

Park Governance & Partnerships

Queen's Park North Revitalization Info Sheet

Park Operations, Partnerships and Governance

Parks are operated and maintained directly by the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation division. Park permits are granted for events, programming, sports, recreation activities, etc., based on what exists within the park and the park's context in the surrounding neighbourhood. Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 608 ("The Parks Bylaw") governs what is allowed to happen within park spaces in the city.

The City explores park partnerships where there is an opportunity to facilitate capital improvements and/or service enhancements. Park partnerships can take many forms, including donations, collaborative programming, fundraising, sponsorships, grants, etc. Parks and Recreation has successfully facilitated these relationships for years, advancing park improvements, programming, recreation service enhancements and natural-space investments.

A growing number of new park partnerships are centered around the concept of "collaborative governance", which is an ongoing relationship between the City and a partner group, typically around a specific park or a series of parks within a specific geographic area.

This Info Sheet is part of a series of Info Sheets created to support the City-led engagement process for the revitalization of Queen's Park North. The content in this Info Sheet was provided by the City of Toronto with inputs from Janet Rosenberg & Studio Inc., ERA Architects Inc. and Trophic Design, firms retained through the in-kind donation from the Weston Foundations, and working collaboratively with the City of Toronto.

Potential Public Benefits of Collaborative Governance

Parks can be enhanced beyond what is typical by combining the authority, resources, skills, and experience of the City with the local knowledge, creativity, passion, capacity, ambition, and autonomy of a partner organization.

While no partnership or collaborative governance arrangement is quite the same, the City always starts by asking, does the arrangement contribute to and advance public benefits, the overall vision and mandate of the Parks and Recreation division and the City's strategic goals, such as those set out in the Parkland Strategy, Ravine Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan.

For the City and Toronto residents, there are several social, economic and ecological benefits to be achieved through collaborative governance.

The Queen's Park North Revitalization presents an important opportunity to advance this approach, particularly through meaningful long-term collaboration with First Nations and other Indigenous communities. The project will include the exploration of governance models that incorporate Indigenous perspectives and leadership. This is being actively pursued through ongoing engagement with First Nations, Indigenous community members, and Indigenous service providers.

Collaborative Governance Models – Precedents

There is a range of park governance models used in Toronto. Recent collaborations include:

- The long-standing agreement in place between the City and [Toronto Botanical Garden](#) (TBG), a registered charity, at Edwards Gardens. Through collaboration, the City and TBG deliver on enhanced programming, education, fundraising, events, maintenance, and much more.
- Additional public programming at Allan Gardens through the [Friends of Allan Gardens](#).
- \$1 million gift secured from TD Bank thanks to City-[High Park Nature Centre](#) collaboration, to support subsidized school visits and a capital project to renovate the High Park Forest School.
- Partnership with [Evergreen Brickworks](#) in the Lower Don Valley resulting in \$1 million in additional donor funds to the City for capital improvements to the Lower Don Trail, and additional donor funding for Evergreen-led public art programming.
- Working with the Downtown Yonge BIA, including a \$250,000 contribution to support the new Barbara Ann Scott Skating Trail and \$100,000 in-kind donation

of new clock tower at Trinity Square Park, plus enhanced BIA public programming in downtown parks.

- Construction Management Agreement with Friends of High Park Zoo to build new llama and capybara building, with the Friends contributing \$224,000 plus construction management.
- Establishment of agreement with the [Lassonde Art Trail](#), a new not-for-profit charitable organization, to implement and realize the \$25 million private donation toward a public art trail at Biidaasige Park in the Port Lands.

In addition to the Toronto park examples in this document, the City is collaborating on other public space initiatives such as [the Bentway Conservancy](#) and [the Meadoway](#).



(left) Arrival Courtyard, Toronto Botanical Gardens; (right) Artist Rendering of Lassonde Art Trail (Ookwemin Minising)

National and international precedents where a partner has taken a significant role in programming, operations and maintenance include:

- [Assiniboine Park Conservancy – Winnipeg](#)
- [Emerald Necklace – Boston](#)
- [Governors Island – New York](#)
- [Les Amis de la Montagne – Montreal](#)
- [Millenium Park – Chicago](#)
- [Pioneer Courthouse Square – Portland](#)
- [River Valley Alliance – Edmonton](#)
- [St. Charles River Society – Quebec City](#)
- [The Royal Parks - London](#)

Structuring Collaborative Governance

Partner organizations bring different skills and capacity to the relationship, and agreements with the City are tailored to be site and organization specific.

The City and partner work together to advance the vision and mission for the given park, guided by input from a park's many stakeholders. A legal agreement is developed collaboratively and establishes the rights, roles and responsibilities of all parties. These can take many different forms, which include Leases, Licenses, Management Agreements, Stewardship and Construction Agreements, among others. When there is an opportunity for a successful collaborative governance arrangement on a given site, staff will seek authority to proceed with an agreement negotiation through a report to City Council.

Realizing the Queen's Park North Vision through Collaborative Governance

As part of the City's consideration of the proposed capital and operational donation into Queen's Park North, the City will consider how best to structure future governance of the site to fully implement, realize, and sustain the revitalized park. Enhanced programming, tree care, parks maintenance standards, activations and capital investments are anticipated to form part of the implementation. Any recommended future approach would be outlined back to City Council as part of a staff report.