

Revitalization of Queen's Park North

Focus Group with Students from Victoria University – University of Toronto

Summary of Discussion

Goldring Student Centre – 150 Charles Street

Tuesday, August 26, 2025; 1:30 – 3:00 pm

Participants: 10 Undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Toronto – Victoria University and University of St. Michael's College.

Purpose: The focus group was held to share and seek feedback on the Draft Vision and Draft Guiding Principles for Queen's Park and to brief students on feedback to date, share insights into how the City and project team are thinking about park revitalization, and to brainstorm opportunities for the future of Queen's Park North.

This summary was written by Third Party Public and was shared with participants for review prior to being finalized.

1. What students said they LIKE about Queen's Park North

- **CONNECTION.** The park is a good connector / bridge between the main U of T campus and the various colleges, and surrounding areas. The new entrance to the subway within the park is convenient, especially for students commuting from other areas. The tunnel beside the park (where under the bridge that travels over Wellesley at one of the entrances to U of T) is a beautiful walking experience.
- **TRESS, NATURE, AND BIODIVERSITY.** Students really like the diversity of tree and plant species in the park and seeing the seasonal changes that occur. They suggested including more information about the various trees and plant species. They also like the beautiful birds and animals in the park – some of have seen foxes. Some consider the park a tree museum, particularly with the signs on the trees which create a great opportunity to learn.
- **CALM AND OPEN.** Students like that the park acts as calm and relaxing space. Students also like the open space and that it can be used for a variety of activities (e.g., yoga, university clubs, running).
- **TRACK.** The track is well used by many people, including the varsity running club.
- **HORSE STATUE.** There was at least one person who said that they liked the horse and the ledge around the horse because people use it (for sitting, dancing on, etc.) but they did not like how everything in the park leads to the horse.

2. What students said they DON'T LIKE about Queen's Park North

- **NARROW PATHWAYS.** The pathways and sidewalks are quite narrow and become overcrowded. This leads to conflicts when there are bikes, scooters, kids, and others all using the same paths. People have to very aware when using the paths to cross the park.
- **CROSSWALKS.** The crossing times are too short, especially at the northern edge of the park. Students crossing at the traffic light that connects at the memorial often get stuck in the middle of the road.

- **POOR DRAINAGE.** When it rains large puddles form, especially in the northeast section of the park near the crosswalk. In the winter the water freezes and makes the park icy. This makes it difficult to move through the park, especially for people with accessibility needs.
- **MAINTENANCE.** Trash bins are often overflowing and litter gets left throughout the park. The water fountain is often dirty and water pools around the base. The grass is very patchy and gardens need better maintenance.
- **HORSE STATUE.** It is problematic that a colonial statue is located at the centre of the park with all paths leading to this statue. The statue could be moved somewhere else in the park that is less prominent. It would be better to see the centre of the park used as a gathering space with public art or it could be the location of pavilion. Consider an Indigenous presence here.

3. Opportunities identified for Queen's Park North

- **BALANCE PLANNED AND UNPLANNED SPACES.** Unplanned spaces are important so that people have the freedom to do their own thing and choose how to use the park (e.g., study, do yoga, skiing, University clubs using the space to organize gatherings, etc.). Planned spaces are also good but think about the threshold and balance between planned and unplanned space.
- **INDIGENOUS GARDENS.** Add an Indigenous garden to honour and share Indigenous history and knowledge.
- **EDUCATION.** Add information in the park about different tree species. Work with educators and knowledge keepers to create and share educational materials.
- **GATHERING SPACES.** Consider adding a covered space with seating where people can gather during inclement weather.
- **AMENITIES FOR DEDICATED USES.** Add playground equipment for children, swings, and chess tables with seating. Consider adding a dedicated space for skateboarding. Currently people skateboard on/off the statue, which conflicts with other uses. Consider a pavilion / group seating area where people can gather in inclement weather when it's raining or snowing.
- **SEATING.** Add more benches. Be creative with the types of benches installed. Could also consider tables where people can play chess at tables.
- **FLOWERS AND TREES AND MORE NATURALIZED AREAS.** Add more trees that flower in the spring, wildflowers that bloom at different times of the year, shrubs, and a well maintained garden. Ensure trees and their roots are well maintained and protected from the vibrations of the subway. Grass is still needed to support physical activities and to provide places to sit.
- **WATER FEATURE.** Introduce a water feature where people can gather and ideally learn about the Taddle Creek.
- **WATER FOUNTAINS AND WASHROOMS.** Add more water fountains and a permanent washroom. Ensure they are kept clean and well maintained.
- **LONGER CROSSING TIMES AT LIGHTS.** This will be safer for students.
- **BIKES.** Create space and rules for if/where bikes are allowed in the park. Currently there are conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians because of limited space and the speed of cyclists. It may be better to only allow bikes to be used around the perimeter of the park.

- **YEAR ROUND USE AND MAINTENANCE.** Ensure the park is well maintained and can be used year-round. Consider adding holiday lights in the winter – which also creates a draw for people who may come to take pictures in the park. It would be nice to have a natural place to skate in the winter and the space could be a small soccer field in the summer.
- **ATTENTION TO DETAIL.** It is important to pay attention to the details when making changes.

4. Feedback on the Draft Vision:

“Queen’s Park North is an extraordinary place for people and nature throughout the seasons, that respects the existing beauty of Queen’s Park and showcases excellence in design, ecological stewardship, programming and partnerships.”

- Use words and terms that are more accessible to the general public. Terms like “ecological stewardship” sound too professional.
- Define what is meant by “programming and partnerships”. It sounds very business-like; the park should not be looked at like a business.
- Add more about the recognizing and respecting the history of the park.
- Consider replacing “design” with “natural design”. “Design” sounds like buildings / physical structures.
- Please use Oxford commas.

5. Feedback on the Guiding Principles

- Expand the priority “protect and celebrate trees” beyond trees to include wildlife, flowers, and nature more broadly. Also consider adding something about education / learning about trees and nature. Explain who will be protecting and celebrating the trees.
- Add specificity to the principle “incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and being”. Explain which Indigenous Nations and people we are talking about.
- Consider replacing the term “elevate” with another word. “Elevate” can make people think about buildings, which should not be in the park.
- Principles are missing reference to water, public safety, and education.
- The principle “address outstanding priorities from the 2019 project” is unclear.
- Explain who / what institutional partners are. People may interpret institutional partners as corporations.