

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Centennial Park Playground and Water Play Improvements

Phase 2: Public Meeting #1

May 2023

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This report has been prepared by SAFFY, a third-party strategy, research, and engagement consultant for the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation.

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1 Project Background

The City's Parks, Forestry & Recreation division (PF&R) is implementing improvements to the Centennial Park District Playground, guided by the 2021 Centennial Park Master Plan.

As a part of the Master Plan implementation, the City is improving the playground and water play area to provide safe and accessible fun for many years to come. The project will include a new district playground, a new waterplay area and improvements including seating and picnic areas, accessible pathways, drinking fountains, landscaping, sustainable features and more.

1.1 Meeting Overview

The meeting was held on May 3rd, from 5:30 -7:00pm, hosted virtually on Webex. 7 participants joined the meeting. The project team included representatives from the City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, as well as SAFFY and PMA Landscape Architects.

During the 1.5-hour virtual public meeting, the City of Toronto, SAFFY, and PMA Landscape Architecture guided participants through a presentation which included: (see the [project webpage](#) for presentation).

- An overview of the Centennial Park Master Plan
- An overview of engagement and what we've heard and learned to date
- An overview of the vision statement for the playground and water play area
- Proposed play elements, equipment and features
- Two concept design options

Throughout the presentation, the virtual tool Mentimeter invited participants to vote on their phones or computers in response to questions about their preferences. Mentimeter, asked participants to select their favourite features for the junior play, senior play, fitness and waterplay area. Each question was accompanied by images for their references. Their responses were displayed in real time during the meeting.

Following the presentation, Mentimeter questions, and question and answer session, MIRO (a virtual collaboration space) was shared on screen with participants to engage them more deeply with particular project components and facilitate discussion to collect design feedback. The MIRO board focused on:

- Design Concept options and preferences
- Hangout space
- Sensory play
- Fitness equipment and features
- Water play features

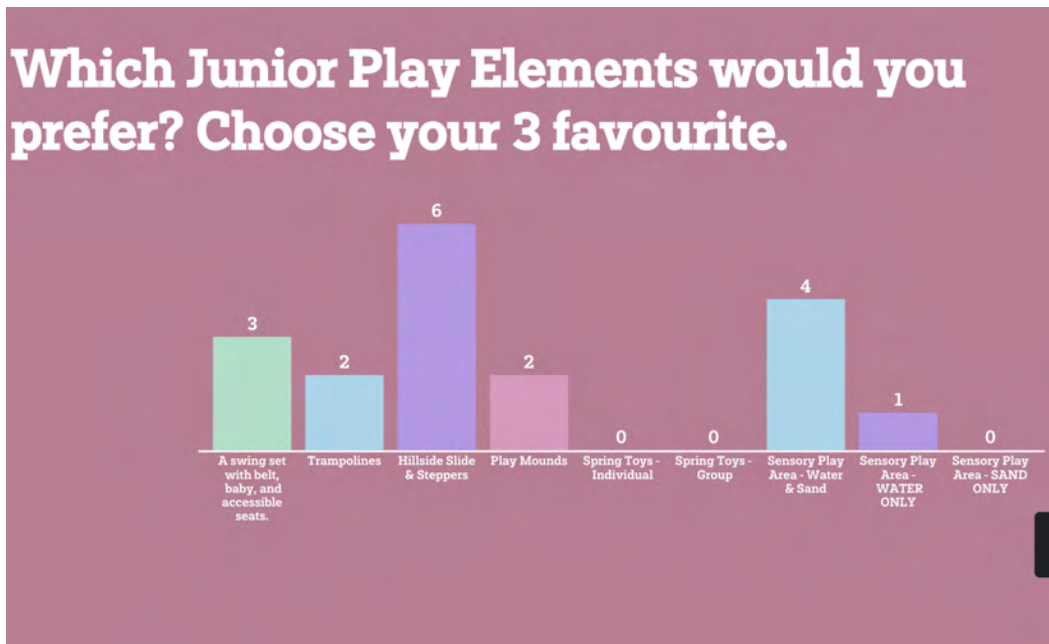
2 What We Heard

The following section contains a summary of the feedback received during Public Meeting #1. See Appendix B for full documentation of comments and questions shared during the open house.

2.1 Meeting Summary

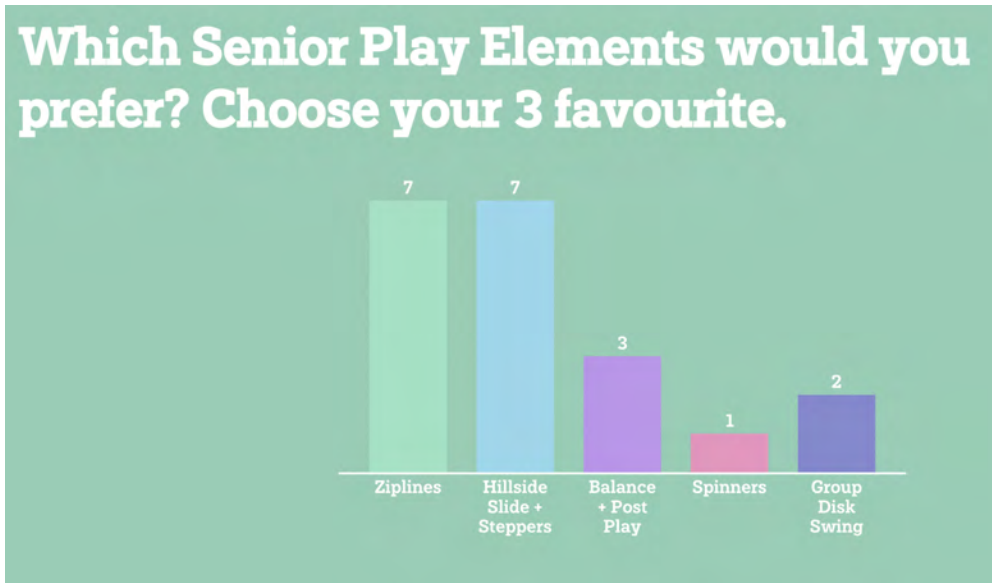
During the presentation, participants were invited to vote virtually on their top three favourite junior play, senior play, fitness equipment and water play elements. Their responses are organized below.

- **Junior Play Elements**
 - Hillside Slide & Steppers (6)
 - Sensory Play - Water and Sand (4)
 - A swing set with belt, baby and accessible seats (3)
 - Trampolines (2)
 - Sensory Play - Water Only (1)
 - Sensory Play - Sand Only (0)
 - Spring Toys - Individual (0)
 - Spring Toys - Group (0)



Response screen on Mentimeter once participants had indicated their preference for Junior Play Elements.

- **Senior Play Elements**
 - Ziptracks (7)
 - Hillside Slide and Steppers (7)
 - Balance and Post play (3)
 - Group Disk Swing (2)
 - Spinners (1)



Response screen on Mentimeter once participants had indicated their preference for Senior Play Elements.

- **Fitness Features**
 - Bouldering Rock (4)
 - Fitness Gym (2)
 - Bamboo Climber (1)
 - I do not want fitness included as an option (0)



Response screen on Mentimeter once participants had indicated their preference for Fitness Features.

- **Water Play Features**
 - Bucket Dump (6)
 - Water Channel (6)
 - Tall Sprayer (3)
 - Small Water Jets (2)
 - Water Bubblers (2)
 - Water Rings (1)
 - Misters (1)



Response screen on Mentimeter once participants had indicated their preference for Water Play features.

2.2 Key Insights

Following the presentation and mentimeter questions, participants were invited to ask questions for clarification, before additional feedback was captured in the MIRO board.

Key insights that have emerged from this Public Meeting are consolidated into the themes below. Generally, participants were pleased with the options presented, and excited that the playground and water play area would see such robust improvements.

Preferred Playground and Fitness Equipment

Generally, participants were aligned in their appreciation for equipment that offer excitement and adventure play for children and youth, favouring hillside slides and steppers for all age groups, ziptracks and a bouldering rock as fitness equipment. Participants agreed that the fitness equipment felt like an extension of the play equipment that was suitable for all ages. Two participants suggested that sand be avoided in the play areas, or that if it is included, it be separated from any water play areas. Participants also indicated a preference for a rubberized material as a ground surface for the play areas over mulch or sand.

Preferred Water Play Equipment

Participants were aligned around their selection of water channels and bucket dumps as their favourite water play elements, while a tall sprayer, water bubblers, and water jets were also among the group's preferred options.

Preferred Concept Option

Participants were split between the two design concepts presented, favouring them equally. Some suggested that Concept A: FOLDS felt more user-friendly and the layout was well concentrated, while others appreciated the organic shapes and smooth feeling that Concept B: WAVES provided. Participants unanimously agreed that both concepts should include a hangout space that is accessible, pointing out that leisure activities and accessible hang-out spaces are appreciated by all ages.

Picnic Areas

Participants were curious if the current shaded/covered picnic pavilion that is permitted at the playground would remain, or if a similar permitted picnic space would take its place. Participants indicated that the current permitted picnic area is well used and important to them, in particular with a structure for inclement weather and expressed a desire to see something similar take its place. The Project Team indicated that the proposed shaded pavilions would not include permitted space, but permitted picnic areas are located nearby. Participants indicated that protection from inclement weather was important in picnic or gathering spaces.

Accessibility

Participants appreciate the accessible nature of the concepts and raised additional accessibility concerns. One participant noted that sightlines and visibility for children playing within enclosed play structures should be considered, while another wanted to ensure that there would be seating options that include back rests, to be accessible and inclusive to all ages and abilities. Participants specifically mentioned the need for accessible seating within hangout areas that include benches and tables.

Appendix A

May 3, 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
Add a BMX track?	There's a BMX park in Centennial already and skatepark in the works.
I didn't see winter activities included in the plan? I know the existing hill is very busy and there are other parks with hills that are busy in the winter with activities.	<p>We appreciate that there is lots of toboggan activity that takes place in the park. This will continue—the slide will be activated with the hillside slide, but it was important to preserve that toboggan hill in winter, picnic lawns in the summer.</p> <p>Within the park, there will also be a skating trail and other winter activities within the parks. This will all be connected through improved paths and trails.</p>
I didn't see anything about Indigenous Placekeeping, are there plans for Indigenous Placekeeping?	We had a meeting with Indigenous communities members and I the city has spoken to Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. PMA is also working with Elder Catherine Tamaro, a Wendat elder and advisor, and Elder Catherine will be working to inform Indigenous Placekeeping throughout the design, with the input of these communities. This could be art, plantings, a way of memorializing, so we will share those plans with the public when they are available.
Can you share more information about the water channel? Is this a little river of water?	<p>Centennial playground overlooks Elmcrest creek. During a separate project, that creek is being improved with some naturalization.</p> <p>The channel you may have been thinking of is one of the options for junior water play features. The intention that this water channel would be within that splashpad or water play area.</p>
Is the grading going to be the same with the current hill, and access both concepts?	Yes, we will keep the primary hill, almost exactly as is. We hope to cover some of it in a rubber play surface and will introduce some mounds at the top of the hills as well.

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
Will both options have that rubber ground material or wood chips?	Primarily rubber, however the space under the ziptracks will be woodchips.
Do you know yet how much seating there will be in both pavilions? And can it provide shelter from rain.	<p>For the FOLDS concept, we will have 4 of the large porch swings that can accommodate 2-4 people, so seating for about 8 to 16 people.</p> <p>The WAVES concept is more casual, as there is less specificity in how the seating will work. The idea is that the rubber mounds will accommodate as many people as can sit on them, and they will be tiered and terraced to accommodate different groups, again about 10-20 people.</p> <p>The structures won't be weather tight or rain proof. They wouldn't be totally solid and might have perforation or slats. The washroom will be a weather tight space.</p>
Any shaded areas other than the large trees?	The project team walked through the options and locations of shaded trees. The same number of trees are maintained and planted for each concept.
The water/creek is always polluted and very displeasing. Will you address this?	The improvements to the creek will include naturalizing that space, and a part of that will include filtration which will improve water quality.
Will the washrooms have change rooms?	There will be washroom stalls, but not specific change rooms.
Is the surface area of the water play area different between the 2 concepts? It appears that one is larger than the other?	<p>The surfacing will be the same in both concepts, both a poured concrete textured material.</p> <p>FOLDS concept is slightly bigger, about 20-30 square meters larger, but has more of a buffer around it so it looks a bit larger in the image.</p>
Like FOLDS with the big porch swing seating and the wall seating which makes parental supervision is easier. I can see porch swings being a highlight for all ages and highly utilized.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
I prefer WAVES. Considering how people move through space, it feels smoother with more flow.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
Feel torn, I like both options,-but FOLDS has a layout that feels open and user friendly, but WAVES seems more concentrated. FOLDS seems to have better transitions.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
We were wavering between the two. FOLDS looks like the more traditional layout, but do like the orgsnic shape in WAVES.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
Seating should consider elderly, with backs for seating.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
Will there be a big slide in both?	Both concepts have these awesome hillslides, but only FOLDS has this standalone large slide in the tower.
Inside the tower structure, can you see kids playing inside?	Yes. The company we work with considers visibility and the whole journey through the tower, with cutouts so you can see and get to your kids.
The tower structure, is it similar to the one in high park that burned down? Our daughter loves those ones.	Yes, it would be a tower and castle, but just one singular tower. It is a similar idea, a bit more modern with more visibility - think Grange Park or the one in St. Jame
Would there be accessible seating options in the hang out?	Yes we would have a variety of seating that includes accessible options.
Can we combine ideas? Could the elements of hangout go into FOLDS even though its not in WAVES? I like the inclusion of a hangout space.	Yes, we can combine based on what people want to see.
I would like to see the hangout space included in FOLDS.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
Sand is a nightmare. Dogs can misplace sand as a place to go to the washroom.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>

PARTICIPANT QUESTION/COMMENT	PROJECT TEAM RESPONSE
Ok with both sand and water in sensory play, as long as they are separated.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
I like the bouldering rock.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
I also like the bouldering rock.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
My child always goes to the fitness bars and sees them as an extension of the playground.	<i>Recorded as a comment.</i>
Is this in addition to the fitness stations or are those being removed?	We are not removing the existing fitness stations and they will be improved in a separate project.
The current pavilion that you can rent out, is that being removed or relocated? We often use it and it's well used with the shade and cover.	We did include some permitted picnic areas without a shelter and have then shown the play pavilion which would not be permitted. We will maintain picnic permitted areas at both the top and bottom of the hill, and will have smaller picnic structures but not to the same scale.
What is the timeline for the playground?	We're looking at the playground being completed spring or summer of 2024, which means starting construction this fall and then picking back up after the winter.
Could you give us an overlay of the whole park and what we are discussing? There are so many things in Centennial Park and it would be helpful to understand the overall park and what we are actually discussing to provide context?	<p>Sharing screen, we are talking about the picnic pavilion as a part of the playground, and there are many throughout the park so we're only talking about the one at the playground itself.</p> <p>The Master Plan sets out a vision for the whole park, implemented over 20 years.</p>
You mentioned access from the parking lot, but is there also connection from the road or bus stop, for example if you have a stroller?	We hope to connect to the trail network and make sure that the park is accessible by transit.