

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Centennial Park Playground and Water Play Improvements

Phase 2: Public Survey Summary Report

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This report has been prepared by SAFFY, a third-party strategy, research, and engagement consultant for the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation.

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Project Background

The City's Parks, Forestry & Recreation division (PF&R) is implementing improvements to the Centennial Park District Playground, guided by the 2021 Centennial Park Master Plan.

As a part of the Master Plan implementation, the City is improving the playground and water play area to provide safe and accessible fun for many years to come. The project will include a new district playground, a new waterplay area and improvements including seating and picnic areas, accessible pathways, drinking fountains, landscaping, sustainable features and more.

Survey Overview

The public online survey was live on the City of Toronto Centennial Play Area project website from April 18 to May 9, 2023. Community members could take the online survey to review and share feedback on draft design options for the playground and water play area improvements. In total, 1078 people of all ages participated in 392 survey submissions (households were encouraged to complete the survey together).

The survey invited input on design options for the playground including preferred features and equipment for the playground and water play area, as well as concept design options. The design team will use this feedback to inform the final design for the playground and water play area and select playground and water play features to prioritize and include in the design.

The survey was promoted through social media, outreach through the project listserv and email updates to key stakeholders including local schools. The survey was designed for children, youth, adult and group respondents, with questions that varied across each segment. Details about who responded to the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Key Takeaways

Generally survey respondents were aligned on their preferences for playground equipment and water play features and feedback was primarily positive.

Below are highlights around preferred options.

The majority of survey respondents (87%) indicated that they liked the vision statement presented.

Vision Statement:

“To create a playground and water play area that inspires community, joy, physical activity, creativity and social interaction by providing a unique, thrilling, challenging, inclusive and accessible space for all ages to play, learn and connect with nature.”

Overall, Design Concept A: FOLDS was preferred among survey respondents.

- 51% of respondents indicated that Design A: FOLDS was their preferred layout
- 70% indicated a preference for the hillside lookout over the hillside swings (28%)
- 78% preferred the large wooden play structure over the large rope course (19%)
- 56% preferred the shade pavilion with group swings over the shade pavilion with rubber mounds (41%)
- 70% of respondents indicated they liked the shade pavilion and group swings a lot
- 79% of the participants indicated they like the large wooden play structure and tower a lot
- 67% of the participants indicated they like the hillside lookout a lot

When asked about playground equipment, hillside slide and steppers were ‘liked a lot’ by 89% of survey respondents. Additional top playground equipment preferences include:

- 81% liked Ziptracks a lot
- 78% liked Fitness Features for all ages a lot
- 70% liked Trampolines a lot
- 70% liked Balance and Post Play a lot
- 64% liked the Sensory Play area with water and sand a lot, with 73% preferring both water and sand over just water or just sand
- 52% liked Group Spinners a lot

When it came to Water Play equipment, small water jets were ‘liked a lot’ by 73% of survey respondents. Additional water play equipment included:

- 69% liked water channels a lot
- 68% liked water rings a lot
- 63% liked bucket dump a lot
- 61% liked water bubblers a lot
- 61% liked Mistlers a lot

Of the fitness equipment, which was liked by 78% of respondents, the Bouldering Climber was the preferred equipment by 40%, with 29% preferring the fitness gym and 27% preferred the Bamboo climber.

Additional sentiments that emerged from the survey responses included

- A request from several respondents for a dog-off leash area, which is out of scope for the playground and water play area
- Support for the use of a soft rubber material as an alternative to sand under play structures, for a perceived increase in safety
- Support for the addition of sports courts (ie: basketball, volleyball, fitness) for youth and teens
- Support for the addition of outdoor fitness equipment and workout areas
- Support for safety measures that consider health and well-being for hot days

Survey Summary

Here we summarize the findings from across the survey.

Vision Statement Feedback

The survey asked respondents if they agreed with the Centennial Park vision statement:

“To create a playground and water play area that inspires community, joy, physical activity, creativity and social interaction by providing a unique, thrilling, challenging, inclusive and accessible space for all ages to play, learn and connect with nature.”

The majority (87%) indicated that they agreed with the vision statement. 7% indicated that they “somewhat agree”, 2% indicated they “disagreed” and 4% selected “I am not sure”.

For those who selected “somewhat agree” and “disagree” the changes they indicated they would like to see reflected in the vision statement included:

- the notion of “fun” to ensure repeat users with a statement of “a safe and fun place for all”
- programming for young and older adults, resources for seniors, leisure and recreation programs suitable throughout the year
- The addition of respect for community and nature
- The addition of the word safety
- The addition of “connecting with the outdoors”
- The addition of the language of “Turtle’s Back” (ie: to connect with Turtle’s Back as we are living on Turtle Island).

Playground Equipment

When asked for respondents to indicate how much they liked or disliked various playground feature, the results were as follows:

Swing set with belt, baby, and accessible seats

- 62% liked it a lot
- 22% liked it a little
- 12% were neutral

A group disk swing

- 62% liked it a lot
- 20% liked it a little
- 8% were neutral
- 7% dislike it a little
- 2% dislike it a lot

Ziptrack

- 81% liked it a lot
- 10% liked it a little
- 5% were neutral
- 3% dislike it a little

Sensory Play Area - Sand Only

- 54% liked it a lot
- 24% liked it a little
- 13% were neutral
- 5% disliked it a little
- 4% disliked it a lot

Sensory Play Area - Water and Sand

- 64% liked it a lot
- 17% liked it a little
- 8% were neutral
- 7% disliked it a little
- 3% disliked it a lot

Sensory Play Preferences

- 73% preferred both sand play and water
- 10% prefers sand only
- 17% prefer water only

Spring Toy -See Saw

- 43% liked it a lot
- 29% liked it a little
- 21% were neutral
- 6% disliked it a little

Spring Toy -Individual

- 43% liked it a lot
- 29% liked it a little
- 19% were neutral
- 6% disliked it a little

Spinners - Group

- 52% liked it a lot
- 21% liked it a little
- 8% were neutral
- 4% disliked it a little
- 4% disliked it a lot

Spinners - Individual

- 31% liked it a lot
- 28% liked it a little
- 22% were neutral
- 11% disliked it a little
- 8% disliked it a lot

Hillside Slide and Steppers

- 89% liked it a lot
- 7% liked it a little
- 3% were neutral

Trampoline

- 70% liked it a lot
- 14% liked it a little
- 8% were neutral
- 3% disliked it a little
- 4% disliked it a lot

Junior Play Mounds

- 42% liked it a lot
- 29% liked it a little
- 20% were neutral
- 5% disliked it a little
- 4% disliked it a lot

Balance and Post Play

- 70% liked it a lot

- 17% liked it a little
- 6% were neutral
- 6% disliked it a little

Fitness Features for all ages

- 78% liked it a lot
- 12% liked it a little
- 7% were neutral

Favourite junior play equipment (ranked)

1. Hill slide
2. Sensory Play Area
3. Trampoline
4. Baby Swing
5. Junio Play Mounds
6. Spring Toy - See-Saw
7. Spring Toy - Individual

Favourite Senior Play equipment (ranked)

1. Ziptrack
2. Balance and Post Play
3. Belt Swing
4. Disk Swing
5. Spinner - Group
6. Spinner -Individual

Favourite fitness equipment (ranked)

1. Bouldering rock
2. Fitness Gym
3. Bamboo Climber
4. Do not want fitness equipment included (4%)

Water Play Equipment

When asked for respondents to indicate how much they liked or disliked various water play features, the results were as follows:

Small Water Jets

- 73% liked it a lot
- 19% liked it a little
- 6% were neutral

Water Bubblers

- 61% liked it a lot
- 25% liked it a little
- 11% were neutral
- 3% disliked it a little

Water Channels for junior water play

- 69% liked it a lot
- 20% liked it a little
- 6% were neutral
- 3% disliked it a little

Water Rings

- 68% liked it a lot
- 21% liked it a little
- 9% were neutral

Tall Sprayers

- 70% liked it a lot
- 19% liked it a little
- 8% were neutral

Bucket Dump

- 63% liked it a lot
- 12% liked it a little
- 8% were neutral
- 4% disliked it a little
- 4% disliked it a lot

Misters

- 61% liked it a lot
- 23% liked it a little
- 8% were neutral
- 4% disliked it a little
- 4% disliked it a lot

Favourite water play equipment (ranked)

1. Water Channel
2. Water Jets
3. Bucket Dumper
4. Tall Sprayer
5. Water Rings
6. Misters

7. Bubbler
8. Indicated they do not want water play

Design Concept

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferences for various aspects of the concepts. Responses were as follows:

When asked if they liked or disliked Design A: FOLDS shade and group swing pavilion they indicated:

- 70% like it a lot
- 17% like it a little
- 9% are neutral

When asked if they liked or disliked Design A:FOLDS large wooden play structure and towers, respondents indicated:

- 78% like it a lot
- 12% like it a little
- 6% are neutral

When asked if they liked or disliked Design A: FOLDS hillside lookout, respondents indicated:

- 67% like it a lot
- 17% like it a little
- 9% are neutral
- 4% disliked it a little
- 3% disliked it a lot

When asked if they liked or disliked Design B: WAVES shade pavilion with rubber mounds respondents indicated:

- 52% like it a lot
- 21% like it a little
- 13% are neutral
- 10% disliked it a little
- 4% disliked it a lot

When asked if they liked or disliked Design B: WAVES large rope course play structure respondents indicated:

- 57% like it a lot
- 20% like it a little
- 9% are neutral
- 19% disliked it a little
- 5% disliked it a lot

When asked if they liked or disliked Design B: WAVES hillside swing, respondents indicated:

- 35% like it a lot
- 23% like it a little
- 20% are neutral
- 13% disliked it a little
- 9% disliked it a lot

When asked if they liked or disliked Design B: WAVES hangout space with table tennis, bleachers and game tables, respondents indicated:

- 50% like it a lot
- 27% like it a little
- 15% are neutral
- 5% disliked it a little
- 3% disliked it a lot

When asked to compare each shade pavilion from Design A: FOLDS and Design B: WAVES:

- 56% prefer a shade structure with swings
- 41% prefer a shade structure with rubber mounds.
- 2% indicated that they had no preference.

When asked to compare the central play feature from Design A: FOLDS and Design B: WAVES:

- 78% prefer the large wooden play structure
- 19% prefer the large rope course play structure.
- 4% indicated that they had no preference.

When asked to compare each hillside feature from Design A: FOLDS and Design B: WAVES:

- 70% prefer the hillside lookout
- 28% prefer the hillside swings
- 2% indicated that they had no preference

When asked to compare each special feature from Design A: FOLDS and Design B: WAVES:

- 52% prefer fitness equipment
- 42% prefer spinners, balance and post play
- 5% indicated that they had no preference

Colour Choices:

- 59% prefer a cooler colour palette which includes gray tones, blue and teal/green
- 34% prefer a warm colour palette including sand (tan) tones, yellows and pinks
- 7% indicated they had no preference.

Layout

- **51% selected Design A: FOLDS,**
- **35% selected Design B: WAVES**
- **14% had no preference**

Appendix A

Who Responded?

The majority (69%) of survey responses came from families and/or households.

The other groups were as follows:

- 1% were representatives from organizations
- 30% were individual community members

Additionally, segments included:

- 64% of respondents identified as a parent/guardian/caregiver(s) of a playground or water play area user
- 24% were playground or water play area user(s) ages 6 to 12
- 24% Community member(s) who do not use the playground or water play area
- 20% Playground or water play area user(s) age 5 or younger
- 9% Playground or water play area user(s) age 13 or older

One classroom of 28 Grade 1 students from Nativity of Our Lord completed the survey.

The majority of survey respondents were between the ages of 30-39 (26%) and 40-55 years old (26%). Additionally:

- 1% of the respondents were 4 years old or younger
- 1% of the respondents were ages 13-18 years old
- 6% of the respondents were ages 19-29 years old
- 2% of the respondents were ages 5-12 years old
- 5% of the respondents were ages 55-64 years old
- 0.5% were 75 years old or older

3% selected “prefer not to answer” while 25% did not complete the demographic questions.

The majority of survey respondents (47%) identified as White. Other respondents identified as:

- 1% Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian (e.g. Afghan, Armenian, Iranian, Lebanese, Persian, Turkish)
- 1% Black (e.g. African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean)
- 3% East Asian (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese)
- 22% Latin American (e.g. Brazilian, Colombian, Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian)

- 2% South Asian or Indo-Caribbean (e.g. Indian, Indo- Guyanese, Indo-Trinidadian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
- 1% Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, Vietnamese)
- 2% of the respondents identified as Indigenous to Canada.

Most respondents identified as not having a disability, while 6% indicated they did have a disability, and 6% identified that excluding themselves, someone else in their household identified as a person with a disability.

48% of respondents were women, while 15% were men. 1 respondent (>1%) identified as Two-Spirit and 3 respondents identified as gender non-binary.

The majority of respondents identified as straight (53%) while additionally:

- 3 respondents identified as bisexual
- 7 respondents identified as lesbians
- 2 identified as queer
- 2 identified as Two-Spirit

The majority of respondents identified as homeowners (56%) while 7% are renters, 5% are permanently living with parents or other family, and 0.5% are temporarily staying with others and have no fixed address.

Most (49%) have access to private outdoor space like a yard, while 10% have access to semi-private or shared outdoor space and 9% only have access to public spaces like parks.