

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Eglinton Park Master Plan Implementation Phase 1

Public Survey #1 Engagement Summary Report

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1.0 Introduction

The City completed the Eglinton Park Master Plan in 2019 and is working towards park improvements in a phased approach based on the four priority areas identified in the Master Plan and the available project budget. A three-phase community engagement process for Phase 1 Implementation: Priority Area 1 of the Master Plan is currently taking place.

This survey summary report, prepared by SAFFY, summarizes the key findings that emerged through Public Survey #1 (Phase 1 Implementation Public Survey), as part of the Eglinton Park Revitalization of Priority Area 1. This report summarizes key findings from the Public Survey conducted between June 2nd and June 18th, 2023.

1.1 Project Overview

The City completed the Eglinton Park Master Plan in 2019, with the help of a professional design consultant, various internal stakeholders, user groups, and the public. The plan sets a long-term vision for the park through a four-phased approach that will see park improvements implemented as budget and timing allows. The Master Plan was a participatory effort and resulted in a plan focused on the landscape and environment (it does not include the playground, buildings, community centre, arena or parking lot).

The plan has since been revised to incorporate feedback from the public and Community Advisory Group (CAG) in late 2022/early 2023 during the ongoing community engagement process.

The revisions made to the Master Plan include:

- Maintaining the existing permitted sport recreation fields
- A slight shift south for the east/west walkway that connects the Oriole Parkway stairs to the main path
- Shifting the dogs off-leash area south
- Relocating the proposed skate spot frontage along Eglinton Avenue West
- Relocating the wet plaza/water feature to the existing wading pool location

The City is currently implementing improvements to Priority Area 1, which will only include general park upgrades, including:

- North/south pathway from the North Toronto Community Centre to Roselawn Avenue
- Dogs off-leash area
- Skateboard spot (small skateboarding area)
- Historic themed gardens
- Improvements to the existing stairs at Oriole Parkway

1.2 Project Schedule

- Winter 2021: Hire a design team
- Fall 2022 to Summer 2023: Community engagement
- ***WE ARE HERE - Spring to Summer 2023: Design development**
- Fall 2023: Hire a construction team
- Spring 2024: Construction starts
- Fall 2024: Construction complete

2.0 Engagement Overview

2.1 Engagement Objectives

The objective of this public survey was to determine resident and park users' preferences around park elements included in Priority Area 1 of the Eglinton Park Revitalization project, including:

- Design concept options for the Heritage Garden and Planting Area
- Design concept options for the Dog Off-Leash Area, in addition to options for:
 - Fencing
 - Dog play features
 - Water fountain location
- Preferred paving surface of the gathering areas along the Central Spine Pathway
- Preferred seating options in the gathering areas along the Central Spine Pathway
- Preferences around trees and plants to be included along the Central Spine Pathway
- Design concept options for ecological placekeeping opportunities throughout Eglinton Park

2.2 Engagement Approach

The public survey was designed as a way to connect with a broad public audience, ensuring engagement with a broad range of community members.

A total of 345 members of the public responded to the survey and 253 (73%) completed the survey in full. The survey was hosted digitally on CheckMarket and was open from June 2nd and June 18th, 2023).

The public survey was advertised through various channels, including on the Eglinton Park Revitalization project webpage, social media and project signage.

2.3 Who We Engaged

There were 345 survey participants.

The majority of survey respondents (63% [219]) described themselves as a local resident who uses Eglinton Park. The remaining responses were received from the following categories:

- 22% (76) of respondents are local dog owners who uses Eglinton Park
- 5% (18) of respondents said that their child(ren) or family member plays sports in Eglinton Park
- 2% (8) of respondents are a member of a local community group, association or organization

- 1% (4) of respondents said that they play sports in Eglinton Park
- 6% (19) of respondents selected “other”

The demographic profile of survey respondents can be found in Section 3.2.1.

3.0 What We Heard

The following section contains a summary of the feedback received through the public survey. See **Appendix A** for a full list of questions included in the public survey.

3.1 Key Insights

Key insights that have emerged from the public survey are consolidated by the theme below.

BALANCE

In some cases, there was not strong consensus on preferred design concepts. For example, 35% (97) of respondents prefer Design Concept 1 for the dog off-leash area and 32% (88) of respondents prefer Design Concept 2. Similarly, 43% (110) of respondents prefer Design Concept 2 and 36% (98) of respondents prefer Design Concept 1 for ecological placekeeping opportunities.

Respondents often provided suggestions that a blend of the two design concepts or park elements would be preferable to provide variety to park users. This suggestion was most prevalent around seating options, where respondents appreciated the concrete wall seating and traditional bench seating, and would prefer both options to be included in the design of the park.

SIMPLICITY

Respondents often mentioned a preference for simplicity, especially around maintenance and upkeep of new park elements. They would appreciate elements that are easy to maintain and clean (e.g., graffiti removal), and can be maintained well within budget.

Respondents allude to their preference to have a park that is more simple. Some comments mention that they do not wish to see overly modern or flashy park elements (e.g., modern-looking seating like large concrete stones) and other comments mention a preference for a more traditional park experience, especially in reference to having traditional bench seating and plenty of grass and trees.

ACCESSIBILITY

In many of the open-ended comments, respondents described the importance of ensuring accessibility within Eglinton Park improvements. Much of the concern was concentrated on seating options, where respondents wish to see as much seating as possible, seating with backrests, and seating that is comfortable for all users. Traditional bench seating was mentioned often, as it is considered to be more accessible for older adults and seniors.

A few responses expressed concern about whether the concrete unit pavers might shift over time, creating an uneven and inaccessible path for people with mobility challenges or using mobility devices, as well as strollers. One response requested that the dog park is designed to be accessible for all.

DOG OFF-LEASH AREA

Respondents provided many comments on the dog off-leash area, with most comments expressing that they feel the space is too small and that they prefer the space be divided into separate spaces for smaller and larger dogs.

3.2 Public Survey Summary

The public survey for the Phase 1 Implementation: Priority Area 1 of the Eglinton Park Master Plan focused on the aspects related to the heritage garden and planting area, dog off-leash area, central spine pathway (including paving, seating and planting options), as well as ecological placekeeping.

A section of the survey designed for Indigenous community members to contribute ideas around Indigenous Placekeeping opportunities was included, but was not utilized, as no respondents identified as First Nations, Inuit or Métis. As a result, these questions are omitted from Section 3.2.2 below.

Below is a review of the responses by percentages. See Appendix A for full survey questions.

3.2.1 Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

The majority of survey respondents (61%) were adults between the ages of 30-55, followed by adults aged 56-64 (14%) and adults ages 65-74 (11%). A small proportion of respondents were youth or young adults between the ages of 19-29 (9%) or older adults 75 years old and above (2%).

Racialized individuals made up 23% while 14% had a preference not to disclose their race. The majority of respondents were white (64%). No survey respondents identified as First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

58% of survey respondents were women, 27% were men, 2% were gender non-binary (including gender fluid, genderqueer, androgynous), 1% were trans (men and women), and 11% preferred not to disclose their gender. 10% of respondents identified as being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer or Two-Spirited and 69% identified as heterosexual.

10% of respondents identify as having a visible or invisible disability. The majority of respondents (95%) reported that English was their preferred language.

3.2.2 Survey Responses

HERITAGE GARDEN AND PLANTING AREA

Respondents were presented with two design concepts for the heritage garden and planting area, then asked which design concept they preferred:

- 51% (141) of respondents prefer Design Concept 1: A pollinator garden and a central gathering space
- 27% (74) of respondents prefer Design Concept 2: A clustered or informal seating around large circular planters

- 18% (49) of respondents would appreciate either design concept (no preference)
- 4% (10) of respondents selected “none of the above”

Survey respondents provided additional comments on the heritage garden and planting area:

- Prefer more seating (4)
- Native plantings (3)
- Routine maintenance is required (2)
- Prefer inclusion of pollinator gardens (2)
- Concern about pollinator gardens introducing risk for bee stings (2)
- Include seating with backrests for older adults (2)
- Concerns around vandalism and groups gathering near the garden (2)
- Beehives (1)
- Make the space usable for all community members (1)
- Prefer less parking spaces and more greenery in the park (1)
- Water fountains (1)
- Prefer bigger garden space (1)
- Add space for community garden or urban agriculture (1)
- Have painted furniture (1)
- Prefer more sports fields instead of gardens (1)

DOG OFF-LEASH AREA

Respondents were presented with two design concepts for the dog off-leash area, then asked which design concept they preferred:

- 35% (97) of respondents prefer Design Concept 1 which is nature themed and includes concrete pad area with benches at each entrance
- 32% (88) of respondents prefer Design Concept 2 which is urban themed and has a path along the eastern edge with benches and artificial grass mounds
- 26% (72) of respondents would appreciate either design concept (no preference)
- 6% (17) of respondents selected “none of the above”

Respondents who identified that they are local dog owners who use Eglinton Park had slightly different preferences than other park users, with 44% (30) of respondents preferring Design Concept 2, 35% (24) preferring Design Concept 1 and 13% (9) with no preference.

Survey respondents were asked additional questions about their preferences for the fencing, play features, and water fountain for the dog off-leash area.

Which type of fencing for the perimeter of the dog off-leash area would you prefer?

- 57% (156) of respondents prefer wooden post and paddle fence with wire mesh infill
 - 50% (34) of dog owners prefer this option
- 25% (68) of respondents prefer metal fence
 - 34% (23) of dog owners prefer this option

- 15% (42) of respondents selected “not sure”
- 3% (8) of respondents selected “none of the above”

There are several options for dog play features to be included in the dog off-leash area. Select your top three (3) features.

- 61% (167) of respondents prefer the bridge climb
- 53% (146) of respondents prefer the log play feature
- 49% (134) of respondents prefer agility stepping stones
- 29% (79) of respondents prefer agility wooden posts
- 20% (55) of respondents selected “none of the above”
- 19% (51) of respondents prefer agility bone

Responses to this question were similar between dog owners and other park users.

Which location for the park’s existing dog fountain would you prefer?

- 49% (126) prefer the fountain to be located inside the fenced area
 - 43% (29) of dog owners prefer this option
- 34% (93) of respondents prefer the fountain to be located outside the fenced area
 - 47% (32) of dog owners prefer this option
- 16% (44) of respondents selected “not sure”
- 4% (11) of respondents selected “none of the above”

Survey respondents provided additional comments on the dog off-leash area:

- Would like larger dog off-leash area (13)
- Separated spaces for small and large dogs (11)
- Prefer fountain outside of dog off-leash area (4)
- Prefer not to use mulch as ground cover (3)
- Prefer not to have a dog off-leash area in the park (2)
- Needs to be accessible for people with disabilities and mobility challenges (2)
- Prefer trees and obstacles, rather than open spaces (2)
- Prefer more open spaces, rather than trees and obstacles (1)
- Routine maintenance is required (1)
- Would like a dog wading pool (1)
- Prefer to use mulch as ground cover (1)
- Fence should be strong (1)
- Need a structure or trees for shading (1)
- Location should be further south away from baseball diamond and playground (1)
- Prefer fencing that is easy to maintain and repair (1)
- Incorporate natural grass in design option 1 (1)

CENTRAL SPINE PATHWAY

Respondents were presented with two options for the paving surface if the gathering areas along the central spine pathway, then asked which paving surface they preferred:

- 57% (146) of respondents prefer concrete unit pavers with opportunities for pattern making
- 25% (65) of respondents prefer poured concrete with decorative concrete elements
- 12% (31) of respondents selected “not sure”
- 6% (15) of respondents selected “none of the above”

Survey respondents were asked additional questions about their preferences for seating and planting (trees and plants) options for the central spine pathway.

There are a few seating options that could be included in the park. Which type of seating would you prefer along the Central Spine Pathway?

- 55% (141) of respondents prefer traditional bench seating
- 30% (78) of respondents prefer concrete wall seating
- 11% (27) of respondents prefer large concrete stone seating
- 3% (7) of respondents selected “not sure”
- 2% (4) of respondents selected “none of the above”

Survey respondents provided additional comments on the seating options along the central spine pathway:

- Provide a variety of seating options (15)
- Include seating with backrests (12)
- Include seating that is accessible (10)
- Prefer traditional park seating like benches (9)
- Provide plenty of seating (8)
- Dislike concrete stone seating (6)
- Provide seating for groups to gather (4)
- Concrete options may get too hot or cold (4)
- Include comfortable seating options (4)
- Concerns that concrete wall seating will attract skateboarding (3)
- Prefer nature-inspired design options (3)
- Would like picnic tables (3)
- Avoid hostile architecture (3)
- Avoid modern design options (2)
- Concrete stone seating may not be accessible to all (2)
- Ensure there is enough shade (2)
- Prefer modern design options (1)
- Provide seating that allows people to lie down (1)
- Prefer design that prevents people from lying down or sleeping (1)
- Provide seating options that are flexible or moveable (1)
- Prefer less concrete paving in this area (1)

Would you prefer seating that creates opportunities for gathering and connection (seating in groups or facing one another), or seating that prioritizes solitude and park views (seating that are alone and separated from one another)?

- 67% (172) of respondents prefer seating that creates opportunities for both solitude and park views, as well as gathering and connection
- 23% (59) of respondents prefer seating that prioritizes solitude and park views
- 9% (24) of respondents prefer seating that creates opportunities for gathering and connection
- 1% (2) of respondents selected “none of the above”

When considering trees to be planted along the central spine path, which of the below is important to you? Select your three (3) preferred options.

- 80% (206) of respondents prefer trees that provide the most shade possible
- 51% (130) of respondents prefer trees that are more resilient to environmental stressors
- 37% (94) of respondents prefer trees that provide greenery during winter (coniferous trees like pine, cedar, etc.)
- 32% (82) of respondents prefer trees that mature more quickly
- 30% (75) of respondents prefer trees that flower
- 27% (70) of respondents prefer trees that are less likely to emit pollen/allergens
- 8% (20) of respondents prefer trees that produce fruit
- 6% (16) of respondents selected “other”
- One respondent selected “none of the above”

Respondents who selected “other” provided the following comments:

- Avoid female ginkgo trees (1)
- Avoid fruit that will fall on the path and become a hazard (1)
- Prefer trees native to Ontario (1)
- Prioritize biodiversity (1)
- Prioritize native plant species (4)
- Avoid planting too many trees and blocking sightlines (1)
- Consider including sections of varying density and form (e.g., forest thickets) (1)
- Include latin names for tree species (1)
- Consult Indigenous experts for suggestions on plantings (1)

Some respondents mentioned specific tree species that they would like to see planted, including the following: bur oak, red oak, red maple, hackberry, kentucky coffeetree, mountain ash, elm, and black locust.

When considering plant species to be planted along the central spine path and in the heritage gardens, what is most important to you. Select your three (3) preferred options.

- 84% (215) of respondents prefer naturalized planting strategies that increase biodiversity, provide natural habitat, and promote climate resilience
- 76% (196) of respondents prefer plants that attract pollinators such as butterflies, bees and hummingbirds
- 43% (110) of respondents prefer a “food forest” approach to planting that includes edible plants
- 4% (10) of respondents selected “other”
- 1% (2) of respondents selected “none of the above”

Respondents who selected “other” provided the following comments:

- Prefer native plants (2)
- Concern about pollinator gardens introducing risk for bee stings (1)
- Avoid plants with strong fragrances (1)
- Avoid plants that people are commonly allergic to (1)
- Prefer plants that require minimal water (1)
- Consult Indigenous experts for suggestions on plantings (1)
- Prefer plants that have low maintenance requirements (1)
- Include plants that provide all of the benefits listed (1)
- Provide an opportunity for community gardens (1)

Survey respondents provided additional comments on paving, seating and planting along the central spine pathway:

- Consider how paving impacts accessibility over time (e.g., if pavers shift over time) (3)
- Keep paving to a minimum (1)
- Keep as much grass in the park as possible (1)
- Incorporate wood elements where possible (1)
- Include a large skatepark (1)
- Prefer plants that have low maintenance requirements (1)
- Concern about pollinator gardens introducing risk for bee stings (1)
- Provide an opportunity for community gardens (1)
- Include string lights over community gardens (1)
- Including murals by local artists on paving elements (1)
- Include perennial flowers (1)
- Would like to see parking lot reduced and more green space instead (1)
- Ensure spaces are accessible and welcoming (1)
- Ensure plenty of shade is available (1)
- Avoid plantings that obscure sightlines (1)
- Provide habitat for local fauna (1)

ECOLOGICAL PLACEKEEPING

Respondents were presented with two design concepts for placekeeping opportunities to highlight the ecological heritage of the site, then asked which design concept they preferred:

- 43% (110) of respondents prefer Design Concept 2: Scattered and engraved stones along the central spine path
- 36% (98) of respondents prefer Design Concept 1: Etching and text cutouts centred at the heritage gardens
- 14% (36) of respondents selected “not sure”
- 5% (13) of respondents selected “none of the above”

Survey respondents provided additional comments on ecological placekeeping opportunities:

- Concerns that placekeeping elements may not be durable or remain aesthetically pleasing over time (3)
- Appreciate consideration of Indigenous placekeeping (2)
- Prefer not to see placekeeping elements in the park (1)
- Prefer minimal and/or intentional placekeeping elements (e.g., signage) (1)
- Ensure placekeeping elements are easy to remove graffiti from (1)
- Ensure placekeeping elements are maintained (1)
- Keep the current memorial stones and dog fountain (1)
- Include signage in other languages including French (1)
- Design 1 is easier to read and provides more information (1)

4.0 Next Steps

Additional public, community and stakeholder engagement is planned throughout the design process and phases of this project. This engagement will include consultation with Indigenous communities and a Community Advisory Group which was formed during the Master Planning process and represent diverse park user groups and community perspectives. Additional public engagement opportunities will be included on the Eglinton Park improvements [webpage](#).

Appendix A: Survey Questions

ABOUT RESPONDENTS

What best describes you? Select all that apply.

- I am a local resident who uses Eglinton Park
- I am a local dog owner who uses Eglinton Park
- I play sports in Eglinton Park
- My child/family member plays sports in Eglinton Park
- I am a local Indigenous resident
- I am a member of a local community groups, association or organization
- Other, please specify

What category/categories best describe the focus of your organization? Select all that apply.

- Resident/Tenant Association
- Education Services/Schools
- Housing or Shelter Service
- Arts
- Cultural or Community Services
- Indigenous Service/Community
- Youth Services
- Recreation Sport/Play
- Newcomer/Immigration/Refugee Service
- Disability Services
- Business
- Poverty Reduction
- Religious
- Health Services
- Other, please describe

What is the name of the local organization, services provider or community group you represent?

Please provide a webpage link for your organization or community group (if available).

Please provide an email address for your organization or community group (if available).

HERITAGE GARDEN

Which approach to this heritage garden and planting area do you prefer?

- Design Concept 1: A pollinator garden and a central gathering space
- Design Concept 2: A cluster of informal seating around large circular planters
- I would appreciate either design concept (no preference)

- Not sure

Do you have anything else you'd like to share about the heritage garden?

DOG OFF-LEASH AREA

Which layout for the dog off-leash area do you prefer?

- Design Concept 1 which is nature themed and includes a central path through the area with benches
- Design Concept 2 which is urban themed and has a path along the eastern edge with benches and artificial grass mounds
- I would appreciate either design concept (no preference)
- Not sure

Which type of fencing for the perimeter of the dog off-leash area would you prefer?

- Wooden post and paddle fence with wire mesh infill
- Metal fence
- No preference
- Not sure

There are several options for dog play features to be included in the dog off-leash area. Please select your three (3) favourite features.

- Bridge Climb
- Water play feature
- Agility Wooden Posts
- Agility Stepping Stones
- Agility Bone
- Log Play Feature

Which location for a dog fountain would you prefer?

- Inside the fenced area
- Outside the fenced area
- No preference
- Not sure

Do you have anything else you'd like to share about the dog off-leash area?

CENTRAL SPINE PATH

There are two options for the paving surface of the Central spine path. Which type of surface would you prefer for the Central Spine Pathway?

- Concrete unit pavers with opportunities for pattern making

- Poured Concrete with decorative concrete elements
- No preference
- Not sure

There are a few seating options that could be included in the park. Which type of seating would you prefer along the Central Spine Pathway?

- Traditional Bench Seating
- Concrete Wall Seating
- Large Concrete Stone Seating
- No preference
- Not sure

Would you like to elaborate on your preferred seating choice from above?

Would you prefer seating that creates opportunities for gathering and connection (seating in groups or facing one another), or seating that prioritizes solitude and park views (seating that are alone and separated from one another)?

- Gathering and connection
- Solitude and park views
- Both
- No preference
- Not sure

When considering trees to be planted along the central spine path, which of the below is important to you? Select your three (3) preferred options.

- Trees that provide the most shade possible
- Trees that mature more quickly
- Trees that provide greenery during winter (Coniferous trees like pine, cedar, etc.)
- Trees that are more resilient to environmental stressors
- Trees that produce fruit
- Trees that flower
- Trees that are less likely to emit pollen/allergens
- Other, please describe

When considering plant species to be planted along the central spine path and in the heritage gardens, what is most important to you. Select your three (3) preferred options.

- Plants that attract pollinators such as butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds
- Naturalized planting strategies that increase biodiversity, provide natural habitat, and promote climate resilience
- Ornamental planting that prioritizes colours and textures
- A “food forest” approach to planting that includes edible plants
- Other, please describe

Do you have any additional thoughts to share regarding planting, seating or paving along the central spine path?

ECOLOGICAL HERITAGE PLACEKEEPING

When considering placekeeping opportunities to highlight the ecological heritage of the site, which concept do you prefer?

- Design Concept 1: Etching and text cutouts centred at the heritage gardens
- Design Concept 2: Scattered and engraved stones along the central spine path
- No preference
- Not sure

Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share about ecological placekeeping at Eglinton Park?

INDIGENOUS PLACEKEEPING

Note: these questions were asked only to respondents who identified themselves as local Indigenous residents.

Is there an approach to Indigenous placekeeping that you think would be most successful and you would most like to see implemented in Eglinton Park? Select up to two (2) options.

- Interpretive Walks through Planting Strategies (Tree Walk)
- Narrative and Storytelling through Casting or Engraving
- Integrated Artwork and Murals
- Cultural Gardens and Land Stewardship
- Other, please describe

We've heard a desire for planting of species that hold significance to Indigenous communities throughout the park (ie: Sumach, sunflowers, sacred plants, etc). Are there any particular species you would like to see considered in planting strategies for the park?

We know there are many histories that could be honoured and memorialized through Indigenous placekeeping. The design team has been considering the adjacent Wendat Village, use of the site as a historic corn field, the history of Mud Creek and importance of clay. Please share any thoughts you have regarding a narrative or history you'd like to see included in the Project.

Language is an important consideration for narrative and interpretive elements. Do you have any recommendations on the inclusion of Indigenous languages?

Imagery, symbols and iconography can be powerful visual reminders of Indigenous peoples, histories and narratives. Is there anything in particular that should be considered or other approaches to creating a visual identity of Indigenous Cultures?