

Focus Group Summary Report: 2SLGBTQ+

Queen's Park North Revitalization

Community Engagement Phase 2: Exploring Design Options

November 24, 2025



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Introduction

On November 24, 2025, the City hosted an online 2SLGBTQ+ focus group 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 are summarized below.

Attendance

Participating organizations: LGBT YouthLine, Friends of Hanlan's, University of Toronto – Geographies of Enforced Heteronormativity in Urban Public parks, Department of Words & Deeds, Toronto Society of Architects – Toronto's Queer Spaces Database.

Queen's Park North Revitalization Project team: City of Toronto, Janet Rosenberg & Studio (JRS), 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 summary was written by Third Party Public and was shared with participants for review before being finalized.

Many participants shared thanks and said they appreciate all the work done to date on the proposed design and presentation materials. They discussed and shared feedback on several of the proposed design features. Throughout the focus group participants also discussed the importance of if/how different design features would impact sightlines and privacy in the park, the future governance of the park, and questioned who is driving the need or desire for the proposed amenities (e.g., a café, kiosk, washroom, workshop, performance space, water feature, treewalk, etc.).

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

Topics discussed	Comments and advice from participants for the City, the donor, and design team to consider
1. Mixed feedback on the understory plantings. Strong interest in finding the right balance of grass and understory plantings, and in refining the team's thinking on the location of the understory plantings.	<p>There were mixed opinions on the understory plantings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several participants said they liked the proposed understory plantings in general as well as efforts being made to create / restore a White Oak Savanna environment in the park.• There were participants who expressed concerns about the understory because of conflicts with other park users and uses, noting that decreasing the space for lawn also limits the space available for people to gather. <p>Participants also discussed the importance of being strategic with location of plantings by giving consideration for how they could impact different uses in the park, including places to gather on the lawn, space for protests, and cruising.</p> <p>Other specific comments and suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider using the understory plantings to create a ring around the park to maintain privacy by obscuring sightlines and creating a natural barrier between park users and cars on Queens Park Crescent.• Temporary fencing may be problematic as it may result in conflicts between park users with some trying to

	<p>police/control how others use the park and concerns about vigilante policing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find ways to balance protecting trees by surrounding them with understory plantings and maintaining space for people that naturally gather at the base of the trees. <p><i>James from Trophic Design explained that locating understory plantings at the base of trees has been informed by the longstanding relationship between species. An example of this type of relational planting would be locating Pawpaw and Butternut trees together because they have a beneficial ecological relationship. The idea is to create an environment for ecological restoration that allows trees to thrive.</i></p>
<p>2. Considerations for moving the horse statue with some interest in removing it from the park.</p>	<p>Participants shared support for deprioritizing the presence of the horse statue in the park. Some suggested removing it from the park all together. Others suggested it bringing it down lower to the ground or putting it on its side to allow people to climb on it.</p> <p>Participants also shared concerns about unintended impacts of moving the statue, including reducing privacy in the park by opening up sightlines and/or discouraging cruising in the southeast corner of the park if the statue is located there with lighting.</p>
<p>3. Mixed opinions about the treewalk</p>	<p>There were mixed opinions on the treewalk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some participants questioned if the treewalk is needed, practical, or the best use of resources. Some participants also shared concerns that the treewalk would create an unwanted viewing platform (introducing an unwanted panopticon-like presence from which to monitor and watch activities in the park) that would increase sightlines, reducing privacy, negatively impact queer users of the park at night, and discouraging cruising in the park. There were also concerns that salting and sanding the treewalk (e.g., to keep it accessible in the winter) could have a negative impact on its longevity and the vegetation underneath. Other participants shared support for the treewalk and said they like the idea of being closer to the trees to

	<p>experience them in a different way. They also said the City needs more high-quality public amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some who said they like the treewalk suggested it may be better if located in a larger park with more trees (e.g., High Park) or integrating it in the future University Park.
4. Support for the proposed Council Fire	A participant said they like the proposed Council Fire.
5. Concerns about the location and viability of the café	<p>Participants raised concerns about the café including its size being too large, its location being too impactful on the park, and potential for it to include Loblaws branding. They also questioned if there is a need for both a café and kiosk. Participants suggested the team consider a kiosk at the corner of the park by Wellesley, closer to the Legislative Building and/or in the commemorative garden space. One participant asked if the donation agreement could include a clause that prevents Loblaws branding.</p>
6. Mixed opinions on whether these ideas reflect a “light touch” design	<p>Participants generally agreed with taking a “light touch” approach to the design for the park.</p> <p>There were mixed opinions about if the current design aligns with a light touch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some said they appreciate efforts being made to maintain areas of serenity in the park and prioritize native tree species through forest succession. Others said too much is being proposed to consider the design a light touch and there are concerns about conflicts in uses, including pedestrian / cyclist conflicts that persist. Participants expressed interest in understanding who / what is driving the need or desire to create a park with so much in it, that seems to be designed to increase the number of people in the park by including places to get drinks and food, use a washroom, watch a performance, interact with a water feature, etc. They wondered if attracting more people to the park was an objective of the City of Toronto’s for this project. Some said that would be an objective that they are opposed to, and that it would compromise the tranquility of the park. They said there is no doubt the design team could do a great job

	<p>designing all these features but first the need/desire needs to be established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were questions about whether the park needs to be inviting to all. The Queen's Park North team was encouraged to consider whether and why it's a priority to make the park inclusive to all and family-friendly. The park is surrounded by fast moving traffic, and that didn't seem to come across clearly in the presentation. • It was suggested that the team consider whether the Workshop design idea could be incorporated into University Park, since it may be more appropriate on U of T land rather than in the park. <p><i>Jessica from JRS said that they have heard from some that there is a lack of options in the area to get something to eat/drink and use a washroom. She also explained that the proposed elements are meant to support informal activities already taking place in the park and give people more of a reason to stay in the park, not just pass through.</i></p> <p><i>Alex from the City said the café and washroom are being considered, in part, in response Council's direction to provide more washrooms and food in parks.</i></p>
7. Show the relationship to adjacent spaces and neighbouring landscapes	<p>Participants said it would be helpful to see more about the relationship between the ideas being considered for Queen's Park North and surrounding uses and landscapes. Be more explicit, for example, show how the park and the proposed design could connect to Philosophers Walk and Ziibiing at Hart House. Some said that it would be great if this park extended into U of T, resulting in the closure / removal of the portion of Queen's Park Crescent West that currently encircles the western side of Queen's Park North.</p>
8. Feedback from the last meeting is not yet reflected in the design ideas	<p>Participants said that concerns and ideas about lighting were discussed at the last focus group but they didn't see anything in the presentation materials about lighting at this meeting. They reiterated previous feedback that lighting needs to be carefully considered because of its potential to impact / deter different park uses.</p> <p>Specific suggestions included having more lighting on/around paths and less or no lighting in other areas away from paths, use of low kelvin lighting, avoiding the use of overhead lighting.</p>

9. Concerns about the balance of power in a future governance model	<p>Participants shared concerns about the governance model, including, including concern about the donor having a permanent and disproportionate influence in the future governance of the park, and concern that a formal board will be created without adequate representation from community voices. They said if the donor has a permanent seat at the governance table, then community voices – including students, the queer community, the unhoused, and others – also need a permanent seat, rather than occasional community consultation. Community representation is important for the governance model.</p>
10. Questions about the commemorative garden	<p>Participants asked a few questions about the proposed commemorative garden including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there has been a determination about what portion of the donation would go towards the commemorative garden versus the rest of the park? • If there are any other structures being proposed within the commemorative garden? <p><i>The City said the amounts for the garden and the rest of the park are not yet determined but there is nothing to indicate a disproportionate amount would go towards the commemorative garden. They also said that there are no plans currently for any additional structures in the commemorative garden area.</i></p>
11. Rather than permanent structures, the design should be more future-ready and flexible to allow for changes	<p>There were participants who encouraged the Queen's Park North team to reconsider the design ideas that include permanent park elements, and instead to consider providing utilities for flexible structures / amenities (e.g., a café cart, converted shipping containers, etc. that are not intrusive on the park). There was concern that formal structures create a path-dependency that can be hard to overcome.</p> <p>The Toronto Society of Architects (TSA) will be releasing a Future Ready Design Guide in December of this year that makes the case for allowing park elements to evolve by making them moveable, removeable, and expandable rather than investing in set buildings. TSA offered to share the report with the Queen's Park North team when it's released.</p> <p>Participants also suggested providing a variety of seating, including benches because they are very social. They shared concerns about heavy metal chairs, noting that Hart</p>

	House has a lot of metal chairs that make loud scraping sounds when they are moved around.
12. Recognize / show consideration for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in the designs	<p>A participant said they did not see any explicit reference to or consideration for the 2SLGBTQ+ community in the designs and would like to see it added. They also said that the south, south-east, east and north-east quadrants of the park are areas of importance to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. There was also interest in sharing additional information with the design team after the meeting, including maps with details about important routes and gathering areas. Another participant noted that queerness has always existed in parks and public spaces and will continue whether or not it is explicitly designed into the space. Suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider identifying family-friendly sections of the park in the areas closest to the ROM and Hart House (the northwest area of the park). • Delineate areas of different use types. • Update the presentation slide showing design ideas related to kids learning about trees in the park, given the importance of that tree to some park users.
13. Show consideration for different times of use	A participant said the proposed design references seasonality but does not speak explicitly to daytime and nighttime use. They said considerations for different uses at different times (i.e., daytime uses versus nighttime uses) should be considered and referenced in the design.
14. Use the water feature to recognize lost rivers	A participant suggested the team consider if/how any proposed water feature could be used to recognize Taddle Creek, which use to run through the area and park.

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.