



## Oriole Park playground plans worry residents

### Neighbours question need to make play area for disabled children

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STAFF REPORTER

Christopher and Jan Patton, 84 and 80 respectively, sat patiently, waiting for the meeting to begin, the first of many concerning the fate of their beloved Oriole Park.

At issue: the details of a proposed playground for disabled children, which has resulted in an outcry from local residents who fear the loss of green space and question the need for such a facility in the park.

The city has hired consultants and scheduled four meetings for this mixed community – made up of wealthy north Toronto homes and highrises – just west of the Davisville subway stop on Yonge St.

A public-private partnership with the city has raised \$800,000 of the planned \$1 million for the project.

Christopher Patton was born on nearby Gormley Avenue. He's lived here almost all his life and he and his wife have lived in their house since 1960. They remember when the park was a dump. But now, "It's a very satisfactory neighbourhood park for people to walk to," said Jan Patton. "If it got any busier, it would be chaotic."

The family of Joan Filip, 89, has owned a house in the area since 1925. "I'm concerned about why they chose this small park in the first place," Filip said. "I'm not even sure how many disabled children there are in the area."

Oriole Park has tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a splash pad and open areas of grass and trees where, yesterday, owners walked their dogs through the rain.

The city and steering committee, however, plan on making the ordinary, aging playground more inclusive for disabled children. Jim Melvin, a landscape architect on the project, said the playground's sand, elevated structures and inaccessible bathrooms are all "exclusionary."

Trevor Schmidt, the city's senior project manager on the playground, said Toronto is "way behind" other big cities in terms of building accessible parks.

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