

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Bob Acton Park

Phase 1: Visioning Phase

Thought Exchange Survey Summary Report & Pop-Ups

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Project Background

The City is improving Bob Acton Park and adding a new playground!

Bob Acton Park is located at 45 William Hancox Ave., just north of Gerrard Street East between Main Street and Victoria Park Avenue.

This project is in the early design phase and community feedback collected during the community engagement process will help determine the park improvements and new playground design.

Park Vision

Bob Acton Park will continue to be a park cherished by community members for its defining features, including the large green open space. The park provides open gathering spaces that allow for multifunctional uses by all age groups, including community yoga and various youth- and family-oriented play activities (i.e. sandbox). The park will be a space where community members can continue to visit to relax and enjoy through a new accessible playground space, seating options, and shade provided by new trees.

The park currently includes:

- A shade structure
- A sand box
- Benches
- Large open lawn area
- Pathways
- Trees and shrubs

The park is being improved with new features and amenities, including a new playground. The playground is proposed to include:




- Play equipment for ages 2 to 12
- Additional seating
- New playground surfacing
- Accessible play equipment and an accessible pathway connecting to the playground area.

Thought Exchange Process

Thought Exchange is an online engagement platform that allows community members to confidentially and independently share their thoughts, appreciate other points of view, and understand how their perspectives are connected to decisions made in the park design process. Community members are first invited to share their vision and ideas about what they would like to see and do in the new park. Participants are then invited

to review and prioritize the thoughts of others by placing stars next to the ideas that were most important to them.

Overall, the process includes 3 basic steps:

-  **Share answers** to open ended questions
-  **Add stars** to thoughts shared by others
-  **Discover** what is important to the community

Project Timeline

The anticipated schedule for this park project is as follows:

- Summer 2022: Community engagement
- January to June 2023: Community engagement and detailed design
- July to August 2023: Hire a construction team
- September 2023: Construction starts
- Fall 2023: Construction complete

Pop-up

The project team hosted three on-site pop-up engagements, one at the Beaches International Jazz Festival on July 24, 2022, another at East Lynn Farmer's Market on July 28, 2022, and one at Bob Acton Park on August 17, 2022. The goal was to provide an opportunity for community members to ask questions and share their ideas and vision for the Bob Acton Park improvements.

The project team facilitated both pop-up events and engaged over 100 residents who live within the local area or neighbouring the park. The project team set up 4 engagement boards, which included information about the park project, project timeline, and opportunities for members of the public to vote for various preferred park amenities (such as seating options, playground surfacing, and playground equipment).

Online Survey

On July 26, 2022, the project team launched an online survey to collect feedback on the proposed new playground and additional park improvements for Bob Acton Park. Responses to the survey will help inform future draft design options for the new playground and park improvements.

The online survey was available from July 26 to August 19, 2022. The survey received a **total of 1001 responses and 1,319 participants**, which included input from participants of various ages and backgrounds and families/groups who completed the survey together.

Participation

 1,001
Participants

 743
Thoughts

 20,341
Ratings

Key Insights

Community members shared their insight and ideas for the new playground and park improvements. The following are key areas addressed by several responses received from survey participants, including the total number of responses provided for each:

- Safety (154)
- Park Area/Design (145)
- Pets (129)
- Green (88)
- Shade (77)
- Water Features (46)
- Playground (35)
- Fitness (30)
- Accessibility (25)
- Court (23)
- Seating (19)
- Park Maintenance (17)
- Flooring (1)

All additional responses and a full summary of results for the survey questions can be reviewed through this [Thoughtexchange survey report link](#). The following summarizes key feedback from the online survey of the most popular ideas that are within the project scope. **feedback received regarding park maintenance has been noted and will be shared with the appropriate City Staff and will remain outside the scope of the **design** and **construction** project.*

Plantings and Open Green Space

- Ensure the park includes more native plants, pollinators, and open green space to help mitigate the impacts of climate change and support endangered species, such as butterflies and bees. The park should retain the existing multi-purpose open green space which is popularly used as a gathering and picnic space by community members.
 - Popular relevant thoughts:
 - "The park has few mature trees and otherwise no landscaping. It would be nice to have some garden design elements so it doesn't look so bare" – 4.3 rating
 - "We needs more large trees, beyond shrubs, in green spaces for shade and mental health. As above. Also, lower income areas have disproportionately less trees." – 4.2 rating

- "I think this is great! It's so central that our neighbourhood gathers so often here. We have lots of kids and pets around. We should leave some green space for families to play sports. Lots of people walk/run the path around the park. So it would be nice to keep/improve." – 4.2 rating
- "The City should include more native plants, particularly native host plants in it's parks. Pollinators are in crisis. People love the look of native gardens when they are exposed to them. The City has a pollinator policy." – 4.2 rating
- "Add more equipment for sure, but also keep a large portion of the field which is actively used. This field gets adults & kids playing soccer, catch, flying kites, it's good to keep that, but just a sandbox isn't enough stuff" – 4.2 rating
- "It might be nice to have a few native plants as well (preferably pollinators). We could always use more pollinators, and native plants are hardier" – 4.1 rating
- "Don't take over the entire space. It is nice to have the open area for flexible broad use and as a neighborhood gathering space." – 4.0 rating

Shade Trees

- The park needs to have lots of trees and structures that could provide shade, especially during the summer season. The park currently lacks shade and as a result, is less frequented during the summer months due to concerns of safety and health from the sun for park users. Play areas for children, as well as gathering spaces in the park should have shade to allow for prolonged use during the summer.
 - Popular relevant thoughts:
 - "More trees and shade" – 4.6 rating
 - "Be mindful of the sun when designing the structures and seating areas. Many grandparents and parents bring their children to parks in the area. Providing enough shady, benched seating is helpful to keeping the caregiver" – 4.5 rating
 - "Need new shade, specifically tree shade. It's good for the environment and allows use of park on sunny days. All of the trees are far from the sand area" – 4.5
 - "Natural shade. Please don't put a lot of cement. It's important to have a nature feel" – 4.4 rating
 - "There needs to be more shaded areas. The park doesn't get much use during summer when it's sunny, because there's barely any shade" – 4.3 rating
 - "We need to plant more trees, shrubs and native plants in this park - not more paved areas. Also plants to soak up standing water after rain (N side). To create shady, urban green spaces that mitigate the effects of climate change and help endangered species (eg. butterflies, bees)." – 4.3 rating

Accessible and Inclusive Park Design

- Ensure the park meets accessibility requirements and needs for wheelchair users and those with limited mobility or other physical disabilities. Barriers along paths and in gathering spaces should also be mitigated for strollers and other mobility devices. Play equipment should be inclusive in the park for all kids or park users with mobility or other disabilities.
 - o Popular relevant thoughts:
 - "Whatever you do please make sure that it is accessible by children in wheel chairs. The local school has a special program for kids with mobility issues, but there really isn't anywhere for them to play in their neighborhood currently" – 4.3 rating
 - "Barrier free accessibility for strollers and the elderly is critical." – 4.2 rating
 - "That it is accessible to very young children for safe play. All ages should be safe and the design should give all parents peace of mind." – 3.9 rating
 - "The park should be accessible to those adults and children with disabilities or limited mobility. Inclusivity is important" – 4.2 rating
 - "The most imp things is creating parks that are accessible for all kids. At Dieppe the new build removed a seated swing with harness and did not put it back or replace it with any accessible features." – 3.9 rating

Seating Options

- Ensure the park has a diverse range of seating options protected by shade and accessible to park users with limited mobility. Shaded seating should be provided in close proximity or adjacent to play areas to allow parents and caregivers to watch their children at a safe distance.
 - o Popular relevant thoughts:
 - "Trees and seating. Seating and shade for grandparents bringing children to the park" – 4.4 rating
 - "Be mindful of the sun when designing the structures and seating areas. Many grandparents and parents bring their children to parks in the area. Providing enough shady, benched seating is helpful to keeping the caregiver protected" – 4.5 rating
 - "Adding some trees for shade near seating areas. Right now you can barely sit at Bob Acton Park when it's sunny outside as there are no shaded areas and only one bench under the pagoda." – 4.4 rating
 - "Shade, seating, and activities to encourage community development. Right now it's a bare space with no shelter from the sun. As a result, the park is mainly used for walking dogs, few hang out in the park for long." – 4.2 rating

- "I'd love to see some seating in shaded areas. I'd enjoy this park more if the sandbox wasn't the only part not fully exposed to full sunlight" – 4.0 rating

Park User Safety

- Community members consider safety as a top priority for Bob Acton Park. Ensure the park is safe by considering the following popular thoughts:
 - "Lights on the walking path on the south of the park. It's quite dark along there" – 4.3 rating
 - "There needs to be improvements on lighting throughout the park and around the new proposed playground. Walking through the park at night is very dark. A lot of teens pass through and vandalize the area on a constant basis. More lighting is important!" – 4.3 rating
 - "Improved lighting please. Park is dark and unsafe to walk through in the especially in the winter when it's slippery and dark early." – 4.3 rating
 - "Park is currently a known hangout spot at night as it doesn't have adequate lighting. Trash debris and other items are sometimes left. Deterrence by having adequate lighting would be beneficial" – 4.3 rating
 - "Few street lights along the walkway similar to the pathway longing the houses on the other side of the park to increase visibility/safety at night. Visibility because of good lights will reduce risks to ALL who use or walk through the park, including neighbours coming from Go trains/subway." – 4.2 rating
 - "Many neighbours bring their dogs in the morning. It would be lovely to have a dog run along the south end of the park, away from the main area. Having a space for both kids and animals to play, including safety for all." – 4.1 rating

Park and Park Amenities Designed for All Ages and User Groups

- Ensure the park is designed for all age groups, and for community-lead programs. Bob Acton Park should also have a water filling station for park users to rehydrate while participating in activities, especially during the summer season.
 - Popular thoughts of relevance:
 - "A filtered water station would be so useful, for all ages." – 4.4 rating
 - "There are a lot of daycare providers and Nannies who bring young children to the park during the day. In the evenings it gets used by Families, older kids, people exercising. The entire community uses the park." – 4.2 Rating
 - "Great that you're improving the park! It's important to provide public spaces for families, kids, and people of all ages." – 4.2 rating
 - "Should be geared to all ages and provide something for everyone" – 4.1 rating
 - " Water availability - taps for water bottles sustainability and waste" – 4.1 rating

- "Needs to have something for all ages" – 4.0 rating
- "There are very few parks in the neighborhood that appeal to older children above the ages of 6. Older kids need outdoor spaces as well. And there are many older kids in this neighbourhood" – 4.0 rating

Playground Space

- Design a unique and inclusive playground space and ensure it includes play equipment that differs from existing playgrounds within the neighbourhood. The playground should be designed for younger and older children.
 - Popular relevant thoughts:
 - "Go for a more natural looking playground that's modern and blends into the landscape. See Corktown common or Sackville park/St James Park. It's far more appealing, modern and less of an eye soar. Surrounded with greenery, it's a very warm look." – 4.0 rating
 - "Most parks walkable in our neighborhood are school playgrounds. Making the park different than school playgrounds, swings and for older kids, climbing. Kids just need more opportunities for challenging themselves" – 3.9 rating
 - "Bigger play equipment for older kids is important for the demographics of the kids in the area. Lots of things get stolen & damaged in the area - that needs to be considered when putting in anything moveable in the park." – 3.9 rating
 - "Inclusive equipment so all kids can play" – 3.8 rating
 - "The area really needs another playground! We only have schools nearby and kids will really benefit from another option. Young and older kids really don't have many playground options nearby so this will be very well received." – 3.7 rating

Water Feature or Cooling Area

- The park should have a water or cooling feature to support safety and health of park users during the summer season.
 - Popular relevant thoughts:
 - "A water feature of some sort would be amazing like a splash pad of a fountain" – 4.2 rating
 - "I think features like shade and splash pads are becoming increasingly important. Because the summers are getting so hot and while there is a wading pool at the arena, you need a car to get to the closest splash pad." 3.9 rating
 - "A splash pad like the one in Cassels Park would be ideal! There's only the wading pool at Ted Reeve Arena that is close by." – 3.7 rating

Spaces for Dogs

- The need for a designated dog space at Bob Acton Park should be considered as many respondents expressed their concerns of off-leash areas and other dog-specific spaces.
 - o Popular relevant thoughts:
 - "Off leash dogs are an issue and will 100 percent clash with those who use the playground/park without a barrier. This is a when not if situation. Safety of all users of the park is paramount. You will need to enforce off leash bylaws, fence in the playground or have an off leash area. Your pick!" – 4.0 rating
 - "There's a big issue with off leash dogs there. There needs to be clear signage that dogs are not allowed in the playground and need to be leashed. This is necessary because there were many cases of dogs attacking kids" – 4.0 rating
 - "Stop allowing off leash dogs in the area. My child was attacked this year. Safety of children" – 3.9 rating
 - "This space needs to have much better leash law enforcement. Right now too many dog owners use it as an off leash area and that has become dangerous. Public safety." – 3.9 rating

Necessary Design Features

A completed analysis of key themes (as summarized above) and additional data from the [Bob Acton ThoughtExchange survey](#) reveals the following design considerations that should be explored in future design options. These recommended design considerations are formed based on the most popular submitted thoughts and survey question results, as well as frequently mentioned highly rated themes gathered from the ThoughtExchange survey:

- A majority of survey respondents prefer for Bob Acton to have more plantings and shade trees
 - o Respondents also have a high preference for retaining the large open green space at Bob Acton Park as it is actively used for community yoga and recreational/sport uses
- Survey respondents have a higher preference of Integrating natural features into the building materials for the playground
- A higher preference for shade structures integrated into the playground design and around seating areas was also gathered from the thoughts submitted
- Survey respondents have a higher preference of using a lighter colour for the surface of the playground to minimize heat impacts
 - o Similarly, survey respondents expressed that heat mitigating considerations should be made when exploring design options for the playground area
- Based on data received from the ThoughtExchange survey questions and thoughts submitted, the playground will likely be used by children around the ages 6 to 12.

How We Reached People

In general, the community was informed of engagement activities through social and print media, listed below:

Print Media

Signage near the site

Project information was displayed on 36x48 notice boards placed near the new park site. These notice boards provided information about the project, details about the online survey, and how to access additional information on the project webpage.

Digital Media

eFlyer

A digital flyer was circulated to community groups and the local Councillor's Office for additional distribution.

Social Media and Digital Ads

The City of Toronto used its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts to promote the virtual community meeting and online survey through paid advertisements and organic posts from July 25 to August 19, 2022.

Project Webpage

A webpage (toronto.ca/BobActonPark) was set up to act as a communications portal to inform the public about the new park project. The webpage hosts all up to date information regarding the project, including links to the online survey and a sign-up button for e-updates.

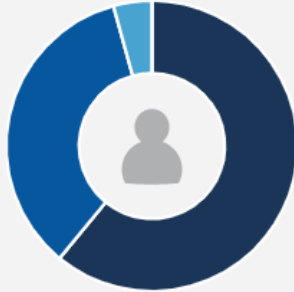


Next Steps

The feedback received from this phase of community engagement will confirm priorities for the Visioning. To be notified about upcoming consultations for the new park, please visit the project webpage at toronto.ca/BobActonPark to sign up for e-updates.

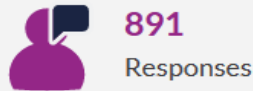
Appendix A: Demographics

What is your relationship to Bob Acton Park?



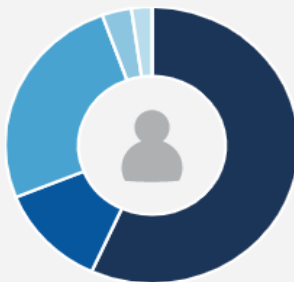
%	Person Icon	Answer
61%	(543)	I live/will live within walking distance to Bob Acton Park in a nearby neighbourhood
35%	(310)	I live in the Upper Beaches neighbourhood.
4%	(38)	Other

What are the age(s) of those who are participating in this activity?
Select all that apply.



%	Person Icon	Answer (Multi-select)
31%	(284)	5 to 12 years old
12%	(109)	13 to 18 years old
12%	(114)	19 to 29 years old
35%	(317)	30 to 39 years old
38%	(346)	40 to 55 years old
9%	(81)	56 to 64 years old
3%	(32)	65 to 74 years old
1%	(10)	75 years old or above
2%	(26)	Prefer not to answer


What best describes you and your household's access to outdoor space?




%	Person Icon	Answer
57%	(505)	I/we have access to private outdoor space like a yard
12%	(108)	I/we have access to semi-private/shared outdoor space
26%	(228)	I/we only have access to public spaces like parks (I do not have access to private or semi-private outdoor space)
3%	(29)	Prefer not to answer
2%	(20)	Other

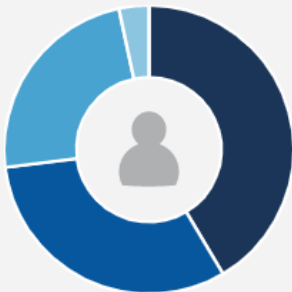
Appendix B: Quantitative Response Summary






Select all that apply. Which of the following playground features would you prefer?

 **906**
Responses

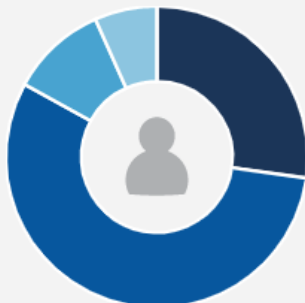
%		Answer (Multi-select)
79%	(724)	Swings
70%	(635)	Sliding
78%	(713)	Climbing
35%	(322)	Spinning
60%	(550)	Balancing
35%	(318)	Playing in sand
27%	(250)	Sound features (talk tubes, acoustic chimes, etc.)
31%	(286)	Quiet or sensory play
19%	(181)	Other






Which of the following colour sets would you prefer for the new playground?



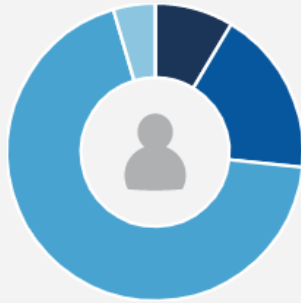
%		Answer
41%	(374)	 Earthy colours, like green, brown, or grey
32%	(285)	 Bright colours, like purple, orange, blue or yellow
24%	(213)	 No preference
3%	(30)	 Other

What surface(s) would you prefer for underneath the playground?



%		Answer
27%	(245)	 Wood-chips
56%	(502)	 Rubber
10%	(93)	 No Preference
7%	(60)	 Other

What age groups do you think playground features should be geared to?



%	Person Icon	Answer
9%	(77)	Mostly younger children aged 2-5 years
18%	(162)	Mostly older children aged 5 and up
69%	(617)	Evenly split between younger and older children
4%	(41)	Other

Select all that apply. What type of seating would you prefer in Bob Acton Park?



893

Responses

%	Person Icon	Answer (Multi-select)
67%	(603)	Benches (fixed locations)
59%	(535)	Picnic Tables (moveable)
48%	(435)	Seatwalls (large stones that form a short wall that you can sit on in fixed locations)
48%	(429)	Muskoka Chairs/ Adirondack Chairs (Moveable individual chairs with a relaxed back and arm rests)
6%	(58)	Podium Seating (fixed locations; no back supports)
4%	(39)	No Preference
2%	(19)	No new seating
1%	(14)	Other

Select all that apply. Which of the following features would you like to see in Bob Acton Park?



893

Responses

%	Person Icon	Answer (Multi-select)
53%	(474)	Exercise/fitness equipment
43%	(391)	Walking Circuit
49%	(438)	Games tables (i.e. ping pong, chess, other)
7%	(69)	None of the above
5%	(47)	No new features
15%	(138)	Other

Comparative Survey Response Date

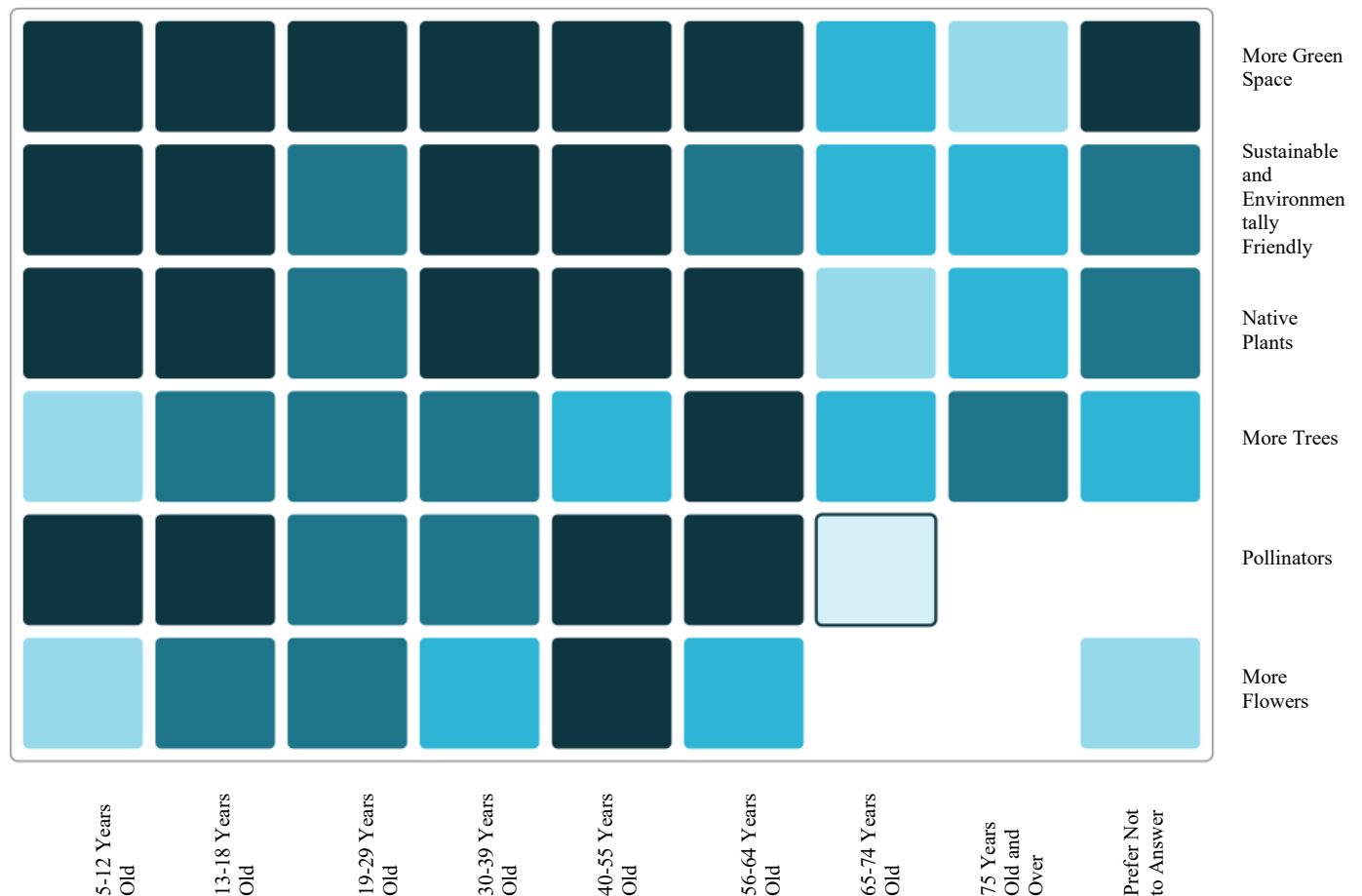
This section of Appendix B includes additional key insights, organized in specific categories that reveal unique user perspectives that will help inform design options. It is important to observe data from various perspectives to ensure the new park, as well as any upcoming engagement events, consider the lived experience of the area's community members. All key themes (Y Axis) are rated out of 5, with 5 representing a highly popular rating and 2.8 or less representing a lower popular rating.

Green Space and Sustainability Interests, by Age

STAR SCORE



X AXIS = SURVEY QUESTION 8

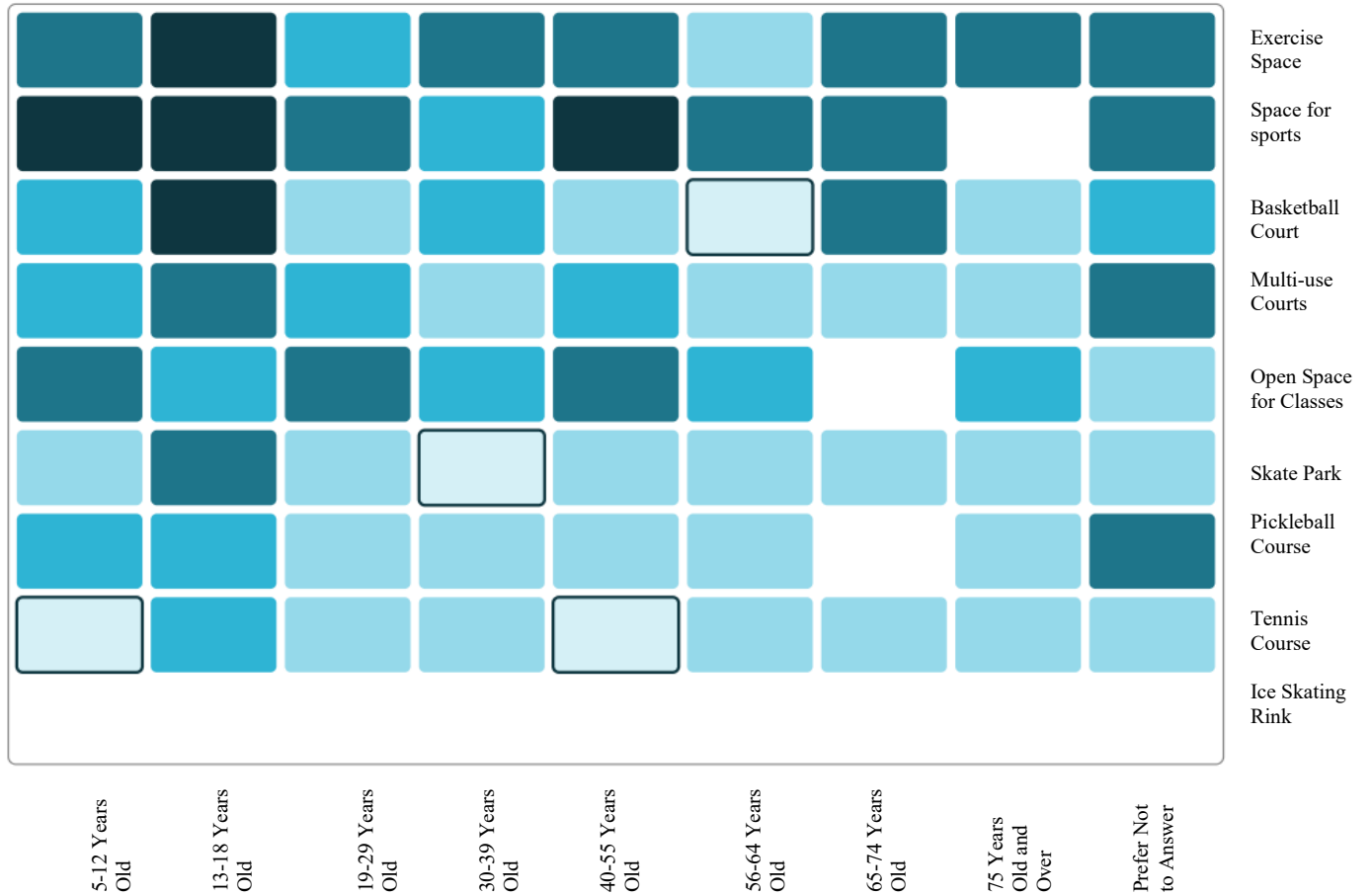


Sports and Recreational Use Interests, by Age

STAR SCORE



X AXIS = SURVEY QUESTION 8



Accessibility Interests, by Age

STAR SCORE



X AXIS = SURVEY QUESTION 8

