

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Wabash Community Recreation Centre Youth Workshops Feedback Summary

July, 2021

Ashley Wilson, Senior Project Coordinator
Alex Lavasidis, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator



Table of Contents

Project Background.....	2
Youth Workshop Overview.....	2
Summary of Feedback.....	3
Leisure Pool Activities	3
Lane Pool Activities	4
Multi-Purpose Room Activities	4
Lobby Features	5
Additional Features.....	5
Making the Centre Welcoming for Youth	5

Project Background

The design of the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre will build on 20 years of planning and consultation work by both City staff and the local community, which has played a strong role in driving this project forward.

The City first identified the Wabash site in a 1999 report as one of five historically under-served areas. The site, including the former Canadian Linseed Oil Mill factory, was purchased by the City in 2000 in order to develop a community recreation centre.

Thanks to the advocacy and fundraising efforts by Friends of Sorauren Park and the local community, several improvements were made to the site, including renovations to the Field House in 2008, and the construction of the Town Square in 2014.

The City's new 20 year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan again identified the community recreation centre project as a priority for the City, this time specifying that it should include:

- An indoor pool
- A gymnasium, and
- Flexible multi-purpose program spaces

Youth Workshop Overview

Youth will be an important user group at the new community recreation centre. To ensure the centre is designed to be welcoming for local youth, the project team held online youth workshops with two local grade 8 classrooms. One classroom attended Fern Avenue Jr. and Sr. Public School while the other attended St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School. Other schools invited to participate include Parkdale Jr. and Sr. School, Parkdale Collegiate Institute, and Bishop Marrocco High School.

Each workshop lasted approximately 30 minutes and was hosted online using Google Jamboards, an interactive online platform that allows participants to vote, leave notes and questions throughout the workshop.

Summary of Feedback

Leisure Pool Activities

The three most popular leisure pool activities students wanted in the new Centre include a dumping water bucket, water jets, and a water mushroom. Spray toys and a tot/shallow area were somewhat desirable, but less popular.

Additional suggestions for pool features include:

- Diving board(s)
- A rope swing
- A water slide
- A wave pool



Image 1: A screenshot of Fern Avenue P.S.'s Leisure Pool Preferences



Image 2: A screenshot of St Vincent DePaul's Leisure Pool Preferences

Lane Pool Activities

Many students wanted the following lane pool activities in the new Centre:

- Leisure Swim
- Swimming Lessons
- Birthdays and Special Events (permits)
- Women's only swim times
- Diving classes/clubs
- Lifeguard courses
- Senior's Swim times

Some students wanted the following lane pool activities in the new Centre:

- Aqua Sports
- All-Inclusive swims
- Sports training
- Recreational Family Swim Time
- Lane Swim

A few students wanted the following lane pool activities in the new Centre:

- Competitive swimming
- Parent/Tot Aquafit
- Swim Teams
- Leadership Courses
- Water Aerobics

Multi-Purpose Room Activities

Many students wanted to participate in the following multi-purpose room activities in the new Centre:

- Lounging/open social space (this was the most popular activity)
- Rock climbing wall
- Workout room/gym space
- Fitness/Dance studio
- Community Permits for events (e.g. birthdays)
- Youth Programs
- Art
- Pop-up clinics
- Tech Programs/Computer Lab

Some students wanted to participate in the following multi-purpose room activities in the new Centre:

- Yoga/meditation
- Cross-fit
- Multi-media
- Martial Arts
- Music Recording, Practice, and/or teaching
- Leadership Courses
- Multi-sensory activities (e.g. therapy for those with developmental differences)

- Drama/Auditorium space

A few students wanted to participate in the following multi-purpose room activities in the new Centre:

- Dance
- Zumba
- Aerobic/Pilates
- Low Impact Stretching
- Board games

Lobby Features

Students would like the lobby to be a space **to be a place they can meet up with and linger with their friends. Many students liked the idea of including a cafe or other food and beverage options, with a seating area.** This would give students a safe, welcoming, and casual space to eat indoors, spend time with their peers, and form relationships with other community members. Students also like the idea of including the following features in the lobby:

- Murals
- Community art displays
- Community notice boards
- A drinking fountain/water bottle filling station
- A map of the building
- History of the area/building
- Access to rentable sports equipment to use in Sorauren Park
- A ping pong table
- A foosball table
- Vending machines

Additional Features

Some students would like to see the inclusion of local businesses and artists throughout the centre, as is possible.

Making the Centre Welcoming for Youth

Students feel welcome in spaces that are spacious and include nature/greenery. They like spaces that are interesting, with things to do and see, where there is plentiful seating to casually hang out with friends, as well as access to fun activities. Some youth also like calm, quiet spaces, suggesting there should be a mixture of lively, airy gathering spaces, and quieter, calming spaces to appeal to different moods and people.

Students do not like spaces that are cramped or crowded, unclean, lit with harsh fluorescent lights, or too loud. A student mentioned the importance of having gender neutral washrooms to ensure all youth feel comfortable in the new Centre.

A safe and clean centre, with plenty of space, interesting activities, room to casually hang out with friends, nature and greenery indoors, and long operating hours, is a centre that would be welcoming to youth.

What would make YOU feel WELCOME in the new space?

What public or shared spaces do you feel comfortable in/like spending time in or at?
 (e.g. a certain park, a gym, a trail etc.)

- on logs in parks
- high park
- library
- YMCA
- high park
- High Park
- high park or sunnyside pool
- library
- ontario place
- skate park
- Our Lady Sorrows soccer field
- turf field
- high park
- ontario place
- high park
- lake shore bike path
- rail path

What qualities do you like to see in a new space?

- scout
- community garden space
- lots of things to do
- nature
- social
- places to sit and eat
- hangout with friends
- running track
- spacious
- calm
- soccer
- Open spaces
- nature
- going with friends
- exercise classes
- abandoned theme park
- quiet, air conditioned and full of books

What would make YOU feel UNWELCOME in the new space?

What are unwelcoming qualities or features we should avoid?

- Very crowded spaces
- loud
- not having a gender neutral bathroom
- office looking spaces (fluorescent lights, big empty white walls)
- white fluorescent lights
- smells like mold bc its abandoned

In non-COVID times, why didn't you spend more time at your local community centre?

- too crowded
- not enough activities
- didn't have what I liked (soccer field)
- opening hours are too short
- does not feel welcome to teens
- not enough to do
- not kept clean

Image 3 & 4: Screenshots of Fern Avenue P.S.'s suggestions for designing spaces that are welcoming for youth.

What would make YOU feel WELCOME in the new space?

What public or shared spaces do you feel comfortable in/like spending time in or at?
E.g. a certain park, a gym, a trail etc.

high park ✓
lakeshore plaza ✓
swansea ✓
fern ✓
st casimirs bank ✓
parking lot ✓
west lodge ✓
skatepark ✓
by the lake ✓
mimic waterfront park ✓
Lunch in front of church ✓
Starbucks (a lounge area) ✓
Sorauren, High park, Lakeshore ✓

What qualities make you like that space?

immersed in nature ✓
Scenery ✓
humble community ✓
flat ✓
concrete for skating ✓
security cameras! ✓
smooth ground ✓
3 stair ✓
Seating, the space (whether it's welcoming) - Starbucks ✓
The nature, big spaces ✓
people watching/ meet up with people casually ✓

What would make YOU feel UNWELCOME in the new space?

Welcoming qualities or features we should avoid ?

crowded classrooms/spaces for multi purpose room ✓
boring areas (no music, no scenery) ✓
unsafe people ✓
uncleanliness ✓
Too crowded (a small space for the room's purpose) ✓
Scary people ✓
overcrowded ✓
Crowds, lack of nature, garbage everywhere, no washrooms ✓
I think there should be multiple places to meet and hang out, so one area could be more for parents with toddlers, and maybe teenagers pick a different spot. ✓

In non-COVID times, why didn't you spend more time at your local community centre?

its in public ✓
Many people ✓
many many people ✓
people dont wear masks ✓
privacy reasons ✓

Image 5 & 6: Screenshots of St Vincent DePaul's suggestions for designing spaces that are welcoming for youth.