

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Moss Park

Park Improvements and John Innes Community Recreation Centre Replacement

Public Meeting #3: Park Design Options Summary Report

March 22, 2023



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1.0 Introduction

Moss Park park improvement and the replacement of the 70-year-old John Innes Community Recreation Center will serve the evolving needs of the diverse community. This includes supporting vulnerable and equity-deserving populations in the local area and growing numbers of community residents by offering improved park amenities and recreational facilities.

The new and bigger facilities of the Community Recreation Centre and the park improvements will serve local communities by building on the assets of the park and community, in response to the needs of the diverse array of community members who enjoy the park and recreation amenities today.

This report builds on reports previously published, such as those for past surveys, open houses and advisory group meetings, all of which can be found on the project webpage.

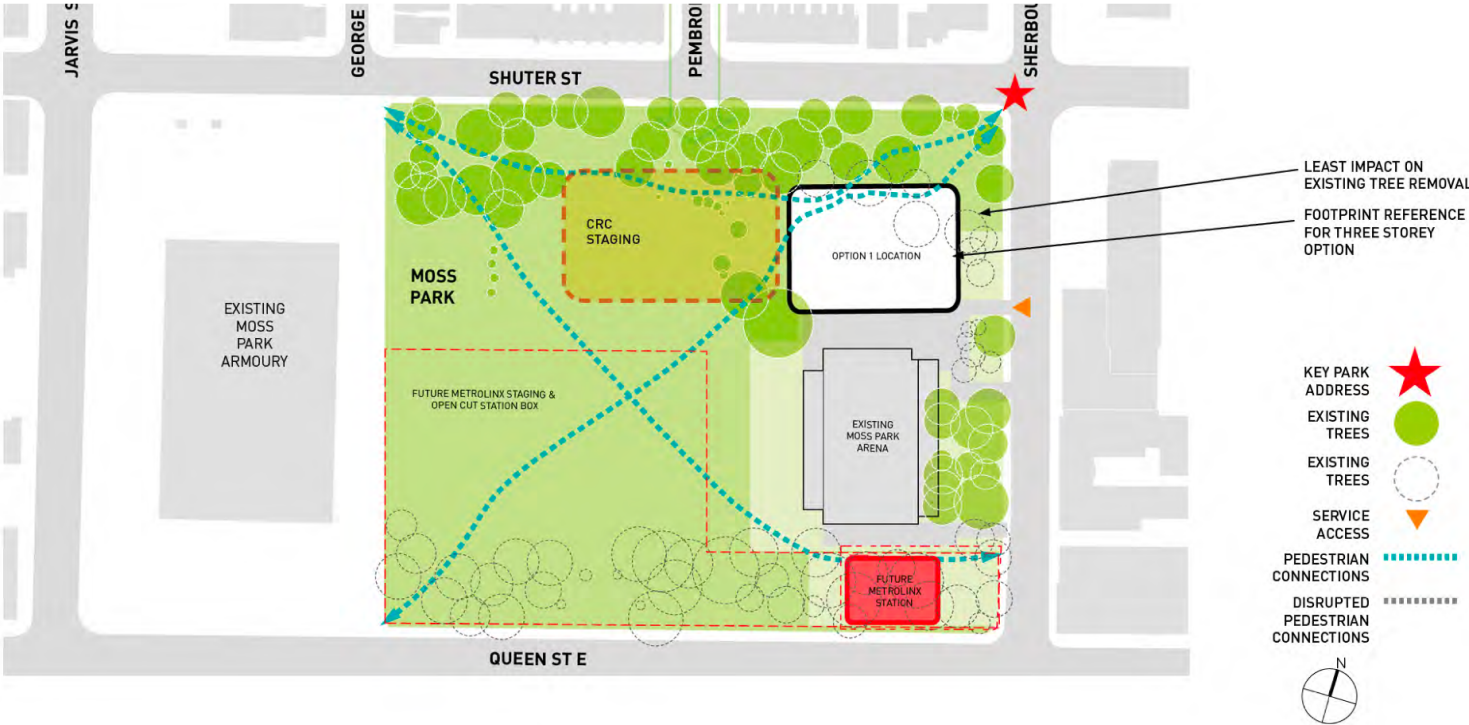


FIGURE 1: Map of the location of the new Community Recreation Centre in Moss Park

1.1 Project Context

In 2015, an initial reimagining of Moss Park began as a partnership between the City of Toronto, The 519, and a philanthropic partner. The project, titled More Moss Park, aimed to redevelop the park and replace the community recreation centre with a new facility that centered 2SLGBTQ+ communities and expanded the services offered. After a community and stakeholder engagement program and feasibility study, culminating in the More Moss Park Report in 2016, the project was deemed not feasible.

In 2019, City Council adopted the implementation strategy for the Parks & Recreation Facilities Master Plan with amendments. The plan made recommendations for the replacement of the John Innes Community Recreation Centre, facade improvements for the Moss Park Arena, as well as park improvements.

While the scope of the current Moss Park park improvements and John Innes Community Recreation Centre replacement project is now focused on park and recreation facilities for the community; the insights, knowledge and data gathered through the More Moss Park consultation and engagement laid valuable groundwork for this project.

1.2 Project Goals

Launch a new initiative to replace the John Innes Community Recreation centre with a new Community Recreation Centre and make extensive improvements to the park through a consultation process that is informed by the insights of the *2015 More Moss Park* project, with the following key project goals:

1. Replace the John Innes Community Recreation Centre with a bigger facility that meets the standards set out in the City's Recreation Facilities Master Plan and that can better meet the community's needs.
2. Redesign the park to meet current and future needs.
3. Build on the park's long-standing role as a hub for the diverse communities and people of Moss Park.
4. Ground the project by honouring local communities and by building on the assets of the park and community and the experiences and goals of diverse park users.
5. Build on the input received from the previous *More Moss Park* community consultation process.
6. Deliver an accessible and welcome place for all members of the Moss Park and John Innes Community Recreation Centre community.
7. Work closely with the community throughout the project.

1.3 CONFIRMED Design Principles

The following eight *Design Principles* serve as guidance to steer the vision of the project. They have been workshopped with public input and confirmed with the public throughout this Phase of the project.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1: Ensure the design of the Community Recreation Centre and park supports equity, belonging and inclusion.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 2: Ensure the Community Recreation Centre and Park are accessible to all.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 3: Create a space that makes safety for all users a priority.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 4: Design an open, permeable, and transparent environment.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5: Maximize, enhance, and improve green spaces.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 6: Celebrate and share information about the Indigenous history and character of Moss Park.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 7: Contribute to food security.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 8: Be sustainable and carbon neutral.

1.4 CONFIRMED Big Moves

The Project team compiled thirteen *Big Moves* that describe priority actions that the City intends to take. They have been workshopped with public input and confirmed with the public throughout this Phase of the project.

BIG MOVE 1: Maintain a large area of open parkland with frontages onto Queen and Shuter by building the new Community Recreation Centre along Sherbourne St., over the existing footprint.

BIG MOVE 2: Establish a strong and cohesive design language between the Community Recreation Centre and the Arena buildings as well as the public realm.

BIG MOVE 3: Optimize opportunities for rooftop access to the new Community Recreation Centre.

BIG MOVE 4: Incorporate spaces for prayer and ceremony in flexible spaces.

BIG MOVE 5: Ensure washroom access from the outside of the building.

BIG MOVE 6: Create pedestrian connectivity to the park, arena and the Community Recreation Centre from the new Moss Park station in anticipation of a large volume of new users.

BIG MOVE 7: Work with local indigenous partners and first nations to ensure that indigenous placekeeping, knowledge, ways of knowing are reflected in the process and design, park improvements and Community Recreation Centre redevelopment.

BIG MOVE 8: Establish a renewed urban canopy of trees on Queen to match the Shuter edge. Wood from trees removed during construction will be used in the project in various ways.

BIG MOVE 9: Maintain and enhance key pedestrian pathways and access points into the park with lighting and sightlines.

BIG MOVE 10: Maintain and enhance existing permeable park edges and protect the existing urban canopy along Shuter.

BIG MOVE 11: Maintain the strong Sherbourne urban built edge and enhance the relationship between the Community Recreation Centre/Arena/Park and Metrolinx Station with improved visual and physical connectivity and accessibility.

BIG MOVE 12: Remove the baseball diamond to accommodate a wider range of park uses.

BIG MOVE 13: Add a fenced, dedicated dogs off-leash area to the park to support the growing number of residents with dogs in the intensifying neighbourhood, and to protect other park amenities and park users from conflicts with dogs.

1.5 Project Schedule

- Spring 2021: Procurement of architect and landscape architect design services and community engagement consultant
- Spring/Summer 2022: Community engagement – Building on the Vision
- ***WE ARE HERE - Summer/Fall 2022: Community engagement – Early Design Ideas**
- Winter/Spring 2023: Community Engagement – Preferred Design
- Spring 2024: Hire a construction team
- Summer 2024 to Fall 2027: Community Recreation Centre construction
- Spring 2025 to Fall 2027: Park construction

1.6 About this Report

This Public Meeting summary report, prepared by SAFFY, summarizes the key findings that emerged through the Public Meeting #3 Moss Park park Concept Options Design Feedback, as part of the Moss Park Improvements & John Innes Community Recreation Centre Replacement Project held on March 21st 2023. This report summarizes the feedback and input collected from the public meeting:

WHEN: March 21, 2023, at 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
WHERE: Virtually on Webex

ATTENDEES: Session #1 - 41 participants
Session #2 - 27 Participants

PROJECT TEAM: City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division
SAFFY (Public and Stakeholder Engagement)
The Planning Partnership (Landscape Architecture)
Two Row Architect (Landscape Architecture & Indigenous Lens)

2.0 Engagement Overview

2.1 Engagement Objectives

The objective of this engagement phase was to unveil three early park concept design options and solicit public feedback on the various elements of the three designs from the public.

2.1.1 Engagement Approach

The engagement process was designed to reach and listen to the general public. The open house was hosted virtually on Webex. Two 1.5-hour virtual public meetings held on WebEx were scheduled at different times to accommodate diverse schedules and provide more opportunities for the public to participate. The first session was held from 4:00-5:30 pm, followed by the second session from 6:30-8:00 pm.

Meeting Structure: Both meetings followed the same structure and format. The City of Toronto, SAFFY, The Planning Partnership, and Two Row Architect guided participants through a presentation about the park improvements as well as a facilitated discussion to garner feedback about the park concept design options.

The public meeting began with a briefing on the project context, including the timeline for improvements to the park and community centre, an update on the project's engagement activities to date, and a few remarks from local Councilor Chris Moise. The project team discussed critical aspects of the park improvements, including a review of the Design Principles that underpin each option, the approach to Indigenous Placekeeping, and site-plans and renderings that demonstrate pedestrian connections, pathways, park lighting, tree planting, seating, and the location of park programming including the new off-leash area.

The Planning Partnership led the facilitation of a feedback period by asking each meeting participant to respond and provide their feedback and opinion about:

- Paths through and around the park
- Community gardens
- Children's play area and splash pad
- Seating
- Joint use of tennis courts with pickleball

The rest of the project team provided support during this portion of the meeting.

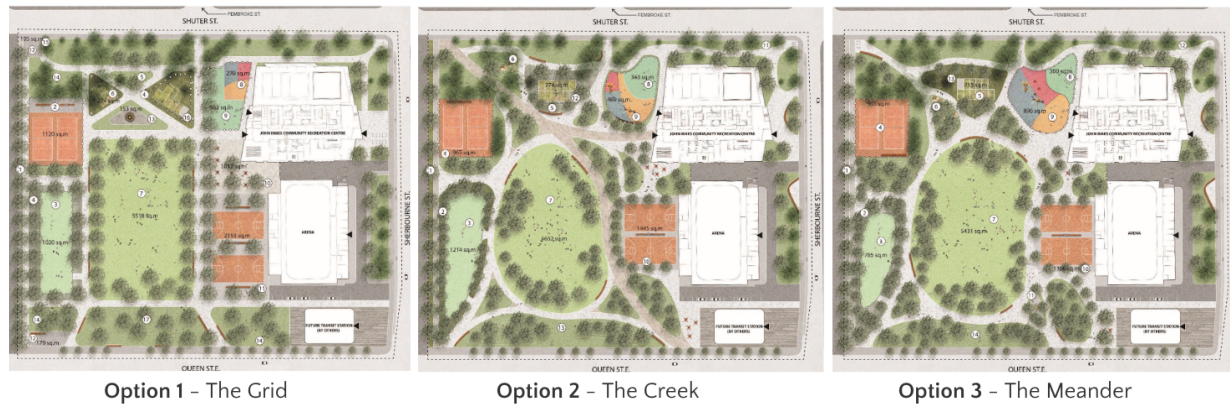


FIGURE 2: Site plan of the three different park options.

3.0 What We Heard

The following section contains a summary of the feedback received during Public Meeting #3. See [Appendix](#) for full documentation of comments and questions shared during the Public Meeting.

3.1 Key Insights

Key insights that have emerged from the Public Meeting are consolidated by the themes below.

Intuitive Pathways

Meeting attendees provided feedback on the importance of maintaining clear sightlines and their opinion on the locations of different pathways in the three park options. The preferences on the different pathways were mixed amongst the three options, but there was more preference for diagonal lines and organic cross connections between the Creek and Meander option. This option allows people to easily cross the field, which is currently a common walking route for park users. Participants mentioned that "people will want to walk along a diagonal" and that "more diagonal paths are probably better to

avoid diagonal track across fields." With The Grid (Option 1), there was mention that there would still be a tendency to cross diagonally anyways.

In addition, one community member spotted a potential danger in the North-South pathway between the dog run and the armory. They commented that the North-South pathways between the off-leash area and the fence to the armory could be dangerous, and people could be trapped.

The design team responded that this information will be taken into consideration as they continue with further refinements of the park options.

Park Maintenance

During the feedback process, community members expressed concerns regarding park maintenance and upkeep, especially with the recent addition of pathways, increased traffic, the off-leash area, and debris that accumulates in the park throughout the year.

To address these concerns, City staff acknowledged that the Moss Park improvements constitute a major capital project. They also confirmed that measures will be taken to increase winter maintenance in the park, given the many new pedestrian crossing routes. Furthermore, efforts will be made to ensure that the park is kept clean and tidy for the benefit of all park users.

Trees and Plants in Moss Park

During the meeting, the tree strategy for each design option generated a lot of interest among attendees, with several participants sharing ideas on how to repurpose the trees that had already been taken down by the province due to [Metrolinx's Ontario Line](#). Some attendees specifically inquired about whether the design team had plans to reuse the trees in the playground or other areas of the redesign.

The Creek and Meander option proved popular among attendees due to its proposal for a greater number of new trees compared to the Grid option. Participants also raised questions about the sightlines and the types of trees being planted. Several attendees recommended giving priority to native plants in the garden areas. They also asked for more information about the specific types of plants that are planned to be used. Additionally, one participant suggested considering coniferous trees as an option to maintain a green environment during the winter months.

A member of the design team confirmed that the park's tree strategy will prioritize native plants and tree species. According to the updated tree strategy details, around 65% of the trees in the park will be native, and the concept plans propose planting between 142 to 202 trees. The tree selection will include fruit-bearing trees and various native pollinator plants.

Regarding the trees that were removed by Metrolinx, the design team is exploring ways to incorporate them into the park design and the community center. While no specific plans for the playground have been made yet, direction on the park design will take place in the upcoming months.

Community Garden

Participants of the public meeting did express strong opinions and support for community gardens and access to food growing opportunities in the park. There were concerns centered around whether an allotment garden model or a large community garden area would be more appropriate. Some attendees also asked about the possibility of connecting the community gardens to a food security program at the community center. Although the management of the community gardens is not within the scope of the project or design team, the team welcomed ideas and suggestions from the community members which will be shared with parks and recreation staff. These questions were addressed by the project team and are listed in the [Appendix](#).

“Totally in favour of a community garden, but needs to incorporate the most recent studies and best thinking - not individual plots”

“Could garden maintenance be led by the shelters in the area?”

“Allotment program is not enough. The idea of having individual allotments is not appropriate.”

Seating

Overall, there was a widespread agreement among park users regarding the advantages of having additional seating in the park. There was a variety of feedback and ideas shared concerning the types of seating people would like to see. Suggestions included providing shaded seating, installing picnic benches, and offering seating options with backrests, using the reclaimed wood to construct seats and having seating included around the multi-use courts. The project team took note of all comments and feedback concerning seating. Furthermore, participants were informed that additional input and preferences regarding seating are also being gathered through the latest survey.

“Picnic benches would be nice! They are largely missing from parks in the area.”

“Seating should not be hostile (prevent people from sleeping on them with bars in the middle)”

“Seating, would love backrest. armrests are not important.”

Off-Leash Area

There were mixed reactions about the proposed new off-leash area, some participants expressed concerns about the oversaturation of dog parks in the area. Specifically, participants raised questions about the potential impact of dog urine on nearby gardens and expressed concerns about how to ensure the safety of people in and around the dog parks. Participants wanted more information on the maintenance and potential impacts the off-leash area would have in the park. Project team members provided further context and rationale for the inclusion of the off-leash area as an activating feature year round, and ensured that needs of both dog-owners and non dog-owners are being equally addressed and maintained. Specific answers to participant questions can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Year Round use of the Park

During the meeting, questions were expressed about the park's year-round use. Participants wondered how some of the park's features would be utilized and maintained in the winter months, particularly the splash pad. In response, the project team provided information about the use of the splash pad, explaining that it will be repurposed as a play area during the winter months. They also assured attendees that the park would receive adequate maintenance and upkeep throughout the year, ensuring continued accessibility.

Appendix A

March 23, 2023 - Public Meeting #1 Questions and Comments

Note: Participant questions and comments, and project team responses, are not verbatim.

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
What is a food forest?	A food forest is tree planting of fruit and nut trees, that provide edible food for both humans and other creatures.
Could you please post a more detailed explanation for the "land acknowledgement" areas designated by #14 on the first plan. Thanks	A land acknowledgement is a formal statement of the land we are on and how we pay homage to that. This can look like art, fire-pit, there are many ways it could look like and how it is being applied to the park designs.
How will the hangout curb along sherbourne street be affected with these designs? None of the street views showed that part of the park (across from the Salvation Army). Often food is also handed out on the south east corner of the park (queen/sherbourne). Have any of these organizations been consulted/included in the process?	We have given this a great deal of thought. This will be a difficult place to hangout because there will be a lot of movement with the plaza/station. Carving out extra space for seating on that sidewalk will be part of the strategy and we have been meeting with various stakeholders to make sure needs are met.
Is there a consideration for integrating art?	There are two public art components planned for this project. One indoor and one outdoor. An Indigenous curator has been hired and working with the Percent for Public Art Program to select two artists.
Moss park is currently home to or frequented by many marginalized and vulnerable people. Have the impacts of this project on this community been taken into account, either in the design or development? I'm concerned about displacing people who use Moss park as an integral part of their lives and communities.	<p>We have a fairly robust engagement program. Trying to understand the priorities and preferences of the community. We heard this sentiment that people may feel pushed out. One of the markers of success in the park is to make sure the current users will also be future users.</p> <p>We are also working with the City on social infrastructure, to ensure elements of the park that are useful to vulnerable communities this includes access to drinking fountains and places to sit and warming stations in some of the parks that might come to this park, as well as access to washrooms.</p>

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
<p>Will the trees include both male and female trees to lessen allergies as has occurred from urban planners preference of male trees?</p>	<p>In terms of allergies ragweed is more the cause of allergies. Our priority will be planting native trees.</p>
<p>Thank you for this presentation and the thoughtful design alternatives. Is there any thought about a toolshed for the urban community garden plots and perhaps a small greenhouse on the south side of the community centre to support the gardeners (seedling production)? Perhaps the community garden is a bit small? Is it too shaded?</p>	<p>The community gardens will be reinstated and will include improved with storage and access to water.</p>
<p>The splash pad that is only accessible for part of the year may not be the best use of limited space.</p>	<p>The splash pad area would function as more play space in the winter, when the water is not running.</p>
<p>Is this going to be more than just the allotment gardens or is this something that that community can enjoy?</p>	<p>The new garden plots will be bigger than the existing allotment. It will be more equitably distributed and it will be fenced and individuals will have plots that are assigned with storage and water source and it is closely linked with the community center. We are also looking at food elements throughout the park such as food bearing trees and medicine planting. Plants that attract birds and pollinators- giving a multi-prong approach. Overall, community gardeners will be managed the same way.</p> <p>We have heard continually from engagements to continue the community gardens and allotment plots. Recreation is currently managing the plots. There has been general support for keeping the allotments but we can take your comments back.</p>
<p>Are the arena and center designs finalized to make more spaces for gardens and allotments for example.</p>	<p>The footprint of the Community Recreation Centre is more or less in place already. The area is not part of this capital project that does not include the area it will not move.</p>
<p>Will there be green space for picnic blanket seating?</p>	<p>In addition to the central green space, we've created additional green areas around the edges of the park. To complement these new green spaces, we've also added more formalized seating, similar to the examples shown in the images we presented in the presentation.</p>
<p>Like the inclusion of food forest and including the downtown is amazing. Do you have full support behind this idea?</p>	<p>We have presented this to city staff and have not had any push back.</p>

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
<p>I still don't understand, given how much respect you are professing for the environment and Indigenous connections, why the large trees were cut down last month only to have so many trees in the design, at the same places?</p>	<p>The trees were removed by the Province, to build the subway, not the City of Toronto.</p>
<p>With amount of trees you should consider line of sight into the park for police from the street while driving by for safety.</p>	<p>The images show that the tree branches will start above eye level and maintain clear sightlines through the park.</p>
<p>Where would the closest baseball diamond be located, since it's being removed from this site?</p>	<p>The Downtown East End Softball League will be playing at Riverdale Park West. Other leagues have been relocated to other downtown diamonds.</p>
<p>St James Town park was redone and dogs took over the park even if there are signs. Our parks are littered with dog waste. The designs that you have don't have a strategy for controlling dogs.</p>	<p>We will ensure there is a fenced space for dogs and enough space for family and children.</p> <p>We really want to make this off-leash area a place where dog owners want to take their dogs.</p>
<p>Those that let dogs roam free attack people, there are several dog parks in the area within walking distance. And there are many needles. A lot of people do not go to the park because it is unsafe. How is the park going to be maintained?</p>	<p>The City acknowledges the complex social issues surrounding the park. As a significant capital project, the park's ongoing maintenance has been carefully considered.</p> <p>Additionally it is important to activate the park and make it a hub of community activity. By doing so, we can encourage people to spend more time in the park and discourage undesirable behaviors elsewhere. With the help of the community, we aim to create a welcoming and inclusive space that reflects the diverse needs and interests of park users.</p>
<p>What are the materials being used for the paths?</p>	<p>We are currently exploring materials for the paths in the park. While concrete is excellent for snow clearing, it is not the most sustainable option. We are considering alternatives such as natural stone and brick, and may use a combination of materials. This is still in the early stages of development, and we will continue to evaluate options that balance functionality with environmental impact.</p>

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
<p>Paths: Is the plan for the paths to be pedestrian only or pedestrian and cyclist?</p>	<p>Park paths are for pedestrians and they are "pedestrian priority" - bikes can travel on the paths, but they are meant to go at a slow, pedestrian rate. This is not cycling infrastructure, but a park path.</p>
<p>North - south pathways could be quite dangerous. If you got caught at the back of the dog run that could be an issue.</p>	<p>We get your point, that someone can be trapped in that area. That is interesting. We will take this into consideration.</p>
<p>How many of the proposed paths would be winter maintained? That aside, I love the idea of honouring the lost creek, but I also love the variety and tree cover in the meander option. The Grid option is a bit too formal.</p>	<p>The park will be maintained throughout the winter season due to the anticipated increase in park usage and the additional features that have been added to the park. With heightened maintenance we will ensure the park continues to be an accessible park for the community to enjoy year-round.</p>
<p>I've been a resident in the neighborhood for almost 30 years. My wife and I were involved in the last renovation of the park. One of the things that was of great advantage then is we made sure that we had good sightlines through the park from the street and access throughout the park for the police and EMT units to deal with situations that happened in our neighborhood. I was wondering, have the police in the EMT been consulted in this renovation.</p>	<p>We have engaged with the community police in the neighborhood and park ambassadors to discuss the park's design and safety. They have been informed and consulted on the lighting and sightlines in the park.</p> <p>The paths in the park have been designed to be wide enough to allow for the passage of vehicles, ensuring that emergency services can access the park quickly and efficiently.</p>
<p>Will kids who use wheelchairs be able to use the playspace?</p>	<p>Ensuring that the playground is accessible to people of all abilities is a top priority for us, as it is a City of Toronto requirement. To achieve this goal, we are working closely with the same playground designers who worked on St. James Town. Their expertise and experience will help us create a one-of-a-kind playground that takes everyone's needs into account. We are committed to making the park an inclusive and welcoming space for all members of the community to enjoy.</p>
<p>Do you know what happened to the trees that Metrolinx took out? Will the trees be used in the playground design?</p>	<p>We are looking at ways to incorporate the trees into the park design and the community centre. We have looked into re-using the different types and sizes of branches and logs in the park and playground itself.</p> <p>We have not gotten into the playground specifically, but this will be discussed in the next coming months.</p>
<p>Can the splash pad become a four season feature?</p>	<p>Skating is not in the program. But this is an interesting</p>

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
Could it be designed to permit skating?	idea for how the splash pad area could be used around the seasons.
Will most of Ontario line station be underground with minimal above ground entrance (preferable just stairs like queen and university	The subway line is a provincial project . More info at: https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/ontario-line/what-were-building/moss-park-station
Gage Park in Brampton - skating trail that went through the park, it wasn't just a rink and brought a lot of people into the park. It feels warm.	Important to think about the winter uses. This needs to be taken back to the city staff.
Can we include a skating trail throughout the park?	There is a high cost factor and operational factor associated with incorporating a skating trail. At this time it would not work in this park. There are a number of skating opportunities nearby such as: Toronto Metropolitan University , Sherbourne Rink , and Nathan Phillips Square.
Arena is hockey focused, without skating feels like a 3 season solution.	This is a comment we can take back and try to address.
Will these gardens be open to communities where public and households can rent a garden, or are these food gardens taken care of by the City for public consumption.	These are allotment gardens. People would have to apply to get a plot.
Will these be individual garden plots or managed by the community centre?	The garden plots are managed by the City's community gardens programs. The existing Moss Park Community Kitchen Garden will remain and plots will be made available through the city's allotment garden program.
In the design guidelines, accessible outdoor washrooms were listed, but are not shown in any of the three options. Where are the washrooms going to be placed?	North arrow in the plan represents access to the washrooms from the outside.
Will the washrooms be accessible year round?	Yes, washrooms will be made accessible year round.
To design a tennis court without pickleball would not be fair. Pickleball is a fast growing sport.	The community centre will have pickleball lines in the gym and we are actively collecting feedback on having pickleball and tennis share the same court.

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
<p>Much of the conversation this evening has seemingly imagined or hoped for their displacement from this space. Also, doing this type of consultation only online is also exclusionary. While it is great to see the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, which is essential – I would love to see commitments to other inclusive practices more evident.</p>	<p>We're currently hosting one in-person pop-up to showcase the design options for the park on April 15th. We've gathered feedback from unhoused folks and service providers, we've heard a number of concerns that we're actively addressing, including the need for washroom access, external shower facilities, and space for social services. All of these have been incorporated in the park improvements and Community Recreation Centre. There are just some of the ways, but there is still work to be done.</p> <p>Additionally, we have project champions that are local residents. These champions are incorporated in this process to help reach hard-to-reach populations and spread the word while also gathering valuable input from the community.</p>
<p>Will there be bike parking?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Will the bike share station remain?</p>	<p>This is to be determined.</p>
<p>Is there any thought about a toolshed for the urban community garden plots and perhaps a small greenhouse on the south side of the community centre to support the gardeners (seedling production)? Perhaps the community garden is a bit small? Is it too shaded?</p>	<p>A storage shed will be provided. Shade and size needs are being considered.</p>
<p>Is the grading plan within the "open lawn" section to be flat with undulation on the perimeter? Or will there be some mounds in the lawn area?</p>	<p>The central lawn area will be flat to allow for activities.</p>