

# Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3 Summary Report

Barbara Hall Park Improvements  
Phase 2: Exploring Design Options  
April 2025





# Contents

Introduction..... 3

Meeting Purpose ..... 3

Meeting Summary..... 4

Next Steps ..... 11

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda..... 12

Appendix B: Meeting Attendance..... 13

# Introduction

The City of Toronto is collaborating with the local Church-Wellesley Village community to develop a new vision and improvement plan for Barbara Hall Park. The plan will articulate a community-driven vision for how the park should evolve in the medium term and will set the direction for future park improvements.

As part of Phase 2 of the community engagement process, the project team met with the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to begin shaping design options for Barbara Hall Park. The meeting also provided an opportunity for CAC members to explore how the new park design can reflect the park’s history and ongoing significance to 2SLGBTQ+ communities by reviewing and expanding on insights from an online thought exchange conducted in March 2025. To view the results of that activity, visit [toronto.ca/BarbaraHallPark](https://toronto.ca/BarbaraHallPark).

This report provides a summary of key discussion points and feedback shared during the meeting, including input collected through two interactive workshops.

## Meeting Purpose

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CAC Meeting #3 was held on Tuesday, April 9, 2025, from 6 pm to 9 pm, at The 519 community centre. The purpose of the meeting was to generate and develop design and heritage themes for the park improvements, and to introduce CAC members to the recently hired design and facilitation consultants.

The meeting agenda and attendance can be found in Appendix A and B, respectively.

# Meeting Summary

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The CAC meeting began with a presentation by the project team, followed by two workshops, and concluded with remarks from the project team outlining next steps in the community design process.

## Presentation

- City staff opened the meeting by providing a Land Acknowledgement and an African Ancestral Acknowledgement before reviewing the meeting agenda and code of conduct.
- City staff introduced members of the design and facilitation team, including staff from DIALOG, GBCA Architects, and Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting, and reviewed the list of organizations represented in the CAC.
- City staff provided an overview of the project and described the scope and schedule of the community design process.
- DIALOG staff presented Rainbow Park in Vancouver as an example of a park improvement plan that they recently helped to develop.
- City staff briefly discussed recent and upcoming improvements to the Trans Memorial and the dog off-leash area, and The 519's new waste enclosure.
- City staff reviewed the vision statement, guiding principles, and big moves that were developed in Phase 1.
- DIALOG staff presented four precedent projects ahead of the two workshops to help set the context and demonstrate the final outcome of the project's scope.

## Design Workshop

Three breakout groups were formed around tables, each equipped with a large base plan of the park, trace paper, markers, cut-out bubbles representing a range of park elements and amenities, and precedent images.

The groups were then instructed to brainstorm and consider different park improvement opportunities and design options and, using the tools provided, to develop a bubble diagram of the new park by drawing or making notes on the base plans with the support of facilitators.



## Breakout Group #2 Design Themes



Figure 2: Breakout Group #2 Bubble Diagram

- Modern, durable lighting was discussed as a priority for both safety and longevity.
- The group supported the idea of strong gateway elements at both entrances, creating a sense of identity and connection across the park.
- There was strong interest in creating flexible, open spaces at the centre of the park to support pop-up markets, art installations, and rotating vendors. It was noted that permanent vendors, such as cafés, have not been successful in this location in the past.
- A proposal was made to level the existing green space on the north side to create a large open lawn, ideal for movie nights and screenings on the side of The 519 building.
- The group emphasized a preference to not overly animate the park, suggesting a more balanced and restrained design approach.
- No water features were recommended, due to concerns about unintended uses such as bathing.
- A flexible seating wall around the playground was proposed to support caregivers, casual gatherings, and visibility.
- A heritage interpretation feature was suggested for the planting area to the south, while preserving the unobstructed service corridor south of The 519 building.

## Breakout Group #3 Design Themes



Figure 3: Breakout Group #3 Bubble Diagram

- A strong interest was expressed in making the playground more accessible to all users.
- The group discussed the idea of a community-driven café space, suggesting a rotating vendor model that supports local businesses and individuals.
- A space that feels communal and inclusive, rather than purely commercial.
- The addition of a public washroom was not supported. Concerns were raised about the lack of existing supervision and an unsupervised facility could exacerbate these issues.
- The current stage design was seen as underwhelming and problematic. Suggestions included reimagining it to be more functional and flexible for multi-use programming.
- The ping pong table was viewed as impractical for outdoor use due to frequent windy conditions.
- It was recommended that the dog off-leash area include separate areas, allowing for the separation of dogs by size.
- A suggestion was made to include an upper level in the café area, offering views of the park.
- The group emphasized maximizing the site, including better utilization of corners and underused spaces.
- More access points to both the park and The 519 playground were recommended to improve connectivity.
- This group emphasized that park improvements should avoid overwhelming or overshadowing the Trans Memorial to ensure it remains prominent within the park, and that the space remains respectful, inclusive, and supportive.

# Heritage Themes Workshop

GBCA staff began the heritage themes workshop by introducing what an interpretation plan is and explaining how different outcomes or mediums can be applied to the park design.

City staff then instructed CAC members to read through a set of cards featuring different heritage interpretation themes or ideas collected through an online thought exchange activity (categorized by people, symbols, and stories and events) and to select up to three themes that they felt must be interpreted in the new park design. They could also suggest their own themes. Working in breakout groups, CAC members selected their preferred themes and placed them on a story map with the most important themes closer to the centre of the map. The transcriptions below appear in order of importance.

## Breakout Group #1 Heritage Themes and Story Map



Figure 4: Breakout Group #1 Story Map

- Mourn:
  - Bathhouse Raids
  - Pussy Palace Bathhouse Raid
  - AIDS Memorial
  - Trans Memorial
- Celebrate:
  - History of the Village and 2SLGBTQ+ Spaces
  - History of the Independent Lesbian Press

- 519 Wheelchair Access
- History of the 519
- Isabella Gamk
- Reflect:
  - History of the 2SLGBTQ+ Movement
  - World AIDS Day
  - History of HIV/AIDS Activism in Toronto
  - AIDS Ribbon
  - HIV-Positive People

## Breakout Group #2 Heritage Themes and Story Map

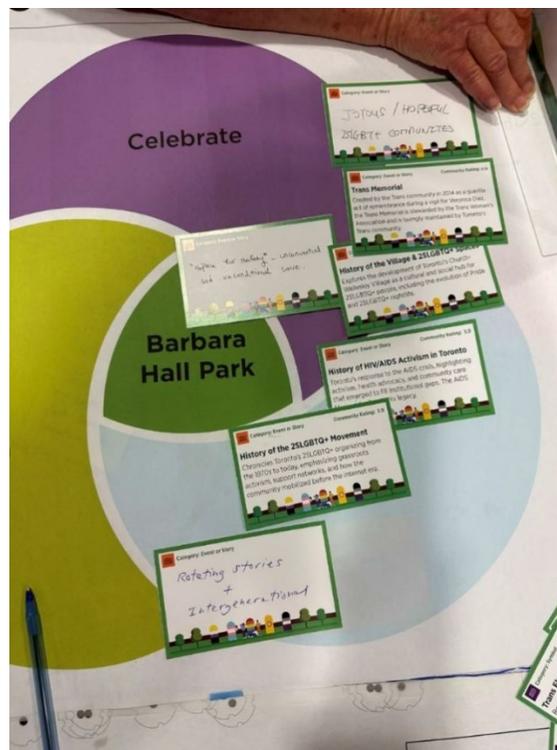


Figure 5: Breakout Group #2 Story Map

- Celebrate:
  - Space for Safety – Unconventional and Unconditional Love
  - History of the Village and 2SLGBTQ+ Spaces
  - Trans Memorial
  - Joyous and Hopeful 2SLGBTQ+ Communities
- Reflect:
  - History of the 2SLGBTQ+ Movement
  - History of the HIV/AIDS Activism in Toronto
  - Rotating and Intergenerational Stories

## Breakout Group #3 Heritage Themes and Story Map

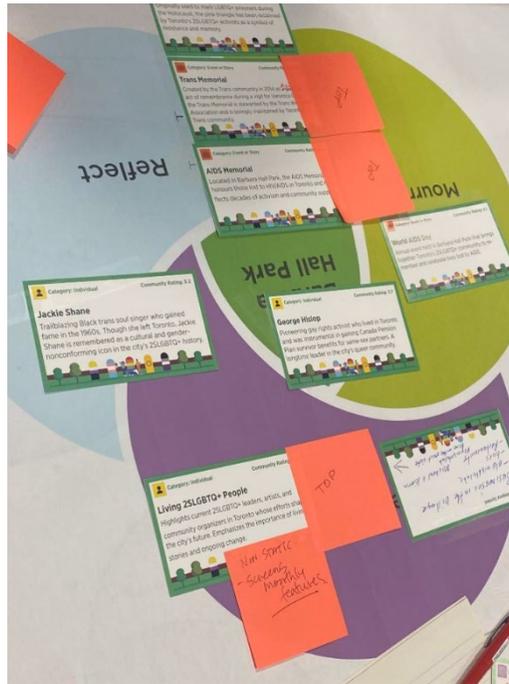


Figure 6: Breakout Group #3 Story Map

- Mourn:
  - George Hislop
  - World AIDS Day
- Celebrate:
  - Living 2SLGBTQ+ People
  - Businesses in the Village
  - Non-Static – Screens Monthly Features
- Celebrate/Reflect:
  - Jackie Shane
- Reflect/Mourn:
  - AIDS Memorial
  - Trans Memorial
  - Pink Triangle

# Next Steps

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The three high-level concept diagrams that CAC members produced will be used by the design team as the foundation for the development of three draft design options for the park improvements.

The heritage interpretation themes will be reviewed by the project team, evaluated for commonalities, and shared with other stakeholders and community members for validation and additional feedback.

To learn more about the project, visit [toronto.ca/BarbaraHallPark](http://toronto.ca/BarbaraHallPark).

# Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

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1. Welcome and Introductions (5 min.)
2. Project Overview, Scope and Updates (25 min.)
3. Vision, Guiding Principles and Big Moves (20 min.)
4. Design Workshop (60 min.)
5. Report Back (25 min.)
6. Heritage Themes Workshop (30 min.)
7. Final Remarks and Next Steps (5 min.)

# Appendix B: Meeting Attendance

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In addition to the 11 CAC members who attended the meeting, the following project team members were in attendance:

- City of Toronto, Parks and Recreation
  - Tonya Crawford – Senior Project Coordinator
  - Daniel Fusca – Public Consultation Manager
  - José Ramón Martí – Public Consultation Coordinator
  
- DIALOG
  - Bryce Miranda – Landscape Lead, Partner
  - Khatereh Baharikhooob – Senior Designer and Engagement Facilitator
  - Kav Wahdat – Intermediate Urban Planner and Engagement Facilitator
  - Xushan Liu – Landscape Designer and Engagement Facilitator
  - Michael Mousa – Sustainability
  
- Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting
  - Kingsley Strudwick – Trans-Equity and Gender Advisor
  
- GBCA Architects
  - Emad Ghattas – Heritage Advisor

Representatives from the following community organizations attended the meeting:

- ACT Toronto
- ArQuives
- Barbara Hall Park Dog Park Association
- Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
- Church-Wellesley Village BIA
- Gerstein Crisis Centre
- Pride Toronto
- The 519
- Trans Women's Association

Six CAC members were absent from the meeting.