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# What We Heard

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## Toronto Island Park Master Plan

Phase Three Report – Summer 2023





The City of Toronto gratefully acknowledges that the area covered by the Toronto Island Master Plan is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of New Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat people and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The City of Toronto also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Mississauga Treaty 13 (1805) signed with the Mississaugas of New Credit, and the Williams Treaties (1923) signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Overview</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| The Toronto Island Park Master Plan engagement process                   | 6         |
| More about Phase Three   | 7         |
| How we engaged   | 9         |
| How we got the word out  | 15        |
| Phase Three snapshot   | 16        |
| By the numbers   | 17        |
| <b>What we heard about the Demonstration Plans and Draft Master Plan</b> | <b>18</b> |
| Overall feedback   | 18        |
| Revealing an Indigenous Place  | 20        |
| Elevating Equity and Belonging   | 23        |
| Enhancing the Visitor Experience   | 24        |
| Supporting a Dynamic Environment   | 25        |
| Improving Access and Connections   | 27        |
| Island District-specific feedback  | 28        |
| Feedback about Hanlan's Point  | 29        |
| Feedback about Gibraltar Point   | 32        |
| Feedback about Centre Island   | 32        |
| Feedback about Ward's Island   | 33        |
| <b>Phase Three Outcomes</b>  | <b>34</b> |

# Overview

For thousands of years, the Toronto Islands have been a place for healing and ceremony for the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other diverse Indigenous communities. Today, it is one of Toronto's signature parks and acts as an oasis for Torontonians from many walks of life. In recent years, however, the park has faced increasing pressures on aging infrastructure as a result of city growth, including increased use, changing demographics, and flooding.

The Toronto Island Park Master Plan will address these issues and ensure the park can be a cherished gathering place for generations to come. The Master Plan is being co-created with Indigenous rights-holders, local communities, and the public through an iterative engagement process from 2021 to 2023. It will be a long-term guiding document that outlines a Vision, Values, Guiding Principles and Big Ideas to inform change and investment in Toronto Island Park over many years.

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## About this report:

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This report provides an overview of what we heard across engagements in Phase Three of the public and stakeholder engagement process. The feedback summarized reflects a synthesis of different engagement events, tactics, and tools. See the Appendix for the detailed summaries from the various engagement activities.

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## A Demonstration Plan is:

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- A way of illustrating ideas captured through the engagement process and possible improvements described in the Master Plan document.
- Intended to guide future design while remaining adaptable to evolving best practices and policy directions that impact the realization of master plans over long periods of time.
- A starting point for future in-depth investigations, detailed design exercises, and project-specific engagement processes which will refine concepts into constructable proposals that adhere to established budgets and reflect innovations in design and construction practices.

## A Park Master Plan is:

- A dynamic and long-term planning document that outlines how the Master Plan can be realized over time using coordinated approaches, actions, and strategies.
- A guide to inform future decision-making around park improvements, programming, operations, and management.
- A document that identifies what works and guides approaches to improve the things that don't work as well.
- A coordinated way to introduce new park features, amenities, and innovations over time, considering diverse opportunities and collaborations.
- A written document that is supported through a Demonstration Plan and other diagrams that illustrate how feedback and ideas heard through the engagement and Master Plan process might take shape and relate to one another within the park.

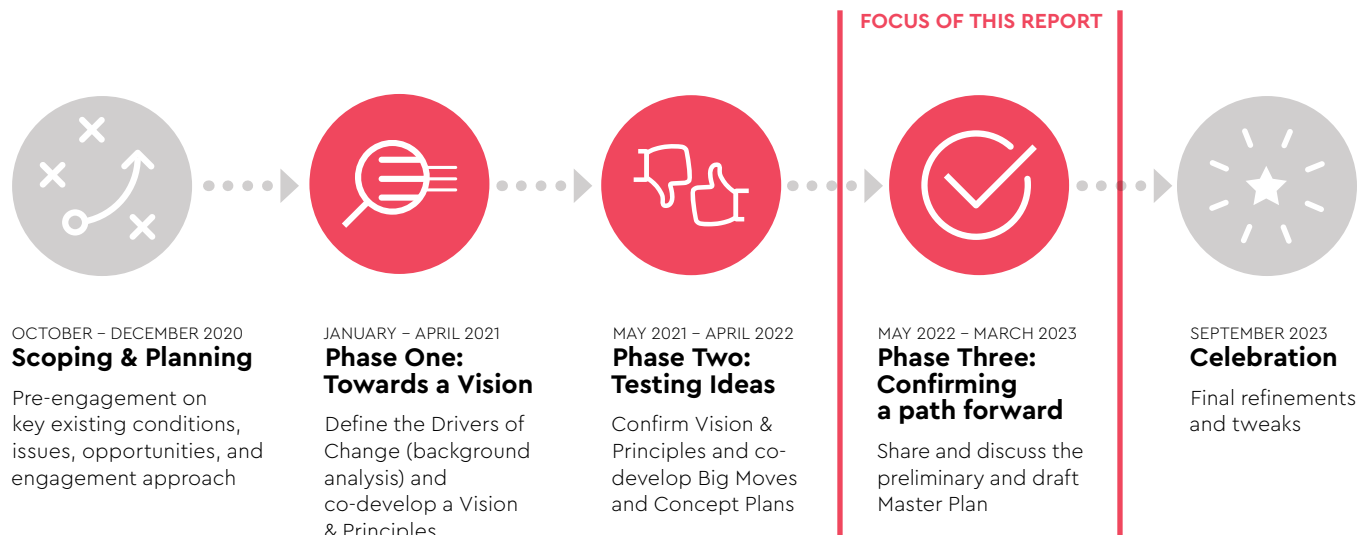


The Toronto Island Park Master Plan focuses only on the parkland managed by the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division. The residential communities, water treatment plant, and Billy Bishop Airport are not part of the scope. In addition to the feedback from the engagement process, the Master Plan will be based on research

into similar parks around the world, professional expertise and experience, and coordination with related initiatives (like the [City's Ferry Fleet Replacement Strategy](#), the TRCA's [Toronto Island Park Flood Mitigation Environmental Assessment](#), and Waterfront Toronto's [Marine Use Strategy](#)).

## The Toronto Island Park Master Plan engagement process

Toronto Island Park Master Plan engagement is following a three-phase process.



**Phase One, "Towards a Vision"** (January 2020 to April 2021), focused on developing the Vision, Values, Guiding Principles and Drivers of Change for the park.

**Phase Two, "Testing Ideas"** (May 2021 to April 2022), kicked off with an engagement on Big Ideas and then, building on the Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles developed in Phase One, developed a Draft Demonstration Plan, which represented ideas spatially within the physical spaces of the Island as part of the larger Toronto Island Master Plan document.

**Phase Three, "Confirming a Path Forward"** (May 2022 to March 2023), builds directly on the outcomes of Phases One and Two. In this Phase, the team shared site-specific refinements to the Demonstration Plan as part of the Draft Master Plan. The team presented this information relative to four Island Districts and sought feedback on the many different components of the Draft Plan. This report focuses on the project team's engagement efforts as well as the feedback received in Phase Three.



# More about Phase Three

## Transitioning to the Draft Master Plan

Public engagement in Phase Three kicked off on August 13, 2022, with a circuit of pop-ups on the Island at seven key locations. The goal was to share updates and information about the Master Plan process, illustrate some of the emerging ideas for the Island and continue raising awareness about the project.

Each pop-up location focused on different components of the Master Plan and shared ideas related to different areas of the Island, including providing an overview of the Master Plan process, and emerging ideas related to transportation and wayfinding, four-season activation, cultural heritage interpretation, Indigenous placekeeping, expanded use of the internal waterways, and collaborative with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) on the flood mitigation efforts for the Island.

Over the course of the day, the team spoke with hundreds of people about the Master Plan and handed out 300 freezies to visitors and others enjoying their time on the Island. Generally, the engagement approach was well received by the public as many people stopped by the pop-up stations to learn more about the project and the emerging plans.



Master Plan Framework

The "Draft Master Plan" is the precursor to the "Final Master Plan" document and gives the Advisory Committees and the public the ability to see how the various ideas in the plan, the relationship of the physical spaces and the connections and overlapping lenses of the plan work together. The Draft Master Plan builds on the materials shared in previous phases and is comprised of all the components in the Master Plan Framework outlined above. It includes a refined Demonstration Plan based

on feedback received through engagement and advisory committees to ensure the plan addresses the Drivers of Change, aligns with the Values, Vision, and Guiding Principles, and incorporates the Big Ideas as implementable strategies and projects that could be delivered over several decades. The Draft Master Plan integrates all the work and discussion to date in a written narrative and guidelines for projects throughout the park.

## Shaping the Draft Master Plan

The Draft Master Plan has been shaped through the outcomes from the engagements in Phases One and Two and was vetted with the Technical Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Committee in September and October 2022 before the Draft Master Plan was presented to the broader public in November 2022. Using site-specific Demonstration Plans, the project team shared information and sought feedback on refinements to the Demonstration Plans, and site-specific approaches as part of the preparation of the Draft Master Plan.

From October to November 2022, the project team met with The Mississaugas of the Credit and First Nations and other rights-holders to share plan refinements related to Indigenous placekeeping, cultural heritage and interpretation, and opportunities for Indigenous business within the Draft Master Plan.

At the end of November 2022, the project team hosted an Open House to conclude Phase Three of the project. This was the first indoor, in-person broader public engagement for the Toronto Island Master Plan. The purpose of the Open House was to share the Draft Master Plan, including Demonstration Plans (site-specific approaches) for the three Ferry Landings and a number of Focus Areas around the Island as well as coordinated thinking with the Business Strategy; and to seek feedback on the overall Draft Master Plan.

**Rights-holders** are First Nations governments whose historic connection to the territory includes Aboriginal and/or Treaty Rights protected under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*.



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## How we engaged

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of Phase Three engagement activities were conducted virtually. There were three in-person engagement events – a one-day pop-up event at the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal, complemented by a series of locations across the Island, a Public Open House hosted in November 2022, and a workshop with the Hanlan's Beach Community.

Phase Three also included Indigenous engagement through placekeeping discussions and meetings with First Nations rights-holders; targeted engagement with advisory groups; a Public Open House, and dedicated engagement with the Hanlan's Beach Community.



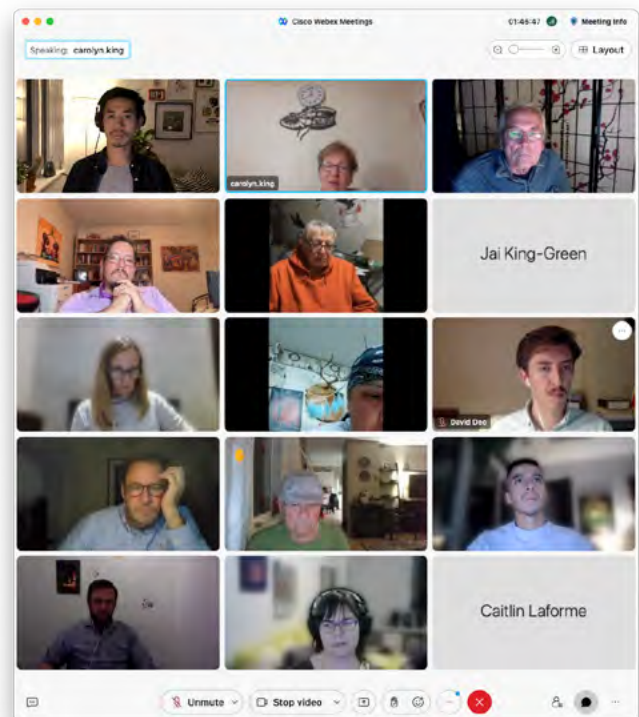
### Indigenous engagement

Given the significance of the Toronto Islands to Indigenous communities and rights-holders, and the City of Toronto's commitments to truth and reconciliation, the Toronto Island Park Master Plan engagement process includes working with and seeking advice from rights-holders and Urban Indigenous communities. Phase Three included:

**One placekeeping discussion with Mississaugas of the Credit elders and knowledge holders,** to review the progress related to Indigenous placekeeping and exploring Indigenous ways of knowing and being within the Toronto Island Master Plan.

**Four meetings with First Nations and Métis governments** to share and discuss revisions to the Draft Demonstration Plan and introduce some of the initial thinking on the Island-wide implementation strategies. The team met with the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Huron-Wendat Nation, and Six Nations of the Grand River, and the Toronto-York Region Métis Council.

Beyond these dedicated placekeeping and Indigenous engagement meetings, the Master Plan team also invited interested Indigenous organizations and individuals to participate in all public engagement activities, including the pop-ups and Public Open House.



Placekeeping discussion with Mississauagas of the Credit

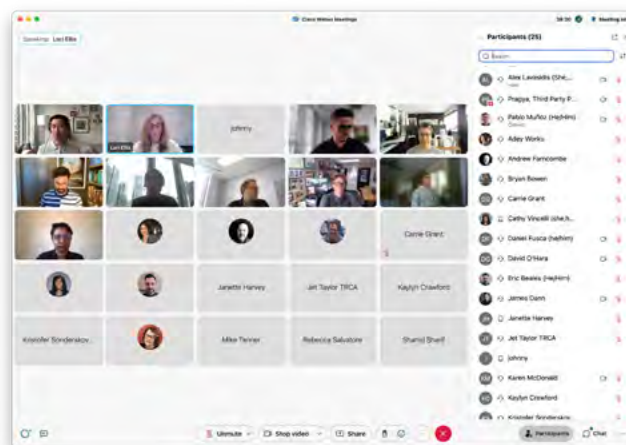


## Targeted engagement

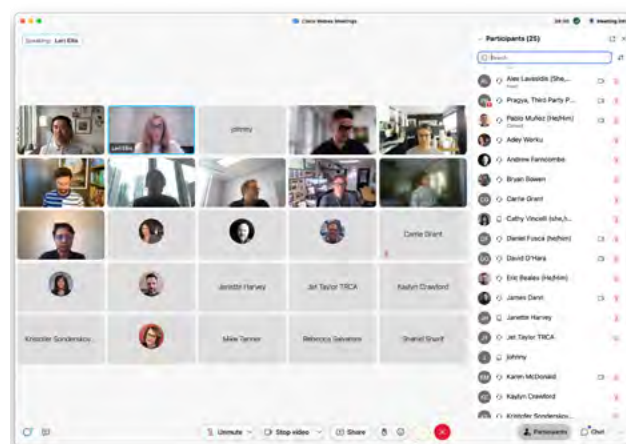
Targeted engagement for this phase of the Toronto Island Park Master Plan included meetings with the project's advisory groups. The purpose of these targeted engagements was to share and seek feedback on refinements to the Demonstration Plans, and a sample of site-specific approaches as part of the preparation of the Draft Master Plan. These engagements included:

**A meeting with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**, which focussed on identifying and discussing possible strategies towards implementation, key actions, next steps, and identifying future champions and partnerships for implementing the Master Plan over time in the future.

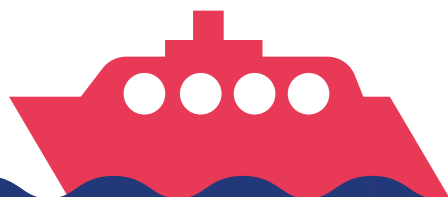
**A meeting with the Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**, which focussed on providing a preview of the examples of the site-specific approaches to achieving the vision of the Master Plan in advance of the broader Public Open House.



Meeting with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)



Meeting with the Community Advisory Committee (CAC)





## Broader public engagement

Public engagement in Phase Three of the Toronto Island Park Master Plan included both in-person and virtual engagements, including:

**One-day pop-up event including seven individual pop-ups in key locations;** one at Jack Layton Ferry Terminal and seven on Toronto Island. Each pop-up was set-up in proximity to the theme or area being presented and showcased different ideas from the Draft Demonstration Plan.

The purpose of the pop-ups was to engage park visitors in the Toronto Island Park Master Plan process by sharing information about the Master Plan and related initiatives.

The following list describes the content shared at each location:



Members of the public at one of the seven pop-up locations

| Pop-Up Location                                       | Information Shared   |
|---|--|
| ① Jack Layton Ferry Terminal.                         | Overview of the Master Plan and Wayfinding                   |
| ② Centre Island Dock                                  | Four-Season Activation and Wayfinding                        |
| ③ Centre Island Bridge (South-west side)              | Cultural Heritage Interpretation and Indigenous Placekeeping |
| ④ Ward's Island                                       | Island Transportation and Wayfinding                         |
| ⑤ Snake Island (Along Lakeshore)                      | Indigenous Placekeeping and Internal Waterways               |
| ⑥ Hanlan's Point (Near Mermaid Café and Mooring Wall) | Island Transportation + Cultural Heritage Interpretation     |
| ⑦ Gibraltar Point                                     | Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Recent Works     |



Map of pop-up locations

**Public Open House** hosted at Canoe Landing Community Recreation Centre – the first in-person indoor broad public engagement event for the Toronto Island Park Master Plan engagement process.

The purpose of the Open House was to share the Draft Master Plan, including updates to the Draft Demonstration Plan, site-specific approaches for Priority Areas and Focus Areas and the business strategy; as well as seek feedback on the Draft Master Plan, overall.

The Open House was well attended with over 80 members of the public attending, including some members from the Community Advisory Committee as well as the local City Councillor, Ausma Malik. The project team in attendance included City of Toronto Parks Forestry and

Recreation staff along with the project's consultants: the design team (DTAH, Trophic Design, North-South Environmental, Common Bond Collective, and Steer), the business strategy team (fsStrategy), and the engagement team (Third Party Public and Nbisiing Consulting).

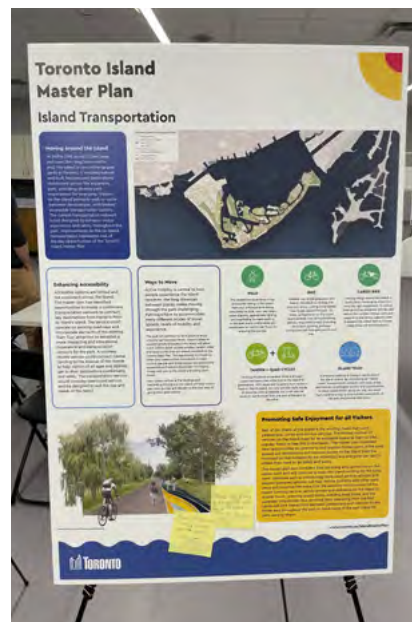
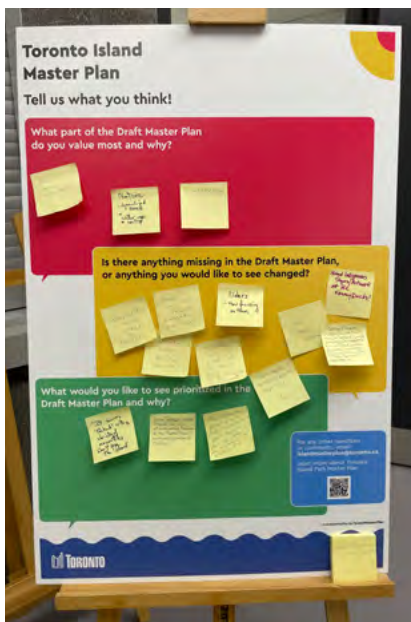
At the Open House, participants learned about the Master Plan through reading 38 informational panels and/or speaking with City staff and subject matter experts from the project team. Participants shared feedback by submitting feedback forms, posting sticky notes on the boards, and through conversations with the project team.

For more details about the format of the Open House, please read the Open House Summary in the Appendix and on the City of Toronto's [website](#).





Participants listening to a speaker at the Public Open House.



Comments on boards from participants at the Public Open House.

### **Hanlan's Beach Community Engagement,**

including one virtual Public Meeting, one virtual workshop, one in person workshop, and one asynchronous online engagement (via an idea-rating platform called ThoughtExchange). The purpose of the Hanlan's Beach Community Engagement was to:

- respond to community requests for further consultation about Hanlan's Island
- share information and answer questions about a proposed event space on Hanlan's Island
- further workshop ideas for Hanlan's Island to ensure the plan met the needs of the Queer community and addressed the significance of the space from their perspective.

The purpose of the Virtual Public Meeting was to explain the Master Plan team's proposed ideas and answer community questions about a proposed

event space on Hanlan's Island. The team also launched the ThoughtExchange platform at the Virtual Public Meeting, offering community members a way to share (and react to others') thoughts during and after the meeting.

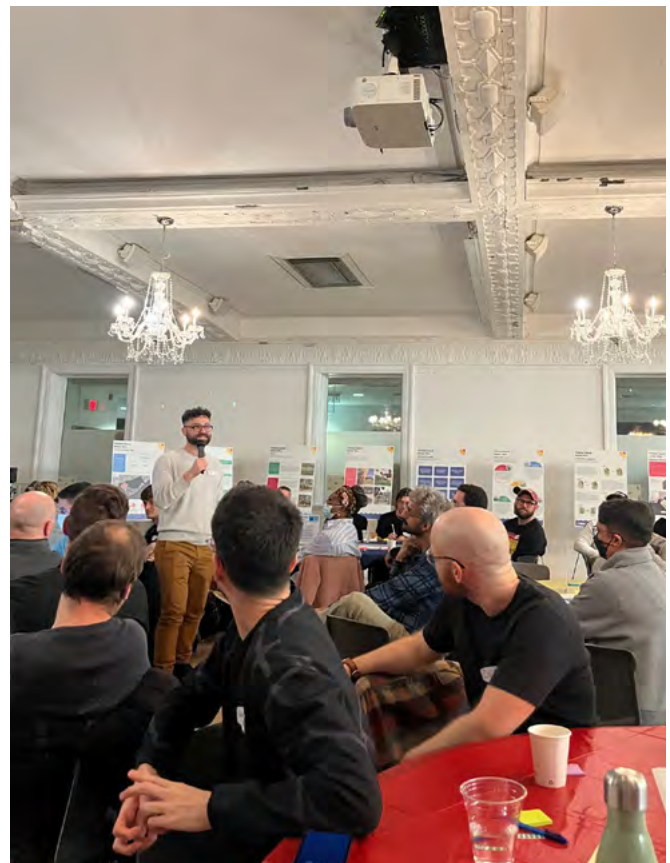
Following the Virtual Public Meeting and ThoughtExchange, the team hosted two identical, follow-up workshops (one in-person, one virtual) to further discuss issues and opportunities related to Hanlan's Island and Hanlan's Point Beach.

In total 579 members of the public attended the meetings (both in-person or virtual) and 2,471 people participated in the ThoughtExchange.

For more details about the Hanlan's Beach Community Engagement, please read the Summary Report in the Appendix and on the City of Toronto's [website](#).



In-person ThoughtExchange for Hanlan's Point





## How we got the word out

Promotion for Phase Three events and engagement tools, built on the momentum of successful public outreach channels from the previous phases. The communication strategy in Phase Three aimed to keep people interested and updated about the Island Master Plan process.

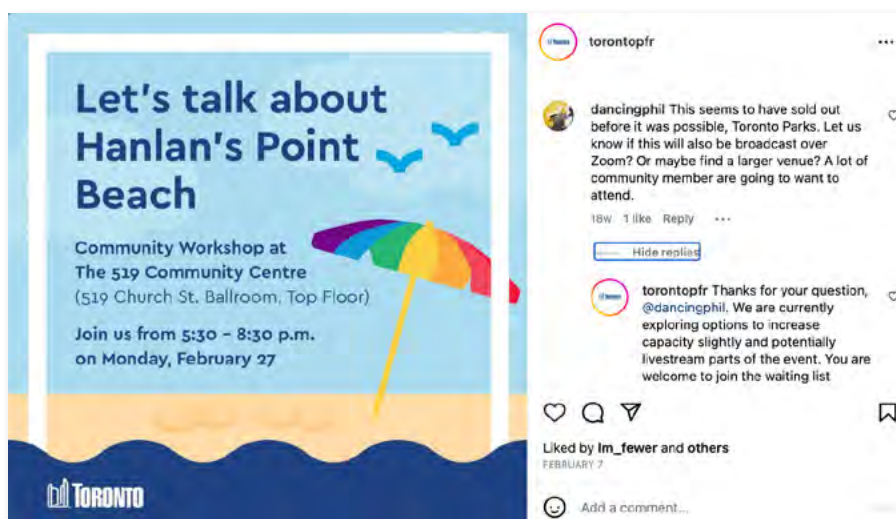
In addition to sending regular updates to the project e-mail contact list, the project team used social media ads and organic posts to promote public engagement activities to Torontonians.

Overall, marketing and promotions activities for Phase Three continued to drive strong reach and engagement to fuel public participation and drive awareness for the process. In total, the paid and organic social campaigns in Phase Three delivered the following performance:

- Nearly 440,000 Torontonians reached
- Over 8,500 total engagements
- Just under 8,000 link clicks
- Over 38 creative assets created
















Screenshot of paid post



Screenshot of organic post

## Phase Three Snapshot

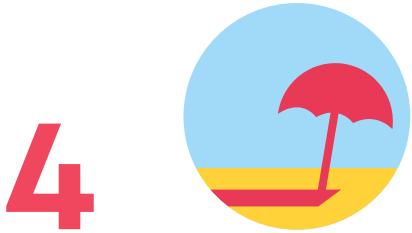
The following graphic illustrates all Phase Three engagement tactics and tools, with key statistics highlighted.

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <b>AUG 13</b>  <p>Pop-ups on the Island</p> <p><b>7</b> locations + <b>hundreds</b> of people</p>             | <b>SEPT 27</b>  <p>Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #5</p> <p><b>20</b> participants</p>             | <b>OCT 02</b>  <p>3<sup>rd</sup> Mississaugas of the Credit Placekeeping Dialogue #4</p> <p><b>7</b> participants</p> | <b>OCT 25</b>  <p>Community Advisory Committee Meeting #4</p> <p><b>13</b> participants</p>               |
| <b>NOV 30</b>  <p>Public Open House</p> <p><b>80</b> participants</p>   | <b>DEC 01</b>  <p>Rights-Holder Meeting: Huron-Wendat Nation</p> <p><b>1</b> participant</p>             | <b>DEC 05</b>  <p>Rights-Holder Meeting: Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation</p> <p><b>3</b> participants</p>     | <b>DEC 07</b>  <p>Rights-Holder Meeting: Six Nations Lands and Resources</p> <p><b>8</b> participants</p> |
| <b>DEC 15</b>  <p>Rights-Holder Meeting: Toronto York Region Métis Council</p> <p><b>5</b> participants</p> | <b>FEB 23</b>  <p>Hanlan's Event Space Public Meeting (Virtual)</p> <p>+/- <b>385</b> participants</p> | <b>FEB 23</b> → <b>MAR 12</b> <p>Hanlan's Beach Community ThoughtExchange</p> <p><b>2,471</b> participants</p>   | <b>FEB 27</b>  <p>Hanlan's Beach Community Workshop (In-Person)</p> <p>+/- <b>100</b> participants</p>  |
| <b>MAR 02</b>  <p>Rights-Holder Meeting: Toronto York Region Métis Council</p> <p><b>5</b> participants</p> | <b>MAR 09</b>  <p>Hanlan's Beach Community Workshop (Virtual)</p> <p>+/- <b>95</b> participants</p>    |  |  |

By the numbers



**2**  
meetings with  
advisory groups



**4**  
engagements (including  
in person, virtual, and  
asynchronous) with the Hanlan's  
Beach Community, reaching  
thousands of participants

**8,000**

unique link clicks generated  
from social media



**5**  
Indigenous engagement  
and placekeeping meetings  
involving

**24**  
participants



**3**  
in-person engagements  
with hundreds of  
participants

Nearly **40,000**

people reached through social media  
promotion with

**+8,500**  
engagements



# What we heard about the Demonstration Plans and Draft Master Plan

The following section summarizes the feedback collected across all the engagement activities in Phase Three. The feedback received throughout this phase of work relates to the refinements to the Demonstration Plan that contribute to the Draft Master Plan as outlined above. Participant feedback and comments below are organized by overall feedback about the Master Plan project, the Master Plan lenses, followed by Island District-specific feedback. See the Appendix for the detailed summaries from the various engagement activities.

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## Overall Feedback

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Participants said the following about the overall Master Plan project:

**General excitement and continued interest in the Toronto Island Plan Master Plan.** Many participants expressed support for the Master Plan, specifically its focus on sustainability, resilience, biodiversity as well as its emphasis on Indigenous placekeeping. Many also appreciated the plan's intention to be a light touch approach to improvements with a focus on upgrading existing facilities and not introducing new infrastructure or changing uses.

**Provide more information about implementation, including budgets, timelines, and longer-term plan.** Many participants wanted more information about budgets, timelines and implementation mechanisms in the materials. They also wanted clarity on who would be responsible for implementing, operating, and maintaining components of the plan, and whether they will include expertise across different specialties (i.e., horticulture, climate change, etc.). Some were also interested to learn about the additional studies that will be conducted to assess any potential impacts of proposed improvements in the future.

**General appreciation for the community engagement efforts.** Overall, many participants expressed appreciation for the various community engagement efforts in this phase. At the Open House, some participants said they appreciated in-person interactions with the project team and learning more about the Master Plan.

**Further engagement with Hanlan's Point Beach users and 2SLGBTQ+ communities is needed to evaluate and workshop proposed ideas.** At the Open House it became clear that it was important to have an additional meeting to share the Draft Master Plan and have an additional conversation with Hanlan's Point Beach users and the 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Several participants shared concerns with some of the ideas presented in the Master Plan for Hanlan's Point, as well as how 2SLGBTQ+ communities were engaged in the Master Plan process, in general. Concerns raised were generally about safety for beach users,

the importance of recognizing and protecting the beach as a significant queer space and acknowledging the beach as a site of significant importance to 2SLGBTQ+ people. They also shared strong concerns about the proposed event space at Hanlan's Point. Participants also said that an event space could lead to conflicts between beach users and event goers, and potentially lead to homophobic attacks, particularly if event/concert goers are not aware that they are entering a clothing optional and significant queer space.

**Present the information in an easy and digestible way.** Some participants across the engagement activities said they appreciated the detailed information about the Master Plan. There were, however, some that suggested

the content could be clearer and shared in a way that is easier to understand. Some suggestions included avoiding acronyms, defining terminology, labelling all components of maps and illustrations, and adding subtitles to concept images. Some also suggested including interactive elements and videos at future engagements.

**Other feedback about the Master Plan scope.** Some participants continued to suggest that areas currently beyond the Master Plan scope such as the airport and water treatment plant should also be included in the Master Plan scope.

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## Feedback organized by Master Plan lenses

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### Highlights from the online Big Ideas generation board

Within the context of the Toronto Island Park Master Plan, lenses are used to organize ideas, opportunities, and challenges to meet key objectives of the study. The lenses first emerged through the Big Ideas engagement and helped define how various unrelated ideas could work together to realize coordinated improvements for the park. In Phase Three, the lenses were used to inform how specific projects and recommendations throughout the park would contribute to the objectives of the Master Plan. The lenses presented and shared for feedback in Phase Three were:

- Revealing an Indigenous Place
- Elevating Equity and Belonging
- Enhancing Visitor Experience
- Supporting a Dynamic Environment
- Improving Access and Connection



Participants said the following about the Master Plan lenses:



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## Revealing an Indigenous Place

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Unless otherwise noted, the feedback summarized in this specific section, reflects the thoughts of Indigenous communities engaged in Phase Three.

**Indigenous communities continue to support the ideas in the Master Plan.** Throughout the course of Indigenous engagement for Phase Three, there was continued support from First Nations and Métis peoples for the vision and ideas reflected in the Toronto Islands Master Plan. These ideas were refined, presented, and validated with Indigenous community members through the course of meetings with First Nations rights-holders and the local Métis Council.

**Provide adequate resources for the Master Plan.**

The Toronto Island Master Plan is an ambitious plan filled with many ideas that resonate with Indigenous communities and the public. However, in order to be successful, many of these ideas require the necessary support, including resources, partnerships, and funding.

**First Nations rights-holders must be involved in all facets of Master Plan implementation.**

As Aboriginal and Treaty rights-holders, First Nations in the territory assert that they must have enhanced role in the future of the Toronto Islands Park. This includes continued interest in co-management of the park (for ex., management of the proposed Snake Island ceremonial space), economic involvement, park stewardship, and in the implementation of the Master Plan strategies. This is consistent with the City of Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan. Continued dialogue with First Nations, and commitment to further First Nations involvement in a stewardship role for the Toronto Islands Park, will be important parts of the Master Plan.

**Naturalized spaces rather than "impermeable spaces".**

As stewards of the land and the water, Indigenous peoples continue to advocate for respect and stewardship of the Toronto Islands and the surrounding waters. This includes all aspects of flora, fauna and habitat. First Nations are not generally supportive of new buildings and structures and much prefer naturalized spaces on the islands.

**More work must be done to better reflect**

**Indigenous heritage in City assessments.** As part of the development of the Toronto Islands Master Plan, a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment has been undertaken. The purpose of a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment is to assist the City in determining whether a property, collection of properties, or landscape feature should be designated under provincial legislation. A Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment focuses primarily on built resources, rather than landscapes or cultural significance, including Indigenous heritage that does not include archaeological research or built form. This does not adequately reflect Indigenous worldview. The City needs to better capture and appreciate the value of the land, water, history, culture, and land use from an Indigenous perspective as this has intrinsic value to First Nations and Métis peoples.

**Indigenous economic development is a priority.**

Indigenous communities are seeking economic benefit from the Toronto Islands. First Nations have expressed a desire to obtain benefit from tourism and business opportunities. This could take form of partnerships with economic development corporations (MCFN Development Corp.) or



tourism collectives (Aboriginal Tourism Ontario or Tourisme Wendake). Other opportunities could be related to co-management of the Toronto Islands Park; creating cultural, learning and experiential opportunities; co-development of Indigenous festivals; opportunities to enhance winter programming (for ex., Wendat mid-winter festival); and dedicated pop-up food and vendor spaces at the proposed Centre Island marketplace or at regular, community cultural events. There is a placemaking opportunity at the Avenue of the Islands to weave in Indigenous storytelling about inter-nation trade which promotes the idea of celebrating economic equity and cultural diversity.

**Walking Softly: Trail-making.** For Wendat people, the making of trails is considered how living beings "write" upon Mother Earth. Trail making should be left to animals rather than human beings. Users of the Toronto Islands Park should be kept to marked paths, including the Cultural Narrative Trail, in order to leave natural spaces to the plants, animals and habitat. Human trails should be marked with the Moccasin Identifier and park users encouraged to "walk softly" on Mother Earth with appropriate awareness, education, and signage.

**All-Seasons glass structure to support growing traditional food and medicinal plants.** First Nations have shared a vision of the Toronto Islands Park to be used for growing traditional food and medicinal plants. Toronto Parks may also need a nursery to encourage Indigenous plant growth and seed propagation across the park and across the City. First Nations propose the building of a low-impact, glass structure that can be used in all seasons. This structure can be used as a greenhouse during the growing season, and a place for shelter and warmth for park users in the winter season.

**Help address Indigenous food sovereignty.** Participants felt that there may be opportunities for the Toronto Island Park to support Indigenous food sovereignty. In addition to a greenhouse, community gardens were suggested to grow traditional foods to distribute to Indigenous families. Such gardens can also be used to grow and supply traditional medicines for community

members and Indigenous healing programs. Care must be taken on how these community garden programs are managed, especially when growing traditional medicines. This can only be done through co-development with Indigenous communities. Adequate funding is needed to ensure that the caretakers of the gardens have appropriate resources to manage, protect and ensure these areas are safe.

**Storytelling experiences can be a highlight of the Toronto Islands.** First Nations and Métis have expressed the importance of the Toronto Islands as a place of cultural awareness and education. Storytelling is the traditional means of sharing and remembering Indigenous history. This can be integrated into the Toronto Islands Park through: multimedia tour stops across the Cultural Narrative Trail with QR codes that link to more information; developing smartphone apps that provide an interpretation narrative; developing Indigenous Island Walks in partnership with Toronto Ecotours; and integrating cultural, holographic technology at the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal and Centre Island Ferry Dock. Storytelling can also include wintertime/night-time projections, Indigenous drone light shows, and a large-scale spectacle of fireworks interwoven with Indigenous storytelling. All storytelling experiences should reflect both the treaty rights-holders, and the diversity of Indigenous nations within the territory.

**Reflecting Canoe-Making Traditions.** Métis people have a long-established tradition of canoe-making and would be a willing contributor in an annual canoe-making demonstration. Métis would appreciate inclusion of storytelling and teachings related to canoes, and hands-on participation of children and youth in canoe-making.

**Cost may be a barrier to enjoying the Toronto Islands Park.** For many First Nations, Métis and Inuit families, certain costs (food, travelling on the ferry) may make enjoying the park financially inaccessible. When you consider the cost of the ferry, as well as food and beverage – it may not be a reality for low-income families to visit the park. Participants expressed an interest in the City providing free ferry transportation for Indigenous people.

### **The Toronto Islands as a (literal) Indigenous**

**place.** In cities across Canada, there are places that Indigenous people can go to spend time with other Indigenous people. These can include friendship centres, community centres, and ceremonial and park spaces. The Toronto Islands can be that for First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Toronto. Ideas include using the proposed Snake Island ceremonial space for regular ceremonial programming (ex. monthly sweat lodge ceremonies, full-moon ceremonies), and using the proposed Olympic Island event space for regular cultural events (ex. drum socials, Indigenous movie night). These can be regular events where Indigenous vendors can set-up and sell to the public. The Métis Council expressed the need for event and activity space and could be interested in seeing this fulfilled on the Toronto Island.

### **Other feedback about Indigenous Placekeeping in the Honour + Celebrate implementation strategy included:**

- Identify spaces for ceremonies as well as different ceremonies that can educate people about Indigenous cultures.
- Consider having First Nations, Métis and Inuit as "internal champions" within Parks Forestry and Recreation to lead the work on Indigenous engagement, such as an engagement specialist or manager dedicated to engagement with Indigenous communities.



**Aaniin.  
Sago.  
Taanishi.  
Hello.**

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## Elevating Equity and Belonging

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**Further engage with a diversity of different Island user groups, including the Hanlan's Point Beach users, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and Island residents.** Participants throughout the various engagement activities said it is important to ensure that the Island is welcoming, accessible, and safe for a diversity of users – including children and families, seniors, people with disabilities, newcomers, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and Island residents. There were also some suggestions about further engagement with members of 2SLGBTQ+ community, specifically related to Hanlan's point, and with the Island residents. *Refer to pages 30–31 in this report for feedback specific to Hanlan's Point, including feedback about the proposed event space and cultural significance of Hanlan's Point Beach.*

**Stories and heritage on the Island are important, and storytelling should be accessible to a diverse audience.** Several participants said that Island has a diversity of stories which should be collected, preserved, and honoured – including stories from previous residents, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, Indigenous communities, and many others.

Some also said that storytelling on the Island should be inclusive and accessible for a diversity of users – including multi-lingual options. They suggested partnerships with agencies in the settlement sector and Local Immigration Partnerships.



### **Ensure that the Island is accessible to a diversity of visitors by installing accessible infrastructure.**

Many participants highlighted the need to make the Island experience safe and accessible to a diversity of visitors including children and families, seniors, and people with disabilities. Some suggested including accessible infrastructure throughout the Island. Many participants supported proposed improvements that make moving from one end to the other on the Island more accessible to people with different abilities – they suggested infrastructure such as ramps and handrails where needed; separated bike paths and walkways, and limiting vehicles.

**Use the Island to facilitate food security.** Some participants suggested that the Island can be used as a place where food is grown and shared. Suggestions included enhancing food-related educational programming, such as the existing programming at Franklin's Children Garden.

**Develop a Statement of Cultural Heritage Value for the Island.** Some participants said it was important to develop a comprehensive statement of Cultural Heritage Value for the Island in order to implement the Honour + Celebrate theme, and to create a comprehensive interpretive strategy. They said this statement and accompanying resources could help identify and prioritize the protection of heritage resources.

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## Enhancing Visitor Experience

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**General support for ideas to enhance visitor experience.** Participants across the engagement activities in this round generally supported the ideas for enhancing visitors experience on the Island, specifically around creating additional opportunities for winter activities, along with programming and infrastructure to support them; improving the infrastructure at ferry landings; and exploring options for interactive storytelling.

**Support for expanding year-round access to the Island.** Several participants across Phase Three supported the idea of expanding and improving year-round access to the Island. Many said that having winter activities like skating on the Island could encourage people to visit during winter months. Additionally, some said that activities and attractions should also be planned for bad-weather days during the peak season.

Participants said that is important that there is adequate infrastructure to support year-round activities, such as skate paths, storage facilities, winterized washrooms, warm shelters, an ice-breaker ferry, and a robust winter maintenance plan (to clear snow on trails, etc.).

**Explore opportunities for a cohesive and interactive storytelling approach.** Some participants suggested tying together various elements of the narrative strategy (such as information centres and narrative trails) to create an integrated storytelling approach. Some also suggested exploring interactive and digital storytelling – such as that used at Toronto Zoo, the aquarium, and ROM. Other suggestions included mobile art programming on the Island, like the Play Mobile Initiative at the Nathan Phillips Square. There were also a few suggestions to offer educational rides and experiences using the Island's transportation network.

**Integrate Indigenous storytelling throughout the Island visitors' experience.** Some participants suggested integrating Indigenous storytelling throughout the Island, starting with educational experience at the ferry terminals. Some suggestions to implement this were through partnerships with the Island school, offering portaging experiences, and including Ojibwe or other Indigenous languages in the signage. Some also suggested including Indigenous plantings throughout the park and considering the entire Island as a ceremonial space.

**Ensure that storytelling is accessible and engaging.** Some participants said there should be a focus on making the storytelling accessible and engaging for a diversity of users, including newcomers and people whose first language is not English. Some also suggested that champions or partners for creating such an approach could include Heritage Toronto, Toronto History Museum, Myseum of Toronto, and The ArQuives. Additionally, some also suggested identifying opportunities for sharing Black histories on Toronto Island.

**Support for "welcome spots" at ferry landings.** Some participants shared support for the improvements at ferry landings, especially creating welcome spots or informational booths at ferry landings, which could be spaces for visitors to get information on wayfinding, attractions, and amenities. Additionally, some suggested there should also be lockers and rental spaces for skis, skates, and snowshoes to support winter activities.

**Focus on protecting and maintaining beaches and shorelines.** Some participants said the Master Plan should include a clear focus on protecting beaches and shoreline, highlighting that beaches are well maintained, attractive to swim in, and popular recreational destinations.

**Assign resources to beach maintenance and creating more amenities, such as washrooms.** There were also a few suggestions to direct revenue from rentals towards maintenance.

**Other suggestions to enhance visitor experience and advice for the implementation strategy included:**

- Increase camping and canoeing opportunities for kids – the Island is often the first experience of camping and canoeing for many kids in the city.
- Create spaces that are flexible and can accommodate Ultimate Frisbee games, and theatre and performance art.

- Consider adding "events" to the title of the implementation strategy "Play, Programming + Activation". The suggested title is: "Play, Programming, Events + Activation".
- Develop a staffing and funding model for Island Ambassadors and other suggested programs for the Island and identify where funds come from.
- Identify areas and do a business case for expanding safe swim zones, and connect with the right stakeholders, which include the City's aquatics team, fishing groups, Port Authority, and TRCA.



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## Supporting a Dynamic Environment

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**Strong support for preserving the natural environment, and appreciation for Master Plan's 'light touch' approach.** Participants throughout the various activities in this Phase of engagement said that it is important to prioritize preserving and restoring the landscapes, natural habitats, and biodiversity on the Island. They generally appreciated the Master Plan's intent of a 'light touch' approach.

**Ensure that the efforts to protect and restore natural environment are balanced with human uses and improving visitor experience.** Some participants expressed concern that the focus on protecting the natural environment is not as strong as that of human uses and improving visitor experience, especially since the natural environment is only one of the five Master Plan

lenses, while other four speak to human uses. They said it is very important to balance improving visitor experience and preserving the natural environment. There were also suggestions to create environmental management plans with more details about environmental protection efforts and how human uses effect the natural environment.

Some said the Island is unique in being a 'city respite' and 'parkland for all' and suggested the park should be improved while persevering this unique character and not being over-commercialized. There were also suggestions to create distance between public space and park space to allow for a quieter experience for visitors.

### **Support for the intention of raised boardwalks and 'low traffic' and 'no-go' areas in**

**Environmentally Significant Areas.** In general, participants supported creating raised boardwalks and 'low traffic areas' in the Environmentally Significant Areas. Some said that the boardwalks would be a good way to manage access to the Environmentally Significant Areas while protecting nature and natural resources, while some said it is important to mitigate any impacts to the natural environment when implementing the boardwalks.

Some participants also supported proposed no-go areas or seasonal no-go areas to protect Environmentally Significant Areas and suggested developing strategies to ensure compliance of the no-go rules. There were also suggestions to engage with the project team managing the Toronto Environmentally Significant Areas Management Plan Framework Project and share learnings.

### **Protect the bird population on the Island, and concern about cormorant population.**

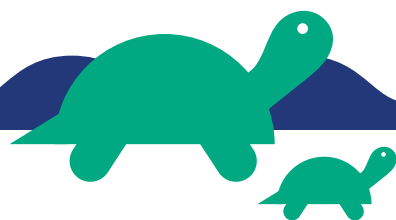
Some participants said that the Island is a critical nesting area for birds (such as Piping Plovers), and it is important that any changes or new infrastructure be critically evaluated, and impact studies be conducted to ensure preservation of bird population, including migratory birds. Some participants also expressed concern about the cormorant population on the Island, such as their impact on the Island's flora and fauna, noise, smell, and degradation of the tree canopy. Some suggested consulting with birding groups to find solutions.

### **Need for better waste management strategies.**

Some participants said the Island needs better waste management and suggested more frequent clearing of overfilled waste bins, proper sorting of landfill waste and recycling, and creating a composting strategy. Other suggestions included educating visitors about zero-waste picnics.

### **Feedback about the implementation strategies for this lens included:**

- Add heritage aspects to the strategies and conduct a Cultural Heritage Landscape Study to identify other areas that should be protected.
- Define "stewardship" and the intent of the Stewardship + Sustainability implementation strategy since stewardship can refer to advocacy as well as hands-on protection work. Clarifying this can help set expectations and assign roles more effectively.
- Clarify whether the "Interpretive Natural Trail Strategy", is intended to be a natural trail strategy or an interpretative plan. The team should start with a natural trails strategy and then layer on the interpretative pieces.
- Create an inventory of stewardship programs (internal, external, TRCA, etc.) before applying for grants since there are many successful existing programs the City can utilize.
- Develop capital plans to improve fish habitats around the Island.
- Develop a coordinated Parks Operations and Landscape Management Plan – it is a good opportunity for the Division to assign resources and identifying the teams' responsibilities.
- Continue to coordinate with TRCA to integrate flood mitigation measures.





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## Improving Access and Connection

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**General support for making it more accessible to get to the Island.** Participants across engagement activities said that getting to the Island as well as getting across it needs to be accessible and safe for a diversity of users, and available year-round. There were also suggestions to create additional access points for the ferry (for example, at the foot of Spadina Ave.), and exploring the opportunity for a pedestrian and cyclist bridge connection from the mainland to the Island.

**Make wayfinding creative and engaging, while avoiding over-signing.** Participants said that wayfinding is a critical element of getting across the Island and suggested that the team explore opportunities to make it more engaging by leveraging technology. Some suggested digital and interactive signage which can be used year-round. Some also cautioned against installing too many signs or creating "sign-pollution" and suggested to carefully consider where signs are installed on the Island.

Some other suggestions about signage included keeping wayfinding signage and heritage information separate; ensuring washrooms appear on maps; and considering the need for signage in waterways for paddlers and ice-skaters.

**Make wandering across the Island interesting and activate the narrative trail.** Some participants supported creating new walking loops or paths and enhanced pathways across the Island, and suggested exploring opportunities to create a series of bridges, trails, and promenades along the edges of the Island, similar to the waterfront on the mainland.

Some participants also said that wandering across the Island could be made interesting and informational by activating the narrative trail with small events and activities showcasing diverse cultures. They also suggested creating groups like 'Friends of Toronto Island' to champion these effort (like the 'Friends of Pan Am Path').



**Make getting across the Island easier for everyone (including by tram and/or bike).** While some participants supported the tram service, there were also some who suggested transporting people across the Island by bike (i.e., rickshaw bikes or bike buses) instead of the tram. Some suggested adding bike rentals near ferry terminals and places to lock bikes and scooters near popular places (i.e. washrooms, concessions etc.) to make biking easier.

**Consider extending the peak season for ferry service, and plan for increased traffic.** Some participants suggested increasing the 'peak season' for ferry service, as recent trends have shown increased demand even while ferries are running on winter schedule. Some also suggested planning for increased visitor traffic when making improvements at the ferry landing.

**Support for a non-motorized watercraft area,** while being mindful of how motorized watercrafts will be redistributed with the plans for the Island's waterways. Some participants supported the creation of non-motorized zones, specifically space for kayaking and other smaller watercrafts. Some others also said that there is a need to consider how motorized watercrafts will be redistributed if non-motorized zones are established. They said the non-motorized zone in Long Pond will restrict access to and from the Toronto Island Marina and push commercial vessels to the pond by the lighthouse.

## Island District-specific feedback



The Master Plan also organizes its content and proposed area-specific improvements by the four geographic Districts on Toronto Island:

- Hanlan's Point
- Gibraltar Point
- Centre Island
- Ward's Island

Participants said the following about the Island Districts:

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## Feedback about Hanlan's Point

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### Concerns about the proposed event space.

Many participants said that an event space might make it unsafe for the queer community at Hanlan's, since not all visitors coming to the area may be aware of its clothing optional designation and the significance of Hanlan's for the queer community. It was suggested that this could lead to conflicts and potential homophobic attacks if event/concert goers are not aware that they are entering a clothing optional and significant queer space. Some said that the impact of events on Environmentally Significant Areas should be considered and managed. There were also some suggestions to limit events to Olympic Island.

**Recognize the cultural significance of Hanlan's to the 2SLGBTQ+ community.** Many participants said Hanlan's cultural and historic importance for the 2SLGBTQ+ community should be recognized, and efforts should be made to protect and celebrate it, including through commemorative signage and renaming. They also said the beach should be protected from further commercialization. Several participants said that the 2SLGBTQ+ community's inputs were not reflected in the plan; and efforts should be made to further engage with the larger Hanlan's Beach community and gather their inputs.

**Expand the clothing optional area and ensure safety and privacy without policing.** Some participants said they would like to see the clothing optional area expanded and suggested including nudist areas to the beach. They also focused on the need to increase safety on the beach and privacy for people in the clothing optional area, without increased police presence or additional by-laws. They said police presence and additional by-laws can make the space inaccessible and unwelcoming.

Other suggestions to ensure safety at the beach included extending buoys further from the shore to expand safe swim area; managing noise from boats parked near the beach; providing naloxone kits and implementing harm reduction strategies; and enforcing dogs to be on-leash.

**Concerns about Ecologically Sensitive Areas at Hanlan's and Gibraltar Point.** Some participants expressed concerns about human activity affecting Environmentally Significant Areas at Hanlan's and Gibraltar Point. Suggestions included signs indicating places suitable for campfires and making sure there is a management and compliance strategy for 'no-go' areas.

**Protect wildlife at Hanlan's Point.** Some participants said protective measures should be implemented to protect wildlife such as the Piping Plovers. There were also some suggestions to provide additional signage to inform users about the sensitive habitats, and measures in place to protect them. There were also some suggestions for a 'nature positive approach' to the Master Plan, which would establishing key indicators and targets for improving wildlife – this could include setting a goal and measuring the number of species on the Island.

**Consider providing year-round ferry service to Hanlan's Landing.** Some participants suggested that year-round ferry services should also serve Hanlan's Landing if there will be year-round activities happening across the Island.



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## Hanlan's Beach Community Engagement

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In response to concerns about the proposed event space near Hanlan's Point Beach, the project team hosted dedicated consultation catering to 2SLGBTQ+ communities (key users of the beach): including four engagement sessions (one in-person meeting and two virtual meetings) and an asynchronous virtual conversation using a tool called ThoughtExchange.

### Feedback from Synchronous Hanlan's Engagement Events

The feedback from the synchronous sessions was similar to feedback shared in the broader public engagement, with additional detail and nuance shared (see the appended Hanlan's Beach Community Engagement Summary Report for a detailed summary). Key messages from the Hanlan's Beach Community Engagement included:

- **Strong opposition to the proposed event space.** Many felt this space would lead to conflicts between beach goers and event attendees, putting 2SLGBTQ+ communities at risk.
- **Concern about Hanlan's Point Beach's condition** as a result of erosion and over-crowding. Several suggested expanding the clothing optional area to include the "new beach" at the south.
- **There is a need for cultural markers** identifying the beach as a queer historic site (to help create a feeling of safety). The current lack of cultural markers combined with an influx of new visitors unaware of the beach's history (as the result of the reduction of the clothing optional area) have led to conflicts.
- **Preserve and protect Hanlan's ecology,** giving special attention to dune quality, water quality, and garbage on the beach. Suggested strategies to address these issues included comprehensive educational and stewardship efforts with beach users, seasonal closures, revegetation, and waste management.
- **Apprehension towards police** and any strategies that might bring more police towards the beach (creating unsafe conditions for queer beach users).
- **Do not commercialize the park.** If exploring new business opportunities, the City should prioritize businesses that are independent and led by queer, Black, Indigenous, or people of colour.

## Feedback from Asynchronous ThoughtExchange

ThoughtExchange is a tool for hosting asynchronous conversations, whereby participants are asked to share thoughts related to a single open-ended question and are then prompted to rate the responses of other participants, creating a dialogue that leads to a deeper understanding of overall community priorities. In general, feedback through the ThoughtExchange was similar to that received through the synchronous sessions. The feedback was coded into 19 different themes as well as one category of miscellaneous thoughts. Note that thoughts were coded with as many as two themes.

The top five themes (in order of the **total number** of thoughts submitted) were:

1. Concerns about loss of queer space (827 thoughts)
2. Concerns about safety/queer safety (803 thoughts)
3. Concerns about the environment/keep it natural (438 thoughts)
4. Concerns about commercialization/corporatization (259 thoughts)
5. Concerns about crowds and crowding (174 thoughts)

The top five themes (according to the **average rating** of thoughts) were:

1. Concerns about commercialization/corporatization (4.7/5)
2. Concerns about loss of queer space (4.7/5)
3. Concerns about crowds and crowding (4.6/5)
4. Concerns about loss of privacy (4.6/5)
5. Concerns about safety/queer safety (4.6/5)

For a detailed summary of the ThoughtExchange, see the Hanlan's Beach Community Engagement Report or visit the online [ThoughtExchange Report](#).





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## Feedback about Gibraltar Point

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**The heritage Toronto Water buildings can be transformed into formalized art spaces,** and it could also function as museum or educational space.

**Prioritize preserving low traffic areas within the Environmentally Significant Areas in the Master Plan,** especially at the dunes by Gibraltar Point.



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## Feedback about Centre Island

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**Prioritize the Centre Island ferry landing for year-round service,** since this landing is equidistant to both ends of the Island and has existing facilities to support the year-round service, and an existing community to support the use.

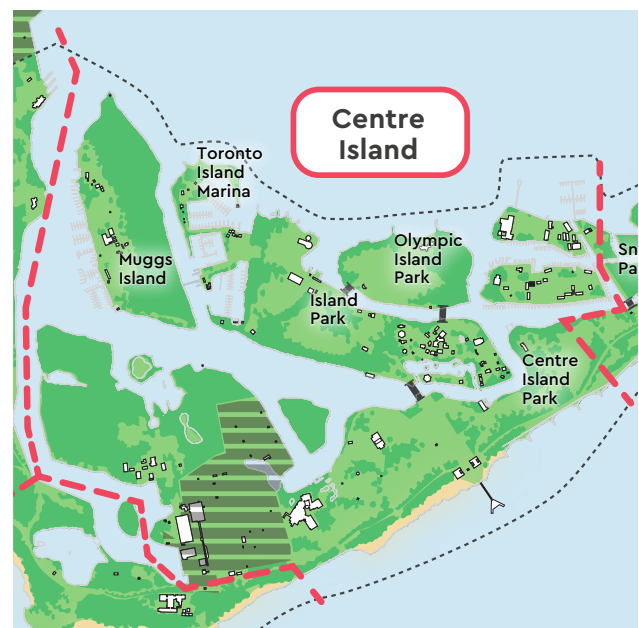
**Concerns about excessive paddling and its impact on wildlife.** Some participants expressed concern about excessive paddling, especially for corporate tours or parties. They said more people in the waterways may disturb wildlife, such as turtles at Snake Island. They said more education is needed to create a balance between natural use of Island by passive users and paddlers.

**Concerns about cormorants' impacts in Environmentally Significant Areas.** Some participants said that areas around the Long Pond Loop have been impacted by the cormorants and suggested that the City collaborate with local birding groups to find potential solutions.

**Support for camping opportunities, with some concerns about them conflicting with nature preservation on the Island.** Some participants supported camping opportunities on the Island, especially opportunities for children and youth. There were a few who suggested that the area beside the CHIN Radio Towers was a good space for camping. Some, however, were concerned that

this might bring intense human activity to the Island, which may conflict with the efforts to protect and restore nature.

**Engage with the marina and consider ways to clean up and improve access to the site.** A few suggested that cleaning up the marina could expand space on the Island for the public to access and enjoy.



## Feedback about Ward's Island

**Create walkways along the water for city views, which do not go through residential communities**, and ensure there is distinction between public and private areas. There were some concerns about visitors walking through the community and natural areas for city views and photography, and damaging residents' decks and community sandbags.

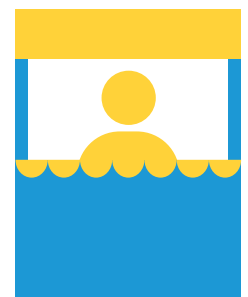
There were also suggestions to reconsider the proposed boardwalk through the Environmentally Significant Area on Algonquin Island because it might disturb the environment. There is another route along the shore that is more worn and generally used.

**Create amenities to support winter activities close to the Ward's Island dock.** Create amenities, like the waiting shed, to ensure that those who visit the Island for winter activities with equipment such as skis, snowshoes, and skates have a place to start their activities right away.

**Support for improving the cove and converting it into an attraction.** There is a lot of demand to go to the cove to get city views and walk along the water, but it is currently hazardous to go there.

**Support for new washrooms by Ward's Landing.** Some shared explicit support for the new washrooms by Ward's Landing and said more washrooms across the Island are welcomed.

**Further engage with Island residents and collaborate with others who have been volunteering to make the Ward's Island dock more welcoming.** Some suggested the City could reach out to residents and existing community organizations on the Island for future partnerships.



# Phase Three Outcomes

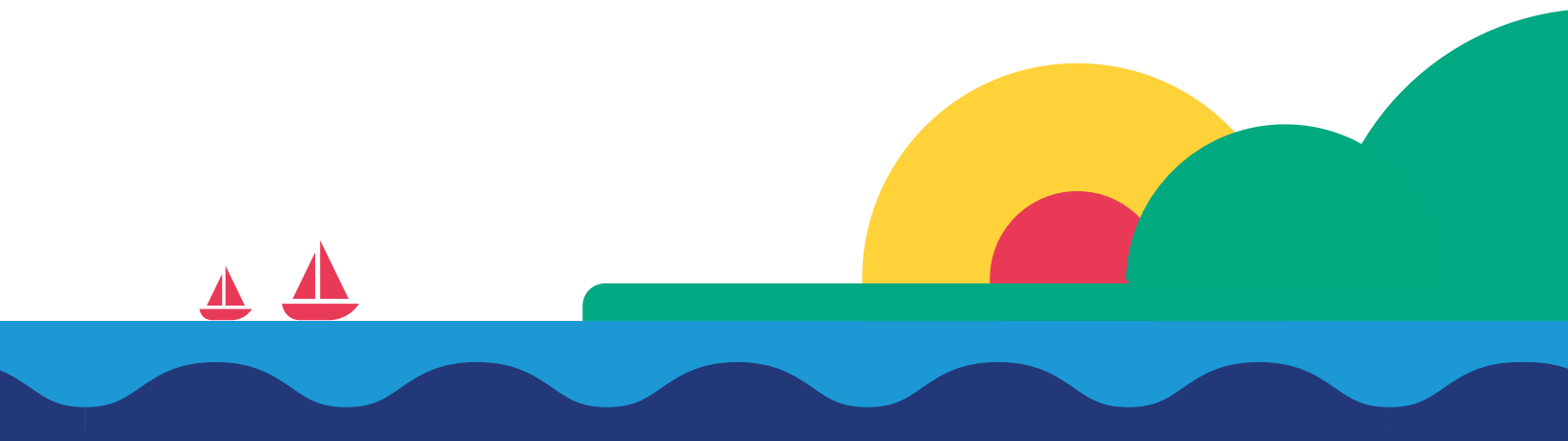
The concepts and proposals in the Draft Master Plan are a culmination of over two years of collecting feedback from thousands of Torontonians from all across the city, considering many users groups, points of view and alignments with City of Toronto's strategic initiatives, emerging priorities and available budgets.

During the Phase Three engagements, advisory group inputs helped the Master Plan team think strategically about how to implement the ideas proposed in previous engagement phases and reflect the key realities and context on the Island. Indigenous communities shared advice on the importance of placekeeping, collaboration, and reflecting Indigenous significance on the Island both through interpretation and management of Island spaces; and the general public shared suggestions, advice, and considerations to the project team as they move towards finalizing the Master Plan.

Another key outcome of Phase Three was the inclusion of a new lens called "Centring Queer Heritage, History and Community-Well Being." Master Plan directions related to queer space (including Hanlan's Point Beach) and queer safety will be organized under that lens.

The feedback received during Phase Three serves as one of several key inputs to refining the Draft Master Plan before it is reviewed by City staff and Parks, Forestry and Recreation. After City staff reviews the Revised Master Plan, the project team will finalize the Master Plan and City staff will prepare a Staff Report for City Council's consideration in 2023.

In the upcoming Celebration Phase, the team will present the Final Draft Master Plan in 2023 that will be considered by Council.



This report was prepared for the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation by Third Party Public (formerly called Swerhun Inc.), Nbisiing Consulting, and Co-Effect Creative.

## Toronto Island Park Master Plan Consultant Team:

### Engagement team

Third Party Public  
Nbisiing Consulting  
Co-Effect Creative  
HighTop Studio

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Trophic Design  
Steer  
Common Bond Collective  
North-South Environmental  
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### Business strategy team

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