

Community Workshop 2 Summary Report

Queen's Park North Revitalization

Community Engagement Phase 2: Exploring Design Options

November 4, 2025





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Overview



On Tuesday, November 4, 2025, the City hosted the second Community Workshop and Open House for the Revitalization of Queen's Park North. Approximately 65 people attended the Community Workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to provide updates on the revitalization planning process, share a summary of feedback to date, and share and seek feedback on the draft Big Moves and emerging design ideas.

Following introductions, staff from City of Toronto Parks and Recreation provided an update on progress to date and the design team from Janet Rosenberg & Studio (JRS)_ and Trophic Design presented the emerging design ideas. After the presentation, participants asked questions through a facilitated plenary discussion before breaking into three workshop stations.

The workshop stations focused on three topics:

- Trees and Nature
- Community and Cultural Heritage
- Visitor Experience

The meeting concluded with a report back on feedback shared at each of the workshop stations and a closing plenary discussion. Please see the agenda included as Attachment A.

Questions to participants included:

In each of the three workshop stations, participants were asked to provide feedback on the **emerging design ideas** by answering the following questions:

1. Are there any you really like?
2. Are there any that are worrying or concerning to you?
3. Do you have any suggestions on how we could address your concerns (or any other feedback)?

Third Party Public prepared this summary and shared it with participants in draft for review before it was finalized; it is not intended as a verbatim transcript.

How We Reached People

Notice of the Community Workshop was shared through various digital and in-person methods. These included outreach to local institutions and community organizations; 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

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

- **Strong support for some of the core design ideas shared.** The emphasis on trees and planting and opening up of the centre of the park by relocating the statue were the most strongly supported ideas shared. There were some at the meeting who shared support for other ideas – the treewalk, the washroom, the running track, and food and beverage in the park – however the need and appropriateness of these elements in Queen’s Park North were also strongly contested by others.
- **Concern that too much is being proposed for Queen’s Park North.** Many participants shared concerns that proposed design ideas will bring too much change and too many structures (e.g., the kiosk, café, washroom, and treewalk) to Queen’s Park North. Participants questioned the viability of the structures and are concerned they will negatively impact the trees and natural environment and peaceful enjoyment of the park. Participants also reiterated concerns about ongoing and future maintenance of the park.
- **Governance should be discussed upfront, not after the park design.** Participants said that the public and First Nations need to be involved in the governance discussion along with the City and donor. Participants also advocated for having discussions about governance concurrently with discussions about the park design, not afterwards.
- **Protecting the trees and natural environment continue to be a top priority.** Many participants reiterated comments shared previously about the importance of protecting and enhancing the trees within Queen’s Park North.

- **Greater clarity and details about the proposed design ideas are needed.** Several participants had questions and said they would like additional details about the proposed design ideas to better understand potential impacts (positive, negative, and/or neutral).

Detailed Feedback

Workshop Stations

At the three workshop stations, participants asked questions and shared feedback on the design ideas presented, including what they like, what they worried or concerned about, and suggestions they would like to team to consider moving forward. The questions and feedback are summarized below, organized by each of the three stations.

Responses provided by the project team are included in *italics*, where provided.

Trees and Nature Station

Likes

Several participants said that they loved the emphasis the team had placed on trees and planting in Queen's Park North, saying it looked like they were doing their utmost to respect, protect, and restore the parks' trees. One participant said that, while the emphasis on trees was nice, the project team should remember that this park is in a big urban city, not a forest, and that the design should reflect that reality.

A few said they liked some of the specific big moves and design ideas, including:

- **The Treewalk**, which would be good for kids and provide an educational component would be valuable for all park visitors.
- **The ability to have fires in the winter**, which could increase use of the park year-round.

There were mixed opinions on the lack of skating rink in the design ideas. Several were happy to see the rink omitted, saying the infrastructural impacts on trees were not worth it; but a few were disappointed, saying a skating rink or trail would help increase use of the park in the winter.

Worries, concerns and suggestions

Participants had some worries and concerns about the draft big moves and design ideas related to trees and nature. Big picture, a few participants said they were worried that we were "asking too much of this land" by including so many interventions. Some of the specific concerns participants shared were:

- **Practicality of the savannah and plantings under trees.** Several said that, while the images of plantings under trees looked nice, they were skeptical that the temporary fencing would be an effective barrier and that these plantings wouldn't be trampled by kids and dogs or full of garbage once the temporary fencing was removed. They wanted to understand how essential the savannah plantings were to the health of the trees. There was also concern that, if the park was full of temporary fencing for years at a time, it would feel more like a construction site than a refuge.
- **Impacts of infrastructure on trees and wildlife.** Some were worried that the infrastructure proposed in the draft big moves — including the treewalk and the kiosk — could have negative impacts on the environment. For example, the treewalk could interfere with birds, and the kiosk could hurt roots and lead to increased garbage.
- **Shadow impacts on trees.** The City is approving many high-rises to the east of the park. The team should make sure that all these sensitive trees are not harmed by an increase in shadowing from new towers by connecting with the City Planning staff reviewing these development applications.
- **Potential negative impacts of the proposed treewalk.** Some participants questioned the appropriateness of the tree walk and shared concerns including that it would be a high-cost intervention relative to its benefits, added pressure on limited park space, a loss of flexible and adaptable green space and openness of the park, and adding to the cumulative impacts when combined with other proposed structures (e.g., café, kiosk, washroom, memorial garden).
- **Public access to fruit trees.** A few said that the team should not encourage the public to access fruit trees, saying that, if picking fruit is encouraged, the trees will be picked clean very quickly, which could lead to some harm to the trees.

Participants shared several suggestions for the team to consider:

- **Pick and prioritize one reference ecosystem** when proposing plantings. There was a suggestion that the project team consider the Oak Savannah ecosystem as the reference when proposing plantings for this park. Relying on too many reference ecosystems could water down the ecological benefits of plantings. Consider planting native herbs as part of plantings, too.
- **Protecting old growth trees in the park must be a priority.**
- **Make sure to demonstrate how the ideas relate and respond to the surrounding environment.** There are major green spaces and lots of trees on both the east and west side of Queen's Park North, so the plan for this park should reflect how that context informs what's proposed here.
- **Consider using boardwalks instead of fences** to separate people from trees and to protect tree roots.
- **The design of the commemorative garden should tie in with the rest of the park's design** so that it feels like the whole place was designed with a coherent vision.

- **Make sure that any new lighting does not harm the trees** or the wildlife (especially birds) that relies on them.
- **Think bigger and expand Queen's Park North** by replacing some of the roads surrounding the park with parkland. Given the amount of the donation, the City should be looking to make the most of this rare opportunity to do something big and transformative. At a minimum, the final design should not preclude future expansion of the park that would replace the roadway.
- **Be mindful the buried Taddle Creek runs under Queen's Park North.** The project team should take an approach of working with nature rather than controlling it — efforts to control nature in the past typically end up looking futile in the long run.
- **Include some evergreen trees in the planting plan** so that there is still some greenery in the park during the winter.

Questions

Participants had a few questions that they said they would like answered to better inform their opinion, including:

- Exactly how many trees will be removed to accommodate these ideas?
- Is the amount of hardscape in the park going to increase, and, if so, by how much?

Community and Cultural Heritage Station

Likes

Overall, participants expressed support for opening the central area for people's use, and in particular for Council Fire. Participants also generally liked the idea of moving the statue but had different opinions on how to recontextualize it. Specific ideas participants said they liked included:

- **The new proposed location of King Edward's statue.** There was general support for relocating King Edward's statue. Some participants liked that the proposal is to move it from the central place and to lower it to the ground; others liked that the statue is not being removed. There was a difference of opinion about how to recontextualize the statue's significance at the new location – some wanted it to be at an even lower level, where kids could climb it and play with it, while others argued for more elevation to preserve its iconic status.
- **Council Fire at the centre of the park.** Many participants said they liked the idea of opening the central space for Council Fire – to be accessible and used by people. Others noted that it made sense because we are on Indigenous territory.
- **Fountain in the southeast corner.** Some participants expressed interest in the fountain, noting that it was acquired in 1957 and it used to be lit at night. There was a suggestion to make it into a grand fountain similar to Berczy Park.

Worries, concerns and suggestions

Participants had some worries and concerns about the draft big moves and design ideas related community and cultural heritage. They also shared several suggestions related to their worries and concerns they would like the project team consider.

The feedback about community and cultural heritage has been organized under common themes that emerged, including culture and history, food and programming and governance and process.

Culture and history

- **There needs to be a better integration of 2SLGBTQ+ history.** Consider interpretative signage as part of the rain shelter design.
- **Consider keeping and bringing more of Al Purdy's contemporaries' statues.**
- **Ensure that there is an efficient use of fire and water features** similar to the Toronto Peace Garden at Nathan Philips Square.

Food and programming

- **Consider designing a food kiosk to be multi-use** because there might not be enough demand to keep it open just for food.
- **Consider different food options models**, such as plaza Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS) – community-driven pop-up installations to promote local and diverse food vendors.
- **Think big.** There was a suggestion to bring a destination restaurant instead of a food kiosk.
- **Consider introducing a formal speaker's corner** at the park, given the park's role in Toronto's civic life and its proximity to the Legislative Assembly.
- **Ensure the design of the park discourages illegal raves** at the park at night.

Governance and process

- **It is important that Indigenous peoples are part of the governance model.**
- **It is important that the conversations about governance happen at the same time, and not after the design is complete.** There is a concern that the donation comes with strings attached. Governance is the place to include conversations about and bring transparency to the donor's intentions and priorities. Having these conversations after the design is complete might be too late – a too heavily designed park might inevitably lead to certain governance outcomes. Design should not lead governance. A public park must stay public.
- **There is a concern that the timeline to go to Council with City Staff Report is very short and that the overall vision and the big moves do not respond well to some people's feedback**, as the park feels cluttered and it does not look like a place of respite and calm. *The project team clarified that the consultation process will not conclude with this meeting. It is currently in its second phase and will continue into the next year with the third*

phase. The City Staff Report scheduled for Council in December (note: the date has been rescheduled to early 2026) will primarily address the donation acceptance terms. The project team will persist in engaging with communities, First Nations, other Indigenous voices, institutional stakeholders, and the donor on the design and governance throughout the upcoming year.

Visitor Experience Station

Likes

A few participants identified specific design ideas they liked. However, the majority of feedback at the station focused on concerns that what is being proposed is too much change in the park.

Specific design ideas participants said they like included:

- An **improved running track**.
- The **Treewalk**, including the ability to see the tress from a different point of view.
- **Washrooms**, which should be accessible, safe, and winterized. Explore examples for public washrooms from around the world to ensure they are designed to the highest standard.
- A **small café / place to buy food**. In response to several participants sharing concerns about a café one participant said it would be nice to have a place to get a coffee and/or something small to eat in the park.
- The **memorial garden in the southern part of the park**. One participant said they liked the idea of the garden. They were also interested to know if the proposed garden would only be built if it is named after Hilary Weston. *City staff said there is some expectation from the Weston family of connection / commemoration to Hilary Weston. However, the exact details (including any naming) are yet to be determined.*

Worries, concerns and suggestions

Several participants shared some worries and concerns about the draft big moves and design ideas. The main concern participants shared was **too much change is being proposed in the park**. One participant said and several others agreed that what is being proposed is “at a level 10 and we need to bring it down to level 6”. Some of the specific concerns shared were:

- **The impacts and sustainability of a café building in the park**. Several said it is not needed given there are many places around the park for people to purchase drinks and food. There were also concerns that the infrastructure required to support the café would negatively impact / damage tree roots. A few said it would be unlikely a café would receive enough business to make it financially sustainable. There was a suggestion to allow temporary food vendors to reduce impacts on the park and provide greater variety to patrons.
- **Current and future maintenance**. Several participants shared concerns about the current maintenance of the park (e.g., garbage pick-up, the lawn/grass areas, and trees) and

expressed concerns that adding more to the park would only make it more difficult to maintain. Participants were keen to know why better maintenance can't be done currently and if/how additional maintenance would occur. *City staff explained that the main barrier to maintenance is financial resources. They also said there is an opportunity to leverage the funds from the proposed donation to improve ongoing maintenance in the park.*

- **Any loss of greenspace / additional pavement in the park.** There was concern that the proposed design ideas will result in a loss of greenspace and additional pavement in the park. *City staff and members of JRS said the intention of the design ideas is to enhance the natural space in the park, including the protecting the trees, not reduce greenspace or increase paved space.*
- **Moving the King Edward statue away from the centre of the park.** There was feedback that the statue provides a central feature and vibrant place where people gather and children play. Moving it from the central location may result in losing the central focal point. *Members of the JRS team explained that the intention of the proposed design of "The Heart" is to create a flexible and vibrant place that brings people together at the centre for the park.*

Participants also shared suggestions for the team to consider:

- **Conversations about governance should happen now and include a role for the public.** There was concern that it is a mistake to delay discussions about governance until after the design is complete because design will dictate governance when governance should be the centre piece dictating design. They also said it is essential that the public has a voice at the table about governance with the City and the donor.
- **Continue to improve connections to/from the park.** Participants discussed safety concerns for pedestrians crossing Queen's Park Crescent to access the park. They said this process should include improvements to connections over Queen's Park Crescent. There was a suggestion to have pedestrian bridges go over the road. Another participant said there have been recent improvements to pedestrian connections, particularly in the southwest, and would like to see these improvements continue around the park.
- **Consider allowing temporary food vendors instead of a permanent café building.** There was a suggestion to explore temporary food vendors if this would reduce the impact on the park when compared to a permanent café building and provide greater variety for patrons.
- **Consider locating the proposed structures closer together if this reduces impacts on the park.** There was a suggestion to put the café, washroom, kiosk, and workshop in one location if this would reduce the amount of infrastructure required throughout the park and therefore lessen the impact on tree roots and the natural environment.
- **Ensure this restoration process learns from the previous process.** Participants encouraged the team to review the previous restoration process for lessons learned, including what worked well and did not work as well to avoid repeating any mistakes.
- **Locate the council fire further south,** where the current fountain is located.

- **Education resources / infrastructure should be a light touch.** Some questioned the need to provide education materials / infrastructure in the park and shared concerns that they could take away from the passive enjoyment of the park. Another participant suggested providing information through simple printed or electronic materials that people interested in learning about the history and/or natural environment could use.

Plenary Discussions

Before and after the workshop stations, participants asked questions and shared feedback in plenary discussions. The questions and feedback shared have been summarized and organized under common themes that emerged.

Responses provided by the project team are included in *italics*, where provided.

Amount of “new” being introduced to the park and intensity of park use

- **Balancing ecological health with active use is critical to the park’s future.** Participants questioned how the City would reconcile heavy use and activity (such as people running through the park) with plans for new plantings and groundcover, given the subway tunnel beneath the park and limited soil depth for trees. Participants shared a few specific ideas and suggestions including think carefully about lighting, including impacts on trees, install permanent fencing to protect the trees, use boardwalks to help keep people separated/off tree routes. *The design team acknowledged these challenges and explained that balancing all elements has been a priority since day one. JRS elaborated that the goal is to ensure the park thrives amid climate change while continuing to serve the public. The design emphasizes a simple but ecologically rich system, concentrating hard-surfaced areas where activity is highest while rehabilitating lawns and improving tree health elsewhere. The donor has been supportive of an “ecological park” that avoids unnecessary embellishment while preserving the historic landscape.*
- **Population growth pressures must be addressed without over-intensifying park use.** Some residents expressed concern that there is a “hidden agenda” to attract more people to the park, potentially leading to overcrowding, loss of green space, and ecological damage. *The City responded that it has a responsibility to plan for increased downtown population, whether or not the park is revitalized. The proposed interventions are designed to protect the lawn and tree canopy under this growing pressure. Staff emphasized that the project’s goal is long-term ecological resilience, not commercialization. The City said that the intent is preservation through thoughtful design, not replacement of green areas.*
- **There is uncertainty about the need for food or beverage services in the park.** Participants want to understand why food options are being considered. *City staff clarified that direction from Council directs staff to explore both food and beverage opportunities and improved washroom facilities in parks. Staff acknowledged that opinions vary while some*

nearby workers and students said they would welcome a coffee kiosk or small food stand near the subway, others preferred maintaining a more natural park atmosphere.

- **A clearer definition of what “programming” means is needed.** Participants requested clarification on whether “programming” referred to scheduled events, organized activities, or informal park use. *City staff explained that programming encompasses a broad range of activities people may engage in, such as picnicking, Tai Chi, or casual gatherings, and doesn’t necessarily mean structured or City-run events. The intent is not to “program” the park heavily, but to design spaces that self-program by naturally supporting diverse uses. The JRS team emphasized that programming conversations have primarily focused on cultural relations with nearby institutions like the ROM or the University of Toronto, rather than organized entertainment.*

Donation and Governance

- **More transparency is needed regarding the Weston Family’s role and the “destination park” label.** Attendees asked whether the park’s vision was being driven by external donors or by the City’s long-term planning. *City staff clarified that the “destination park” term was early language used in preliminary documents and no longer reflects the current vision. The park is now being seen as an opportunity to create a unique and resilient downtown green space. The Weston Family’s proposed contribution focuses in part on a commemorative garden honouring Hilary Weston, intended to support improved design, ecological enhancements, and the City’s long-term maintenance capacity. The City reaffirmed that the park would remain under municipal responsibility and consistent maintenance standards.*
- **Clarity is needed on how the proposed commemorative garden and park in general would be governed and maintained.** Participants asked whether the garden would be maintained by the City, a non-profit, or the donor, and if it would be fenced off from the rest of the park. *The City explained that governance discussions are still ongoing between the City, the donor, and the University of Toronto. The current vision aims to strike a balance between shared responsibilities, but details will be finalized through Council once the design is complete. The design remains conceptual, and no final decision has been made regarding fencing or accessibility. Staff expressed interest in hearing community feedback on how the garden should be integrated into the broader park design.*

Design, Ecology & Infrastructure Connectivity & Park Expansion

- **Connecting Queen’s Park North to surrounding green spaces should be explored.** Participants suggested the City could enlarge the park by capping portions of Queen’s Park Crescent (both east and west) to reconnect the space to Hart House, improving safety and walkability. They noted that such an approach would create a larger, cohesive park that aligns with ecological, accessibility, and safety priorities. *The City said part of their long-term planning is how to align Queen’s Park North with the broader University Park Plan. Immediate work is focused on improving pedestrian connectivity.*

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. Community Engagement Phase 2 also includes an online survey, pop-ups in the park and focus group conversations.

Attachment A –Agenda

Revitalization of Queen’s Park North

Community Workshop #2

Tuesday, November 4, 2025

6:30 – 9:00 pm

Metro Central YMCA, 20 Grosvenor Street



	Proposed Agenda
6:30 PM Review	Acknowledgements, Introductions and Agenda City of Toronto, Third Party Public
6:35	City of Toronto Update on Progress to Date City of Toronto
6:45	Emerging Design Ideas Janet Rosenberg & Studio, Trophic Design 7:15 Facilitated Questions of Clarification 7:25 Workshop Rotations <i>The emerging design ideas have been organized into 3 categories, including: (1) Trees and Nature; (2) Community and Cultural Heritage; and (3) Visitor Experience. There will be an opportunity to rotate between stations every 20 minutes. You can visit as many or as few of the stations as you like.</i> 7:25 Rotation 1 7:50 Rotation 2 8:15 Rotation 3 We want to know about you think about the emerging design ideas. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there any you really like?• Are there any that are worrying or concerning to you?• Do you have any suggestions on how we could address your concerns (or any other feedback)?
8:35	Facilitator Highlights from Workshop Stations
8:40	Closing Plenary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall, how supportive are you of where the design is going?
8:55	Wrap-Up and Next Steps City of Toronto, Third Party Public
9:00	Adjourn

Workshop purpose

To provide updates on the revitalization planning process, share a summary of feedback to date, and share and seek feedback on the emerging design ideas

Resources:

www.toronto.ca/QueensParkNorth

Discussion Guide
Nov / Dec 2025

Information Sheets:

- Trees
- Governance
- Policies, Programs and Strategies
- Cultural Heritage