

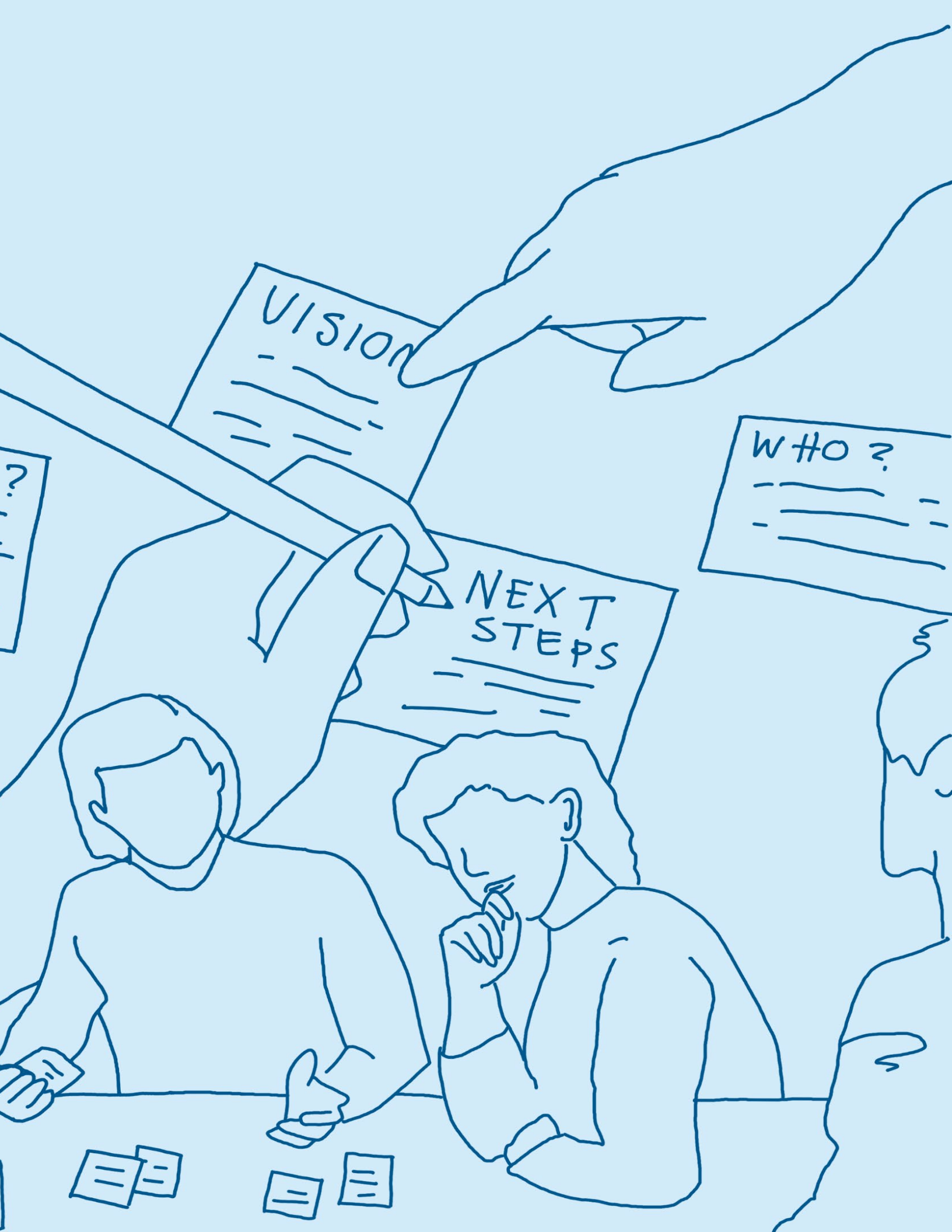
Online Thought Exchange Summary Report

New Park at 15 Wellesley Street East

Phase 1: Towards a Vision

May 2025





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Introduction

A new 3,900 m² park (slightly smaller than a junior soccer field) is coming to 15 Wellesley St. E. – currently a Toronto Parking Authority parking lot at the intersection of Yonge and Wellesley Street East, directly across from Wellesley subway station. The park's design, amenities, and features will be determined through a community engagement process.

Phase 1: Towards a Vision

In this phase of the engagement process, the project team will collect feedback to develop a draft vision statement for the park, a series of guiding principles, and big moves which will guide the development of design options in Community Engagement Phase 2.

The community engagement activities in this phase include:

- an online Thought Exchange activity
- two Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings
- a Site Sensory Tour with CAC members

This report summarizes the Thought Exchange activity.

Thought Exchange

291

Participants

Community members were invited to participate in an online Thought Exchange activity from May 6 to May 20, 2025.

How We Reached People

The community was informed about the online Thought Exchange activity through the project webpage, project updates email list, an e-flyer sent to organizations in the Church Wellesley Village, local Councillor's office communications, signage posted on the site of the new park, and a social media ad that ran for about two weeks.

Thought Exchange: Themes

Participants were asked to complete the following statement: **“the new park at 15 Wellesley St. E. should be a place where...”** Participants were then asked to rate the statements (or “thoughts”) that others had already shared.

291 participants contributed a total of 243 thoughts and 5,561 ratings. A full interactive report is available [online](#).

The most popular thoughts reflected the following themes:

- You can peacefully walk through on your way somewhere in the city.
- People can relax and socialize.
- To enjoy the weather there are not enough green spaces in Toronto.
- There is a break from the greyness of the city core – lush and green. Our diverse community can gather for rest, or events.

The second most popular thoughts reflected the following theme:

- A safe place where people can come together, socialize, and enjoy community events.

Some participants shared concern about loss of parking, and that there are already children's play in the neighbourhood. Some participants also expressed interest in a dog off-leash area, however most people prefer that this be a park geared towards adults.

Survey: Character

In the survey section of the Thought Exchange, participants were asked, **“What would you most like the character of the new park at 15 Wellesley St. E. to be? Select your top 3 choices.”**

The following four park character choices were the most popular among respondents:

1. **Green and sustainable:** A place lush with trees and plantings, designed to conserve resources and create animal habitat (67 percent).
2. **Eventful:** A flexible space for small, local, outdoor events (such as community markets, performances and outdoor movie nights), that can change based on community needs (63 per cent).
3. **Peaceful:** A calm oasis with places to sit and relax (43 percent)
4. **Social:** A space for meeting and gathering (42 percent)

See *Appendix A* for the full list of responses.

Survey: Features

In the survey section of the Thought Exchange, participants were asked, **“When you think about using this new park, what features do you feel are most important? Rank the following options in the order of most important to least important.”**

The following list of park features is ranked in order of popularity, with #1 being the most favoured by respondents and #9 being the least favoured:

1. Seating and seating areas (67 percent)
2. Flexible open green space (61 percent)
3. Drinking fountain/ water bottle filler (58 percent)
4. Shade feature and/or pavilion with seating underneath (55 percent)
5. Flexible space for events or gatherings (55 percent)
6. Planting areas (53 percent)
7. Stage for performances (40 percent)
8. Bicycle parking (34 percent)
9. Quiet reflective spaces (33 percent)

Community Spotlight: Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQ+ and Newcomer Considerations

This section highlights insights from equity-deserving communities—including Indigenous, Black and Black queer, 2SLGBTQ+, newcomer/immigrant, and other historically marginalized groups. These perspectives are intentionally prioritized to ensure that the park design reflects a diversity of lived experiences, cultural knowledge, and community values. By centering voices that have often been excluded from traditional planning processes, we aim to support a design approach that is inclusive, representative, and responsive to the needs of all communities.

Indigenous Community Spotlight

Indigenous participants expressed the importance of ceremonial and cultural practices, such as Sacred Fires, being acknowledged and embedded into park design. Themes of nature, healing, and gathering were tied to identity, belonging, and continuity of tradition.

Top Themes: Gathering and socializing, cultural expression, Sacred Fires, nature connection.

Top Thoughts:

The Top Thoughts noted by Indigenous participants are:

- Beauty, lush planting, and quiet reflectivity offer a reprieve from the overstimulating surroundings. Avoid over programming, too much open paved space and hard scape. Lots of plants, lots of seating pls.
- It is clean and safe. No homeless, no drug addicts. No trash everywhere.
- Before you create another park, there needs to be some means to address the drug use and social issue in the community.
- Open up the back of the Yonge Street buildings allowing for cafes.
- Please spend the resources to clean up the neighborhood.

Black and Black Queer Community Spotlight

Black and Black queer voices emphasized the park as a stage for storytelling, culture, and joy. There was a clear call for visibility, cultural recognition, and celebration of history. Performance spaces, community gathering areas, and representation of Black queer heritage emerged as central design needs.

“The stage provides a place for young people to tell their stories every year. The dance floor is where we dance all night long to music made by our community – the Black queer community.”

“Urban planners often decide on dorky imposed public art; let the community decide what reflects us.”

Top Themes: Prioritization of Black queer spaces, performance, cultural recognition, resilience.

Top Thoughts:

The Top Thoughts noted by Black and Black queer voices participants are:

- You can peacefully walk through on your way somewhere in the city.
- 2SLGBTQ and downtown communities can feel included, safe and grow together.
- People enjoy outdoor events and activities
- People can relax and socialize
- There is a break from the greyness of the city core - lush and green.

2SLGBTQ+ Community Spotlight

2SLGBTQ+ participants consistently connected the park to feelings of safety, liberation, and cultural pride. Themes included inclusive washrooms, safe gathering spaces, and symbolic recognition of queer and trans communities. The park is envisioned as both a celebration space (e.g., Pride) and a welcoming everyday refuge.

“2SLGBTQ and downtown communities can feel included when there is intentional space for us.”

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

Top Themes: Inclusivity, identity, safety, belonging, cultural celebration.

Top Thoughts:

The Top Thoughts noted by 2SLGBTQ+ participants are:

- You can peacefully walk through on your way somewhere in the city.
- 2SLGBTQ and downtown communities can feel included, safe and grow together.
- People enjoy outdoor events and activities
- People can relax and socialize
- There is a break from the greyness of the city core - lush and green.

Newcomer & Immigrant Community Spotlight

Newcomer and immigrant participants highlighted the park as a gateway to community life, emphasizing cleanliness, maintenance, and natural beauty. Green space and wildlife were seen as symbols of belonging, while cultural expression and inclusion were viewed as pathways to integration.

“Please spend the resources to clean up the neighbourhood so the park can be safe and inviting.”

“When I moved here, I really liked the nature in Canada. Birds, dogs, and green space made me feel at home.”

Top Themes: Adaptation, cleanliness, connection to green spaces, cultural inclusion.

Thought Thoughts:

The Top Thoughts noted by Newcomer & Immigrant participants are:

- A public plaza for events, trees and seating around the perimeter. An outdoor gym would be very popular here. Some kind of monument to the LGBTQ+
- I can socialize and hang out - not many 3rd places to socialize without paying money.
- People and dogs hang out. The city is full of places to do things. We need more spaces to do nothing.
- you can feel safe to relax and sit there are not many clean or safe public spots to sit in the Village
- There is shade and green space and nature plantings. These features are calming, absorb rain and excess moisture, and present a pleasing environment.

Cross-Community Themes

Looking across groups, several shared priorities emerge:

- **Inclusivity:** All communities want the park to be accessible, safe, and explicitly welcoming.
- **Cultural Recognition:** Recognition of Indigenous, Black, queer, and newcomer histories and contributions.
- **Spaces for Gathering:** From large Pride events to small picnics, the park must balance major cultural moments with daily uses.
- **Nature & Healing:** Greenery, shade, and natural features consistently emerged as sources of peace, comfort, and identity.
- **Performance & Expression:** Music, art, and storytelling are vital ways for communities to feel seen and celebrated.

The Community Spotlights demonstrate the park's role as far more than green infrastructure: it is a stage for identity, memory, healing, and belonging. By designing with these voices at the centre, the new park at 15 Wellesley Street East can become a landmark of inclusivity, resilience, and joy for the Church-Wellesley neighbourhood and the city at large.

Next Steps

Based on input from this ThoughtExchange summary, as well as other Phase 1 engagement data, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and project team will develop a draft vision statement, guiding principles, and key ideas to guide the new park's design. These will be the main outcomes of Phase 1 of the community engagement process.

In Phase 2, the team will use these outcomes to create two draft park design options. These options will be shared with the community for feedback to help shape the final preferred design.

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

Appendix

To view all thoughts and ratings, visit the full interactive report [online](#).

Appendix A: Character

What would you most like the character of the new park at 15 Wellesley Street West to be? Select your top three choices.



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Responses

%		Answer <i>(Multiple select)</i>
67%	(179)	Green and Sustainable: A place lush with trees and plantings, designed to conserve resources and create animal habitat
63%	(167)	Eventful: A flexible space for small, local, outdoor events (such as community markets, performances, outdoor movie nights), that can change based on community needs
42%	(113)	Social: A space for meeting and gathering
43%	(114)	Peaceful: A calm oasis with places to sit and relax
35%	(92)	Flexible: A space that can change based on community needs
19%	(51)	Whimsical: An area that is colourful and unexpected
22%	(59)	Playful and active: A space for people of all ages to play and be physically active together
16%	(43)	Historic: A place to learn and celebrate local heritage, including Indigenous Placekeeping

Appendix B: Features

When you think about using this new park, what park features do you feel are most important? Select all that apply.



247
Responses

%		Answer <i>(Multiple select)</i>
67%	(165)	Seating and seating areas
55%	(136)	Shade feature and/or pavilion with seating underneath
34%	(85)	Bicycle parking
53%	(130)	Planting areas
61%	(150)	Flexible open green space
17%	(41)	Educational elements (such as signage and/or historical interpretation)
19%	(47)	Exercise equipment
55%	(135)	Flexible space for events or gatherings
33%	(82)	Quiet reflective spaces
10%	(25)	Games tables, such as ping pong or chess
9%	(22)	Play equipment for children
15%	(37)	Sports courts
58%	(144)	Drinking fountain/ water bottle filler
40%	(99)	Stage for performances
14%	(34)	Other

Appendix C: Demographics

Do you identify as belonging to any of the following communities? Select all that apply.



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Responses

%		Answer <i>(Multiple select)</i>
2%	(5)	Indigenous to Canada
2%	(4)	Black
20%	(48)	Person of Colour
66%	(163)	LGBTQ2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit)
11%	(28)	Person living with a disability
4%	(11)	Newcomer and/or refugee
24%	(59)	Woman
52%	(127)	Man
0%	(1)	Transwoman
1%	(3)	Trans man
7%	(18)	Gender non-binary (including gender fluid, genderqueer, androgynous)
2%	(4)	Two-Spirit
0%	(1)	None of the above
3%	(8)	Prefer not to answer

Appendix D: Survey Awareness

Q10 | How did you find out about this survey? Select all that apply.

Answered: 243

Not answered: 48 ?

