

Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2 Summary Report

Western Beaches Public Realm Plan Update

Community Engagement Phase 1: Refreshing a Vision

July 3, 2025







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Introduction

The City of Toronto is working with local residents, community groups, and waterfront users to refresh the Western Beaches Public Realm Plan — a long-term vision for how this cherished stretch of the waterfront can better serve the people who live, work, and play here.

Phase 2 engagement focused on refining the community-led vision and exploring potential “Big Moves.” Activities included a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) workshop, an Indigenous Advisory Circle meeting, public pop-ups, and online engagement.

This summary report captures feedback from the second CAC meeting, held on July 3, 2025 at Swansea Town Hall. The meeting introduced members to draft Vision and Guiding Principles, provided opportunities for interactive feedback, and hosted breakout workshops on identity, mobility, recreation, and natural systems.

Meeting Format

The meeting was held in person at Swansea Town Hall and was attended by 29 people in total, including 19 CAC members and 10 City staff and consultants.

The session was scheduled from 6:00 to 9:00 PM, though discussions extended slightly past the scheduled end time, wrapping up around 9:15 PM. Participants were given the option to leave at 9:00, but all chose to stay and continue the conversation, reflecting the high level of engagement and shared enthusiasm for the project.

The first portion of the meeting (approximately 6:00–7:30 PM) focused on presentations, while the majority of participatory activities took place between 7:30 and 9:15 PM.

The agenda unfolded as follows:

- 1. Sign-In & Registration**

- Participants were welcomed with name tags and refreshments.

- 2. Welcome & Introductions**

- Facilitators outlined the purpose of the CAC and provided an overview of the evening’s goals.

- 3. Project Presentation**

- The consulting team presented background research, pre-engagement findings, a site inventory and analysis, and the emerging Vision Statement and Guiding Principles.

4. Workshop: Vision & Guiding Principles

- Participants engaged in a dot-voting exercise to indicate agreement with the draft Guiding Principles.
- A second round of dot-voting asked members to select their top priority principles.
- Participants were also invited to add comments and refinements.

5. Precedents: Framing Towards Big Moves

- A short presentation showcased precedents from other waterfronts, providing inspiration for discussions about future possibilities.

6. Breakout Activity: Exploring Big Moves

- Participants rotated between four themed tables: Place Identity, Mobility, Recreation & Reflection, and Natural Environment & Shoreline.
- Each rotation lasted approximately 10 minutes, with groups sharing ideas, responding to prompts, and exploring challenges and opportunities.

7. Group Report-Backs

- One representative from each table shared highlights from their discussions in a 2-minute report-back.
- This helped surface common priorities and allowed all participants to hear across themes.

8. Next Steps & Closing Remarks

What We Heard

Discussion Highlights

Participants remained highly engaged throughout the evening, with conversations that were thoughtful, constructive, and solution-oriented. The tone of the meeting was positive and collaborative, reflecting a shared commitment to shaping a vibrant and inclusive waterfront vision.

Key Themes Included:

- Broad alignment with the emerging Vision Statement (no revisions requested).
- Strong support for embedding Indigenous presence and celebrating diverse cultures.
- Acknowledgment that water quality, safety, and access are central to revitalization.
- Calls for year-round use through seasonal programming and infrastructure.
- Recognition of the need for ecological restoration alongside public activation.
- Concerns about trail congestion, safety, and access across Lake Shore Boulevard.
- Emphasis on a need for recreational activities, with calls for more food options, cafés, picnic areas, and places to enjoy drinks, reflecting Toronto's diversity and encouraging people to linger and return.

Vision & Guiding Principles Feedback

Emerging Vision Statement

Participants were given an opportunity to share their thoughts on the emerging vision statement as part of the engagement process. Feedback was generally positive, with participants expressing support for the overall direction. One comment suggested that the statement could be shortened, but no other revisions or suggestions were raised, indicating broad alignment with the proposed vision at this stage.

Emerging Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles with the Most Agreement

Participants used a dot-voting exercise to indicate support for each draft principle. Results are listed below in order of most to least support.

1. Strengthen access to park destinations and connections to nearby neighbourhoods by active transportation and transit. (27 Votes)
2. Create welcoming places to sit, gather, and enjoy food and drink that encourage people to linger and return. (25 Votes)
3. Improve safety for all road and trail users by providing clear, continuous, and universally accessible paths for walking, cycling, and rowing. (22 Votes)
4. Expand access to water-based recreation, including swimming, paddling, and beach activities that invite interaction with the shoreline. (21 Votes)
5. Embed climate resilience through adaptive planting, shade, and stormwater strategies that respond to a changing climate. (21 Votes)
6. Create immersive lakefront experiences that allow people to safely touch, see, and feel the water. (21 Votes)
7. Restore shoreline habitats, protect ecological systems, and prioritize nature-based solutions throughout the site. (18 Votes)
8. Incorporate public art, interpretation, and storytelling that encourages learning about the history of the place and its culture. (18 Votes)
9. Reveal the distinct identity of the Western Beaches through design that reflects its cultural history and natural character. (18 Votes)
10. Create a flexible plan and design with phased implementation to accommodate future growth and changing needs. (18 Votes).
11. Reflect Indigenous ways of being and the teaching of “All Our Relations” by designing a public realm that expresses interconnection and supports the wellbeing of all forms of life. (17 Votes).
12. Design a range of spaces that support diverse activities—from quiet reflection to active play—for people of all ages and abilities. (17 Votes)
13. Incorporate flexible infrastructure and programming that embraces all seasons, including Indigenous seasonal calendars. (16 Votes)
14. Celebrate Indigenous presence and embed Indigenous cultures, values, and teachings through design, naming, art, and interpretation. (14 Votes).

Guiding Principles Selected as Top Priorities

A second round of dot-voting asked participants to identify which draft principles they felt were the highest priorities. Results are shown below in order of most to least support.

1. Restore shoreline habitats, protect ecological systems, and prioritize nature-based solutions throughout the site. (12 Votes)
2. Expand access to water-based recreation, including swimming, paddling, and beach activities that invite interaction with the shoreline. (11 Votes)
3. Create welcoming places to sit, gather, and enjoy food and drink that encourage people to linger and return. (10 Votes)
4. Celebrate Indigenous presence and embed Indigenous cultures, values, and teachings through design, naming, art, and interpretation. (8 Votes).
5. Embed climate resilience through adaptive planting, shade, and stormwater strategies that respond to a changing climate. (7 Votes)
6. Strengthen access to park destinations and connections to nearby neighbourhoods by active transportation and transit. (7 Votes)
7. Improve safety for all road and trail users by providing clear, continuous, and universally accessible paths for walking, cycling, and rowing. (6 Votes)
8. Reflect Indigenous ways of being and the teaching of “All Our Relations” by designing a public realm that expresses interconnection and supports the wellbeing of all forms of life. (6 Votes).
9. Design a range of spaces that support diverse activities—from quiet reflection to active play—for people of all ages and abilities. (5 Votes)
10. Incorporate public art, interpretation, and storytelling that encourages learning about the history of the place and its culture. (4 Votes)
11. Incorporate flexible infrastructure and programming that embraces all seasons, including Indigenous seasonal calendars. (4 Votes)
12. Reveal the distinct identity of the Western Beaches through design that reflects its cultural history and natural character. (3 Votes)
13. Create a flexible plan and design with phased implementation to accommodate future growth and changing needs. (2 Votes).
14. Create immersive lakefront experiences that allow people to safely touch, see, and feel the water. (2 Votes)

Additional Comments on Guiding Principles

Participants were invited to share any additional Guiding Principles they felt were missing, not clearly reflected, or to suggest refinements to the draft principles. Their direct comments are stated below and organized into thematic categories.

Cultural Activation & Inclusivity

- Celebrate Indigenous culture through food, drink, and storytelling.
- Make the site a destination: a place to have a drink and experience diverse cultures.

- Connect to Toronto's diverse communities (e.g., Kensington Market) and reflect them through programming.
- Include diverse vendors to showcase different cultures and support the local economy.

Public Realm Design & Programming

- Activate the space in winter (e.g., Sunnyside Pavilion, seasonal events, hot chocolate for wind).
- Use pedestrian-friendly and seasonal design strategies (e.g., pedestrian tunnels).
- Encourage flexible recreational use (e.g., basketball sharing space with tennis or open grass areas).
- Design clear and distinct elements within the space – ensure each area reads differently and with purpose.

Access, Mobility & Connectivity

- Improve pedestrian safety and experience; create barriers from car traffic for noise, safety, and visual relief.
- Prioritize inclusive connections and movement throughout the site – wayfinding and access should feel seamless.
- Consider boat transit or water taxi connections to Downtown Toronto, Ferry Terminal and the Toronto Islands.

Water, Nature & Infrastructure

- Naturalize the mouth of the Humber River with design precedent from the Port Lands Flood Protection.
- Explore concepts like artificial islands with ecological and public uses.
- Incorporate hard engineering elements (e.g., stormwater management, water quality infrastructure) visibly and meaningfully.
- Improve water safety for all users.

Notes for Refinement

- Consolidate overlapping ideas. For example:
 - Guiding Principle 5 (*“Restore shoreline habitats, protect ecological systems, and prioritize nature-based solutions throughout the site”*) and Guiding Principle 12 (*“Embed climate resilience through adaptive planting, shade, and stormwater strategies that respond to a changing climate”*) could be combined or streamlined.
 - Guiding Principle 3 (*“Celebrate Indigenous presence and embed Indigenous cultures, values, and teachings through design, naming, art, and interpretation”*) Guiding Principle 4 (*“Reflect Indigenous ways of being and the teaching of ‘All Our Relations’ by designing a public realm that expresses interconnection and supports the wellbeing of all forms of life”*) are closely related and could be merged to avoid repetition.
- Ensure overlapping concepts are grouped or made distinct for better readability.

Big Moves Breakout Workshop

The intent of the workshop was to understand people’s wants and needs, their ideas for the place, and their expectations. These were framed as “big moves.” In this context, Big Moves refer to the bold ideas and priorities participants want to see realized on the site.

During this part of the session, participants took part in a rotating breakout activity focused on four key themes:

- Recreation & Reflection
- Natural Environment & Shoreline
- Mobility
- Place Identity

Small groups circulated between four themed tables, spending approximately 10 minutes at each station. At each table, participants were prompted to share ideas, respond to key questions, and explore the project from different perspectives. Following the breakout rotations, a brief report-back session was held. The facilitator at each table shared highlights from their discussions with the full group, capturing key ideas and reflections in about two minutes each. This helped surface common interests and priorities while allowing participants to hear insights from all four themes.

A fifth theme, Indigeneity, was not set up as a separate breakout table because it is intended to serve as an overarching theme embedded across all aspects of the project rather than addressed in isolation. A dedicated Indigenous engagement process was

also held in parallel, providing focused input and ensuring that Indigenous voices are integrated throughout the other themes.

Participants direct comments are stated below and organized into thematic categories within each of the four key themes.

Recreation & Reflection

Participants highlighted the need for diverse recreation opportunities, improved food and beverage options, and spaces that support both active play and quiet gathering.

Food & Beverage

- Explore a Parc LaFontaine-style non-profit restaurant (all profits reinvested).
- Provide better food and beverage opportunities, including Indigenous vendors.
- Ensure four-season food service — warm in winter, cool in summer.
- Food makes a place “sticky” — creates reasons to linger.
- Add a pizza stand.
- Provide year-round food and drink programming at Sunnyside and Joy Oil.
- Expand vending (bike rental, food) under the Gardiner Expressway — avoid chain vendors.

Recreation & Play

- Provide multipurpose/flexible recreation spaces.
- Add more multi-sport courts (not just tennis): basketball, volleyball, disc golf.
- Provide better playgrounds with challenge zones and “risky play.”
- Add a reflexology path.
- Provide firepits and gathering spaces.
- Provide nap zones or quiet seating nooks.
- Extend Gus Ryder Pool into the lake.
- Provide public kayak and paddleboard storage and launch areas.
- Explore a borrow-a-disc system for disc golf.
- Provide fishing nodes.
- Designate swimming points with safe access into the water.
- Upgrade clubhouses or recreation facilities (e.g., Club M).

Indigenous Presence & Cultural Interpretation

- Provide opportunities for Indigenous food, vendors, and programming.
- Encourage Indigenous-led events (e.g., pow wows, storytelling).

- Provide site-wide Indigenous cultural interpretation.
- Use firepit areas as education zones (e.g., Indigenous fire teachings).
- Provide interpretive signage that fosters connection to land and natural materials.

Event Programming & Activation

- Do more with Sunnyside Pavilion.
- Coordinate events across the Western Beaches.
- Improve advertising and communication of park events.
- Identify and designate space for fireworks and sky events.
- Expand programming at the Joy Oil heritage building.

Nature & Landscape Design

- Play with topography and create nature-based recreation zones.
- Recreate pebble beaches to bring back the sound and feel of water.
- Encourage connections to land through materials and design.
- Provide experiential, immersive lakefront zones.
- Add green spaces in areas of low-income or limited access.
- Reduce hostile architecture (e.g., anti-homeless design).

Water Access, Safety & Quality

- Improve water access at Marilyn Bell Park.
- Improve public access to the beach and water (inclusive and accessible).
- Provide more information about water safety and relative risk.
- Ensure water recreation is supported with better education and water quality monitoring.
- Provide safe routes and signage for swimming, kayaking, and fishing.
- Add safe splash pads and swimming access from the rail corridor edge.

Lighting, Safety & Year-Round Comfort

- Provide better lighting for homeward routes and safety at night.
- Improve signage and infrastructure for all-season use.
- Create identity and foster a sense of community year-round.
- Improve and winterize public washrooms.
- Address identity and sense of safety, especially for marginalized groups

Natural Environment & Shoreline

Comments stressed the value of ecological restoration, shoreline improvements, and celebrating the natural environment as a defining feature.

Restoring Natural Systems

- Daylight rivers and lost creeks.
- Improve the quality of wetlands.
- Address combined sewer overflows (CSOs) — separate sewage from stormwater and wetlands.
- Clean up storm and sewage pollution in the water.
- Reintroduce or protect lost creeks and natural drainage corridors.

Shoreline & Habitat Enhancements

- Recreate pebble and stoney beach areas.
- Explore rocky shoreline treatments to improve biodiversity.
- Draw lessons from Humber Bay Park.
- Design land bridges that integrate natural features and accommodate movement.

Biodiversity & Wildlife

- Support Canadian geese and broader urban biodiversity.
- Enhance wetland habitats.
- Design for multiple species, not just human uses.
- Include holistic strategies to manage the dominance of any single urban species (e.g., Canadian geese), such as reducing open lawn areas, planting taller grasses, or encouraging natural predators.

Identity & Interpretation

- Celebrate the natural environment as a key part of identity.
- Use design to reflect environmental history and current ecological values.
- Accommodate multiple uses while protecting natural habitat.

Mobility

Feedback focused on improving cycling, pedestrian, and transit connections to ensure safer and more accessible movement throughout the area.

Cycling Infrastructure

- A bike lane on Lakeshore is safer than a shared cyclist–pedestrian multi-use trail.
- The Pan Am Path is used by pedestrians — needs clear signage.
- Build a designated cyclist bridge.
- Lengthen the Roncesvalles Pedestrian bridge to create an entrance on the south side of the Martin Goodman Trail and reduce conflicts with cyclists.
- Current bridge is too narrow — arrival at Palais Royale is dangerous.
- Add more bike racks at destinations.
- Move the trail away from car crossings on bridges.

Pedestrian Connectivity

- Create a better link between the beaches and High Park.
- Provide barriers that let pedestrians and traffic through at every underpass of major roads.
- Provide access to the pool from the pedestrian side instead of the cyclist side.
- Add paths along Lakeshore.
- Add more access points for mobility devices.
- Provide new, wider paths that work well.
- Improve underpasses — currently ugly and poorly maintained (e.g., Windermere).
- Explore more natural ways to connect (e.g., “land bridge”).

Transit Improvements

- Improve transit: bus stops or shuttle.
- Provide more TTC access.
- Add bus stops along both sides of Lakeshore.

Crossings & Traffic Safety

- Consider widening sections by reducing median size.
- Increase the frequency of traffic lights.
- Provide more temporary bridges.

Place Identity

Participants emphasized the importance of history, culture, and community atmosphere in shaping the site's identity.

Celebrating History, Culture, and Meaning

- Layer Indigenous, natural, and settler histories into the space.
- Celebrate history but also celebrate the now — make the place feel alive.
- Express site history outside of buildings like Palais Royale, not just inside.
- Palais Royale dance floor history and Sunnyside sessions are worth remembering.
- Joy Oil station: recognize old heritage stations — what will its future be?
- Monuments need repair — some are “ugly” and detract from the place.
- Change the name of Budapest Park to reflect a more local or Indigenous identity.
- Celebrate the site's layered significance: Humber River confluence, migratory birds, past uses.

Connecting with Nature and the Lake

- Create a stronger connection between urban life and nature.
- Acknowledge the energy of specific features — e.g., the willow tree, peaceful areas.
- Celebrate the lake as the special, defining feature of the site.
- Water should be clean and accessible — “we want to swim, not need a pool”.
- Reclaim and daylight buried rivers and creeks.
- Protect natural feel — don't over-manicure; “hard to get to” can be a positive.
- Floating platforms or lake pools like Copenhagen – especially for youth.
- Celebrate natural rhythms through Indigenous public art (e.g., smudging at bridges, art at piers).
- Create more access points to the water — break through physical and social barriers.

Indigenous Presence and Cultural Interpretation

- Integrate Indigenous art and storytelling throughout the site.
- Use art, signage, and infrastructure intentionally to support cultural expression.
- Ask: “What makes this place Indigenous to this land?”
- Eastern entrance and Humber River: good places for Indigenous art or ceremony.
- Reclaim natural + cultural identity through stories, placemaking, and design.

Placemaking, Signage, and Atmosphere

- Improve signage — current signs are hidden or absent.
- Use signage as both wayfinding and storytelling (e.g., art + interpretation).
- Friendly, inviting information (non-hostile and accessible).
- Create quiet, special spaces with a peaceful atmosphere.
- Space amenities intentionally.
- Install consistent street furniture (benches, picnic tables) to reinforce identity.
- More shade/shelter from sun and rain.
- Pavilions and trellises should feel enjoyable and welcoming.

Equitable Access and Community Use

- Beaches and lakeshore should feel like the “backyard” of the public, not private clubs.
- Spread access and programming more equally between the west and east sides.
- Provide more space for informal uses — picnics, canoe storage, BBQs.
- Add washrooms that are accessible and free year-round.
- Improve the Dufferin connection — currently unclear and difficult.
- Provide non-hostile seating, safe gathering spots, and spaces for diverse communities.
- Ensure new spaces feel welcoming to youth and young families.

Questions & Comments During Presentation

During the presentation, CAC members raised questions (**Q**) and comments (**C**) on water quality, Indigenous engagement, accessibility, and shoreline design.

Water Quality

C1. Bubblers were seen as effective at controlling algae in the past; participants asked whether similar approaches could be reintroduced.

C2. Members discussed natural filtration strategies and water testing protocols (e.g., differences between coloured flag status at Sunnyside Beach).

Previous Planning Work

Q1. Members asked what elements from the 2009 Master Plan remain unbuilt and why.

A1. The Consultant Team advised that they will follow up with a list of implementation activities from the 2009 Master Plan and their status.

Indigenous Engagement

Q2. Some asked why Indigenous representatives were not present at this session.

A2. The project team clarified that Indigenous communities are being engaged in dedicated meetings and committed to sharing findings with the CAC.

Accessibility & Inclusion

C3. Requests were made to directly engage disability groups to evaluate what works and what does not on site.

Shoreline & Breakwater Design

Q3. Questions were raised about who owns the breakwater and whether raising its height could block views of the lake.

A3. City staff described the complex ownership status of the breakwater.

C4. Members emphasized the importance of maintaining visual and physical connections to the waterfront.

Equitable Access to the Waterfront

C5. Participants expressed that access to the water should be available to all, referencing the aspiration of “Humber Bay for All.”

Post-Meeting Feedback

Following the CAC workshop, members were invited to submit additional written comments. Feedback reinforced themes from the discussion and added new ideas. Key points included:

Sunnyside Pavilion & Destinations

- Strong interest in refurbishing and activating Sunnyside Pavilion as a year-round hub for events, food, and cultural programming.
- Inspiration drawn from European waterfronts, with multi-generational and all-season uses such as fishing, swimming, and gathering.
- Suggestions for fun and practical amenities like trampolines or solar-panel sun shelters.

Mobility, Safety & Connectivity

- Concerns about congestion and safety conflicts on the Martin Goodman Trail, especially with high-speed e-bikes and e-scooters.
- Calls for safer pedestrian-only paths and improved north–south access across Lake Shore Boulevard, the rail corridor, and Gardiner Expressway.
- Suggestions for a pilot TTC bus route linking Exhibition Place and Humber Bay Shores, and more Toronto Bike Share capacity.

Public Amenities & Comfort

- Requests for more and better washrooms, particularly accessible ones.
- Suggestions for outdoor showers at Sunnyside Beach and Budapest Park.
- Calls for shaded areas and winterized structures to improve year-round comfort.

Cultural Heritage & Indigenous Placekeeping

- Requests for greater visibility of Indigenous voices, advisors, and operations.
- Suggestions for dedicated space for Indigenous gathering, ceremony, and cultural activities.
- Ideas for expanded Indigenous art, storytelling, and reconciliation-focused interpretation, as well as plaques recognizing tree heritage.

Environment, Shoreline & Water Quality

- Calls for shoreline restoration, habitat protection, and more frequent beach cleanups.
- Concerns about debris, as well as outflows from Grenadier Pond and Lost Creek affecting water quality.
- Interest in exploring Pebble Beach concepts as an alternative shoreline experience.

Programming & Activation

- Requests for more cafés and diverse food options, including container-style cafés.
- Desire for music, events, and year-round programming that create a sense of community.

Signage, Monuments & Interpretation

- Suggestions to reinterpret or replace aging monuments with more relevant cultural uses of green space.

- Interest in storytelling around Indigenous history, local literature, natural ecology, and cultural memory (e.g., Joy Oil Station, Trans Canada Trail).
- Requests to ensure existing Indigenous artworks, such as the Creation Story, are included in the cultural inventory.

Next Steps

The feedback from CAC #2 will inform refinement to the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, as well as help inform the development of “Big Moves”. A draft plan will be developed for fall 2025, when CAC members will reconvene to review, refine, and advise before broader consultation. The plan will be finalized based on what we heard in fall 2025 and presented at Committee and Council in the first half of 2026.

Acknowledgements

City of Toronto

Parks & Recreation

Kaly Tobe, Senior Project Coordinator, Parks Planning and Strategic Initiatives

Lori Ellis, Senior Project Manager, Parks Planning and Strategic Initiatives

Danny Brown, Project Development Officer, Parks Planning and Strategic Initiatives

Jill MacLachlan, Supervisor Outreach and Special Projects, Strategic Project Implementation and Community Engagement

City Planning

Heather Ingles Baron, Project Manager, Waterfront Secretariat

Wai Ming Lo, Technical Coordinator, Waterfront Secretariat

Indigenous Affairs Office

Fred Martin, Project Manager Waterfront, Office of the Chief of Staff

Transportation Services

Sabrina da Rosa Machry, Transportation Planner, Area Transportation Planning

Consulting Team

DIALOG

Dorsa Jalalian, Associate, Senior Urban Designer

Bryce Miranda, Partner, Landscape Architect

Haniya Abi Khuzam, Senior Landscape Designer

Community Members

We appreciate all the community members who engaged with us during the second Community Advisory Committee for the Western Beaches Public Realm Plan Update. Your questions, insights, and feedback have been invaluable in refining our materials and enhancing the overall experience for all participants.

To learn more about the project, visit toronto.ca/WesternBeaches