

Revitalization of Queen's Park North
Focus Group with Parks, Trees, and Nature Groups

Summary of Discussion

Online via Zoom

Thursday, August 12, 2025; 7:00 – 8:30pm

Participants: Friends of Queen's Park North, Park People, Toronto Field Naturalists, Maximum City, Toronto Environmental Alliance, Toronto Public Space Committee

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

Feedback on protecting and enhancing the trees in Queens Park North

1. Greatly appreciate the **emphasis and focus on protecting the trees and their root zones and using Indigenous knowledge within the context of tree stewardship/ecological restoration** in Queen's Park North. Especially the work to look at invasive species and how to improve the overall ecological health of the park and identify site-specific ecological restoration strategies. Determining how best to balance the ecological health of the trees with the other uses of the park will be important.
2. **Places like Queen's Park North are precious in the City especially in the face of climate change.** Students in the park for summer camp used the trees on hot days for shade and noted that it was 4 to 5 degrees cooler under the trees. Campers also noticed that some trees were near the end of their life cycle and were keen to understand the succession plan for trees in the park.
3. **Some trees in the park are not beneficial to the overall ecosystem of the park.** For example, the Norway Maples in the park are invasive and can be allelopathic (when one plant releases substances that can impact the growth of neighbouring plants). This is important to explain to those who are advocating to save all the trees in the park.
4. **Indigenous co-stewardship** can play a key part in this process to understand what species are native to the area and can help improve the overall health of the natural environment in the park. There are opportunities for companion plantings (e.g., pawpaw trees with butternuts) and leaving dead branches on site to enrich the ecosystem.
5. **Support for finding ways to go beyond simply "protecting" heritage trees to "enhancing" what is already there.** Climate change is putting more and more stress on the urban environment and we need to continue to find ways to support the natural environment within the city.
6. **Love the idea of stewardship opportunities.** We should be thinking about ways that we can use the park to help teach people about ecology. Using fencing to keep people away from the root zones is an important teaching opportunity, as is acknowledging the water.
7. **Protection zones play an important role.** We need to explore ways to protect important trees. Fencing / barriers can be put in place that still allow people to see / experience important trees without trampling or damaging their root zones.
8. **The City's Forestry team and the City's Tree Bylaws are critical to how work moves forward with the park.** Every tree in the park is protected by the bylaw, regardless of its size or condition. In addition to

regulating tree removal, the bylaws also regulate tree injury. The City gives permits for tree injuries. We know that trees can sustain a certain impact.

9. Consider using **Taddle Creek as an opportunity to honour the history of the water** at the same time as honouring the ecological history of the land.
10. **Programming will be important to giving the space vibrancy.** Look for opportunities for activation to be built into the design, especially with Indigenous partnerships. Red Pepper Spectacle Arts had a Mosaic project that was supposed to be in Queen's Park North.
11. **Higher use areas require additional maintenance.** The southern portion of the park is more heavily used and as result is more worn and requires more maintenance / attention.

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."

1. **Indigenous placekeeping and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and being** should be elevated to the vision as well as being included in the guiding principles.
2. **The term respect in "respects the existing beauty"** does not go far enough. The vision should include stronger language such as "enhance", "promote", or "uphold". "Protect" is not strong enough.
3. **Provide additional detail / further explain what is meant by "throughout the seasons"**. Understand this primarily relates to activating the park in winter months. However, given we are seeing warmer and "greyer" winters with less opportunity for activities such as skating due to climate change (e.g., there were fewer than 12 days for natural ice skating last winter) we need to think about what it will mean to activate the park in this type of winter weather.

Feedback on the Guiding Principles:

1. **Include more information and language in the guiding principles to make them stronger and enforceable.** Currently the language is too succinct and superficial. A vision can be succinct but the guiding principles need additional detail, such as targets to give them more teeth. For example, a principle that deals with ecological integrity should have targets that can be measured and met. This could be supported by a yearly report on the ecological health of the park, seasonal soil recovery projects, etc. All of this requires a high standard of operations and maintenance to make Queen's Park North a model multi-generational imitative.
2. **It's unclear what "address outstanding priorities from the 2019 project" means** without additional information about this project and its priorities.
3. **The language of "signature Toronto designation" makes me nervous** that changes will focus more on making the park a tourist destination with non-ecological programming that could conflict with protecting the trees in the park.
4. **Expand the principle "protect and celebrate the trees"**. If this is meant to be the primary focus of the process, then attention to in the principles should reflect this priority.
5. **Further explain what is meant by "connect the park to existing and emerging open spaces in the area"**. For example, does this mean using similar design elements used in the surrounding area to make the park space feel more cohesive with the surrounding area?

Other thoughts

1. **Horse and war memorial do not have a lot of relevance to young people.** The story of the horse statue is confusing. The war memorial feels important. Young people want to see something that is more relevant to them and connects to their experience of the park.
2. **Queer spaces:** Park People and the Toronto Society of Architects have done a lot of work with cultural districts and mapping of queer space and may be able to help navigate and inform this work in relation to Queens Park North.
3. **Safety:** Summer camp students described feeling uncomfortable and unsafe as they spent more time in the park. Safety is a loaded term and there are often differences between perceptions of safety and actual safety. Regardless this needs to be further explored.
4. **Elevation change:** In the northwest portion of the park there is a significant drop in elevation from the park to the road with no real protection for park users from vehicles. This should be addressed.