

Revitalization of Queen's Park North
Follow-Up Focus group with Heritage Interests

Summary of Discussion

Online via Zoom

Thursday, September 4, 2025; 12:00 – 1:30 pm

Participants: Annex Residents' Association – Heritage Team, St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association – Heritage Committee, Victoria University – University of Toronto; Legislative Assembly of Ontario; Royal Ontario Museum; University of Hong Kong; and a Toronto-based independent heritage professional

On September 4th, The City of Toronto hosted a second focus group with representatives of different heritage interests (based on feedback and discussion at the first focus group with heritage interests on August 7th) to share and seek feedback on the Queen's Park North team's cultural heritage work to date. Further conversations will take place to discuss and seek feedback on detailed design options as they are developed.

This summary was written by Third Party Public and was shared with participants in draft before being finalized.

Feedback on Queen's Park North team's cultural heritage work to date

- 1. There was appreciation and interest in the cultural heritage work done to date.** Participants said they enjoyed the presentation of draft materials, noting that it both confirmed what some already knew and also included information and materials that they had never seen before. They emphasized that the park is a delicate space, that requires a delicate approach. The presentation also presents a great opportunity for the public to learn more about the cultural heritage of the area and the park.
- 2. There was support for moving forward with research and analysis using a cultural landscape approach as well as a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk approach.** Consider how to acknowledge the various layers of the cultural heritage of the site, at the same time as also acknowledging the threads that vertically integrate the cultural heritage. *The team agreed and explained that the collaboration between ERA and Trophic was helping to understand the full cultural heritage of the site.*
- 3. The trees are an important element of the cultural heritage of the park.** It will be important to continue to examine the history of the trees to inform how decisions are made about which trees are planted and protected within the park. There is also an opportunity to use the trees as an educational tool to help people understand the history of the park. Consider ways to preserve and replace old and valuable trees within the Park. For example, in Japan they use saplings to replace and create a legacy of valuable / important trees. *The team explained that they are using an ecological stewardship lens to consider the cultural heritage of the park and understand the most significant part of the park is the trees. The team also explained the various ways they are examining and giving consideration to protecting and enhancing the trees in the park, including using Indigenous knowledge to identify and plant companion trees and gracefully replace invasive species. The team is also working with ecologists to manage the health and succession of trees, and use of sonic tomography to safely study the age and health of valuable trees in the park. The City has experience with the gradual phasing out of Norway Maples from Victoria Memorial Square.*

4. **Need to carefully consider the appropriateness of the positioning of the King Edward VII statue.** It may be appropriate to move the statue to another location within the park or relocate it outside of the park. *The Queen's Park North team shared that they are considering options related to the statue very carefully, including options to move the statue to another location in the park where it is less dominant. They shared an example from Kiweki Point Park in Ottawa where a statue of Samuel de Champlain was re-contextualized in the park.*
5. **It will be important to examine the relationship between Queen's Park North and the Legislative Building.** The current work appears to refer to the Legislative Building as a negative influence on the park. It will be important to consider how to create positive connections between the Legislative Building and Queen's Park North, including historical connections and safe pedestrian connections. Queen's Park North can be seen as a wonderful backyard to the Legislature with wonderful activities. Security issues will also be important to discuss, though likely at separate meeting. *The team said they agree with the need for better connections between the park and Legislature. They also said the Legislature gives the park greater importance in part due to the connection to Robert Baldwin and his work establishing responsible government in Canada and provides opportunities for connections to be made regarding Indigenous-Crown relationships.*
6. **Consider options for bringing some water element back into the park to honour the heritage of Taddle Cree.**
7. **Carefully consider the addition of any physical amenities in the park, including washrooms, refreshment stand, and bandstand / shelter.** It will be important to carefully consider if these amenities are needed and if so, where and how they could be located with a delicate approach using an architect (or architectural team) with great sensibility for the park and potential impacts on surrounding uses/programs (e.g., the Legislature). A contemporary bandstand / shelter (based on the previous version) could play an important role in bringing communities together in the park for different activities.
8. **Importance of connecting the cultural history of the park to those of surrounding uses and institutions.** The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and other institutions have interesting historical connections to the park. It will be interesting to see how these connections are explored and considered through this process. *The team agreed that the ROM and other institutions have important and exciting histories and connections to the park, especially related to education.*
9. **There was interest in University Park and Connections to the University.** The roads around Queen's Park North (3 lanes in one direction, 2+ lanes in the other direction, plus Wellesley on the south side) almost feel like a "hard shell" and car-centric boundary that takes energy to try and cross to access the park. There was also a reminder to ensure that the design for a revitalized Queen's Park North anticipates and plans for what changes may happen to the transportation conditions on the east side of the park if traffic lanes are removed on the west side of the park (i.e., impacts on traffic, impacts on pedestrian crossings heavily used by students, etc.). *City staff explained that plans for University Park are part of a much larger park plan for the City that has been approved by Council and would require funding for implementation. They also said they are aware of the plans and taking them into consideration to ensure any proposed changes to Queen's Park North would be complimentary to this plan.*
10. **Identify opportunities to "soften" the edges of the park.** Nobody travels to Queen's Park North by car and crossing to the park can be unpleasant. It would be great to see new crossings that go under or over the roadways to make access easier.

Next Steps

The project team thanked participants for attending the follow-up meeting and committed to:

1. Sharing a draft summary from the discussion for review with everyone that attended;
2. Continuing to share updates on the process including future engagement opportunities in the fall and winter; and
3. Posting a document in the fall on the project website (www.toronto.ca/queensparknorth) that includes the information shared during the meeting.