

New Parks in the Moss Park Neighbourhood Black Communities Advisory Group Meeting 2

Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: January 19, 2023
Summary Finalized: March 12, 2023

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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 Communities Advisory Group (BCAG) meeting for the design of the two new parks in the Moss Park Neighbourhood that was held virtually on Thursday January 19, 2023 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

- For the New Park on King St:
 - Share and discuss the proposed plan for hiring a Black artist/designer to join the design team.
 - Present two draft design options for the park layout and discuss general suggestions, comments and preferences.

- Discuss what specific ideas, themes, histories, and cultures BCAG members would like to see represented through the design of the water feature. This will help influence and guide the work of the Black artist/designer and the design team.
- For the New Park on Richmond St:
 - Share two draft design options for the new park on Richmond St. and:
 - Discuss suggestions, comments, and preferences for the design options.
 - Discuss what specific elements of Black histories and/or cultures BCAG members would like represented on heritage plaques in the park

Attendance

BCAG Members Present

- Amanda C
- Ashleigh E
- Camara C
- Josh V
- Joy S
- Julianna S
- Kevin W
- Linda M
- 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

Design Team – New Park on Richmond Present

- CCxA (*formerly known as Claude Cormier + Associés*)
 - Yannick Roberge–Design Director, Landscape Architect
 - Guillaume Paradis –Project Director, Landscape Architect
 - Léonard Flot–Project Manager, Landscape Architect
- BrookMcIlroy Indigenous Design Studio
 - Andrea Mantin–Principal Landscape Architect
 - Ryan Gorrie–Indigenous Design advisor
- Tricon Residential (Developer)
 - Ryan Li

Design Team – New Park on King Present

- Janet Rosenberg & Studio
 - Jessica Hutcheon -Principal
- Trophic Design
 - Terence Radford -Indigenous Design Advisor
- Fitzrovia(Developer)
 - Mauro Russo –Manager, Development

Meeting Summary

The meeting summary is organised to reflect the meeting agenda (Appendix A).

New Park on King Street

Hiring a Black Artist/Designer to Join the Design Team

Staff presented the motivation for, and proposed process for, hiring a Black artist/designer to join the design team for the park on King Street. Following the presentation, BCAG participants were asked to share any questions, concerns or comments. The discussion that followed is summarized below:

Q: Are community members allowed to sit on the panel that will select the Black artist/designer?

A: Yes. The project team is planning to include 1-2 members from the community on the selection panel, and BCAG members are welcome to apply. Once the process for establishing the panel is finalized, City staff will email all BCAG members to ask interested members to apply.

Post Meeting Note: Since this BCAG meeting, the process for hiring a Black artist/designer to join the design team has evolved. In addition to 1-2 BCAG members be a part of the selection panel, all interested BCAG members will be invited to review and provide feedback on all shortlisted artists' proposals at 50% design, and again at 100% design (an additional 2 BCAG meetings for those interested in participating). BCAG feedback from the meeting at 50% design will help the artists refine their proposals. Feedback from both meetings will be provided to the selection panel to inform their final selection. For a graphic overview of the revised next steps for each park, go to Appendix C.

Q: I'm not familiar with the process for hiring artists. What is the process for funding? What about artists who might face barriers?

A: Funding for constructing the artwork will be part of the park budget. The application process is two stages. In stage one, artists provide their resume, artist statement and examples of past work to show they have the demonstrated ability and expertise to deliver on the work required. This is meant to be a quick and straightforward process for artists applying. The artists that are shortlisted to be a part of stage two will be provided an honorarium (funding) to participate. In stage 2, artists are asked to provide a proposed design for the new water feature (*Post-meeting note: this will be expanded to include options to design integrated art throughout the park, to reflect feedback from this BCAG meeting that Black cultures, histories and stories need to be holistically represented throughout the park, not just in the water feature*). The honoraria (funding) is meant to reflect and respect the time the artists will need to put into this stage of the proposal. Offering the honorarium for artists in stage two is meant to reduce barriers that some artists may face to applying.

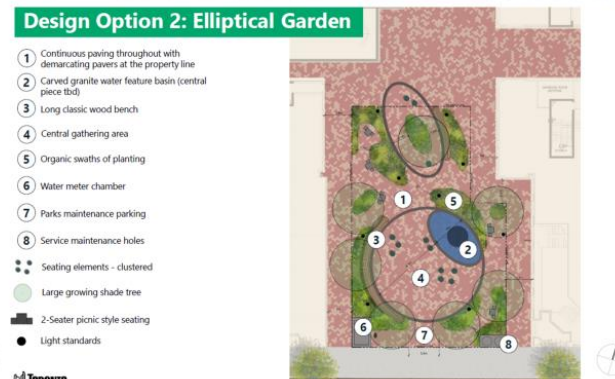
In the chat, a participant shared a link to an artist's page, who they think could be a good fit for the park design.

- [Alexis Eke](#)

Two Draft Design Options for the New Park on King Street

The following provides a summary of discussion about the two design options presented for the new park on King Street. Overview images of each design are provided below.

Post Meeting Note: At this BCAG meeting the project team heard the importance of ensuring the park vision's design focus, "*to celebrate and/or commemorate the history, presence, diversity, and future of the Black Communities in the neighbourhood*", be reflected throughout the park design, beyond the central water feature. A Black Artist/Designer is being hired to join the design team, to help bring the park vision to life, holistically throughout the park's design. Anticipating that the park designs presented at the BCAG meeting (below) will change significantly after a Black Artist/Designer is brought on board, and recognising the overwhelming preference from BCAG members for the more organic forms of option 2: elliptical garden, the below designs will not be presented to the public for feedback. Phase 2 of the community engagement will take place after the Black Artist/Designer is brought on board, and once new designs are available to share. There will be multiple BCAG meetings to review developing designs before draft options are shared with the wider community in Phase 2 community engagement. For a graphic overview of the revised next steps for each park, go to Appendix C.



- **All BCAG participants who provided comment prefer Design Option 2: Elliptical Garden.** Design option 2 is preferred because:
 - It feels more like a neighbourhood park (warm, natural and welcoming, somewhere you want to spend time), whereas option 1 feels too much like a financial district park (more formal and restrictive, uninviting, unwelcoming, sad, and less natural).
 - The rounder, softer, more fluid and organic forms and layout make the space feel more natural, familiar, inviting, and welcoming.
 - The flow is more welcoming while still providing a distinction between spaces.
 - There is more space for gathering. It feels more communal.
 - In design option 1, the fountain takes up valuable space that can be used for community gathering or events.

- There are clear spaces for different park uses (e.g. gathering vs sitting alone).
- The layout feels more innovative and futuristic, but also natural and familiar.
- Option 1 feels too common/the design is oversaturated in Toronto, especially the paving type.
- **The overall feel of the park needs to better reflect the Park Vision, to "celebrate and/or commemorate the history, presence, diversity, and future of the Black Communities in the neighbourhood" throughout the entire design, not just through the water feature.**
 - Black Artist/Designer needs to be able to influence more than just the design of the water feature. There needs to be more interactive and holistic ways for visitors to experience Black cultures and histories throughout the park.
 - The words "contemporary and classic" are being used to describe the designs. Often this can relate to parks feeling stoic or sterilized instead of lively. If the park is meant to celebrate Black and Indigenous histories, there needs to be more vibrancy, more colour, and more diversity throughout the entire design.
- **Integrate Indigenous Placekeeping and a celebration of Black cultures in the park.**
 - Combine Indigenous and Black cultural representation. There are many cohesive threads between cultures. Examples include the importance of braids, weaving, beads, and the power of women in restoring culture.
- **Feedback on the water feature:**
 - Most participants like the inclusion of a water feature in the park, noting that water is calming, cleansing and healing. However, participants don't want the water feature to be the only way Black cultures and histories are showcased and celebrated in the park design.
 - Support for the tilted element of the water feature in design option 2
 - Avoid being too metaphorical. People need to understand the point behind the art feature. Include an interpretive signs if required.
 - Avoid the water feature being too cooling (e.g. if misting is involved) if the park will be in shade most of the time.
 - Use the vertical space well when designing this feature.
 - Consider a more interactive water feature or features, rather than a fountain.
 - Concern that the water feature will not be able to be used for a significant portion of the year due to cold weather.
 - See examples provided post meeting, through email, in appendix B.
- **Feedback on seating features:**
 - The seating orbs/ rocks proposed in design option 1 can lead to conflict in the park. People don't always see these as places to sit, and instead see them as decorative. This can lead to conflict when some people use them as seating, and others see them as "breaking the rules" by sitting on a decorative feature". Consider including "have a seat" on or near these features so it is clear they are seating.
 - Concern that garbage and leaves can get wedged into gaps between the wooden slats of the bench seating.
- **Feedback on Paving:**
 - Use paving to draw people into the park. Include more creative, unique and/or colourful paving.
 - Include shapes or patterns in the paving design.
 - Etch information on Black histories, and immigrant histories across various diasporas into the paving/bricks.

- **Feedback on fencing:**
 - The low fence used to protect the planting beds could be a hazard for kids (they can trip over it) or can be enticing for kids to climb, so would not serve its purpose effectively.
- **Feedback on plantings:**
 - Native plantings are a positive feature in both designs.
 - Support for the soft, lush and natural forms of the planting beds in design option 2. These help pull your focus to the green spaces and water feature in the park, rather than focusing on the pavement.
- **Feedback on connection to Publically Accessible Privately Owned Pathways connected to the park:**
 - Ensure these pathways are well lit and safe.
- **Elements missing from the designs include:**
 - Joy, colour and liveliness.
 - Email Feedback: Include bright primary colours that speak to both Black and Indigenous cultures.
 - Murals on the neighbouring walls to bring colour and vibrancy into the space.
 - *Post-meeting note: The walls surrounding the park are private property and not within the scope of the park design.*
 - Interesting and colourful paving conditions to draw people in.
 - Consider commemorating historic people or moments in black communities in the paving (e.g. names or events etched into paving stones).
 - Consider paving shapes and conditions that replicate the fluidity of the elliptical garden park design.

Brainstorming: How to Celebrate Black Cultures and Histories through Design

Participants were asked to brainstorm "**What specific ideas, themes, histories, and cultures would you like to see represented in the design of the water feature, to celebrate/commemorate the history, presence, diversity, and future of Black Communities in the neighbourhood.**"

Participants were provided with this question at the same time as the initial meeting invitation, to allow time to think through and brainstorm ideas before this BCAG meeting. These ideas will be used to inform the art and design revisions for the new park on King Street, and the briefing for the Black artist/designer hiring process. These will also be used to help inform the inclusion of an interpretive plaque in the park on Richmond St. The following provides a summary of the ideas shared in the meeting.

- **Celebrate Black cultures while also Integrating Indigenous Placekeeping.** Don't separate the two in the space. There are many cohesive threads between cultures. There is power and unity in collaboration.
 - Examples of ideas/elements significant in both Black and Indigenous cultures that can be explored include:
 - The importance of Braids/ braids as a motif.
 - Weaving.
 - Beads / beading.
 - The power of women in restoring culture. Women are often carriers of cultures.

- Embracing colours (look into whether there are specific colours to tie into both cultures).
 - Email Feedback: Include bright primary colours that speak to both Black and Indigenous cultures.
 - The connection between women and water.
 - The three sisters (in Indigenous Cultures) and the importance of various crops and foods in Black cultures.
 - The ties in both cultures between crops, food, women, and carrying.
 - Consider a collaboration between Black and Indigenous communities to design the water feature.
- **Highlight each of the three sub-groups of African Identity:**
 - 1) Individuals brought here by force.
 - 2) People who still live on the African continent.
 - 3) Black peoples in Central and South America.
- **Highlight the idea of "coming back to nature".**
 - Include imagery of Black and diverse people doing activities outdoors.
 - Acknowledge and celebrate Black peoples' relationships to nature rather than a focus on symbols or statues of individuals.
- **Highlight positive Black futures and Black joy.**
 - Show diverse people and imagery of positive black futures rather than focusing on individual historical figures in these small parks.
 - Consider a timeline with the vibrancy of the present, future, where we are now, with a nod to the past.
- **Highlight immigrants, the lives of immigrants, and the role of immigrants in this city.**
 - Use bricks/ paving to include information on Black histories, and immigrant histories across various diasporas.
- **Be bold, colourful, and literal with design.**
 - Include faces and bold illustrations.
 - See examples provided in Appendix B.
- **Reflect some of the black histories in the neighbourhood that were presented in BCAG meeting 1.**
 - Examples: Mary Ann Shad, Lucille and Thornton Blackburn, the black activist groups that used to meet in St Lawrence Hall, Rosemary Sadlier, etc.
 - Provided through email:
 - Tell a story about the historic/present-day Black community. Consider a timeline or map, as "the Black community comes from so many places, but ultimately, Africa."
 - Consider something immersive, that people could engage with.
 - See examples provided in Appendix B.
- **Include representation of all cultures that compromise Canadian identity.**
- **An example a participant likes in an existing park** is the colourful [Afroophilia installation](#) on King Street, just east of Church (south side).
- **Suggestions on what to avoid:**
 - Don't make things too contemporary, too smooth, or too sterile – this removes a sense of place.
 - Don't make things too abstract, people need to understand and learn from/about the meaning behind different features.

New Park on Richmond Street

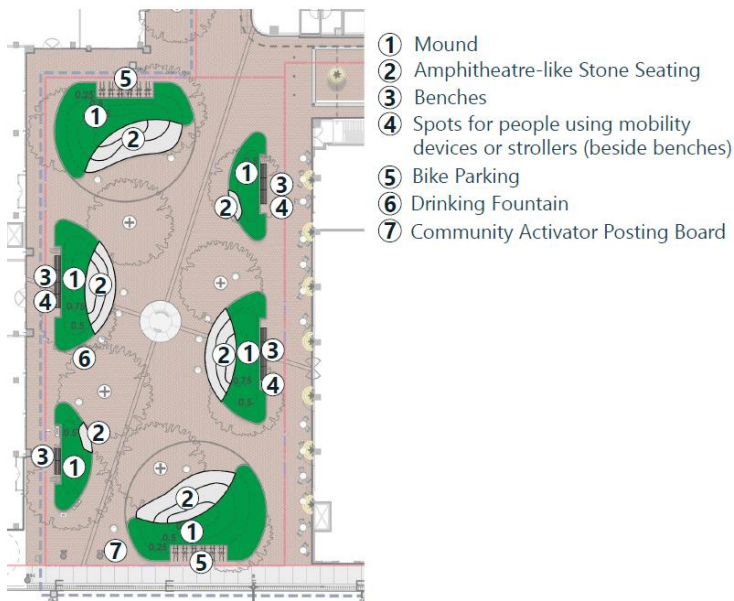
Draft Design Options for the New Park on Richmond Street

The following provides a summary of discussion about the design options presented for the new park on Richmond Street. Overview images of design options are provided below.

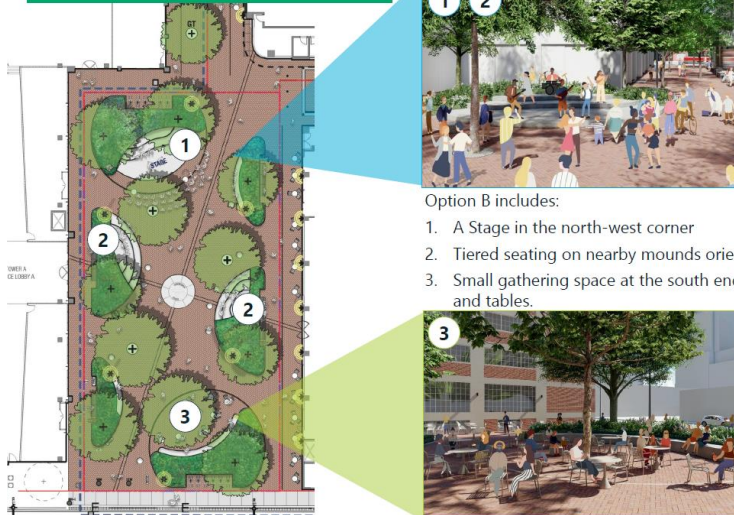
Proposed Design: View Looking North into the Park from Richmond



Design Layout



Seating Layout Option B



- **All BCAG participants like the inclusion of a stage.**
 - Support for the informal space (no booking required) which would provide more opportunity to create community.
- **Feedback on seating:**
 - **There is no consensus on the café-style chair and table area included in seating layout option B.**
 - Some BCAG participants like the inclusion of the café style chairs and tables:
 - Creates a good space for impromptu meetings and gathering.
 - Draws people into the space.
 - Tables are helpful for people with kids, and people reading or working in the park.
 - Seating with chair-backs are good for support (though this can be done with benches/seating elsewhere).
 - Some BCAG participants dislike the inclusion of the café style chairs and tables:
 - These chairs can be uncomfortable.
 - Concern the furniture will get too cold at night and too hot in the summer sun.
 - Concern that because the seating and tables are moveable, they may become cluttered, untidy, will need to be chained together to prevent theft, will be taken over by local retail, and may cause conflict between park users.
 - Concern that these chairs will not stay clean.
 - Concern that the chairs will result in a lot of noise (from people moving them around the park).
 - One participant suggested that the tiered stone seating must be well done, otherwise it can result in water pooling, and be uncomfortable to sit on for long periods of time.
 - Support for the moon seating features.
 - Most participants prefer seating layout option B, while some feel indifferent as the options are not different enough.
- **Support for the firefly light posts and their warm golden light.** This makes the space feel more inviting.
- **The design of this park shows holistically integrated Indigenous Placekeeping elements throughout the park design.**
 - This is a good example to reference for how to integrate Black and Indigenous cultures throughout the design of the new park on King Street, in the revisions.
- **Suggested additional design features include:**
 - Plaques to explain the meaning behind the Indigenous Placekeeping elements. These are thoughtfully designed but their meaning may be overlooked or go unnoticed if there is not a panel(s) to provide an explanation.
 - All native plant species.
 - More physically interactive features/ elements (e.g. the wave boardwalk).
 - Soft and colorful rubber flooring (e.g. Corktown commons).
 - A turtle statue that kids and others can touch, to reflect and teach about the 13 moons (E.g. the frog statues in College Park.)
 - Art and design features on the walls surrounding the park.
 - *Post-meeting note: The walls surrounding the park are private property and not within the scope of the park design.*

- Some BCAG members would have liked to see two more drastically different designs, to better understand other possibilities for the space.

Next Steps

- BCAG members can send additional ideas, comments, or suggestions to Alex.Lavasisdis@toronto.ca
- Honourarium pickup is Tuesday January 24, 4 –6:30 p.m. at Rooster House Coffee (King St E & Ontario St). An email with instructions for pickup will be distributed. 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.
- Phase 2 Engagement will include*:
 - Targeted engagement with Indigenous community members
 - An online survey for community members
 - Pop-ups & youth engagement
- The third BCAG meeting is planned to take place in summer 2023*, to meet with the newly hired Black artist/designer to review their proposed design.
- BCAG members will receive an email at least 3 weeks in advance to confirm a meeting date and time. The fourth BCAG meeting is planned to take place in fall 2023*, when the proposed final designs will be presented to the community for feedback and revision.

***Post Meeting Note:** Based on the feedback provided at this BCAG meeting, the decision has been made to separate the timelines for both parks. The Richmond Street Park will move ahead for Phase 2 public engagement in March. The King Street Park will not move into Phase 2 of public engagement until the Black artist/designer has joined the design team and revised designs are available to share with community. For a graphic overview of the revised next steps for each park, go to Appendix C.

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

Alex Lavasisdis | Sr. Community Consultation Coordinator
Phone: 416-318-1887 | Email: Alex.Lavasisdis@toronto.ca

Appendix A – Meeting Agenda



Two New Parks in Moss Park

Black Communities Advisory Group Meeting 2

Jan 19 2023, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

AGENDA

- 5:30 Project team tech check**
- 5:45 BCAG Member tech check**
- 6:00-6:10 – Introductions/Welcome**
- 6:10-6:20 – Project Overview and What We Heard**
- 6:20-6:30 – King St East – Hiring Black Artist**
- 6:30-6:45 – King St East – Design Presentation**
- 6:45-7:05 – King St East - Design Discussion**
- 7:05-7:20 – Richmond St - Design Presentation**
- 7:20-7:40 – Richmond St – Design Discussion**
- 7:40-7:50 - Park Naming Process Overview**
- 7:50 Final Comments/Questions**
- 8:00 Adjourn & Thank You**

Appendix B – Post-Meeting Email Feedback

Item A

A BCAG member followed up via email with the project team inquiring if a Black Landscape Architect could be hired as part of the design team for the new park on King Street. City Staff met with the BCAG member virtually to discuss their request further.

While hiring a new Black Landscape Architect to join the team is not feasible at this point, the project team understands the desire to bring more Black design professionals into this park design process. Through our conversations, the member suggested that alternatively, Black design students or young professionals could contribute to the process. Based on this feedback, the City will be pursuing a design workshop with Black design students and Black design professionals to evaluate the design options. This workshop could provide beneficial experience and networking opportunities for the students, and would add more Black voices, especially those with a background in design, to the park design process.

More information on this decision is available below. Please contact the project team if you have any questions or concerns.

Initial Plans for the Design Workshop: It is currently anticipated that at the workshop, participants would include both Black design professionals and Black design students. Participants would be provided honourarium for their time (different amounts for professionals and students). At the half-day event, participants would be presented draft designs for the new park and provide suggestions for improvement. The workshop would take place after the Black artist/designer is brought on board and has worked with the existing landscape architect and Indigenous Design Advisor to further refine the draft park design options. For a graphic overview of the revised next steps for the park, go to Appendix C.

The above plan is a tentative starting place for discussions with Black design professionals and student groups. The City still needs to confirm interest and availability from both groups.

The intention of this approach is to:

- Open the park design process up to feedback from many more Black Communities members, especially those with a background/training in design.
- Provide a useful networking opportunity for Black design students who may be interested in entering the field of landscape architecture and design.

Why hiring a new Black Landscape Architect to join the team is not feasible at this point in the process: Hiring a Black Landscape Architect to join the existing team would require letting go of the existing landscape architecture firm. The existing firm was hired before the community-driven park vision was developed for this park, is now familiar with the site and community feedback, and are very open to working with and integrating suggestions from the Black artist/designer hired through the upcoming process. Hiring a new firm would move the process backwards, and would mean the City funds that have already been spent on the work of the existing design team would be wasted. The developer (who will build the park and then transfer ownership to the City) would also have to agree to this change, as they are the ones in a hiring agreement with the existing landscape architecture firm.

Hiring a Black artist/designer to join the design team: As presented to the BCAG in Meeting 2, a Black artist/designer is being hired to join the design team for the New Park on King Street to help achieve the park vision. This Black artist/designer will become a key member of the design team and will have a substantial impact on the proposed park designs, beyond just

impacting the design of a water feature in the park. The design competition for hiring the Black artist/designer will clearly communicate that the artist/designer is expected to influence the design of the entire park.

Examples of the holistic and widespread impact an artist/designer can have on a park design: Two local examples of how bringing an artist/designer onto the team can effectively and holistically impact the design of a park included the recently opened Dr. Lillian McGregor Park and the recently designed St. James Town West Park.

Pausing the community engagement process to ensure strong designs are presented to the community, that reflect the park vision: Anticipating that the designs will change significantly from those presented at the second BCAG meeting, the public engagement process for the new park on King Street will not move forward until after the Black artist/designer has joined the design team, and new park designs are available. An overview of the new process is outlined in Appendix C.

How an iterative community engagement process will keep the design team accountable: The park design process is iterative and there are multiple touch points for the BCAG and wider community **to make sure** the designs are developing in a way that reflects community feedback and the park vision. If in future meetings, if there is a strong feeling from the BCAG or wider community that the designs are not reflective of the park vision, the process can be revisited.

Item B

During the BCAG meeting, a member had shared [a link about parks in Chicago](#). The project team followed up with the member to get more insight into what the member liked/ wanted to suggest from that article for inclusion in the park on King Street. The member replied:

- The link includes a photo of a blue statue, a feminine water bearer, and a great example of a water feature that promotes care for the planet, powerful feminine energy, and creativity. And I love the mosaic.



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- Also, I added some additional photos, one is from an event I coordinated last year and would allow us to tell a story about the historic/present-day Black community. I thought a timeline or map approach might also be cool, as the Black community comes from so many places, but ultimately, Africa. There's also another water feature idea. I feel like something immersive that people could engage with would be cool.



- And I know this was captured but the inclusion of bright primary colours is important. I think vibrant colours speak to both Black and Indigenous cultures and could be better integrated into the design.

Appendix C – Graphic Overview of the Revised Next Steps

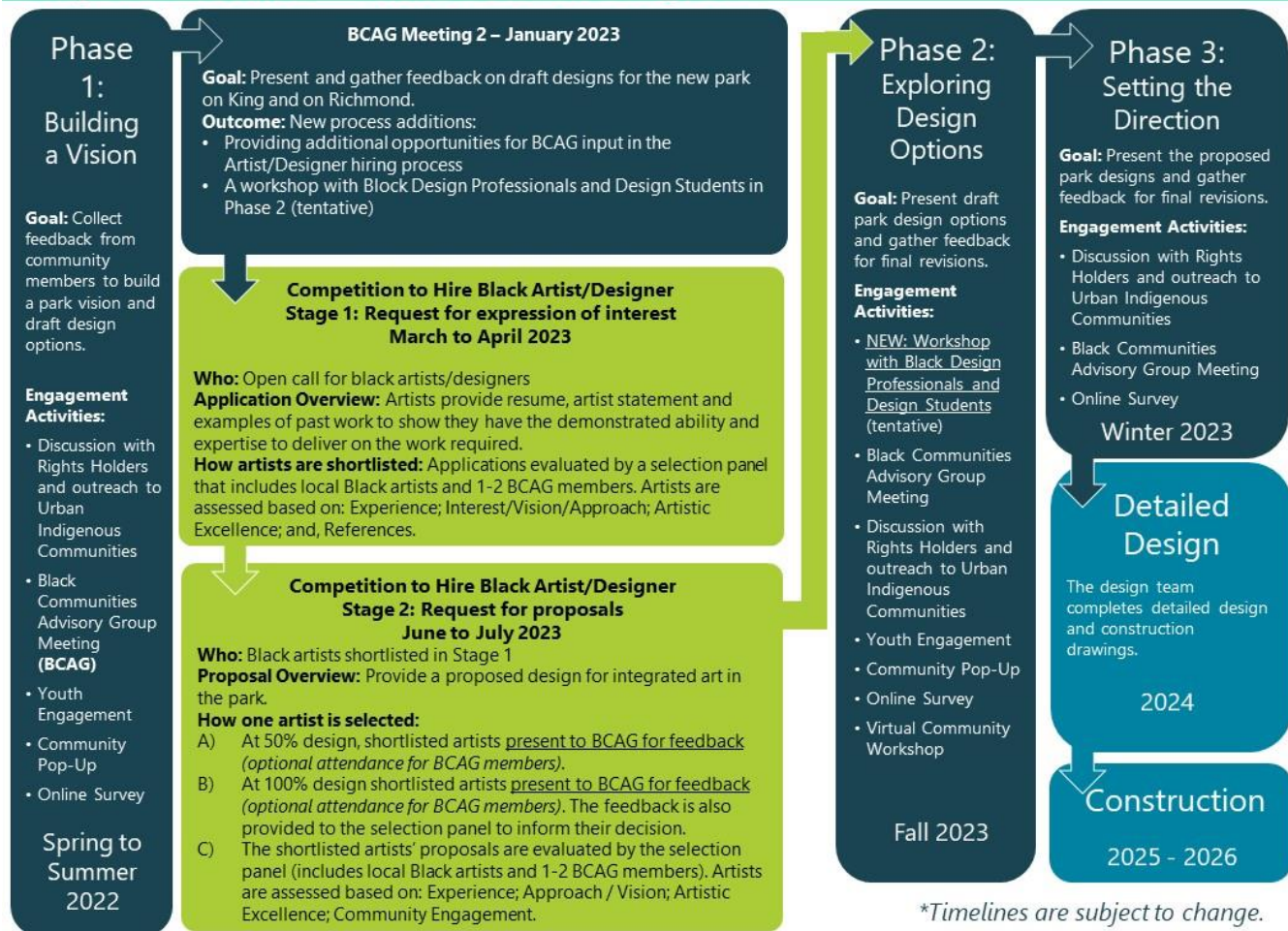


Project Timeline* - New Park on Richmond St E.



Timelines are subject to change.

Project Timeline* - New Park on King St E.



**Timelines are subject to change.*