



**David Crombie Park Improvements &  
The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project**  
Summer Pop Up Events – Summary  
Saturday July 29, 2023 1 – 3 PM &  
Friday August 11, 2023, 1 – 3 PM  
David Crombie Park

## Overview

On Saturday, July 29 and Friday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 the City of Toronto hosted two pop up events in David Crombie Park for the David Crombie Park Improvements & The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project. The purpose of the pop up events was to connect with park users and local community members to share information about the project, including:

- notification that detailed designs are underway based on the 2019-2020 approved Master Plan;
- timelines for construction of the park improvements, cycle track improvements and intersection improvements;
- notice that a community event will take place in the fall of 2023 to share the final park plan; and
- how stay involved with the process.

From approximately 1 – 3 PM on both days City staff and members of the design consultant team set up in the park under a large blue tent and spoke with people interested in learning more about the projects. Information was shared on display boards and through handouts. The display boards and handouts included the same information and are attached to this report (see attachment 1). Over 100 people stopped to talk throughout the two pop up events. The comments shared are summarized in this report.

The pop up events were advertised through a variety of mechanisms, including posters distributed to businesses and residences that surround the park; on the project webpage [www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark](http://www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark); sharing information with members of the Community Stakeholder Group, and information shared in Councillor Ausma Malik's newsletter.

Third Party Public documented discussions at the pop up events and prepared this summary. The purpose of this summary is to capture the feedback shared at the pop-up events, not to assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives. This summary also does not indicate an endorsement of any of the perspectives on the part of the City of Toronto.

## Key Themes

Key points of feedback are summarized below as a brief overview. These points should be read along with more detailed feedback included in a later section of the summary.

- **Excitement about the park redevelopment moving forward and keen to see the final park plans.** Several people said they are excited that improvements will be made. People are keen to see more detail about the final plan and understand how it connects to what they saw during the Master Plan process. Participants also said they want to know when construction will take place and be complete, specifically, which blocks will be completed and when.
- **Mixed opinions about the wading pool conversion to a splash pad.** Some continued to share their disappointment that the current plan is to convert the wading pool to a splash pad. Others said they understood why the change was occurring and supported the splash pad while being keen to see what the splash pad would look like. There was a suggestion to consider a hybrid option to include both a wading pool/splash pad.
- **Support for improving the cycle track.** There was strong support for improving the cycle track with more trees and clear division between pedestrians. Some participants shared concerns about conflicts between cyclists, pedestrians and cars, especially related to cyclists not stopping at intersections or following the rules of the road. Others were interested in understanding the costs related to elevating the cycle track.
- **Strong support for improving the school playground and recreation spaces.** There was general excitement for plans to upgrade the shared-use playgrounds/schoolyards. Suggestions included having more robust barriers to keep children in, improving maintenance and safety of play spaces and adding more swings, shaded areas and sitting areas. Some other advice included looking at other examples of playgrounds for inspiration (for example Charles G. William Park in Roncesvalles).
- **Questions and concerns about the dog park.** There was some frustration that the off-leash dog area was not included in this phase of the redevelopment. There were safety concerns about the lack of fencing, in addition to strong support for fencing the off-leash dog area.

## Detailed Summary of Feedback

This section reflects the summary of feedback shared by participants during both pop up events at the David Crombie Park. It is organized by the key topics. *Responses from City Staff are available below in italics.*

### General Feedback

**Strong support and excitement for the revitalization of the David Crombie Park.** Many people shared that the park needs a refresh and are excited that improvements will be made. People are looking forward to seeing the final plan during the upcoming public meeting in the Fall of 2023.

**Understand the growing need for park spaces.** The area has been busier in the last ten years due to new developments, for example, the Distillery District and more people are using the park and surrounding areas.

**Suggestion for the project team to look at other precedents to consider the design and approach that other parks have taken locally and internationally:**

- Bryant Park, for its inclusion of cafes in the park with areas to sit on the grass field;
- Charles G. Williams Park, specifically for the playground with natural elements;
- Central Park, specifically for the activities and events in the park;
- Other general suggestions included Madison Square Park/Chelsea Pier located in New York and Mel Lastman Square in Toronto.

**Maintain the David Crombie Park arches.** The arches are iconic and should be maintained.

#### Wading Pool and Water Feature

**Mixed opinions about the water feature, and the conversion of the wading pool to a splash pad.** Some people were in strong support of maintaining the wading pool. Comments included, the wading pool is a longstanding feature of the park and is used by young children and families, especially as a hub for mothers. It is also one of the few remaining wading pools in the area. There is joy in being able to sit in water. Others supported the proposed conversion to a splash pad and agreed with the benefits of having longer access during the summer and cleaner water. There was also a suggestion for a hybrid wading pool and splash pad.

**Consider adding more benches and sitting areas around the wading pool.** Shading for these new seats and benches is important, especially in the summer.

**Strong support for updating the water feature near Hahn Avenue.** The water fountain on the east end of the park is confusing and awkward looking. It would be nice to have an interactive water feature, such as interactive seats in the fountain.

#### Off-Leash Dog Area

**Frustration that the off-leash dog area will not be part of this portion of the project.**

Participants said community members have been advocating for the enclosed dog area for years, including starting a petition in 2014. Community members are interested in advocating for the budget necessary to include the off-leash dog area.

**Separate off-leash dog area.** Participants said it the lack of barrier around the off-leash area makes it unsafe for dogs. Participants suggested looking for creative ways to separate the off-leash dog area including adding fun features to create a barrier. Commercial dog walkers would be interested in using a fenced dog park.

*Following the pop up events City staff reiterated that the off-leash area will be part of the next phase of work. The City has heard the importance of a fenced off-leash area from earlier consultation and it is an important facility for the reasons stated above.*

**Enforce the by-law for the off-leash dog area.** Participants said additional enforcement is needed as many owners do not follow the existing rules.

#### Cycle Track and Active Transportation

**Consider more enforcement for cyclists.** Participants said many cyclists are not following the stop signs or using the sidewalk which is causing tension with pedestrians and cars. They suggested increasing enforcement and outreach/education with cyclists.

**Prioritize pedestrian access to sidewalks.** Roads should be narrower for pedestrians to have more space.

**Mixed opinions on proposed improvements to the cycle track.** There was some support for improving the cycle track. This a beautiful part of the city cycle through because it is shaded and close to the park. Others were concerned about funds allocated for raising the cycle track.

**Explore how other jurisdictions are designing bike lanes.** Denmark has a great approach to bike lanes, which ensures there is a separation between bikes and pedestrians with shaded areas for both.

### Gathering Spaces

**Strong support for more seating areas and space for events.** Participants said there needs to be more seating areas with shade in the park. The cement walls by the wading pool are a great example of having good seating options. It would also be nice to have seating with comfortable backrests too. The park already has several community events, including those hosted by Jamii. People are excited about having more informal and formal gathering spaces. Jamii is an amazing resource to connect with about this project.

**Mixed opinions on “hostile architecture”.** Some suggested using “hostile architecture” (i.e., design elements that purposely guide or restrict behaviour) to prevent people from sleeping on benches. Others were against the use of this type of design.

**Maintain the hill, known as The Mound, east of the basketball court as a gathering space.** Participants said the hill is a great place to sit and host events and that the hill has been used by Indigenous communities and others to host events.

**Include outdoor fitness equipment for seniors and others to access.**

**Include charging stations** for electronic devices (e.g. cell phones) throughout the park.

### Playground & Schoolyards

**Coordinate with school boards to plan renovations to limit disruption to schools as much as possible.** There was concern about the schoolyards being closed during the school year and a strong suggestion to align the revitalization of schoolyards during the summer months as much as possible.

**Suggestion to include more robust barriers between street and schoolyard.** Participants said they wanted to prevent students from running out onto the street. There was also concern about anti-social uses of the playground after school hours (such as drug use) and potential discarded drug paraphernalia.

*As part of this process, City staff are working with the two school boards to ensure that the design provides adequate fencing and safety standards.*

**Concerns around flooding and freezing of the shared-use playground at Lower Jarvis St. during winter.** It is a safety concern for students.

**Consider more shaded areas for slides and more swings.** It would also be good to avoid metal slides due to heat gain.

### Greenspaces & Natural Spaces

**Strong support for more trees and preserving canopy for shade and sun protection.** There is interest in seeing more native and fruit trees in the park to support pollinator species and allow for community stewardship opportunities with fruiting trees. Shaded areas are also important in the summer for people to be able to enjoy the park.

**Make space for ‘guerilla gardening’ for volunteers to use.** It would be great to use the park for community gardening, especially with food insecurity being an issue in the area and throughout the city.

The City of Toronto currently has a community garden program. Community groups can apply and submit a proposal for new community gardens through the City of Toronto's website at [www.toronto.ca/gardens](http://www.toronto.ca/gardens).

**Concern about cigarette butts being left in the park.** There was a suggestion by a participant to include more places around the park to dispose of cigarette butts.

## Other Feedback: Outside of the Scope of the David Crombie Park Improvements & The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project

*In addition to feedback related to the David Crombie Park Improvements & The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project, participants also shared feedback **outside the scope of this project**. This feedback has been included below:*

**Clarify the future of the tent site** at 125 The Esplanade Participants noted that the tent site was part of the park master plan. The team explained that it is not part of this project's scope.

*Following the meeting City staff followed up with the appropriate channels to provide an update: Due to the expropriation of the First Parliament site by the Province, the City has had to move the location of the new District Library to the site south of the South Market (125 The Esplanade). This Library will undergo design consultation in the coming months.*

*The City is committed to optimizing the use of public space for city-building goals and will look at co-locating other community infrastructure on the site, that meets the service needs of the neighbourhood. That additional consideration will be developed in consultation with the community.*

**Included more trees at the new development on Princess Street.**

**Concern about the ongoing renovation of the Green P beside the St. Lawrence Market.**

**Develop space for dogs and owners to run beside the Gardiner Expressway**

**Concern about the cost of the revitalization project.** There was some concern about public funds being allocated to a revitalization project when there is a housing crisis and other basic needs that need to be met across the city.

**Maintaining and staffing the park is important.** There needs to be enough staff and regular maintenance to service the park. There was also a suggestion to have security staff monitoring the park.

**Clarify if there will be washroom access for events in the park.** It would be good for there to be staffing and security to provide washroom access in the community centre.

**Clarify new changes to roads through signage.** There is frustration around changes to local roads. Better and clearer signage should be added to communicate the new changes. Specifically, there needs to be a sign that indicates on Front Street there is "no access to the Gardiner Expressway".

**Mixed opinions about traffic/roadway design.** Some shared concerns about traffic congestion (i.e., difficult for residents to get to/from where they live and cannot drive from one end to the other). Some shared appreciation for traffic calming in the area.

## Next steps

City staff will be hosting a Community Information Event in the fall of 2023 to share and answer questions about the detailed designs for the park improvements and connection project. Details about the event will be shared broadly with the community. City staff will continue to keep the local community updated on the process, including construction schedules.

For more information please visit the project webpage ([www.toronto.ca/davidcrobmiepark](http://www.toronto.ca/davidcrobmiepark)) or contact the project team:

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### **For the Esplanade & Mill Street Connection**

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## **Attachment A – Pop-Up Boards and Community Update**

The following materials were available at the pop up events to view on display boards and to take home as a four-page booklet.

## Community Update

# David Crombie Park Improvement & The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project

## Overview

**David Crombie Park and the Esplanade are undergoing major improvements!** The City of Toronto is responding to the current and future needs of communities through the David Crombie Park Revitalization project, a comprehensive design and implementation plan for improvements to the park. City divisions are working closely together to deliver the park revitalization alongside the Esplanade and Mill Street Connection project for integration of the park and cycle tracks. The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project is changing the way people move through and experience the Esplanade and Mill Street by enhancing safety, making walking, cycling and taking transit more attractive and maintaining access to local and citywide destinations.

The City of Toronto is now in Phase 2 of both projects. Park improvements will be implemented based on the plans developed in Phase 1 through extensive consultation with local communities.

The purpose of this community update and upcoming engagement activities is to:

1. Provide a summary of key feedback heard that has informed the approved plans;
2. Highlight vision for implementation.
3. Share different opportunities to receive project updates.

For more information on the project including reports and other materials, please check out the website at [www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark](http://www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark). (QR code available below).



## Project Timeline

The design of David Crombie Park was developed through an extensive community engagement process during fall 2018 to winter 2020. The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection project held public engagement between fall 2019 and winter 2021. Public feedback informed both the recommended design of the Park and the cycle track.

### PHASE 1: DESIGN AND ENGAGEMENT *Completed*

**Fall 2018:** David Crombie Revitalization Project publicly launched with public engagement.

**Fall 2019:** The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection launched and partnered with David Crombie Park public workshop.

**Winter 2020:** Final report and park master plan completed for David Crombie Revitalization Design. See the final report at [www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark](http://www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark).

**Winter 2021:** The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project ongoing engagement.

**Spring 2021:** Final recommendations for the Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project approved by City Council.

PHASE 1

### PHASE 2: CONSTRUCTION *We are Here*

**2023:** Hire a design team, detailed design and construction document preparation for the park, cycle track and streetscape improvements.

**Early-mid 2024:** Hire a construction team; Late 2024: Construction for park and cycle track starts.

**Late 2025:** Construction for cycle track complete.

**Spring to Fall 2025/2026:** Construction for park improvements continues, and is completed.

PHASE 2



## Overview of Public Engagement in Phase 1 - 2018-2020

Below is a description of engagement activities completed in Phase 1 of the public engagement from 2018-2020. These are taken from the David Crombie Park Revitalization Final Report which is available on the project website. Summaries of the feedback received during Phase 1 are also available on the project website: [www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark](http://www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark).

### 50 One of One Interviews

We talked with any interested members of the community about their views and priorities for the park.

### Kick off Meeting

Inspirational panel discussion about the park and best practices from around the world

### 3 Workshops

Working meetings with the community to share ideas, get feedback, and talk about design concepts.

### 4 Community Resource Group Meetings

Dedicated members of the community and local stakeholders shared their thoughts on the emerging issues.

### 2 Indigenous Placekeeping Meetings

Learning how the Indigenous community views stewardship and discussing opportunities for Indigenous culture in the park.

### School Board Meetings

Discussions about how the schools use the park, their priorities, best practices, and emerging concepts in educational play

### Online Surveys

Community reaction and comments on the concept options and preferred plan.

### Public Life Surveys

3 seasons study of how people arrive at the park, the activities they engage in, and personal surveys of their opinions about the park

### Direct Communication

On-line and face to face discussions with people during the course of the study.

### Focus Group Meetings

Discussions and idea sharing with stakeholders including seniors and kids.

### Print Communications

Banner at the St. Lawrence Community Centre. Flyers and posters distributed around the neighbourhood.

### Website & Social Media

A dedicated information website and tweets about the study's progress and events.

## Key Observations from David Crombie Park Revitalization Phase 1 (2018-2020)

The Key Observations are an early inventory of issues identified by the community, City of Toronto staff and consultant team that characterize David Crombie Park and the adjacent parks, and that needed to be addressed in the Revitalization Design. Some of the observations are strong features of the parks today that should be preserved and enhanced, while others are challenges to overcome.

These key observations have been taken from the David Crombie Park Revitalization Final Report which is available on the project website.

- **The park is showing its age.** Many features are original (40 years old) and need repair or replacement.
- **A beloved park.** The whole park is used, in a variety of ways, by people of all ages and backgrounds.
- **Strong frame.** Buildings frame the park's edges and it is divided into outdoor rooms by the streets and tree planting.
- **The tree canopy is at risk.** Many ash trees have been removed because of Emerald Ash Borer, and there are many more in the park. Other species are also in decline.
- **Dogs are a big issue.** A dedicated dog area is desired by the community, but it takes up a lot of space.
- **Connects in many ways.** It connects to the city, the neighbourhood and across park blocks.
- **Playgrounds are outdated.** Heavy use, poor drainage, low play value, hazards, lack of shade and poor accessibility need to be addressed.
- **Water Features.** Mechanical equipment for all water features is at the end of its service life.
- **Seating and Furnishing.** The furniture lacks cohesion, is aging, and a lot of seating lacks backs or arm rests.
- **Accessibility.** The park needs to be brought up to date and comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- **Gardens.** The existing gardens contribute to the beauty and vibrancy of the park, and there is a desire for more.
- **Support Programming.** There are great events that take place in the park, and there is a desire for more.
- **Support Cycling.** There is a desire for better cycling facilities in the area. Coordination with other City departments is required.
- **Lighting.** The perimeter of the park is well lit, but the interior of some blocks is dim and can be improved.

## Highlights of Feedback About Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project

Following are highlights of feedback about Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project from Phase 1. For detailed feedback, visit <https://www.toronto.ca/the-esplanade-mill-street>

- Prioritize road safety with focus on vulnerable road users (e.g., seniors, cyclists, and people with accessibility needs). Lower speeds along the Esplanade, raise crosswalks, and install islands and bump outs.
- Any changes need to be easy to understand and follow. Concerns about increased travel time and decreasing permits for parking.
- Support for prioritizing transit along the corridor. Suggestions to improve accessibility and increase access for curbside activities.
- Support for physical separations, two-way cycle tracks, and connections to other cycling facilities.
- Consider how new developments in the area may impact traffic and travel times in the area.

## Vision for Implementation

The City of Toronto, with the support of their consultants, are actively working to implement the vision of the approved plans. Listed below are key considerations informing the implementation:

- **Understand the approved plans:** The vision for implementation and the detailed design will align with the approved plans which includes the David Crombie Master Plan and the final recommendations for the Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project.
- **Support Indigenous Placekeeping (Action #15 of the City's Reconciliation Action Plan), by engaging with Indigenous Elders, communities and organizations:** The City is working with an Indigenous design firm to inform the detailed design of the approved plans and continue to engage with Indigenous communities.
- **Embrace City Nature:** The detailed design will carry forward the desire to protect green spaces, trees, nature and wildlife by integrating a City Nature approach. City nature will work to integrate these elements within the detailed design of the park.
- **Understand the identity of David Crombie Park:** The identity of David Crombie Park will be an important aspect of the detailed design. The team will look for opportunities to improve existing features and local nature and attract biodiversity with the goal of minimizing waste.
- **Continue to connect with local Community Stakeholder Group:** The City and project team will continue to connect with the local organizations for insight and feedback on implementation of the approved plans.



## How to Receive Updates

**Community Pop-ups:** Learn more about the projects, meet City staff and design team members at a pop-up.

Join us at a pop-up on:

**Saturday, July 29 | 1 - 3 PM**

**Friday, August 11 | 1 - 3 PM**

*Look for us under the blue tent between the wading pool and Frederick St.*

**Public Information Event:** In fall 2023, the City will host a virtual public information event to share an update on the project and answer emerging questions.

## Get in Touch:

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## Visit our Website:

[www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark](http://www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark)

