



Website Feedback Summary

Overview

The City of Toronto launched an online feedback form on the Facilities Master Plan web page www.toronto.ca/parks/facilitiesplan in November 2015 as part of its Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan consultation process. The online feedback form is available to the public until the end of the second phase of consultation for the Facilities Master Plan in late fall 2016. Between November 2015 and June 2016, 120 people participated, resulting in a total of 1,063 comments received.

The online feedback form consists of the following broad, open-ended questions:

1. How do City of Toronto parks and recreation facilities make a difference in your life?
2. Has your participation in parks and rec activities changed? What has contributed to these changes? What would increase your participation?
3. What can be done to improve City parks and recreation facilities?
4. In order to provide the right facilities in the right places in an affordable manner, what opportunities or strategies should the City consider?

Analysis consisted of coding individual comments within responses based on the six challenges that the Facilities Master Plan will address, followed by identification of the key themes or messages under each challenge. The key themes are summarized below, organized by the six challenges that the Facilities Master Plan will address.

Summary of Results

Responding to a Changing City

24% of all comments

Many respondents reported that parks and recreation facilities are essential infrastructure used by people at all stages of life. They play a key role in supporting physical activity, social/community connection and skills development, and promote physical and mental health and well-being. Outdoor spaces allow people to connect with

nature, provide respite from a busy city, enable active transportation and offer many environmental benefits that in turn improve health.

Respondents felt that parks and recreation facilities are important places for families to spend quality time together, and for children to play, learn and engage in communities. They provide essential, affordable access to formal and informal recreation that supports the growth and development of children and youth. Many respondents articulated a desire for more casual, multi-generational facility use opportunities, such as all ages or concurrent programming for caregivers and children.

Many respondents identified that facility use changes over a person's life cycle, with high use by young families that decreases as children get older. As people age the activities they engage in change – for example someone who played hockey as a youth and young adult may use rinks less, but use trails more.

Issues to consider in providing the right facilities in the right places include intensification, for example in the downtown core. The City should also plan and deliver facilities and services that meet demographic needs, for example those of seniors, newcomers and low-income communities. Some respondents raised issues of facility quality and access, including increased crowding and decreased sport field quality.

Reshaping Facilities to Fit Evolving Needs

21% of all comments

Many comments indicated that residents value the range of facility options available and reported participating in arts, culture, sport and exploring the natural environment, both as individuals and with groups. The availability of registered as well as drop-in and informal activities supports people of all ages and stages. Some respondents reported a trend toward individual vs. organized activities and a desire for multi-use spaces e.g. open green field. Many expressed a desire for environmental, cultural and other options at facilities, and for small amenities such as outdoor fitness equipment and benches.

Some respondents emphasized that they use facilities to maintain their health. Many respondents reported that in an increasingly urban environment green space is more important than ever. Natural areas are excellent places to relax, decompress and find peace. They provide important environmental benefits e.g. cleaning the air. Some respondents felt that it is important that the City ensure that existing green spaces are protected and new ones created when new development takes place.

Many respondents described the value of the wide range of affordable recreation options at City facilities, particularly for children, youth and seniors. To encourage

facility use it was suggested that the City improve amenities, reduce crowding, provide more multi-generational options and reduce parking and program fees.

Providing Quality Facilities

22% of all comments

Many respondents reported regularly using many facility types, particularly swimming pools, ice rinks, sports fields and that these are important venues for both recreational and competitive sport. Many comments suggest that many of the city's parks and recreation facilities are in need of renewal. Some respondents reported a need for increased greater sport field maintenance.

Suggestions for improvement included ensuring a good state of repair, regular upgrades and refreshes of facilities, amenities and signage, enhanced amenities such as change rooms and lighting, and making equipment more available for use e.g. weights and sport balls. Some respondents recommended expanding existing facilities in response to community needs and improving maintenance, particularly for sports fields and pools.

Some respondents suggested that facility planning should be done with strong, current data on existing facilities and demographics. It was suggested that the City apply best practices for facility planning, maximize use at existing facilities, and ensure the equitable distribution of facilities. Additional suggestions were to work with partners to create new facilities, and to use materials and techniques that promote all-season use.

Working with Others to Meet Needs

7% of all comments

Many suggestions were provided by respondents for working with others to provide facilities. These include exploring community hubs with other providers, working with developers to deliver facilities, partnering with school boards, and improving revenue generating facilities e.g. arenas. It was also recommended that the City work with community groups, non-profit organizations, and with the private sector including developers to secure land for facilities

Some respondents provided recommendations for service delivery. These included improving customer service and having more staff trained to work with seniors.

Improving Accessibility for Everyone

22% of all comments

Respondents generally found that parks and recreation facilities were conveniently located and make regular use of facilities within walking distance. Some respondents

would like to see a greater range of facilities and within their neighbourhoods. It was also suggested that facilities could be better linked with the trail system.

Many respondents expressed a desire for more amenities such as concession stands, washrooms, smaller sport facilities (e.g. fitness equipment), and modernized facilities (e.g. splash pad vs wading pool).

It was emphasized by many respondents reinforced that City facilities need to keep up with growth and demographic change. Some respondents highlighted the need to provide for adequate provision and maintenance of support amenities such as washrooms and support space. It was also suggested that the City consider facilities in non-traditional locations such as shopping malls.

Many respondents expressed appreciation for the many free and affordable parks and recreation facilities, with some suggesting more discounts for specific population groups e.g. students, and seniors. A frequent suggestion was to extend hours of operation, for example by being open later at night and increasing lighting to extend the hours of outdoor facilities. Many people would also like to see improved information and outreach regarding parks and recreation facilities and programs.

The Funding Challenge

4% of all comments

Respondents suggested sponsorships, community fund-raising, working with community and private sector partners, and revenue generation through leases and permitting as options to help fund parks and recreation facilities. Additional strategies out forward include ensuring that the state of good repair is maintained at facilities and retrofitting existing facilities. Some respondents commented that it was important to ensure adequate funding for Parks, Forestry and Recreation.