

BRINGING NEW LIFE *to*
VICTORIA MEMORIAL SQUARE

REVIVING AN OLD NEIGHBOURHOOD



THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC
WELLINGTON PLACE NEIGHBOURHOOD

A Unique Public/Private Initiative

PHASE ONE

A Project of the Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association
in association with
The City of Toronto
November 2002

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City of Toronto Culture Division, 2000
- F. “City’s most historic park is put on auction block”, by John Brehl, Toronto Star, 1963
- G. “Ghosts of old Toronto to rise in song: Michael Rudman is writing an opera to commemorate 500 people buried in Victoria Square”, Natalie Southworth , Globe and Mail
April 29, 2000
- H. Attendees at Community Design Workshop, Artword Theatre, March 24, 2002
- I. “Strengths and Weaknesses of Victoria Memorial Square” (Workshop document)
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1. INTRODUCTION

WE INVITE YOU TO HELP SHARE IN AN EXCITING COMMUNITY ENDEAVOUR – THE REVITALIZATION OF VICTORIA MEMORIAL SQUARE AND THE WELLINGTON PLACE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Victoria Memorial Square is a hidden gem – an important historic site as well as a unique urban square of beautiful proportions in the midst of a mixed residential and commercial neighbourhood.

Located at the intersection of Wellington, Portland and Niagara Streets, Victoria Memorial Square is the oldest surviving European cemetery in Toronto. From its beginning in 1793 as a burying ground for Fort York, to today, it has been a focal point for this part of the city known as Wellington Place.

Wellington Place is a growing and vibrant residential, business and cultural community. As more residents and businesses move into the area – in both renovated industrial spaces or newly constructed residential buildings – Victoria Memorial Square’s users are expanding. From early morning dog walkers to lunchtime bocce players and picnickers, the square is filled with activity and people. This means that the formerly out-of-the-way park faces increasing demands with the need for:

- improved lighting to guarantee a safe environment for residents and workers
- new playground facilities for the kids in the neighbourhood
- more seating areas for park users throughout the day
- new planting and garden areas
- the maintenance and care of the existing tree population
- reconstruction of deteriorating walkways to prevent accidents
- a small number of new features (such as a fountain) to add to the enjoyment of the park
- protection of historic elements such as graves and markers
- signs and way-finding elements that highlight the historic importance and features in the park

With gratitude to the Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association:

Victoria Memorial Square will be an urban jewel, rescued from a wasteland of neglect and forgetfulness. It beautifully ties the city’s earliest roots into a living, caring, revitalized community. The whole city is made richer by this enlightened act of stewardship.

Jane Jacobs, October 5, 2002

A UNIQUE PRIVATE/PUBLIC INITIATIVE – A COMMUNITY TAKES THE LEAD TO CONSERVE ITS HERITAGE FOR THE FUTURE

It's no secret that the City of Toronto faces severe financial constraints that limit its ability to keep up with the growing demands of our communities. Rather than wait until the public funding process got around to answering the needs of the neighbourhood, the local community group, The Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association began looking for innovative ways to make things happen. Working closely with supportive City staff and local elected officials, we developed an approach that has proved successful in other cities in North America – a public/private partnership for the restoration and stewardship of the park.

Our plan is to raise money from the community and the private sector that will be matched dollar for dollar by public funds from the City. Our goal is to raise \$1 million from the community and the private sector. In addition, the city will continue its commitment to maintain the park with some of the fundraising proceeds going to a conservancy fund.

In the following pages you will find:

- schematic plans for the historically sensitive renovation of the park addressing the needs of local residents and businesses
- information about the community process and participation, our mission and vision
- a budget
- a comprehensive collection of information about the fascinating history of the park since its beginnings in early Toronto history.

We invite you to join us in realizing a truly exciting and historic opportunity – restoring and revitalizing part of Toronto's history and urban landscape for use by all of its citizens.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

We have developed a number of truly exceptional naming opportunities in the design of the park.

- *The commemorative walk outlining the old burying ground*
- *The new garden area*
- *Children's playground*
- *A fountain at the south/east corner*
- *A special feature or part of the park in honour of urban activist Jane Jacobs*
- *Individual seating areas and benches*

In addition to this list, we are prepared to consider a naming opportunity for the entire square within the historical context should such an offer be of interest to a major donor.

2. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

STEERING COMMITTEE 2002

William Brokenshire
Henry D'Auchapt
Eti Greenberg
Ken Greenberg (Acting Chair)
Charles Grieco (Treasurer)
Lee Jacobson
Scott James (Secretary)

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Tony Capizzano
Cate Freeman
Eti Greenberg
Ken Greenberg
J. Charles Grieco (Chair)
Scott James (Secretary)
Ann Kurdyak
Judy Matthews
Don Solomon

CITY AND PROVINCIAL STAFF

Joe Halstead, Commissioner,
Economic Development, Culture and Tourism
Paula Dill, Commissioner,
Urban Development Services
David O'Hara, City Parks
Jo Ann Pynn, Fort York
Sherry Pederson, City Heritage
Eric Pederson, City Planning
Sandra Loughheed, City Culture
Tamara Anson-Cartwright, Ontario Culture

CITY COUNCILLOR

Councillor Olivia Chow

DESIGN COMMITTEE

William Brokenshire
Jeff Coussin
Cate Freeman
Eti Greenberg
Ken Greenberg (Chair)
Margaret Grieco
Lee Jacobson
Ann Kurdyak
Leo Madore
Eileen Matthews-Hill
Michael McClelland
Stephen Otto
Jorge Ovejero
Peter Raynes
Judith Sandiford
Don Solomon
Robert Stacey
Cindy Trower
Tracy Brown
Paula Tew

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

David Leinster, Principal
Hough Woodland Naylor Dance Leinster

SUPPORTERS

Jane Jacobs
Judy Matthews
Ontario Heritage Foundation



3. VICTORIA MEMORIAL SQUARE

3.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Realize the untapped potential of Victoria Memorial Square as a recreational and cultural resource for the neighbourhood and the City.
- Produce a design that will address the site's unique history and the needs of an emerging new community.
- Identify and protect the site of the 1794-1863 cemetery with its approximately 500 burials.
- Interpret the history of the site for the community and visitors.
- Provide a comfortable and safe environment for the enjoyment of park users.
- Accommodate multiple uses of the park, including children's playground, dog walking, office lunch crowd, artistic performances, sunbathers etc.
- Use simple, high quality design and materials, with a view to minimizing long term maintenance costs.
- Ensure easy access for all.
- Ensure adjacent and surrounding new development is compatible with park character.
- Make the improvement of Victoria Memorial Square a first step in achieving the improvement of the entirety of Wellington Place, including Wellington Street for Portland to Spadina and Clarence Square, as set out in the King-Spadina Community Improvement Plan.

3.2 GOALS

- Secure funds from public and private sources for the redesign and refurbishment of Victoria Memorial Square. Preliminary estimates indicate total hard costs of approximately \$2 million, half to be raised by the community by the end of 2002 if the project is to be completed in 2003.
- Create a management structure to ensure the co-operation and support of our public and private partners, including Federal, Provincial and City governments, the business community and private citizens.
- Ensure new development in the area, and adjoining areas, contributes to the form and character of the neighbourhood.
- Maintain a successful park/historic cemetery which serves the multiple needs of neighbourhood users and functions as a destination for cultural tourists.

3.3 PLAN DESCRIPTION

The schematic design for Victoria Square reveals the rich layers of history in the park and provides a vision for its future that addresses the needs and desires of the community and the City. For the surrounding residents and the community the restored park will continue to be a refuge, a place to relax, play and enjoy throughout the year. For visitors the park will become a destination, one of a number of historically significant places in the City's oldest European settlement area.

The schematic design identifies a number of distinct areas that are defined by their function and character. Each area will provide for a variety of uses in all seasons.

THE BURIAL GROUND

The most prominent and sacred feature of the schematic plan is the burial ground. Currently there are no markers in the park to identify its location. In the proposed schematic design the burial ground will be capped with half a metre of soil providing protection for the shallow graves and artifacts that are buried just inches below the surface. The cap will also make the burial ground more visibly prominent. The proposed profile of the park will slope gently from the surrounding sidewalks to a high point in the centre of the burial ground.

A narrow gravel walkway will outline the burial ground. Stone tablets, set flush with the surrounding grade, will be set along the walkway and serve as a storyboard for the visitor as they stroll around the edge of the shaded gravesite. Pedestrian level light standards will line the walk as will a number of benches that face toward the burial ground.

The trees that are now located on the burial ground will be protected with gently sloping tree wells. As the trees die and are removed over time, no new trees will be planted on the burial ground.

Two meandering walkways will cross through the burial ground and intersect at the Monument. They will provide diagonal connections through the park to each of the four corners.

The Monument will be restored in its current location on top of the burial ground and the deteriorating stone markers at its base will be removed.

THE GROVE

In the area between the burial ground to the south and Wellington Street to the north, a grove of spring flowering canopy trees with an understorey of spring flowers will be planted to create an area of seasonal interest. This will also begin the long-term regeneration of the tree canopy in the park.

A small urban square will be created at the corner of Portland and Wellington. Paved with simple rich materials and lined with benches, the square will serve as a meeting place. A series of walkways will radiate throughout the park promoting easy access along natural desire lines.

THE CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

A Children's Play Area will be located at the north west corner of the park. Surrounded by trees that provide seasonal interest, wind and sun protection, the area will also be enclosed by a decorative metal fence to address safety and security concerns.

THE BOSK

The Bosk will be an area dedicated to summer enjoyment. It will extend east of the burial ground to Portland Street north of Niagara Street.

The area will be paved with a gravel surface and may accommodate a moveable kiosk and tables and chairs. A fountain will be situated in the bosk to softly mask the sounds of the street and provide a cooling sensation in summer.

THE MEADOWS

A simple grid of meadow planting will be established in the area defined by the burial ground to the north, Niagara Street to the south, Twenty Niagara to the west. In the late summer, fall and winter, when the meadows are at their peak, they will add a rich texture to the park.

A series of mown paths will cross through the taller meadow plantings for walking and maintenance access.

THE PARK EDGES

Wellington Street defines the north edge of the park. The road will be narrowed by approximately two metres on the south side and one metre on the north side, providing more space for sidewalks and street tree planting on the street. The sidewalks will run adjacent to the curb edge with street tree planting beside the sidewalk.

Portland Street defines the east edge of the park. The intersection at Wellington Street will be reconfigured, significantly reducing the extent of roadway paving. The pedestrian crossings at the intersection will be paved in concrete to differentiate them from the driving surface. Along the eastside of Portland the existing street trees will be protected and new trees planted. Along the west side of Portland, a sodded boulevard will separate the walkway from the street edge.

Niagara Street defines the south edge of the park. At the Portland/Niagara intersection the pedestrian crossings will be paved in concrete. The existing walkway will be maintained but street trees will be planted where possible along the edge of the sidewalk.

Pedestrian scale lighting will be added to the roadway lighting on each of the park's three surrounding streets.



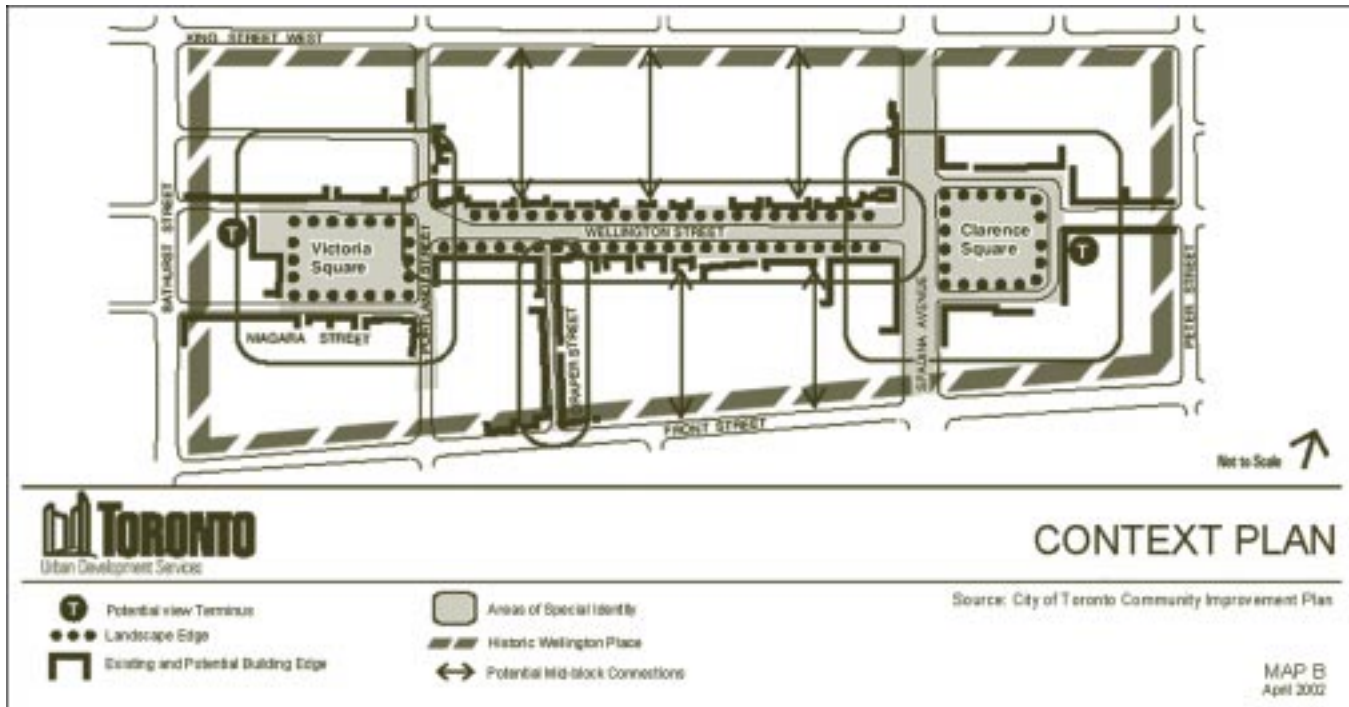
Victoria Memorial Square Concept Plan

*Hugh Woodland Naylor Davis Lintner
September, 2002*

4. WELLINGTON PLACE NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

4.1 MISSION

The Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association (WNPA) was formed in 1999 to represent the interests of our vibrant and growing residential and business community. The boundaries of this community are formed by Bathurst St. on the west, King St. on the north, Front St. on the south and Clarence Square on the east. Our focus is to work with the City to improve urban design and public amenities such as parks, lighting, City services and traffic planning that support the special identity of our neighbourhood.



Historic Wellington Place is the district formed by that part of Wellington Street West with Victoria Memorial Square at its western end and Clarence Square at the east. WPNA is establishing a non profit **Conservancy** (Advisory Board), with Officers, Trustees and Ex-Officio Trustees, which will operate in a partnership with the City, other levels of government and the private sector, to revitalize, redesign and maintain this historic district.

The role of the Conservancy is twofold. First, it can act as a catalyst in generating a vision for Historic Wellington Place, and in facilitating its implementation. In this process it will raise awareness, build broad community and political support at all levels, locate funding and orchestrate new partnerships among key stakeholders, such as the Parks Department, other government agencies and the private sector. Second, it can act as a “Friends” group by providing local stewardship, assisting the Parks Department with programming and education and with volunteers.

4.2 VISION

Wellington Place was laid out in the 1830s as a grand residential street with a square, on the English model, at each end. This fashionable westward extension of the City was, however, thwarted by mid-century by the coming of the railways and the subsequent incursions of industrial activity. While the generous street layout and the two squares survive to this day, they are badly neglected and in need of refurbishing.

The most significant historical survivor is **Victoria Memorial Square** which contains the City's first European cemetery, opened in 1794 as the garrison cemetery for Fort York. Its first occupant was Katherine, infant daughter of Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe. The last burial was in 1863 and it is now operated as a park

Since the City changed the development rules for King-Spadina in the mid 90's, this area has boomed. It is the vibrant home to many businesses in new media, architecture, technology, communications, fashion and entertainment. With established residential areas like Draper Street and new developments at 20 Niagara, the Monarch Building and Portland Park Village, this is a model mixed use neighbourhood. The City's King-Spadina Community Improvement Plan (June, 1998) recognizes this and calls for public and private initiatives in support of continuing investment in the area.

The Conservancy's vision is for the community to work in partnership with the City to revitalize the entire Historic Wellington Place district. Special attention will be given to the two historic parks (Victoria Memorial Square and Clarence Square), the Wellington Street West streetscape between Spadina and Portland Streets and the historic residential precinct of Draper Street.

Phase I is the improvement of Victoria Memorial Square. Here WPNA intends to build on the historical character and natural beauty of the original design and conduct a program of rehabilitation and interpretation that will provide a priceless amenity for those who live and work in the area, and a cultural attraction for all citizens and visitors to the City and entertainment. With established residential areas like Draper Street and new developments at 20 Niagara, the Monarch Building and Portland Park Village, this is a model mixed-use neighbourhood. The City's King-Spadina Community Improvement Plan (June, 1998) recognizes this and calls for public and private initiatives in support of continuing investment in the area.

4.3 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WPNA HAS:

- Identified and involved a wide range of stakeholders interested in the future of Victoria Memorial Square and its historic cemetery:
 - Resident's groups (incl. Draper St., 20 Niagara, the Monarch Bldg., PortlandPark Village)
 - Businesses
 - Artword Theatre
 - Friends of Fort York
 - Roman Catholic and Anglican Parishes
 - Historians and Landscape Architects
 - City Councillor Olivia Chow
 - City Parks
 - City Culture
 - City Planning
 - Ontario Ministry of Culture
 - Department of National Defense
 - Department of Veterans' Affairs
 - Army, Navy and Airforce Veterans Association
- Secured endorsement of its efforts in the improvement of Victoria Memorial Square from Toronto East York Community Council, Jan.29, 2002
- Conducted a Community Design Workshop, March 24, 2002, attended by 40 members of the community and led by Ken Greenberg, Urban Designer and David Leinster, Hough Woodland Naylor Dance Leinster, Landscape Architects (see Appendices H and I).
- Produced, with the collaboration of City staff and the City Councillor, a Plan for the revitalization of Victoria Memorial Square, with drawings and estimated construction costs (see page).
- Conducted a follow-up Design Workshop on June 1, 2002, attended by 46 people, to review the plan resulting from the first workshop (see Appendix K).
- Formed a Fundraising Committee and a Design Committee to raise the targeted \$1 million and refine the park restoration plan by year end. Fundraising formally began with a benefit performance at Artword Theatre (courtesy of the proprietors) of the musical "Toronto the Good", July 17, 2002.
- Established a bank account for the deposit of funds for park renovation, and opened negotiations on the recommendation of Community Council, with the City's Film Liaison Committee regarding income from film industry sources.
- Created a WPNA web site.
- At it's meeting on August 1, 2002, City Council again endorsed the project and directed staff to assist the fundraising effort, establish a line item for consideration of the park plan during 2003 Capital Budget deliberations (a sum of \$1 million has been included in the draft budget), help establish a park advisory group, and ensure other civic initiatives are complimentary with the park restoration plan (see Appendix L).
- Produced "Reviving an Old Neighbourhood: Bringing New Life to Victoria Memorial Square," a printed report on the restoration project, including extensive historic information on Victoria Memorial Square.

4.4 NEXT STEPS

1. COMPLETE INITIAL SCHEMATICS PHASE OF THE DESIGN PROCESS
BY SEPTEMBER 2002
2. PREPARE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN MATERIALS
3. PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF UP TO \$1M OF AVAILABLE NON-CITY FUNDING
BY YEAR END
4. COMPLETE DETAILED DESIGN
BY YEAR END
5. CITY APPROVAL OF 2003 CAPITAL BUDGET
DECEMBER.2002 - JANUARY.2003
6. COMPLETE WORKING DRAWINGS
BY MARCH 1, 2003
7. CONSTRUCTION BEGINS
MAY 2003