

Earl Bales Skatepark Phase 3 Summary Report

Earl Bales Skatepark – Phase 3 (Setting the Direction)

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry and Recreation

August 2024

Rachel Weston, Senior Project Coordinator

Ariel Stagni, Construction Coordinator

Rosemary McManus, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator

José Ramón Martí, Public Consultation Coordinator

Annie Ding, Public Outreach Trainee





Photo by pixelperfektion

Contents

Earl Bales Skatepark Phase 3 Summary Report.....	0
Introduction	3
Project Background	3
How We Reached People	4
Digital Media	4
Preferred Design	4
Skatepark Champions Meeting	5
Who Participated	6
Key Feedback.....	7
Pop-Up Events	8
Who Participated	8
Key Feedback.....	8
Next Steps.....	10
Appendix A: Preferred Design.....	11
Appendix B: Pop-Up Boards	14
Project Board	14
Preferred Design Boards	15
Engagement Board.....	18
Appendix C: Pop-Up Feedback.....	19
Earl Bales Community Centre Pop-Up Event	19
Stanley Greene Skatepark Pop-Up Event	20

Introduction

In Phase 3 of the Earl Bales Skatepark community engagement process, the City of Toronto shared the preferred skatepark design with the community and Skatepark Champions. This document provides a summary of the feedback and insights collected from the engagement activities during this phase of community engagement, which included:

- A virtual meeting with the Skatepark Champions
- In-person pop-up events

Project Background

Earl Bales Park is located at 4169 Bathurst Street, south of Sheppard Avenue. It is a large 51-hectare destination park in Ward 6 – York Centre with a community centre, extensive park grounds and many recreational amenities.

As part of Toronto’s 20-year Facilities Master Plan and informed by the Skateboard Strategy, City staff reviewed existing skate facilities across the city to identify areas where new or improved facilities are needed to improve access to the activity city-wide.

Through this process, York Centre was identified as an area that lacked skateboarding facilities. Based on several criteria, Earl Bales Park has been selected as the best location to create a new skatepark for the local community. These criteria include:

- Geographic location
- Site characteristics including adequate space, suitable topography, etc.
- Available supporting amenities including washrooms, parking lots and transit access
- Demographics of the area, including children and youth population size
- Safety considerations (i.e., clear sightlines and proximity to other amenities that will encourage “eyes on the skatepark”)

The skatepark design is being developed in consultation with the community. Budget, site limitations and operational requirements are also being considered throughout the design process.

How We Reached People

The community was informed of the pop-up events through targeted communications and digital media. Participants in the Skatepark Champions meeting were informed of the meeting by email.

Digital Media

Project webpage

The webpage (toronto.ca/EarlBalesSkatepark) provided up-to-date information about the project, details about the engagement activities and a sign-up button for community members to subscribe to the project mailing list and receive email updates.

Targeted stakeholder emails

An email update was sent to a list of stakeholders notifying them of the pop-up events, including relevant dates, times, locations, links and other details so that this could be promoted with skatepark user groups more broadly. The stakeholders included but were not limited to: local skate shops, skate clubs and the Toronto Skateboarding Committee.

Mailing list

An email update was sent to the project mailing list notifying subscribers of the in-person pop-up events, including relevant dates, times, locations, links and other details.

Preferred Design

The preferred design for the new skatepark was shared in Community Engagement Phase 3 of the community engagement process. This preferred design was informed by input gathered during Community Engagement Phase 2, during which three design options were presented to the public for feedback in a Skatepark Champions virtual meeting, a virtual public meeting and an online survey.

The results of the Phase 2 online survey showed two of the design options (Design Options B and C) tied as the overall preferred option. However, when asked whether each design option met the project's guiding principles:

- Good flow
- Opportunities to progress from easier to more difficult terrain
- Areas for different skill levels
- Features for different skill levels; particularly those that support beginners such as smaller features, open flat space, ledges or curbs

A higher number of participants responded that Design Option C met these principles. As a result, Design Option C was selected as the preferred design.

The preferred design is approximately 12,000 square feet (1,100 square metres) in size. It has two lanes arranged in a V-shaped layout with two types of skate terrains and a variety of features to accommodate a range of skill levels.

In response to Phase 2 feedback on Design Option C, design consultants from New Line Skateparks Inc. made the following changes to the design between Community Engagement Phase 2 and Phase 3:

- Increasing the length of the technical street lane to create more space between features
- Increasing the width of the flowing street lane to add more space between features
- Adding a 1.5-foot-high bank ramp and a 1.5-foot-high transition ramp, and a 6-inch high slappy curb
- Moving the 14-inch flat rail and the 14-inch flat ledge away from the playground to allow for a wider area for beginner skaters in the technical street lane
- Switching the positions of the 1.5-foot table top and the 2-foot A-frame ramp to add a rooftop ledge feature

Images of the preferred design can be found in **Appendix A**.

Skatepark Champions Meeting

As part of the community engagement program for the creation of this skatepark, the project team formed a group of Skatepark Champions to ensure the final design of the park meets the needs of its future users. The Skatepark Champions are meant to

advise the designers at every phase of the project and help engage the broader community in the process.

The Earl Bales Skatepark Champions consists of 13 members from the local community and across the city. The demographics of this group of 13 Champions are described below:

- Three Champions were under the age of 18 when they applied; three were over 35.
- Five Champions self-identified as women, seven Champions self-identified as men, and one Champion self-identified as gender non-binary, gender fluid, gender queer and/or androgynous. One of the five Champions who self-identified as a woman also self-identified as a Trans Woman.
- Three Champions self-identified as members of the LGBTQ2S+ community.
- Three Champions self-identified as members of the BIPOC community.
- One Champion self-identified as a person with a disability.
- Three Champions considered themselves beginner-level skaters; nine considered themselves intermediate; one considered themselves advanced.

The project team convened a virtual meeting of the Skatepark Champions from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on April 24, 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to collect suggestions from the Skatepark Champions for improvements to the preferred design before sharing it with the broader community for their feedback.

The meeting opened with brief introductions from members of the project team and the Skatepark Champions in attendance. The project team briefly reviewed the project background, timeline and engagement plan, presented feedback on the three design options from Community Engagement Phase 2 and shared the selection of Design Option C as the preferred design. The design consultants then described new features of the preferred design, including several changes that were made in response to input gathered throughout Phase 2, and presented renderings and concept plans of the preferred design. Upon conclusion of the presentation, Skatepark Champions shared their thoughts on the preferred design.

Who Participated

Of the 13 Skatepark Champions, 4 were in attendance.

The following City staff were in attendance:

- Rachel Weston, Senior Project Coordinator

- Ariel Stagni, Construction Coordinator
- Rosemary McManus, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator

Two design consultants from New Line Skateparks Inc. were also in attendance.

Key Feedback

The Skatepark Champions responded positively and enthusiastically to the preferred design. Their discussion of what they liked and what they thought could be improved about the preferred design is summarized below.

Layout/flow:

- A Skatepark Champion appreciated how much space there is in the preferred design.

Balance for skill levels:

- A Skatepark Champion noted that as a beginner, the space and benches provided in the preferred design help to orient movement around the skatepark.
- While discussing the height of the 1.5-foot transition turn-around, a Skatepark Champion cautioned that the feature may appear more beginner-friendly than it is because of its short height.

Skatepark terrain and features:

- A Skatepark Champion felt that the area of the flowing street lane with the hubba/out ledge would benefit from a larger transition, adding that some skaters may like to drop into the five stair set. The Champion inquired about the possibility of adding an elevated platform on the far side of the flowing street lane or increasing the height of the 1.5-foot transition turn-around.
- A Skatepark Champion recommended adding a vertical extension at the 3-foot bank turn-around and a jump on the 1.5-foot bank turn-around for a variation of levels.
- Skatepark Champions also recommended a vertical extension at the 3-foot transition turn-around.

Pop-Up Events

On May 15, 2024, the project team hosted pop-up events at the Earl Bales Community Centre in Earl Bales Park from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and at Stanley Greene Skatepark from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The purpose of the engagement activities was to present the preferred design for the new skatepark and to solicit public feedback. The project team was also available to answer questions.

At the pop-up events, the project team displayed information about the project and diagrams of the preferred design on large boards. An additional board was set up for community members to indicate their overall satisfaction with the preferred design using stickers and to provide further comments on sticky notes. Images of the pop-up boards can be found in **Appendix B**.

Who Participated

Approximately 116 people of various ages and backgrounds attended the pop-up events.

The following City staff were in attendance:

- Rachel Weston, Senior Project Coordinator
- Ariel Stagni, Construction Coordinator
- Rosemary McManus, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator

Two design consultants from New Line Skateparks Inc. were also in attendance.

Key Feedback

The feedback gathered during the two pop-up events is summarized below. A complete record of the stickers and sticky notes left by community members can be found in **Appendix C**.

Overall Satisfaction

Community members signalled their overall satisfaction with the preferred design on a scale from “Very Satisfied” to “Very Dissatisfied” by putting a sticker in one of five boxes. Most community members demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the preferred design. Of the 27 total stickers placed, “Very Satisfied” received 21 votes

(77%), "Satisfied" received 5 votes (19%) and "Neutral" received 1 vote (4%). "Dissatisfied" and "Very Dissatisfied" both received no votes.

General Comments

Community members were invited to write any suggestions or feedback they had for the preferred design on sticky notes. In total, community members placed 24 sticky notes on the pop-up boards. Most of the comments were positive and supportive of the project.

Comments within the project scope indicated the following themes:

- **A positive amenity for young people:** Five comments noted that the skatepark was good for children and teenagers.
- **Skatepark location:** Four comments were related to the location of the skatepark.
 - Two comments said that the skatepark is a closer and more convenient option for them; one noted that the new skatepark would give their kids somewhere to skate closer to home.
 - One comment said that the location within the park was a good choice because of the clear sightlines.
 - One comment expressed concern about the skatepark's proximity to the playground in Earl Bales Park and the safety of young children.
- **Layout and flow:** Three comments complimented the layout and flow of the skatepark.
 - One comment mentioned that the design has a good amount of space between features.
- One comment complimented the layout but stressed that geometric details (by which the commenter likely meant the dimensions of and between features) are important.
- **Visual appeal:** One comment suggested adding a feature or material that brings more character and colour to the skatepark and mentioned a unique brick bank at Stouffville Skateboard Park as an example.
- **Skate features:** Comments related to skate features included:
 - Requests to add features, including: a Euro-gap on the stairs, a mini ramp, a pump track and a feature for young children on scooters similar to features at Lake Wilcox Skatepark.
 - Requests to change features, including:
 - extending the coping (the metal or concrete edge which provides a surface that sticks out for grinding or stalling tricks) along the 3-foot transition turn-around into the slappy bank

- moving the inset manual pad near the slappy curb so beginners can move more easily from one to the other
 - widening the flat ledge
- combining the down rail and out rail to make space for a Euro-gap

Next Steps

The feedback provided through the Skatepark Champions meeting and the pop-up events will be used to refine the preferred design for the new skatepark. Following Community Engagement Phase 3 and refinement of the preferred design, the project will move into the detailed design phase. The design team will finalize the design for the new skatepark by working through the technical details and by preparing drawings for the construction contractor.

Appendix A: Preferred Design

The preferred design includes:

- A balance of flowing street features and technical street features
- A layout with characteristics and features beginners will appreciate, like:
 - Open space
 - Features to ride onto from flat, like mellow banks and quarter pipes
 - A slappy bank with an inset manual pad feature
- A V-shaped design that provides a separation between the technical street lane (closer to the playground) and the flowing street lane (farther from the playground)



Site plan features

1. Main entry
2. Bench seating/gathering area
3. Cluster seating with umbrella
4. Lighting
5. Shade tree planting



Skatepark features

- 6. Technical street plaza section
- 7. Flowing street section



Skatepark features

1. 1.5-foot bank turn-around
2. Three-foot bank turn-around/hip
3. Six-inch slappy curb
4. 14-inch flat rail
5. 14-inch flat ledge
6. Four-foot slappy bank with inset six-inch manual pad
7. 1.5-foot transition turn-around
8. Three-foot transition turn-around
9. 1.5-foot table top
10. Two-foot A-frame with rooftop rail and ledge
11. Five stair set with down rail
12. Hubba/out ledge
13. Slappy out rail
14. Two-foot transition turn-around


Appendix B: Pop-Up Boards

Project Board

This board provided background information about the project, a project timeline, facts about the location and a summary of the previous phases of the community engagement process and their outcomes. It also featured a map of the site and a QR code linking to the project webpage.

Earl Bales Skatepark


About the Project



As part of Toronto's Facilities Master Plan and informed by the Skateboard Strategy, the City is building new skateparks in areas that lack skateboarding facilities.

A new skatepark is coming to Earl Bales Park at 4169 Bathurst Street. The new skatepark will be:

- Approx. 1,000 m² (11,000 ft²) – about 2/3 the size of the playground
- a community skatepark, designed for all levels of skatepark users
- in the northwest corner of Earl Bales Park, not far from the playground and parking lot for the Earl Bales Community Centre



Scan with a smartphone camera for project webpage and to sign up for e-updates.

Community-Driven Design

Phase 1 of Community engagement took place in Fall and Winter 2022, and included:

- An online survey which collected over 500 responses
- The first meeting of the Skatepark Champions, a diverse group of skateboarders who advised the designers at each phase in the process

A Park Vision and Guiding Principles were developed based on the outcomes of the Phase 1 community engagement process and the site constraints.

Park Vision

To build an accessible and inclusive Community Skatepark at Earl Bales Park




Guiding Principles

The Earl Bales Skatepark should have:

- Good flow
- Features for different skill levels; particularly those that support beginners such as smaller features, open flat space, ledges or curbs, etc.
- Areas for different skill levels
- Opportunities to progress from easier to more difficult features/obstacles
- Supporting amenities for the skatepark, including seating, lighting and shade

Phase 2 of community engagement took place in early 2024 and included an online survey, public meeting, and Skatepark Champions Meeting. Three skatepark design options were shared for community review and feedback.

On the online survey, overall design preference was tied between Options B and C – but when asked to compare how well each design reflected the Guiding Principles, survey respondents ranked Option C higher. Option C was therefore selected as the preferred design.



Design Option A **Design Option B** **Design Option C**

Read more about the Community Engagement Process at [Toronto.ca/EarlBalesSkatepark](https://toronto.ca/EarlBalesSkatepark)

Timeline (subject to change)

Fall 2022 Community Engagement: Visioning	Winter 2023 Community Engagement: Exploring Options	Spring 2024 Community Engagement: Setting the Direction	Summer 2024 Complete Detailed Design	Fall 2025 Construction
--	--	--	---	-------------------------------------


About the Location

Why Earl Bales Park?

- Ward 6 was identified as a gap area for skateparks in the city in the Facilities Master Plan
- Earl Bales Park has enough space and suitable topography
- Amenities such as community centre, drinking fountain, washrooms, parking, and transit access
- The area's demographics: many children and youth live in the area
- Safety considerations (i.e. clear sightlines and proximity to other amenities that will encourage "eyes on the skatepark")

Why this site?

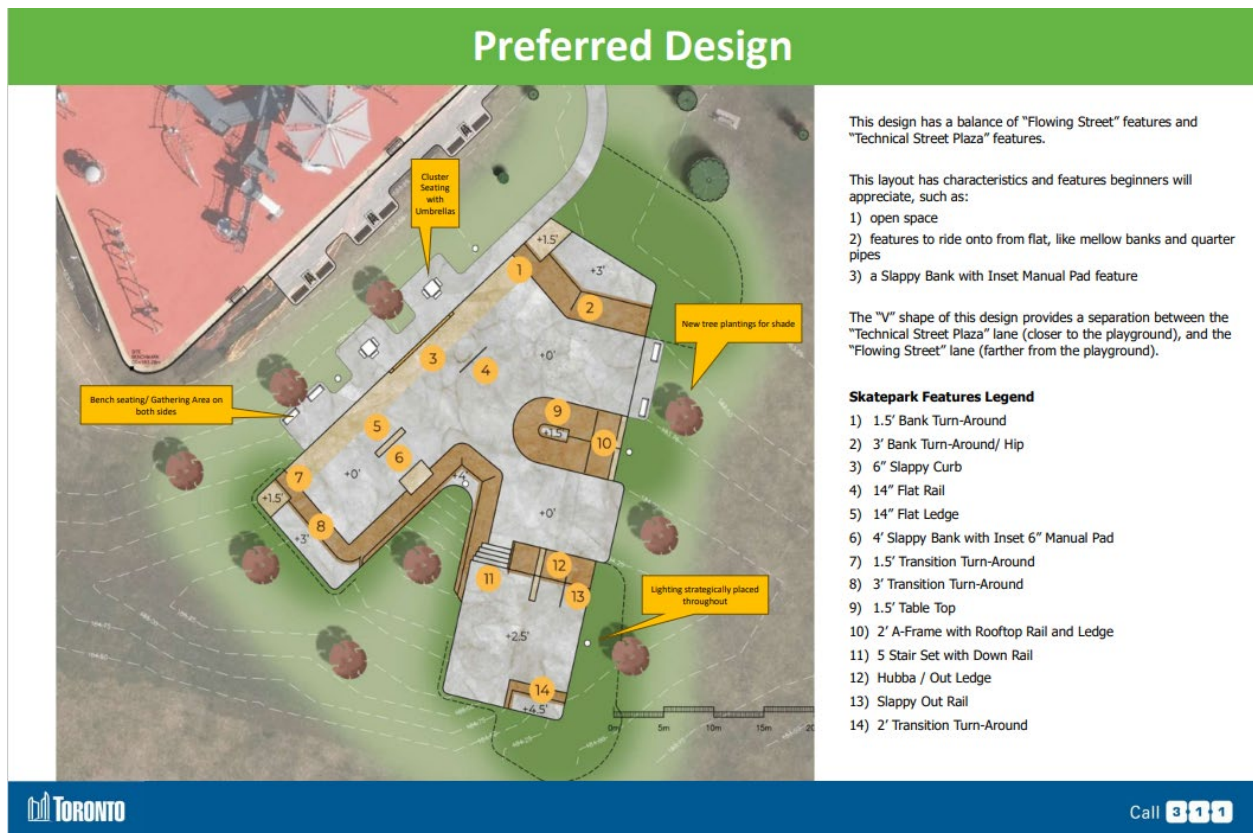
- Enough space. Close to amenities, but far enough from monuments and residences
- Clear sight lines, after hours visibility, ease of emergency access, passive surveillance during active hours
- Ease of development (construction access etc.)
- Closeness to the playground encourages participation of different age groups; families can use the skatepark and playground at the same time
- Enhanced safety for skatepark users, a sense of inclusion, community accountability



Call **311**

Preferred Design Boards

This board presents the preferred design. It includes a description of the layout, a map of the skatepark with labels and numbered features and a corresponding legend.



This board shares four different views of the preferred design from above.

Preferred Design from Above



View from above looking Northwest



View from above looking Northeast



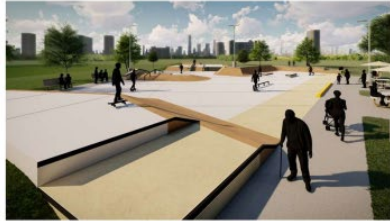
View from above looking South



View from above looking West

These two boards share twelve different views of the preferred design from ground level.

Preferred Design from Ground Level



View from main entry



View from main entry looking toward Bank Turnarounds



View from main entry looking toward Flat Ledge and Manual Pad



View from main entry looking toward Transition Turn-Arounds



View from plaza section looking toward Flat Ledge & Flat Rail



View from plaza section looking toward Transition Turn-Arounds



Call 311

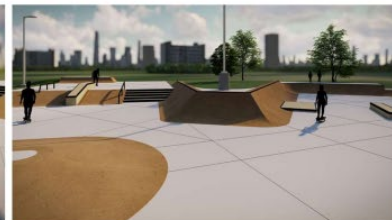
Preferred Design from Ground Level



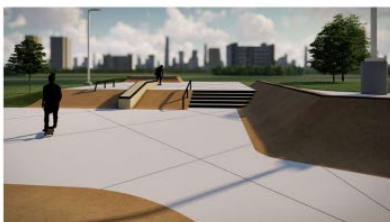
View from plaza section looking toward Slappy Curb & Main Entry



View from plaza section looking toward Table Top & A-Frame



View from plaza section looking toward Slappy Bank Turn-Around



View from Table Top looking toward 5 Stair Set & Down Rail



View from flowing street section looking toward 5 Stair Set



View from top of 5 Stair Set looking toward Transition Turnaround



Call 311

Engagement Board

This board invited participants to share their feedback about the preferred design by rating their overall satisfaction with the preferred design on a scale or by writing suggestions or feedback on a sticky note.

Your Feedback

Overall, how satisfied are you with the preferred design?

Very Satisfied


Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied


Any suggestions or feedback? Use a sticky note!



Words from Skatepark Champions about the positive role skateboarding has played in their lives

"I came to Canada from Nigeria alone, not knowing too much about the Canadian streets. Skateboarding provided me with a means to explore Toronto. And being new to the country, skateboarding was a way for me to connect with people and make friends."
- K.A., 23 years old

"Skateboarding had always been something I wanted to advance in, but I never felt welcome or accepted into the culture as I was a girl/woman/mom. It was only when my kids became interested that I finally felt that I was given permission to go to a skatepark and develop my skills. It became more than just a hobby; it became a lifeline for my mental health. Those moments of pushing through fear and doubt on the board translated into a newfound confidence in every aspect of my life. I wanted to challenge the stereotypes and very quickly learned that age and gender know no bounds when it comes to passion and determination.
And perhaps the most beautiful part of this journey is the bond it created with my kids. Instead of just watching from the sidelines, we're out there together, laughing, falling, and cheering each other on. Skateboarding has brought us closer than ever before, teaching us resilience, teamwork, and that anyone can do anything. So, to anyone out there hesitating to try skateboarding, know that it is for everyone. It's a journey of self-discovery, breaking barriers, and building unforgettable memories with the ones we love."
- A.O., 41 years old



Call 311

Appendix C: Pop-Up Feedback

During the pop-up events, community members conveyed their overall satisfaction with the preferred design using stickers and shared comments on sticky notes. All feedback is listed below and organized by event. Comments are included verbatim.

Earl Bales Community Centre Pop-Up Event

Overall, how satisfied are you with the preferred design?

- Very satisfied: 9 votes
- Satisfied: 2 votes
- Neutral: 0 votes
- Dissatisfied: 0 votes
- Very dissatisfied: 0 votes

Any suggestions or feedback?

- Glad that my kids will have a place to skate closer to home
- Outdoor ping pong tables would be nice
- Fully supportive
- Euro-gap on stairs
- This really looks nice!
- Will protective gear be required?
- Great to have more seating at the park
- I don't skate myself but I am very glad this is being done.
- Great for the kids!
- Extra addition for "young" toddler for scooters. *Lake Wilcox has good example of this. Good stuff guy
- Pump track please
- Anything to get kids outside
- Mini ramp? Extend coping through pocket into slappy.
- Great for teenagers (and all ages) good location because you can see it
- Concern with proximity to playground & safety for young kids
- Looking forward to it
- Seating for skaters on far side of park

Stanley Greene Skatepark Pop-Up Event

Overall, how satisfied are you with the preferred design?

- Very satisfied: 12 votes
- Satisfied: 3 votes
- Neutral: 1 vote
- Dissatisfied: 0 votes
- Very dissatisfied: 0 votes

Any suggestions or feedback?

- I like it. My kids use the playground and skatepark
- Good flow
- Would be a closer option
- Awesome project. Small minipad at (6) should be on somewhere at (3) for beginner skater. Flat ledge could be wider
- This park design has great features. Keep the stairs. The spacing between is a good distance
- Layout is epic but geometric details critical
- Overall amazing and very well thought out design for all skill levels. Agree with extending the short side of the pocket on feature (8) with more coping that goes into the bank. Like the idea of combining down rail (11) with out rail (13) and adding a euro gap feature to this section as I could see more skaters using the euro gap than a set. Would love to see a feature/material used that adds more 'character' to the park and makes it feel less 'black and white' ex. The brick bank at Stouffville Memorial Skatepark