

The Parkland Strategy & The Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

**Presentation to the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee
September 9, 2025**

Why we're here today

- Receive feedback that will inform the new Parkland Strategy and Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan.

To facilitate this, we will provide the following context:

- Introduce the Parkland Strategy and Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan, including project timelines
- How we have engaged with communities to-date (Phase 1)
- What we have heard from communities to-date (Phase 1)
- Community engagement (Phase 2)
- Emerging directions for how each document will be updated
- Next steps

****A member of the project team will be taking notes on your feedback today****

Parks & Recreation Strategic Documents

Parkland Strategy



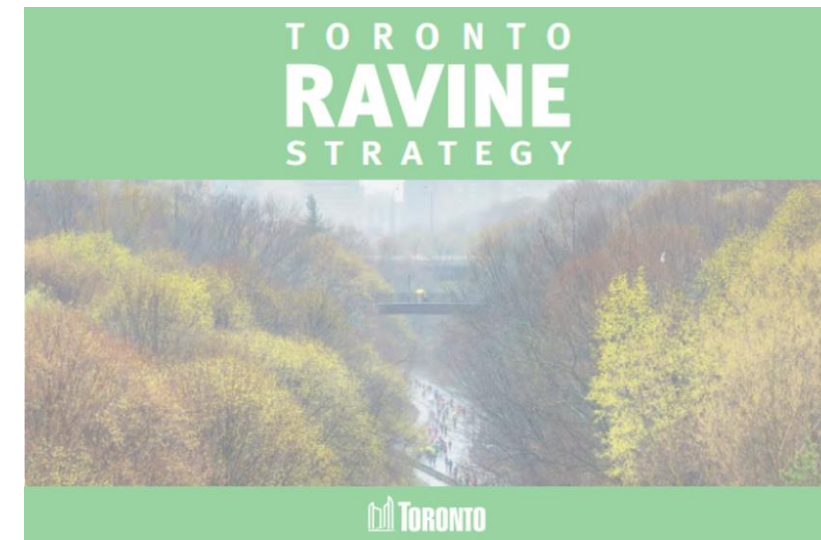
Long-term plan for the creation of **new parks and park improvements**.

Parks & Recreation Facilities Plan



Long-term plan to build and renew **recreation facilities**.

Ravine Strategy



Long-term plan that guides management, use, enhancement, and protection of parks in the ravine system.

What is the Parkland Strategy (PLS)?

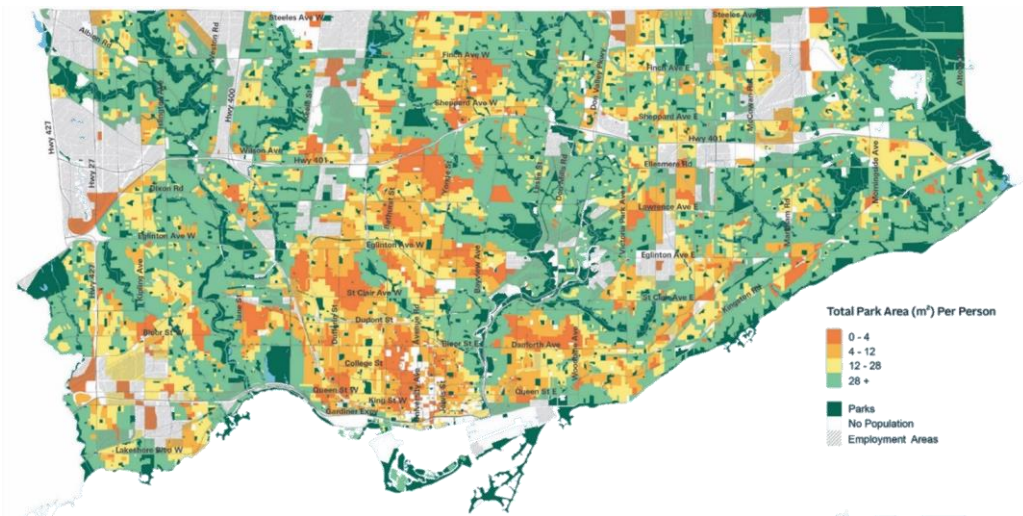
- Approved in 2019, it's a **city-wide**, 20-year planning framework to **direct investment** in parks
- 4 guiding principles: **Expand, Improve, Connect, Include**
- **Data-driven**: it includes multiple maps to analyse Toronto's parks system in different ways (e.g. current parkland provision rates, future parkland provision rates, park walking gaps based on 500 m pedestrian distance, etc.)
- **Supports Parks and Recreation staff with assessments and decision making**, including: reviewing development applications, making parkland acquisition recommendations to City Council, providing local parkland analysis for area studies, etc.
- Identifies considerations that make for a **high-quality park**, shown below



Parkland Provision and Priority Areas

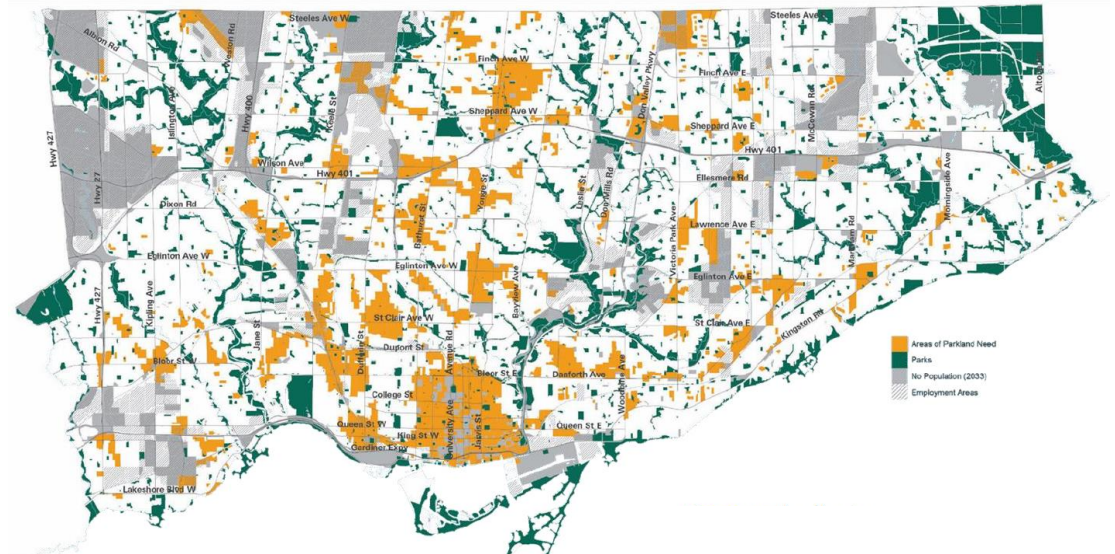
- **Parkland provision** is measured on a per person basis and is key metric used to track progress
- Provision rates are one of several inputs used to identify **Parkland Priority Areas**
- **Parkland Priority Areas** are a composite of provision and equity factors, and help focus park planning and acquisition

Map: Total Park Area Per Person (2019)



Dark orange indicates areas with the lowest parkland provision rates

Map: Parkland Priority Areas (2019)



Orange indicates Parkland Priority Areas

What is the Parks & Recreation Facilities Plan (PFRP) ?

The **Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (2017)** and **Implementation Strategy (2019)** are Council-approved 20-year plans to build and renew recreation facilities to meet changing and growing needs across the City. Facilities in the plan include:

Community Recreation Centres

- Gymnasiums
- Indoor Pools
- Multi-purpose Spaces



Ice Facilities

- Arenas
- Outdoor Artificial Ice Rinks (Airs)
- Skating Trails
- Curling Facilities



Outdoor Aquatics

- Outdoor Pools
- Splash Pads and Wading Pools



Sports Fields

- Soccer and Multi-use Fields
- Ball Diamonds
- Cricket Pitches
- Support Buildings
- Sport Bubbles



Sport Courts And Zones

- Tennis and Pickleball Courts
- Basketball Courts
- Skateparks
- Bike Parks
- Bocce Courts
- Lawn Bowling Greens
- Dog Off-leash Areas (OLA)

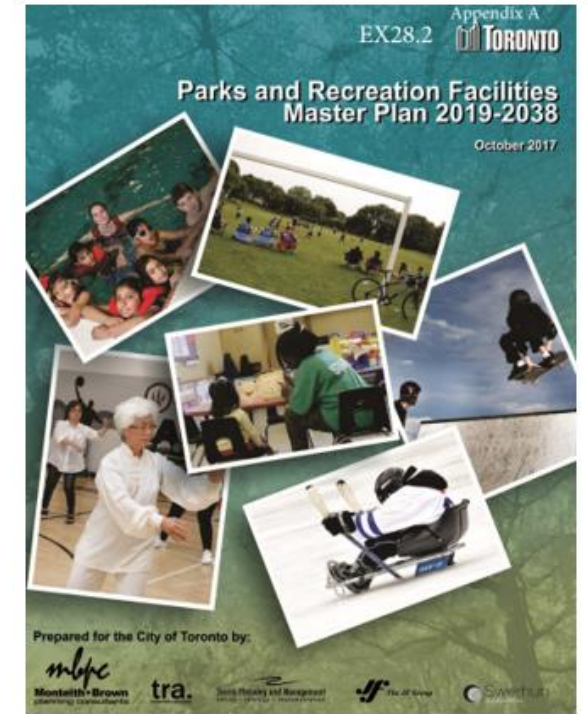


PRFP Recommendations

The PRFP guides facility investment decisions and identifies priorities for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities across the city in 5-year increment, to 2038. The recommendations in the PRFP guide future capital budgets and determine when and where to:

- **Reinvest in existing recreation facilities** through replacement, repurposing, renewal, when facilities reach their end of life or are under-used.
- **Address recreation facility gaps** where there is a lack of facilities or large waitlists
- **Respond to future recreation facility needs** based on estimated population growth

The PRFP is focused on facility recommendations to address equitable programs across the city.



Review: Updating the PRFP and PLS

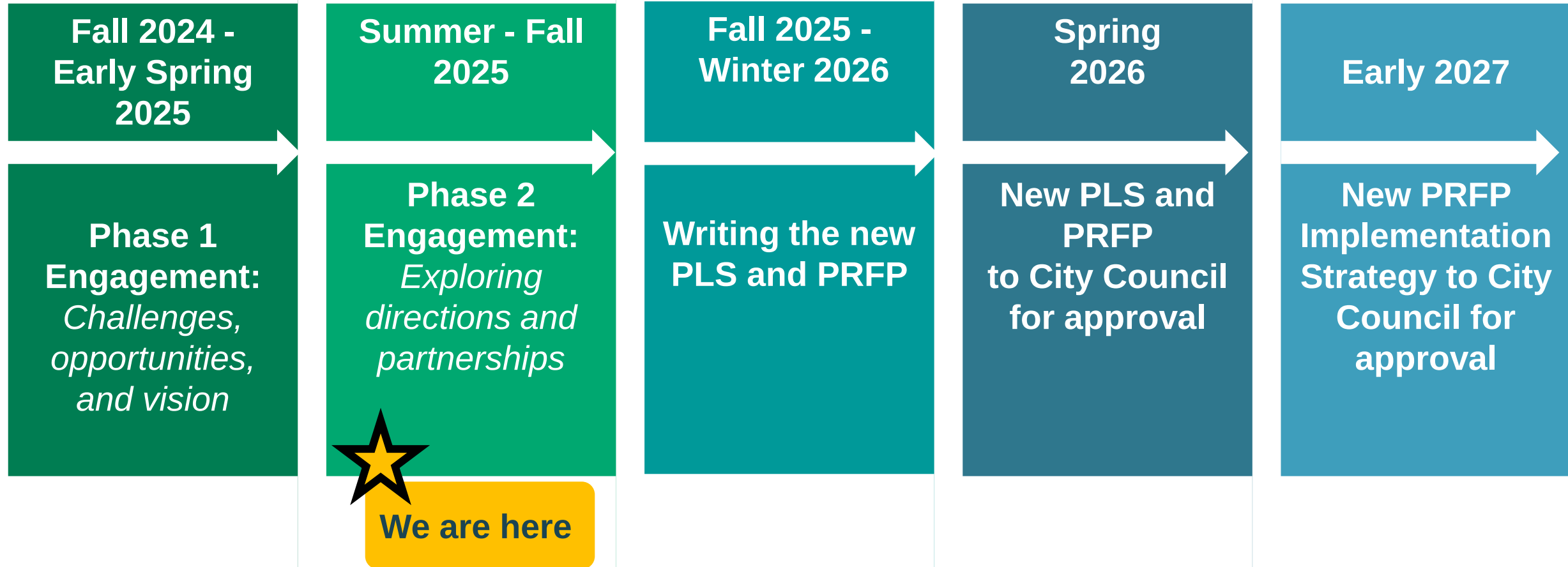
The City is reviewing the PRFP and PLS to reflect:

- Changing resident needs and priorities (e.g. changes influenced by COVID-19 for work/home/play)
- A growing population
- Provincial legislation changes
- New city-wide policy directions (e.g. Reconciliation Action Plan, Net Zero Strategy, Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism)
- New financial tools resulting in less funding
- Updated accessibility and environmental standards

A multi-phase, city-wide engagement process is informing the reviews, including engagements with First Nations and urban Indigenous communities.

Past Indigenous engagement undertaken to develop these strategic documents was insufficient – the project team is working to better incorporate Indigenous voices throughout the current review process. Responding to Indigenous needs and interests will be an important part of updates to both documents.

High-level Timeline



Communities Engagement, to Date

Engagement with Urban Indigenous Communities (led by consultant – Ridge Road Consulting)

Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC)

4 meetings

Share public survey & wider engagement opportunities

Over 100 survey respondents identify
as Indigenous/representing an
Indigenous-serving organization

Pop-ups in community spaces

5 pop-ups,
60 participants

School engagement

(TDSB Wandering
Spirit elementary
school - Grade 1)

Interviews/tours in existing Indigenous community spaces

3 park tours

Meetings with internal Indigenous staff

1 informational visit to
Ambe Maamowisdaa
Employee Circle

Outreach and relationship building with First Nations

(City-led)

Outreach to:

- Mississaugas of the Credit FN
- Alderville FN
- Chippewas of Beausoleil FN
- Chippewas of Georgina Island FN
- Chippewas of Rama FN
- Curve Lake FN
- Hiawatha FN
- Mississaugas of Scugog Island FN
- Six Nations of the Grand River
- Wendat FN

Engagement with other Toronto residents / Non-Indigenous communities

(Surveys, pop-ups,
virtual public meetings,
community-led
engagements,
classroom workshop
kits, DIY engagement
kits, and an Equity-
Focused Advisory
Committee)

What We Heard - Phase 1 - Indigenous Communities - PLS

Infuse Indigenous cultures, languages, and teachings into park design

Indigenous organizations need more partnerships and agreements with P&R to access parks

The types of changes that make parks feel welcoming, inclusive, and safe for Indigenous people, will do the same for everyone else

Hire Indigenous people at all levels of staff, from ground crews to decision makers and security, and including Knowledge Keepers and Elders for programming

Access to water is essential for ceremonial purposes

Need more spaces for Indigenous ceremonies and gatherings, for learning, connecting, and healing

More education should be provided to P&R, By-law, and Police staff around ancestral practices and for confronting anti-Indigenous racism

Indigenous gardens are spaces for Indigenous families to come together to garden and access sacred medicines

Permitting systems (e.g. for fire pits) deny inherent Indigenous rights to access the land

Top barriers to accessing and experiencing local parks indicated by Indigenous respondents in Survey #1 included: insufficient lighting, not feeling safe or comfortable, and lack of convenient bike parking

Where there is no water access, consider creating water features

What We Heard - Phase 1 - Indigenous Communities - PRFP

Indigenous participants were passionate about enhancing visual representation of Indigenous history and culture across all spaces

Hire more Indigenous people at recreation facilities and parks

Provide more spaces and policies supporting Indigenous cultural practices

Support recreation facilities and parks as spaces for education and reconciliation: Provide Indigenous peoples with access to space for cultural teachings, activities, languages, and ceremonies, while offering non-Indigenous peoples learning and engagement opportunities to foster understanding and bridge differences.

Most Indigenous participants expressed feeling generally safe when using parks and recreation spaces and facilities, but also shared suggestions for improving safety and accessibility to enhance experiences and usability.

(Re)design recreation facilities and parks to repair and rebuild Indigenous relationships with the Land. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain ancestral relationships with Land, but this intergenerational relationship has been interrupted by colonization. Recreation facilities and parks should honour Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history at all levels of operations, to enhance the livability for all who call Toronto home.

Parkland Strategy: Emerging directions

Internal and external engagement during Phase 1 has helped to inform the following proposed updates to content in the PLS:

- What land gets counted as parkland when measuring parkland provision rates (to better reflect the reality of the park user experience)
- The Vision and Guiding Principles, to reflect Indigenous placekeeping and the important environmental role that parks serve
- The Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool (which guides decisions on where to buy and accept land to create new parks) to respond to new City priorities and unique opportunities
- The method to identify Parkland Priority Areas, which will consider:
 - Additional equity criteria - e.g. age, race, Indigenous identity, newcomer status, and language (low income will continue to be considered)
 - Access to private green space
 - Access to parkland that's generally accessible to people

Parks & Recreation Facilities Plan: Emerging directions

The Phase 1 community feedback and the City's review of existing recreation facility use led to the development of four key directions for the PRFP. **While these apply across facilities broadly, they also create opportunities to respond to what we heard from Indigenous communities members.**

1. Seek to maximize year-round, all-day use, improve accessibility, and improve the overall resident experience by building new, renewing, replacing, or repurposing recreation facilities.
2. Use recreation spaces to provide a wider range of community benefits in addition to traditional recreation services.

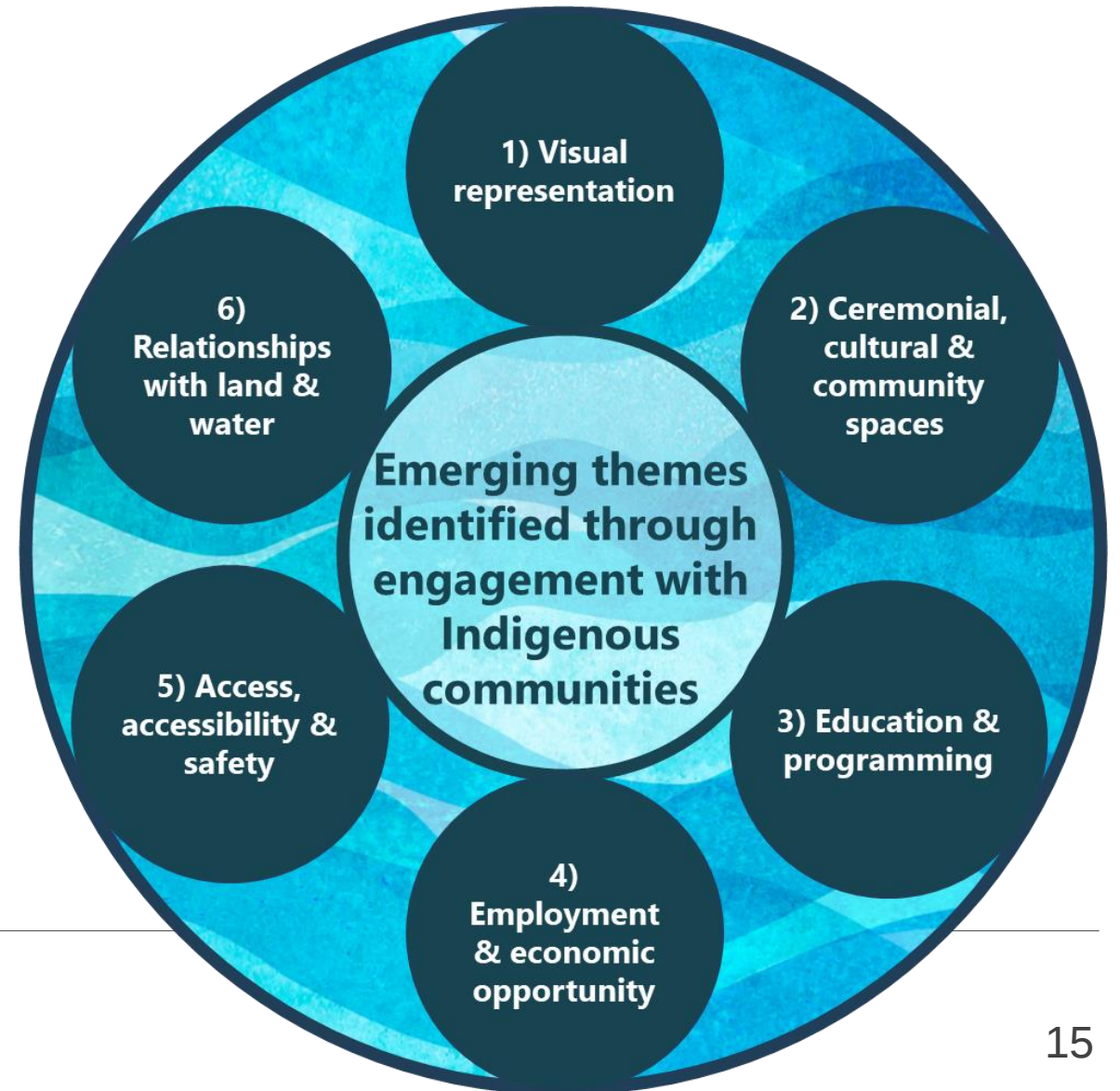
Example Action: Work towards Reconciliation by meeting local Indigenous communities' needs through recreation facilities through visual representation of Indigenous communities and cultures, including treaties; art and signage for celebration, Placekeeping, and education; access to lands and waters for Indigenous ceremonial, cultural, and community practices, including Pow Wows.

3. Ensure the new Facilities Plan serves high-needs communities and reduces barriers to access.
4. Actively pursue and enhance collaboration and partnerships (e.g., schools, libraries, etc.) to better meet community needs and make the most of the land available for recreation facilities and other community services and facilities.

Six Emerging Themes for a Better Way Forward

These six themes are proposed directions for revisions to the PLS and PFRP, that respond to what we heard from Indigenous communities members in Phase 1 engagements.

Themes will be reviewed, and actions under each theme will be further developed and revised through Phase 2 engagement with Indigenous communities.



Hearing from You

We would love to hear from you! Please share any:

- Thoughts on the emerging themes
- Thoughts on what we've heard from community so far
- The process moving forward
- Any organizations or groups you can connect us with for Phase 2 engagements (contact information on next slide)
- Anything else presented

Next Steps

If you have additional feedback, if you are part of a community organization who would like a pop-up hosted in their space, or you would like us to visit a community group you are involved with, please email:

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The public online survey is available on the project webpage <http://toronto.ca/parksandfacilitiesplans>

Phase 2 will include additional conversations with First Nations; IAC meetings; and focused community conversations in Indigenous communities spaces. We will share engagement opportunities and ask that you please spread the word within your networks.

Chii Miigwech

Nyá:wen

Marsi

Thank You!

Appendix

Hiring an Indigenous Engagement Consultant

P&R posted a Request For Proposals (RFP) to hire an Indigenous engagement consultant to support the Parkland Strategy and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan. The RFP included:

- An outline of the proposed multi-phase Indigenous communities engagement process
 - P&R staff developed a thorough program to highlight the depth and breadth of engagement expected from the consultants.
 - Consultants, in their proposals, were asked to note anything they would want to change with the proposed engagement process.
- Honoraria and Disbursement Cost Estimates
 - Developed based on best practices P&R staff have learned through past engagement processes.
- Specific ask in the RFP for the supplier to demonstrate **local Toronto** experience:
 - "The supplier should demonstrate an understanding of the landscape of Indigenous communities in Toronto, and have existing relationships with Indigenous communities in Toronto."
 - "The supplier should have demonstrable experience successfully planning, organizing, and facilitating culturally appropriate engagement sessions with Indigenous communities in Toronto."
- Successful Supplier: **Ridge Road Training and Consulting**
 - Haudenosaunee-Owned & Led.
 - Based out of Toronto & Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, with experience on other P&R projects

Forming the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC)

- Recruitment occurred Fall 2024
- Selection criteria was transparent in the Terms of Reference made available to applicants:
 - Membership will consist of **community leaders, knowledge keepers, and representatives of local Indigenous-serving groups and organizations** who are Indigenous to Canada.
 - Members will be selected to **represent key expertise areas for this project** (e.g., language speaker, women's/youth services carer, health & wellness carer, Pow Wow/event planner, firekeeper, housing services leader, community-serving organization, etc.)
 - Priority will be given to the **ancestral First Nations of the Toronto region**, followed by **diverse representation** across First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities.
- Membership Representation: 12 members
 - •Comprised of Afro-Indigenous identities, land stewards, firekeepers, housing service carers, Pow Wow/event planners, community-serving organizations, 2S-community service providers, Indigenous Crisis response providers, community-serving organizations, educators & parents

Engagement by the numbers: Over 10,000 people engaged in Phase 1

These numbers represent joint engagement for both the Parkland Strategy and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan that took place from Fall 2024 to Winter 2025:

4 online public meetings

1 Equity-Deserving Advisory Group meeting

Several visits to City advisory bodies including Seniors' Forum, Lived Experience Advisory Group, and P&R Community Disability Advisory Committee



12+ community-led do-it-yourself engagements with an equity focus

1 online survey with **8,800+** interactions

25 pop-ups across the city (1 in each ward)
with **3,000+** interactions



Engagement with Indigenous communities:

3 meetings with the Indigenous Advisory Circle

5 pop-ups in Indigenous community spaces

2 interviews and **1** tour with Indigenous organizations

96 respondents identified as Indigenous in the online survey