

Island Programs and Activation Targeted Discussion Conversation Summary

October 27th

Purpose

To share and discuss emerging ideas that will influence the preliminary master plan and to gather specific feedback regarding programming and activation for the Island.

Community Participants

- Toronto Island Community Association
- Shadowland Theatre
- Queen City Yacht Club
- Pirate Life Theatre
- Artscape Gibraltar Point
- Artscape Gibraltar Point
- Evergreen Brickworks
- Toronto Island Maple Leaf disc golf tournament

TRCA

Colin Love
Cory Anderson

City Staff

- Community Recreation
- Community Recreation
- Community Recreation
- Community Recreation
- Park Supervisor
- Parks Waterfront District

Project Team

City: David O'Hara, Daniel Fusca, Pablo Muñoz and Lori Ellis
Consultant: Victoria Bell - DTAH

Agenda

Presentation shared: City Staff; Lori Ellis and Consultant; Victoria Bell
Questions and answers facilitated: Lori Ellis and Consultant; Victoria Bell
Discussion facilitated: Pablo Muñoz, Daniel Fusca, Lori Ellis and Victoria Bell

Summary of feedback

The project team facilitated a discussion using 3 questions as a starting point:

1. Are there any concerns with where new programming areas are identified? Are there any access issues or experiences with using these areas that contribute to them being unsuitable?
2. Are there areas that have not been identified for public use that should be considered? How does activating these areas contribute to a year-round experience?
3. Are there additional considerations we should include in the master plan recommendations to support creating a four-season park for all Torontonians to enjoy?

The discussion was facilitated using a Miro board. Answers from participants are summarized and grouped into themes below.

Access and Transportation

Environmental Impact: It was shared by the group that increased ideas of activation could also result in increased vehicles which would not be ideal. Idling cars should be deterred from the Island. Several participants suggested that eco-friendly transportation should be considered for the Island. One participant suggested autonomous vehicles while another participant noted that the tram at Centre Island is eco-friendly.

Transportation within the Island: It was noted by park staff that getting across the Island is a challenge for some visitors. Often they are asked to transport someone in their vehicle because they didn't know how long the walk was going to be.

Ferry Access: Several participants noted that better ferry access was needed, particularly in the winter, to access the West side of the Island and Gibraltar point.

Bike Rentals: A couple of participants suggested adding bike rentals and bike sharing on the Island.

Winter Programming and Activities

Skating on Canals and Lagoons: Island residents shared that during COVID, Torontonians from diverse communities headed to the Island to skate on the frozen canals and lagoons. Some people even built lodges and that this trend is expected to continue. One participant suggested that this increased activity shouldn't be "overly policed" or programmed. Another participant noted that there were some accidents this last winter. Some people fell through the ice and had to be rescued from drowning. Currently there are no places for people to warm up if there is an accident, usually people knock on the doors of Island residents for help. Including warming shelters would be important when considering winter activation.

Some participants suggested that the small ponds at Centre Island could be transformed into skating rinks. It was noted that ice conditions in other cities like Ottawa are tested for safety and that the same could be done here. One participant added that the City has a program where community groups can create homemade rinks permitted by the City.

Cross Country Skiing and Snow Shoeing: It was also suggested that cross country skiing and snow shoeing could be considered in some of the Island's trails and that snow making would be great for supporting those activities.

Far Enough Farm and Winter Programming: Some participants brought up Far Enough Farm and noted that it was a great experience in the winter to go see the animals. "There were horses running free in the winter and it was just an unbelievably amazing experience"

One participant suggested the creation of a winter market to compliment winter programming.

Climate Considerations: It was noted that Toronto's climate isn't consistently snowy, or cold, to support winter sports like skiing and snow shoeing. One participant suggested doing a climate study. Evergreen Brickworks shared that due to the lack of snow, they have accentuated their winter programming with other activities like curling and "owl tours" because they can't rely on their skating rink. They also shared that they have identified that they need to provide programming or activities for visitors for **at least 2.5 hours** "the optimal time" in order to make it worth their time.

Gardening and Food Production

Food Gardens: One participant noted that there is a growing trend in cities for urban food production. It was suggested that there might be an opportunity to use existing areas to grow food. Artscape and the school have/had food gardens, for example. One participant suggested that maple syrup tapping could be introduced in the winter.

Kid Programming: Some participants suggested that Franklin Garden presents an opportunity to include Indigenous planting techniques that could be shared to children. City staff shared that there currently is a community programmer at the Island and Franklin Garden has an eco-coordinator that offers some programming to children.

Water Access

Vessel Traffic: Some participants suggested that noise from sea-doo's and motorized water vessels should be considered when looking at water accessibility. They added that some vessels go through the channels really fast making it potentially dangerous for others.

Docks: It was noted that more people are going to the Island on personal water vessels and not just ferry boat, and that there is a lack of docking and access points. Most people arrive at places where there are washrooms and food, like Wards.

Water and Beach Quality: Participants brought up that water access needs to be looked at in a more holistic way and consider the quality of the water as well as things like poison ivy near the shores, fire ants and ticks, which are a growing problem in parts of the Island. One particular problem area is the meadow near Wards.

Boating: One participant shared that Long Pond is used annually for a paddling event and it has been used in the past for dragon boat races.

Spaces and Opportunities for Activation

Water Treatment Plant: One participant noted that the space behind the treatment plant building is currently not being used and could be activated. Another participants shared that that area is a bird sanctuary and human traffic could disturb the ecosystem.

Eastern Gap: One participant shared that Island visitors go to the Eastern Gap to look out to boats but that the concrete in that area is currently crumbling. Someone added that that a pedestrian footbridge could be placed here.

Pier: One participant suggested that the pier at centre Island is currently underused and could be better activated.

Snake Island: Snake Island was also suggested as a space that could be programmed, potentially permitting on a case by case basis for overnight stays and camping.

Docks + Wards Island: Pirate Life Theatre shared that boats in general, as well as docks, tend to be inaccessible spaces and that accessible docks should be installed across the Island. One suggested place was the inlet at Wards.

Artscape + Gibraltar Point: Someone suggested that Artscape has potential to anchor winter activation and become a "focal point" for year-round activity. "Artists come from across the world to the island". There have been conversations about different hubs and a cafe space art Artscape. If there was ferry access at Hanlan's in the winter, it would make it easier to activate the space.

It was also noted that the beaches around Gibraltar point are becoming more and more a destination because there is more sand/beach space thanks to the restoration projects.

Amenities and Infrastructure: Shadowland theatre shared that they would like to do more performances across the Island in the off-season but this would require infrastructure "a café or something like that. . . that's what's great about this type of meeting, we realize how much we depend on each other and how these things have to work together." It was noted that the Riviera Café is the only open restaurant through the year but they close in January and February because it is unsustainable to maintain business due to the temperature variation. Evergreen Brickworks shared that they have the same challenge.

One participant suggested that the City could facilitate flexible businesses at the Island like food karts and create incentives for entrepreneurship and added that currently people have to "jump through hoops" to set up businesses or sell food.

Centre Island: Rec staff shared that there is a lost child centre at Centre Island.

Annual Programming

The project team facilitated an activity that crowdsourced from the group different events throughout the year that take place at the Island. Outcome of that activity as follows:

January (none)

February (none)

March (none)

April (none)

May

- Franklin Garden Programming
- Commercial & Recreational Charters (primarily Long Pond and Blockhouse Bay)
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June

- Commercial & Recreational Charters
- Wedding Season
- Migration Celebration – Shadowlands Theatre Programming
- Moccasin Identifier
- Water Ceremony

July

- Commercial & Recreational Charters (busiest season)
- Artscape private events all summer
- Art gallery exhibits and concerts
- Dragon boat races
- Summer camps (Monday to Friday)
- Electric Island

August

- Gala Day Weekend (Former Island residents return)
- Artscape private events all summer
- Shadowland Fire Parade
- Electric Island

September

- Terry Fox Event
- Fall weddings
- Longboat runner's club
- Rogue Wave

October

- Art residencies and gallery showings at Artscape

November (none)

December

- Christmas Boutique
- Winter Island (Residency at Artscape Gibraltar Point, incorporating events for the public)