

Focus Group Summary Report: Cultural Heritage

Queen's Park North Revitalization

Community Engagement Phase 2: Exploring Design Options

November 17, 2025



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Meeting Summary.....	2
Next Steps	6

Introduction

On November 17, 2025, the City hosted a focus group online with representatives of organizations interested in the cultural heritage of Queen's Park North as part of the Queen's Park North Revitalization project. The meeting was part of Community Engagement Phase 2. It focused on presenting and seeking feedback on the draft big moves and emerging design ideas.

Feedback from participants is summarized below.

Attendance

Cultural Heritage organizations: Annex Residents' Association – Heritage Team, St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association – Heritage Committee, Royal Ontario Museum, Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Queen's Park North Revitalization Project team: City of Toronto, Janet Rosenberg & Studio, ERA Architects, Trophic Design, Third Party Public.

For more information about the project and to review summaries from previous community engagement activities, visit the project webpage:

toronto.ca/QueensParkNorth

Meeting Summary

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

Participants said they appreciated all the work that has been done to date and thanked the team for sharing the presentation and Preliminary Historic Context Statement prepared by ERA Architects in advance of the meeting. Participants identified a number of the design ideas they liked as well as concerns and advice they would like the City, donor, and design team to consider moving forward.

A summary of the feedback is below. The numbers do not reflect an order of importance.

Topic	Participant Comments/Feedback
1. Preliminary Historic Context Statement	The Preliminary Historic Context Statement prepared by ERA is a foundational document that provides a clear background of the park's history. The park design must align with the information included in this document, which it is in many ways, however there are still concerns.
2. Updated Vision & Guiding Principles	The updated vision and guiding principles have been greatly improved, including removal of the word "partnerships". However, the terms "animation" and "modest programming" continue to be concerning. It is important to be specific with what these terms mean in relation to design outcomes to understand if/how they will impact the park.
3. Focus on "light touch" improvements	There continues to be strong support for "light touch" improvements to ensure the park remains a place of respite, however, the proposed design appears to be inconsistent with a light touch given the significant changes being proposed (e.g., the structures, treewalk, extensive understory plantings, etc.). There seems to be too much proposed for a relatively small area that requires protection.
4. Concern about reductions in lawn space	Concern that replacing a large portion of existing lawn space with understory plantings (i.e., reducing the total lawn space

	<p>from 88% to 25%) will leave to little space for use of the park by the public.</p>
5. Café and washroom	<p>Concerns persist about the proposal to locate the café and washroom in the centre of the park, and the negative impacts created by the significant infrastructure required to support these uses (i.e., water, sewer, waste management, deliveries, etc.). There are also concerns about safety, and a suggestion that the team consider locating washrooms in a more well-travelled and well lit, area such as in the perimeter of the park / gateways instead of in the centre, where oversight is available.</p> <p>There continue to be concerns that a permanent café at the centre of the park is unlikely to be financially viable. In other parts of the City, these types of facilities have been abandoned and left empty (e.g., in the Beaches). Consider instead a pop-up model at the perimeter of the park. Operating hours could coincide with different events and adjust based on the seasons. This way people visiting the park would not expect access to a café-like offer as something that's continually there.</p> <p>Regardless of location it will be important that washroom facilities are well maintained. Many washrooms in City parks are built but not maintained.</p> <p>Interest in understanding who would design the café, washroom, and treewalk as they would be important elements of the park.</p> <p>To explain the reason behind the proposed location of the café and washrooms, Jessica from JRS shared that locating the café and washroom together at the centre of the park is intentional. The proposed location was chosen to minimize impact on the trees, as it is one of the few areas in the park with minimal trees.</p> <p>She also said the team is looking at how people can overlap in the centre of the park by providing options for different activities in the same area (i.e., people at the café, kids playing in the water feature, someone watching a small performance – all creates energy in the place where people will have the least amount of impact on the trees). In terms installing any required infrastructure the team is looking at</p>

	<p>low impact solutions that would not damage the trees (e.g., directional drilling instead of open cut trenching).</p>
6. Cultural Heritage Landscape study	<p>Urgent interest in how Queen's Park North connects to/is informed by the outstanding 2021 direction from Council to the Chief Planner to immediately undertake a Cultural Heritage Landscape study of Queen's Park.</p> <p>In 2020, a group of many resident associations from across the city, and private citizens living and Toronto and beyond expressed concern on the impact of development on the cultural heritage district of the Queen's Park Precinct by a proposed development at 78-90 Queen's Park West. Over 100 letters were sent to the TEYCC meeting on October 15, 2020. Many also made deputations. Agenda item reference: TE19.3. On February 20/21 City Council's decision directed the Chief Planner and executive director to immediately undertake a cultural heritage study on the Queen's Park precinct. Agenda item reference: 2021.MM28.35.</p> <p>Nothing has been initiated on this Council request to date, and there's interest in seeing this direction from Council fulfilled now. The work, now completed for the Heritage Context Statement together with other already prepared heritage impact studies will address almost all the required information for the study.</p> <p>This is important because the City's Park strategy does not address heritage in exceptional areas such as Queen's Park. Rather its focus is on the impact of densification and lack of amenity space, a condition created by acquiescing to developers in recent years. Reports continually state that the area is amenity rich, so not much more is needed. Densification is too referenced in the heritage report.</p> <p>Recognition of the Queen's Park precinct as a cultural heritage landscape or designation of Queen's Park North will ensure all proposed interventions are carefully evaluated to achieve the right balance and will do no harm for the conservation of this special place.</p> <p>This could inform the park design and could potentially see the park designated a cultural heritage precinct, which would be a preservation tool.</p>

7. Funding	It's important that funds be available in perpetuity to maintain the park. The park is not that large – it's about the same size as David Crombie Park, just with a different configuration.
8. Treewalk	Some support for the idea of the treewalk. One participant said they liked it and that it reminds them of raised boardwalks in Collingwood Ontario. Another participant suggested the design be reconsidered to be much less invasive.
9. Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and being	Strong support for the Indigenous components being proposed, including moving the current horse statue and creating space for a council fire in the heart of the park. As also shared by the Indigenous programmer at the ROM (Leslie McCue), it's important to consider and plan for the resources that will be needed to maintain these components (e.g., sustained funding to support sacred firekeepers).
10. Moveable furniture	Support for movable furniture in the park – flexible seating is better than fixed rows of seating. It is a fun idea that is likely to encourage people to stop and rest in the park. The furniture could also be used by kids camps from the ROM.
11. Education and Interpretation	Consider using a tool like "murmur" to provide interpretation plans for the treewalk and the park as a whole and/or other information and educational opportunities in the park. Plaques can become outdated quickly whereas a technology like murmur can be updated regularly. That being said, murmur also needs ongoing maintenance. The ROM also has interpretive planners that can help with educational programs and activities in and about the park. Laura Robb is a subject matter expert who has done a lot of work engaging with Indigenous communities and could be a great resource to support educational opportunities in the park. In response to the suggestion about the "murmur" tool, Michael from ERA Architects noted that murmur was started by Torontonians but unfortunately is not used much anymore in the City. He said the team is keen to look into something similar and work with others like the ROM and

	Laura Robb on ways to provide information about the history of the park.
12. Lighting / illumination	For any illumination in the park, be sure to consider potential impacts on the natural ecosystem, including wildlife. It will be interesting to think about what sustainable lighting looks like, especially with respect to helping address safety concerns in the middle of the park.
13. Design and consultation process	It is exciting to watch the consultation process to see the team engaging with many people and being thoughtful of the feedback. Really proud of all the work that is being done.
14. Other ideas for areas around the park	Consider approaching the Premier to talk about the idea of a “road diet” around Queen’s Park to reduce speeds and make the park more welcoming and safer for pedestrians.

Next Steps

The project team thanked participants for their ongoing interest and participation in the process and committed to sharing a draft summary of the discussion with participants for review before it is finalized and published online.