

Programming, Events and Tourism Targeted Discussion Conversation Summary

October 26th

Purpose

To help identify programming and activations that leverage and celebrate the unique elements of The Island, are appropriate to the context and build on mainland offerings to create a district-wide strategy

External Participants

- █ – MCFN Economic Development Corporation
- █ – Manager, Ontario Travel Information Centres & Visitor Centres at Destination Ontario

City Staff

- █ Program Manager Music Sector Development
- █ – Supervisor Client Support PFR
- █ – Manager of Tourism Services
- █ – Manager City Cultural Events and Programming
- █ – Manager of Cultural Partnerships

Project Team

City: David O'Hara, Lori Ellis and Pablo Muñoz

Consultant: Victoria Bell, James Roche

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 4 questions as a starting point:

1. How can the Master Plan and the evolution of Toronto Island Park support a linked and integrated Waterfront experience?
2. What are activities or attractions across the waterfront that should be considered when exploring water-based connections to The Island?
3. How can destinations and activities in other nearby areas inform the future programming and design of Toronto Island Park?
4. From a Tourism lens, how can the Master Plan work to support an improved visitor experience more effectively? What key changes are necessary and are there any recommendations on priorities?

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

Access and Transportation

- A mobile stage would be beneficial for events on The Island, and would make them more accessible. A per-ticket facility fee, which is then reinvested in the upkeep of The Island, would be beneficial.
- There should be additional access points, especially from the east and west to access The Island. These access points should allow for travel to and from The Island, as well as support mobility networks/routes across The Island.
- It is important to ensure an efficient method for getting visitors home who are leaving The Island via the ferries. It is common for there to be congestion when visitors to The Island are leaving en-masse, and this can further create additional congestion/traffic in the downtown area at, and surrounding the ferry terminal areas.
- The Billy Bishop Airport has a land link that currently doesn't allow the public to access the rest of The Island.
- There are some clear logistical challenges, namely the airport runway, which impeded the use of the land link. Link or no link The Island needs to function.
- New transportation ideas to The Island could include the renting of canoes, organized similarly to the Toronto bike share system.
- It's important to obtain perspectives from a wide range of individuals starting from youth, to young adults, to lone parent families, and elders, as they all bring forth their own lived experiences that would impact potential programming throughout The Island.

Island Wayfinding System

- A wayfinding system, which is under development, would help navigating to-and-from, and throughout The Island. This would require support from systems that are currently not setup on The Island, such as a public Wi-Fi network, and other missing infrastructure.
- Having non-digital resources to assist in navigating The Island would still be preferred by certain demographics. This includes on-site island ambassadors/tour guides or concierges to further help residents and visitors navigate The Island. We should explore the idea of establishing a hybrid wayfinding system that incorporates both digital and non-digital options.
- Visitor information for navigating The Island is inaccessible or hard to find. You have to know exactly what you are looking for to locate the information using the City's resources.
- Implementing a digital wayfinding system for The Island does not feel like the right choice. The wayfinding system should reflect the current "nature" of The Island and it should feel like it belongs, rather than a big screen that you'd find at an airport. In thinking about how to better connect The Island to the parks along the waterfront, the emphasis should be placed on what makes these specific parks unique, opposed to highlighting similarities between the waterfront parks and the parks located on The Island.
- A wayfinding system should be multilingual and support multicultural interests. The Island is the backyard for some families and groups who don't have access to a cottage or a place beyond the city.

Island Programming and Activities

- Create guided tours on The Island and in particular, Indigenous curated and lead tours. This could be done through tours with 1st story Placemaking and programming.

- In terms of planning and design, The Island can't be approached like every other park in the city. It is important to consider how the unique attributes of various sites along the waterfront may impact the overall design and programming for The Island specifically.
- The Island provides a non-urban experience, for instance when looking north from the Southside of The Island your view consists majorly of the lake, which provides an oasis-like feel. Programming on The Island should fit the nature of The Island and not introduce urban-like programming such as huge music/electronic festivals that may not fit with the existing context on The Island and its natural features.
- A right-sizing approach would be taken towards programming on The Island. This entails that events that may take place on The Island will be carefully chosen to ensure that it fits the planned location/surrounding context. This acts as our stage gate (or vetting process) to filter through programming ideas proposed for The Island.
- The Island could fully support programming that centres the outdoor, green experience. Programming could include a place to learn more about nature and various ecosystems and habitats on The Island, as well aquatic activities such as paddle boarding.
- Additional programming could include, "LearnTO canoe, LearnTO paddle board, LearnTO bird (for bird watching)". This type of programming would support stewardship of The Island and allow participants to potentially become more connected with The Island and its natural features.
- A visit to The Island creates a lot of new experiences for people. The can be programming, curated events, activities and partnerships to immerse participants into the culture and nature that exists on The Island. For instance, walking paths around The Island could include info-markers or info pop-ups on the wayfinding tool that educates individuals about various plants and wildlife that exist on The Island.
- There would be a difference in behaviour and programming interests between visitors to The Island and local residents of The Island. Programming may not be able to cater towards all the diverse populations of the city and island.
- Events should be capped at 5,000 people. Free events on The Island may not be feasible. However, events that allow for a larger crowd should have a strong consideration for the environment, adequate sanitation, garbage pickup/removal, careful thought on products sold at the event etc. all of this will contribute to an event's success. Most event organizers like to shape a space according to their event and the audience. When the city reaches out for input about projects like the Island, they often lack engagement from young people and the entertainment community. Inclusive and diverse programming should make sure that these voices and perspectives are present.
- Hanlan's Point is likely a more suitable location for loud events.
- I agree. The proper precautions and measures can be taken to further reduce the impact of noise, as well as soundwaves.
- Various programs operate simultaneously at different areas/points on The Island to ensure participants are spaced out and can enjoy different aspects of The Island that they may not experience if they were to be grouped up in a single area.
- It is important to provide diverse food options, especially diverse culinary options to allow individuals to experience food from their won cultures or other cultures, which is unique to the Toronto experience – bringing people together through food.

Winter Programming and Activities

- Emphasis should be put on winter activities, they have the greatest potential as the inner-harbour freezes over creating new trails. This provides a great opportunity to use these trails for activities like skating.
- For programming during the winter, it is important that warming stations are available.