

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre

Phase 1: Build the Vision, Principles, and Big Moves

Integrated Pop-ups Summary Report

December 2023



This summary was written by the Third Party Public team, an independent facilitation team supporting the City of Toronto's community engagement about the Community Recreation Centre. The intent of this summary is to capture the range of feedback shared at the pop-ups, and not to assess the merit or accuracy of the feedback.

Introduction

The City of Toronto is designing a new Community Recreation and Childcare Centre for the Lawrence Heights Community. When completed, it will be one of the largest Community Recreation Centres in Toronto. Community consultation is an important part of the design process, and the City has launched a three-phase engagement process to share and seek feedback on the new community recreation centre's design, features, and programming. The first phase of the process focused on creating a new community-led vision, principles, and big moves, that will serve the project team as they prepare design options.

Pop-Up Overview

Between September and November 2023, The City of Toronto's Parks Forestry and Recreation Division (PFR) hosted three pop-up public consultations in the Lawrence Heights neighborhood. These pop-ups were a part of Phase 1 of the community consultation to inform the design of the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre. The purpose of these pop-ups was to seek feedback on the Draft Vision, Design Principles, Big Moves, and proposed programming and activities that will guide the design of new Community Recreation Centre.

The three community pop-ups include:

- Location:** Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre
Date and Time: September 27 (10 am to 9 pm)
Participants: ~50
 This pop-up occurred on the same day as the first round of Community Meetings.
- Location:** Lawrence Allen Centre
Date and Time: November 9 (10:30 am to 1:30 pm)
Participants: ~30
- Location:** Unison Health & Community Services
Date and Time: November 13 (4 pm – 4:30 pm)
Participants: ~25 youth (through the Unison tutoring program) These pop-ups were one of the several ways the City engaged the community about the Community Recreation Centre in this phase of public engagement. Other engagement activities included a community meeting and an online survey.



Figure 1: Pop-up at the Lawrence Height CRC



Figure 2: Pop-up at the Lawrence Allen Centre

Key Highlights from the Feedback

The points below reflect key themes and highlights that emerged across all three pop-ups.

The current Community Recreation Centre (CRC) has a lot of intangible valuable to the Lawrence Heights community that should be preserved in the new Centre. The centre should prioritize local use and be accessible and welcoming to everyone in the community including children, youth and seniors, people with low income, young parents, newcomers, people with different first languages, people with disabilities, and existing Toronto Community Housing (TCH) residents. Many participants said it should be a space where the community gathers and where people can get oriented to the neighborhood.

There is general support for the plan and willingness to participate in the next phase of engagement. Participants said the Draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves look good so far, and said they would be interested in seeing the draft designs during Phase 2 of the engagement process in the new year.

Ensure that the programming stays accessible and free. There was high interest in the proposed programming and activities, with many suggestions on additional programming, features, and activities, especially for youth. Participants also emphasized the need for programming to remain accessible to all and free of cost.

Detailed Feedback Summary

General feedback about the future Community Recreation Centre

Participants were generally happy to see the City moving ahead with the new CRC. Some participants said they have been waiting for the new CRC for a long time and hope the City does not take too long to build it. Big picture suggestions about the CRC included:

The CRC should be a central place for the community to gather and get to know the neighborhood. Suggestions included having an information desk to orient people to the neighborhood and the different services and programs being offered in the CRC.

Preserve the value this CRC has for the community. The current CRC is more than a building for the Lawrence Heights community – it has shaped many lives in the community, especially for youth. Ensure that it continues to reflect and contribute to supporting and shaping this community.

Prioritize local use and ensure that the community currently being served is not displaced. Ensure that the local community has first and prioritized access to the new Community Centre, not just access that's equal to residents from other parts of the city. There was also a suggestion that the City upgrade its phone system to work as well as the website, since people in the community rely on both to access information about the services and programming.

Ensure that the new CRC is accessible for everyone in the community. This includes children, youth and seniors, people with low income, young parents, newcomers, people with different first languages, people with disabilities, and existing Toronto Community Housing

residents. This should be reflected in the design, services, and programming at the CRC, which should be free, and physically accessible.

Ensure safety by including proper lighting and making it safe to get to and leave.

Employ people living in the neighborhood and showcase artists from the community.

Include a youth hub in the new CRC.

Feedback about the Draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves

Pop-up boards asked participants about their level of support for the proposed Draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves for the new CRC (available in Appendix A), or if there was anything participants would change or add.

Participants generally supported for the Draft Vision, Design Principles and Big Moves.

Some said the plan looked great so far, but it will be important to see how these ideas are implemented.

Suggested additions to the Vision included:

- Indicating that the building should be high quality and aspire to do better than just meet existing standards.
- Communicate that the Centre will be free.

Feedback on Programming, Features, and Activities

The City asked participants for their feedback on proposed programming, activities, and uses for the following areas of the new CRC:

- aquatics
- multi-purpose room
- gymnasium
- rooftop
- ground floor outdoor use
- weight and conditioning room
- enhanced youth space
- community kitchen.

Participants generally supported there being a range of programming and uses, adding that scheduling of the different activities can make a huge difference. They suggested that programming for seniors be scheduled earlier in the day (around 2 pm to 5 pm). The following section provides detail on the feedback received.

Feedback provided by youth at the Unison Health and Community Services pop-up is marked with a ★ and mentioned in callout boxes throughout this section.

Feedback about Aquatics

Participants said they would like to see the following aquatics programs in the new Community Recreation Centre:

Most Requested

- Women's only Swimming ★

- Aquafit
- Leisure swimming ★
- Swimming lessons
- Water Aerobics
- Seniors Programming

Somewhat Requested

- Age-based leisure swim times (e.g. Seniors times or tots times)
- Community permitting (birthday, special events)
- Kids programming
- Lane swim
- Leadership course
- Sports training
- Toddler and caregiver swim lessons.

Other feedback on aquatics included

- The leisure pool should have adjustable depth that can be manually adjusted, like in Central YMCA.
- Include programming for kids and seniors.
- Include a jacuzzi area.

At the pop-up at Unison Health & Community Services, youth suggested the following additions: basketball hoops next to the pool, waterslides, sauna, separate pool programs for women and men, swimming lessons and swimming equipment like floaties.

Feedback about the multi-purpose rooms

Participants said they would like to see the following programs in the multi-purpose rooms in the new Community Recreation Centre:

Most Requested

- Senior's programming
- Art (e.g. painting, drawing)
- Cooking programs
- Pottery ★
- Music recording program ★
- Dance ★
- Youth programs
- Computer/Tech Programs

Somewhat Requested

- Martial Arts
- Prayer/religious programs or events,
- Aerobics/Pilate's classes

- Computer/tech programs
- Low impact/stretching
- Multi-sensory activities (e.g. mobile activities that can be used for therapy for those with developmental differences)
- Yoga/meditation
- Music, practice or teaching
- Drama

Less Requested

- Community permits
- Pop-up clinics
- Drama
- Lounging/open-social space

Other feedback on the multi-purpose room

- Include programming to help people apply for documentation (especially for newcomers and non-English speakers). Participants said this community needs multilingual support.
- Include small rooms with desk for one-on-one counselling.
- Include programming related to nutrition education and diabetes. Combine exercise related programming with health, nutrition, and diabetes awareness programming, especially for seniors.
- Ensure there are instructors for programs offered.
- Include a quiet space for seniors.
- Participants also suggested adding the following programming and activities: dancing for adults, accounting and book-keeping, knitting groups, seniors' karaoke (in multiple languages), bingo (for families, multi-generational), educational programs and lectures, life-skills, web-design, social-media training, and interactive media training.

Feedback about the Gymnasium

Participants said they would like to see the following programs in the gymnasium in the new Community Recreation Centre:

Most Requested

- Basketball (including competitive) ★
- Senior's program
- Volleyball ★
- Multi-sports programs
- Tennis
- Soccer ★
- Pickleball
- Fitness Stations
- Badminton ★

Somewhat Requested

- Gymnastics
- Kid's Programs

Less Requested

- Toddler programs
- Teen programs

Other feedback on the gymnasium included

- Include more programming for seniors.
- Ensure that there is enough space in the gymnasium.
- Include a space for drop-in fitness that can fit many people.
- Include bleachers in the gymnasium.
- Other additions included: indoor running track, a common court for basketball and badminton, indoor soccer field.

Feedback about the Rooftop

Participants said they would like to see the following uses on the rooftop:

Most Requested

- Gathering spaces that would allow for group activities and events (yoga, movie nights)
- Seating & tables (picnic tables, benches, worktables, chess tables etc.) ★
- Fitness Stations ★

Somewhat Requested

- Canopy/Gazebo/Other shade structure
- Kid's play space (e.g. outdoor play equipment)
- Gardens/Plantings
- Walking Track
- BBQ

Feedback on Ground Floor Outdoor Use

Participants said they would like to see the following outdoor uses on the ground floor:

Most Requested

- Playground
- Seating & tables (picnic tables, benches, worktables, chess tables etc.) ★
- Walking Track

Somewhat Requested

- Basketball Court ★
- Gardens/Plantings
- Canopy/Gazebo/Other shade structure
- BBQ ★

A few participants also said they would like to see: off-leash area for dogs, walking track around the building with distance markers, playground and splash pad that would support kid's programs in summer and encourage community gathering, ice-skating, outdoor tennis,

accessible community gardens with hard paths and raised planting beds, a hair salon, underground parking, and outdoor fitness equipment.

Feedback About the Weight and Conditioning Room

Participants wanted to see a bigger weight room than what currently exists, more equipment, and the presence of instructors to help people navigate the space and use equipment.

At the pop-up at Unison Health & Community Services, youth suggested the following additions: places to get food, including vending machines to get snacks and drinks.

Feedback About the Enhanced Youth Space

Participants said a youth space was much needed. Some said it should be a fun space, incorporating music and arts, while others said it should be a quiet space for students.

At the pop-up at Unison Health & Community Services, youth suggested the following additions: Ping-Pong table, group seating, video-games, spaces for games like air hockey and arcade games, electrical outlets to charge devices, some quiet individual study spaces, and places to get food – including vending machines.

Feedback About Community Kitchen

Participants said they would like to see this space used for community cooking and learning. It should be a teaching kitchen (not a commercial kitchen), and accessible to all using the Centre.

Other Suggestions on Programming, Features and Activities

- Include a big sink for arts.
- Ensure proper storage space and ventilation.
- Include floral prints and patterns in the design.
- Include “adaptive programs”, with multi-sensory environment with Snoezelen-like features.
- Include enough space for staff and a quiet area for management.
- Spaces for pre-school programming should be used for senior’s programming when not in use by children.
- Ensure that more meeting rooms are available to the community.
- Include a childcare space parents can use while they attend programs and events.
- Include blinds to block the heat from the sun.
- Need more clarity on whether there will be food vendors at the new Community Centre.
- Include space to practice for driving tests.

Feedback about the engagement process

A few participants shared suggestions about the engagement process, including:

- Host Community Meetings across a few days to accommodate more people and differing schedules.
- Hold Community Advisory Committee meetings in-person, not virtually. These meetings should be a social experience where people get to know each other and actively participate.

Appendix A:

Pop-up Boards Presented at the pop-ups



The City of Toronto is starting to design the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre (CRC) and Child Care Centre! The design of the CRC will be determined with the help of community feedback.

The new CRC will be a free centre and is anticipated to open in 2027 (subject to change). The existing CRC will remain open until the new centre is built. They will be connected buildings with separate entrances and programs and will include some shared spaces.



 Location of the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre

The location for the new CRC and CC was determined in the 2011 Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan. To become a well-connected future hub in the growing community. The site will connect to the new Varna Road Extension and other infrastructure.

The Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre will be one of the City's largest new Centres. A CRC of this size aims to serve approximately a 2 - 2.5 kilometers radius.

About the Community Recreation Centre

Based on the City's Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan and initial feedback from community members and recreation staff, proposed CRC features include but are not limited to:

- A six-lane, 25-metre lane pool
- A leisure/tot pool
- A double gymnasium with raised track
- Fitness/dance/aerobic studios
- Multi-purpose rooms (for various activities and uses)
- A community kitchen
- Enhanced youth space
- Weight & conditioning room
- Social services office
- An active rooftop
- Active outdoor space
- Indigenous Placekeeping elements
- WiFi access throughout the building

About the Child Care Centre

The Child Care Centre (CC) is an 88 space facility that includes spaces for infants (10 spots), toddlers (30 spots) and pre-school children (48 spots) up to 4 years old.

- 1 Infant playroom/sleep room
- 2 Toddler playrooms
- 2 Preschool playrooms
- Office space
- Meeting room
- Parent/staff resource room
- Laundry room/toy washing station
- Kitchen
- Universal washroom
- Stroller storage space
- Gross motor space
- Lobby area
- Ancillary space

The City will not be conducting community engagement about the design of the new Child Care Centre as the number of spaces available and the building program for the Child Care Centre are determined by the Province.

Share Your Feedback! Draft Vision, Principles, and Big Moves

Over the last 15 years and more, community members have shared many thoughts on the new Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre. Guided by this feedback, the team at Parks, Forestry, and Recreation have developed a draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves for the facility.

Review and let us know your thoughts!

Draft Vision

The new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre will be:

- alive with the energy of the many communities it serves
- a space for community to gather, connect, and grow together
- a place of play, fitness, food, health, music, art, learning, belonging, connection, strength, and fun
- where diversity is celebrated and our collective aspirations embraced

I support
the vision

I somewhat
support
the vision

I do not
support
the vision

What would you change about
or add to the Draft Vision?

Draft Design Principles

1. Be open to all ages and accessible to diverse abilities.
2. Be flexible to support a range of different activities.
3. Respect the unique needs of different members of our communities, including those of different religions and cultural needs.
4. Be beautiful.
5. Encourage positive social interactions and community bonding.
6. Accommodate the importance of arts, culture and music.
7. Respect and embrace the importance of food to the local community through cooking, eating and gardening.
8. Accommodate access to technology.
9. Be a safe place for the community to use and a safe place.
10. Integrate Indigenous design in keeping with the importance of Indigenous placekeeping in City spaces. This includes seeking input from the First Nation, Métis and Inuit, and seeking the involvement of an Indigenous designer.

I support
the principles

I somewhat
support
the principles

I do not
support
the principles

What would you change about
or add to the Design Principles?



Call **3-1-1**

Share Your Feedback! Draft Vision, Principles, and Big Moves

Over the last 15 years and more, community members have shared many thoughts on the new Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre. Guided by this feedback, the team at Parks, Forestry, and Recreation have developed a draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves for the facility.

Review and let us know your thoughts!

Draft Big Moves

1. Provide year-round aquatic space including a lane pool and leisure/tot pool
2. Provide space for fitness and physical activity including a gym, weight room, indoor track and fitness studios
3. Provide spaces to support food-centred programing including a community teaching kitchen and space to grow edible plants (options about whether and how to include space for a food bank are being considered)
4. Provide dedicated youth space where youth will have access to technology and youth-specific programming
5. Provide gathering spaces for community meetings, events and celebrations, including indoor and outdoor spaces.
6. Provide tech spaces that enable community creativity and growth including a music recording studio, computer lab, public Wi-Fi and tech-connected meeting spaces.
7. Provide a variety of multi-use spaces that can support a diverse range of community uses including arts and cultural programs, seniors programs, accessible and sensory programming, prayer spaces, community meetings, incubator space, etc.)
8. Encourage local access through active transportation and transit, providing a limited amount of parking as the site allows.
9. Provide lively, all-ages outdoor spaces on the ground floor and rooftop that can accommodate gardens, fitness and activity space, gathering and event space and play space.
10. Incorporate Indigenous cultural needs, the needs of First Nation, Métis and Inuit families, and ensures the CRC is a unique and welcoming, Indigenous place.

What would you change about or add to the Big Moves?

I support the big moves

I somewhat support the big moves

I do not support the big moves



Call 311



Share Your Feedback! Programming, Features, Activities

Aquatics



The aquatics area in the Lawrence Heights CRC is planned to include:

- A 6-lane, 25 metre lane pool with an accessible entry.
- A tot/leisure pool with a shallow, stepped entry and an accessible ramp entry.
- Gender-neutral change rooms, washrooms, and lockers, that can become ender-specific as required for programming (e.g. for women-only or men-only swim times). All changing takes place in private cubicles.

What pool programming or activities would you like to see available? Place a dot beside them.

• Age-based leisure swim times (e.g. Seniors times or tot times)	• Parent/Tot Aquafitness
• All-Inclusive swims	• Recreational family swim time
• Aqua sports	• Seniors only time (e.g. a therapy-style time, where the pool will be heated to a warmer temperature)
• Aquart	• Seniors programming
• Community permitting (birthdays, special events)	• Sports training
• Competitive swimming	• Swim teams
• Kids programming	• Swimming lessons
• Lane swim	• Teen programming
• Leadership courses	• Toddler and caregiver swim lessons
• Leisure swim	• Water aerobics
• LGBTQ2S+ programming	• Women's only swim time
• Men's only swim time	

Are there any other pool programming or activities you would like to see? Use a sticky note to tell us!

Multi-purpose room



Multi-purpose rooms are an important part of community recreation centres. These rooms are flexible, transformable spaces that can serve a variety of purposes and users throughout the day.

Which multi-purpose room programming or activities would you like to see available? Place a dot beside them.

• Aerobic/Pilates classes	• Multi-sensory activities (e.g. mobile activities that can be used for therapy for those with developmental differences)
• Art (e.g. painting, drawing)	• Music Recording program
• Community Permits (e.g. meetings, sports) / Events (e.g. birthday parties, celebrations)	• Music, practice or teaching
• Computer / Tech programs	• Play time (for younger children)
• Cooking programs	• Pop-up clinics (e.g. mobile flu shot or blood drives)
• Cross-Fit classes	• Pottery
• Dance	• Prayer / Religious programs or events
• Drama	• Preschool programs
• Leadership courses	• Seniors programs
• Lounging/open social space	• Yoga/Meditation
• Low impact/ stretching	• Youth programs
• Martial Arts	
• Multi-media program	

Are there any other multi-purpose programming or activities you would like to see? Use a sticky note to tell us!

Gymnasium

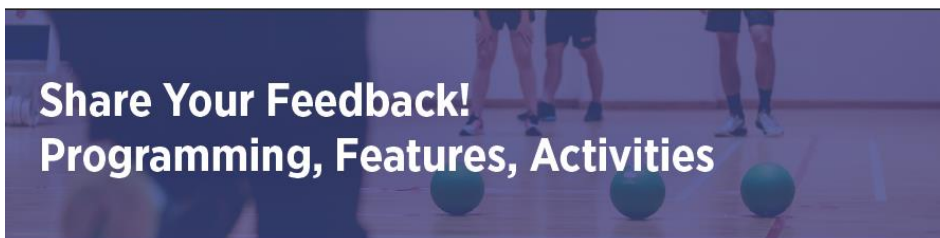


The new Community Recreation Centre is planned to include a double gymnasium with raised track.

Which gymnasium programs would you like to see available? Place a dot beside them.

• Badminton	• Pickleball
• Basketball	• Seniors programs
• Cricket	• Soccer
• Fitness classes	• Teen programs
• Gymnastics	• Tennis
• Kids programs	• Toddler programs
• Multi-Sport programs	• Volleyball

Are there any other gymnasium programs you would like to see? Use a sticky note to tell us!



Rooftop

Which of the following rooftop uses would you rank as most important? Place a dot beside them.

BBO	Kid's play space (e.g. outdoor play equipment)
Canopy/Gazebo/Other shade structure	Seating & tables (e.g. picnic tables, benches, worktables, chess tables etc.)
Fitness stations	Walking track
Gardens/Plantings	
Gathering spaces that would allow for group activities and events (e.g. yoga, movie nights)	

Are there any other rooftop uses you would like to see? Use a sticky note to tell us!

Ground Floor Outdoor Use

Which of the following outdoor ground floor uses would you rank as most important? Place a dot beside them.

Basketball Court	allow for group activities and events (e.g. yoga, movie nights)
BBO	Playground
Canopy/Gazebo/Other shade structure	Seating & tables (e.g. picnic tables, benches, worktables, chess tables etc.)
Fitness stations	Splash Pad
Gardens/Plantings	Walking track
Gathering spaces that would	

Are there any other outdoor ground floor uses you would like to see? Use a sticky note to tell us!

Do you have any suggestions for the following proposed spaces?

Weight and conditioning room

Enhanced youth space

Community kitchen

Timeline and Engagement

The City has learned that community facilities work best when they're designed for and with the communities that will use them.

This is the first phase of a three-phase community engagement process to share information and seek feedback from the community regarding the design of the new Community Recreation Centre.

Phase 1: Visioning

September to October 2023

Goal: Present and gather feedback on the proposed program, draft Vision, Principles and Big Moves.

Phase 2: Exploring Options

November to December 2023

Goal: Present and gather feedback on draft design.

Phase 3: Setting the Direction

February to March 2024

Goal: Present and gather feedback on a preferred design.

Detailed Design & Construction Updates

Ongoing to 2027 Opening

*Process and timeline subject to change

Project webpage:

www.toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights



Scan with your smartphone camera to visit the project webpage where you can learn more about the project, participate in the online survey, or sign up for on-going project e-updates.



Interested in applying to sit on the project's Community Advisory Committee?

Interested in applying to sit on the project's Community Advisory Committee? Visit the City's project website to review the Terms of Reference for the Committee and to download the application form.

Applications are being accepted until 11:55pm on October 1, 2023. All applicants will be notified if they have been successful or unsuccessful by October 6, 2023.

Indigenous Community Members

Indigenous Community Members are welcome to join the Indigenous Sharing Meeting on Wednesday, October 4, 2023 from 6:30-8:30pm.

To register, visit:
tinyurl.com/8zft9pf

Project Contacts:

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Call **3-1-1**