

# City of Toronto Curling Strategy Public Meeting

July 15, 2021  
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

# Land Acknowledgement

I'd like to begin by honouring the land that I'm on. If you are not currently in Toronto, I encourage you to learn about the lands you're on.

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.



# Agenda



Welcome, Meeting Goals, Introduction, and WebEx Tips



Presentation

- Project overview and Council direction
- Review of work to date
- Introduce draft principles for feedback



Q&A and Discussion

- You can participate by raising your hand to be unmuted or using the chat feature. The chat feature will open following the presentation.



Next Steps

thank  
you!

Adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

## Meeting Goals

- Provide an introduction and overview of the Curling Strategy
- Review results from engagement with current arena users and curlers
- Gather feedback on draft principles and opportunities
- Answer questions of clarification
- Share next steps

# Project Team

## Capital Projects & Public Consultation (PF&R)

Suzanne Coultres – Project Manager, Parkland Strategy

Matt Bentley – Project Manager, Facilities Master Plan

Cathy Vincelli – Manager, Community Recreation

Alex Lavasidis (facilitation) – Consultation Coordinator

Rajesh Sankat (tech) – Consultation Coordinator

# Meeting Participation



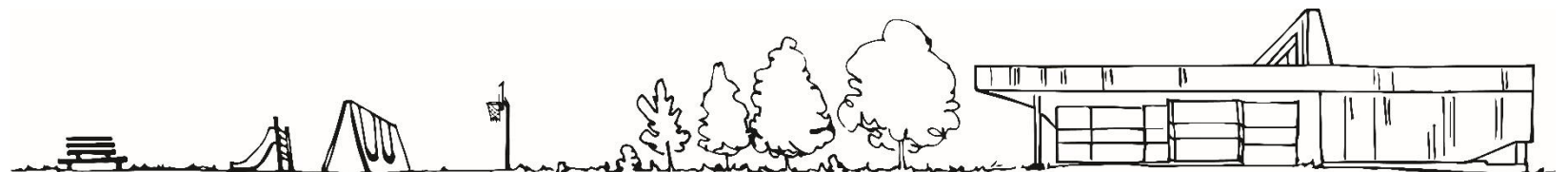
All participants are currently muted for the presentation.



All cameras have been turned off for this meeting.



You can ask questions and give your feedback through both the **chat** and **audio** features during the Q & A and discussion period following the presentation. The chat feature will be enabled following the presentation.



# Project Overview

# Introduction: The Facilities Master Plan and Council Direction

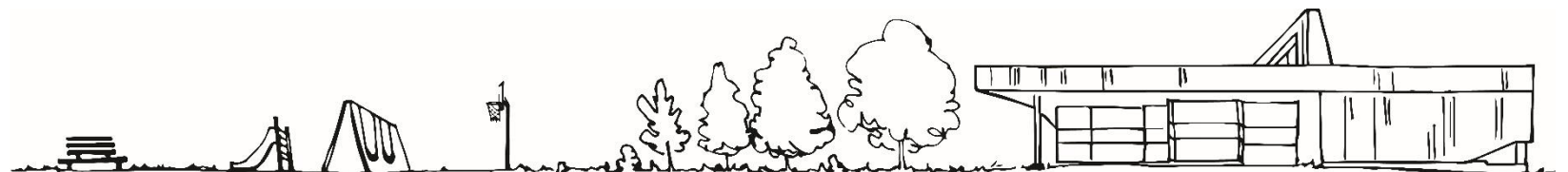
The Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan(FMP) 2019-2038 is a 20 year plan that guides recreation investment in the City.

The FMP originally found Toronto's per-capita supply of curling sheets was adequate and no new curling facilities were recommended.

**Since the FMP was approved, three privately owned curling facilities have closed (two in Toronto's west end).** The principal reason for these was not lack of demand or revenue related to curling. Although specific circumstances differ, each closure related to prioritizing golf activities.

The closures altered the context of curling in the city.

In October 2019 City Council directed staff to assess trends and participation in curling.





# Curling Strategy Phases of Work

## ✓ Phase 1:

Taking Stock

Assess supply of and demand for curling ice in Toronto.

Identify gaps and opportunities.

## ✓ Phase 2:

Identifying Opportunities

Review existing City ice facilities, provision models for curling ice, and sport development opportunities.

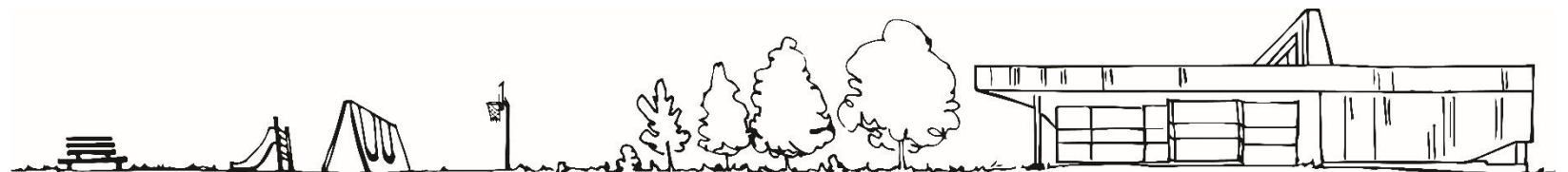
## Consult

(in progress)

Seek input from arena users and the public through meetings and surveys

We  
Are  
Here

**Seek Council  
Direction on  
next steps**



# Curling in Toronto by the Numbers

**8 & 51**

curling facilities &  
sheets in Toronto

**~ 6,000**

members in curling  
clubs & leagues  
*(number is stable and growing)*

**7 to 100**

age range of  
participants

- Programs for Little Rocks & Juniors are growing
- 128 high school curling teams
- Important social role, helping combat isolation for seniors

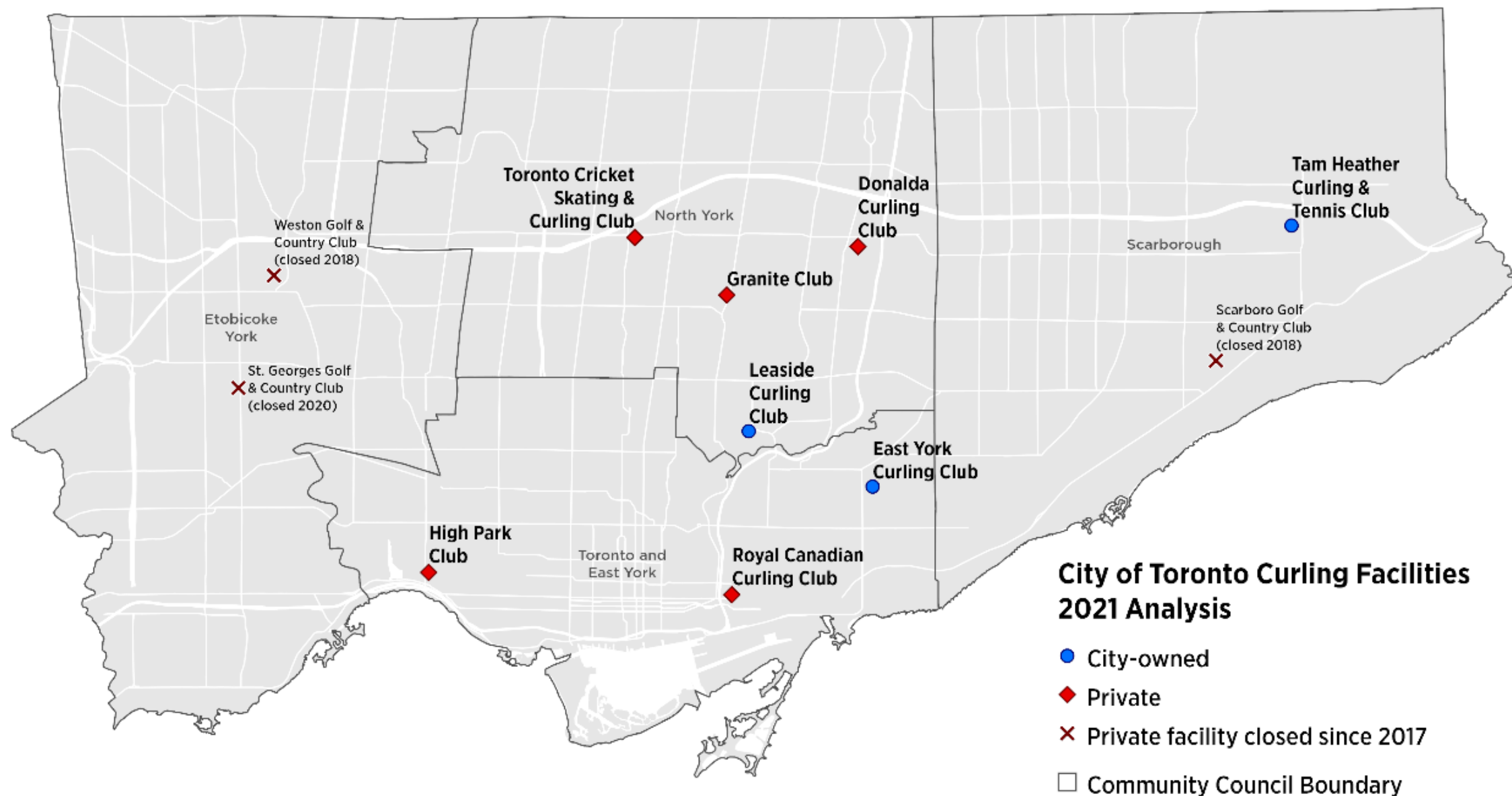
**~37,000**

Torontonians curl at  
least once a year

**~Equal**

Ratio of male to  
female curlers

# Curling Facilities in Toronto



# Demand Arising from Recent Facility Closures

A conservative estimate of the demand arising from the recent closure of curling facilities in Toronto is 625 curlers (550 in the west end).\*

The recent closure of two curling facilities in Etobicoke York caused a number of programming gaps:

- **Six high school curling programs (approximately 100 students)** have lost access to curling ice. St George's was a major centre for high school curling, providing free ice and low-cost instruction to students and also frequently hosting tournaments for schools in Etobicoke York and across the city.
- The **University of Toronto program** lost practice ice due to the closure of St George's.
- **A Special Olympics curling program** serving 35 participants with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their helpers ended due to the closure of Weston. Roughly 20 of these athlete are no longer curling.

# Summary of Supply and Demand for Curling

## 1. There is unmet demand for curling ice in Toronto, especially in the west end.

- Toronto's supply of City-owned curling ice has not changed and is in line with other jurisdictions.
- The recent closure of 3 privately owned curling facilities, 2 in the west end, decreased the overall supply of curling ice. Demand is stable or growing.
- There is no curling ice in Etobicoke York, demonstrated demand, and little or no capacity at nearby facilities to meet this demand.

## 2. Curling serves a wide range of ages and abilities.

- Curlers in Toronto range in age from 7 to over 100.
- Specialized programs include youth curling, blind curling leagues, LGBTQ2S curling leagues and wheelchair and stick curling.
- Programming is limited by a available ice, especially transit and wheelchair accessible ice.
- Recent facility closures have caused some programs such as Special Olympics curling and high school teams to end.

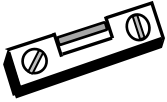
## 3. The delivery model for curling in Toronto presents a barrier to broader participation.

- Most curling ice is used by members of clubs and established leagues.
- Many curling facilities offer programs for new curlers but these are limited by the high demand for ice.
- When these barriers are removed, there is evidence of interest among new participants and a more diverse group of participants.

# Specifications for Curling Ice



A sheet of curling ice is roughly 45m (150') long by 4.75m (15'7") wide



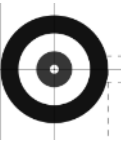
Ice surface must be level and clean



Ice temperature is  $-4.5^{\circ}$  to  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  (roughly  $1^{\circ}$  to  $3^{\circ}\text{C}$  warmer than hockey ice)



Ice surface is “pebbled” by spraying with clean water (no minerals or impurities) at a consistent temperature



Curling-specific markings and “ hacks” for rock delivery are installed at correct dimensions



Ice quality depends on consistent ambient air temperature and humidity



# Types of Curling Facilities

## Dedicated curling facility

May be stand-alone or co-located with other recreation amenities.



Image: Leaside Curling Club (City of Toronto)

## Arena facility

Arena ice can be converted to curling ice permanently or on a part-time or temporary basis. Conversion requires staff time and technical expertise.



Image: PEI Curling



Image: Town of Petawawa

# Facility Options (Phase 2 Findings)



# Facility Options Analysis

The following facility options for curling were identified by stakeholders and through a jurisdictional scan:

- **Convert an existing arena to curling ice**
- **Shared use of an existing arena (hockey/skating + curling)**

**Potentially  
feasible**

- **New stand-alone curling facility**
- **New co-located curling facility (part of a CRC)**
- **Add curling facility onto an existing arena building (three-wall addition)**

Not recommended based on  
Capital Budget pressures

# Option: Arena Conversion to Curling Ice

- Potential to deliver 5 sheets of curling ice.
- Aligns with opportunity identified in Facilities Master Plan to repurpose an underutilized single-pad arena as new twin-pad arenas come on line (planned budget: \$2.55M for each arena).
- Depends on identifying a suitable site based on FMP criteria and community consultation.
- Flexibility to convert ice back to a different use if demand changes.
- Cost TBD based on facility condition (e.g. accessibility requirements, State of Good Repair). Curling-specific costs (rocks, ice equipment) are estimated at <\$250,000.

## Case Study: West Northumberland Curling Club at Jack Heenan Arena (Cobourg, ON)

- Volunteers converted arena to 5 sheets of curling ice in 2011
- Leased and operated by third party (curling club)
- Future plans include lounge space, snack bar, locker rooms and wheelchair accessibility

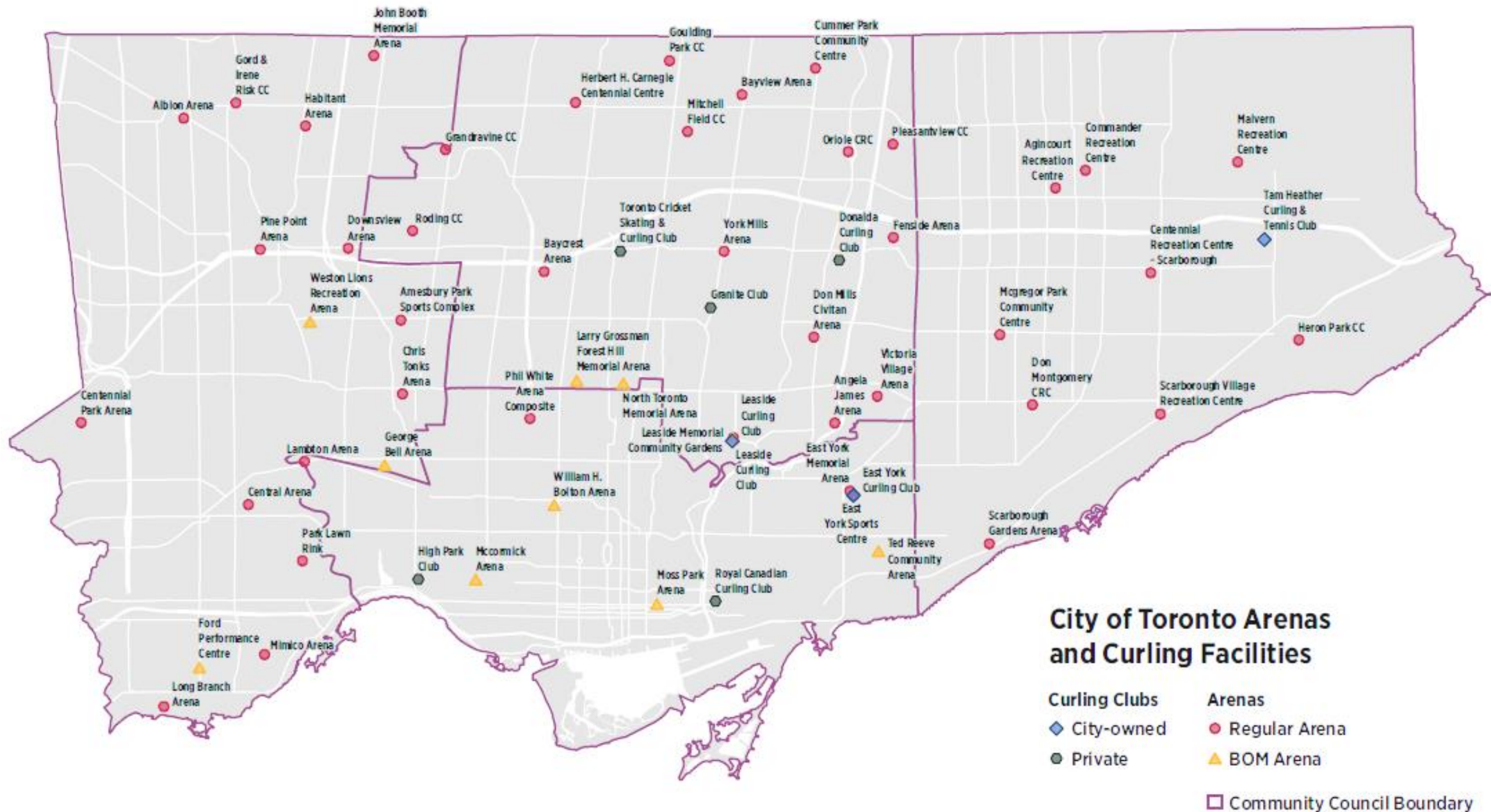
# Option: Arena Shared Use (Hockey/Skating and Curling)

- Staff time and expertise required to convert between hockey and curling on a regular basis.
- Conversion requires down time where no permitting can occur plus additional time to flood the ice (e.g. overnight).
- Lower capacity for curling than an arena conversion (4 sheets instead of 5) due to requirement to leave space for ice-making equipment.
- Curling ice is suitable for recreational rather than competitive curling. Ice quality is not as high as a curling-only facility.
- Requires multiple sets of lines on the ice which may impact users.
- Competition for uses and lower overall capacity for both curling and hockey.

## Case Study: Petawawa Civic Centre Arena

- Curling 2 mornings per week – conversion requires 2 staff/2 hrs
- Remaining use is hockey/skating – conversion requires 15 min
- Portable scoreboards, hacks
- Curling stones stored in a shed and cooled on ice prior to use
- User fee (\$8/day) offsets roughly 20% of operating cost

# Curling and Arena Facilities in Toronto



## Current Uses at Arenas

- City-run programs:
  - Drop In/Leisure Skate
  - Learn to Skate
- Permit holders:
  - Children/Youth versus adult
  - Non-profit (house league) versus competitive
- Community use
- Anchor programs: e.g. House League based at the arena, figure skating programs
- Community impacts: degree to which utilization is local vs. city-wide
- Special events

**Overall demand for arena ice is decreasing over time.**

**Demand remains strongest in prime time.**

# Criteria to Identify Potential Arenas for Curling

- **Arena Location & Type:** Focus on locations that will address geographic gap in supply of curling ice (in Etobicoke York).
- **Arena Use:** Identify which arenas would result in the least impact to existing permits/programs.
- **Suitability of Arenas for Curling:** Review facility condition, physical accessibility, and transit and car access to ensure the arena would be suitable for curling.
- **Neighbourhood Indicators:** Compile information about the communities where arenas are located including:
  - Participation in hockey, skating and curling.
  - Community use.
  - Proportion of equity-deserving groups: Recent immigrants, Aboriginal Identity, Visible Minority, Low Income.\*
  - Whether arena is located or serves a Neighbourhood Improvement Area.

# Engagement to Date

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- Stakeholder and public engagement is an important part of this process.
- Feedback collected from stakeholders (Curlers and Etobicoke Arena Users) and members of the public has/will inform:
  - Background research to understand needs of curlers
  - The development of facility options
  - The development of principles for shared use or conversion
  - The staff report to council



# Engagement to Date - Curlers

- Curling Stakeholder Group Virtual Meetings | Summer 2020 – Summer 2021
  - Four meetings
  - **Goals:**
    1. Review and confirm the results and findings of **Phase 1: Taking Stock**, (research completed by City staff).
    2. Review and confirm the analysis of **Phase 2: Identifying Opportunities**, (research completed by City staff).
    3. Discuss facility options and considerations identified for further analysis.
    4. Introduce and gather feedback on draft principles for shared use or arena conversion.

# Engagement to Date – Etobicoke Arena Users

- Online Survey for Etobicoke Arena Users | May 18 – 31, 2021
  - Emailed to 130 recent permit holders, 53 Responses
  - **Goals:**
    - Identify potential opportunities & challenges related to a shared use or arena conversion
    - Inform the development of draft principles for shared use or arena conversion
- Online Etobicoke Arena Users Stakeholder Meeting | June 17, 2021
  - 130 recent permit holders invited, 40 Attendees
  - **Goals:**
    - Provide an introduction & overview of the Curling Strategy; review the May survey results; introduce and gather feedback on draft principles for shared use or arena conversion; answer questions of clarification, and share next steps.

## Key Feedback From Etobicoke Arena User Stakeholders (Meeting and Survey)

- Most arena users would prefer the City provide more ice time for curlers by building a new, purpose-built arena for curling, so that existing arena use is not impacted.
  - Some arena users suggested/like the idea of creating a sports bubble over an outdoor rink to provide additional ice time.
- Arena users suggested that if a shared use model is considered, curling use should occur when the ice is not currently being permitted (daytime, late evenings etc.) and that quality and safety of the ice needs to be maintained.
- Some arena users questioned the demand for curling vs. the demand for additional hockey ice time, as demand for ice (especially in prime-time) continues to be high.
  - Arena users indicated that reducing available time can force leagues to permit private ice (at greater cost) which will further increase the costs of participation for children and youth.

More detailed summaries are available on the project web page: [www.toronto.ca/CurlingStrategy](http://www.toronto.ca/CurlingStrategy)

Feedback from existing arena users and the Curling Reference Group have informed the development of principles for possible arena conversion or shared use (*next section of this presentation*).

## Key Feedback From Recent Curling Reference Group Meeting

- Leagues within curling are just as popular in the evenings as they would be for hockey and skating. Giving curling mid-day slots during the week is not necessarily going to help provide curlers with accessible ice time, especially for school leagues and new curlers.
- Curlers suggested that if a shared use model is considered:
  - It will be important to consider transition time requirements. It may be beneficial for all users to transition overnight, and have full days of a converted arena.
  - Quality and safety of the ice needs to be maintained.
- Many curlers would prefer an arena conversion, asserting there is enough demand to fill a facility with curling, and existing publically accessible facilities are full.
- Some curlers like the idea of creating a sports bubble over an outdoor rink to provide additional ice time.

More detailed summaries are available on the project web page:  
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# Draft Principles for Shared Use or Conversion

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- The seven draft principles have been informed by:
  - Online Survey for Etobicoke Arena Users : May 18 – 31, 2021
  - Online Etobicoke Arena Users Stakeholder Meeting : June 17, 2021
  - Curling Stakeholder Group Virtual Meeting 4 : June 24, 2021
- Additional refinement will be based on:
  - This meeting
  - The online survey, closing July 25 ([www.toronto.ca/CurlingStrategy](http://www.toronto.ca/CurlingStrategy))

# Draft Principles for Shared Use or Conversion

1. Maintain open dialogue and transparent communications between existing Etobicoke arena users, curlers, and the City
2. Allocate ice time based on the demand for each activity (adjusted over time)
3. Maintain safe and good quality of ice for all users
4. Minimize impacts on existing user groups by:
  - Filling unused ice time slots (e.g. off-peak times) before other actions are taken
  - Minimizing any reductions to existing ice permit hours
  - Maintain existing permit time slots and permit locations whenever possible
  - Minimize ice down-time from ice conversion
  - If required, work with permit holders to select the least disruptive time slots changes and/or relocations
5. Ensure off-ice amenities are not overcrowded and are safe for all users
6. Do not create gaps in programming provision for existing user groups (e.g. skating, ice hockey, etc.)
7. Support sport development for all ages and abilities

# Next Steps



## Next Steps

- Refine the draft principles based on feedback collected today and through the public survey (*survey live until July 25*)
  - A summary of this meeting and feedback collected through the survey will be posted to the project webpage.
- Apply the principles to develop staff recommendations (September)
- Report back to Council (October - TBC)
- Any further steps to be determined by Council

You can complete the online survey until July 25, learn more, and register for project updates on the project webpage:

**[www.toronto.ca/CurlingStrategy](http://www.toronto.ca/CurlingStrategy)**

**You can contact the project team with additional feedback at [facilitiesplan@toronto.ca](mailto:facilitiesplan@toronto.ca)**

# Q&A and Discussion

## Q&A and Discussion

- Do you have any questions of clarification?
- Do you have any comments about the draft principles?
  - Is anything missing?
- Do you have any preference between the two options (Shared-Use or Arena Conversion)? If so, why?
- Do you have any additional feedback?

**To Participate: Use the Raise Hand or Chat feature.**

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## Discussion Questions

1. Do you have any questions of clarification?
2. Do you have any comments about the draft principles? Is anything missing?
3. Do you have any preference between the two options (Shared-Use or Arena Conversion)? If so, why?
4. Do you have any additional feedback?

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Online Survey to July 25  
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**THANK YOU**