

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

# Don Mills Community Recreation Centre

## Phase 2: Building a Vision Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Engagement Summary

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Eli Bawuah, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator  
Ashley Wilson, Senior Project Coordinator



# Contents

<b>1.0 Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Project Background	2
1.2 Project Context	2
1.3 Project Timeline	2
1.4 Phase 2 Engagement Activities	3
<b>2.0 Community Advisory Committee Meeting Summaries</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2	4
2.1.1 Meeting Participation	4
2.1.2 Meeting Purpose	4
2.2 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3	5
2.2.1 Meeting Participation	5
2.2.2 Meeting Purpose	5
<b>3.0 What We Heard</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Key Insights	6
3.2 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Summary	7
3.3 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3 Summary	8
<b>4.0 Next Steps</b>	<b>12</b>

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Project Background

A new Community Recreation Centre (CRC) is coming to the Don Mills community, near the intersection of Eglinton Avenue East and Don Mills Road.

This large, integrated, and multi-component facility will offer the diverse and growing communities of the Don Mills Corridor and beyond a range of year-round programs and services. Located at the former Celestica Lands site at 844 Don Mills Rd., the new CRC will be next to a new large park and all within walking distance of a planned Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit (ECLRT) station and is part of the ongoing implementation of the [Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan](#).

### 1.2 Project Context

#### Previous Community Engagement: Recreate Don Mills

In early 2019, community and stakeholder engagements were conducted to determine the CRC location that would best meet community needs. Two location options were presented to the community.

The results indicated that locating a large ‘one-stop’ community recreation centre with arena, aquatics facilities, full gymnasium and multipurpose room uses at the former Celestica Lands (844 Don Mills Road) was preferable to two separate facilities.

Based on the outcomes of the 2019 community engagement and recommendations by City staff, City Council directed the City to [proceed with the Preferred Facility](#) on the former Celestica Lands site.

The community engagement and design process for the Don Mills CRC will consider only the amenities, programs and services within the CRC located on the former Celestica Lands. Separate community engagement processes will be held for the design and programming of the one-hectare park next to the Don Mills CRC.

### 1.3 Project Timeline

The anticipated schedule for this park project is as follows:

- Fall 2021 – Hire a design team
- Winter 2022 – Community engagement process starts
  - December 2022 - April 2023: Community Engagement Phase 1: Building a Vision
  - Spring - Summer 2023: Community Engagement Phase 2: Exploring Design Options
  - Fall 2023 - Winter 2023/2024: Community Engagement Phase 3: Setting the Direction
- Winter 2023/2024 – Detailed design
- Spring 2026 – Hire a construction team
- Summer 2027 – Construction starts
- Winter 2030 – Construction complete, Community Recreation Centre opens

*The timeline is subject to change.*

## 1.4 Phase 2 Engagement Activities

This phase of engagement is separated into two parts, A and B. During Phase 2a, feedback will be collected on early drafts of the design options. In Phase 2b, feedback will be collected on refined versions of the draft design options based on what the project team heard during Phase 2a.

During this phase of the community engagement process, the City and the design consultant will work off of the outcomes of Phase 1 to develop two design options for the Community Recreation Centre (CRC). These will be presented to the community for feedback, with input collected used to develop a preferred design for the CRC.

### Phase 2a

Early design options and anticipated community engagement activities:

- City Recreation Staff Meeting (internal)
- Youth Meeting 2
- CAC Meeting 2
- IAG Meeting 2
- Online Survey
- Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings
- City Disability Committee Meeting (internal)

### Phase 2b

Refined design options and anticipated community engagement activities:

- CAC Meeting 3
- Public Meeting 2

At the end of Phase 2, a preferred design option will be selected by community members, and design consultants will begin working on a final design for Phase 3: Setting the Direction.

## 2.0 Community Advisory Committee Meeting Summaries

This document provides a summary of two Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings held in Fall 2023 to present and receive feedback from the CAC on Design Concept Options. The summary of feedback is provided in Section 3.0.

### 2.1 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2

A second Community Advisory Committee Meeting for the Don Mills CRC project was held virtually on Thursday, September 28th, 2023 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

#### 2.1.1 Meeting Participation

WHEN: September 28th, 2023 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm  
WHERE: Virtually on Webex  
ATTENDEES: 19 committee members  
PROJECT TEAM: City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division  
MJMA Architect (Landscape Architect)  
SAFFY (Engagement Consultant)

#### 2.1.2 Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to:

1. Provide a recap of the role of the Community Advisory Committee and an overview of the Don Mills CRC project
2. Present the Design Concept Options
3. Provide an opportunity for the Community Advisory Committee to ask the Project Team questions about the Design Concept Options
4. Breakout Room Activity
  - a. Participants were divided into two breakout rooms for facilitated discussion on specific elements (design, program and amenities) presented in the Design Concept Options
5. Next Steps

## 2.2 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3

An third optional, drop-in CAC meeting was held on Thursday, October 26th, 2023 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

### 2.2.1 Meeting Participation

WHEN: October 26th, 2023 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm

WHERE: Virtually on Zoom

ATTENDEES: 11 committee members

PROJECT TEAM: SAFFY (Engagement Consultant)

### 2.2.2 Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this additional meeting was to provide CAC members with an opportunity to provide further feedback on the Phase 2 Design Concept Options. Participants were welcome to contribute directly to an interactive whiteboard or share their feedback with the Project Team for inclusion.

## 3.0 What We Heard

The following section contains a summary of the feedback received during the Phase 2 Community Advisory Committee Meetings.

### 3.1 Key Insights

Three key insights that have emerged from the Public Workshop are consolidated below.

#### **DESIRE FOR MORE MULTI-PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY-ORIENTED SPACE**

Throughout the meeting, participants expressed that they wish to see more multi-purpose and community-oriented spaces be integrated into the design of the Don Mills CRC, rather than some of the active recreation and fitness-oriented spaces. Some CAC members feel that the twin ice pad arena and aquatics facilities occupy too much square footage of the CRC and are disproportionate in size to the number of people that the amenities will serve.

While options such as transforming one rink into multi-purpose space during the summer off-season was proposed as a compromise, ultimately, many community members wish to see more passive recreation and community-oriented spaces in future designs.

#### **FOCUS ON WELLBEING AND SOCIAL CONNECTION**

Through various program and amenity suggestions, members of the committee expressed their desire to see the Don Mills CRC function as a space to improve the wellbeing and social connectedness of the community. In particular, participants mentioned that access to resources and programs for mental health and addiction, capacity-building workshops, and programs for children and families would be welcome additions to the CRC.

Certain amenities and facilities, such as a hot tub or sauna, have been requested to support community members' physical and mental well-being.

#### **CONCERNS AROUND PARKING**

CAC members' concerns around parking were expressed frequently during the meeting. The 72 below-grade parking spaces are not perceived to be adequate for this facility, especially given the twin pad arenas and other proposed amenities.

Members of the community do not believe the area surrounding the future CRC to be transit or pedestrian-friendly, even with the future opening of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, and many continue to rely on personal vehicles to travel throughout the community and beyond.

### 3.2 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Summary

The following section provides a summary of more detailed comments provided by participants in Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2, listed by category.

#### Parking

- 72 parking spaces, doesn't feel like enough, especially when considering things like hockey tournaments and community kitchen with space for 200 attendees
- The Project Team communicated that a parking study will be conducted, which will help to address some of their questions and comments around parking.
- The Project Team mentioned that additional parking spots are expensive (approximately \$100,000 per additional spot) and could result in a reduction in other amenities

#### Alternative Transportation

- Adequate bike parking
- Access to public transportation
- Possibility for drop-off area on Don Mills Rd.
- Enhance pedestrian access from surrounding communities

#### Imbalanced Program Offerings

- Perception that twin ice pads and aquatics facilities dominate the floor plan of the Don Mills CRC.
- Some members feel that the active recreation and fitness-oriented spaces take up a lot of square footage, but serve less people at a time, when compared to community-oriented spaces that can serve more people at once.
- Some members feel that there is not enough community-oriented space within the CRC.
- The Project Team described that the larger Community Hall and Kitchen (3,800 square feet) was added on top of mandatory requirements set by the City of Toronto for the Don Mills CRC, so there has already been consideration for additional multi-purpose space.

#### Flexible and Adaptable Spaces

- To address the perception that there is not enough space for general community use, CAC members have requested the ability to use one of the ice pads during the off-season (summer) for concerts, large events, etc.
- Participants would like to see spaces that are unprogrammed (either sometimes or always), as well as spaces that they can book for personal or community use.

#### Community Hall and Kitchen

- There are mixed opinions about how to program the larger multi-purpose room with an attached kitchen space. While some CAC members believe that it would provide an opportunity for people to rent the space for large-scale private events like weddings,



others believe that it should be reserved for more informal uses and planned community gatherings.

- A social enterprise / entrepreneurship opportunity was identified as a potential way to animate the community kitchen, provide low-cost food to the community and generate resident income, with potential to lead to long-term employment.

### **Wellness Programs and Amenities**

- The Don Mills CRC should act as a wellness hub, especially for low-income community members and people who are struggling with mental health and addiction. Access to resources, connection, programs would benefit the community.
- Programs should support community members to evolve, should build on cultural diversity, cater toward community needs across income levels, and enhance social cohesion.
- Skill development and capacity-building workshops, such as learning how to grow food at home, would be welcomed.
- Suggestion to include a jacuzzi or steam room.

### **Additional Considerations**

- CAC members would like to ensure that adequate storage spaces and administrative spaces are included in the design.
- One CAC member requested that pickleball court lines be included in gymnasium.
- One CAC member indicated that they did not feel like programs and amenities for children and families didn't feel like they were considered in the design. They mentioned a community centre they visited in another province, where there was a drop-in childcare centre so parents / caregivers could use facilities, and attend programs and events.
- One CAC member requested whether a library could be included. The Project Team clarified that a formal library facility is not possible but the Don Mills CRC can serve similar functions, such as spaces for quiet study and rest.
- One CAC member mentioned that they felt the space is not very inviting for people who are not swimming, skating or going to active recreation spaces. They would like to see open space with flexible, ad hoc uses.

### 3.3 Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3 Summary

The following section provides a summary of more detailed comments provided by participants in Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3, listed by category.

#### Parking and Transportation Accessibility

- Parking continued to be raised by members of the CAC. They emphasized the need for additional parking spaces due to the CRC's proposed amenities and expected high usage.
- Transportation and mobility issues for seniors and people using transit, in addition to the proposed vehicle drop-off zone at the parking level.
- Participants were creative in proposing parking solutions, including parking on the roof of the CAC or partnering with adjacent businesses to allow for overflow parking.

#### Technology Hub and Skills

- Several CAC members wish to see the creation of a technology hub, skill-building programs, and community spaces that offer a variety of services. They emphasized the importance of making the facility appealing to those who do not participate in active recreation.
- Participants wish to see programs including workshops, webinars, training on new technology to support the local community in skill building.

#### Flexible and Adaptable Spaces

- Participants continued to express the desire to see spaces like the ice rinks transform into community spaces when not in use; however, one participant mentioned that the arena, should it be used in the summer, must be air conditioned in order to be comfortable as a multi-purpose space.
- Theatre and other types of performance was mentioned as a potential community use. Participants wondered if a performance space could be integrated into one of the multi-purpose rooms or accommodated in the gymnasium.
- The Community Hall and Kitchen was discussed, with ideas expressed about the possibility of hosting community meals or cooking classes. Participants were particularly excited about an idea to see the kitchen open into the lobby and act as a coffee shop, whether permanent, as a pop-up or as part of a social enterprise.
  - If the coffee shop is not possible, participants said even a vending machine for coffee would improve their experience of the CRC.
- Suggestions for multi-purpose spaces included: arts and crafts programming, access to technology like printers, 3D printers or a Maker Space, moveable walls to subdivide rooms, a place to watch movies, a wellness or meditation room, and intergenerational programming / storytelling.

#### Fitness Spaces

- A smart screen was recommended for one of the fitness spaces to allow for virtual instruction / digital classes.

- Participants wish to see a variety of sports, activities and amenities in the double gymnasium, including: soccer, basketball, hoola hoops, and more.
- One participant asked whether a free indoor playground could be considered, similar to the one at Flemington Community Centre.

### **Aquatics Amenities and Accessibility**

- Participants had many questions and comments about the specifics of the lane and leisure pool that the Project Team will address in future conversations, including:
  - Whether there would be on-deck seating and viewing areas for parents and caregivers.
  - Whether the depth of the pool could accommodate diving.
    - One participant believes it should be made deep enough in case people try to dive regardless of whether it is safe or not.
  - How people with mobility challenges will be accommodated (e.g., ramp into pool or lift chair).
  - Depth of the leisure pool.
    - If the leisure pool is too deep for programming like aquafit, then the lane pool will need to be able to accommodate programming.
  - An early morning (i.e., 7am) lane swim time would be appreciated by seniors.

### **Wellness Amenities**

- CAC members discussed the possibility of a sauna, steam room, and cold plunge, noting that this provides significant wellness benefits, particularly for older adults.
- They agreed that all amenities, and especially wellness amenities, should be accessible and welcoming to older adults.

### **Additional Considerations**

- One participant mentioned that they would like to see the CRC promote participation in various sports by partnering with local sports organizations, hosting tournaments, and providing adequate seating for spectators.
  - Further to this, another participant did not feel that there was adequate seating for spectators surrounding the twin ice pads.
- One participant wondered whether the distance between the team rooms and doorway onto the ice pads could be disruptive to the lobby and common areas of the CRC, since people using the arena will have to walk through the common space to access the rink.
- One participant asked whether geothermal heating had been considered as part of the CRC's sustainability commitments.

- One participant continued to express their frustration that a library partnership was not considered as part of the Don Mills CRC, especially considering constraints on existing library branches in the community and the large incoming population.
  - A mobile library or pop-up library was considered an acceptable alternative.
- One participant expressed their idea to have artwork and information about the history of the surrounding neighborhood on display in the lobby.
- One participant mentioned the need for child care, which could be provided to parents or caregivers who are using the fitness or program areas at the CRC.
  - Another participant expanded on the idea of providing support to seniors, by suggesting that an intergenerational child care program where seniors take care of children could be a way to address loneliness and isolation in older adults in the community.
- Participants expressed some concern around safety in the lobby and wondered if the reception / welcome desk should be an “island” in the middle of the lobby to improve visibility to both entrances.

## 4.0 Next Steps

The feedback received in Phase 2 of community engagement will be used to refine the design of the Don Mills Community Recreation Centre. An updated design will be shared with the public in community engagement Phase 3: Preferred Option.

To be notified about upcoming engagement opportunities, visit the [project webpage](#) to sign up for e-updates.

