

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Centennial Park Master Plan

Public Information Session Summary

January 2024



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Introduction

On January 10, 2024, a virtual public information session was held to provide the community with updates on the improvements coming to Centennial Park as part of the Centennial Park Master Plan. Approximately 100 community **members** attended the meeting.

This document provides an overview of the information session and the discussion that followed.

Visit toronto.ca/CentennialPark for more information about the project.

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Discuss priority projects from the Centennial Park Master Plan, including timeline and updates
- Answer questions from the community

Presentation

The project team presented an overview of the upcoming improvements that are being implemented as part of the Centennial Park Master Plan. This included the location, site plan and designs for:

- Skate trail, chalet and parking lot improvements
- Playground and water play improvements
- Sport hubs and recreational facilities
- Elmcrest Creek improvements
- Indigenous Placekeeping
- Improved trail network
- Natural areas and watercourses

The team also provided information on upcoming community engagement that will help guide the design and implementation of these projects.

What We Heard

Following the presentation, participants had the opportunity to ask questions of the project team. For the purpose of this report, a summary of this discussion has been organized into categories and themes.

Please note that the answers provided below are accurate at the time of this public meeting. Details and project information may change as the design of each project progresses.

Sports and Activities

Skate Trail and Ski Hill

- A participant asked about ski hill decommissioning. The project team clarified the City's decision to close the ski hill because of unreliable and warmer weather. The Master Plan proposes other winter activities for the area instead of the ski hill.
- A few participants asked whether the ski hill will have an area dedicated for tobogganing. The project team clarified that considerations for other recreational opportunities utilizing the hill features are in review stages and will be included in future consultations for public input. The existing lift equipment will be removed as part of the skate trail implementation. The hill north of the BMX track is the park's designated toboggan hill.
- A participant inquired about the up-to-date timeline for the skate trail. The team clarified that construction will begin Fall 2024 and the skate trail will be open to the public for the 2025 season.
- Participants asked whether the skating trail is cooled artificially. The project team confirmed that the refrigeration plant will provide the artificial cooling for the skating trail.
- Participants asked if there would be skating facilities on the pond. The project team clarified that the City of Toronto does not permit skating on open bodies of water since temperature changes, salt run-off and other factors can make the ice dangerous.
- A participant asked about the difference between the refrigeration system for the skate trail and the ski hill. The project team explained that skate trails and outdoor artificial ice rinks are designed to withstand temperatures up to 14-15 degrees Celsius. On hot days,

sunlight poses a greater challenge, therefore, crews typically create ice during nighttime hours for a quicker establishment process, which usually takes about a week. However, once established, the ice holds, even on hot days. While extreme heat may make it slushy, a quick recovery is expected overnight, especially if the following days are overcast. This contrasts with ski operations that can lose snow quickly, and it takes a longer time to re-establish due to the ground's lack of temperature retention, making the ice rinks more adaptable.

- Participants asked the safety precautions and upkeep for the skate trail. The project team clarified that the skate trail will be maintained and operational, from roughly November to March, weather permitting. Snow will be cleared, and ice will be maintained by Park staff from the chalet, as it is currently maintained for all City artificial ice rinks.
- A few participants asked whether there will be benches with back support, both inside and outside of the skate trail. The project team clarified that a combination of benches with and without backs will be provided so as to provide comfort for a range of park visitors.

Batting Cages, Baseball Hub and Soccer

- Participants were curious if the batting cages at the Park might be reinstalled at any point and if there would be public access to them? In February 2024, City Council adopted a [motion](#) which requested City staff, in consultation with the local community and appropriate Divisions, and in alignment with the Centennial Park Master Plan, to consider as part of the phased implementation of the proposed Baseball Hub, the potential for complimentary and supporting amenities that ensure a successful user experience in both the short and long-term and for staff to explore the potential for inclusion of batting cages with a viable operating model.
- Some participants asked for a possibility to have a soccer bubble. The project team clarified that the City is investigating costing and logistics at various locations within the park to see if this would be feasible.
- A participant asked what was being done to maintain the current soccer fields to ensure user safety. The team explained that the turf installed on the current soccer fields experiences dry conditions during the hot summer months that damages the turf. Part of the Soccer Hub improvements will include installing a comprehensive irrigation system aimed to mitigate this turf damage during hot weather, along side continued maintenance of our sports turf field crew operations.

- A participant asked for the updated timeline of the pickleball court completion. The project team clarified that the pickleball courts are expected to be completed for summer 2024.
- A participants asked whether beach volleyball area be installed in the Park. The project team responded that eight public beach volleyball courts will be delivered as part of the first phase of construction. They are expected to be complete by July 2024.
- A participant asked how the City prioritizes which sports get considered for doming and which don't. The team explained that the 2019 [Facilities Master Plan](#) identifies the need for bubbled sport fields across Toronto, but does not identify soccer as a priority for bubbled fields. When the City moves forward with installing a sports bubble at a location with the park, it prioritizes multi-use bubbles that can be used for a range of sports and activities.
- A participant questioned the reason to building another soccer facility when there is an existing indoor soccer facility nearby. The project staff clarified that the sport bubble that is part of Centennial Master Plan will be a multi-use sports field. This will allow for various activities and sports to take place in the bubble.

Other Recreation

- A participant asked if go-track track would be reintroduced. The project staff confirmed that go-karting will not be re-installed since pay-for-play recreation was not identified as a priority during the Centennial Park Master Plan consultation process.
- A participant conveyed the importance of having a swimming pool as a form of exercise for children and adults in the summer, and the whether Centennial Park would consider installing a pool. The project team confirmed that there are no new indoor or outdoor pools being introduced in Centennial Park. Please check toronto.ca/swim for the closest swim facility.
- Participant inquired whether there would be a paddle boat rental in the pond. The staff confirmed that there is no plan to introduce paddle boats to the park as they cause damage to wetland habitats.
- A few participants inquired as to why the existing facilities are being rearranged. The project team explained that the the creation of the sport specific hubs, will maximize the space available within the park and help prevent conflicts between other sports sharing the same space. Additionally, hubs will help to minimize potential injuries from wayward balls.

Booking Systems and Permits

- A few participants raised concerns on the permit system not being a fair method to utilize amenities as not everyone belongs to an organized sport. The project team clarified that the City of Toronto offers many drop-in activities and programs that do not require a permit or registration. City staff are exploring the potential for inclusion of batting cages with a viable operating model within the Baseball Hub.
- A participant asked whether the project team would consider income equity for the usage of sporting facilities, since not all have the financial ability to pay organized sport but would still like to take part in the events. The project team clarified that the City of Toronto offers many drop-in activities and programs that do not require permit or registration. Residents can find the programs and activities close to home or work and refine the search by programs, week, age and other options.
- A few participants inquired whether bookings can be made through the permit process as well as open registration. The project staff shared that the current plan for the new courts is to adopt a first-come, first-serve model similar to the existing tennis courts. However, due to a significant interest from stakeholders, there are ongoing discussions about potentially permitting some courts while keeping others open for casual use. The initial approach involves allowing participants to use the courts for 30 minutes, with the next person in line taking their turn, but the strategy is subject to further discussion.
- Participants asked whether there is a permit tracking system for the courts. The project team clarified that there will be a total of eight volleyball courts, with only four of them subject to permitting. The remaining courts will operate on a first-come, first-serve basis. In the case of occasional weekend tournaments, the park webpage has the capability to provide updates and alerts. Although there isn't a specific tracking system for soccer, the larger space allows for more sports fields in the park, maximizing flexibility and potential for future sports such as cricket, which will be introduced in a later phase.

Noise Control

- Few participants raised concerns on the noise levels in the park during the summer in the picnic areas and around the homes near the perimeter of the park. Participants were curious what the noise buffers along Rathburn Rd. would look like. The project team confirmed that berm, including planting, will be added to help buffer sound. The team also confirmed that there will no longer be a permitted picnic area on the upper plateau. Picnic tables are provided at the north end of the playground further from the street. Residents are encouraged to notify 311 if they have a noise concern.

Trees, Plantings and other Nature Elements

Trees and Plantings

- Participants asked whether there would be a wetland or butterfly area. As part of the creek rehabilitation work that is occurring, new wetlands will be established and all projects are incorporating pollinator meadows. Participants were also concerned whether trees were cut down to install the skate trail. The team assured the participants that no trees have been cut to accommodate the new skate trail. The new skate trail will be placed in the open area at the base of the hill outside the chalet. The design intent is to maintain the existing trees.
- A few participants expressed concern regarding tree removal in the ravine. The project team confirmed that invasive species of trees, including Buckthorn, Manitoba Maple, and Crack Willow, were removed to complete naturalization of the creek. This removal will be followed by extensive planting of native trees and vegetation. While it will take a few years to get the trees to maturity, there will be immediate benefits for storm water management, enhanced water quality and habitat for pollinators, fish, feathered and furry friends.

Pond and Creek Maintenance

- Participants were concerned regarding the stale water in the ponds. The project team clarified that the City is working with TRCA to improve the water quality of the creek and ponds by naturalizing the creek and addition of wetlands throughout the park.
- A participant asked whether there is a maintenance plan in place for the sand pit. The project team confirmed that, yes, the park amenity itself will have a drainage system incorporated into the design.
- A participant expressed concerns regarding the creek area transforming into a wetland and whether there is enough water for the process to take place. The project team confirmed that the collection of water within the park will be focused towards the wetlands.
- A participant asked whether fishing would be permitted in the pond. The project team confirmed that fishing at the pond is permitted as per Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry. Consideration for lookouts is being considered as part of the pond improvements.

Wildlife

- Participants expressed concern regarding the protection of existing wildlife and any migratory patterns that might be disturbed by the Master Plan. The City confirmed that wildlife habitat opportunities within the park will be greatly increasing thanks to the work to improve the creek, the introductions of wetlands, and the increased amount of forested areas that are part of the Master Plan implementation.
- A participant asked whether the existing turtles would be impacted during this process. The project staff confirmed that the TRCA ecologists are involved to reduce the impact on wildlife by assisting with the relocation of current wildlife and the reintroduction of native species.

Parking and Walkways

- Participants suggested that some parking spots be reserved for seniors, aside from the parking spots allocated for families or accessibility. The project team clarified that additional signage will be incorporated into the parking lot designs to allocate space for accessibility, seniors and for expecting families or families with young children.
- A participant suggested that the Master Plan should prepare for a surge of visitors in the summer by including additional parking lots/spaces nearby. City staff confirmed that through the reconfiguration and consolidation of the smaller parking lots and further improvements to the park's larger parking lots, additional spots would be created to accommodate the increased demand and improve accessibility.
- A participant questioned the possibility of underground parking. The project team confirmed that park is well serviced with onsite parking.
- A participant asked the precise number of spots proposed in the Master Plan and whether the additional parking will remain free. The project team clarified that the precise number of parking slots in the entire park is currently unspecified and parking will remain free. However, the goal is not to reduce any existing parking spaces.
- Participants asked whether they should anticipate user fees for parking or for entering the Conservatory. The project team confirmed that the City of Toronto does not charge an entrance fee to its Parks and Recreation facilities.
- A participant suggested that the area along the road by Elmcrest needs a sidewalk to improve safety for pedestrians. The project team clarified that new accessible sidewalks and multi-use trails are being included in all new designs including along Elmcrest Ave.

Engagement Process

Stakeholder Advisory Group

- Participants inquired on the process to nominate representative from a user group for the Stakeholder Advisory Group. The project team confirmed the details related to the Stakeholder Advisory Group and applications will be added to the project web page. For project notifications and updates, participants were asked to sign up for email updates under the Get Involved tab.
- A participant inquired whether there is a general citizen advisory group. The project team explained that residents will be engaged through surveys and public engagement/information sessions on the specific phases/projects. The Master Plan informs the overall planning pieces and its development included input from Community Advisory Committee.

Youth Engagement

- Participants were curious whether children are involved in the planning process of the Master Plan. The project team confirmed that yes, during the playground consultation the project team engaged with several camp groups (ages 6 –15 years old). The objective was to envision an optimal playground by recording children's input through sketching engagement activities. Playground design options were also presented to two classrooms in local schools. Additionally, outreach efforts were extended to schools via email to encourage participation in online surveys.

Budget and Timelines

- A participant asked the total cost to tax payers to implement the Master Plan. The City staff responded that some of the priority projects that are currently advancing or will be advancing in the near future have Council approved funding through the Parks, Forestry and Recreation's 10-Year Capital Budget and Plan. Each project budget will be developed around the project scope and staff will investigate funding sources.
- A participant questioned whether the private funding, discussed in the previous consultations, has been approved. The project team clarified that the City is open to exploring partnership opportunities for building and maintaining our recreational assets when there is demonstrated benefit to the residents of Toronto.

- A participant asked for the timeline of the sports bubble feasibility study to be reported out. The project team clarified that the planning process for the facility has involved careful consideration to balance functionality without significantly increasing costs. The current expectation is that this phase, involving both design and cost estimation, will take approximately four to five months. The approach involves a high-level design for both aspects, followed by a thorough cost estimate. In addition, stakeholders will be engaged to review and determine the most effective course of action for moving the project forward.

Park Elements and Design

Off-leash Area

- A participant expressed concern regarding dogs off-leash and whether there would be signage to have dogs on a leash in the park. The project staff confirmed that notices will be included in the new wayfinding system. Reminders of applicable by-laws such as dogs must remain on leashes while in the park will be integrated into the design.
- A participant inquired whether there would be an off-leash dog park implemented into the plan. The project team clarified that at the moment, there isn't a dog off-leash area planned as it was not explored as part of the Master Plan. City Council recently directed staff to undertake a citywide review of dog off-leash areas. City staff will be reporting back to Council in 2024 to recommend an approach to determine the need for an off-leash area in a given area, as well as set standards and budgets associated with deploying it.

Food and Entertainment

- Participants asked whether retail opportunities will be provided to buy food, coffee or snacks. The project team clarified that there is presently no plan to include such opportunities. However, this could be explored in the future if there is significant interest from the community.
- A participant expressed concern regarding the impact on community events like Ribfest and Jerkfest due to the planned construction. The project staff confirmed that project timelines have been adjusted to accommodate the two primary community events that are scheduled near the construction area in 2024. However, due to the concurrent work on the chalet and the new skate trail some disruptions are anticipated in 2025. Talks have been initiated to facilitate the relocation of these events to alternative areas within the park for 2025.

Materials and Construction

- To improve safety and minimize damage, a participant suggested that any revitalization work include basic physical protection, such as stone barriers or additional vegetation, on all recreational fields and green spaces to keep motorized vehicles off these surface. The project team confirmed that clear wayfinding and vehicle control measures will be considered in the design.
- A participant expressed concerns regarding the quality of asphalt used and the resulting uneven surfaces in West Dean Park. The project team assured that they are meeting the transportation standard for trails and path quality at Centennial Park.

Washrooms

- A few participants asked whether the new washrooms will be open year-round. The project team assured that the new washrooms will be operational year-round, gender neutral washrooms and will be AODA compliant.

Accessibility

- A participant asked the number of accessible parking spots available in the Plan and whether there will be improved pathways and connections to the Park. The project team clarified that the exact number of accessible slots is not yet determined but will be based on Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines. With new wayfinding and new lit accessible pathways the intent is to enable the use of public transit and cycling as alternates to vehicles. Park benches along pathways will remain year-round.
- Participants were curious whether the play area/play hills are wheelchair accessible. The project team confirmed that the proposed playground includes inclusive play elements with accessible surfacing. All playground areas are interconnected by accessible walkways, extending from the plaza to the hill play area. Additionally, the project aims to incorporate accessible seating and picnic tables for enhanced inclusivity.

Contact Us

For questions or comments related to projects associated with the Centennial Park Master Plan, please contact:

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