

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Barbara Hall Park Re-Visioning Exercise

Pre-Engagement Phase Summary Report

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Introduction

From January to March 2023, the City of Toronto hosted a series of pre-engagement meetings with key stakeholders associated with Barbara Hall Park. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the new visioning exercise and the team working on it and to discuss key issues, existing conditions, and opportunities that should be explored through the new process. The pre-engagement meetings also included a discussion around how participants would like to be engaged in the process moving forward.

Pre-engagement included a series of one-on-one conversations that prioritized community-based audiences with organizations with an interest or mandate related to the scope of the park re-visioning process, including organizations that serve the wide range of communities that use the park. These discussions included a short introduction from the project team but were otherwise focused on listening to what stakeholders had to say. Each discussion was summarized by the project team, and the summaries were shared with stakeholders for their review and confirmation before being shared through this report.

Pre-Engagement Interview Questions

A common list of questions were prepared and used in each of the pre-engagement interviews. The questions were:

1. What are the specific challenges with the way the park currently works as you see them?
2. Are there any specific needs (either specific to your organization or client-base or general to the whole community) that you think the revitalized park must meet?
3. What is special about this park, from your perspective?
4. What are the opportunities for the park that you think the plan should embody? What do you think it's possible to achieve through a renovation of the park?
5. How would you like to be involved in this process moving forward? Do you have any advice for the Project Team with regards to effectively engaging the community on this project?
6. Is there anything else we should know?

Interview Sessions and Dates

Organization/Audience	Date
Parks Operations Staff	January 11, 2023
519 Community Centre	January 12, 2023
Church-Wellesley Village BIA	January 17, 2023

Progress Place	January 17, 2023
Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association	January 19, 2023
Toronto Police Services (Sergeant Robert Chevalier)	January 25, 2023
Monteith Street Residents (Focus Group)	February 8, 2023
Toronto Police Services (Sergeant Henry Dyck)	February 15, 2023

What We Heard

The outcome of the pre-engagement phase are the Draft Drivers of Change, a short summary of the main issues, opportunities, and constraints in Barbara Hall Park that are currently driving the need for change. The draft Drivers of Change are listed below. They will be confirmed in Phase 1 of the engagement process.

Full summaries of the pre-engagement conversations can be found in the appendix of this report.

Draft Drivers of Change

A place with diverse users and needs

Barbara Hall Park has diverse users with varied needs. In many ways, the space is expected to be "everything to everyone": It is a space for the everyday, while also being a place for reflection, mourning, celebration, and where people come to access the services of the 519 Community Centre. In the past, the park accommodated all of these uses quite well, but this has not been the case more recently. Since the start of the pandemic there has been an increase in at-risk behaviour, including drug use and drug dealing, as well as other behaviours like public urination and defecation, which has led many users and nearby residents to feel unsafe. These problems are made worse by a lack of cohesion between the different park elements, including the off-leash area, the children's play area, the memorials, and the back-of-house functions of the 519 (like loading in the south laneway and the garbage bins on the north side of the building). These tend to function independently of one another, with little cross-usage between them. Finally, as the home of the 519's Green Space Festival, the park hosts a huge number of visitors during Pride Week, which damages the lawn and often impacts the way the park can be used for the rest of the summer.

A green heart in need of improvement

The park is well-used and is the green heart of the Church-Wellesley Village – a highly prized oasis of green within the community that is also its central gathering place. The raised lawn, garden beds, and canopy trees are all highly valued by nearby residents. However, the park lacks an appropriate range of seating, is not properly lit, and the pathways are not wide enough to accommodate heavy use. The programmed spaces like the off-leash area (OLA), the garden beds and the playground present maintenance challenges that the community would like improved. Maintenance challenges in the park include failing unit pavers, broken tree grates, planting beds trampled due the lack of planter curbs, broken light standards, overflowing garbage bins, rodent infestations, broken wood slats in the benches/woodbench tops, granular material from the OLA and mulch from planters that migrate onto pathways, and damage to sod after large events. The park also has a lack of flat surfaces which make it difficult to program.

A place for reflection and grief

As the home of two significant LGBTQ2S+ memorials, the Toronto AIDS Memorial and the Trans Memorial, Barbara Hall Park is an important community space for grief, reflection, and activism. There is a strong desire to maintain these memorials as places where people can grieve or reflect quietly within the hustle and bustle of the rest of the park. However, there is a feeling that these memorials are not properly or clearly identified, and they are sometimes vandalized. The circular plaza in front of the steps to the AIDS Memorial is a part of the memorial itself that was intended to act as a gathering space. However, it lacks appropriate seating and experiences drainage issues which limit its use.

A place where people sometimes feel unsafe

The lack of clear sightlines throughout the park and the presence of dark corners present safety challenges and often attract undesirable activities. Particular areas of the park, including the area to the south of the 519 and the northeast corner of the park, lack good lighting and/or programming and can feel particularly unsafe.

APPENDIX A: MEETING SUMMARIES



Pre-Engagement Interview Summary: January 11, 2023 with Parks Operations staff

Participants

City of Toronto: Grant Drygas, General Supervisor West Region; Esther Afriat, Manager Parks); Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Challenges:

- Very poor sightlines, cannot see the inside of the park
 - caused in part by the raised round stage
 - never used as a stage
 - different changes in elevation are problematic
- AIDS Memorial tucked away at the back of the park
 - drug activity can occur here sometimes
 - can it be moved to a more prominent location? closer to Church Street?
 - community complains about plant life but there are problems because of tree roots, etc
 - a lot of unwanted behaviour occurs at the memorial
 - there is a Trans memorial on the brick wall that is not formalized and sometimes gets erased
- The playground is decently used
 - However, splash pad rubberized surface needs repair
 - Dog park is well used but needs repair
 - Elevation change in DOLA is a problem. Ongoing maintenance to top of granular ground cover. Granular ground cover migrates due to elevation changes.
- Park should be more of a square or plaza
 - Pride and other events lead to destruction of the turf and there is a high cost to re-sod (\$40k)
 - there are so many challenges in keeping grass alive and is not conducive to the way the park operates
 - artificial turf in the DOLA would be appropriate
- Huge Pride events take place every year, causing sod to be trampled and requiring re-seeding
 - After every event it costs \$40k to re-plant,
- Since it's a high volume park, it gets ruined again easily and there isn't enough budget for this to happen each year

Park needs:

- Open sightlines
- Any structures need to be see-through
- Playground equipment should be made of metal
- Everything should be easy to clean (for this neighbourhood – cleaners need to go every single day and remove needles, human feces, crushed glass)
- Electrical outlet boxes: even though they are locked, they get damaged as people know what they are and try to open them. This creates a potential safety hazard

- Back of the park is dark, we have added a more lighting but public still demands more.
 - Park should be brightly lit and lighting should be practical – not about aesthetics
- Need a needle bin, but on a solid surface to be able to permanently fix it to the ground – since people sometimes pick up the bin and dump out the needles.
- Do not integrate a pergola or shade structure, which would encourage loitering at night
- Benches with slats (as shown below) are problematic. The needles get stuck in the cracks and are very difficult to remove.



- Flat stones are also problematic – can be used as seating, set up shop for drug use etc.



- Landscape boulders are also problematic – similar to stones, can be used for drug activities – especially with smooth, reflective surfaces.
- Playscape – covered wood structure is an issue, cannot see what is going on inside, if someone is living, any needles, any harmful material? Unsafe for children and families.

What makes the park special?

- Facilities are well used
- Public space in a busy area
- The best thing about the park is that it is well-used by many different groups but the elements do not sum up nicely
- Unique area, with a row of town houses on the north side

Design Opportunities:

- There is a need for power to support the programming in the park
 - people break into the electric power outlet boxes, which create safety hazards
 - need to figure out a way to keep them discreet and secure
- Need to power wash walls everyday
 - Creative solutions: Amsterdam - public urinal planters that collect material that can be used as fertilizer
 - GreenPee installs hemp urinals in Amsterdam to stop "wild peeing" (dezeen.com)
 - Even if we get a washroom – that's going to create more problems
- Monteith wall:
 - decorative edges and seating cause challenges
 - might be appropriate to remove this wall
 - close the access between Monteith and the park
- Accessibility should be key – a lot of scooters
- Paths need to be wide enough to accommodate maintenance trucks
- Concrete pads under all site furnishings
- Pavers are not recommend. Patterned concrete is preferred
- Complaints: metal detectors for needles – can't be any areas people can hide behind
- Existing big trees near the memorial – to get clear sightlines, trees might have to be removed, which could be a problem
 - Grates don't work and are difficult to maintain. Trees at grade need to be reviewed – high traffic areas will compact the soil
- The programmable lights at the front of the park – controls are only accessible from the basement of the 519
 - Often don't work
 - Few people know how to operate them
- AIDS Memorial belongs to the City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture division
 - this is contentious with the community - they want appropriate signage
 - While it is now identified on the Park ID sign, the community wants a larger standalone sign
- Planters:
 - Staff tried to beautify the AIDS Memorial by adding planters & the community noted that this was a sensitive issue because of the Bruce McCarther murders
 - No planters, find some other way to beautify the park.
- Benches:
 - There should be a mix of seating types as it does improve accessibility for people
 - Should be easy to replace, maintain
 - Prioritize maintenance over aesthetics

Is there anything else?

- The residents often have issues since the park tends to have a lot of negative overnight activity.
- The Councillor has requested more benches and seating – however, homeowners oppose that given the high level of loitering that occurs.
- 519 runs a community safety network meeting.
 - police did a formal CPTED audit of the park

Pre-Engagement Interview Summary:

January 12, 2023 with the 519

Participants

519 Community Centre: Curran Stikuts, Director Advocacy and Strategic Communications; Megan Pool, Manager Community Relations and Communications

City of Toronto: Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Challenges:

- Regular visitors of the park:
 - Megan ran all the activations that happened in BHP from April - October
 - There are competing park users in the space
 - There is a collection of folks who regularly use the park who might be considered at-risk, unemployed or underemployed
 - Some behaviour that is perceived as at-risk in terms of drug use and drug dealing
 - Mostly these folks are not violent – actual violence is isolated
 - Perception is reality
 - High commuter pocket for folks because of the bike share station
 - Dog park sees a lot of activity
 - Different pockets of people in the park – a little isolated and they don't converse
- North-east corner sees a lot of violent behavior (near the opening the brick wall which is a discreet area of the park)
- Not a lot of opportunity for people to merge in the park or bridge the gaps between different sections
- Stage:
 - The stage is not in a good spot for anything
 - Doesn't relate to the benches that are located around it
 - Permit holders don't usually use the stage
 - Sometimes it is programmed by the 519
 - Not having a stage would make the space more flexible and would not be detrimental to people who permit the park
 - Without activation the stage becomes a dead zone
 - Used to host movie nights in the park, which the stage made challenging
 - Stage sees a lot of graffiti
- Benches are faced outwards so doesn't go with the park design
- Movie nights at the park – a challenge to organize because of a lack of flat surfaces
- Outlet boxes:

- Useful where they are right now but the ones at the stage are not super useful and are tampered with regularly
- Not a lot of greenspace in the park, very concrete heavy
 - Not a lot of green in Downtown East – and if this gets taken away it could be detrimental to community well-being
- There are many incredible social problems in the park
 - Designing for activation and engagement is a way to address this as opposed to defensive design
- Paths going east to west are too narrow and pose safety challenges
- Fenced envelope around the children's play area are a dead space
- South side of the park (laneway) has problems
 - Dark at night and even in the daytime. There aren't eyes on this area and a lot happens there that sets a negative tone
- AIDS Memorial
 - Flooding of the memorial can be a huge issue – makes the entire space unusable
 - Better signage and increase in signage – people don't know it's a memorial or treat it like one
 - Moving the AIDS Memorial will have a lot of backlash
 - Memorial includes the stairs and the rotunda
 - A lot of people grieve there, so there needs to be an element of privacy
 - Could also create a barrier to entry way to the park
 - No clear entrance or sign , not gateway
- Laneway and garbage management, don't have a parking lot, loading doc
 - This poses operational challenges
- Lots of beautiful and natural assets in the park
- Fencing in the park would not be a good idea

Park needs:

- Drive-in access (see above)
- Prioritize green spaces in the park
 - That work all year round
 - Park has great trees
 - Strategically program it
 - Community garden
 - Relatively well used by children and family
 - Huge need for public washroom access
 - people are constantly defecating and urinating in the park
- Being intentional about how each space is passively programmed will be very important because the 519 might not always have the resources to activate the park and there are lots of opportunities to strategically and passively program the park
- Playground space is super important - used every day by the 519 and relatively well used by children and families
 - Expand, don't take away
- while forecasting years ahead is difficult, a plan that reflects the importance of Green Space Festival as The 519's largest fundraiser is important to The 519.

What is special about this park?

- Special park that has sentimental value for people
- A beautiful park in many ways
- Part of the reason why people in the homeless community congregate in this park is because homeless queer and trans people don't feel safe anywhere else in the city
- Often the park is also not safe but it's safer than everywhere else
 - We need to plan with this reality in mind
- There is a strong vibrancy with a unique mix of people that you don't see in parks often
 - community intersections
 - there is opportunity to bring different kinds of people from different walks of life into the park together
- The brick wall is unique
- Zumba in the park has been successful
- Movies in the park have been successful

Design opportunities:

- There is an opportunity around the fact that the park is a gathering place
 - Don't try to resolve social issues through design
- Focus on making the park beautiful
 - A good, beautiful space that works for as many people as possible
- Giving people opportunities to play games or take an "un-idle hands" approach
 - from a harm reduction lens, those types of activities allow for deeper community conversations
 - intentional joyful opportunity
- Indigenous folks should also be represented
 - Key opportunity for Indigenous perspectives to be incorporated into the park design
- Important to tone set:
 - this project is not going to house anyone
 - we're not going to solve public drug use through park design

How do you want to be involved?

- Have a very deep seeded interest in the park and want to be involved
- Offer to work with the City to engage the street-involved people in the park, like in the linear park process
- Engaging with the families who use the playground space
- Ensure there are Indigenous folks represented
 - There was a recent discovery of Indigenous burial grounds in the village
- People are pretty invested in this park
- People are deeply frustrated
- Need to take a very nuanced approach to safety
 - safety vs perceived safety
 - But conversation can't be solely focused on safety
- Plan: make an advisory committee

- Working with the community centre to engage
 - Put more thought into it
 - Meaningful internal consultation process
- Talk to:
 - PCCS, Gerstein, here to help - speak to them as they are first responders
 - The 519 can help connect us to other perspectives

Pre-Engagement Interview Summary: January 12, 2023 with the Church-Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area (CWVBIA)

Participants

CWVBIA: Stephanie McCracken, Executive Director

City of Toronto: Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Challenges:

- Lack of positive animation
- Safety issue
- Not a diverse use of the space
- Sense of territory
- Guns are an issue: there was a shooting on the Jarvis side of the park
- a lot of resources go into the park - cleaning it up
 - programs should be accountable for the garbage that they generate
- community centre takes up part of the park with their parking and garbage

Park needs:

- More nature and focus on environment and climate
 - having a concrete plaza doesn't help with really hot summers and the amount of rainfall
 - if there's a stage it needs to be animated
 - there should be a contract in place to animate it if it exists
 - need more nature for mental health benefits
- Sightlines from a safety perspective
- DOLA and playground more upfront
- Make the AIDS Memorial more accessible, maybe towards the street
- Add more benches
 - "More benches than trouble can handle"

What makes the park special?

- AIDS Memorial
- There should be an homage to cruising
 - an important part of queer culture
- Walking tour with Patricia Wilson
 - trans icon and elder in the community- bartended at Buddies for 30 years

- a mother figure to a lot of young queer kids when they were coming out
 - could be a good stakeholder
 - the park was safer when there was cruising because there were more eyes on it
- Grass and trees should be preserved
- Rainbow benches
- LGBTQ+ visibility
- People getting together and meeting
 - people who haven't seen each other in a long time will often run into each other here and you see people embracing and connecting

Design opportunities:

- 7 day a week, consistent animation through food vendors could help the park
 - residency where queer chefs can go in and do something
 - not a hot dog cart but more like a storage container or something
 - provide more eyes on the park
- address climate change
 - paving should be permeable
 - more greening
- Provide opportunities for the community to come together
- Need a maintenance plan

Is there anything else?

- Green Space event is really great but might have outgrown that space
 - grass gets trampled afterwards
 - people get resentful of the 519
- Climate
- Self-sufficient park – maintenance is key
 - sprinklers to keep the grass fresh?
 - lush grass can encourage use during the day
- Mindfulness
- Frustration level is high and some have lost compassion
- People seem divided on how the space should be used
- Dudley's Hardware Store & Out on the Street - good people to talk to
- CWVBIA animated the park from 2017 to 2021
 - robust programming including music in the park
- LGBT Liaison at TPS
 - Robert Chevalier
- Polls on social media
 - Promoted through the safety network
- 519 has a big presence
- There is a new Board of Management for the BIA and they would like to meet with the project team

Pre-Engagement Interview Summary: January 17, 2023 with Progress Place

Participants

Progress Place: Robyn Evans, Clubhouse Manager

City of Toronto: Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Progress Place Background:

- Progress Place has been in the community for almost 35
- Runs a Clubhouse program dedicated to improving the lives of people living with mental illness
 - 120 members attend the program
 - program run by members and staff working in partnership
 - members build skills and confidence and are assisted in getting back to school/work
 - Also manage 78 housing units within the community
 - Progress Place gathered feedback around Barbara Hall Park from members in their housing

Challenges:

- Lack of greenspace in the neighbourhood
 - Because there is a lack of parks and so many people in apartments this park has to be many things to many people
 - has to serve many different needs
- Safety concerns
 - for the last four years or so safety issues have kept people from using the park
 - members and staff won't even eat lunch in the park anymore because of the concerns
 - It's really hard to access the back of the park
 - depending on who's sitting in the bench area, you have to walk by them to be able to access the back of the park
 - even if you do walk that way, coming back can be a challenge
- South side of the park is avoided
- No public toilets available in the park
 - Understand the safety concerns but there is a need.
- Can 519's garbage bins area be enclosed?

Park needs:

- People really enjoy the music and activities in the park
- Keeping the green space that is there (especially the trees) and increasing it if possible
- Would be nice to see more families and residents be able to use park

- Exercise equipment would be useful
- Game tables – ping pong?

What makes the park special?

- AIDS Memorial is an important part of the park
 - People aren't aware it's there
 - Once they know – it becomes important and valuable
- Community events – the only outdoor space in the neighbourhood where people can gather
- Brings the community together

Design opportunities:

- Continue activations/events in the park
- Open up the front of the park
 - Remove the stage
 - Re-green this space
- Open up the back of the park
- Park already has a lot of things in – would be best not to add too much more
- Dog park is needed

How do you want to be involved?

- Willing to be on advisory committee
- Possibly add a member from the housing or neighbourhood
- Distribution of surveys

Is there anything else?

- There are a broad variety of interests here – make sure you're sampling people from different stakeholder groups
- Make sure we're sampling people from all the different stakeholder groups to ensure that there's a balance in terms of meeting different needs
- Education about unhoused people would be helpful
- People now seem to have a better understanding around the depth of the challenges that some community members are experiencing
- Lots of new people will be moving into the community with new buildings being built and will need to rely on the park for access to green space.

Pre-Engagement Interview Summary: January 19, 2023 with Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association (CWNA)

Participants

CWNA: Connie Langille, President & Chair of Placemaking Committee

City of Toronto: Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Challenges:

- a lot of what seems to have driven the redesign is not as big of an issue anymore
 - encampments are gone
 - drug dealing has subsided immensely
 - two main players are gone
 - less aggressive behaviour
 - not in crisis like we were in 2021 and early 2022
- Not enough seating
 - in 2019 Parks removed all the benches and didn't replace them after Pride
 - still short about a dozen benches from the original number in 2019
 - rainbow benches are more welcoming and they work
 - trans-flag benches have been coated in a sealant that allows dirt to stick to them
- Children's area is not super welcoming
 - Include more child-friendly activities
- The stage is not useful except for summer weekends
- Park gets dirty because the gardens don't have retaining walls so mulch etc flows down into the walkways, which flows into and blocks drains
- AIDS Memorial was power washed and lettering on names that was chipping off was fixed
- Defining the area of the AIDS Memorial is paramount
 - includes the plaza, the stairs and the area outside
 - shaped as a teardrop
- There should be a grand entrance off of Cawthra, which is now like a back door
 - metal work or sign that fits with and announces the AIDS Memorial and creating a gateway
 - lack of seating in this area
- Connie understands the concerns of the people on Monteith but believes that the more seating you have, the more you can encourage diverse use of the park
- Church Street side
 - Can the sign indicate the AIDS Memorial?
- DOLA: Extending the dog run
 - request to consult with those users
 - negative vibe that comes from there

- people who are underhoused and homeless walk by and dogs bark, charge the fence, and owners laugh, while those folks feel intimidated
 - extend the DOLA at the west end and run it to Church Street have a small & large area
 - everybody loves dogs, and the DOLA makes it a more happy and alive space
- Space for small dogs
- Safe space from the large dogs
- Against the building on the south side: Raise planters that community can use
- Add to the basic skeleton of the park
- Grass can be raised so its flat you could play a game of ball etc.
- DO NOT move the AIDS Memorial
 - People visit the memorial and people reflect, grieve
 - CWVNA would not support moving the AIDS Memorial
 - shouldn't be put on Church Street
 - people visit, contemplate, and mourn
 - not a dog and pony show
 - where it is currently allows for tears and displays of affection and contemplation etc, which is why it's perfect exactly where it is
 - mulberry tree is the only problem because it soils the end of the monument every year with its berries
 - Dealers claim certain spaces (north wall, steps)
 - when you can encourage proper social behaviour, it makes the park safer
 - Sightlines
 - there's a building in the park, so it's unreasonable to expect clear sightlines

Park needs:

- Everyone should be welcome as long as activities are legal and don't infringe on the enjoyment of the park by anybody else
 - should be welcoming
- There's a community group ready that wants to take care of the gardens around the AIDS Memorial
 - more people joined in the care and enjoyment of the park
- More places to be and things to do in the park
 - benches
- The park will do what it does best if it looks welcoming and is kept clean
- doesn't need a lot of pretty bells and whistles to attract people
- People cringe about the south walkway because it's not inhabited by anything
 - there's an idea out there to put container shops, but this could be a problem
 - bring life here
- East side
 - take away the hidey-ho back door look
- Front
 - a sign that better honours the AIDS Memorial
- Play area could use re-imagining
 - currently ringed by dirt
 - could there be planters that kids can engage in?
 - on the outside of the fence could we widen the paths to give people room to pass by each other

What makes the park special?

- The rainbow benches
 - they should be sprinkled like on donuts everywhere
- AIDS Memorial
 - should be a priority
 - community is looking at working with partners to have it declared a national monument
 - it deserves to be honoured and respected for what it is
- The large green space
 - could be flattened, improved
- Variety of people that use this park
 - underhoused should not be washed or scrubbed from the park. it's part of their sanctuary as well
- The Canopy - when it works
 - south canopy always works and is a really nice gateway
- Connie has sat there for hours watching people come and go

Design opportunities:

- Work with the building to the east to see if their space can be incorporated into the park entrance
- The 519 has very active children's programming, so anything that can encourage parents to bring their kids to the park
- Concerts in the park
- If you have an open space, it can be used for a lot of things
 - i.e. queer market
- GreenSpace in alternative locations
 - 519 can't find an alternative place to hold the event
 - City should honour its commitment to help the 519 find a more suitable space to engage the people who want to be part of GreenSpace
 - confining this festival to BHP is unacceptable
 - difficult for community because it takes green space away that could also be used for other community pride events
 - 519 has been more than accommodating and professional to find solutions to the issues that have arisen
 - always out front on solutions

How do you want to be involved?

- Yes, interested in being part of CAG
- Identify all the important stakeholders and include them
- On-site engagement would be helpful.
 - Would help people imagine what ideas are being put forward
- Don't steer people towards our own priorities/preferences
 - engage people in a real conversation

Is there anything else?

- We cannot cure the homeless problem through this project
- We have to make people feel welcome, like they have place and space no matter who they are, but with the clear stipulation that illegal activity is not acceptable
 - i.e. there's a running group that starts from the park and occupies it
 - what if there were other groups that could inhabit the space in the same way
- Do not close off or start anything at Barbara Hall Park until George Hislop and Norman Jewison are completely finished and open
 - community can't lose the green space
- Play nice with Sanctuary
 - they're a vital part of the community
 - they service people that no one else wants to
- Community is eclectic and diverse but is also a very caring and supportive community and the park should reflect this
- People don't know what the AIDS Memorial is but when they do, they take care of it
- Including, educating, embracing is what the park should be about
 - with lots of rainbow benches

Pre-Engagement Interview Summary: January 25, 2023 with Toronto Police Services

Participants

Toronto Police Services: Sergeant Robert Chevalier, LGBTQ2S Community Liaison

City of Toronto: Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Challenges:

- There's a combination of issues
- Pandemic increased the challenges
 - when Robert first started as a neighbourhood officer in the area, there were some issues (people in tents, for example), but Toronto Police Services was able to deploy the resources to deal with it
 - 2018-2019 there were no encampments
 - Issues were mostly with noise at night, some criminal activity
- Pandemic hit and everything became much worse
 - Encampments became common
 - People began to build more elaborate structures
 - this has subsided and is now under control
 - winter weather has contributed to fewer encampments
- Park is known for street-level drug dealing
 - Criminal activity follows this
 - Things are slightly better in the winter
- Infrastructure is getting old, there isn't much maintenance of the park
 - The drain clogs near the AIDS Memorial
 - Stage funnels people into close proximity/crowds them
- There was a gun found in a tent in late 2020/early 2021
 - A one-off event that stood out as being unusual

Park needs:

- Trans memorial –
 - It is a chalk print on the wall because it is a grassroots initiative
 - not touched or removed
 - needs maintenance
- AIDS Memorial – its ageing and needs upkeep
- Dog park
 - Heavily utilized
- Benches – trans and pride benches
 - Main components of the park

- Safety
 - Users and sellers with drugs and that brings in anti-social criminal behaviour

What makes the park special?

- It's everything to everyone
 - Its connected to 519 – the only LGBTQ community centre
 - Culturally special
 - Needs to be preserved and recognised
 - Would be great to see something like the dog statue in Allen Gardens but that includes the progress pride colours
 - if you make a dog park so special then it draws people to use it
 - Keep the focus on the cultural sensitivity
 - Make sure the space reflects that
 - build a space that is going to be so special that it can accommodate a diversity of users

Design opportunities:

- South side of the park
 - replace the fenced-off area on the south side with a small-dog dog park
 - Gardens behind the 519 between the building and the splash-pad
 - Can be turned into a community gardening area – something that will bring people into it
 - For People to garden and safe area to walk through
 - No seating in the back area
 - AIDS Memorial and passive recreation (like sitting) on the other side
 - Can we add a track or physical fitness equipment?
 - Would need to be very durable

How do you want to be involved?

- Yes to be part of the CAG

Is there anything else?

- Listen to the residents at Monteith
 - Recognising that they live there and it's their front door
- Out on the street and Dudley hardware – speak to them
- Community Association
- Progress Place
- 519

Pre-Engagement Interview Summary: February 8, 2023 with Monteith Street Residents

Participants

Four Residents of Monteith Street

City of Toronto: Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Challenges:

- Barbara Hall Park has always had some level of problems:
 - Encampments exacerbated these problems exponentially
 - People had to endure criminality and violence
 - Park is occupied by drug dealers and users as well as mentally-ill people
 - Lots of laws related to loitering, noise, etc are being violated
- People endure criminality and violence:
 - Criminal and bylaw dysfunction affects Monteith street residents in their homes
 - On a regular basis people drift over from the park to Monteith Street
 - People break into houses, defecate and urinate on front stoops, or leave cigarette butts
 - Residents are portrayed as being too sensitive – but this is their home and it is a huge safety issue
 - Problems have increased in the past 4-5 years
- There is lots of drug use in the park: people call the park drug alley
- Park is overburdened with too many functions
 - Too much in a small space
 - Remove the dog park
 - Disruptive and loud
- Criminal and municipal laws must be enforced
 - Currently relies on people calling 311
 - What has worked – pilot project with 24/7 security
 - Twice-daily patrols by bylaw officers and security guard patrols (2 security guards)
 - For the first time Monteith residents could sleep
 - Within hours of the pilot ending – criminal activity resumed within hours
 - 2 security guards are needed from April to December
- Money spent on animating the park this summer was not successful
- Barbara Hall Park has become a social service hub
 - If folks stay long enough they will get food, help and welfare and be provided with drug paraphernalia
 - 519 has huge funding – they take over the park and their services exacerbate the issues
- More lighting added to the park hasn't made it safer.
 - Northeast corner is very well lit but that only provides more opportunities for illicit activities

- Need an External bathroom
 - People spend a long time there so they need to use a bathroom while there
 - People urinate and defecate in the park
 - Should be external to the 519, because people don't like having to go into the building

Design opportunities:

- Safety is a huge issue
 - Design can mitigate some risks – but enforcement of the laws is also needed
- Lots of noise comes from the park, caused by:
 - Dogs (which can also be aggressive)
 - People in mental health crisis
 - In June, Green Space
 - Event has outgrown the space – it's too big
 - Very loud – people on Monteith can't live in their homes
 - People can't visit the AIDS Memorial because it is chained off
 - Event physically ruins the park
 - Bushes get trampled
 - 519 has not been a great neighbour
 - They need to show they can take more responsibility for the park by returning it to its pre-event condition
- Bathroom should be accessible
- AIDS Memorial:
 - needs to be better identified
 - needs to be maintained
 - not sure it should be moved but there should be better seating and lighting
 - There used to be rose bushes around the AIDS Memorial that made it beautiful but they had to be removed
- Remove the platform/stage in front of the park
 - Replace it with a large flower bed or something aesthetic for the park
- entrance to the park from Cawthra:
 - need something that stops people from coming into the park on bikes/electric bikes because that's dangerous
 - Entry maze?
 - even taxis have driven into the park from that area
 - motorcycles come through the park
 - Very wide entrance – fast on electric bikes (introduce an entry maze)
- Cameras and security guard
 - If implemented, people need to be made aware of their existence if they are going to be a deterrent
- The stairs from the park into Monteith Street are problematic
 - not to code, puddles form
 - needs to be closed or fixed up
 - a ramp would prevent people from sitting on the stairs
- Residents like the wall separating them from the park
 - there is a lower fence at the end of the wall - expand the wall
- Need to stop people from being able to run away easily via Monteith and Jarvis when the police arrive

- Increase the fencing and make Monteith inaccessible from the park
- Governance
 - 519 is anti-security, camera has to be entirely separate
 - Include elements that promote community involvement:
 - a community garden, or something that engages community in a positive manner

Pre-Engagement Interview Summary: February 15, 2023 with Toronto Police Services

Participants

Toronto Police Services: Sergeant Henry Dyck, Neighbourhood Community Officer Supervisor

City of Toronto: Daniel Fusca, Manager Public Consultation; Navyata Neeraj, Public Consultation Coordinator

Challenges:

- Small property that is very close to residential properties
 - People in neighbouring homes, many of whom have owned there long before the park existed, are impacted by activities that happen in the park
- Social factors have pushed illicit activity into the park recently
 - Includes:
 - drug activity;
 - gathering for inappropriate types of activity, esp late into the evening
 - excessive noise;
- Adjacent business have a much higher than average rate of thefts and robberies
 - often offenders are coming from the park
- Residents who live there or walk through the park don't feel safe walking through the park
 - even people who are also marginalized and come to use the services of the 519, etc have said they feel this way
 - In other places, they will often erect a fence around a park and then lock it at night - why can't this happen here?
 - 519 will feed people in the park and then people dump their garbage there

Design opportunities:

- We've tucked away the AIDS Memorial and its location allows for unwanted activity, like drug use, to occur at the Memorial
 - should be better showcased
- Dog park is extremely well used but it might be a little large given the amount of green space in the park
- Stage space doesn't get used a lot but does get used for inappropriate activity
 - People steal electricity
- The park needs to be inviting so that fewer people can use it inappropriately
- Be bold! We should be a world class city and our parks should reflect that

How would you like to be involved?

- You're going to get a very wide range of advice
 - You will hear from both sides of the spectrum - 519 and nearby residents
 - "you'll know you're doing the right thing if everyone's upset at you"

Is there anything else?

- Bathrooms might not be such a big deal because there is a community centre adjacent to the property that is supposed to be open for everyone
 - people can use the facilities in the 519
 - people using the park as a washroom might have been more of a COVID issue

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL RESIDENT SUBMISSIONS



Correspondence submitted by a resident of Monteith Street

1. The systemic issues of homelessness, mental health crisis, and addiction are the major issues that impact the park. Whatever plans are made are only ways that we manage the longer term very important issues for our city and those need to be addressed. Park re-visioning will not address these larger far more important challenges we have as a community.
2. The thing that really has had an impact on the park was the increased lighting. More use of lighting is a good idea.
3. The AIDS Memorial is a memorial. It is very important that the use of it not be for defecation, sleeping, drug use and violence. Thinking about it as a sacred spot where people come to pay tribute is important. Are there design features that would promote these elements?
4. The park gets unbelievably messy with garbage. Often that garbage contains drug paraphernalia. Are there design issues that can have impact on this? We appreciate the cleaning crews that come so often and they do an amazing job.
5. Be sure to know there is a lot of "going to the bathroom" in this park. Any areas that create a space that make it easy to use as a toilet should be avoided.
6. The park is used for Green Space during Pride. This then means it takes the whole summer to grow back the grass. This leaves areas of the park (particularly the North East part of the park) useless for the summer months... it is too muddy to enjoy. Are there ways of re-visioning that area with a design that ensures that Pride can happen and then the ground can be used afterwards?
7. The concerts and activities in the park are wonderful. How does the design make those functional and possible?
8. We use the dog park. This is an incredible community and many neighbourhood friendships are formed there. Creating spaces that promote those friendships would be a great feature.
9. We love BHP and want to use it more. Violence and bullying are particularly painful in this park given that it is the green center of the 2SLGBTQQ+ community. Can we think of lovely art pieces that speak to peaceful community?

10. Children use the park too!! The playground behind the 519 is closed right now and the kids miss having a spot that is for them.

Correspondence submitted by two members of the Barbara Hall Dog Park Association

Correspondence submitted by first member

Background:

- Dog park has been in the Barbara Hall Park for many, many years.
- Community dog owners have organized to make an association to promote the park, as well as to maintain the park
- We are a responsible community group of dog owners in a very active dog park. We take pride in our dog park as well as the community and are dedicated to creating a safe and enjoyable environment for dogs and their owners.
- This is a high volume of dog activity in the park.
- The association has held many dog events over the years which include:
 - A Halloween party in conjunction with the 519 Community Centre, as well as a dog off-leash area (DOLA) Halloween parties.
 - Christmas parties with Santa and his Elves, summer pool parties, the association has held fundraisers to purchase shovels and rakes, doggy bags, brooms, plastic pools, treats and balls for the events. Many more dog park activities are being planned right now for the summer season events.
 - Members have been involved with cleaning, raking pea gravel back, snow shoveling from entrances and sidewalks, fall leaf raking, general cleaning of human feces, drug use syringes and maintenance of the park. This is crucial for the safety and well-being of all dog park visitors.
 - Has their own Facebook page with many members, which is a useful tool for communication and organizing events.
 - We also encourage responsible dog ownership with in the community. This includes picking up after your dog, keeping them on a leash in public areas, and not allowing them to engage with other individuals or dogs in an aggressive manner.

Challenges:

- Limited maintenance from the City Parks, we can do only so much.
- In the past, people experiencing homelessness and drug addiction have used the DOLA as a washroom, injection site, all leaving human waste and syringes and other litter around the DOLA.
- Verbal threats, assaults from people suffering from drug addiction entering the dog park, verbally harassing dog owners and some confrontations have occur. Several assaults have occur between these people and dog owners, police were called several times.

- People experiencing homelessness and drug addiction harassing dogs and owners over the fence, causing dogs to charge the fence, while owners rush to call and rush over to dogs to stop them barking at the instigators.
- One Person caught trying to poison dogs with anti-freeze.

Park needs:

- We need more maintenance from the City.
- Iron fence is rotting at bottom. To correct this problem a 1 foot concrete curb following the fence line could be erected and fence fasten on top the curb. This would stop dogs from urinating on the fence and also act to stop garbage and debris from blowing into the dog park.
- There is a huge empty pit at south west side by west entrance, which in the past was a human waste area. People suffering from drug addiction leave their syringes and drug gear there, as well as food litter. Could it be filled in to be level with park area?
- Sprinkler system has not been working in the past, possibly for years, dog urine is not washing through to the ground. Relying on rainfall to wash. This is vital to keep the area clean, and keep the smell of urine down for the neighbors.
- Small dog area could be installed and would be very utilized, and safer for the little dogs. There is two spots where it could be erected. One side on the east side, on the newly acquired area from Capreits 100 Wellesley st, or on southwest area running along the 519 to Church St.
- With the elevation changes, pea gravel migrates toward the south and east side of fence. We asked the City for more pea gravel, and are waiting for their response. City was to pull pea gravel back to centre, but hasn't happened yet. Needs a couple of truck loads to level it out.
- Artificial turf in the dog park would be great solution to this problem, but also must have the proper sprinkler system to keep the turf clean and safe for dogs and their owners.
- Extra water fountains could be added for the new small dog area, and maybe one more for the large dog area.

What makes the park special?

- The dog park brings a diverse community together, with a lot of information exchanged on dog resources as well as the community, by everyone to new dog owners.
- Dog park users visit year round, rain, snow or shine.
- Serves a wide range of ages from teens to seniors.
- It brings community together. Dog owners set up play dates up with their friends and dogs. Everyone is really friendly, and has a really nice positive vibe. Some dog owners spend hours there, sitting on bench watching the dogs run free and playing.
- It is a relatively safe area for LGBT people to gather with their dogs and meet new people.

Design opportunities:

- Add a small dog area.

- Artificial turf the dog park like some of the other city dog parks.
- Repair sprinkler system through the dog park.
- Expand the dog park to the east side.
- More benches, more lighting, should be brighter at night.
- Fix the maintenance issues.
- Agility course, fake fire hydrants for pee areas.

How do you want to be involved?

- Yes to be the voice for the DOLA.

Is there anything else?

- With many new condos going up in the area, the need for a brighter, safer, larger dog park is in need. We are now seeing an increase of new dog owners in the area.
- If we have a top notch dog park, it will draw more people into the park to use it.
- I think an ice cream food vendor shop would bring in people to the park, as well, as a coffee and fast food vendor container shop too. Put them on the north side of the building to hide the garbage from the 519.
- Music in the park is good.
- 519 pride event ruins the grass for the rest of the summer, totally destroyed. Maybe smaller events can take place without destroying the grass. Perhaps have vendors set up in there instead of on the streets during pride.
- CWNA and BIA need to be more involved, more flea markets, garage sales.
- Remove the wall on Monteith St. Making it wide open will feel like more eyes on illegal activities. It feels closed in at the moment. I think people will feel safer with the wall removed.
- Remove the round stage.

Correspondence submitted by second member

Challenges:

- People experiencing homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness
 - The park has been taken over by people experiencing homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness. This is partly due to the services 519 offers, such as harm-reduction programs that provides drug paraphernalia, which is most likely to end up littering the park.
 - All residents (not just Monteith residents) are being forced to endure crime, harassment, theft, human waste, and threats on a daily basis. The Monteith Street residents suggesting the removal of the dog park is absolutely disheartening. The dog off-leash

- area is the only part of the park not completely taken over by people experiencing homelessness and mental illness. The reason why the dog park has not been taken over by drug users is simply because of the frequency residents and their dogs use the area.
- Fence barrier
 - Is metal and quickly deteriorates from dog urine.
 - Small dogs are able to escape through the fence bars.
 - Allows unrestricted view of pedestrians.
 - North side fence should have a concrete border to obstruct view and prevent small dogs from escaping. It will also serve to protect the metal fence from damage caused by dog urine.
 - Please consider extending the bushes and adding flowers between the fence and sidewalk to prevent reactions to pedestrians.
 - Poor visibility of the west entrance. Open up or reduce the westside entrance so dog owners have a clear view. The hidden pocket at the west end is often used by non-dog owners (street-involved/unhoused people and drug users) who leave drug paraphernalia, and human waste.
 - Safety concerns of south wooden fence stability.
 - Funding
 - The off-leash dog park is the most used area of the park and has the least amount of city funding and maintenance.
 - A splash pad and some agility equipment would be a welcome addition.
 - A small dog area would also be well used and appreciated.
 - Disrepair
 - 75% of the original gravel is no longer evenly spread throughout the area. Regular maintenance such as racking to reallocate the migrating gravel to uneven areas is key to preventing gravel loss over time.
 - Side-effects of low gravel
 - Mud puddles are created during wet weather.
 - Tripping hazards are revealed from the underbase material.
 - Dogs have been injured by sharp base rocks.
 - Low levels of gravel revealed the sprinkler system which became a tripping hazard and ultimately broken off.
 - Urine and fecal odors.
 - Poor lighting and security
 - Lighting Improvement.
 - Regular maintenance.
 - Adding CTV cameras or regular patrols.

How do you want to be involved?

- We would like to be involved in every step and be given the opportunity to be heard and listen to other stakeholders. We are willing to work with fellow locals, discuss, debate, and are confident together we can find a mutually agreed design.

Is there anything else?

- The 519 give out needle, glass pipes, Kits, food and clothing, and should be responsible for cleaning up these items. This includes the broken glass smashed around the park.
- The truth of the matter is 519 enables the people who cause the largest problem which is agreed by all stakeholders interviewed. Many residents would love to enjoy the park but are not willing to endure harassment, intimidation, open drug use, risk of being injured and witness people having a mental health crisis. Most residents will go the extra distance to Queens Park, but not dog owners. Why? Queens Park does not have an enclosed off-leash area and we are not willing to give up our local dog park.
- The off-leash area has been maintained by local residents who are members of the association. We have regular events, regular clean ups, including seasonal maintenance. We fundraise to purchase special temporary equipment for the dogs to enjoy. We support our local businesses and often include them in our fundraising events. We value the dog area and do our best to preserve it.