

# Centennial Park SAG Meeting #1 Summary Report

Centennial Park Stakeholder Advisory Group

June 17, 2024



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## Introduction

The Centennial Park Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) is a panel of project stakeholders who have been selected through an application process to provide advice to the City of Toronto on implementing the Centennial Park Master Plan. SAG members were selected based on their knowledge and experience, and represent diverse park user experiences, including sporting organizations, hobby groups, and local schools.

## Meeting Details

The first meeting was held on May 15th in Centennial Park at the Etobicoke Olympium. The purpose of this meeting was to review the Terms of Reference, provide background information and context to SAG members about the Centennial Park Master Plan, and share project updates about ongoing implementation initiatives. Participants were also provided with an activity sheet to capture additional thoughts and questions. Meeting takeaways are summarized below and worksheet contributions can be found in the Appendix.

**Date:** May 15th, 2024

**Time:** 6:00pm - 8:00pm

**Location:** Centennial Park, Etobicoke Olympium, “The Lounge”

### **SAG Members Attendance:**

- Taras Antoniwi, Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Toronto Branch
- Angela Loconte, Friends Of Centennial Park Conservatory.
- Kim Doherty, Balsa Beavers Model Flying Club
- Dave Simpson, Etobicoke & District Cricket League
- Douglas James, Etobicoke Cricket Association
- John Rudd, West End Curling Committee
- Grant Panasiuk, Toronto Cruisers
- Anthony Plummer, Caribbean Promotions Arts & Culture Inc. (JerkFest)
- Brenda Yatabe, Etobicoke Pickleball Association
- Nancy Lyons, Seneca School
- Joe Vaccaro, Toronto High Park FC
- Roman Harapyn, Islington Rangers Soccer League
- Trish Harrow, Centennial Slo-Pitch League
- Kim Stemshorn, Learn Softball Toronto & the Toronto Downtown Fastpitch League
- Stephen Sherwin, Toronto West Athletics
- Marco Polsoni, Go West Athletics

### **City Staff Attendance:**

- Mark Goulart, Senior Project Manager, PF&R
- Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator, PF&R
- Helen Luu, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator, PF&R
- Kevin Carr, Manager Client Services, PF&R
- Rocco Leoncini, General Supervisor Parks Operations, PF&R

### **Consultant Attendance:**

- Casey Hinton, Senior Strategist, SAFFY (Meeting Facilitator)
- Cherie Ng, Principal-in-Charge, Architect

## **Meeting Summary**

SAG members were generally happy to be involved and shared their optimism about their contribution to the implementation of the Centennial Park Master Plan. Below is a summary of the key takeaways from the meeting.

### **Festival and Event Facilities**

SAG members who host large festivals and events expressed frustration around the lack of access to indoor space. These frustrations are further exacerbated by barriers to installing large tents, as many require permits to ensure safe installation. Storage was also raised as a challenge, with requests for increased on-site storage that is accessible to permit holders for event and sporting equipment.

### **Soccer Fields/Bubble**

SAG members from the soccer community expressed concern over the existing condition and management/use of the grass field, suggesting that with the existing lack of fencing, enforcement and management, the quality of the field would be comprised by overuse by various park users. They also shared recommendations around new innovative technology for doming soccer fields and a desire for world-class parks and features.

### **Indoor Access & Year-Round Spaces**

SAG members representing running/track and field groups, cricket groups and hobby groups expressed an interest in greater access to indoor and year-round spaces for a greater diversity of park users, and activities including training and practice. Some shared that there is a lack of indoor facilities in Etobicoke in general, placing a strain on Centennial Park, while others expressed a concern that summer activities are generally prioritized over winter activities.

## **Permits & Bylaws**

Many members shared a frustration with the existing permitting system. Some pointed to the lack of bylaw enforcement as a problem. They expressed a desire to see increased City staff or security staff in the park to manage access to permitted spaces, pointing to skating rinks, which have rink guards and operators, as an example. Some stated a desire for increased permitting fees if better facilities, security and management could be provided. Some members expressed concerns that other groups are excluded when permit holders are prioritized in space usage. The project team raised the importance of balancing permitted spaces with public access, the limitations that permit fees can impose for some groups, and the desire to protect equitable access to public spaces.

## **Transitional Planning**

Many SAG members expressed the need for greater clarity about disruptions, closures, and alternative spaces and programs during construction throughout the implementation., SAG members shared specific questions regarding access to the chalet, closure of one baseball diamond, and alternative beach volleyball courts.

## **Accessibility, Safety & Inclusion**

SAG members expressed a desire for safe and accessible park spaces, including lighting along main trails to enhance safety and the installation of safety buttons that could connect users with a security office. One user shared the importance of accessible pathways and greater access throughout the park for youth with wheelchairs and physical disabilities.

## **Additional Comments**

- Current cricket field has no running water
- There is an anticipated demand for more pickleball courts and suggestions to introduce additional courts elsewhere in the park, and enhance pickleball offerings with acrylic court surfaces and plenty of shade
- There is an unmet demand for curling, acknowledged by the City, and a desire by members of the curling club/community to see curling included in Centennial Park
- The need for additional and enhanced washroom facilities
- The need for more seating and bleachers
- Concerns about inadequate parking
- A desire to preserve the BMX park
- Appreciation for the naturalization efforts
- Suggestions of enhanced technology
- A desire to support and enhance the greenhouse and introduce relevant programming

## **Next Steps**

Future SAG meetings will include further information and clarity on the following topics to address the comments and concerns shared in this meeting:

- Ongoing clarity around timelines, closures and possible alternatives to support long-term planning
- Information about permitting allocation and through and post-construction plans, City staff required to attend future SAG meetings to answer questions and hear concerns
- Continued discussion about recreational facilities and other ongoing projects
- Clarity on where input and feedback can influence a project and where it can't

# Appendix

## Worksheets

Meeting participants were provided with a worksheet to capture additional information. Below is an example of the worksheet and the member's contributions on the worksheets.

Centennial Park SAG Meeting #1  
**Worksheet**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

**1**

**Terms of Reference**

I have read and understood the Centennial Park SAG Terms of Reference.  Yes  No

I agree to the Centennial Park SAG Terms of Reference.  Yes  No

Do you additional guidelines and/or accommodations I would like to see included before you agree to the Terms of Reference? If yes, please elaborate below.

**2**

**Project Priorities**

Of the upcoming park improvements, which interests you the most? Please prioritize the projects using numbers 1-7, with #1 being your top interest and priority, and #7 being your lowest priority or interest.

- \_\_\_ SkateTrail, Chalet and Parking Lot Improvements
- \_\_\_ Playground and Water Play Improvements
- \_\_\_ Sport Hubs and Recreational Facilities
- \_\_\_ Elmcrest Creek Improvements & Natural Areas
- \_\_\_ Indigenous Placekeeping
- \_\_\_ Improved Trail Network

Beyond the projects listed here, what improvements would you most like to see in Centennial Park?

**3**

**Roses, Buds and Thorns**

We know you represent a specific organization and want to be sure we understand your organizations needs so that we might further uncover opportunities to improve Centennial Park for everyone.

**ROSES**  
What is working well for you and your organization that you would like to see protected, included or preserved as the park evolves? What changes are you most excited about?

**BUDS**  
What ideas or opportunities would you like to see included in Centennial Park?

**THORNS**  
What challenges does your organization face in Centennial Park?

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### Worksheet Section 1 - Terms of Reference

The first section of the worksheet invited participants to indicate that they had read, understood and agreed to the Centennial Park SAG Terms of Reference (TOR). TOR were shared in advance of the meeting and reviewed as a part of the presentation. All participants indicated that they had read, understood and agreed to the TOR.

## Worksheet Section 2 - Project Priorities

The second section of the worksheet listed upcoming park improvements and asked SAG members to prioritize projects that interest them the most. The following prioritized list is a summary of all responses:

1. Sport Hubs and Recreational Facilities
2. Improved Trail Network
3. Skate Trail, Chalet and Parking Lot Improvements
4. Playground and Water Play Improvements
5. Elmcrest Creek Improvements & Natural Areas
6. Indigenous Placekeeping

Participants were also invited to share what improvements they would most like to see in Centennial Park. They shared the following:

- Ensure that areas in the park are accessible to people with disabilities  
Programming attached to the Centennial Greenhouse
- Provide curling with appropriate facilities, specifically using the park's soccer site as a base for a curling facility. Parks, Forestry and Recreation has published a report stating there is an unmet demand for curling.
- Provide a covered running track for winter use
- Provide reserved space for large-scale events
- Install power sources for audio, lighting, and LED screens for events
- Keep the BMX park
- Keep areas naturalized
- Update wifi and technology, including management technology
- Safety and security for use of the park at night, including supervising from the office and a call-through speaker for help/directions/support

## Worksheet Section 3 - Roses, Buds and Thorns

Section 3 provided an opportunity for SAG members to share answers to the following;

- **ROSES** — What is working well for you and your organization that you would like to see protected, included or preserved as the park evolves? What changes are you most excited about?
- **BUDS** — What ideas or opportunities would you like to see included in Centennial Park?
- **THORNS** — What challenges does your organization face in Centennial Park?

Below is the amalgamated contents provided across all worksheets.



## **Roses**

- Lighted cricket fields! Wow, I never thought this would ever happen in my lifetime.
- Having access to Centennial Stadium
- Soccer field turn has been a fantastic experience
- Greenhouses, areas to walk and have outdoor learning
- Partnership with Centennial Greenhouse
- Opportunities to make new softball and baseball spaces and making them more accessible
- Focus on natural spaces
- Happy to see the pickleball courts in the plan
- The site for the Balsa Beavers has been very good due to less turbulent air, removal of shrubs and trees that were not there at the start
- Access to the cricket fields
- Grass areas for cross-country running in, including the use of hills and berms
- BMX park, naturalized areas, trail network, lit street through the park

## **Buds**

- Off-season and year-round cricket training facilities, such as indoor practice facilities
- Permanent indoor sports/soccer facility
- Education
- A meeting place for community
- Focus on Indigenous knowledge
- Batting cages open to non-permit groups
- Consultation with the softball community
- A new focus on meeting the demand for curling
- Would like to see a second location for pickleball courts with a smaller footprint in the park
- There is an opportunity to make pickleball courts “best in class” as per the cricket patches, diamond, soccer, etc., which all sound great.
- Consideration to acrylic pickleball court surfaces, shading down the corridor would enhance the project
- More domes in the winter to provide spaces for hobby groups like the Balsa Beavers
- Washrooms and change rooms
- Covered/bubble running track for winter use
- More greening
- Opportunities for events of various sizes
- Dog park
- Active workout areas

## **Thorns**

- Poor toilet facilities
- Lack of bleachers, seating, and facilities
- Inadequate parking
- Not enough indoor facilities in the Etobicoke area
- Not all areas are accessible for students in wheelchairs or with physical disabilities
- The greenhouse does not have space for educational programs or meeting space
- Permit holders exclude groups
- Access: while privately run “Diamond Beach” is not what we’re going with, it was accessible even at a cost
- Demand for curling has been overlooked
- Summer sports/activities are prioritized over winter activities
- We anticipate demand for pickleball courts to be very strong, and there will be a need to discuss balancing permits with public access
- Protective fencing at the site of the Balsa Beavers is an issue
- Lack of running water at cricket fields
- Limited track space
- Reduction in open running areas as more sports facilities are built
- Planned loss of BMX park
- Enforcement of permits