

Centennial Park SAG Meeting #2 Summary Report

Centennial Park Stakeholder Advisory Group

July 15, 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 second meeting was held on June 19th, virtually. The meeting commenced with introductions, where participants re-familiarize themselves with each other. Following introductions, the agenda covered several important topics: park development projects, accessibility improvements, updates on sports hub construction, and discussions on sports dome design. Additionally, there was an emphasis on strategies to enhance existing amenities to better serve the community's needs. The session provided opportunity for participants to ask questions, share comments, and express their concerns regarding the agenda items.

Date: June 19, 2024

Time: 6:00 - 8:00pm

Location: Virtual

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
- Greg King on behalf of 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 Liu, 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 compromised 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 other sports 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