

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

# New Parks in the Moss Park Neighbourhood Black Community Advisory Group Meeting 1

Meeting Summary

August 12, 2022

Eli Bawuah, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator  
Alex Lavasidis, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator  
Katie Black, Project Coordinator Landscape Architect  
Laurel Christie, Senior Project Coordinator



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## Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Black Community Advisory Group (BCAG) meeting that was held virtually on Thursday July 14, 2022 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

More information about the project can be found on the [project webpage](#).

A meeting agenda is included in Appendix A.

## Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Welcome and introduce BCAG members & the project team
- Review and confirm Terms of Reference
- Present a project overview
- Discuss BCAG members' ideas and visions for the new parks
- Share next steps

## Attendance

### BCAG Members Present

- Amanda C-B
- Ashleigh E
- Hildah J
- Ishimwe N
- Jasmine S
- Joy S
- Julianna S
- Kevin W
- Linda M
- Lydia O
- Shad U
- Tonya R

### Project Staff Present

- Alex Lavasidis, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
- Eli Bawuah, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
- Katie Black, Project Coordinator Landscape Architect, New park on Richmond St E
- Laurel Christie, Senior Project Coordinator, New park on King St E

## Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were reviewed with BCAG members. Members made no suggested edits or comments. The Terms of Reference were approved by all BCAG members present.

BCAG members absent from the meeting will review and confirm the Terms of Reference through email.

The terms or reference is available on the [project webpage](#).

## Presentation

Project staff presented:

- A project overview about the two new parks coming to the Moss Park Neighbourhood.
- Information about the community around the two new parks, including:
  - Community Demographics

- Nearby Park Amenities
- Historic Black connections in the Neighbourhood

The full presentation is available on the [project webpage](#).

## Questions and Discussion

A discussion period followed the presentation. Guiding discussion questions included:

1. What are your priorities for the new parks?
2. What features would encourage you to spend time in these new parks? OR  
What would help make you feel welcomed in the new parks?
3. What are features that should be avoided? OR  
What would make you feel unwelcomed in the new parks?
4. Are there specific features you want in the new park on  
Richmond St East OR on King St East?
  - *Note: Discussion focused on questions 1-3. There was not enough time for the BCAG to discuss question 4 in depth.*

## Q & A

Questions received by BCAG members (Q) and responses from staff (R) include the following. These are not verbatim:

Q. Will these be regular City Parks (e.g. with a standard park sign) or will these be privately owned public spaces?

R. These will be public City parks. They are built by the developer and then ownership is transferred to the City. The City then owns and maintains the public park, as with any standard City of Toronto park.

Q. In the presentation, it said grass would not be included, does this mean planted areas cannot be included either?

R. Grass cannot be included as space for people to walk or sit because it will not survive due to the high foot traffic in the parks. Planted areas and trees can be included.

Q. Will these parks be open to the public for all activities? Are there concerns about a park next to residential buildings due to noise?

R. These parks will be open to the public. The buildings will be mixed-use including residential uses. Noise is a part of living downtown.

Q. Will there be multiple access points into and out of each park?

R. Yes. For the new park on Richmond St East there will be a pedestrian connection north to Queen St East, and east to Ontario St. For the new park on King St East, there will be a pedestrian connection east-west between Princess and Ontario St, as well as north to Adelaide St. Each of these connections will be through publicly accessible but privately owned spaces.

Q. How do we prevent dogs (there are many in nearby and upcoming condominiums) from using these new parks to relieve themselves, which makes spaces unusable for people in the neighbourhood?

R. The City strongly encourages developers to include amenities for dogs inside new condominium developments (e.g. on private terraces or indoors). These parks are small and there is no space to cater to dogs (e.g. by providing a dog off-leash area), as there is such high

demand for other uses of these park spaces. Moss Park is a larger park nearby that is about to go through a redesign process. There may be space for a dog off-leash area or similar facilities to be considered there. The design team will still need to consider the presence of dogs in the park designs to ensure that plants and trees in the parks can thrive and coexist with dogs present.

Q. Is park naming part of this park design process, and can the BCAG influence the park name?

R. Naming of City properties is currently a separate process and is on hold as part of the [Recognition Review](#). Naming will begin again once the moratorium is lifted, and after Council has approved a new [framework for commemoration](#) in the public realm, which is anticipated this year. If the moratorium ends and there is opportunity to provide input into the park naming during the BCAG process, members will be notified.

Q. I am against defensive architecture; what are other strategies to mitigate behaviors that may be unsafe or unwelcoming for other park users?

R. BCAG members have raised many suggested approaches to ensure parks feel safe and welcoming without defensive architecture. For example, it will be important to have clear sightlines through the park, to avoid creating hidden spaces, and to include good lighting, especially at night. By creating a space that many members of the community want to spend time in, we encourage the presence of many park users, which helps to deter unsafe or unwelcoming behaviours.

## Design Priorities for Creating Welcoming New Parks

The following provides a summary of the BCAG member discussion about priorities and suggestions for creating welcoming new parks:

- **Provide Options:** There needs to be a variety of different spaces and features to meet the needs of a wide range of park users, so that people don't feel left out (e.g. people without dogs or without children shouldn't feel like the space is not also theirs to use). Grange Park is a great example of a park that creates different spaces and features for different uses. Provide a little "something for everyone".
  - **Seating:** Provide lots of comfortable seating in a wide range of options (e.g. Grange Park). This will make the park more welcoming and accessible to more people. Include:
    - Accessible seating.
    - Seating with tables, so people can eat in the park.
      - Seating and tables at different heights, for people of different heights and abilities, and for different uses (e.g. table height, counter height and bar height).
    - Seating in the sun and in the shade.
    - Seating arranged into distinct areas, with seating facing each other, so that multiple groups can sit in the park at once.
    - Seating at different orientations and positions, for a variety of experiences and views.
    - A variety of seating forms including benches, picnic tables, etc.
      - Ensure seating has proper drainage, so it can be used after rain.
  - **Sun vs. Shade:** Shade allows people to stay in a park longer and feel more comfortable. Provide a mix of sunny and shaded areas at all times of day.
  - **Activity Spaces:** Create different areas within the parks that accommodate activities for different ages and interests. Pulling people with different interests

and abilities into a park creates vibrancy and makes people want to spend more time there.

- **Build Space for Community:** Provide open gathering spaces for local community events that encourage people to come together without the need to book a venue (e.g. space for poetry reading, dancing, drum circles and more). Also include a large community posting board (with a rain roof, like in east end parks).
- **Create quiet and calm spaces**
- **Other park feature ideas (less discussed):**
  - An exercise circuit.
  - Little library.
  - Charcoal grills or a hibachi.
  - Puzzles or mazes.
  - Badminton net.
- **Make it Green:** The new parks are located in a "park desert", an area in need of greenspace. Keeping in mind that looking at greenery and being in green spaces can help maintain good mental health, make sure the parks are as green as possible, feel like an oasis, and enable people to connect with nature in the City.
  - Include native plants and pollinators.
    - A benefit of native plantings are that interesting birds will want to spend time in the parks, without the need to install bird feeders (which can come with problems, such as attracting pests, and maintenance requirements).
  - Consider vertical spaces for greenery, such as climbing vines and other vertical gardening.
  - Include beautiful flowers.
  - Example: There is a gated park at 156 King St E that at times can feel like an oasis, but there is too much concrete. To achieve a more oasis-like feel, there needs to be less concrete and less concrete planters.
- **Representation Matters:** Create a welcoming space by ensuring Black community members see themselves reflected in the design of the space.
  - Use vibrant, colourful art to celebrate the history, presence, diversity, and future of the Black community in the neighbourhood. For example:
    - Murals (fixed or changing over time).
    - Standing or rotating art displays.
    - Rotating art displays on large community notice boards (a protected part of the boards. The size of those available in the east end).
    - Interactive art.
  - There is a proud abolitionist history in the area that should be celebrated and commemorated through art. This would help make the space welcoming for the Black community and educate those who are not aware of these important histories.
  - Consider naming one or both of the parks after a prominent Black person or Canadian.
    - *Note: Naming of City properties is currently a separate process and is on hold as part of the [Recognition Review](#) . Naming will begin again once the moratorium is lifted, and after Council has approved a new [framework for commemoration](#) in the public realm, which is anticipated this year. If the moratorium ends and there is opportunity to provide input into the park naming during the BCAG process, members will be notified.*

- **Different Parks for Different Purposes:** Each park doesn't need to do everything. Each park can serve a different set of functions.
- **Ensure the Parks Feel Safe:**
  - Ensure visibility into, through and outside of the park. People should be able to see if others are in distress inside or near the parks.
  - Provide adequate lighting throughout the parks. This is especially important for improving safety for feminine-presenting folks. This could include:
    - Plenty of lighting along pathways, and through common and seating areas.
    - Over time, ensure trees don't grow to obscure lighting, or place light below the tree crown, along pathways at a more human-level. This would also avoid light pollution into nearby units.
  - Some members suggested the potential inclusion of an emergency or panic button to improve feelings of safety in the parks. Others felt this would not improve safety in the parks, and could instead reduce safety for Black community members and others, depending on who the buttons would call.
    - A member shared that emergency buttons are located in a space off of Roberts Street, south of Bloor. Staff will investigate to learn if these are located in public parks, as staff present are not aware of any emergency buttons in City parks.
  - Include a gate or fence near roads to ensure safety of younger park users.
  - Consider creating and posting community principles on a community notice board or mural to set standards and prevent gender-based violence and harassment.
  - Make it easy to report crime or other unsafe situations.
- **Ensure Accessibility:**
  - Do not include hostile architecture.
  - Design for all ages in mind.
  - Include a drinking fountain.
  - Include washrooms to make the park welcoming and accessible, and to allow people to spend more time in the park. This is a feature that is especially important for increasing accessibility for people who have certain medical needs, for parents breastfeeding or in need of changing space, and for unhoused people.
    - There are some modern public washroom designs with glass panels that are clear when not in use and become opaque when in use, so you can see what is inside before entering.
    - Staff will confirm if washrooms are possible to include in the parks.
  - Ensure pathways are wide enough to accommodate the use of mobility devices. Many people in the neighbourhood use mobility devices.
  - Since grass may not be useable in this space, provide other soft groundcover options (e.g. rubber) for kids and others to use.
- **Support Sustainability:**
  - Consider the needs of future generations when designing the parks.
  - Use more organic building materials whenever possible.
  - Include many easily accessible waste and recycling bins.
- **Create a Beautiful Space:** The park should be clean, green, colourful, and full of art and interesting features to look at (e.g. the fountain in Berczy Park).

- To encourage younger people or tourists to spend time in the parks, consider creating very beautiful backdrops that would encourage sharing photos of the space on social media. Consider art installations, murals, greenery, etc. to accomplish this.
- **Design with Intention:** The parks need to feel purposeful, cohesive and well-planned. Being able to see the purpose of the parks will help determine how well they are used. The designs should create multiple spaces that interact well together.

## Next Steps

- Members can send additional ideas, comments, or suggestions to [Alex.Lavasidis@toronto.ca](mailto:Alex.Lavasidis@toronto.ca)
- Honorarium will be available for pickup on Thursday July 21 from 4 – 7 p.m. at Rooster House Coffee at King St E and Ontario St.
  - Members will receive an email with instructions for pickup. Alternate arrangements will be made as required.
- Staff will compile a written summary of the meeting and distribute to members for review.
  - Members will have one week to provide suggested edits to the draft summary, after which the summary will be finalized and published to the project webpage.
- The design teams will consider feedback from the BCAG meeting and other community engagement events to create draft designs for each new park.
  - The draft designs will be presented to the community in the fall for feedback and revision.
- The second BCAG meeting is planned to take place in late September 2022.
  - Members will receive an email in September to confirm a meeting date and time.

## Contact Us

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

Elijah (Eli) Bawuah  
Sr. Community Consultation Coordinator  
Phone: 647-289-6559 | Email: [Elijah.Bawuah@toronto.ca](mailto:Elijah.Bawuah@toronto.ca)

Alex Lavasidis  
Sr. Community Consultation Coordinator  
Phone: 416-318-1887 | Email: [Alex.Lavasidis@toronto.ca](mailto:Alex.Lavasidis@toronto.ca)



## Appendix A – Meeting Agenda

# Two New Parks in Moss Park Black Community Advisory Group Meeting 1

July 14 2022 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

## WEBEX INFO

Meeting link:

<https://toronto.webex.com/toronto/j.php?MTID=m27e86110764b2975c78f9119186ab80c>

Password: -----

Phone in: 416-915-6530

Meeting number: 2458 587 7838

## MEETING GOALS/PURPOSE

- Welcome and introduce BCAG members & the project team
- Review and confirm Terms of Reference
- Present a project overview
- Discuss your ideas and visions for the new parks
- Share next steps

## AGENDA

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>5:30</b> | <b>BCAG Member tech check opens</b>            |
| <b>6:00</b> | <b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>             |
| <b>6:45</b> | <b>Review &amp; Confirm Terms of Reference</b> |
| <b>6:55</b> | <b>Presentation</b>                            |
| <b>7:25</b> | <b>Discussion Period</b>                       |
| <b>7:57</b> | <b>Next Steps &amp; Thank You</b>              |
| <b>8:00</b> | <b>Adjourn</b>                                 |

## Appendix B – Post-Meeting Email Feedback

Email feedback was provided by one BCAG member who was unable to attend the first meeting, and one BCAG member who attended the first meeting and had additional input.

Email feedback from a BACG members who was unable to attend the first meeting:

1. What are your priorities for the new parks?
  - connect with nature in the city
  - find quiet and calm
  - gather with friends
  - gathering place for hyper local community events to bring neighbours of north and south of queen together
2. What features would encourage you to spend time in these new parks? OR What would help make you feel welcomed in the new parks?
  - comfy and clean seating areas
  - nearby places to by food - Eg coffee shops, restaurants etc
  - pretty flowers
  - free of garbage, dog poo, needles
  - easy to report crime or unsafe situations
3. What are features that should be avoided? OR What would make you feel unwelcomed in the new parks?
  - poorly lit spaces at night
  - lots of garbage
  - lack of washrooms
4. Are there specific features you want in the new park on Richmond St East OR on King St East? *Note: Discussion focused on questions 1-3. There was not enough time for the BCAG to discuss question 4 in depth.*
  - a. That bouncy blue flooring that they have at Corktown Commons
  - b. Food trucks
  - c. element of Black art and history
  - d. seasonal exhibits or community events

Email feedback from a BCAG member who attended the first meeting and had additional input:

- A couple of thoughts: for the park to be used, It must feel like home, it might be a bit eclectic but there is something for everyone. It would be cool to incorporate puzzles, or mazes into the space (I know, too small), maybe a badminton net. Might be difficult to maintain but worth it I think, especially if there was buy-in? Maybe a hibachi (I know fire hazard). Also, I think public art, reflective of both our black history, present, and future. It would be great to see it changed based on that maybe quarterly, people would use it all year round.