

CAC Meeting #1 Orientation Summary

New Park at 15 Wellesley St. E.

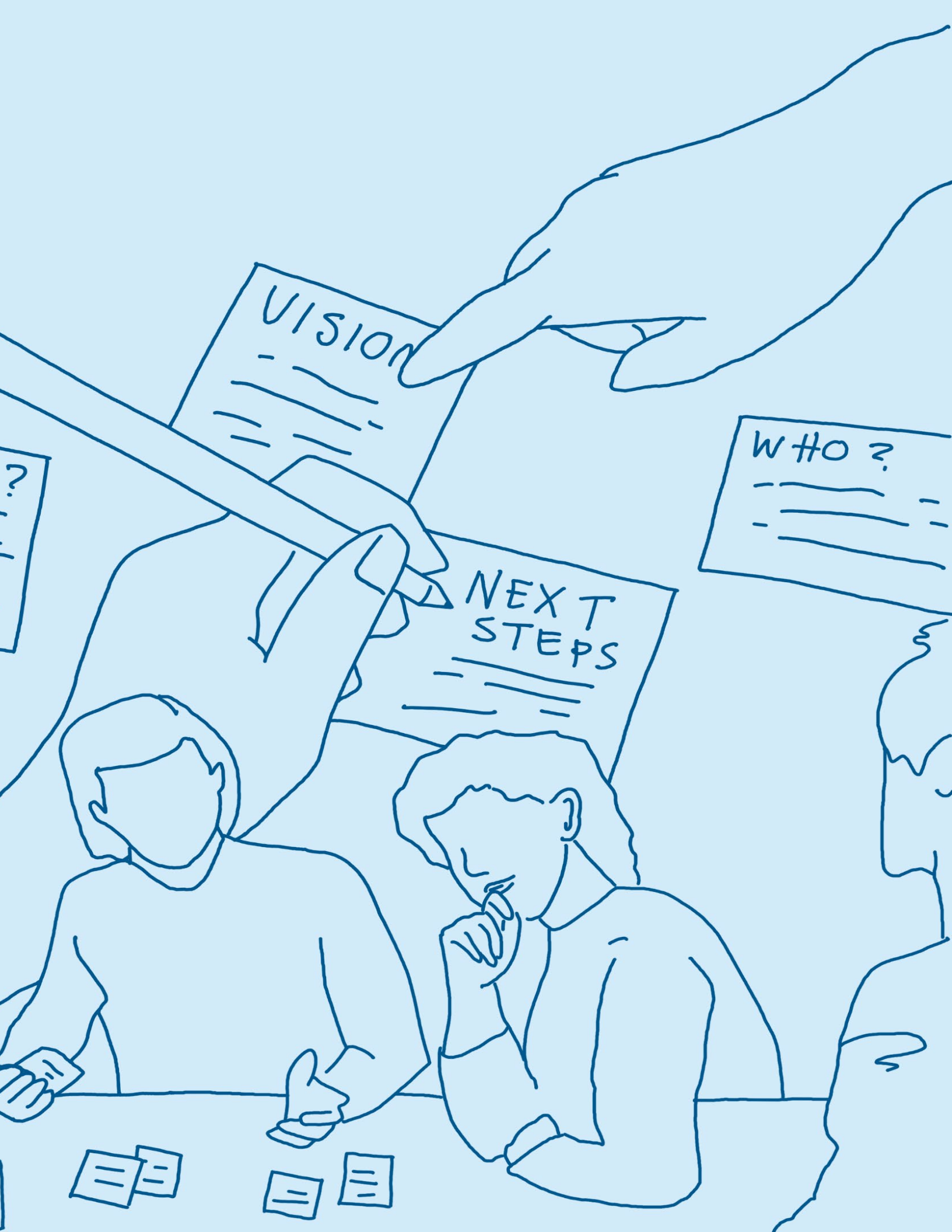
Phase 1: Towards a Vision

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How We Reached People: Civic Lottery and Community Invitations

New Park at 15 Wellesley St. E. 3

Meeting Themes

The following points summarize key take-aways and themes of the feedback shared during the meeting. These themes were expanded on through each activity and provide a foundation for the CAC's work moving forward. They are meant to be read as part of the more detailed summary that follows.

- **Inclusivity and Representation** – ensuring the voices of 2SLGBTQIA+, Black, Indigenous, and marginalized communities are central.
- **Community and Culture** – valuing art, music, storytelling, and historic recognition.
- **Safety and Belonging** – the importance of spaces where people feel free, secure, and affirmed.
- **Nature and Wellness** – the need for greenery, shade, gardens, and places of healing.
- **Flexibility and Growth** – creating multipurpose spaces for daily use and large events.

The meeting opened with Land and African Ancestral Acknowledgements, grounding the group in respect for Indigenous and Black histories. Councillor Chris Moise welcomed participants, emphasizing their role in creating momentum and ensuring everyone feels heard: *“You have an important job today – to help create momentum, ensure everyone feels heard, and guide us toward a park that reflects this community.”*

The project team introduced the CAC's mandate: to provide meaningful input into the design, to reflect wider community feedback, and to help ensure the park becomes a welcoming, inclusive, and celebrated community space. Exercises throughout the day built on this by encouraging members to share personal experiences, define shared values, and begin identifying priorities for the new park.

Found Objects Memory Exercise

The Found Objects Memory Exercise invited participants to reflect on moments when they felt most fully themselves in public spaces, using small, tactile objects as prompts. These stories revealed not only powerful personal memories but also deeply held values that point toward priorities for the new park's design. Several key themes emerged across both personal narratives and collective aspirations:

1. Nature, Wellness, and Healing

Many participants described parks and natural spaces as essential to their well-being. Whether lying under trees, walking through gardens, or simply being surrounded by green space, these memories highlight the restorative role of nature. This speaks to a broader community priority for parks that support mental health, quiet reflection, and ecological stewardship, including attention to wildlife and local ecosystems.

2. Safety, Belonging, and Liberation

Stories of feeling safe during Indigenous ceremonies or liberated during Pride marches emphasize the need for spaces that foster emotional and physical safety, especially for marginalized communities. These experiences reinforce the importance of inclusivity, cultural affirmation, and anti-oppressive design—including the rejection of hostile architecture and the embrace of multilingual signage, inclusive washrooms, and flexible space use.

3. Community, Connection, and Stewardship

Participants shared memories of dancing at Pride, playing sports, and gathering with friends, underlining the role of parks as places for connection. The value placed on social interaction, multigenerational engagement, and community-led care (such as Sacred Fires) points to the importance of community stewardship, especially centering Black and Indigenous histories.

4. Joy, Play, and Spontaneity

Childhood games, dog parks, and summer lifeguarding brought up vivid feelings of joy. These moments support the call for spaces that encourage unstructured play, spontaneous interaction, and intergenerational fun, reinforcing playfulness as a core design element.

5. Art, Culture, and Expression

Performance, music, and storytelling emerged as affirmations of identity and celebration—especially for 2SLGBTQ+ and racialized communities. These memories

support a vision for parks as cultural canvases where public art, live performance, and storytelling are integral, not peripheral.

6. Food, Water, and Gathering

Although not always directly mentioned in personal stories, the theme of gathering through food and water—whether via community meals, markets, or water play—aligns with the broader values of togetherness, comfort, and seasonal joy. These elements support both practical needs and emotional resonance.

7. Global Perspectives, Local Impact

Participants brought memories from places like Banff, Brazil, and Mexico—suggesting that parks are not only local, but also connectors to a broader sense of place, culture, and travel. This emphasizes the need for designs that honor both global diversity and local specificity.

Shared Values Exercise

In this breakout session, CAC members worked in small groups to identify shared values for how they want to work together throughout this project. The goal was to reach an agreement on a common set of values that would help shape how the CAC collaborates and interacts as a group moving forward. Each CAC member began by writing down a word or short phrase that reflected a value they felt should guide the CAC engagement process.

In small groups, members discussed and selected the top three values that best represented their collective perspective, which they then shared with the larger group. The project team then organized the values, grouping ones that were similar. Each value was then reviewed by the larger group, with support measured by hand voting.

The following are the values that were co-created by the CAC and represent our shared commitments to both the collaboration process and the vision for the future park.

Inclusion & Community

We believe that diverse voices should be amplified, and we commit to uplifting and celebrating 2SLGBTQ+ communities. We ensure that everyone's voices are heard and that diverse needs are considered. We value building a sense of community that fosters connection, belonging, and participation for all, while celebrating cultural, ecological, and emotional diversity. We embrace joy and celebration as central to affirming our shared experiences. *Guiding phrase: We uplift all voices and celebrate belonging.*

Preservation & Resilience

We honour the histories of Black, queer, and trans communities, and we commit to preserving the importance of how these communities have shaped and continue to shape the space. We embody resilience by reflecting strength, continuity, and cultural survival over time. *Guiding phrase: We honour the past and carry it forward with strength.*

Creativity & Open-Mindedness

We encourage bold and imaginative thinking while keeping an open mind to diverse perspectives. We believe in embracing possibilities with a clear sense of direction, balancing visionary ideas with realistic, thoughtful implementation to ensure inclusive and practical outcomes. *Guiding phrase: We imagine boldly and act thoughtfully.*

Care & Cohesion

We foster empathy, generosity, and collective care as the foundation of our collaboration. We believe in creating a safe, transparent, and non-judgmental environment that uplifts all identities. We commit to listening, learning, and working together in a way that cultivates belonging, joy, safety, and shared responsibility. *Guiding phrase: We care for each other and grow together.*

Accountability & Transparency

We hold ourselves accountable to one another and to the wider community. We commit to open and honest communication, transparency in decision-making, and responsibility in our actions. We believe that trust is built through clarity, follow-through, and respect for the commitments we make together. *Guiding phrase: We build trust through honesty and responsibility.*

Together, these values guide how the CAC collaborates and shape the vision for the future park.

Project Overview: Questions & Answers

Following the values discussion, the project team provided a detailed overview of the site and its constraints. This session helped ground the visioning process in the realities of the location. CAC Member asked questions about:

- **What type of soil contamination was discovered? Will it harm people or plants?** *Mercury was detected onsite through an environmental assessment. We have tools that will demonstrate the site is safe for park users once the park opens.*

- **Can the site accommodate washrooms?** *The site cannot accommodate any enclosed structure due to soil contamination, including a washroom building. There may be alternate ways of including non-permanent washroom facilities on site.*
- **Can the TTC vents be raised or moved?** *No, TTC vents cannot be raised. They're already built in place and cannot be altered but we can design around them and come up with innovative solutions.*
- **Can you say more about the amount and location of trees and other greenery?** *There are technical requirements that trees require certain depth – they cannot be planted over TTC tunnels. We will provide drawings that show where trees can be located at a later stage. We will prioritize green space if that is identified as a priority through the community engagement process.*
- **Community Recreation has programming where we can create recreational opportunities for community. Creating flexible, multi-use space would be optimal to provide this programming.** *Thank you for your comment.*
- **Can the park offer hydration through drinking fountains?** *Yes, there is access to water and drinking fountains may be included in the design.*
- **Keep the existing trees in place.** *Thank you for your comment.*
- **How is the City engaging hard to reach communities?** *Through pop-ups and targeted outreach but we will consider this as we move forward in the process.*

This Q&A allowed members to align their aspirations with practical considerations, reinforcing the need for innovative design solutions that balance community desires with technical realities. Additional requests included providing advance technical and zoning information at later meetings, as well as data on social and emotional well-being alongside technical metrics.

Terms of Reference Discussion

With a clearer sense of context, the group turned to governance. Reviewing the draft Terms of Reference, members refined the expectations of their role in the following ways:

- **Attendance:** Members agreed that missing meetings should not result in automatic termination. Virtual and hybrid options were encouraged.
- **Replacement:** Vacancies should be filled through the civic lottery to preserve representation.
- **Decision-making:** Consensus should be set at approximately 70%.
- **Quorum:** At least two-thirds attendance required.
- **Other requests:** Inclusion of TTC technical experts at future meetings, and provision of data on both technical and social/emotional impacts.

Members also suggested rescheduling Meeting #2 to follow an optional site visit on July 14, 2025, ensuring members could ground their input in firsthand site knowledge.

Park Visioning Exercise

The final activity invited members to imagine their ideal future park at 15 Wellesley. Using found objects, groups built models representing their vision five years after the park's opening.

Recurring Themes identified and agreed on by CAC members:

- **Inclusivity:** All-gender, accessible washrooms; inclusive signage and welcoming design.
- **Cultural Expression:** Spaces for live music, art installations, Indigenous and queer recognition. Members emphasized intentional performance spaces and storytelling, with sensitivity to sound carrying into nearby residences (including proposals for headphone-based concerts).
- **Community Vibrancy:** Farmers' markets, night markets, social gathering areas, and flexible space for daily and major uses.
- **Green & Healing Spaces:** Gardens, shade, water features, trees, and spaces for relaxation and wellness.
- **Recognition of History:** Explicit acknowledgment of the site's importance to Black queer communities and Indigenous cultural practices.
- **Balance:** A park that accommodates major events such as Pride while remaining welcoming and usable for everyday community life.

"We need a park that celebrates Pride, honours Indigenous and Black histories, and still feels welcoming every day."

Next Steps

The first CAC meeting laid a strong foundation of shared values, memories, and direction. Members reflected on personal experiences of belonging and identity, defined a collective ethos for working together, and began shaping a vision for the future park.

The next CAC meeting in Fall 2025 will focus on developing a draft vision statement, guiding principles, and big moves. These will form the outcomes of Phase 1 of engagement. Phase 2 will then translate these outcomes into design options for the park, which will be shared with the wider community for feedback. A preferred design will ultimately be developed with CAC input.

Please visit the [project webpage](#) to stay informed.

Acknowledgements

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