

Leslie Slip Lookout Meeting #2 Summary

December 6, 2021

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Project Background

In Fall 2020, the CreateTO initiated a procurement process for the design of Leslie Slip Lookout Park, a new 1.9 acre open space at 12 Leslie Street in the Port Lands. The team selected for the design of Leslie Slip Lookout Park is led by Claude Cormier + Associés and includes gh3, Dougan & Associates, and Arup. The Brook McIlroy Indigenous Design Studio was added to the team to provide placemaking design services. Located on the Martin Goodman Trail, the park will include a public beach, distinguished by forested dunes that will create a new multi-use community destination in Toronto's east end.

Conceptual designs were presented for public input on March 1, 2021 during the first round of public consultations.

Purpose

CreateTO hosted a virtual public meeting on December 6, 2021 using the Zoom platform to present the updated design for Leslie Slip Lookout Park.

The purpose of this public meeting was to:

- Recap what was heard from the previous public consultation round;
- Present and gather feedback on the updated design for the site;
- Answer any questions from participants on process, planning, and design.

Approximately 50 participants attended this meeting.

Meeting Details

Liz McHardy, LURA Consulting began the meeting by providing words of welcome and addressing housekeeping items. Jennifer Tharp, Create TO provided a land acknowledgement. Bob Goulais, Nbsiing Consulting then followed the land acknowledgement by speaking to how the Indigenous community is comprised of many different and distinct communities and how an Indigenous Sharing Circle was involved in the project.

Bob introduced Councillor Paula Fletcher, Ward 14 Toronto-Danforth. Councillor Fletcher provided background information on the concept for Leslie Slip Lookout Park and its intended role in the Port Lands area. Councillor Fletcher also emphasized the importance of public engagement and thanked the project team for acting on the ideas shared during the previous public consultations.

Liz then provided an overview of the meeting agenda and facilitated a round of project team introductions. Following this, Jennifer presented an overview of the site context and provided background on Council Direction for the site and the Port Lands Planning Framework. Jennifer also gave

a recap of feedback heard from the previous public meeting, Indigenous community sharing circle, and the online feedback form.

The design team then presented the updated design for the site. Marc Hallé, Claude Cormier + Associés explained how the feedback from the previous public consultations has been incorporated. Marc also narrated a video fly-through of the updated design. As part of this presentation, Heather Schibli from Dougan & Associates provided an overview of the afforestation approach. The presentation by Marc Hallé included the following topics:

- Overview of the site location and surrounding landscape.
- Updates to the design plan including 100% native species and an afforestation approach, dock wall edge, stormwater management and infiltration strategy, revised lookout structure design, bicycle infrastructure, park furniture, and lighting strategy.
 - Landscape planting will be comprised of 100% native species. Afforestation approach will be based on the Miyawaki Forest method - planting a dense community of trees that can mature into a climax forest quickly.
 - Dock wall edge will include a slight slope towards the sand. This will allow sand to blur over the sloped dock wall edge and create the impression of a shoreline.
 - Stormwater management and infiltration strategy aims to absorb and recharge stormwater into the ground as much as possible, rather than sending all stormwater to storm sewer.
 - Lookout structure design has been revised. Previous design referenced industrial silos. The design is taller and narrower that emphasizes the views outwards in four directions and above to the sky.
 - Bicycle infrastructure may include a bike repair and a proposed 71 bicycle racks (142 bicycle spaces).
 - Park furniture built with natural materials. Benches will be simple timber structures raised off the ground and distributed throughout the park.
 - Lighting strategy emphasizes providing a clear view of sunsets and city lights at night through low level lighting that is positioned away from visitors to minimize glare. Lookout structure will be lit at night to act as a beacon to the park.
- Review of categories of comments from the previous Indigenous Sharing Circle meeting: industrial references; native species; ceremonial spaces; four directions and connection to Sky World; and, placekeeping and Indigenous design.

Marc explained that the Brook McIlroy Indigenous Design Studio was added to the design team to address feedback from the Indigenous Sharing Circle meeting, in particular ensuring that Indigenous designers are involved in Indigenous placemaking.

Danny Roy, Brook McIlroy provided some background on the Indigenous Design Studio team members and work. Danny then presented six key areas of opportunity for placemaking design that were identified from feedback from the first Indigenous Sharing Circle meeting: connection to fire; connection to water; lookout tower; language; materiality; and, plantings.

- Connection to fire could be provided through design elements such as a fire bowl that would only be used for Indigenous ceremonies with City permission, or cultural markers embedded throughout the park that reflect light.
- Connection to water could be provided through interpretive panels and signage near the dock wall, or graphic motifs throughout the park that tell stories of waterways and the Anishinaabe Migration Story or reference the role of water in the sustenance of life.
- Teachings could be incorporated into the lookout structure about the importance of the four cardinal directions and the connection to the Sky World. This could be done through artwork and murals at the base of the tower or embedding symbols into the texture of the concrete.
- Indigenous language could be embedded in the signage or wayfinding in the interpretive panels.
- Simple materials such as raw wood, copper, weathered steel, or stone could be used.
- Plantings should be native species, and there is an opportunity to include a medicine garden. Consideration should be given to how medicine garden can be stewarded.

Dani Kastelein from Brook McIlroy concluded by presenting images from the mural design that will be installed on the construction hoarding panels at the site. Dani shared snapshots of the mural design and explained that the mural depicts the Anishinaabe Migration story.

Q&A Summary

Following the presentation, meeting attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions or provide comments. The following is a non-verbatim summary of the discussion. Questions are marked with a 'Q', answers with an 'A', comments with a 'C', and responses with a 'R'.

Q: How many acres is the site?

A: The site is approximately two acres in size.

Q: Is there going to be life saving equipment along the water?

A: Yes. The dock wall will have a lifesaving station similar to those elsewhere along the waterfront. There will also be safety ladders installed in the event that they are required.

Q: How do you envision the site being used in the wintertime?

A: The lookout structure provides a unique view of the city in all seasons. The site will also be available for activities such as ceremonies year-round, and there may be specific wintertime programming. However, the design team is conscious of not over programming the park so that there is flexibility for future ideas.

Q: What safety features are being installed to protect the public from falling into the water adjacent to a large lake and ocean-going shipping?

A: There will be safety signage installed to inform people not to enter the water. There will also be a toe-rail along the edge of the dock wall. This will be similar to other water's edge treatment in other waterfront parks and public spaces, such as the Water's Edge Promenade and Sugar Beach. A lifesaving station and safety ladders will be installed for safety.

Q: **Will there be washroom facilities?**

A: Washroom facilities will be built at the entrance of Tommy Thompson Park, which is about 175 metres south of the park.

Q: **Will there be barbeque facilities?**

A: Barbeques may be considered; however, the challenge with barbeques is ensuring the protection of nearby trees, shrubs, and fences.

Q: **Could you provide some information about how the Indigenous Sharing Circle was formed and engaged?**

A: The Sharing Circle is a community meeting very similar to this Zoom session tonight, and it is specific to Indigenous people in the community. Oftentimes, Indigenous peoples don't feel as welcomed or heard in these kinds of public forums, so as part of the engagement plan specific meetings were held to reach the Indigenous community. The first Sharing Circle meeting was held on April 27, 2021, following the first public meeting. A second Sharing Circle meeting took place last week. The Sharing Circle is not a formal body in any way. Invitations are put out to the community through direct contacts, various agencies at the City, different Indigenous communities, and social media.

Q: **Will there be any possible impacts that this park may have on the allotment garden?**

A: It is not expected that this park would affect or change the allotment garden.

Q: **We have some parking on Unwin Avenue and Leslie Street. Is the park going to create more of a need for parking, which is already at a max in the summer season?**

A: It is anticipated that most people will be coming here by bike or by foot, and not many people are expected to be driving here. Following the last public meeting and online feedback, many participants said they would bike to this park, and some people would walk or take transit to this park. The park will not include new parking.

C: **There are currently many poplar trees in the area and in June there is an extensive amount of poplar fluff. It would be nice to see a different type of tree.**

R: Many people have indicated that they have allergies to this, and people have asked how we can minimize the fluff in the spring. There is a cultivar of the cottonwood poplar that does not seed. Further research will be undertaken – the cottonwood cultivar may be used instead. A certain mix of male and female trees may be considered to minimize pollen and fluff from these trees.

- Q: Can you see there being confusion for visitors between the names Leslie Spit and Leslie Slip?**
- A:** The viewing platform is something unique and this is different from the Leslie Spit, and as such, “Lookout Park” should be considered in the name. Official park naming will be considered in the next steps.
- Q: Is there going to be a swimming area?**
- A:** No. There will not be a swimming area in the park. And to clarify, this is an active shipping channel and as such, direct access to the water is not encouraged. The water is also contaminated from the outfall of combined sewers.
- Q: In this area, sites along the beach are often used for drum circles. Do you anticipate this use here?**
- A:** Yes. Many community members are taking up singing and drumming as a means of healing. It’s a means of restoring their culture, finding an identity, and doing that in fellowship with one another.
- Q: For extreme weather days (heat or precipitation), is there an area that will be covered or shaded for relief? Has there been consideration of how hot the concrete areas will get in the summer?**
- A:** The tree canopy will help to provide relief from the weather and temperatures. As for heat coming off the ground, once the trees get larger, they should cast enough shadow to relieve this as well. As a result, there will be lots of sunny places if you want to be in the sun, but there will be several shady spaces as well if you want to be away from the sun.
- C: I’m guessing getting access to the lookout tower may be an issue with ice and safety.**
- Q: Any idea how dark it might be at night for star watching potential? Not easy to see stars in the city.**
- A:** Minimum lighting will be used in the park, while providing safety. The lighting strategy will include low-to-the-ground lighting on either side of the boardwalk to frame the park edge, but the idea is to provide a rich panorama view of the city skyline in the foreground, and this will help with looking at the night sky as well.
- Q: Are there any wind mitigation strategies that will be implemented for park use in the winter?**
- A:** There are no specific structures for blocking the wind, but we’re expecting that the mounds, the forest, and the buffers on each of the sides will help to protect against winds coming into the park. So, if you’re in an area of the park that is fully exposed to the wind, you will be able to escape the wind.
- Q: How high will the mural walls be?**

- A:** The construction hoarding panels are eight feet tall.
- C:** **A suggestion for the design. I feel that the space near the lookout tower can be enhanced and further defined by using the stones (same stone arrangement around fire pit shown in a sketch) at its parameter to allow for seating and gathering behind the sand area. This would provide a node for bikers to stop and sit or join the sand area, and also serve as an alternative gathering place in a paved area.**
- C:** **It's my understanding that the area will remain as an industrial area. Anyone riding their bike down here knows it can be quite dusty and may not be conducive to barbecuing and eating.**
- Q:** **Are there plans to make changes to the use of big trucks on Leslie south of Lakeshore?**
- A:** CreateTO is working with the City's Transportation Services to explore options for pedestrian and cyclist safety along Leslie.
- Q:** **I did not see benches along the waterfront portion, is that correct? They would be nice to have. It would be the best place to sit.**
- A:** It is not recommend that the benches be positioned so that they block the view to the Lake. Benches along the water's edge may make the beach feel like a sandbox; it is preferred that the beach extend up to the dock wall.
- Q:** **Is there any plan for sports for the sand area, such as volleyball and bocce?**
- A:** The intention is that it's a large sandy area that is flexible and open to spontaneous kinds of uses.
- Q:** **Originally beach activities were anticipated. Volleyball, sunbathing etc. There does not appear to be any thoughts of family use. No showers?**
- A:** Showers will be taken under consideration.
- Q:** **How should concrete campus companies handle complaints if they are received by the MECP (Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks) from the public at the park?**
- A:** This is an area where there are quite a few working industrial areas around the park. Each of the industrial properties around the park is responsible for providing mitigation measures within their own properties to ensure that there's not a significant amount of dust and pollution migrating beyond their properties and into the park. That said, this is a windy area, and it is possible that some migration of dust into the park will occur. This is really a question for the industrial properties in terms of how they will address any complaints. The park has been designed to play a role in mitigating the dust within its property by creating a naturalized area with mounds and microclimates that protect the park.
- Q:** **What will the costs of this park be?**

A: This is still being determined as the park design is being finalized.

Q: **Why did the design team choose sand and concrete for large areas instead of grass?**

A: Sand is durable and requires little maintenance or irrigation. Sand was also part of the historical landscape of the area. Sand relates to the experience of water. Asphalt areas are included in certain areas, where there will be maintenance and other kinds of vehicles coming through, including food trucks. The number of asphalt areas are minimized and balanced with a number of green spaces.

Q: **Will there be any shade by the waterfront?**

A: The number of structures included in the park are minimized to ensure that the lookout structure is emphasized. Special attention will be given to soils and environmental conditions to ensure that trees will mature quickly to provide shade on the beach.

Q: **How can people access the recording of the meeting?**

A: The presentation slides for this meeting and the meeting recording will be posted on the project webpage: <https://createto.ca/project/leslie-slip-lookout-park/>

C: **Following up on area that is covered for weather and dust relief, just a suggestion that birds like these spaces too - for example swallow nests.**

Q: **Will you be offering another opportunity to comment after the design development is finalized before construction?**

A: This is the final public meeting; however, you can review the project materials on the website and send comments directly to Jennifer Tharp at jtharp@createto.ca or Councillor Paula Fletcher at councillor_fletcher@toronto.ca. Any further comments will be provided to the design team to be included in any refinements.

Next Steps

The project team will complete the design development phase and then begin the tender and construction phase. A contractor will be selected, and construction will start in 2022. It is expected that the park will open in 2023. Some activities have already begun to lay the groundwork for the park such as site remediation, dock-wall repairs, and demolishing the existing building at the site. The public can continue to review project information on the project webpage and share comments through email.