
Focus Groups

The Port Lands,
Waterfront Toronto

Summary Report

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CULTURAL COLLECTIVE

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

This summary report provides an overview of user focus groups for the Port Lands Flood Protection project that took place on March 30th, April 2nd and 3rd 2019. The focus groups were held at various locations across the GTA, facilitated by Bespoke Cultural Collective and Groundswell Projects (consultants and collaborators), and were designed in collaboration with Waterfront Toronto's Communications and Engagement and Planning & Design teams, City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation staff, as well as key design team members. The focus groups invited important, yet under-consulted, audiences to engage in meaningful and lively conversations around the future of park design in our city, including how to make our public green spaces more inclusive, welcoming and user friendly.

This first section of the report, 'Project Background', outlines how the focus groups were conceived, how targeted audiences were selected, as well as the agreed upon goals for this consultation activity.

1. OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Throughout the development of the Port Lands Flood Protection project Waterfront Toronto has prioritized timely and meaningful consultation with a variety of user groups, including stakeholders, adjacent communities and the general public. In order to take stock of the audiences that have already been consulted, as well as identify any potential 'gap audiences', Waterfront Toronto enlisted Bespoke Cultural Collective to audit the previous consultations and make suggestions for future engagement initiatives. Waterfront Toronto is particularly interested in the broad range of user groups that frequent public park spaces due to the current development of 11 new hectares of parkland in the Port Lands, and how these users can contribute to new paradigms of urban park design and programming. Given the unique opportunity this project creates for naturalized recreation spaces near urban development, nature play was one concept the team hoped to explore with the

community. Nature play aims to promote daily contact with our natural environment and outdoor space. For the purposes of this consultation, the focus was on both nature play and outdoor recreation generally. Traditional play equipment wasn't included.

2. TARGETED AUDIENCES/ USER GROUPS

Bespoke's research recognized the extensive engagement activities already completed by Waterfront Toronto and the City of Toronto with regards to the Port Lands, however also identified several under-consulted user groups that would benefit from further consultation.¹ Of these groups, youth (ages 12-18), parents with young children (ages 2-14) and seniors/retirees (ages 65+) were targeted as priority audiences to engage using a focus group format. The themes for the focus groups included key aspects of park spaces in the Port Lands, including programming, the need for user amenities, perceptions of various park designs and motivators for seeking outdoor greenspaces.

The need to encourage conversations with users from across the GTA was also noted. Based on the demographics of previous consultations, users outside of downtown Toronto (M5) and east Toronto (M4) neighbourhoods were especially sought out to participate in the focus groups.

3. GOALS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

i) PROVIDE NEW AND USEFUL USER DATA TO THE DESIGN TEAM

Scheduled to occur prior to a major project design milestone (60% design completion for parks), this engagement and consultation was designed to provide the design team with user feedback on key design aspects of naturalized recreation spaces, as well as discuss what it means to create a multigenerational outdoor 'destination', incorporating questions around 'natural' environments. Therefore the sessions were designed to investigate the following:

- What barriers, incentives and motivators drive or inhibit each user group when visiting an outdoor destination?
- What would get these user groups out across day/night, 4 seasons, weekday/weekend?
- How do they most want to spend time in an outdoor space?
- Upon arrival, what types of experiences/animations would prolong their stay?
- What types of play activities are they looking for?

¹ See: Port Lands Flood Protection, Summary of Audience Research, August 2018.

- Why would they seek out a destination park over a local park/other attractions?
- How would they want to see outdoor spaces activated?
- What reactions do they have to activities where users interact with natural, less formal park program and elements of park design that are 'natural' (e.g. water play)

ii) CONSULT WITH 'GAP AUDIENCES' AND AUGMENT PREVIOUS CONSULTATIONS

The focus groups were also intended to augment existing research with these three identified 'gap audiences' intentionally from neighborhoods across the GTA that have not been as widely consulted. The decision to consult with youth and seniors from various neighborhoods also provided a direct means of comparing multi-generational experiences and recommendations for park spaces.

iii) EDUCATE THE PUBLIC AND BUILD FOUNDATION FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

Finally, as with all Waterfront Toronto consultation practices, engaging in meaningful and thematic conversations with the public is also an opportunity to establish a base of awareness and understanding, share ideas and build relationships with community members and partners, which will improve future consultation and engagement.



OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

4. OUTLINE OF FOCUS GROUP STRUCTURE & FORMAT

The focus groups were designed to promote both broad conversations and gather specific information from two very different user groups - youth and seniors. In order to be able to compare and synthesize the findings across these groups Bespoke designed one focus group structure, using the same questions and format for both audiences.

Participants were asked to volunteer their name, age and the first 3 digits of their postal codes to help in our ongoing efforts to reach a broad range of users from across the GTA.

The focus groups were designed to last 30-60mins, include a variety of passive and active activities (conversations, stickering, looking at images, ranking, etc.) and included an introduction with content about the Toronto park system and the Port Lands project.

All focus groups were held at community recreation centres across the city, during existing programming. Participants were given a healthy meal and snacks after the focus group.

Activity 1:
Ice Breaker/Conversation Starter

“When I spend time outdoors I like to: _____”.

Participants were invited to speak about their outdoor activity preferences and elaborate on their motivators and barriers when accessing local park spaces, including how frequently they visit outdoor green spaces and which Toronto parks they like best.

Analysis: cluster analysis, quantitative anecdotes, frequency graphing, mapping of preferred locations.

Activity 2:
Experiences Commenting/Voting Activity

“Tell Us Which Of These Outdoor Spaces You Like The Most, Which Do You Like The Least, And Why.....?”

Participants were given a ballot card and stickers to indicate which of a selection of 12 images of outdoor play and activities they liked the most and the least. They were also encouraged to elaborate on their reactions to all the images. The images shown were selected with MVVA and purposefully depicted a range of nature play experiences, natural settings and various kinds of activities across multiple seasons.

Analysis: cluster analysis, quantitative anecdotes, ranking of preferences.

Activity 3: (Optional)
Closing discussion/ Personal Experiences Wrap Up

“I wish park designers would think about.....”

Participants were given a comment card with the preceding prompt and invited to share their thoughts with the group. They were encouraged to be specific and detailed, given the conversations of the day, and also elaborate on what was missing from the discussion.

Analysis: cluster analysis, gap analysis, quantitative anecdotes.

■ ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

7. YOUTH

For the youth engagement sessions we conducted three focus groups: two sessions at the John Innes Community Centre, with a total of eighteen 12–16 year olds who regularly meet up at this drop-in program to play basketball together. One session was hosted at St. Lawrence Community Center, with a total of five 13–14 year olds.

After investigating various citywide youth programming resources, we approached Victor Galan (City of Toronto) who oversees youth programming at multiple community centres across the GTA. Victor’s work is unique in drawing youth from across the city to his events and his mandate to provide both recreation resources and youth focused education aligned perfectly with Waterfront Toronto’s ambitions for the focus groups. Victor was able to facilitate the youth participants at both the John Innes Community Centre and St. Lawrence Community Centre.

AUDIENCE OVERVIEW

Total participants:

3 focus groups total with 23 participants.

John Innes Community Centre (youth group #1, nine participants, all male)

John Innes Community Centre (youth group #2, nine participants, all male)

St. Lawrence Community Centre (youth group #3, five participants, all female)

Range of birth years:

2003 – 2007 (mostly tweens based on conversation with facilitators)

Geography and Neighbourhood:

Youth Group #1 and #2: Regent Park, Moss Park,
Scarborough, Riverdale

Image from the St. Lawrence Community Centre
youth focus group #3

Youth Group #3: St. Lawrence neighbourhood

ICEBREAKER

“When I Spend Time Outdoors”

For the ice breaker we received the following responses:

95% of youth participants want social interaction outdoors

Nearly every participant sought out social connection and interaction. Language such as “hang out,” “play with,” “laugh,” and “be with friends” alongside the desire to play a range of organized sports that require a large team, suggested that social interaction is the primary driver for what youth want to do outside.

60% of youth participants identified a team sport

Given that one of the community partnerships was centred on young people playing basketball together, it was not surprising that sports were of interest. What is notable is that the sports that tended to gain traction within an outdoor context were team sports that involve a high level of physical activity. Mentions included: basketball, soccer, badminton, frisbee and swimming. The social dynamics of playing these sports outdoors for young teenagers can also get complicated. A number of youth mentioned that if “older kids” were playing –it became difficult to have access to these amenities in a public space.*

* Should the project team require guidance on youth needs for recreational public spaces, the St Lawrence group was highly experienced and passionate to engage further.

30% of youth participants mentioned food

While none of the focus group explicitly touched upon the enjoyment one gets from eating or sharing food—eating and preparing food emerged as a topic. Having the opportunity to eat outdoors, make food outside, or to buy food they enjoy, seemed to be an important part of an outdoor experience.

Only one participant mentioned a connection to nature

There was only one person who spoke about the feeling of “fresh air” outdoors. The appreciation of nature did not seem to be an experience that many of the young people who live in a city immediately connected with when they thought of going outdoors. This leads us to consider whether “enjoying nature” is a learned behaviour.

RAW DATA

When I spend time outdoors I like to ...

- “Play basketball”
- “Play basketball, bake, people, rip people”
- “Play basketball, swimming, soccer”
- “Bake people, rip people, play ball, chill with shawtys (attractive girls)”
- “Be with my friends until its training time or practice time”
- “Play basketball and buy shoes”
- “Hang out with my friends”

- “Eat candy and play basketball”
- “Play basketball and bake people”
- “Many sports like badminton”
- “Go play ball with my friends”
- “Play sports mainly basketball and soccer “
- “Basketball, frisbee, badminton, BBQ”
- “Play basketball and BBQ’s and basketball and badminton”
- “Play on the swings, run around, go down the slide, monkey bars, chill on the tires, go to da stop, eat food, go to da square”
- “Laugh, play taken in the fresh air and I like to fall down and cry and eat”
- “Hang out with my friends, play in the park, go to the corner store, eat food”
- “Laugh, play on the swings, climb, going down the tires, going to the park, I like to fall, eat food”
- “Have fun enjoying time with friends and family – in the park”
- “Go to parks that have nice basketball courts, but usually older people are there”
- “Play and run and play tag”
- “Eat candy at the park”
- “I like to fall around and laugh in the park”

Favourite parks mentioned include: MLSE Launchpad, Corktown Common, Underpass Park, Christie Pitts, Riverdale Pool Park, David Crombie Park, Aquatic Centre Splash Pad

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES COMMENTING/VOTING

At this point in the session, we introduced the idea of increasing people’s connection with nature. We shared a set of images (which were selected by MVVA and Waterfront Toronto project team members) that showed different experiences and activities in parks. We then invited participants to identify what they liked and disliked and to discuss their reasoning.

Overall, this group did not have much experience with nature play and there was a strong sense that what we showed them was “not something I’ve ever seen in my neighbourhood parks,” however they were intrigued by some of the images.

Based on a combination of selecting images as well as the positive and negative commentary that emerged in our group sessions we noted that the following images

received the most positive and negative feedback.

3



IMAGE # 3 was a favourite

The youth groups liked how “cool” this type of space was with logs where “you could skip and jump around the logs, climbing trees looks both cool and fun.” Climbing became a recurring type of activity that young people want. There was a desire to experiment and explore spaces in active play. There was also a desire to ‘brave the outdoors” and play games around surviving in nature.

1



5



IMAGES #1 & #5 were also appreciated

The images that appeared to be more dynamic and offer “more to do” and “fun” in terms of active play garnered the most attention. They liked how these structures looked: “fun, creative and challenging.” Spaces like Corktown Common were mentioned alongside these images to express how important it is for big parks to enable a variety of activities.

10



IMAGE #10 was the least popular

There was a real resistance to the idea that one might visit the park during the winter months. The types of activities that this group associated with parks, do not occur in the winter. A number of them expressed that they felt self-conscious about wearing snowsuits at their age. There was a sense of danger and a lack of comfort associated with winter in the park.

6



IMAGES #6 was also disliked

The image of programming occurring in the water was also unpopular. There was a view that the water might be unclean or dirty and a number of young people also did not want to get themselves dirty or wet.

RAW DATA COMMENTS (BY IMAGE)

IMAGE

COMMENTS/INSIGHTS

1



Photo: Richter Spielgeräte

- 5 likes

COMMENTS:

- A good park to play at because of acrobatical experiences
- My first because I like to climb
- I like this one because it looks like you could do a lot of activities and the structure looks creative
- It looks like fun (3X)
- I would climb everywhere on this structure, explore and make up games
- So much stuff to do
- More earthy instead of plastic. It's better for the earth and it doesn't break when its wood.
- I'm scared of woodchips -for splinters.
- I don't like it when parks put age limits on stuff
- We like parks with swings, like the tires at Christie Pits

2



Photo: Richter Spielgeräte

- 1 like / 2 dislikes

COMMENTS:

- This looks boring to me (3X)
- Is it about getting dirty?
- I like playing in the sand and some like getting messy
- Not a fan - looks boring

3



Photo: Earthscape

- 11 likes

COMMENTS:

- This looks scary but fun and challenging
- Jump over logs, run around - climbing to the top
- Lots of things to climb it's entertaining
- You can play capture the flag, group games - create your own games
- Looks acrobatical - more activities, don't see it a lot - it would make it feel more fresh and urban
- This is my favourite because I like climbing
- I like it because it looks like the woods
- I like the acrobatical experiments
- It looks very different like the logs are a balancing challenge
- I really like this (2X)
- I would skip around and jump around the logs, climbing the trees looks both cool and fun
- It feels fresh you don't see this a lot

4




Photo: Elizabeth Felicella

- 2 likes

COMMENTS:

- What if a kid wants to climb high and they fell off?
- Don't really like this but it looks ok
- As a chill spot it looks nice. But I would still want to climb on it.
- What if someone falls off? Looks dangerous.
- I like to climb things to get away

	<p>from the world and just sit (and be at peace)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I wanna go somewhere I can be off my phone and give back to the earth
<p>5</p>  <p>Photo: Lexi Van Valkenburgh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 likes <p>COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to walk here - I like the trees in the background • There is looking and touching with nature • Bridge is to walk and look at the nice view - like to take a break from the city and technology • It looks like it has a ramp - you could jump off • I love the ramps and would like the acrobatical experiments • The trails in this image, the landscape look more interesting • I like how there is a bridge to walk on and a nice view to look at • I really like this one • I like trees because it looks like we are in the woods surviving • I like the very green trees • I love ramps, I love to fall down • I'm wary of crazy people chasing us and I'm always thinking of my safety

6



Photo: Proludic LTD

- 4 likes, 3 dislikes

COMMENTS

- I don't like this as it looks boring
- It seems like it would be dangerous for little kids

7



Photo: TimberForm

- 1 like, 2 dislikes

COMMENTS:

- Looks boring
- Least favourite - not really much to do, you wouldn't be able to balance for long
- This doesn't look like a park
- I wouldn't use it
- Nothing to do here but one activity
- This is my least favourite - I'm lazy and won't be able to balance
- I'm not about meditation
- Don't want to use that. Swings are more appealing to me

8



Photo: Harvard Health Publishing

- 1 like, 2 dislikes

COMMENTS

- I don't like this because there is really nothing to do except run in the street

9



Photo: New York Magazine

- 2 likes, 6 dislikes

COMMENTS:

- This one is the worst. What are you going to do with a river?
- What about the river smell?
- I don't like this because I don't like getting wet.
- I would go if there was a workshop - like to see animals, catch tadpoles
- Don't like to be in dirty water, but if a friend was there ...
- Like it but don't really like it. I like to get messy, I have rainboots, but wouldn't want to trip and fall and siblings also would throw water.
- Would take my younger brother here
- I don't like getting wet. I don't even like swimming or fishing
- I don't like getting wet in dirty water
- If I have my hair in dreads, I especially won't like it
- I don't want to trip and fall or worry about my younger siblings tripping

10



Photo: Lake Metro Parks

- 7 dislikes
- **Least popular image**

COMMENTS

- Didn't like this - too cold
- Love the snow and have been on a ski trip but it was too expensive to buy food on the ski trip
- This is my least favourite
- I'm too old to wear snow pants and I'd get teased if I wore winter gear
- I don't like snow activities
- Could we clear away the snow so we don't have to wear winter stuff?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It looks cold, I'd rather be outdoors when it's warm
<p>11</p>  <p>Photo: Nicola Bets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 likes, 2 dislikes <p>COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks similar to the other bridge • I wouldn't go by myself in case there is a serial killer • I don't go to parks with my parents anymore
<p>12</p>  <p>Photo: Waterfront Toronto</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 dislikes, 2 likes <p>COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sucks because they are looking at a lake • There's nothing to do here but one thing • I went to a park one time similar to this - we went across and there was a pond but the boardwalk felt loose like you could fall. Make sure its sturdy • I would like this if it were a strong structure

Wrap up discussion around missing gaps: Longlist of comments

- Sports activities and structured sports programming are our favourite
- Variety and a range of different types of experiences for multiple age groups and intergenerational play matters for youth
- Easy access to enjoying and sharing food is a must

- This group is largely unfamiliar with nature play and they will need to be introduced
- They often do not feel welcome in public spaces and feel like “they are being watched”
- Some distance and defined space they are welcome to occupy would be great
- This group still enjoys traditional play structures “swings, splash pads, tires that swing”
- They enjoy deep conversations with their friends in a park
- Some of the best parks experiences have a “community feel” where everybody knows each other
- Sometimes they can use a “break from technology”
- They also worry about their own safety

8. SENIORS

AUDIENCE OVERVIEW

For the seniors focus groups, we worked with Warden Woods - a multi-service agency that provides over 50 programmes and services to over 6000 clients annually out of their main Community Centre and several satellite locations. We chose to work with Warden Woods as they were an enthusiastic partner and are also located in Scarborough, which aligned with Waterfront Toronto’s ambition to broaden their engagement reach to include users outside of the downtown core, who in the future may travel to a destination park in the Port Lands.

We coordinated our focus group session to align with their Friendship Club meeting - a group of seniors who regularly gather for lunch, crafts and entertainment.

Image from the Warden Woods seniors session

Overall the session with the Friendship Club brought together a group of seniors who shared an openness to sharing their feedback and anecdotal stories of spending time outdoors and in parks. Facilitators also scribed conversation points. We broke out the large group into two smaller focus groups, so that each group was lead by a facilitator ensuring each participant would be able to share their feedback and stories. Many points of connection arose across these two groups.

Total participants:

2 focus groups with a total of 14 participants.

Warden Woods (seniors group #1, 9 participants)

Warden Woods (seniors group #2, 5 participants)

Range of birth years:

1927 - 1953, Ages: 66 - 92. (One participant noted they were 94 in the session, but didn't share this on the sign up sheet).

Geography and Neighbourhood:

Mostly South/West Scarborough neighbourhoods and some North/East Toronto.

ICEBREAKER

As an icebreaker activity we invited participants to answer the prompt *When I spend time outdoors I like to...* in order to gauge the temperature of the room and gain an understanding of how the group related to spending time outdoors.

69% of participants mentioned enjoying nature.

Many participants spoke about natural elements like: trees, the sun, flowers and streams, as things they enjoy looking at, and/or spending time with when they go outside. Some specifically mentioned going to parks for these experiences. Overall there was a sense of calmness and serenity associated with spending time in nature.

46% of participants specifically mentioned walking as something they like to do outdoors.

Walking arose as one of the preferred methods of enjoying nature amongst the group. Many remarked that it was their main form of exercise, and that they liked to keep active. One participant noted "For me, walking is exercise... that is the only type of exercise I would do in a park". Walking was also seen as a vehicle for social connection. Many spoke about walking with a friend or with family, and if walking alone, they welcome unexpected encounters with neighbours and community members.

29% of participants mentioned enjoying food outdoors.

These participants mentioned activities such as picnicking, barbequing and "enjoying an ice cream" in their descriptions.

Long list of responses:

- Walk. Enjoy wildlife.
- I don't spend time outdoors. I'm 94.

- Walk in wooded areas that have streams, bridges, lots of trees, and places to sit and enjoy nature.
- Walk, swim, play, etc.
- Walk in the park and go to the flowers and walk around
- Meet people and chat, exchange ideas, talk about the weather and life in general
- Clean up, pick the weeds, water the lawn, cut the grass, etc.
- Take pictures in spring bloom. Then my heart soars and my face glows. I like to walk around picturesque blocks. Feel the wind in my hair. Walk with my grandkids, share some ice-cream and look around.
- Enjoy nature. Meet with neighbour.
- Picnic, barbeque, sit in the sun, put my grandson on swings at the park
- Picnic, enjoy sun, barbeque, people watch (more benches) enjoy neighbours in yards, bird watch
- Walk my dog, have a picnic, have a bbq, walk along the boardwalk, watch people, sit on a bench, get some sun, watch my grandson exercise.

In the larger group shareback participants described how they like to spend time outdoors, speaking about walking, enjoying wildlife/nature, and connecting socially with comments like “meet people and chat”, “meet with neighbour”, “put my grandson on swings at the park”, and “watch my grandson exercise”. Many of the discussions focused on spending time with others outside (with a friend or family), with less solitary activities rising to the fore. Some specified going into a park. Conversations regarding enjoying food outdoors through picnicking or barbecuing also arose. One person spoke about caring for the land, through cleaning up, picking weeds and cutting the grass.

Participants also chatted about what could be better about their experiences spending time outdoors. Some mentioned they felt there was a **lack of greenspaces** in Toronto and that there is a need for more parks. Overwhelmingly the group talked about a **need for more shaded areas in parks**, and the **need for increased outdoor comfort** with comments regarding needing more benches and places to sit and rest.

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES COMMENTING/VOTING

At this point in the session, we introduced the idea of increasing people’s connection with nature. We shared a set of images (which were selected by MVVA and Waterfront Toronto project team members) that depict some different experiences and activities in parks, and hosted conversations to learn about what the participants’ liked and didn’t like, and why.

11



IMAGE #11 was the favourite.

The most popular image amongst the groups was image 11. This image received 16 positive written comments and sticker voting impressions. There were zero negative comments captured about this image.

When discussing the image, the participants' mentioned the peaceful nature of the scene, with comments like "I like to walk in a peaceful park and admire the beauty of nature" and spoke about space for walking,

exercise and getting "lots of oxygen". This image generated discussions of peaceful experiences with comments like "I care about peace, aesthetic beauty and shade". Many found the colours of trees in the fall as beautiful to look at and noted that autumn is a desirable season to visit a park.

12



IMAGE #12 was appreciated.

The group also responded positively to image 12, for similar reasons, but with the added benefit of looking at the water. One participant noted "I like to look at nature and look at the water... I like looking into the water and seeing fish swim". Another participant noted they "like mum and kid on the bridge... I like watching people do things like that and I like being around people".

2



IMAGE #2 was appreciated, with some concern.

The group noted they would not like to play in the water themselves, but many felt it was a relaxing image, and noted that they would enjoy watching others play in water. Some spoke about how it made them feel young to watch children play and that the image looked “happy”. In the group shareback, the group reacted positively to being in close proximity to children play areas. People-watching and being around people was

captured as a positive reason to visit a park. Some raised concerns about the safety of children playing in water.

10



IMAGE 10 was most disliked.

Image 10 was the least popular image. None of the participants like to visit parks in the winter, with the most recurring comments being related to safety concerns regarding ice, slipping and falling. Reactions to the image included “I don't want to walk outside in the winter” and “...Sombre. Dangerous to older folk.” In relation to wintertime amenities such as fire pits, one participant mentioned, “I might like to sit around a firepit in winter, but generally I don't go

outside in the winter. It's tricky to get around in the snow” with another participant adding “not everyone is responsible with fire pits - I would be afraid of trees catching on fire.”

6



7



IMAGES 6 & 7 were also disliked.

Overwhelmingly, participants did not like images that depicted outdoor exercise opportunities (#6 and #7). When speaking about exercise, one participant noted “I would rather exercise in my own home, or a place like this community center - indoors in a more traditional setting.” Some spoke about being open to programming opportunities for group exercise, with comments like “I would only ever exercise in a park if there was a program and someone was there to make sure I’m safe”. Most of the conversations were connected to safety concerns, like “I would never use something like this... I could kill myself on something like this!”

RAW DATA COMMENTS (BY IMAGE)

IMAGE

COMMENTS/INSIGHTS

IMAGE	COMMENTS/INSIGHTS
<p>1</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 likes, 1 dislike <p>COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice to look at, kids would love it • It makes you feel young • Love greenery, tranquility and shade

2



- 8 likes, 2 dislikes
- COMMENTS:
- Water too close for small children
 - Relaxing
 - Relaxing
 - Favourite
 - Like kids playing in sand
 - Relaxing open space
 - Looks happy
 - I like seeing the kids socializing

3



- 2 happy 6 dislike
- COMMENTS:
- I feel indifferent
 - Free to move
 - I would use it
 - Scary and worried about it being dangerous
 - Out of place
 - Dangerous for children
 - Logs can be dangerous
 - The aesthetic is pleasing
 - Looks dangerous for children

4



- 5 likes 2 dislikes
- COMMENTS:
- Beautiful
 - Not that interested
 - Casual, relaxing, distant blue sky, and plenty of greenery that fascinates me
 - Seems dangerous

5



- 5 likes

COMMENTS:

- Looks like the end of a park. Peaceful
- Scenic
- we would need seating and benches
- we all seem to like this one
- Looks like a suspension bridge in BC i went on ages ago. It's pretty and I like the elevation

6



- 5 dislikes

COMMENTS

- Exercise
- I would exercise if someone is watching me
- I like to walk for exercise - walk not workout
- Least favourite. Jumping over horses
- Looks like a dog or horse training area
- I don't like. I would rather exercise in my own home, or a place like this community center - indoors in a more traditional setting.
- I would never use something like this. I could kill myself on something like this!

7



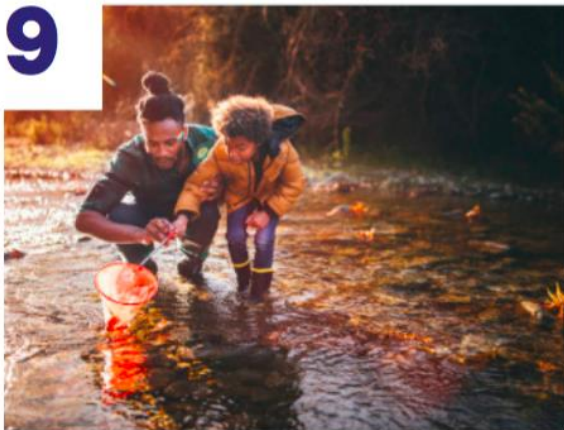
- 5 dislikes
- COMMENTS:
- Kids could play on it
 - At our age we can't do a lot of things
 - Dangerous
 - Don't like - it's not safe

8



- 1 like
- COMMENTS
- Interactive
 - Interaction
 - I don't feel safe in a park alone
 - Walking with friends is nice
 - Sometimes you don't know who you're going to run into
 - Too crowded maybe
 - We want paved walking surface, no wood chips and no gravel.
 - A paved trail would be nice.
 - We can trip on board walks as they become uneven with time. You have to be agile with boardwalks.

9



- 3 likes
- COMMENTS:
- Love this but with a safe pathway
 - Depends... I would not like to walk there
 - It would be nice to see the water like this
 - We wouldn't play in water, but we'd like to watch children do that.

10



- 7 dislikes/negative comments
- **Least popular image**

COMMENTS:

- Don't like winter
- Least favourite. Walking in winter
- Sombre. Dangerous to older folk.
- Melting ice.
- I would not be in a park in winter
- I don't want to walk outside in the winter
- I might like to sit around a firepit in winter, but generally I don't go outside in the winter.
- Not everyone is responsible with fire pits - I would be afraid of trees catching on fire.
- It's tricky to get around in the snow.


11



- 16 positive comments/stickering
- **Most popular image amongst the group**

COMMENTS:

- Peaceful scenery
- I like to walk in a peaceful park and admire the beauty of nature
- Freedom to walk
- Exercise.
- Lots of oxygen.
- this one is very scenic
- I like walking in the park alone or with a friend
- We all like #11 - fall colours are pretty, and the bridge and looking at water.

<p>12</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 positive comments/stickering <p>COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favourite, looking at water • Favourite • Nature. Looking at the stream with the fishes • Nice and open • I like mum and kid on bridge - I like watching people do things like that. • And I like being around people [proximity to children play space is preference for people watching] • I like to look at nature and look at the water. • I like looking into the water and seeing fish swim.
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Wrap up discussion around missing gaps: Longlist of comments

- We need more shade and seating
- A big outdoor fountain where you can throw a coin in, that would be nice.
- We also need adequate water fountains and washrooms.
- I would be interested in a programmed, seniors meeting like this one but in a park. Group walks or something like that. In Rosetta Park here in Scarborough, this same group meets once a year in the park.
- I might be interested in studies in nature... maybe a bird watching group.
- More food, restaurants, snack bars would be nice.
- I'm not comfortable walking alone.
- Numerous seating areas, benches etc.
- Snack bars, areas with trees
- Washrooms, seating areas, shade and kiosks [implied food kiosks]
- More shading, washrooms, walking trails, playgrounds, restaurants, seniors groups, fountains
- Shading, washrooms, benches, fountains, food, water fountains, seniors groups

9. BEHAVIOURS & MOTIVATORS



YOUTH: BEHAVIOURS & MOTIVATORS

Based on what we heard throughout the focus groups, we gleaned the following insights into this core audience:

The motivators that draw this age group into parks are wide and varied. These young people come to parks as older siblings looking after a younger sibling, as a family member on an intergenerational outing, for organized activities within the community and they also just come to “hang out” with friends. This means they need spaces that enable a range of different types of visits and experiences.

In a park, young people can be regarded with suspicion and also be made to feel unsafe. As one participant stated, “you don’t always feel safe with older kids around you,” which leads these younger people to leave when older youth show up. There was a sense of social hierarchy for organized play. When the older kids show up “you often need to leave so they can play.” At the same time they can be made to feel unwelcome by police, parents of younger children and others who may be watching them in the park. Sometimes they “feel” too old to play, “I don’t like it when parks put age limits on the equipment, it feels exclusive.”

They also have concerns about their own safety. One participant shared how: “Once I got robbed in the park,” another participant shared how, “I left my bike unlocked while playing and it got stolen,” there were two other stories like this one shared. We also heard, “sometimes we need to watch out for crazy people who chase us out of the park” they also noted and disliked when “there are racist people - one time I heard comments.”

These young people need more spaces that feel like they are designed for them. They also may benefit from accessing the park through organized community programming, so that they can book in activities and feel protected within the space from older youth. In addition good sightlines and protocols for being entitled to use park amenities seemed important.

This age group still seeks out opportunities for active play. This group wants to climb on structures, “if there is climbing involved, I’d go right to the top,” they also want plenty of space to explore and run freely, “I want to play group games ... and create my own games,” they also “love ramps” and mentioned enjoying classic park play staples such as: swings, tires, splash pads alongside organized play opportunities, games like badminton. There is a

desire for more welcoming play-based structures that this age group would be welcomed to use.

Socializing is essential. For this age group, the park is always somewhere to be experienced with someone else. It's a place to connect with others, which suggests that more social programming should be enabled whenever possible. The "best" park experiences were the ones when the whole neighbourhood felt like it was there. "Remember when your aunt brought like 15 kids with her? She took the whole neighbourhood..." which led to a positive community feel in the park.

The youth groups are not "naturally comfortable" with nature. Young people expressed a concern about the harsher seasons and exposure to natural elements such as water. They did not think about "enjoying nature" as something they seek out when they go outdoors. Furthermore, the nature play structures seemed to be a type of space that they had no starting point to understand it was "nothing I've ever seen in my neighbourhood". There is an opportunity for community programming and the interpretation in parks to open up the possibilities with nature in new ways for this target audience.

SENIORS: BEHAVIOURS & MOTIVATORS

Based on what we heard throughout the focus groups, we gleaned the following insights into this core audience:

This group appreciates natural elements. Participants value time spent in nature, citing getting fresh air, walking, and enjoying the calm moments looking at trees, birds, blue skies and water. Most feel parks are important and they enjoy the aesthetic beauty they can bring.

Seniors are looking for social connection and to be surrounded by people.

Overwhelmingly, participants spoke about spending time in parks with friends or family. It was almost always a social activity, rather than a solitary experience. One participant noted, "I don't want to go to a park alone ever. It's a social time... but at the same time I hate it when it's overcrowded" and another participant added, "spending time with my grandkids is what I like to do in parks." In addition, throughout the session participants spoke about generally liking being around people, and people-watching. In times when they are alone, they go outdoors to seek encounters with neighbours and strangers to connect. They want to be adjacent to play areas so that they can watch kids and families play.

Group programming was also of interest. They mentioned that seniors meet ups in parks would be of interest, and some were interested in taking classes, like bird watching or nature studies. Programs like this would be another opportunity to socialize in parks.

Safety concerns can inhibit visits to parks and/or going outdoors. Throughout the session many safety concerns arose amongst the group. One participant noted “I worry about safety. There are two versions of safety for me as I get older. There are people you don’t know, which can sometimes be scary. Then there are things like ice, where you don’t want to fall. I would not go to a park in the winter.” Physical safety concerns included:

1. Walking surfaces

- Paved walking surfaces are preferred. Many noted concerns about boardwalks and gravel paths, as they can become uneven with time.

2. Seasonality

- Many participants don’t feel safe walking outside in the winter. This was connected to iciness and an increased chance of falling.

3. Negative reactions to outdoor exercise opportunities

- Amenities like those seen in images 6 & 7 were seen as unsafe.

4. Concerns for others safety, especially children

- Some worried that play areas as seen in images 1 and 3 could be unsafe. They liked the aesthetic of nature play elements like logs, but thought they may be unsafe for children to play on/with.

Overall, some of these safety concerns inhibit this group from visiting a park. The main barrier to using a park is tied to seasonality, as almost everyone didn’t feel safe going to a park in the wintertime.

Access to prepared food and to be able to make food is desirable. In our wrap up discussion, when we chatted about what has been missed, overwhelmingly the conversation revolved around access to food. The group was interested in increased access to food, including restaurants, snack bars and kiosks. Where earlier in the session they mentioned picnicking or barbecuing, activities centered around preparing their own food, later in the session they focused on purchasing prepared food.

Outdoor comfort matters. Throughout the session many participants spoke about wanting more places to sit in parks. They also spoke about more shaded areas and easy access to washrooms. These types of amenities would increase their comfort in parks.

10. INTERGENERATIONAL SYNTHESIS

Points of connection across all groups

Nature Play is a new concept to participants

Across all of the focus groups, there was a lack of understanding or awareness about nature play. This concept needs an introduction and some interpretation for participants. Many of the images felt new to the group - with some needing more explanation of what they depicted. For example, Image 3 was often misunderstood as a play structure, rather than a seating area with sculptural elements.

Parks do not feel enticing in wintertime

There was a perception amongst both groups that parks are not a space to be accessed year round. Many participants would be unwilling to go in winter. Both of the groups disliked the idea of visiting a park in the wintertime. Many cited the discomfort of being cold, and the seniors' had safety concerns about walking in the snow (risk of slipping ice, etc). Young people also did not want to embark upon outdoor park activities in the winter.

Going to a park is a social experience for all groups

Shared and social experiences was a surprising strong intergenerational want for both seniors and youth groups. Rather than the park itself, it was the human exchanges that mattered most to both audience groups. Spending quality time with family, having the opportunity to laugh with a friend or share food - were all ways of spending time with others. Solitary experiences or activities did not arise.

Access to the water was more of a concern than a benefit

Neither of the groups saw playing in water as something they'd like to do in a park. There was a general confusion around why they would want to play in the water. Concerns included, getting wet and being uncomfortable, and for the seniors - the uneven walking surfaces caused safety concerns. Some seniors felt like young kids may enjoy playing in the water, but worried about their safety.

Enjoying food outdoors was the missing experience in our focus groups

Both seniors and youth enjoy food, by way of picnicking or barbecuing, and buying treats that they can take with them and share at the park. Both groups repeatedly expressed that access to food and ways of preparing food was a vital part of any visit to the park.

All want a sense of belonging in a park

Youth want to feel comfortable being in parks and feel accepted by other user groups. Often their experiences include not feeling welcomed, not having agency in the space and feeling like an 'in between' user group - not children, not adults - with few amenities designed for their specific interests and abilities. Seniors seek opportunities to people-watch, and be around other people. They are happy to be 'on the sidelines' - near the action but at a distance. Neither group wants their own delineated spaces per se, but they want to feel welcome in intergenerational spaces.

