



DON RIVER PARK FACT SHEET

LOCATION

- West Don Lands: East of Bayview Avenue, South of King Street to the rail corridor, West of GO/CN Rail lines and the Don River

PARK SIZE

- Approximately 7.3 hectares (18 acres)

DESIGN TEAM

- Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. (lead design firm)
- Other team members: Maryann Thompson Architects, ARUP (engineering), Pine & Swallow Environmental (planting soils), Great Eastern Ecology (ecological systems) Creative Irrigation, Trow (geo-technical), The Planning Partnership (public consultation), and Greenberg Consulting (urban connections)

BUDGET AND TIMING

- Budget: \$25,759,964 for the Park+Pavilion project
- Timing: Construction on Don River Park began in August 2010. The park is scheduled to open in late 2011/early 2012.

PARK FEATURES

The design of Don River Park is inspired by the site's many inherent assets—its strong connections to the city, its proximity to the Don River, its unique ecological history, and its location on the area's flood protection landform. The park was designed to take full advantage of the exceptional topography provided by the flood protection landform.

The topography organizes the park both physically and programmatically. The river side of the park will be an extensive 3.2 hectare (7.9 acre) urban prairie to address regulations that restrict active recreation and the planting of woody vegetation on the eastern slope, the potential wet side, of the flood protection landform. The urban prairie will include an upland meadow on the upper parts of the slope, while a lowland wet meadow at the base of the landform will add ecological and experiential diversity. The wet meadow will also be a crucial part of a park-wide ecological stormwater management system. Meandering walking trails, multi-use bike paths, and a boardwalk will allow visitors to explore the unique urban landscape.

The 3.6 hectare (8.9 acre) western city side of the flood protection landform is defined by a dynamic, unfolding topography that creates varied, flexible spaces for a diverse range of passive and active pursuits. A series of open lawns will provide ample space for both informal and organized sports, and creates a variety of flexible spaces where a diverse range of activities can be enjoyed. Woodland plantings work with the topography to define each space and will screen views of the surrounding urban infrastructure. The spaces will allow visitors to immerse themselves in nature or enjoy a range of other activities, from soccer and lacrosse to bird watching, picnicking, concerts, sledding, and skate boarding.

A spacious playground occupies one of the park's central hilltops, bringing a high level of activity to the core of the park. The playground offers diverse play experiences for children of all ages and balances natural features, such as rock outcrops and woodlands, with conventional play equipment such as slides, swings, seesaws, and water play. This elevated area also affords visitors distant views to the Don River and Lake Ontario beyond, encouraging a sense of connection to the wider landscape.

A striking and sustainable pavilion at the play hill serves the practical needs of the park with enclosed bathrooms, a park office, kitchenette and basement utility space. Demonstrating sustainable building design, the pavilion will include solar panels to supplement its power needs. It will also include a flexible multi-use outdoor community 'room' for meetings, performances, and other small-scale events, as well as community tables, benches and a fireplace to create a welcoming gathering place for the community. To the south of the pavilion is a youth athletic field that can be used for a variety of organized sports. In the winter, this area will serve as the base of a sledding hill that rises toward the playground.

A major feature of the park is that it reconnects the site with the native ecology of the area. A large marsh, approximately 1300 square metres (13,993.08 square feet), wrapped by landforms and woodland vegetation, will support plant communities native to the Don River Valley. The marsh re-establishes the site's ecological heritage as a Crown Reserve, providing habitat for wildlife and space for passive recreation. The marsh is also an essential part of the park's ecological stormwater management system, receiving and treating runoff from the western side of the flood protection landform.

The park will be well connected to its urban neighbourhood with a series of clear entrances that invite visitors into the park from a number of points within the community. A new access under the Bala railway corridor will provide direct access to the Don River Trail and the river's edge.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- The park was designed with the native ecology of the area in mind. A large marsh will support plants native to the Don River Valley and will re-establish the site's ecological heritage as a Crown Reserve.
- All of water from the park's water play feature and stormwater collection system will be reclaimed to feed the irrigation system and to flush the marsh. It is a closed loop system to limit input into the city's stormwater system.
- Nearly all plants that will be used in the park are native to the Toronto area.
- The introduction of a series of diverse landscapes such as prairie lands, marsh, woodland hillsides will support wildlife habitat by offering shelter and food sources.
- Solar panels are incorporated into the design of the pavilion and the energy harvested from them will be used to supplement the pavilion's power needs.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- Three public forum meetings in addition to meetings with individual stakeholder groups such as Bring Back the Don, First Nations, and the West Don Lands Committee have been held