



# 411 VICTORIA PARK DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PARK WORKSHOP: BUILDING A GREAT PARK TOGETHER

## SESSION SUMMARY

May 2014

### INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, March 18, 2014, BUILD TORONTO, in partnership with Evergreen,<sup>1</sup> hosted a community park workshop at Malvern Collegiate Institute to help shape the proposed park development at 411 Victoria Park Ave. The 4.5-acre park is part of BUILD TORONTO's redevelopment plan, which also calls for a thorough environmental remediation program of the contaminated site. The purpose of the session was to

- Build on past consultations and continue to facilitate discussions with community stakeholders;
- Inspire creative ideas based on best practices across the city; and
- Obtain input from the community, as part of a continuing consultation process, on park programming and opportunities for ongoing community partnerships

We thank all those who attended. Turnout was great, with over 60 community members in attendance and actively participating. We were very pleased to be joined by Councillor Gary Crawford, staff from the City of Toronto, local community members, representatives from the Concerned Citizens of Quarry Land Development (CCQLD) and BUILD TORONTO staff.

### WORKSHOP PROCESS

Following an Evergreen overview, the workshop session included an interactive breakout activity to brainstorm ideas which were then shared, discussed and voted on by the larger group. Participants were asked:

- What's important to you in the use of the park?
- What can be done so that people feel welcome and form a connection to the park?
- Given the growing diversity of your neighbourhoods, what future community needs should be reflected in the park?

Themes that were explored, building on community interests stated in previous consultations led by BUILD TORONTO, included:

- Nature
- Food
- Play
- Dogs
- Trails
- All-ages
- Celebration/festival

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<sup>1</sup> Evergreen, a national not-for-profit that works with communities to restore and transform local green space. Evergreen collaborated with BUILD TORONTO to plan, deliver and facilitate this session and shares the vision that the park becomes a true community hub that meets local needs.

[evergreen.ca/cityworks](http://evergreen.ca/cityworks)

**National Office:** Centre for Green Cities, Suite 300, Evergreen Brick Works, 550 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3X8  
Tel: 416-596-1495 Fax: 416-596-1443 Email: [info@evergreen.ca](mailto:info@evergreen.ca)

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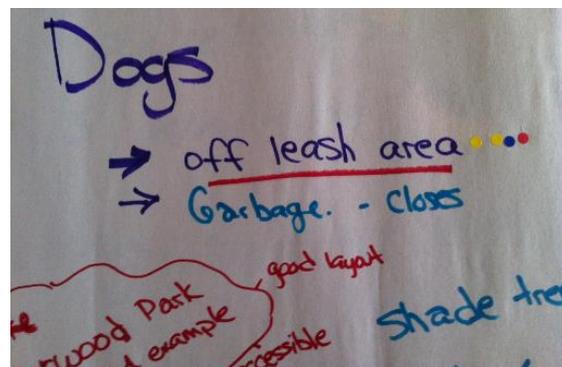
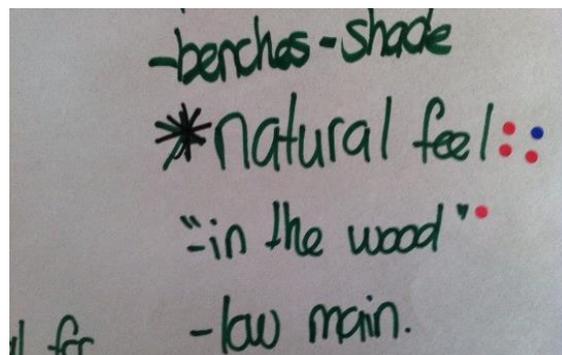
### **Graffiti Wall**

*Attendees were encouraged to post notes on their thoughts and desires for the new park space.*



### **Dotmocracy Voting**

*Ideas from the breakout activity were posted on walls, and all attendees were encouraged to vote on ideas they liked with stickers, a process called "dotmocracy."*





## SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Enthusiasm about the proposed park was high and participants openly shared their ideas and aspirations. The following are the main themes that emerged.

### Primary Recommendations

- **A Natural Space:** There was a very high level of consensus for a natural or “wild” park space that would allow for passive recreational uses. There were variations on what people meant by these terms. We understand this as focusing on many of the natural features, as opposed to a landscape that is heavily groomed or manicured. There was also no strong desire expressed for extensive active recreational facilities such as sports fields. Ideas specifically mentioned included
  - Ensuring birds and other fauna can inhabit the space, including milkweed (for monarch butterflies);
  - Providing for wooded areas and shade trees; and
  - Providing interpretive trails that support walking and cycling.
- **Dog-Friendly Features:** There was interest in dog-friendly aspects of the park. Ideas specifically mentioned off-leash areas and dog-friendly trails.
- **Water-Based Recreational Features:** Although there was strong consensus for a natural park space, the community also expressed interest in the inclusion of water features for recreational uses, including a water play area, wading pool and space for a natural ice rink.

### Secondary Recommendations

- **Art and Cultural Interpretation:** There was a high level of interest in a festival-related monument to celebrate cultural heritage such as Bangladesh Language Day. There was also interest in creating a space to display community-based public art.
- **Built Features:** Specific items that participants would like to see incorporated in the park include
  - A gazebo, welcome pavilion and/or stage;
  - A modest children’s playground area in the southern end;
  - Benches and picnic tables;
  - Improved lighting; and
  - Improved access to the park from adjacent streets
- **Food-Related Features and Programs:** Although this did not resonate strongly with participants, many expressed interest in a family-oriented space for picnicking. Strong sentiments were expressed by some to not have a community food garden included in the park.

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- **Access and Connectivity:** The issue of access to the park, including connectivity to the surrounding neighbourhoods, was identified as a priority. Suggestions made included
  - Creating a corridor connection to Victoria Park Ave;
  - Installing a pedestrian crossing at Gerrard Street; and
  - Bridge connections to other nearby parks including Kenworthy, Elward - Mansion and Oakridge, located on the north side of the railway corridor

#### **NEXT STEPS**

This session was part of BUILD TORONTO's commitment to engaging the community as part of the overall development. This summary, along with a list of Evergreen's recommendations, will be provided to BUILD TORONTO. A copy will also be provided to the City of Toronto for facilitation of next steps.

If you have any questions, please contact Natalie Pastuszak at BUILD TORONTO at [npastuszak@buildtoronto.ca](mailto:npastuszak@buildtoronto.ca) or 416-981-3759.

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