is an additional signature park within Alexandra Park that is coming.

Q 3: My concern as a resident is the noise coming from the park. Is that taken into consideration? We have gone through 18 months with non-stop noise. I hope that this is on your radar. Everything looks great

A: Noise is a measurement of the park's success. It can help us understand the activity levels within the park. However, we understand your point and we'll ensure that we don't place seating options next to any residences. We will maintain a proper distance between park uses and nearby residences.

Q 4: The Ryerson gateway becomes a muddy mess every year. When it rains, it seems the park drains down into the storm drains along Ryerson Avenue, so that entire pathway becomes a river, especially at the end of the winter season. Everything in that southern quadrant is muddy and messy. Are there any plans to mitigate this occurrence?

A: Thank you for clarifying, we will examine this and regrade this area to ensure water does not pool causing this muddy area.

Q 5: I know you said that the pool is not being renovated. I think it is a safety issue. People go in overnight. You find broken bottles. Is there a way to make the fences more substantial? When you come into the pool as a staff person to do the opening checks, it is not great coming across broken glass.

A: Many facilities in the park have already received renovations, the Alexandra Park swimming pool included, as well as a brand new splash pad. I think some of the things you mentioned are security issues, and understanding that the lighting is included as one of these which we are upgrading. Hopefully in improving lighting in the park we could alleviate some of the safety concerns in the park and mitigate any nefarious activities from occurring in the evenings and overnight.

Q 6: It is a well-used park. I enjoy seeing people sitting on blankets picnicking, playing, tai chi in the morning, etc. During the renovations will the park area be closed off entirely?

A: Yes, the park area will be closed entirely. We are looking to start construction in the spring

and finish in the fall. If we phase the project it will be a disturbance over a number of years. The goal is to complete the project in one phase and one construction season. We will look at the possibility of maintaining access to the community garden.

Q 7: I would like to see more areas for community gatherings. The local school and others use this park for outdoor activities during the winter and summer. The park attracts families and parties for celebration.

A: Yes, that's the beauty of open green spaces rather than one facility that serves a single demographic. The open green spaces services many different events and uses and it allows for a lot of programmable opportunities.

Q 8: Could you speak to the circulation plan? It seems to be oriented to go through; consider for example Grange Park where the overall circulation system is creating a focal point.

A: Our research & analysis and discussions with Parks Operation staff verify the circulation works. Also, relocating the paths could result in major damage to the tree roots of the existing mature trees. We don't want to remove any trees. Given the existing pathway circulation system works, our rationale was to reconstruct the pathways in the same configuration.

Q 9: Is that line an old service line? Lead piping wasn't outlawed until recently. Can that water be drank? Are there water fountains in the park?

A: There is a water fountain in the park. It is understood that it is copper. The water in our parks are tested every year to ensure it is safe for drinking. When constructing the recently built splash pad, the water supply line (including the drinking fountain) was tapped into the existing water supply system.

Questions regarding recommendations spaces for dogs.

Q 10: The community centre, rink, library, outdoor pool are an eyesore and leaves a ton of wasted space around them. Also, the southern part of the park is seriously dodgy. Maybe the dog park should be in this area?

A: The southern part of the park is directly adjacent to the residences. That is why we decided to repurpose the baseball diamond. A new Dogs Off Leash Area is proposed for the new park to be built in the Alexandra community.

Q 11: In regards to the baseball diamond, I do have some concerns with those changes because from the image it looks like the proposed DOLA will take up the entire space and that seems to equal to essentially a quarter of the park. In recent years there has been a lot of conversations about there not being enough green space within the City and I feel like that taking this entire space from everybody and dedicating it to one single-use DOLA seems to be very against what we are trying to achieve in the City. I'm not against having DOLAs in parks, but I don't think it's necessarily the best idea to take away the ball diamond from everybody else who uses that space for gatherings, picnics, especially during the summer. So I would like to know, what the alternatives are instead of turning it into one single-use space for dogs?

A: What we're showing in our proposed designs are just concepts representing the feedback we received prior to meeting with the public. So one of our options was converting the ball diamond into a DOLA. However, yes we agree it could be an open parkland space filled with grass and trees that offers a multi-use function for more passive-type uses. This is the kind of feedback we're interested in hearing tonight.

Q 12: Are fire pits an option? To create community use. Also, what's the size of the proposed dog off-leash area (DOLA)? It looks large and could possibly be smaller?

A: Fire pits are not included in the current Renewal Plan, as we would need to talk to parks operational staff to complete a proper assessment and provide further recommendations. Yes as mentioned earlier, the appropriate sizing and/or inclusion of the DOLA will need to be determined.

Q 13: Councillor Cressy brought up the new park that will be coming to the Alexandra Park area. Would it not be beneficial to plan the DOLA into the new park and provide that area that's needed to accommodate it there? If that's a possibility, wouldn't that make more sense?

A: (Councillor's Staff) I think that's a great point and something we could take into account. When the landscape plans for this park came out, the initial plans should an area for a green space. We heard a bit of interest in a DOLA, but we understand and hear that this can be controversial. So we'll take this back to the Councillor and we'll see if it's maybe better to integrate the DOLA into the new signature park instead.

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

Q 14: Whatever happened to the revitalization program for the community centre, library etc.? I've been hearing about this for years.

A: (Councillor's Staff) I believe that staff are still putting together a capital plan to address these future works. This will likely be worked into the later phases of the redevelopment plan. I'm not sure of the exact timings for this redevelopment. However, if you send an email to the Councillor's office, I could follow-up with my Chief-of-Staff and he will surely have all the details on that.

Q 15: Are there any opportunities for better waste management in the park? European (Amsterdam style) garbage cans with large receptacles underground to hold more garbage and keep the park cleaner with the lighter garbage pickup schedules.

A: We have worked directly with the City Solid Waste Department. Waste & recycle collection operations and the waste bins ~~is~~ are standardized within our parks. Waste management within our parks is not performed by the Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Division, it is handled by the Waste Management division.

Q 16: The ball diamond in the Ryerson School Yard is labelled like it would be a park facility, but there's a small text label saying the gate between the park and schoolyard will be locked most

of the time. Will the school's baseball diamond be accessible to the public at all if the park's baseball diamond is removed?

A: What we know about the ball diamond in Alexandra Park is that it's not permitted. It's not being used as a ball diamond. So it's virtually too small of an area given that it's intersected by the pathways. That's why we're interested in repurposing the space as an open green space, etc. We're not touching the ball diamond located in the school yard property.

The ball diamond in the school yard is going to remain for the foreseeable future. The gate that connects to the park used to be open. It's been locked due to increased security issues. While the school yard is open after school hours for the foreseeable future they will keep that gate locked.

Q 17: Is there an opportunity for heritage / history related engagement in Alexandra Park?

Alexandra Park is one of Toronto's oldest public parks, opening in 1904. Prior to 1904, the park was the site of a large estate property (called The Hall) that was home to the Gzowski family. There's also a lot of history in regards to the surrounding neighbourhood.

A: Yes, there is an opportunity to place historical plaques at Alexandra Park.

Comments and Suggestions

C 1: The water access to the southern diversity garden (community garden) is actually outside in the ground and requires extended hoses that are prone to leaking. Seniors that use this set-up often encounter issues with flooding due to connectivity issues. Improving on this design would be vastly appreciated.

R: We will meet with the City plumber. My understanding is that if there is access to water, water hoses would be required. We usually provide the water source and it is my understanding that the water access is there.

C 2: I do want to acknowledge the volleyball court is currently used for other recreational activities. However, the net poles are bent and the surface has large cracks / uneven sections.

R: The plan that we have shown is to replace the volleyball with a pickle ball court. Volleyball is not a growing demographic whereas pickle ball is. It provides an opportunity for seniors to have an activity to participate in within our parks. We will look at other opportunities based on your feedback.

We understand that the parks' functionality currently works. We want to maintain the green space that is there right now. We are calling it a refresh. We know the space is well loved and there is quite a bit of wear and tear.

C 3: Having seating close to residences seems concerning due to noise.

R: We receive the 311 reports on this. We will adjust the design so that the seating is not adjacent to the residences at the south end.

C 4: The benches by the skate rink are good as it's a high traffic zone throughout the year (summer bring in a lot of roller skaters, winter brings in a lot of ice skaters).

C 5: Pickle ball court would be a good idea as there are many seniors that use the park on a daily basis (weather permitting) - they tend to go there for tai chi, qi gong, salsa dancing, and bring their own speakers so this may be a new sport for them to try out and take up.

C 6: I see many dog owners using this park, and a DOLA would be beneficial for our community.

R: In the redevelopment proposal for the Alexandra Park community, a new signature city park, other than Alexandra Park, is planned. There is the opportunity of placing a new DOLA in this new park

C 7: Some of the improvements that make other recent park renovations successful are high end playground facilities and well-designed seating areas that go beyond picnic tables - e.g. the concrete arc in Grange Park, the furniture in St. Andrew's Playground at Adelaide and Brant.

R: The improvements proposed for Alexandra Park is not a total renovation but to give the park a 'refresh' by upgrading its worn existing facilities and amenities.

C 8: The baseball area could be much better used for other purposes like a larger playground connected to the splash pad or like the large playground in Grange. Move the dog park to the southern area. It's a completely unused area.

R: Converting the existing ball diamond into an open parkland area, of lawn and trees, will allow for different types passive uses. A Dogs Off Leash Area is proposed for the future new community park in the Alexandra community.

Contact Us

For any questions or additional comments please contact:

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