

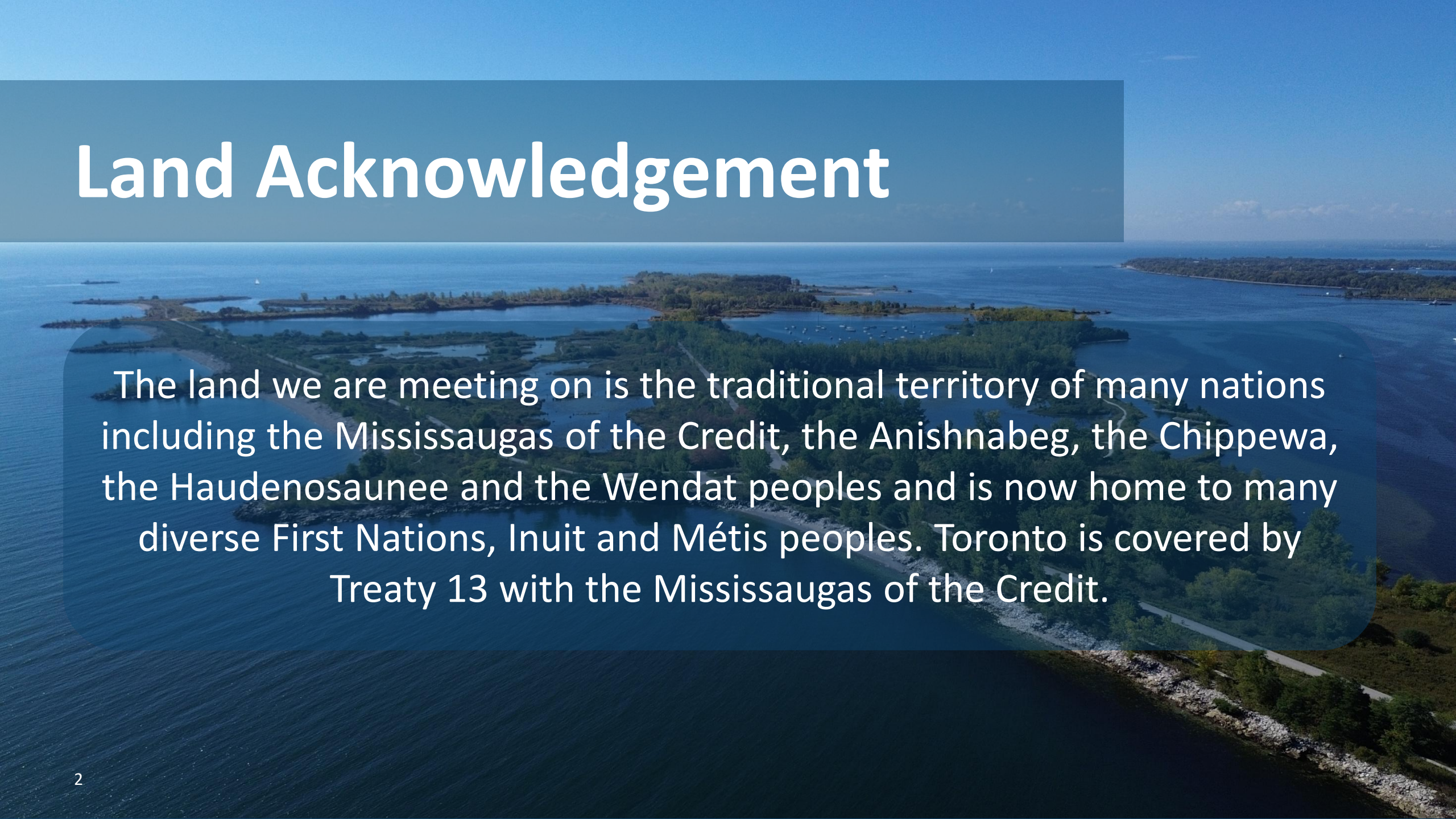
PUBLIC MEETING #1

Tommy Thompson Park Visitor Experience Plan

May 12, 2026



Land Acknowledgement

An aerial photograph of a large, forested island in a body of water, likely Lake Huron. The island is surrounded by smaller islets and peninsulas. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is clear. A semi-transparent blue box with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

01

BACKGROUND

Tommy Thompson Park (TTP) is one of Toronto's most distinctive and ecologically significant landscapes; it is a very special place.



BACKGROUND

In 2021, Toronto City Council adopted a Tommy Thompson Park Update that included the following recommendations:

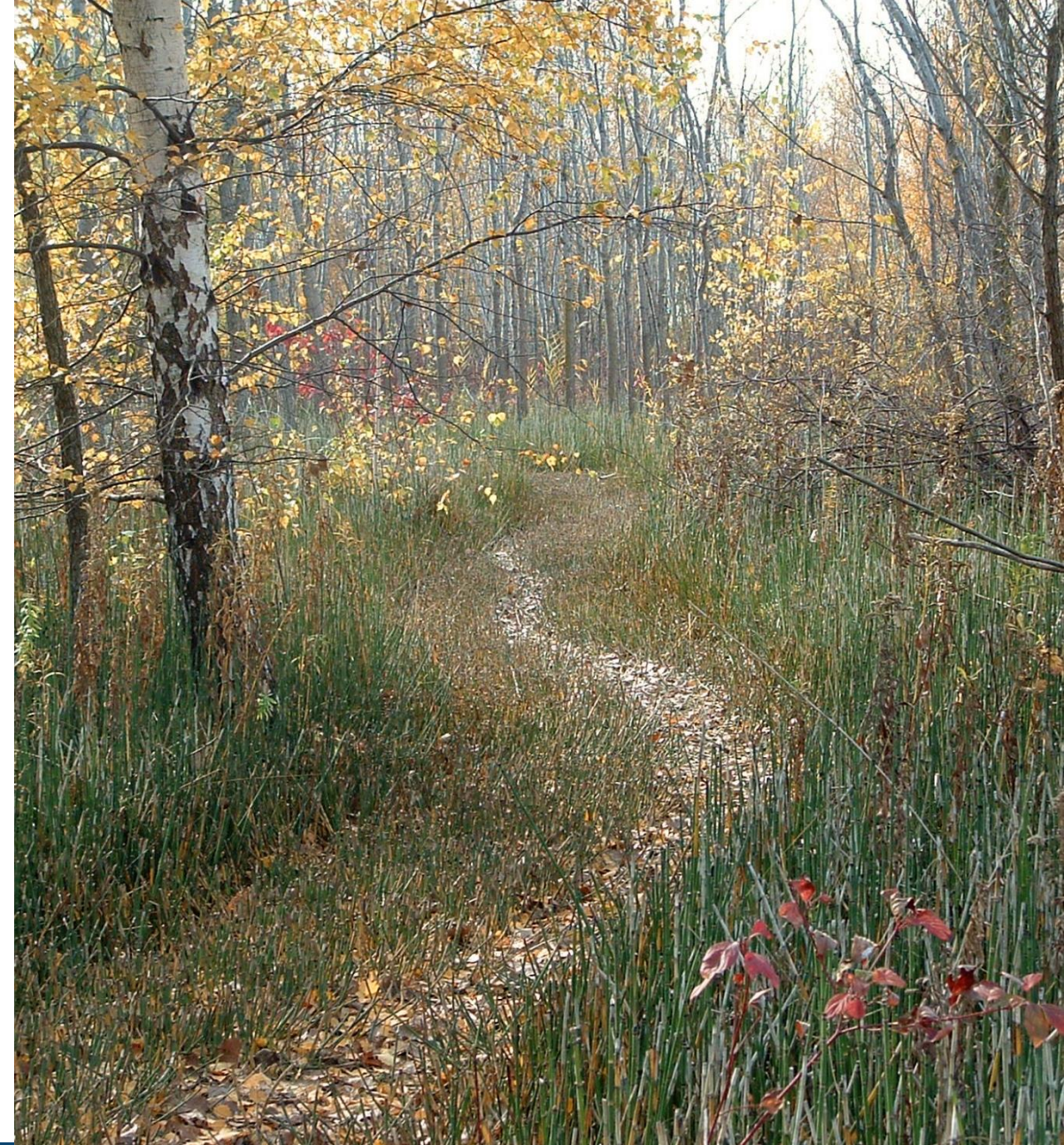
1. Establishment of a Joint Management Committee for the management of the Park and the rest of the Leslie Street Spit
2. Direction to staff supporting the Joint Management Committee to:
 - a. Develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the operations, and maintenance and visitor experience across the lands
 - b. Create a **Visitor Experience Plan** that strikes the balance between public access and ecological integrity
 - c. **Undertake a community and stakeholder consultation process**, including engaging with **rights-holding First Nations and** the broader Indigenous communities, to inform the visitor experience plan
 - d. Develop coordinated policy and enforcement approaches related to filming, dogs, trail conflicts, and similar issues



BACKGROUND

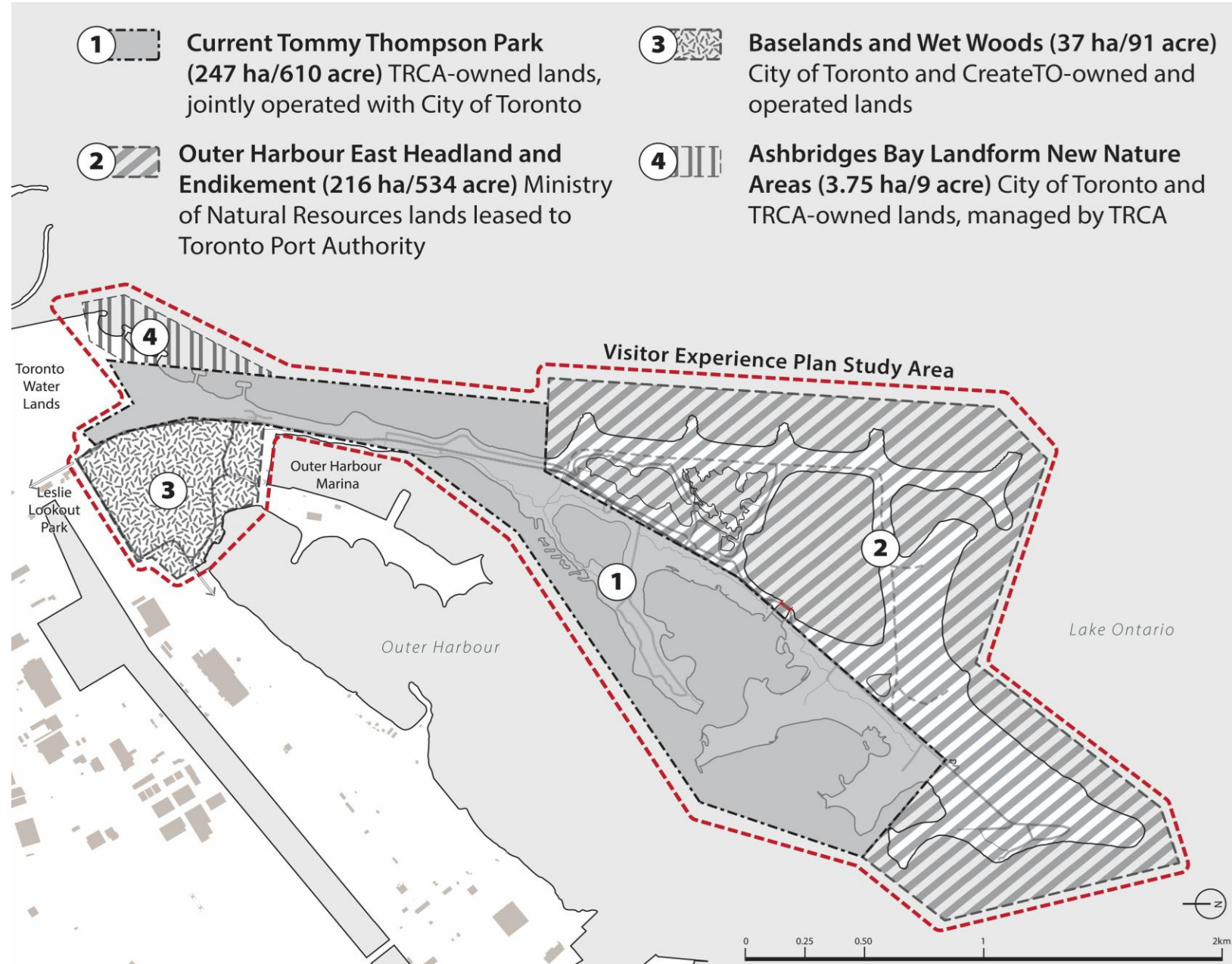
Based on the 2021 direction from Toronto City Council TRCA and City of Toronto are jointly moving ahead with the creation of the **Visitor Experience Plan** (VEP) to:

“...ensure that Tommy Thompson Park’s user experience befits its unique and signature status as a regional destination where visitors can experience an urban wilderness on Toronto’s waterfront.”



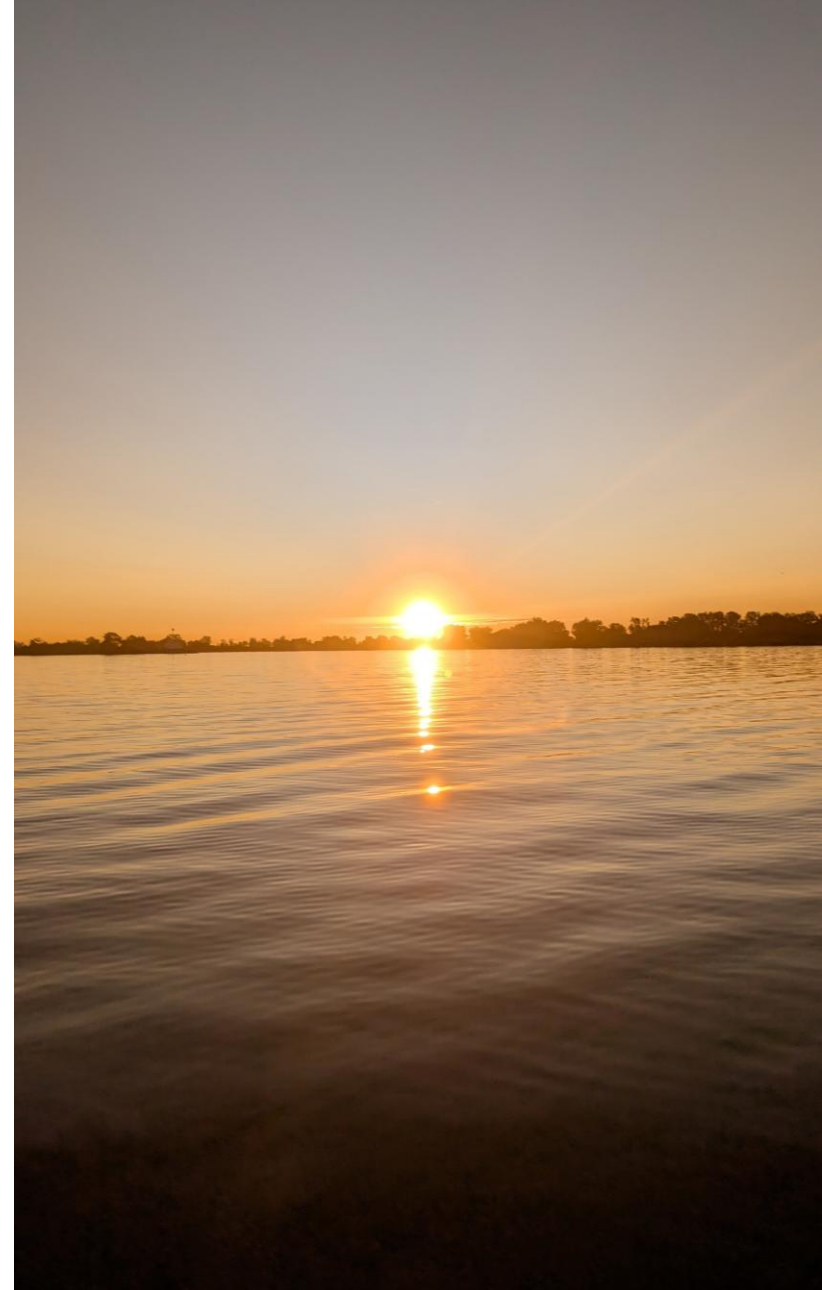
BACKGROUND

- Tommy Thompson Park is one part of the Leslie Street Spit, which has four distinct ownership and management areas
- The Study Area for the Visitor Experience Plan will focus on the Spit as a whole.
- Short-term implementation of the VEP will be focused on TRCA-owned and City-owned lands.
- Recommendations for provincially-owned lands will require discussion and cooperation with MNR and Toronto Port Authority.



WHAT IS A VISITOR EXPERIENCE PLAN (VEP)?

- A VEP is a framework that guides how people will enjoy, navigate, and connect with a park while protecting its natural and cultural features.
- A VEP seeks to understand:
 - **How** people experience a place
 - The **quality** of that experience, and
 - **What steps** can be made for improvements.



ABOUT THE TTP VEP



The VEP is a study to identify projects and priorities that will improve visitor experience at the park in a way that aligns with and further realizes the TTP Master Plan.

The VEP will include implementation planning that prioritizes the recommendations pre- and post-land transfer.



The VEP is not an update to the Master Plan nor an invitation to suggest major changes to the physical or operational priorities of the park.

This means, for example, that the VEP **will not** contemplate new buildings or servicing infrastructure outside of existing clearings, or south of the Nature Centre. It **will** ensure free access is maintained and **will** maintain the ban on pets.

MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES



Preserve significant species



Protect environmentally significant areas



Enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat



Enhance recreational opportunities

WHAT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED?



- Accessibility features
- Access to water
- Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in interpretation and programming
- Interpretive and educational signage
- Nature viewing points / lookouts
- On site staff / programming
- Seating, waste receptacles, shade, bikeshare, bike parking
- Site security / bylaw enforcement / emergency response
- Wayfinding and trail mapping
- Website, newsletters, or social media



ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

02

KEY CONSIDERATIONS INFORMING ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The development of a Visitor Experience Plan presents an opportunity to:

- Retain and **deepen relationships** with park users
- Identify, understand, and help resolve potential conflicts between user groups to **make the overall park experience better** for park users

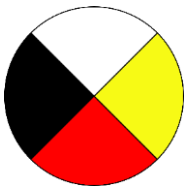


Pop-Ups at TTP

Fall 2025 and Spring 2026



Indigenous Engagement



Rights-Holding First Nations
Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
Six Nations of the Grand River
Huron-Wendat Nation

Urban Indigenous agencies

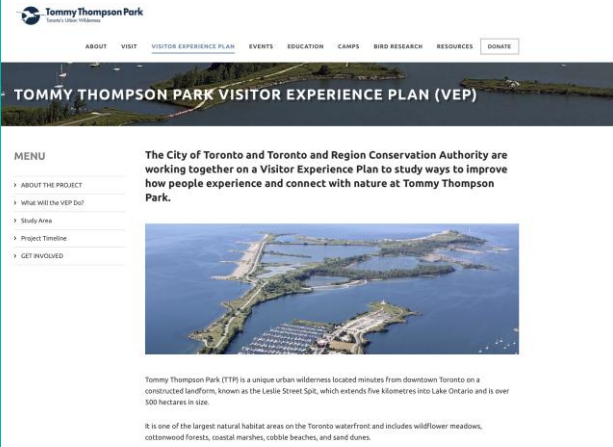
Community Advisory Group

15 organizations, 3 meetings



- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Aquatic Park Sailing Club | 9. Toronto Ornithological Club |
| 2. Cycle Toronto | 10. Tommy Thompson Park Naturalist Team |
| 3. Ekiden Relay | 11. Toronto Urban Fishing Ambassador |
| 4. Friends of the Spit | 12. Artist Network |
| 5. Toronto Entomologists' Association | 13. Sunshine Centre for Seniors |
| 6. Toronto Field Naturalists | 14. Walk Toronto |
| 7. Toronto Harriers | 15. Women's Art Association |
| 8. Toronto Nature Stewards | |

Project Website

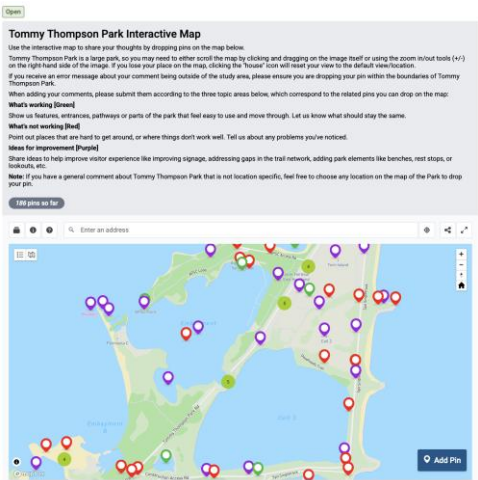


Community Meetings

Spring and Fall 2026



Online “Have your Say” platform

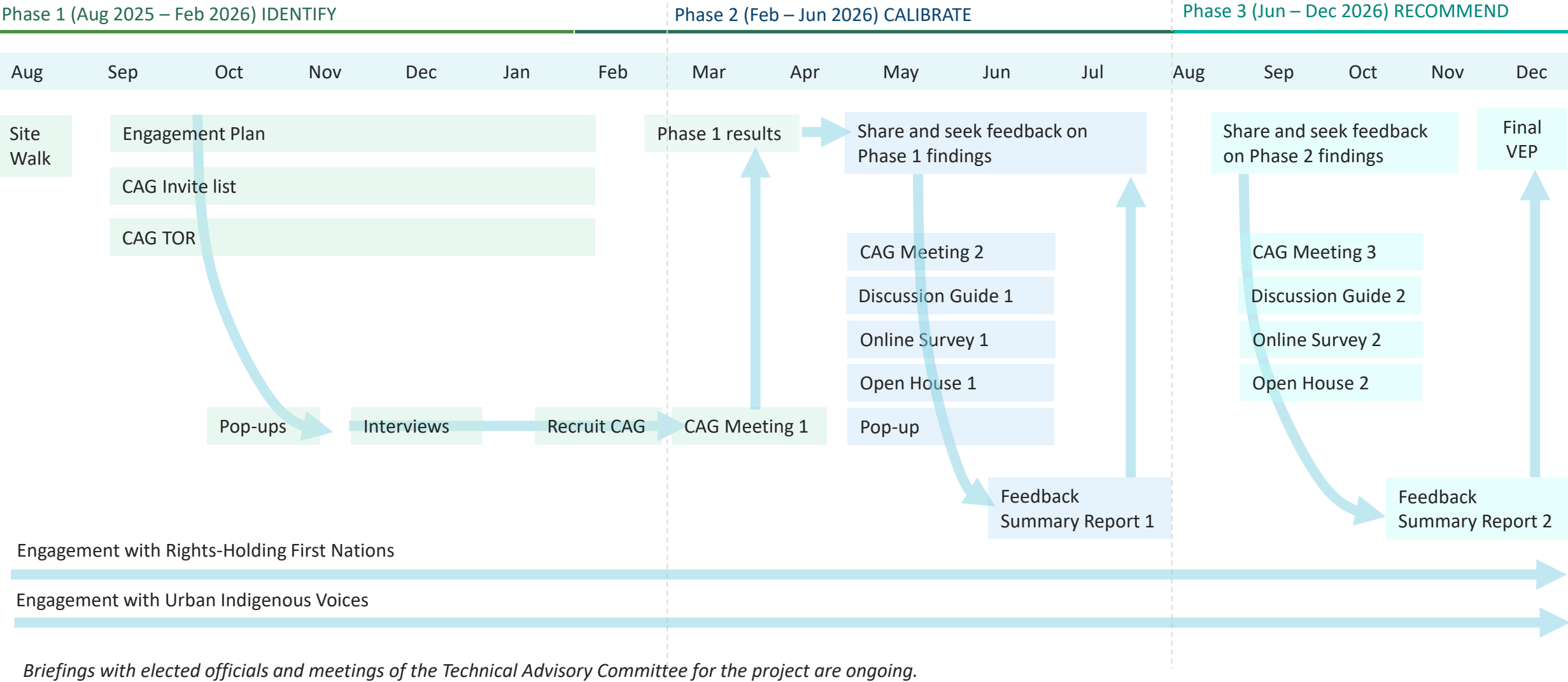


Technical Advisory Committee

City of Toronto, TRCA, MNR, CreateTO, Toronto Port Authority, Waterfront Toronto

Expert & Key Informant Interviews

PROJECT TIMELINE



03

**GOALS,
AUDIENCES, &
ESSENCE OF
PLACE**

VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

The draft Visitor Experience Goals for TTP:

- Are rooted in the TTP Master Plan Objectives
- Reinforce public education and programming that encourages visitors to **grow into stewards** through **low-impact, light-touch interventions**
- Designed to **build on the park's unique strengths** as an “urban wilderness,” its biodiversity, and its proximity to downtown Toronto

They **aim to ensure that all visitors can enjoy a safe, inclusive, and inspiring experience** that deepens their appreciation for this remarkable landscape.

The Visitor Experience Goals
balance recreation,
education, and conservation.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS



MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES



Preserve significant species



Protect environmentally significant areas



Enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat



Enhance recreational opportunities

AUDIENCES

The development of a Visitor Experience Plan presents an opportunity to:

- ***Retain and deepen*** relationships with existing users
- ***Nurture*** new audiences

All while maintaining ecological integrity and the restorative qualities that make TTP special and proactively planning for anticipated user growth.



Retain & Deepen

- Existing current users
- Enhance and engage more deeply

Nature Enthusiasts



Recreational Wellness Users



School and Post-Secondary Groups



Seniors



Nurture

- Low current users
- Support visitation

Multigenerational Families



Newcomers & Diverse Communities



Indigenous Peoples



Young Adults



Tourists and Occasional Visitors



VE ESSENCE OF PLACE

The Essence of Place statement captures what makes TTP unique and meaningful—the qualities that define its character, the experiences it offers, and the emotions it evokes.

It articulates:

- why people are drawn here
- what they can see and do
- what they take away from their visit

The Essence of Place statement expresses the site's distinctive recreational, ecological, educational, and emotional qualities for visitors.

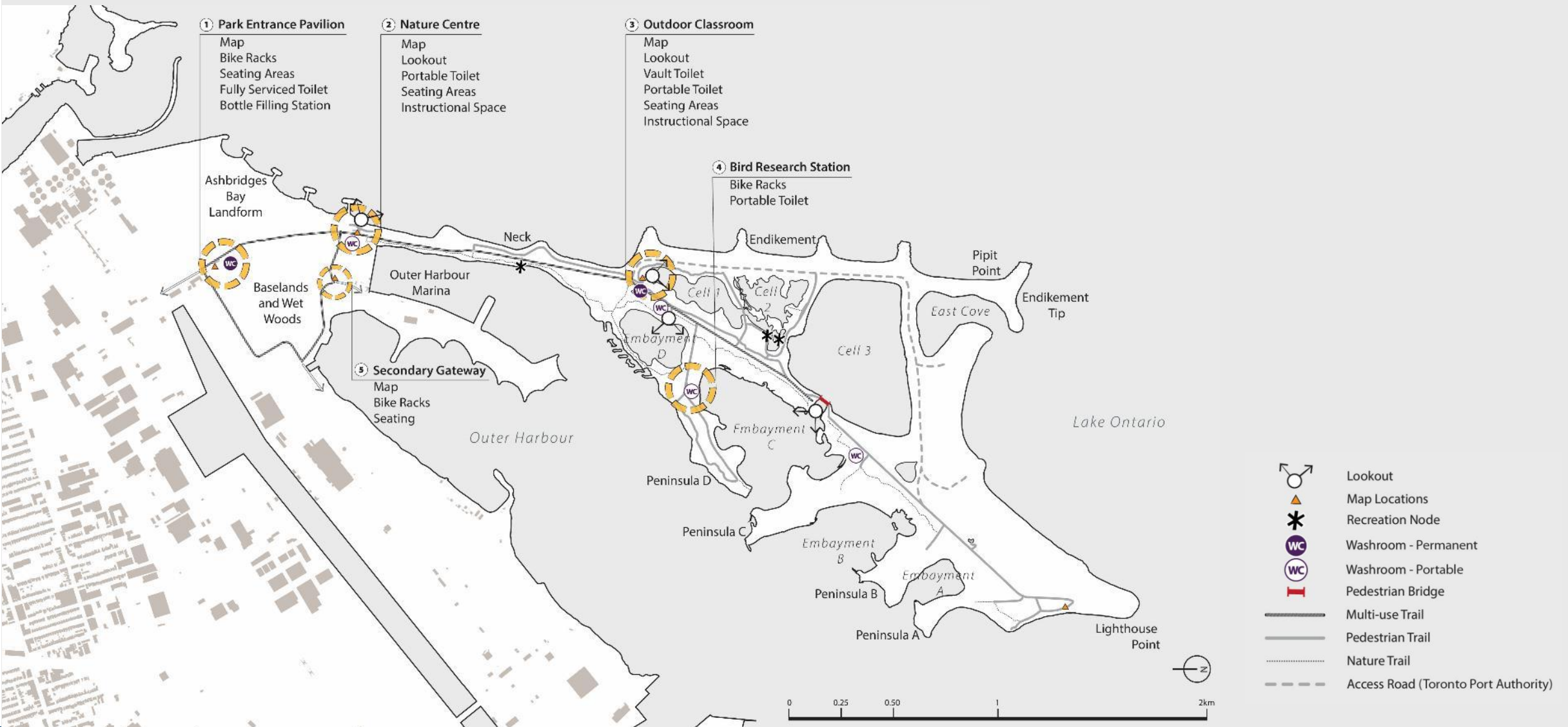


Tommy Thompson Park is
where Toronto breathes—a
lakefront urban wilderness
for renewal, discovery, and
connection with nature.

04

ASSETS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

EXISTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE ASSETS



CHALLENGES

- 1. Visitor Management:** Rising visitation increases user conflicts, safety concerns, and wildlife impacts
- 2. Operational Constraints:** Ecological sensitivity, complex governance, geographical isolation, and funding limitations complicate access, accessibility, visitor services, and operations
- 3. Character & Identity:** Branding and identity fragmentation and lack of clear signage creates visitor confusion and unintended/ undesirable visitor use of the park
- 4. Visitor Comfort:** Limitations and constraints of current facilities and amenities impact visitor enjoyment of the site



LOOKING TO OTHER PLACES

Other parks and nature reserves:

- Are transformed post-industrial or reclaimed landscapes
- Balance public access with environmental protection
- Connect audiences with nature through interpretation, programming, etc.
- Examples of partnership models and governance approaches

We can look to other places for potential solutions to help address challenges at TTP.



Source: [Evergreen Brick Works](#)



Source: [Parks Canada](#)



Source: [National Capital Commission](#)



Source: [Yelp \(Carolyn J.\)](#)

Evergreen Brick Works
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Point Pelee National Park
Leamington, Ontario, Canada

Gatineau Park
Quebec, Canada

Broward County — Parks & Nature Network
Florida, USA

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. **Cohesive Interpretation & Storytelling:** Better tell TTP's transformation that better links navigation with ecological and cultural narratives
2. **Enhanced Orientation & Infrastructure:** Clarify visitor orientation and wayfinding and focus improvements near existing facilities
3. **Foster Stewardship:** Enhance visitors' education to build respectful use and long-term community responsibility
4. **Improve Access & Inclusivity:** Explore ways to better support target audiences' use of the park
5. **Design Excellence & Identity:** Invest in nature-compatible design that strengthens TTP's refined ecological identity



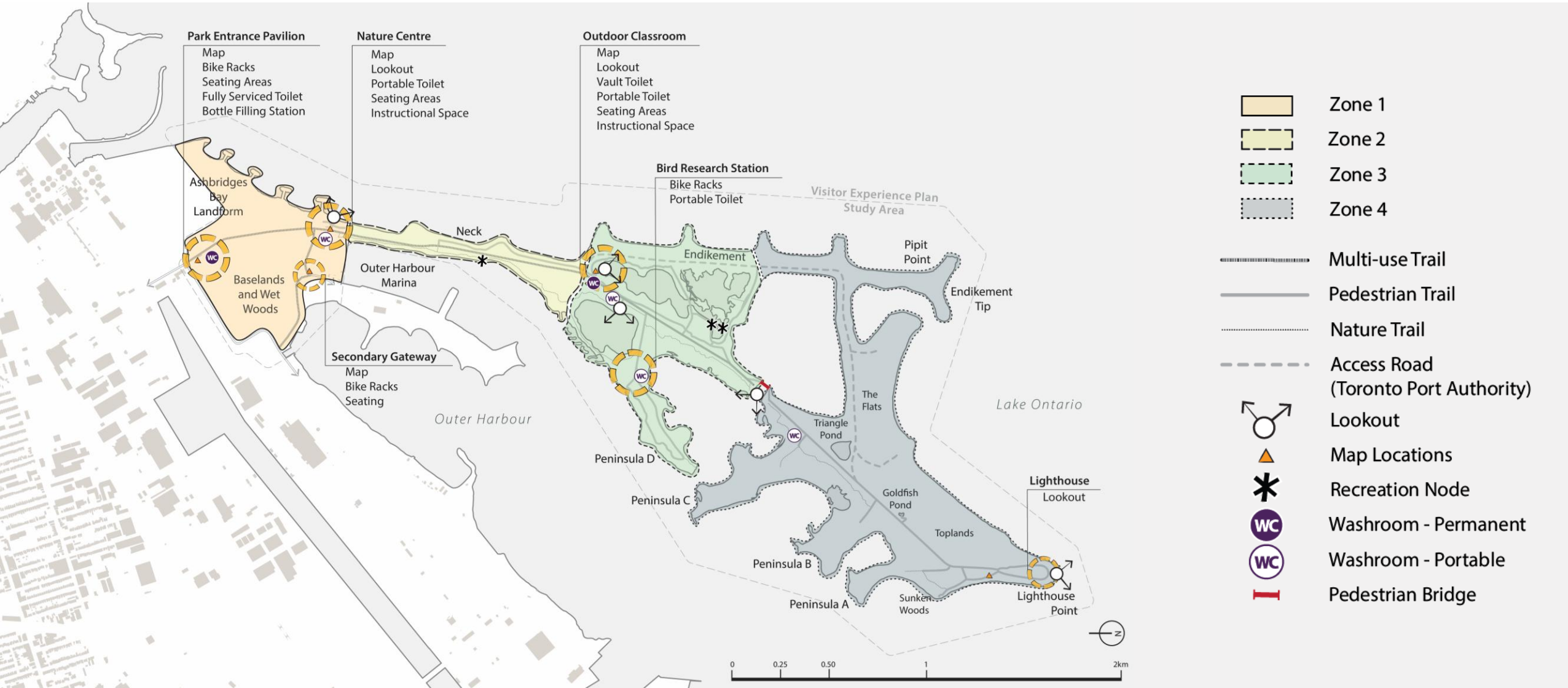
FINDING COMMON GROUND: ZONES

Why Zones?

- Not a single uniform experience at park/the Spit
- Each zone has its own characteristics
- Help us plan what visitors can do and where
- Help us identify how to some elements (e.g. seating) may vary between zones



FINDING COMMON GROUND



NEXT STEPS

05

NEXT STEPS

We look forward to you and your group's continued participation in the development of the Visitor Experience Plan.

Key Dates in Phase 2:

- Online feedback tool open to May 19
- Draft recommendations to be developed by TRCA, City, and consultant team through summer 2026

Next Public Meeting in Fall 2026

- Share and seek feedback on core elements of draft Visitor Experience Plan



THANK YOU.

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