

229 Richmond St West

CAC #4 Minutes

229 Richmond St West

Phase 3

19 August 2024

Madeleine Ghillany-Lehar, Project Manager, West 8



Prepared By
WEST 8



Contents

229 Richmond St West CAC #4 Minutes.....	0
Meeting Purpose	3
Project Scope.....	3
Project Timeline	3
Attendance	4
Meeting Summary	5
Meeting Minutes	6
Next Steps.....	9

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to convene the project's Community Advisory Committee, made up of residents and employees in the area as well as local arts organizations, to review the project's design and gather feedback and input as the Design Team moves towards a final iteration for Detailed Design.

Project Scope

The project is to design a new park at 229 Richmond St W, currently a mid-block open parking lot that has been converted into a public beer garden and patio.

Project Timeline

The project is structured in 7 phases, running from 2022 – 2027. We are currently in Phase 3: Concept Refinement + Public Engagement, scheduled to run through the end of 2024. In this phase, the Design Team is working towards a final Preferred Design and Schematic Design Package, presented in two design iterations (Draft Design and Final Design). At the time of this meeting, the Draft Design is being critiqued by committee meetings and the Design Team will respond to feedback by incorporating changes within the Final Design.

Attendance

City Attendees:

- Lara Herald (Park Design)
- Eli Bawuah (Engagement)
- William Skura (Engagement - Indigenous)
- Marouan Malaeb-Proulx – Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik's Office

Design Team Attendees:

- Shelley Long (West 8)
- Madeleine Ghillany-Lehar (West 8)

CAC Attendees:

- Andrew L - Local Resident, Landscape Designer
- Anojan S - TO Downtown West BIA, Background in Planning
- Betty W - Resident, Architect
- Catherine M - Garment District Neighborhood Association (GDNA), Resident
- Jack F - Resident, Background in Indigenous Planning
- Jennifer C - Resident
- Jess S - Parks People
- Maddy B - Resident, Indigenous
- Mattie W - Resident, Gelber Bros Office
- Meg M - King West BIA (KWBIA)
- Pedro M - Resident
- Samuel S - Resident, Background in Architecture, MJMA
- Sal J - Resident, Peter Street
- Simon L - Resident, King Street West, Architecture, MArch
- Tyler R - Resident, King West
- Ayesha T - Parks People

Meeting Summary

The meeting focused on several key aspects of park design and development. CAC members were generally enthusiastic and positive about the direction of the design. Discussions included the placement and impact of the balcony, coordination with city materials, and considerations for maintenance and safety. Accessibility and inclusivity were emphasized, with attention to integrating features for all abilities and potential exercise equipment. An intergenerational awareness to design was stressed to be crucial. The meeting also explored environmental and community aspects, such as waste management, tree selection, and educational opportunities related to the park's history and features.

Meeting Minutes

- West 8 presented full CAC deck.
- Discussion questions posed by consultant team:
 - As a place of culture in the entertainment district, what organizations and events do you see using this park?
 - What kinds of infrastructure might these uses demand from the park?
 - In order to ensure that the park is programmed and curated inclusively and successfully, are there other organizations who you think could be involved?
 - What do you think of the play area and seating?
- Open question and comment work-session commenced.
- Q: Will murals on the Western edge of the park be kept?
 - R: *This is not within our site boundary and is a question for 241 Richmond St W developers. Lara to inquire with Planning whether murals on the Western wall of the site will be preserved in new development.*
- Q: How was the balcony location chosen and the design for that developed?
 - R: *The balcony bridges between human and tower scale. It acts as a viewing platform for the TIFF screen and Gelber Building, creating a hug around the bowl. We have intentionally avoided placing a large element in the foreground as we have learned from working on playgrounds that large elements in the foreground can be intimidating; many people will be coming from Richmond Street. Nelson Street will make the park feel bigger with consistent paving extending the park-like feel. The patio on the west side may be a café, but the design of the park has been purposely adapted in relation to this edge. The proposed trees are not seen as walls, but as veils that reduce noise but allow sightlines through.*
- Q: Are you coordinating with the city regarding materials on John Street to make the park feel like a larger part of the area?
 - R: *Yes, we are. We are working with city planning staff to coordinate consistency with materials in the right-of-way.*
- Q: Is maintenance being taken into consideration? Maintenance of assets is often a challenge. Is materiality durable and able to be maintained?
 - R: *City staff is very involved in maintenance planning. The design team will be working on this and will show more details at the next CAC.*
- Q: Well done. Early days but noting technical aspects from the project: topographic design is nuanced but is soil contamination being considered, given that we are cutting the ground further in?
 - R: *We have intentionally used cutting to reduce the need for soil importation. A hard cap and soft cap will be used together with the lowered areas intentionally placed to reduce the need for additional remediative soil excavation.*

- Q: Play elements design: Does this playscape comply with CoT/Ontario Safety Zone regulations?
 - R: *The fall zone for the slide is only around the landing. We will need to design the landing area carefully in the next phase. Our preference is to use bark mulch as shown in reference projects.*
- Q: Emerging uses in the neighborhood include a gathering of run club members who exercise as a group. Has any thought been given to integrating exercise equipment? It's hard to find exercise equipment for adults and the area is very active.
 - R: *We have not considered this in the design. We had to be selective in the park because it's so small. We would consider what kind of adult exercise equipment would be most effective if included.*
 - C: Pull-up bars, dip bars – something super simple to reduce people hanging exercise equipment on trees. Somewhere to hang their equipment would be useful and cost-effective. Nothing special or expensive.
- Q: Will the deck be circulated?
 - R: *Yes, the presentation slides and a meeting summary report will be made available on the project webpage.*
- C: Standard city benches are not friendly for unhoused people due to center arm.
- Q: Are the trees native to Ontario/Eastern Canada?
 - R: *Philosophically, this park is welcoming to all native and non-native Torontonians. We are interested in urban robustness and storytelling ability. Ginkgo is an ancient tree, also very resilient. We have chosen a mix of majority native trees with a sprinkle of accent trees from other climates.*
- Q: How will projectors be made durable?
 - R: *Projectors will be encased in a housing designed to be Torontonian-proof. Technical details are forthcoming, with careful consideration in consultation with the public art office.*
- C: Adults seem to dominate the neighborhood, not many kids in the area, and new condos aren't conducive to families. The park doesn't have a huge playground, but having a space that's inclusive for adults would be nice.
- Q: What measures are being taken to ensure that the park is accessible to people of all abilities, including those with mobility challenges?
 - R: *Accessible surfaces and seating are priorities. All experiences in the park are accessible and have a slope under 5% to comply with this. The entire surface, including the balcony, is accessible. Seating is diverse, including formal benches with armrests and backrests, picnic tables that accommodate wheelchairs, and informal elements for creative use of public space.*
- C: City benches don't flow with the park design from a style perspective. The many curves and bends make the benches seem very stiff and structured. "You only can sit here, like this."
- C: Big fan of what W8 has done on the waterfront. Use those same waterfront benches; the standard city ones don't seem to fit.

- C: Concern about waste and refuse, including cigarette butts. No bins on the outside perimeter where visitors step away to smoke.
 - R: *Solid waste management team is involved and will continue to review the design to take this into consideration. Cigarette disposal towers aren't common but can be considered for addition.*
- C: Not too many children, but there is a kindergarten on Richmond Street.
 - R: *This is an evolving neighborhood becoming more residential and changing. We want the park to be intergenerational and fun for children of all ages.*
- Q: Has CPTED been completed for these designs?
 - R: *We have not undergone a third-party review, but CPTED principles are part of our mandate as a landscape architecture office. Lighting is especially of concern because we are working on the concept there, but we consider this in all our public space design.*
- Q: Will the balcony be safe in winter with the slope? How will it be kept safe?
 - R: *We will coordinate with maintenance to explore opportunities to have primary park pathways kept open year-round. CoT notes that typically, maintenance is done in connection with major facilities or transit stops.*
- Q: Will there be amenities for bikers, such as locking posts?
 - R: *Nelson Street will be used as the bicycle parking zone. We can also assess Richmond Street for this.*
- Q: Will there be a designated zone for dogs to pee?
 - R: *A gravel dog-relief area with pop-up sprinklers could be an option. We may also consider exploring whether the planned pee pad for residents at 241 Richmond St can be used, though this is outside of our site boundary.*
- Q: Lighting - will you consider in-ground lighting or tree lighting for performer trees since they function as wayfinding points?
 - R: *This is a good idea that we will take into account.*
- Q: Can we integrate storytelling about the lost creek onsite?
 - R: *Russell Creek crossed along the southwest corner of the site where the firefly habitat will be going. We are exploring educational signage and other opportunities for this. Also, the riverbed playscape is intended to evoke the feeling of a dry riverbed ecosystem.*
- Q: Expand on the laneway design.
 - R: *We are using recycled cobblestone, giving the alleyways sustainable dignity while keeping heritage. We will activate the alley with picnic tables and lights to feel cozy and safe, atmospheric. Also, we would also like to see facades in the alleys cleaned up, pending building owner involvement.*

Next Steps

- City Action Items:
 - Lara Herald to follow up about murals on the western wall of the site.
 - Lara Herald to explore whether CPTED certification must be obtained. Noted that Anthony Lammana from the 52 Division TPS – Crime Prevention Office was recommended by a CAC participant.
 - Lara Herald to confirm how far staff can walk from the edge to the center of the park for maintenance.
- Design Team Action Items:
 - Design team to show more details on maintenance planning at the next CAC.
 - Design team to explore options for exercise equipment and integrate if feasible.
 - Design team to explore additional bike parking facilities on Richmond Street.
 - Design team to incorporate additional comments and suggestions into next iteration of design for presentation to the CAC in late October, including comments related to accessibility and connections to the mid-block points.