

# **Moss Park Improvements & John Innes Community Recreation Centre Replacement Project**

SUMMARY REPORT:  
Phase 2 Pop-up Engagements

August 20 - 25, 2022



# 1.0 About this Report

This report summarizes key findings from Pop Ups at Moss Park, the John Innes Community Recreation Centre and the Moss Park Coalition meeting conducted between August 20, 2022 and August 25, 2022. It includes summaries of key comments and input heard during the engagement activities.

## 1.1 Project Schedule

### Summer 2022 - Phase 1: SET THE STAGE

Introduce the project, explain the process, and lay the project groundwork.

### Summer 2022 – Fall 2022 Phase 2: CONFIRM THE VISION, PRINCIPLES, BIG MOVES **WE ARE HERE**

Introduce the project, revisit More Moss Park findings, and explore how things have changed since 2015. Better understand evolving local issues and how the project can best support local needs. Confirm the Principles and Big Moves of the project.

### Fall 2022 to Spring 2023: Phase 3 - CONCEPT DESIGN OPTIONS

Use what we learn in Phase 2 to start developing ideas for park amenities and concepts for the new Community Recreation Centre. Review ideas through design options presented to the community and revise ideas based on feedback.

### Spring 2023: Phase 4 - PREFERRED CONCEPT

Refine the concept plans for the park and John Innes Community Recreation Centre based on feedback and present the preferred concept to the community. Review ideas with the community and revise plans and designs based on feedback.

## 1.2 Engagement Timeline

The following are other scheduled engagement activities with the public (subject to change):

### COMPLETED

- Local Advisory Group (LAG) and Project Champions Meeting #1: June 13, 2022
- Public Meeting: June 20, 2022

- Public Survey #1: June 20 - July 3, 2022
- **Summer Pop-ups: August 22 - August 25, 2022**
- Local Advisory Group (LAG) and Project Champions Meeting #2: August 30, 2022
- Indigenous Communities' Meeting #1: August 31, 2022
- Public Meeting #2: October 20, 2022
- Public Survey #2: October 20 - November 14, 2022

## ONGOING

- Pop-ups throughout the park: Summer 2022 - Winter 2023
- Indigenous Communities' Meeting #2: December 12, 2022
- Public Meeting #3: Winter/Spring 2023
- Local Advisory Group (LAG) and Project Champions Meeting #3: Winter/Spring 2023
- Youth City-Building and Design Mentorship: Winter/Spring 2023
- Public Survey #3: Winter 2023
- Park Open House: February 15, 2022

## 2.0 Overview of Activity

### 2.1 Moss Park Coalition Pop up



On Saturday August 20th the engagement team conducted a pop-up engagement at the Moss Park Coalition meeting. This took place at the Moss Park Market site on Queen West one block east of the park. The team installed an engagement board outlining the project at a high level and engaged community members attending the event. The primary goal was to understand how community members currently use the Park and

Community Recreation Centre, as well as changes, programming and features that they would like to have included in the future of these community spaces.

## 2.2 Pop Ups at John Innes Community Recreation Centre and Moss Park

During the week of August 22, the project's engagement team conducted pop up engagements at the John Innes Community Recreation Centre. Pop up engagements are interactive and informal consultations in which organizers 'pop-up' a table, booth, activity, etc., and they are timed to coincide with other activities taking place at a strategic location. An informational sign board was stationed near the reception desk and team members moved around the Community Recreation Centre and park talking with community members about the project. The same questions were asked of the people we engaged: 1) What ways do you use the Park and Community Recreation Centre currently? 2) What changes or programming would you like to see in the improvement and redevelopment? And 3) What technologies or features would support those activities?



## 3.0 What We Heard

### **Community Recreation Centre and Moss Park Feedback from Folks Experiencing Houselessness**

An important stakeholder group we engaged were folks who were street involved or currently experiencing housing insecurity. This group represented at least 20% of participants. They expressed the need for washroom and shower facilities that were lockable, secure and discretely accessible from the ground level and from outside of the building. We also heard that water fountains and benches were necessary comforts.

Respondents who were street-involved or experiencing houselessness make use of John Innes Community Recreation Centre facilities and Moss Park in various ways. They play basketball, soccer and handball, exercise in the weight room, swim, listen to music, watch baseball games, and enjoy laying in the open field of Moss Park. The trees provide shade, fresh air and a connection to nature that they appreciate.

Folks who are experiencing housing instability reported concerns about theft, violence and discrimination. They want to use the Community Recreation Centre facilities and the park without being judged for their appearance. They added that better lighting and a safe space to sleep at night may alleviate some of these concerns.

Other suggestions for improvement include better grass, better benches and installing benches under the shade of trees. Housing-insecure folks are in support of an off-leash dog area to keep the grass clean. In terms of programming, they would like access to basketball courts, high quality programs for local youth, a games room, a badminton facility and music spaces.

### **Community Recreation Centre Current Uses**

The people that we engaged indicated a range of ways they like using the John Innes Community Recreation Centre facilities. Most regular patrons we spoke with were users of the pool or the fitness and weight rooms. Others came to play basketball, badminton, or soccer. Many children attended the day camps and youth indicated they like coming to hang out with their friends in the youth lounge. The woodshop was identified as

valuable to some community members. Others valued being able to come and use the washroom and shower facilities. Community members also indicated that they attended yoga classes, community meetings, voted at the facility, and/or used the community kitchen.

**Improving the Well-used Pool Facilities**

Many Community Recreation Centre users identified the pool as an important amenity. Folks living in the area value being able to swim for free close by, and said that it is an important part of their regular exercise routine. People commented on the need to improve the pool’s accessibility, make it a fun space, run programs tailored to different groups, and have a system in place to keep it from getting overcrowded.

| What users value about the existing facilities   | Desired improvements and programming   |
|--|--|
| It’s not overcrowded<br>It’s quiet compared to newly developed pools<br>Registration controls the number of swimmers | Cleanliness of pool  |
| It’s free, financially accessible  | Improving the security of the change rooms and lockers   |
| Dedicated lane swim times  | Programming: swimming lessons for groups and adults, people with disabilities, aquafit, evening swimming, women’s time |
| Lanes are wide compared to lanes at pools like Regent Park   | Features: sauna, hot tub, deep end, large shallow end for seniors and kids   |
|  | Accessibility for people with disabilities, seniors and kids   |

**Cleanliness and Comfort of Showers and Change Rooms**

Community members want private stalls in the showers and change rooms, so that they can undress fully. Feeling comfortable and safe showering without a bathing suit was important to people for hygiene and comfort. A number of the people we engaged with said they were not comfortable with the universal setting and used the Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre facilities as an example of what not to do.

Some people we spoke with also wanted privacy while changing, suggesting separation of some kind, either by gender, closed stalls, or spatial divisions. The discomfort experience was associated either with changing in an open space or seeing people that made them uncomfortable changing. This was a comment made in relation to both adults and kids.

Another repeated concern was around the cleanliness and security of these facilities. A number of pool users said they don't leave their belongings in the change rooms because of security concerns, opting to take them to the pool deck instead. Confidence in the lockers was cited as the issue. Additionally, many people talked about cleanliness as a key barrier to pool, shower, and change room use.

**Balancing Shower and Washroom Needs of Different Patrons**

Several people we engaged with had lived experience with housing insecurity and commented on the need for safe, lockable, unmonitored shower and washroom facilities, especially for women. They said they want to wash with dignity and be able to access the facilities without having to come through the building.

Users with greater housing security who spoke about the issue recognized the importance of shower access for people with insecure housing, but desired some form of separation—scheduling, space, or otherwise—as well as regular cleaning, to mitigate concerns.

**Suggested Additions for the Community Recreation Centre**

| Theme                          | Suggestions  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Lounge, hangout and workspaces | Dedicate games space: foosball, pool/billiards, chess, ping pong |
|                                | WIFI throughout the building                                     |

| Theme                              | Suggestions  |
|------------------------------------|--|
|                                    | Computers / tablets: available for public use, computer lab with related programming |
|                                    | Workspace, reading, quiet zone   |
|                                    | Youth drop in space: increase in size, couches, TVs, consoles                        |
| Space for Staff                    | Staff lounge with couches  |
| Music and art                      | Music room: somewhere to play music, musical instruments                             |
|                                    | Arts and crafts room with a big sink and sewing machine(s)                           |
| Movement based activity            | Yoga: expand the programming, appropriate dedicated space, wood flooring, quiet      |
|                                    | Dance studio: larger space with more availability                                    |
|                                    | Inline skating   |
|                                    | Rock climbing wall   |
|                                    | Indoor playground - designed by the science centre                                   |
|                                    | Updated fitness equipment  |
| General programming considerations | High quality youth programming, local youth graduates as leaders, educational        |
| General programming considerations | Programming for adults and seniors, not just for kids                                |
|                                    | Programing to bring people together, group activities are important for community    |
|                                    | Family programming   |
|                                    | Ongoing opportunities to volunteer with local youth / children                       |
|                                    | Knowledgeable instructors  |
| Kitchen                            | Cooking lessons, features needed to support that                                     |
|                                    | Community kitchen is opportunity to build community                                  |
| Exterior                           | Rooftop garden – many people are excited about this                                  |
|                                    | Mural or graffiti wall   |
|                                    | Parking / drop off area - important for parents with kids                            |
|                                    | Integration between Community Recreation Centre and park                             |



| Theme | Suggestions                 |
|-------|-----------------------------|
|       | Needs and inviting entrance |

**Building Awareness of Programming**

Quite a few people we spoke with expressed a desire for features and/or programming that already exist at the Community Recreation Centre. This points to an opportunity for improved communication with the community. Examples included people asking for a woodworking studio, indoor badminton infrastructure, and showers.

**Park Improvements Mentioned**

People we spoke with indicated a range of improvements they would like to see in the park. These included: requests for better swings, seesaw, bigger slides, outdoor skating, and climbing structures; upgrades to the splash pad and outdoor courts; formalizing pathways crossing the field and beside the tennis courts; adding an off-leash dog area; creating zones for smaller as well as larger children. Some people also spoke about wanting more seating in the park. The lack of seating currently deters all park users.

**The Pros and Cons of Baseball**

Some people view the baseball diamond as taking up too much space, that could serve park users in other ways. However, for others, it is a valuable part of the park that contributes to their sense of safety. For the folks that would like to see it kept, baseball is seen as a way to bring healthy life to the park.

**Reaffirming Need for Accessibility**

We spoke with some community members with disabilities, one in a wheelchair, that said they don't use the Community Recreation Centre currently because of poor accessibility. These people talked about the need for improved wheelchair and scooter access, including street access, considering the size of elevators, as well as the accessibility of specific facilities such as the pool. They also expressed a keen interest in programming specifically created for people with disabilities.

## Reaffirming Need for Safety

Many of the people we spoke with don't feel safe visiting the park or Community Recreation Centre. For some, this means opting to go to community centers farther away instead. Visibility is a key part of safety for a number of people, both sightlines as well as visibility at night. Others talked about current ground cover materials and planting and the risk of needles. The stairs and lawn out front were another point of concern for some people we spoke with. They indicated these spaces supported behaviour that can be intimidating, such as congregation of large groups and open drug dealing. Other people spoke about the desire for more privacy and separation of the outdoor courts. One individual wanted to see the park fenced and locked at night. Despite concerns, in general the people that we spoke with understood the complexity of the issue and wanted to know how the park and Community Recreation Centre designs might be able to support people experiencing homelessness and those with addiction issues.

## Disrupting Community

In addition to those excited about the redevelopment, some people we spoke with voiced concern about the disruption the park improvement and new Community Recreation Centre construction will cause. Some were worried street life would deteriorate further, while others were upset about how the disruption to recreation programs would be mitigated during the construction periods.

There are local residents who fear the redeveloped Community Recreation Centre will cater to condos instead of serving the community. There is some distrust of the City, partially stemming from residual anger about the involvement of an "anonymous private donor" to the [More Moss Park](#) project that began in 2015. Local residents, apprehensive about the revitalization, didn't seem to understand the reasons for the redevelopment.

## 4.0 Who We Engaged

Number of participants engaged: 45

The pop-up engagements were designed as a way to connect with people we may not be reaching through other channels such as online surveys, ensuring engagement with a broad range of community members and facility users.

As these engagements were informal, candid conversations, we did not ask official demographic questions, but ensured we spoke with a diverse cross section of people ranging in age, race/ethnicity, gender identity and housing status.