

Community Workshop & Open House Summary Report

Revitalization of Queen's Park North

Phase: 2A

July 28, 2025





Contents

Community Workshop & Open House Summary Report 0

Overview 4

How We Reached People 5

Quick Glance Summary of Feedback Shared 6

Detailed Feedback 6

Workshop Wrap-Up and Next Steps..... 10

Overview



On Monday, July 28, 2025, the City of Toronto's Parks and Recreation Division hosted the first Community Workshop and Open House for the Revitalization of Queen's Park North. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the project, to understand what people like and don't like about the park today and opportunities to be considered through the revitalization process. The City also shared and sought feedback on a draft vision and guiding principles for the park.

Questions to participants included:

1. What do you **like** about Queen's Park North today? What **don't you like**, and why?
2. What **opportunities for the future** would you like to see considered?
3. What do you like about the **draft vision**? Do you have any suggestions you would like to see the City consider? If so, what are they?
4. What do you like about the **draft guiding principles**? Do you have any suggestions you would like to see the City consider? If so, what are they?

Approximately 50 people participated, with about 35 people in-person and 15 virtually. Participation included community leaders from local resident and community associations (including but not limited to Harbord Village Residents Association, McGill-Granby Village Residents Association, Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association, and Bay Cloverhill Community Association), Friends of Queen's Park North, Friends of Hanlan's Point, as well as other active park users that live both locally and/or work in the area.

Other people at the workshop included:

- Councillor Diane Saxe (who delivered opening remarks) and a staff member from her office. Shannon Lawrence (Project Lead, Parks & Recreation) and Daniel Fusca (Manager, Public Consultation, Parks & Recreation) provided the overview presentation on behalf of the team. Additional staff from City of Toronto Parks & Recreation (Paul Farish, David O'Hara, Alex Deighan, and online facilitators Stella Zhou, Annie Ding, and Joshua Bowman).
- Members of the consultant team including, Janet Rosenberg & Studio (Janet Rosenberg, Jessica Hutcheon, and Todd Douglas), ERA Architects (Michael McClelland and Victoria Angel), Trophic Design (James Miller and Caitlin O'Sullivan), and Third Party Public (Yulia Pak, Matthew Wheatley, Khly Lamparero, Stephanie Quezada, and Asha Edwards). Nicole Swerhun from Third Party Public led facilitation of the meeting.
- Representatives from Wittington Investments, working with the Weston family on this project, attended virtually, including Kate Manson-Smith and Justin Robitaille.

The workshop began with an open house and display boards, included an overview presentation, and a combination of facilitated small group and plenary discussions. The meeting agenda is included as Attachment A to this summary.

Third Party Public prepared this draft summary and shared it with participants who signed in at the meeting for review before it was finalized.

How We Reached People

Notice of the Community Workshop and Open House was shared through various digital and in-person methods. These included posters placed in local businesses, institutions, and residential buildings around the park; outreach to local institutions and community organizations; promotion at community pop-ups held in the park before the event; updates provided to the local Councillor; information posted on the project webpage at www.toronto.ca/queensparknorth; and an email to all those that signed up for updates on the project webpage.

Quick Glance Summary of Feedback Shared

The following points provide a quick glance summary of the feedback shared during the workshop by participants in-person and online. A more detailed summary follows with feedback shared in response to the questions asked by the City.

- **Queen’s Park North is cherished as a calm, tree-filled retreat deeply tied to neighbourhood life.** People value its natural beauty, informal activities (e.g., Tai Chi, picnics, music), and unique running track, and see it as an essential everyday space for students, workers, and local residents.
- **Queen’s Park North should be improved through thoughtful enhancements, are there are concerns about the park being completely reimaged.** Changes to the park should be made to enhance what’s already there and address maintenance and safety issues, rather than large physical redesigns.
- **Do not turn Queen’s Park North into a “signature destination” or tourist draw.** Most participants stressed it should remain a local “People’s Park,” rooted in everyday neighbourhood use, rather than become a place for large events or commercialization.
- **Improving maintenance and safety is essential to make the park more inclusive, comfortable, and safe.** Current issues such as broken benches, garbage, a non-functioning fountain, lack of permanent washrooms, winter maintenance, poor lighting, and traffic hazards limit how welcoming the park feels.

Detailed Feedback

1. What do you like about Queen’s Park North today? What don’t you like, and why?

Likes

- **The park’s natural setting is its greatest strength.** The park was described by some as an “island of calm” and a “space of peace and tranquility” where people can escape the intensity of downtown Toronto. Some participants said they like that it is “open but hidden”, “public yet private”. Participants said they enjoyed the trees, greenery, squirrels, and beauty across the seasons. Participants also appreciated small design details, like the decision to preserve a tree in the middle of a path rather than removing it or curving the edges of walkways to prevent muddy conditions.

- **Pathways, connections, and seating help with access to the park.** The many benches and seating encourage people to stay and connect with others. The multiple pathways allow people to move easily through the park, especially for students traveling to and from class.
- **The running track is important to the local community.** The 800-metre circular track is a rare and valued feature, accommodating walkers, runners, and people with strollers at the same time.
- **Queen's Park North thrives because there is no formal programming.** Some participants called it a space for "self-programming," where people can sit, picnic, do tai chi, or simply enjoy the shade. One participant said they enjoyed the informal music gatherings at the statue, where people play banjo, ukulele, guitar, or mandolin. They noted that these performers are not buskers, but simply community members enjoying the space.
- **The park is deeply integrated into neighbourhood life.** Some participants said the park is more than a green space; it is a part of daily routines for nearby residents, workers, and students. Some local residents use the space as their backyard. They recalled its long relationship with the University of Toronto and colleges, including memories of students learning surveying techniques in the park. For many, it is a lived and essential part of the community.

Dislikes

- **Frustration with lack of maintenance.** Some participants said they are frustrated with broken benches, unrepaired lights, fallen branches, and the non-functioning fountain. Garbage was also a concern, with many saying the park feels neglected and lacking in basic stewardship. Some discussed the accumulation of garbage around encampments, stressing the importance of having safe and clean spaces for all park users.
- **Lack of permanent washrooms and the lack of maintenance to the porta-potties are a major dislike of many participants.** The porta-potties were described as unsightly, poorly maintained, and unpleasant to walk by, particularly in summer. The absence of permanent, accessible, and family-friendly washrooms was highlighted as a challenge, especially for seniors, people with disabilities, and families with young children. Participants said this limited who could comfortably use the park.
- **Traffic and safety remain problematic.** Busy intersections around the park like Wellesley Street East and Queen's Park Crescent, were described as chaotic and unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. Some participants also raised concerns about night-time safety, pointing to poor lighting in key areas, especially near the track.
- **Seasonal access is challenging.** Winter conditions make the park difficult to use, with paths often slushy and icy, which makes them dangerous to navigate. Some shared concerns about a skating rink including comments that there are not enough cold days over the winter to allow for skating.
- **Certain activities threaten the park's features.** Some said any large activations or events risk harming the trees and undermining the park's natural character.

Participants also expressed concerns about encampments being in ecologically sensitive area and being a source of garbage in the park. Participants also raised concerns about skateboarding on and around the central statue, which could damage the monument.

- **Recent overhead lighting improvements negatively impact cruising activities.** Some participants raised concerns about the overhead lighting installed in the park in 2019, as it inhibits cruising in the park – an activity historically present and practiced by queer communities. There should be balance between safety and preserving private spaces.
- **Concerns about potential donor influence.** Some questioned the ethics of accepting a large donation from the Weston family and worried about whether donor priorities would shape the vision in ways that did not reflect community needs. Some said it was concerning that wealthy donors are given such level of influence over important public parks. Some noted that many other parks in the city could benefit a lot more from this donation and questioned the choice of this park.

2. What opportunities for the future would you like to see considered?

- **Enhance the park without reimagining it.** Participants repeatedly said that they would like to see Queen's Park North "enhanced" but expressed concern about the park being "reimagined". They value the park's current character and cautioned against major design changes that could disrupt its peaceful, community-serving role. Some said specifically that they do not want to see the addition of built structures and/or hard surfaces such as paves, patios or walkways. There were a very small number of participants who disagreed and encouraged the City to consider making Queen's Park North a tourist destination.
- **Preserve and expand the natural environment.** Some want to see more flowers, pollinator gardens, and native trees. Educational signage about flora, fauna, and Taddle Creek that once flowed through the area was recommended, both to celebrate nature and to make the park a more informative space.
- **Honour Indigenous people and history by placing a statue of Haudenosaunee Chief George Johnson (Tekanionwake) or plaque in Queen's Park.** It can be near the King Edward VII's monument, to recognize his pioneering role in protecting forests, his alliance with the Prince of Wales, and his foundational contributions to Canada's early environmental movement. It would help celebrate Indigenous people's role in environmental protection in Canada.
- **Add permanent, inclusive washrooms.** The most consistent request was for permanent, gender-neutral, and accessible washrooms. Participants also suggested additional water fountains, including multi-level designs with pet-friendly attachments. Some participants suggested working with nearby subway, institutional, and University of Toronto spaces to provide washrooms, as opposed to building them in the park.

- **Improve the track and pathways.** Suggestions included resurfacing the running track with a softer material to reduce strain on seniors' knees hips, improving snow clearing in winter, and ensuring paths remain safe for strollers and wheelchairs year-round.
- **Strengthen safety and connections.** Better lighting was recommended to improve safety at night. Participants also suggested improving physical and visual connections to surrounding spaces, such as opening the park more directly to Hart House and King's College Circle by improving pedestrian connections between these places and the park. Currently the vehicular overpass at the southwest corner of the park acts as barrier for pedestrians.
- **Give consideration to the historic context of the park and surrounding area.** Any physical changes to the park should be done with consideration for the look and feel of existing surrounding historic buildings.
- **Keep commercialization and large-scale events out and instead strengthen relationships with the community.** Participants expressed concerns about infrastructure for large events and many also expressed concern about cafés or food vendors in the park, stressing that there are already nearby businesses and parks suited to provide these amenities and services. Some participants also expressed concern that over-activation and over-animation of the park may push certain users out of the park. There's interest in seeing the relationship between the park and the community strengthened, noting it will be a better park if everyone is involved and is focused on keeping it the people's park.
- **Consider low-level bollard lighting.** The lighting should provide a sense of safety to park users and not disturb its natural and cultural environment. Use the type of lighting that would not interfere with nocturnal animals and would not inhibit cruising in the park.

3. What do you like about the draft vision? Do you have any suggestions you would like to see the City consider? If so, what are they?

DRAFT VISION SHARED BY THE CITY:

"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."

- **Participants were cautious about major changes to the park.** They expressed concern about altering the park without fully understanding the consequences, emphasizing that changes must not undermine what currently makes the space valuable, such as green lush spaces. Some said it would be a mistake to redesign it again, referring to the 2015 engagement process that informed 2019 park improvements. Some shared that it would be more appropriate to develop "big moves" and a "vision" for Queens Park South, where the area is less ecologically sensitive and more appropriate to accommodate various activities.

- **Ongoing engagement with the local community is essential to ensure the vision, guiding principles, and design are informed by and serve those that use the park on a regular basis.** Some said that the draft vision feels disconnected from the park's current use. Participants raised concerns that the draft vision has the potential to overemphasize programming and commercial uses at the expense of the park's existing calm and informal character. Some participants said it was important to engage cruising communities properly, and from their experience the City did not do a good job engaging with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

4. What do you like about the draft guiding principles? Do you have any suggestions you would like to see the City consider? If so, what are they?

- **Strong support for incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and being.** Participants supported mapping native species and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into the park's stewardship. They also expressed interest in learning more about the site's cultural and ecological history, including Taddle Creek.
- **Safety and inclusion should be guiding principles.** Some called for principles that prioritize making the park a safe and inclusive space for all. They also suggested thoughtful engagement on sensitive issues like cruising, so the park continues to welcome diverse communities.
- **Stewardship of the park should be emphasized in the guiding principles.** Some participants want to see a principle or principles that prioritize care and protection of the park through ongoing stewardship. Some participants said they supported the principle to protect and celebrate the trees and the principle of ecological and sustainable practices.
- **Participants supported the park's civic role.** They emphasized the importance of explicitly recognizing Queen's Park North as a space for protest, gathering, and civic life.
- **There was strong opposition to positioning the park as a "signature destination."** Some participants said this would sever its local ties and risk making it feel like a space that "belongs to everyone and no one." Instead, they wanted the park to remain a "People's Park" grounded in everyday neighbourhood use.

Workshop Wrap-Up and Next Steps

City representatives and the facilitation team thanked participants for attending and the robust discussion. Many people care deeply about Queen's Park North, and the revitalization process relies on hearing from a full range of interests in the park, including those with different perspectives and priorities. The engagement process includes a number of different ways for

people to provide feedback, and an online survey, focus groups, and pop-ups in the park are all part of the engagement process.

There will be future engagement as the revitalization planning process continues. Phase 2A wraps up at the end of August with a public summary of feedback available in September. Then Phase 2B will run from October through December and will include another community workshop. The final engagement phase to share and seek feedback on a design for Queen's Park North, Phase 2C, is planned for early in the new year (2026).