



DISCUSSION GUIDE 2

September / October 2026

Draft Visitor Experience Plan for Tommy Thompson Park & the Leslie Street Spit

Based on direction from Toronto City Council, the City of Toronto and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) are jointly creating a Visitor Experience Plan 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.

Following public consultation in the Fall of 2025 and Spring 2026, a Draft Visitor Experience Plan (VEP) has been developed. The Draft VEP includes:

- 4 Draft Zones
- 8 Draft Recommendations
- 46 Draft Actions

The purpose of this phase of engagement is to share and seek feedback on the Draft VEP, including implementation priorities.

This Discussion Guide includes core elements of the Draft VEP and questions for you. Join us at the September 29th Public Meeting and/or share your thoughts online using the QR code on page 4. The deadline for feedback is Sunday, October 4, 2026.

Responding to Feedback

From October 2025 through to June 2026, hundreds of people shared their thoughts on what's working well and not working well about the visitor experience today at Tommy Thompson Park and the Leslie Street Spit, along with opportunities to consider when developing the site's first ever Visitor Experience Plan. Clear feedback themes included:

- People **deeply love the park**
- Support for a **"light-touch"** approach
- Frequently raised **challenges** were communication, accessibility, and maintenance
- There's an important **opportunity** to help visitors understand, respect, and care for the place, and on sustaining community involvement over the long term
- From **Indigenous** perspectives, the land is a living relationship, not just a place to visit
- There are important **tensions** between users and uses that the VEP will need to balance (e.g., conflicts between fast-moving cyclists and other trail users, a range of opinions about fishing, boat access, amenities such as seating and shade, etc.)



CAG Meeting, Spring 2026



Pop-Up in the Park, Fall 2025

tommythompsonpark.ca/visitor-experience-plan/

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS AND DRAFT ACTIONS

The Draft VEP includes 8 Draft Recommendations and 46 Draft Actions that are summarized here. There are three types of Draft Actions: physical actions (10), process actions (23), and studies (13).

It is intentionally a long list of actions that responds to feedback received to date. Some actions may be removed, others consolidated, and there may be some actions moved to longer-term, post-land-transfer aspirations that would be revisited at an appropriate time in the future. The inclusion of these Draft Actions in the Draft VEP does not mean the City of Toronto nor TRCA have endorsed these actions.

Have a look at the Draft Recommendations and Draft Actions and think about which are of highest priority to you. Also think about whether you see anything major missing or off base. Your feedback will help shape the VEP Implementation Plan.



1

Tell a cohesive, layered story of the site

- 1A. Develop a site-wide Interpretive Plan guided by the TTP VEP's foundations and recommendations (STUDY)
- 1B. Develop a strategy for art in the park that is driven by the site-wide Interpretative Plan and strengthens the connection between nature, art, and stewardship (STUDY)
- 1C. Develop a cohesive and unified interpretive signage system that enhances and encourages self-guided visitor experiences, while respecting the site's unique character (STUDY)
- 1D. Explore opportunities to enhance programming and volunteering to actively foster site stewardship and transform visitors into stewards (PROCESS)
- 1E. Increase transparency into the work of the City, TRCA, and partners in creating, enhancing and protecting the site's ecology (PROCESS)

2

Nurture meaningful and sustained relationships with Indigenous Partners

- 2A. Engage in meaningful and ongoing conversations with Rights Holding First Nations to consider how and if the park's governance could expand to include First Nations and to reflect Indigenous perspectives on the environment and inclusion of Indigenous traditional knowledge with regard to ecology and stewardship (PROCESS)
- 2B. In partnership with First Nations and Indigenous partners, initiate and resource an Indigenous Advisory Group to identify and communicate ongoing needs and to advise on initiating and deepening diverse partnership opportunities (PROCESS)
- 2C. Collaborate and co-develop with First Nations and urban Indigenous partners to visibly integrate First Nation languages, history, Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee clan systems and Indigenous traditional knowledge throughout site (PROCESS)
- 2D. Support and co-develop First Nations-led land-based learning and programming (PROCESS)
- 2E. Consider broadening social media and virtual programming to extend the park's reach to those who cannot physically visit to enable virtual teachings and online content featuring Elders and traditional knowledge holders (PROCESS)

3

Create a clear arrival and orientation experience

- 3A. Work together to create a diverse and connected visitor experience approach within the broader context of the Toronto Waterfront and the Port Lands precinct (PROCESS)
-
- 3B. Consider updates to the Tommy Thompson Park Trail Master Plan to reflect desire paths, contemporary activities and site uses, emerging practices in wildlife supportive trail design, opportunities for inclusive and accessible experiences along trails, and to explore feasibility of eco-corridor crossings on the Multi-Use Trail (STUDY)
-
- 3C. Develop a cohesive wayfinding system (STUDY)
-
- 3D. Leverage all entrances as distinct gateways to welcome visitors to Tommy Thompson Park and the Spit (PHYSICAL)

5

Strengthen and improve amenities

- 5A. Improve the maintenance of what already exists in the park (PROCESS)
-
- 5B. Consider updates to the Tommy Thompson Park Trail Improve access, amenities, maintenance and operations of existing Major Facilities to support ongoing and extended programming (PHYSICAL)
-
- 5C. Improve vegetation management at select viewing nodes and lookouts to support ongoing view access, education and encourage visitors to stay on trails (PROCESS)
-
- 5D. Develop a Lighthouse Point Destination Plan that identifies low-impact, light touch interventions to provide visitor comfort and support it as a destination node while respecting this remote site's character (STUDY)
-
- 5E. Providing additional seating and gathering spaces along trails that respond to site context (PHYSICAL)
-
- 5F. Explore additional Bike Share stations at strategic locations to encourage docking to respect appropriate use of pedestrian-only trails while also enabling and encouraging users to explore Tommy Thompson Park further/more deeply without being overcharged (PHYSICAL)
-
- 5G. Explore opportunities to provide access to drinking water in more areas of Tommy Thompson Park (e.g., mobile/temporary station, water trucks) (STUDY)
-
- 5H. Improve bike parking through expanded capacity at existing locations and strategically placed new bike parking at key trail intersections and Points of Interest (PHYSICAL)
-
- 5I. Establish a cohesive visual identity for park furnishings (seating, bike parking, etc.) and built structures that are suited to Tommy Thompson Park's nature-first character and respond to their context (STUDY)
-
- 5J. Provide weather protection and shade through intentional planting or discrete structures at new and existing nodes, lookouts, rest areas (PHYSICAL)
-
- 5K. Redevelop area around the Nature Centre and adjacent compound to re-establish the facility as a multi-functional educational and programming hub (PHYSICAL)
-
- 5L. Explore opportunities for permanent or temporary wildlife viewing structures, such as bird blinds or viewing platforms, to create safer, less disruptive wildlife viewing opportunities, where suitable. Consider moveable options to support redeployment in response to shifting natural activity and ecological sensitivities. (PHYSICAL)

4

Manage visitor expectations and set visitor responsibilities

- 4A. Clearly define and communicate park rules and restrictions, along with the rationale behind them, to promote visitor understanding and compliance (PROCESS)
-
- 4B. Reframe visitor compliance with site restrictions as stewardship responsibilities through education about why a restriction is in place – and the collective responsibility to keep Tommy Thompson Park and the Spit a special place for both humans and wildlife (PROCESS)
-
- 4C. Establish a unified site identity that helps manage visitor expectations about what the park is and is not, including considering renaming the park and areas within it (STUDY)
-
- 4D. Develop a communication plan (PROCESS)

5 Strengthen and improve amenities

- Develop a coordinated water access strategy that clearly defines ecologically-informed locations for water access, suitable shoreline activities and uses, and places for movement to/from the water. (STUDY)
- 5M.

6 Reduce barriers

- Ensure clear and consistent online and onsite information about accessibility in the park (PROCESS)
-
- Better promote the degree and role of subsidization in current programming and introduce tier-based fees for registered programs to help reduce financial barriers and increase financial accessibility (PROCESS)
-
- Driven by the site-wide Interpretive Plan, deepen programming partnerships with community organizations to make emerging or traditionally underserved visitor groups feel more welcome at the park, including enhancing tactile and sensory based learning experiences (PROCESS)
-
- Develop multi-lingual and AODA-accessible formats to enhance accessibility of interpretive, orientation, and wayfinding materials which could be hosted on TTP's site for download (PROCESS)
-
- Explore digital delivery options to enhance the onsite experience (STUDY)
-
- Improve physical accessibility to more of the park and Spit: reintroduce a seasonal and/or weekend-only shuttle that operates along the Multi-Use Trail; explore opportunities for a shuttle to assist in closing the gap between TTC access and park entrance; introduce a rental program for off-road wheelchairs and mobility scooters, available on a first-come, first-served basis (STUDY)
-
- Introduce rest stops throughout the park as places to recover while reflecting and connecting with nature. Some of the rest stops may coincide with mile markers at intervals. Provide diverse seating options that support individual and cluster seating and reflect area conditions (PHYSICAL)
- 6A.
- 6B.
- 6C.
- 6D.
- 6E.
- 6F.
- 6G.

7 Reinforce public safety through visibility

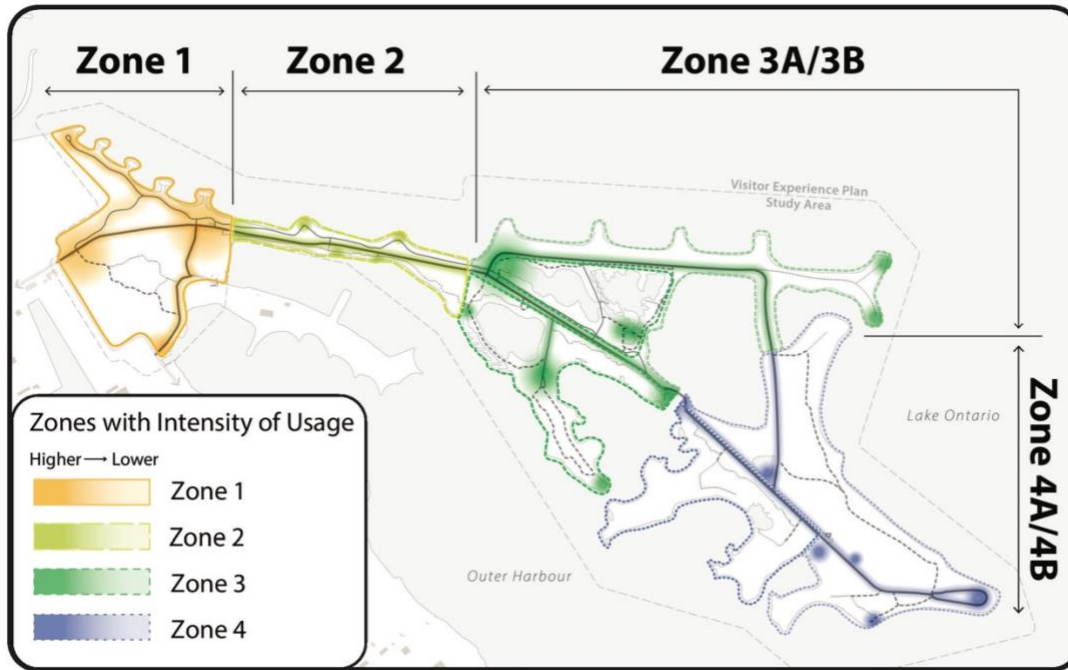
- Better communicate information related to health, safety, and wellbeing onsite (via improved signage throughout the park) and online (to aid pre-trip planning) (PROCESS)
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- Pilot a park ambassador volunteer program to supplement staff presence and provide informal educational and safety support (PROCESS)
-
- Create safety stations at strategic locations throughout the park – these may include emergency phone, first aid kit, safe needle disposal, etc. (PHYSICAL)
- 7A.
- 7B.
- 7C.

8 Invest in sustainable operations, maintenance and governance

- Review and update governance policies and operational procedures from a visitor experience lens to remove ambiguity and provide visitors with clarity especially around points of tension (PROCESS)
-
- Review and update relevant enforcement policies and procedures from a visitor experience lens on a rolling basis to provide continued clarity on what is permitted, where, and to whom/when exceptions apply (PROCESS)
-
- Review and update relevant emergency procedures from a visitor experience lens on a rolling basis to provide continued clarity for the most common/highly reported scenarios (e.g., injuries/medical issues, harassment, injured wildlife, etc.) (PROCESS)
-
- Develop an ongoing mechanism for fostering community consultation (PROCESS)
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- Develop a more sustainable operational model for the park (STUDY)
- 8A.
- 8B.
- 8C.
- 8D.
- 8E.

Draft Zones in the Visitor Experience Plan

A visit to Tommy Thompson Park and the Leslie Street Spit is not a single uniform experience. Dividing the area into zones, each with its own defined character, creates an organizing experiential framework that reflects and guides how we want visitors to experience the site – what uses can be responsibly supported, where, and how the nature of uses may vary between different zones. The map below shows the location of the Draft Zones and the table below explains the differences in the level of immersion, accessibility, and types of supported facilities in the Draft Zones.



Explanation of Zones 3A/B and 4A/B:

Zone 3 is subdivided along the property line between TRCA and MNR. Areas west of the existing Multi-Use Trail fall within 3A (owned by TRCA), and areas east of the existing Multi-Use Trail, including the Multi-Use Trail itself, fall within 3B (owned by Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources or MNR). Some areas in 3B are managed and programmed by TRCA through existing agreements with MNR. Zone 4 is similarly subdivided.

Criteria	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Level of Immersion	Low-Moderate Highest volume of visitors, most references to city	Low-Moderate High volume of visitors, fewer references to city	Moderate Lower volume of visitors, few references to city	High Lowest volume of visitors, very few references to city
Accessibility	High Near to facilities and access points, predominantly stable pathways	Moderate Near to facilities, increased distance to access points, mixed pathway conditions	Moderate Near to facilities, significant distance to access points, mixed pathway conditions	Low Far from facilities, significant distance to access points, mixed pathway conditions
Types of Supported Facilities	Full-Range Full municipal servicing, broad range of amenities and options from high to low impact	Limited Minimal municipal servicing, preference for off-grid/low impact, but supports a broad range of amenities and options	Off-Grid / Low Impact Focused at Points of Interest to mitigate impacts on adjacent areas	Off-Grid / Low Impact Very limited at Points of Interest, if supporting visitor safety

Implementation will be incremental

The final VEP is intended to be an incremental Visitor Experience Plan. It will be implemented gradually over time, considering governance matters such as land ownership transfers and based on available funding and resources.

There are some short-term improvements that can be accomplished now on lands currently owned by the City and TRCA. There are also larger-scale, site-wide, more complex enhancements that cannot be implemented (or may only be partially implemented on lands owned by the City and TRCA) until lands currently owned by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources have been transferred to TRCA or the City.

As land transfer timelines are not yet finalized and implementation will space several years, the VEP delivered at the end of this project will need to be revisited and updated periodically – as land transfers are finalized, and as recommendations and actions start to be implemented based on funding availability.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU

Based on the excerpts of the Draft Visitor Experience Plan included in this Discussion Guide:

1. Which 2-3 Draft Recommendations do you think are the highest priority and why?
2. Which 5-8 Draft Actions do you think are the highest priority and why?
3. How effective do you think each of the elements of the Draft VEP will be in improving the visitor experience (Zones, Recommendations, Actions)? And the VEP overall?
4. Do you see anything major missing or off base in the Draft VEP? If so, what refinements would you like to see considered?

We want to hear from you!



Come to the Public Meeting

Tuesday, September 29, 2026

6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Jimmie Simpson Recreation Centre (fully accessible)
870 Queen Street East



Complete the Online Survey

Opens: Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Closes: Sunday, October 4, 2026

To learn more, checkout the project website at:

tommythompsonpark.ca/visitor-experience-plan/

CONTACTS

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Third Party Public (VEP engagement team), Nicole Swerhun, nicole@thirdpartypublic.ca (416) 572-4365



Scan here to take survey*

If you would prefer to respond to the survey by telephone or paper copy, or to request accessibility accommodations for the public meeting, please contact the Third Party Public team (contact info below).