

The Parkland Strategy & The Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

Presentation to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

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)?

- A **city-wide**, 20-year planning framework to **direct investment** in parks
- **Data-driven**: it includes multiple maps to analyse Toronto's parks system in different ways (e.g. current/future parkland provision rates, park walking gaps based on 500 m walking/rolling distance, etc.) (more info on next slide)
- **Supports Parks & Recreation staff with decision making**, including: reviewing development applications, making parkland acquisition recommendations to Council, providing local parkland analysis for area studies, etc.
- It has four guiding principles: **Expand, Improve, Connect, Include**
- It identifies considerations that make for **a high-quality park**, shown below
- All new park designs (and re-designs) must, at a minimum, meet AODA standards (design standards are not contained in the PLS)

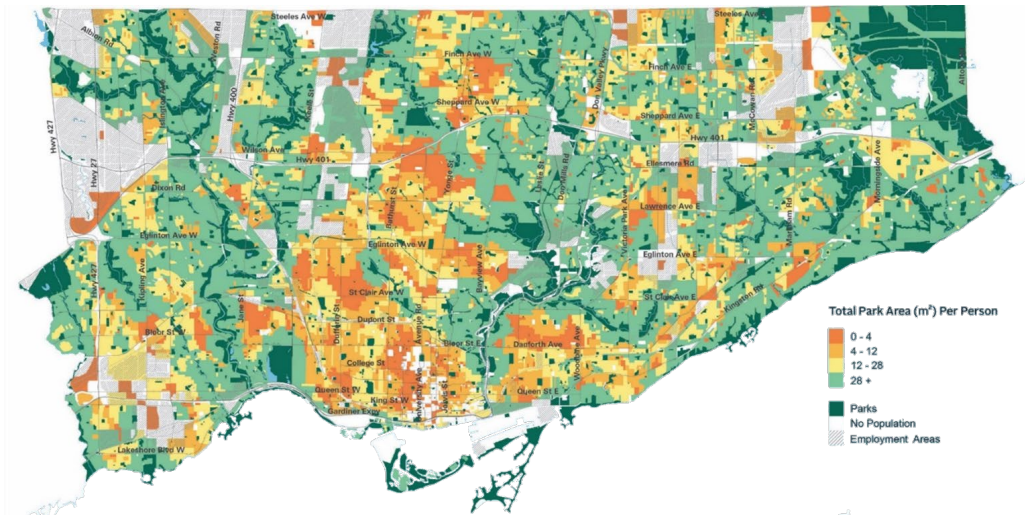


Note: The Parkland Strategy informs but does not take the place of specific engagement processes that Parks and Recreation leads for each new park plan and each park redesign / park improvement.

Parkland Provision and Priority Areas

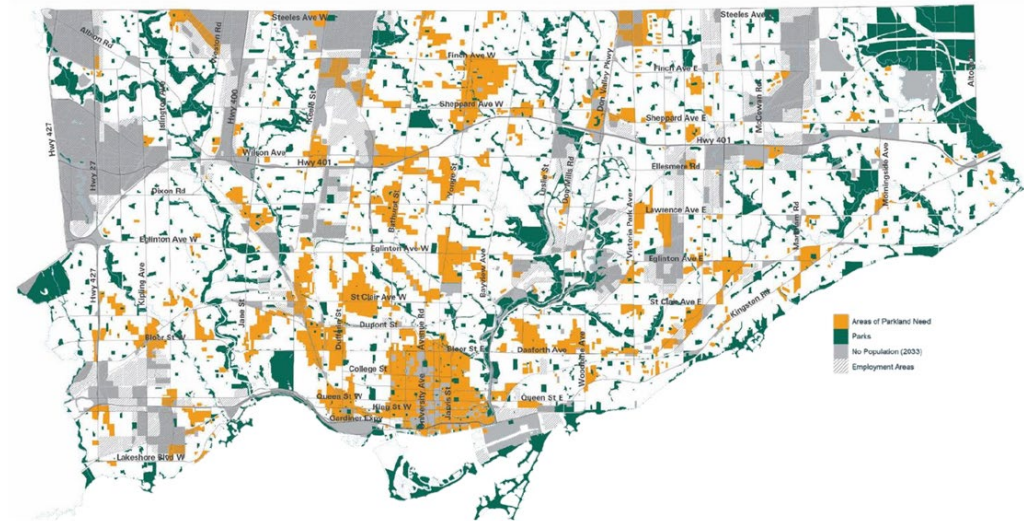
- **Parkland provision** is measured on a per person basis and is key metric used to track progress (map on left)
- Provision rates are one of several inputs used to identify **Parkland Priority Areas** (map on right)
- **Parkland Priority Areas** are a composite of provision and equity factors, and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

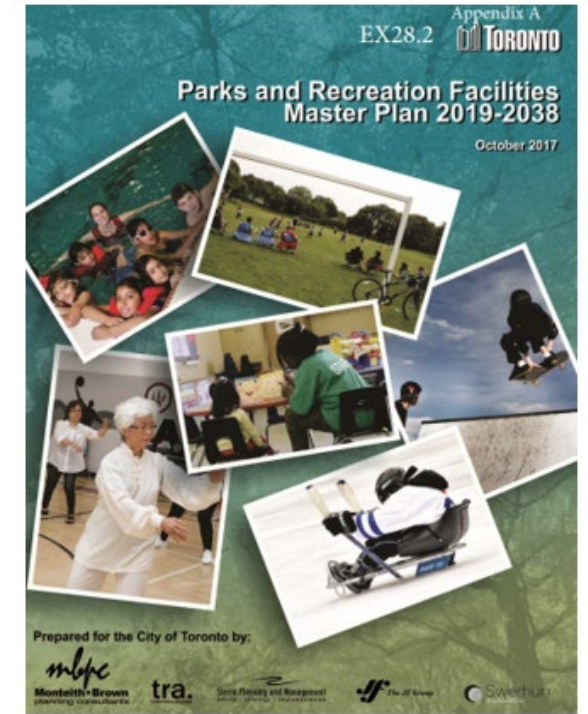
- Tennis and Pickleball Courts
- Basketball Courts
- Skateparks
- Bike Parks
- Bocce Courts
- Lawn Bowling Greens
- Dog Off-leash Areas (OLA)



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



Accessibility in the Facilities Plan

One of six key challenges addressed by the Facilities Plan is: **Improving accessibility for everyone.**

“Facilities that are accessible to diverse communities, and people of all ages and abilities will create healthier individuals and a stronger community. The City strives to offer parks and recreation facilities that can be used by all, but challenges still exist. Common barriers relate to geography, facility design, services and programming, and cost.”

All new recreation facilities must meet TADG and AODA standards. The Facilities Plan emphasizes the importance of accessible, inclusive design for new and upgraded facilities. In the current Facilities Plan, there are three key recommendations related to Accessibility:

1. Document and make publicly available information about the features at each parks and recreation facility, including those that are accessible to persons with disabilities.
 2. Emphasize flexible, age-friendly and barrier-free facility design, where appropriate.
 3. Wherever possible, ensure that new community-level parks and recreation facilities are located along transit lines and accessible by the trail and cycling network.
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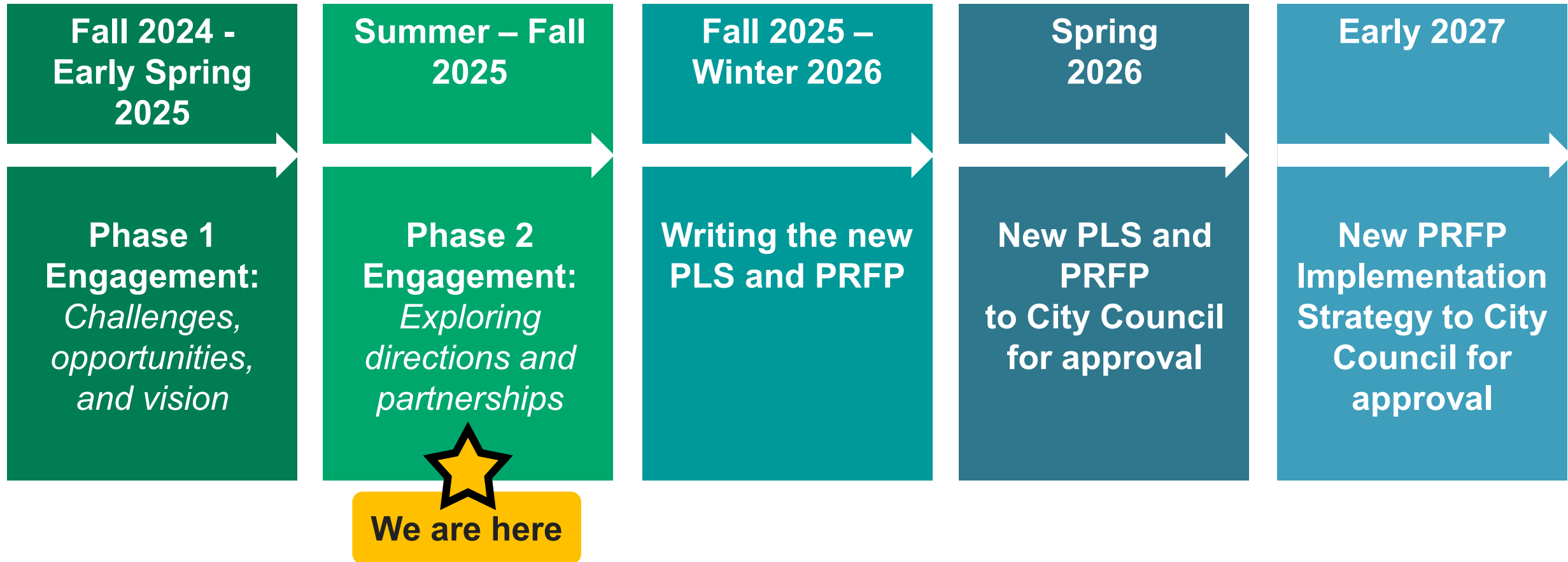
Review: Updating the PRFP and PLS

The City is reviewing the PRFP and PLS to reflect:

- Changing resident needs and priorities
- A growing population
- Provincial legislation changes and the impact on funding to the City
- New city-wide policy directions
- Updated accessibility and environmental standards
- More comprehensive data sets that provide a better analysis of equity factors

A multi-phase, city-wide engagement process is informing the reviews.

High-level Timeline



Phase 1 Engagement Activities

Over 10,000 people engaged!

4 online public meetings

Equity-Deserving Advisory Group Meeting

Classroom workshop kits
(200+ student participants)

Online surveys
(8,800+ responses)

Community-led DIY engagements with equity focus, through SDFA's Community Coordination Plan Clusters
(12+ events)

In-person pop-ups in all 25 wards
3,000 + interactions

Additional engagement for Ice Facilities Strategy

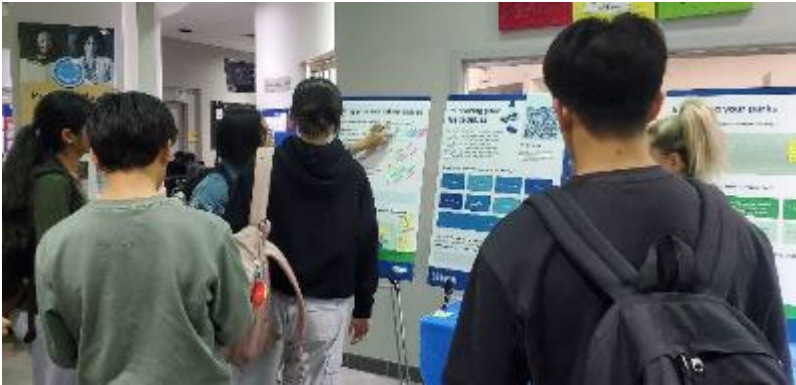
One online public meeting

Online survey
(2,800 + responses)

Visit existing City Advisory Bodies (ongoing)
Seniors' Forum
Lived Experience Advisory Group
P&R Community Disability Steering Committee

Urban Indigenous communities & First Nations engagements (ongoing)

Note: Project team presented to the P&R Community Disability Steering Committee on June 19, 2025



Equity-Deserving Advisory Group: Participating organizations

Community Organizations:

- 8 80 Cities
- Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- Building Roots
- For Youth Initiative
- Harriet Tubman Community Organization
- Hijabi Ballers
- **Holland Bloorview**
- North York Community House
- Out Sports Toronto
- **ParaSport Ontario**
- Park People
- Social Planning Toronto
- The 519
- The Neighbourhood Link
- **Toronto Accessible Sport Council**
- Tropicana Community Services
- United Way Greater Toronto
- **Variety Village**
- WoodGreen Community Services
- YMCA
- YWCA

City of Toronto Resident Advisory Bodies/Cabinets/ Committees:

- Toronto Youth Cabinet
- Senior's Forum
- Lived Experience Advisory Group (Poverty Reduction Strategy)
- **Parks and Recreation Disability Steering Committee**

What We Heard: About park barriers and prioritization

For the parks section of the survey, 620 respondents (~12%) identified as living with a disability and 626 respondents (~12%) indicated they live with someone who has a disability. Responses on this slide are from this group.

Suggested elements to reflect in the Guiding Principles:

Accessibility for all, including in waterfront parks; a more car-centric mandate needed, as well as accessible transit to reach parks; distinction between “inclusive” and “accessible”, and the need to strive for this higher standard

Top 4 barriers to accessing & experiencing local parks:

1. Insufficient lighting
2. Not feeling safe or comfortable
3. Lack of convenient bike parking
4. Difficult or unsafe cycle routes

(Same top 4 barriers and same order as overall respondents, 1/3 of respondents indicated they do not experience barriers)

Top 4 areas to prioritize for creating new parks:

1. Areas that don't have a park within walking (/rolling) distance
2. Areas where more people live in high-rise buildings
3. Areas with few existing parks
4. Areas where population is expected to grow

(Same top 4 priority areas and in the same order as overall respondents)

Top 4 park improvements to prioritize:

1. Provide more comfort facilities (e.g. washrooms)
2. Invest in protecting existing natural areas
3. Create more natural areas
4. Plant more trees

(Same top 4 priority improvements and in the same order as overall respondents)

What We Heard: How to make parks more welcoming, inclusive, and safe

Suggestions received from respondents who identified as having a disability (or who live with someone who identifies as having a disability) for making parks more welcoming, inclusive, and safe, included:

- Accessible washrooms (i.e. not port-a-potties) close to playgrounds, available year-round, and heated in winter
- Accessible park entrances, splash pads, and playgrounds
- Accessible parking that is cleared in winter
- Better access for people with mobility aids and strollers
- More lighting and seating
- More accessible amenities (e.g. ramps and wide, paved, wheelchair-friendly pathways)
- Pictorial signage with diverse representation
- Rentals offered for accessible equipment (e.g. handcycles)
- Vehicle access at all parks at all times so the disabled, elderly, and families can easily access them
- Accessible shuttlebus programs
- High Park improvements to address restricted vehicle access, speeding cyclists, and making TTC more accessible

What We Heard: Overall about recreation facilities

Support for **co-locating** community recreation centres with other community services and facilities. Libraries are most commonly suggested for co-location.

Improving existing facilities (maintenance, cleanliness, upgrades and updates) is of high importance – for some, more than new facilities.

New facilities (of a wide range of types) are needed to keep up with growing demand.

Prioritize accessibility upgrades (e.g. accessible walkways, ramps, elevators, lifts, seating and tables, turf surfacing, elimination of ledges and gaps, etc.) and design for universal accessibility.

Communications improvements are needed to ensure communities know what recreation facilities and programs are already available to them and welcome new users into existing facilities.

The number one reason survey respondents listed for not having used a city-run community recreation centre in the past 12 months was that they were unaware of the opportunities.

Need for **greater 'fairness' and equity in access** to existing programs and permit times. Concerns around local community access to new centres, and women and other equity-deserving groups accessing limited permit timeslots.

Respondents value **access to standard recreation facilities** like gymnasiums, pools, weight/cardio rooms, and similar spaces.

The **ice activity** ranked as most important by survey respondents is drop-in/public skating.

What We Heard: Key feedback on accessibility and inclusive design (1/2)

- Add “Accessibility” as its own Guiding Principle for the Facilities Plan. Facilities and programs are not helpful if people can’t physically or practically access them.
- Provide more well-maintained and clean spaces.
- To create accessible facilities, choice and flexibility are important, as different individuals have varying needs and preferences.
- Build new facilities that are accessible for inclusive and adaptive sports (e.g. sledge hockey, blind curling) and incorporate more accessibility-friendly exercise and sport equipment at recreation facilities (e.g. inclusive weight machines, skating aids, water wheelchairs, etc.).
- Consider accessibility needs at the start of design processes (not as an afterthought). Include consultation with disability advocacy groups to ensure the lived experiences of people with disabilities inform decision-making and design.
- Support for co-located centres, noting the need to prevent overcrowding to maintain accessibility.

What We Heard: Key feedback on accessibility and inclusive design (2/2)

- Prioritize accessibility upgrades in parks and recreation facilities (e.g. accessible walkways, ramps, elevators, lifts, seating and tables, turf surfacing, elimination of ledges and gaps, etc.) and provide accessibility redundancies in case of failure (e.g. elevator failure).
- Provide more inclusive and adaptive programs at more locations, increase awareness of available inclusive programs, and improve staff training.
- Provide year-round accessible support amenities for recreation facilities (washrooms, changerooms, viewing areas, lobbies, etc.) .
- Improve accessibility *to* facilities including transit, providing more accessible parking, and accessible pathways.
- Provide plentiful seating, including accessible seating.
- Provide warm water pools (consider one per district).
- Build playgrounds that are fully wheelchair accessible (e.g. with structures that are wheelchair accessible).

Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2025-2029: Key Recommendations linked to PRFP & PLS

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan includes specific recommendations for Parks & Recreation, including the following recommendations with particular relevance for these strategic plans:

- **1.3** Continue to consult the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee and disability communities to identify, remove and prevent accessibility barriers and to advance equitable outcomes for Torontonians with disabilities. This includes when revising or developing corporate strategies. (all divisions)
- **1.5.** Ensure that equity and accessibility for people with disabilities are prioritized and embedded into appropriate City strategies and infrastructure plans. (all divisions)
- **5.15.** Review current gaps and identify opportunities for improving and/or expanding the City's Adapted and Inclusive recreation programming, including outdoor recreation, to ensure people with disabilities have equitable access to recreation programs that promote health and wellness. (Parks and Recreation)
- **7. Facilities and Public Spaces:** Ensure City infrastructure including facilities, streets, sidewalks, parks and recreation areas are accessible, easy to navigate and are safe for employees, residents and visitors with disabilities.
- **7.1.** Continue to prioritize accessibility upgrades and retrofits of existing facilities and public spaces under the City's State of Good Repair Capital Program. Retrofits and upgrades must comply with City-developed guidelines, including but not limited to the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines, Complete Streets Guidelines, Shelter Design Guidelines and Affordable Housing Guidelines. (all applicable divisions)
- **7.8.** Prioritize accessibility-related projects through the implementation of the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan and other facility projects (such as Park Upgrades, State of Good Repair) to ensure that the City continues to address barriers experienced in City-run parks and recreation facilities. (Parks and Recreation)

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)
 - Areas where fewer people have access to private green space (e.g. backyard)
 - Provision of parkland that's generally accessed by 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.

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.
 - Example Action: Maintain facilities in a state of good repair and continue to improve accessibility, to ensure all residents can enjoy existing facilities, regardless of the age of the facility.
2. Use recreation spaces to provide a wider range of community benefits in addition to traditional recreation services.
3. Ensure the new Facilities Plan serves high-needs communities and reduces barriers to access.
 - Example Action: Accelerate facility upgrades to meet modern accessibility standards.
 - Example Action: Invest in flexible facilities that serve diverse communities' needs, including people of all ages, abilities, races, cultures, genders, and incomes.
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.

Next Steps: Phase 2 engagements

Complete:

- Public meetings
- Online public survey closed Sept 14 (analysis underway)

Ongoing:

- Equity-Deserving Advisory Group meetings
- Community-led engagements through SDFA's Community Coordination Plan Clusters
- Visits to existing City advisory bodies: Seniors' Forum; Lived Experience Advisory Group; P&R Community Disability Steering Committee; Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee; Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee; Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Advisory Committee
- Urban Indigenous communities engagements (including visit to the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee) and engagement with First Nations

Hearing from you:

- Are there key suggestions that you feel are missing from what we heard through engagement so far?
- Do you have process suggestions to ensure we are hearing key concerns and needs from accessibility and inclusion communities in Phase 2 of our engagement?
- Do you have any feedback on the emerging directions, or anything else presented?



Contact Information

If you have additional feedback, please email:

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More information about this work is available on the project webpage:

<http://toronto.ca/parksandfacilitiesplans>

Thank You!

Appendix

P&R Socio-Demographic Equity Index

- Work has occurred to create a **Socio-Demographic Equity Index** that can be used **across Parks & Recreation projects** that will consider the following variables:
 - **Low income:** The percentage of the population that are living with low income according to the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax. **This variable is double weighted.**
 - **Dependency ratio:** The ratio of youth (ages 0 to 19) + seniors (ages 65 or older) per 100 working-age people (ages 20 to 64).
 - **Racialized – Black:** The percentage of the population that are Black.
 - **Racialized – Non-Black:** The percentage of the population that are not White, Indigenous, or Black.
 - **Indigenous identity:** The percentage of the population that identify as Indigenous to Canada.
 - **Newcomer status:** The percentage of the population that immigrated to Canada in the past five years (2016 to 2021).
 - **No knowledge of official languages:** The percentage of the population that cannot conduct a conversation in English or French.

Note: 2SLGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and women are not included as Index variables: There are no data available at the census tract or neighbourhood level to indicate where 2SLGBTQ+, or people with disabilities live. Women were not included because there is low geographic variation in this variable. A question on sexual orientation will appear on the census for the first time in 2026, and this data can be incorporated into future versions of the equity index.