

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

# Wabash Community Recreation Centre Youth Workshops Feedback Summary

## December, 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
Making Indoor Spaces More Welcoming .....	3
Making Outdoor Spaces More Welcoming.....	4
Program Suggestions .....	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, virtual youth engagement sessions were held with one local City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation-led youth group in Parkdale, and two grade 9 classrooms at Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School. Parkdale Collegiate Institute was also invited to participate. Sessions included:

- November 17, 5:00 p.m.: City of Toronto Parkdale Youth Group (~10 participants)
- November 24, 12:00 p.m.: Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School Grade 9 Students (~20 participants)
- December 3, 10:30 a.m.: Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School Grade 9 Students (~20 participants)

Each workshop lasted approximately 45 minutes and was hosted online using Google Jamboards, an interactive online platform that allows participants to vote, leave notes and questions throughout the workshop. A City Staff Member presented each floor of the proposed design to students, along with the proposed landscape design, and asked for feedback on how to improve the design to be more welcoming and enticing to youth. As students were in-class for the sessions, teachers/ Youth Outreach Workers helped to facilitate discussion, along with City Staff.

# Summary of Feedback

## Making Indoor Spaces More Welcoming

### Overall

In all the indoor spaces, youth would like to see more artwork. This could include wall murals or gallery areas to display local/youth artwork. Youth would also like to see plants throughout the space, drinking fountains on each floor, and enough lockers for secure storage of boots, coats, bags, and other personal items while they are using the new facility.

### Lounge/Lobby Spaces

Lounges and lobby spaces should be bright, comfortable areas that have features that make youth want to spend time there. This could include couches, a TV, vending machines, and games like foosball, air hockey, ping pong, ski ball, virtual golf and video games. Some of the spaces could be quieter, with a bookshelf, chairs, and tables, providing a space to work or read. All lobby spaces should have charging stations, outlets, and drinking fountain access.

Some youth suggested the lounge space in each lobby be larger, while others felt the lobby space was too large and could be better allocated to programmable spaces.

### Kitchen

Youth are excited to use the kitchen and hope to participate in baking activities, and to be able to permit the space out to cook and bake with friends.

### Food

Youth would like to be able to purchase and consume food at the new Centre. This could include vending machines or a café. Especially after school, youth will be hungry and food options would be an important part of making the new centre a welcoming and enticing place to spend time.

### Fitness Rooms

Many youth would like a weight room/cardio room with weights and exercise/cardio machines.

### Multi-Purpose Rooms

Youth like the idea of multi-purpose rooms being used for multiple activities. A few suggested a sink be included in each multi-purpose room to improve multi-functionality.

Many youth felt it would also be helpful to have a space specifically dedicated to youth, that can serve as an any-time drop-in space for programmed use (e.g. a spot where youth can hang out with friends, study, take a nap, participate in some activities, use a computer, etc.). Some suggestions for a youth space include comfy couches, video game systems, a large TV, and a fridge with snacks.

The following is a list of activities youth would like to partake in at the new centre, some of which may require more of a dedicated space than the multi-purpose rooms provide. Suggested activities/ activity spaces include:

- An art room (e.g. including materials like easels, canvasses, pottery materials, crafts, etc.)
- A black room for photography
- A film room, to both watch and edit/create films (comfy seats, a projector, film editing equipment)

- A games/video game room (e.g. arcade games, games tables, entertainment equipment, a large TV, videogame consoles, and comfortable couches)
- A greenroom/space to grow food (e.g. indoor vertical gardens)
- A party room (for permitting)
- A quiet space (e.g. reading/study room)
- A sound studio for music recording/mixing that includes DJ equipment, recording equipment, seating, and is sound proof.
- A spa or aromatherapy room
- A tech space for all ages, including computers and a 3-D printer

## Colours and Materials

One participant noted they like the use of grey indoors as it is a calming colour.

## Change Rooms

Some participants noted that they want the changing stall to be a good size, so people using them to change do not feel cramped or claustrophobic.

# Making Outdoor Spaces More Welcoming

## Seating

Seating areas outside are an important spaces for youth to be able to hang out with friends. The areas should include tables and chairs (e.g. picnic tables), to promote eating in these spaces. Outlets should be located at the tables, and there should be some shaded/rain protected seating areas.

## Activities

Some youth requested basketball be available outside the new Centre (instead of just across the street) because it would make them feel more welcome and a part of the new Centre, rather than being relegated to space across the street. Others said they did not mind that basketball was located across the street.

Some youth would like larger and more skateboarding features (e.g. a ramp or bowl, like Wilcox Lake Skate Park, Weston Lions Skate Park, and 8<sup>th</sup> Street Skate Park).

Some youth would like a mist zone to cool down in warm months.

## Rooftop

Youth are excited to spend time on the rooftop space(s). They envision this space as a fun place to hang out with friends, participate in events, and visit after school (including as a place to do homework!). Suggested features for the rooftop spaces include:

- A fire pit with surrounding seating
- A seating area with tables
- Outlets for computers
- A BBQ
- Gardens and plantings
- A telescope to see towards downtown
- Muskoka chairs (which could create a "camping theme")
- Space for movie nights
- Outdoor use (e.g. stargazing)

- Retractable shade/rain coverage
- Outdoor volleyball
- Drinking fountain/bottle filler

### **Pathways**

Youth appreciated that walking/ running looping paths would be maintained. Some suggested heated pavement so no snow or ice removal is required.

### **Town Square**

Include a retractable shelter over part of the square to allow for events in inclement weather.

### **Parking**

One student is concerned the parking lot is too small. Another suggested including charging stations for Electric Vehicles.

## **Program Suggestions**

Programming suggestions for the new Centre include:

- Aromatherapy
- Art classes (a variety)
- Baking classes
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Boxing
- Coding
- Drive-In Theatre
- Film editing
- Movie Nights
- Music Recording and Mixing
- Skateboarding
- Stargazing
- Tech programs (e.g. 3D printing classes)
- Video games
- Volleyball