



David Crombie Park Improvements & The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project – Phase 2

Public Information Event – Summary
Tuesday, October 26, 2023

Session 1 and 2 from 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.,
in-person at 125 The Esplanade, M5E 1C3 (the Tent)

Overview

On Thursday, October 26, 2023, the City of Toronto hosted two identical Public Information Sessions for Phase 2 of the David Crombie Park Improvements & The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the process; present the vision for implementation, and share the refined concept plans for improvements to David Crombie Park and The Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project.

Notice of the meeting was shared through a variety of methods, including mailed postcards to all residences and businesses surrounding the park; information shared in Deputy Mayor and Ward 10 Councillor Ausma Malik's newsletter; information shared with members of the project Community Stakeholder Group, emails sent to the project contact list; posters placed in and around David Crombie Park; and information posted to the project website and on the Parks, Forestry and Recreation social media page. The social media posts reached nearly 30,000 uses with over 700 people clicking on links for more information.

Over 100 people attended the two sessions, including approximately 70 people at the first session and approximately 40 people at the second session. City staff from Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR) and Transportation Services (TS) as well as members of the City's consultant team also attended and participated in the meeting.

Following the land acknowledgement and welcoming remarks from Nancy Chater, City Project Manager for the park project, Matthew Wheatley, the independent facilitator from Third Party Public, reviewed the agenda and introduced the project team. City staff and members of the City's consultant team shared the presentation. The full presentation is available on the project website at www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark. During Session 2, Councillor Ausma Malik provided opening remarks. Matthew facilitated questions of clarification before breaking into five tables with the following station topics:

1. Trees & Planting, Biodiversity, and Sustainability
2. Playgrounds & Wadding Pool
3. Gathering Spaces & Seating
4. Indigenous Placekeeping
5. Street Improvements including the Esplanade Cycling Improvements

Each table had a content expert to share information and answer questions as well as a note-taker to help record the discussions. Participants were able to freely rotate to tables of their choice until the end of the meeting. Third Party Public facilitated the meeting and prepared this summary. The summary was reviewed by City staff and members of the project team before being finalized. This summary is intended to reflect key discussion points from both Public Information Sessions and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.



Summary of feedback and questions

Following the presentation, Participants asked questions of clarification before breaking into five topic-specific tables for discussion. Participants were also encouraged to share any additional feedback and/or questions with the team after the meeting.

Key Themes

Key themes emerged during the discussions and are summarized below. These recurring themes should be read along with the more detailed summary that follows.

- **Appreciation for the ongoing work and excitement about detailed designs.** Many participants said they were impressed with the concept designs and appreciated how they captured the history of the park. Participants also shared that they came to the meeting apprehensive but were happy to see that the plans have incorporated community feedback from previous engagement. Participants also shared a number of specific ideas and suggestions related to the concept designs, which are captured below.
- **Interest and support for Indigenous Placekeeping design elements and placekeeping.** There was curiosity and desire to learn more about the different Indigenous design elements, including sacred fire, carvings, and story circle seating. Participants said they appreciated the Indigenous design elements being included in the park design.
- **Lots of interest in being kept up to date as construction begins.** Many participants said they and other members of the community would like to be updated on construction timelines.
- **Interest in future phases and surrounding areas not included in scope of work for Phase 2.** Participants asked questions and were keen to understand if and when the off-leash area (Block 4 between Frederick St. and Lower Sherbourne) and 125 The Esplanade (Current site of the Farmer's Market Tent) will be considered and/or redeveloped. *City staff explained these two areas are not within the scope of Phase 2 and will be considered through future phases and/or other City-led processes. Additional details are included through the summary.*

Full Room Discussions

Following the presentation participants asked questions and shared comments with the project team before moving to the breakout stations. A summary of the questions and feedback from both sessions are included below. Responses from the project team are included in *italics*.

- **Clarification on the future of the 125 The Esplanade site (The Tent)** Participants said they understood from previous engagements that 125 The Esplanade (currently The Tent) would be part of this project and would be turned into an extension of the park once the new North Market building was complete. Participants also said residents in nearby buildings were looking forward to having additional greenspace nearby. They asked why is it no longer included in the park improvements and what is happening to this site? *City staff explained that the original plan was to include the block at 125 The Esplanade as part of the David Crombie Park revitalization process. However, since the project started, the Province of Ontario has expropriated a nearby property (First Parliament site) where the City had plans to locate a new public library. The City is now planning to locate the library at 125 The Esplanade. The City also explained that there will be a separate public process and community engagement for the development of the library. During the second session Deputy Mayor and local Councillor Ausma Malik responded saying the Council is waiting on the determination on what else can be co-located on the site above the library. She also explained that members of the public could reach out to her office to get more information and stay up to date on this process.*
- **Consider including the dog off leash area in this phase of the project.** The dog off leash area is very important since there is a large community of dog owners. *The City explained that the*

existing off-leash area will be part of a future phase of park improvements and updates will be provided to the community when it is being completed.

- **Excitement the wading pool will remain and be enhanced.** Several participants shared appreciation that the wading pool will remain in its current location and be redeveloped.
- **There are a large number of people experiencing homelessness.** The City needs to consider the large number of people experiencing homelessness who might use the park. There needs to be considerations beyond leisure and play.
- **Concerns and opposition to bike lanes.** A participant shared opposition to having bike lanes on The Esplanade as well as in the surrounding area. They also expressed concerns about impacts to traffic flow from recent traffic changes. *City staff from Transportation services explained that there are no proposed changes to traffic patterns and/or the configuration of existing bike lanes along The Esplanade. Rather, the existing bike lanes are planned to be raised to be at sidewalk height to increase safety and comfort and extend the feel of the park into the road.*
- **Are there plans to add public washrooms? It would be nice for people who are using the park to have access to a public washroom.** *No, there no plans to add new public washrooms. However, there are public washrooms available at the St. Lawrence Community Centre right across from the basketball court seven days a week, and some at the St. Lawrence Market.*
- **Concern about the Norway Maple trees near the wading pool.** There is nothing that currently grows in that area because of the trees – what is being planned for the area? *The team explained that some of the Norway Maples are being considered for removal due to root girdling condition, and new tree plantings are being considered.*

Topic Stations

Following the full room discussions, participants moved to topic stations to ask questions and get more information about different parts of the plans. The topic stations included:

1. Trees & Planting, Biodiversity, and Sustainability
2. Playgrounds & Wading Pool
3. Gathering Spaces & Seating
4. Indigenous Placekeeping
5. Street Improvements including the Esplanade Cycling Improvements

The topic station discussions have been summarized below.

General feedback about the plans and process

- **General appreciation for the design and project.** The design looks great and brings to life the history of David Crombie Park.
- **Appreciation for the reuse of existing features**, including the retaining walls and the wading pool.
- **Advocacy for inclusion, equity and diversity in the project.** The area surrounding the park is very diverse. It is important that the project team use a variety of methods to connect with and share information with people from the area.
- **Ensure the park is accessible.** It is important that all features, both new and renewed, are accessible to all.
- **Appreciation for public engagement.** Public engagements tend to be sterile, but this event is great and allows for meaningful conversations.

Trees & Planting, Biodiversity, and Sustainability

- **Strong support for more trees in the park, including honey locust trees.** There were other suggestions to balance the need for sunlight in the park with the number of trees.

- **Planting, pollinator and sustainability strategy was very well received by participants.** Participants said they were happy to see a major increase in tree planting and lawn space compared to the original Master Plan. They shared support for reducing concrete hardscapes to reduce the urban heat island effect of concrete in the park during the summer.
- **Some residents expressed appreciation for the Dynamic Carbon Model and LID approaches.** Participants asked how much carbon is reduced through reduced carbon concrete. *The team explained that it would reduce carbon by approximately 30 per cent.*

Playgrounds & Wading Pool

- **Clarify what will stay the same and what will be updated with park revitalization,** particularly around water features, trees, and seating. It would be helpful to share more detailed designs, especially for the playground.
- **Strong appreciation for the proposed playground structures.** Participants particularly liked the slides. For example, the existing cork screw slide in Block 2, at the junior playground, is very popular. The existing slide in Block 6 is also accessible and allows everyone, including youth with different abilities to access the slides because they are big enough to use for all; high enough to be interesting but not scary; and the ramp is wheelchair accessible with alternative routes.
- **Appreciation for keeping the wading pool.** Participants shared excitement and appreciation that the wading pool will remain and be improved. Some participants discussed the arch in the centre of the wading pool, saying that it used to have a cascading water feature. They said it was beautiful and calming and would like to see something similar restored. Participants also discussed importance of maintenance to ensure the wading pool is safe and clean.
- **Consider sand pits or sandboxes and a running track in Block 6.** A participant said children love to play in sand, and older kids could also use them to train to jump. Consider a cover and lock mechanism to avoid hazards in the sand. There are no sand pits in the area and very few tracks, which creates limited opportunities for track and field training. Having a track would help engagement during recess as well.
- **Questions and concerns about including trampolines.** Two participants shared concerns that children could get hurt on the proposed trampolines. They said that children may push one another off and cause injuries. *The team explained that the types of trampolines being proposed are quite small and would be flush with the ground. The intention is to provide an opportunity for exercise, not high-jumping or acrobatics. The team also provided examples of other parks around the world and locally, including Downsview Park, where these types of trampolines have been used successfully.*
- **Ensure there is enough room for kids just to run around.** They need space for free play and for free unconstrained running without obstacles. Consider making meandering paths more open.
- **Avoid taking up space with too many logs at and around playgrounds.** One participant said they expect children won't be very interested in the proposed log features.
- **Prioritize the permeability and softness of surfaces to avoid flooding and injury.** Consider replacing the flagstone with a more permeable option. Replace concrete surfaces with rubber or other surfaces that are softer for children.
- **Support for using light colours to brighten the industrial gray look of the park paving**
- **Concern about additional table tennis, as it may bring noise.**
- **Keep the existing small hill in Block 6 at the back of the amphitheatre** that younger kids use for tobogganing.

Gathering Spaces & Seating

- **Ensure that the meandering path will be cleaned and accessible all year.** These paths need to be salted and cleared in the winter months.
- **Tables should have adjustable heights to meet accessibility standards.**

- **Consider adding more seating options to Block 6.**
- **Suggestions for the basketball court includes** removing the new street basket next to the basketball court, providing good seating by the existing court and ensuring that the basketball courts are regulation size so that adults can use them too.
- **It's important to recognize that there are people in the area experiencing homelessness.** The park should be designed in a way provides safe and respectful space for everyone. Consider providing picnic tables or tables and chairs for people who are unhoused to express respect and signal that everyone has a place in this community.
- **Consider adding signs that show where public washrooms are available** (e.g., the Community Recreation Centre and St. Lawrence Market.
- **Balance the need for safety and light pollution.** Consider dimmer lighting between midnight and the morning hours to avoid light pollution for nearby residents and to continue ensuring visibility and safety in the park. Another suggestion included a request for safety buttons throughout the park.

Indigenous Placekeeping

- **Appreciation for a process that recognizes and integrates Indigenous history and placekeeping.** Participants discussed the importance of recognizing and introducing different features that connect to Indigenous peoples and history. Participants said their kids use the mound to play regularly, and it would be good to have plaques in the park and on the mound to provide more information about the relevance of the mound and different elements to Indigenous peoples. There was also interest in understanding how the Medicine Wheel will be integrated into the design of the mound.
- **Clarify how Indigenous peoples and organizations have been and will continue to be involved in the process.** Participants asked which local Indigenous organizations have been involved in the process to date. They were also keen to understand the process for selecting Indigenous artists. *The project team explained that they have and will continue to reach out to different groups including: Anishawbe Health Toronto, Two Spirited People of the First Nations, Na-Me-Res, Native Women's Health, Local Artists, MCFN, Moccasin Project, and Council Fire. They also said the list will continue to be updated as the process continues.*
- **Do you know of any burial grounds found on the site or around the area?** *The project team explained that there are no burial grounds in the park. The mound was originally made to create a buffer between the play area and the local road, and to provide variation in topography of the park for different uses. They also explained that the mounds represent gathering or meeting places.*
- **Many participants shared support for the proposed sacred fire space.** They expressed curiosity about the detailed design, maintenance and protocols for use, including: who would be able to use it; who would be responsible for maintaining the space; would there be a designated fire keeper; and would it be permanently lit. *City staff explained that the fire would be used only for Indigenous ceremony and would not be lit all the time. The sacred fire lid would be locked at other times. The Indigenous community would have their own fire keeper and manage the fire for ceremony. The story circle seating around the fire would be accessible to all park users when a sacred fire or other Indigenous ceremony was not taking place.*

Street Improvements including the Esplanade Cycling Improvements

- **Mixed opinions about completed street changes, bike lanes, and planned enhancements along The Esplanade.** Some participants shared support for the existing changes and planned enhancements. Specific features participants shared support for, include: current turn restrictions, transit-only lanes, raised cycle tracks and additional separation between cars and bikes at intersections, removal of some parking to enhance park connectivity, and two-way bike-lanes. Another participant shared strong opposition to bike lanes along The Esplanade, concerns raised

included increased traffic congestion, creating barriers for emergency vehicles, and reducing vehicle access to/from local businesses and residential buildings, especially seniors buildings.

- **Concerns about cyclists and drivers following the existing rules.** Participants said that cyclists often ride through stop signs, which is not safe for pedestrians and advocated for additional enforcement. Other participants shared concerns about drivers not following turn restrictions and suggested exploring options for automated enforcement (e.g., ticketing).
- **Other street and cycling related ideas and suggestions.** Participant shared a number of ideas, including some location specific suggestions, including:
 - Additional signage identifying where commercial trucks are prohibited (e.g. Wilton Street);
 - Adding a railing or other type of physical barrier between the street and cycle track;
 - Add bump-outs between Princess Street and Berkeley Street;
 - Upgrade pedestrian crossings at Wilton Street, Scadding Avenue and to/from the schools;
 - Add advanced left turns from Front Street on to George Street to improve ease of vehicular access.

Other Feedback outside of the project scope

- **Comments and discussion about the off-leash area.** Some participants discussed the off-leash sharing concerns about dogs being off-leash outside of the designed area and dog waste throughout the park. There were suggestions to install a small fence to create a clear barrier. *City staff explained that the off-leash area is not within the scope of this phase of work (Phase 2) and will be implemented in Phase 3.*

Next steps

The facilitation team thanked participants for their contribution to the process and for attending this meeting. They reminded participants that a summary of the meeting will be made available on the project website.

City staff explained that future updates will be provided on the project website at www.toronto.ca/davidcrombiepark.

Attachment A. Meeting Agenda

David Crombie Park Revitalization and Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Project

Public Information Meeting

Thursday, October 26, 2023

3:00 – 4:30 pm and 6:00 – 7:30 pm

125 The Esplanade (The Tent) – Entrance at Lower Jarvis

Meeting Purpose: To provide a recap of phase 1 and update on phase 2 and present the approach and vision for implementation and concept designs for the David Crombie Park Revitalization and the Esplanade and Mill Street Connection Projects.

PROPOSED AGENDA

3:00/6:00 pm Opening & Land Acknowledgement

3:10/6:10 Introductions and Agenda Review

3:15/6:15 Presentation

3:50/6:50 Questions of Clarification

4:00/7:00 Topic Station Discussions

4:30/7:30 Adjourn