

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Lawrence Heights New Community Recreation Centre

Phase 1 Engagement Report

January 2024



Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Engagement Process Overview | 3 |
| How We Reached People | 4 |
| What We Heard | 5 |
| Overall Feedback Themes | 5 |
| Feedback Highlights on the draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves | 6 |
| Key feedback/advice on the draft Vision..... | 6 |
| Key feedback/advice on the draft Design Principles | 7 |
| Key feedback/advice on the draft Big Moves | 8 |
| Top Community Priorities for Programming, Activities, and Design of Key Spaces | 10 |
| 1. Aquatics | 10 |
| 2. Multi-purpose Rooms..... | 10 |
| 3. Gymnasium..... | 7 |
| 4. Weight and Conditioning Room | 7 |
| 5. Community Kitchen | 7 |
| 6. Enhanced Youth Space | 7 |
| 7. Ground Floor Outdoor Space | 8 |
| 8. Rooftop..... | 8 |
| Feedback Highlights From Each Engagement Activity | 9 |
| 1. Community Meeting 1 | 9 |
| 2. Online Survey | 10 |
| 3. Community Pop-ups, including youth-focused pop-up | 10 |
| 4. Indigenous Sharing Meeting | 11 |
| 5. Community Advisory Committee Meeting 1 | 11 |
| Next Steps | 12 |

Introduction

The City of Toronto is designing a new Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre for the Lawrence Heights Community as part of the Toronto Community Housing Lawrence Heights Revitalization project. The Community Recreation Centre will be one of the City's newest and largest community centres. It will be located north of Flemington Public School, connecting to a new road extension. Meaningful, community engagement is an important part of the process, and the City has launched a three-phase engagement process to help inform the design, features, and programming of the new Community Recreation Centre. The community engagement process focuses on the design for the new Community Recreation Centre since the building program for the Child Care Centre is determined by the Province.

Between September 2023 and January 2024, the City of Toronto held the first phase of a three-phase community engagement process which focused on creating a new community-led Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves that will guide the project team as they prepare design options for the Community Recreation Centre.

For more information about the project and to review summaries of other Phase 1 community engagement sessions, visit the project webpage at toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights.

This report summarizes the Phase 1 engagement process, including how we reached people, what we heard, and next steps. This report was written by Third Party Public, an independent engagement team retained by the City to support the design, delivery, and documentation of the engagement process for the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre.

Engagement Process Overview

The Phase 1 engagement took place between September 2023 to January 2024. The goal of this phase was to:

- introduce the project;
- share and seek feedback to create a new community-led Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves that will serve the project team as they prepare design options;
- seek feedback on the programming, activities, and features the community would like to see in the new Centre; and
- establish a Community Advisory Committee to provide guidance, constructive feedback, and suggestions to the project team at key decision points as the CRC design develops.

Over 800 participants were engaged in eight engagement activities in Phase 1. See the list of engagement activities below, along with the number of people who participated in each activity.

| Engagement activities | Participants |
|---|--------------|
| Two Community Meetings held at Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre on September 27, 2023 | 23 |
| Two Community Pop-ups held at Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre on September 27, 2023 and Lawrence Allen Centre on November 9, 2023 | 80+ |
| Online Survey available from September 13 to November 12, 2023, with hard copies available by request | 632 |
| Indigenous Sharing Meeting held virtually via Zoom on October 4, 2023 | 27 |
| Youth-focused Pop-up held at Unison Health & Community Services on November 13, 2023 | 25+ |
| Community Advisory Committee Meeting 1 held simultaneously at Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and virtually on Zoom on January 18, 2024 | 26 |
| Total | 813+ |

It is important to note that before the Phase 1 engagement was launched, Third Party Public held nine one-on-one pre-engagement conversations with community leaders and stakeholders between August 24 and September 22, 2023 to understand community priorities and interests and seek advice about the proposed community engagement approach. The affiliation of community leaders and stakeholders who participated in the pre-engagement conversations are listed below. Common themes from these conversations can be found on the [project webpage](#).

- Lawrence Heights Interorganizational Network (Former Members)
- Art Starts
- Local Youth Leader
- Triple-S Seniors' Services
- North York Community House
- City of Toronto Community Development Officer
- Filipino Canadian Community House
- Coalition of Connected Communities

How We Reached People

The community was informed of engagement activities through social and print media. Promotions included background about the project, information about the community meetings, online survey, pop-ups, details about how to apply for the Community Advisory Committee and Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting, how to sign up for ongoing project updates, a link to the project webpage, and who to contact for accessibility accommodations.

Print Media

- **Community Mail Out** – The project team mailed a flyer to 34,724 mailboxes within an approximate 2km radius of the existing Community Recreation Centre.
- **Posters and Signage** – Posters and Signage were at the existing Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre.

Digital Media

- **Project Webpage** – A webpage (toronto.ca/lawrenceheights) was set up to act as a communications portal about the project. The webpage hosts up-to-date information as well as an e-update sign-up button.
- **Email** – E-updates including an e-flyer were sent to:
 - Project mailing list(those who signed up for e-updates)
 - Local community leaders and stakeholders reached out through the pre-engagement conversations in August and September 2023
 - Local schools including John Polanyi Collegiate Institute, Flemington Public School, and Lawrence Heights Middle School
 - Local community groups
 - Toronto Community Housing Staff (to distribute through community)
 - The local Councillor (to distribute through community)
 - City staff in various divisions who work with communities in Lawrence Heights
 - The City of Toronto's Ambe Maamowisda Employee Circle (Indigenous Community of Inclusion)
 - The City of Toronto Indigenous Affairs Office contact list
 - The City of Toronto Accessibility contact list
 - The Parks Forestry and Recreation Accessibility contact list
- **Social Media and Digital Ads** – The City of Toronto posted organic and paid social media ads to promote participation in this phase of engagement.

What We Heard

Overall Feedback Themes

- **The Draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves are on the right track, but it will be important to see how these ideas are implemented.** Participants generally liked the Draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves. When participants shared suggested edits or additions, they mostly focused on things like being more aspirational, prioritizing a high-quality facility, and ensuring that safety and accessibility are priorities. Others focused on comments on how to realize the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves through programs, activities, and uses in the future centre.
- **Love for the current Community Recreation Centre.** Many said that the current Community Recreation Centre is a cherished and important space in the community, especially to youth and seniors. They said the City needs to be intentional in ensuring that the community feels the same sense of ownership of the new Centre. Many were excited about the new Centre and said they hoped it would be built quickly.
- **Prioritize local access and meet local needs.** Many felt the local community should have priority access to the future Centre. Suggested strategies included removing or waiving costs and insurance requirements for local grassroots organizations booking space and setting aside spaces in programs for local community members. Participants also suggested the City offer alternative models for the Child Care Centre, such as a 24/7 Centre, to better support single parents and families who work outside 9-5 hours.
- **Make the new Community Recreation Centre free, accessible, inclusive, and respectful to different groups.** The new Centre needs to be welcoming to a wide range of groups and communities, including youth, seniors, Indigenous communities, people with disabilities, people of varying cultural backgrounds, and 2SLGBTQ+ community members. They said no one should be limited in their access to the Centre because of financial constraints or physical abilities. Participants also said the City needs to ensure there is an inclusive approach that accommodates all alongside consideration of cultural preferences, such as preferences for private, dedicated spaces for different genders.
- **Highlight feedback and priorities from the African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities in the plan for the new Centre.** The neighbourhood is home to ACB communities so it's important to highlight the feedback from these communities to ensure the plans for the new Centre reflect their needs. There is a need to provide programming and safe spaces for ACB communities, as well as youth, as this is part of the City's commitment in the longer-term revitalization of Lawrence Heights.
- **Desire for Indigenous cultural integration and representation in the Centre.** The new Centre presents a big opportunity to integrate Indigenous art, teachings, and cultural practices in both design and programming. Suggestions included dedicating spaces for performances, sacred fires, ceremonies, and other gatherings and hiring Indigenous community members to help staff the Centre.

- **Interest in a diverse range of programs and uses.** Participants were excited about the planned facilities and programs in the future Centre, with many interested in aquatics, the weight room, youth-focused spaces, and the kitchen. Suggestions about specific programs and uses ranged from Indigenous craft-making to prayer spaces to youth-focused music spaces to seniors-focused aquafit programming and much more. Food and sustainability came up consistently:
 - **Food.** Cooking and gathering around food are big parts of the community, and many wanted to see a focus on these in the design and programming of the Centre. Suggestions included making sure the kitchen is designed to support community events and teaching. Others were interested in seeing community gardens used to teach people to grow food and provide food to others.
 - **Sustainability.** Many were interested in a sustainable and environmentally friendly Centre, not only in design but also programming. For example, participants suggested making spaces available for community members to store or trade unwanted items that could be re-used by someone else.

Feedback Highlights on the draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves

Overall, participants liked the draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves and said they are on the right track, but it will be important to see how these ideas are implemented.

Key feedback/advice from participants are included below. More detailed feedback on can be found on the individual engagement summaries which are posted on the project webpage.

Key feedback/advice on the draft Vision

- **Majority of survey respondents (74%) support the draft Vision statement for the new CRC.** 24% said they supported the draft statement somewhat, but would like minor changes. 1% of the respondents said they would like major changes and 1% chose not to answer.
- **Aspire to do better than just meet existing standards, but remove the term “aspire” in the introductory text.** The Vision should go beyond just keeping and replacing what the community already has; it should articulate an aspiration keep the best parts of what’s already here and scale up to achieve even more. However, participants did not like that the revised vision said “The new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre will *aspire to be*” – they said the word ‘aspire’ weakens the statements and does not show a strong sense of commitment towards the vision statement.
- **The Vision statement should reflect the legacy of the Lawrence Heights community (past and present)** and that the Centre supports the culture and health of the entire community and supports those most in need in the community.
- **Make the language clearer, more concise and easier to understand, with less use of jargon.**

- **Include a reference to the need for a safe, secure environment.** Safety and security are very important to many in the community.
- **Expand what is meant by “diversity”.** Using the word “diversity” may sometimes indicate only cultural diversity and there is a need to expand the draft statement to include mentions of people with disabilities, people with various income levels, people from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, people from all ages, and a focus on spaces, facilities, and programming that meet the needs of multi-generational community members.
- **Add “inclusion”** to the part of the Vision focused on celebrating diversity.
- **Include references to sports and local employment opportunities** somewhere in the Vision (especially for local youth).
- **Add emphasis on environment, sustainability, or green building features.**
- **The Centre should be a space where the community can come together – priority to local residents should be a part of the vision statement.**
- **Add more focus on the recognition of Indigenous lands** on which the Centre is located, along with Indigenous guiding principles and well-being practices.
- **Communicate that the Centre will be free.**

Key feedback/advice on the draft Guiding Principles

- **Majority of survey respondents (75%) support the draft Guiding Principles for the new CRC.** 21% said they supported the draft design principles somewhat but would like minor changes. 2% of the respondents said they would like major changes, and 2% chose not to answer. The draft Guiding Principles respondents said were very important in guiding the CRC design are:
 - Principle 9: **Be a safe place for the community use, and safe place**
 - **93%** said this design principle is very important
 - Principle 1: **Be open to all ages and accessible to diverse abilities**
 - **89%** said this design principle is very important
 - Principle 2: **Be flexible to support a range of different activities**
 - **83%** said this design principle is very important

Generally, equity deserving groups who participated in the survey placed a high degree of importance on Principle 1 – Be open to all ages and accessible to diverse abilities and Principle 2 – Be flexible to support a range of different activities. Other top priorities varied by group, including:

- First Nation, Métis and Inuit respondents, who identified Principle 8 – Accommodate access to technology as among the most important principles.
- Respondents from African, Caribbean, and Black communities and respondents who identified as having disabilities, both of whom identified Principle 9 – Be a safe place for the community to use, and a safe place as very important.

- Respondents who self-identified as being 2-Spirited, non-binary or trans identified Principle 5 – Encourage positive social interactions and community bonding as important.
- Respondents under the age of 30, who placed high priority on Principle 3 – Respect the unique needs of different members of our communities including those of different religions and cultural needs.

Comments and suggested additions to the draft Guiding Principles included:

- **Principle 4**
 - To realize Principle 4 – Be beautiful, the City should avoid using cheap materials, encourage lots of daylight, and provide murals or public art.
 - Include considerations for the design that is friendly for birds and animals and supports wildlife. This includes having bird houses and having markings on windows to prevent birds from crashing into the glass.
- **Principle 5**
 - Add language recognizing the very special communities in Lawrence Heights, and explain who the “unique communities” are – for example, Caribbean and African descent communities.
 - Some said that the lack of parking will negatively impact the City’s ability to deliver on Principle #5. They said families may want to come to the pool with 4 or 5 kids at night in the winter, and a lack of parking would be a big deterrent to their use. They suggested the City review the decrease in numbers at Parkway Forest due to limited parking and consider introducing street parking.
- **Principle 6**
 - Include “innovation” or “science and technology”.
- **Principle 7**
 - Add language about improving security.
- **Principle 8**
 - Include mentions to the specific technology that will be present at the new Centre, like desktops, Wi-Fi, virtual reality, and 3D printing.
- **Principle 9**
 - Security is very important to the community – the future Centre should include cameras and other security measures and be a place people can gather in emergencies.
 - Adding the word “visible” to Principle 9 to emphasize that visibility will be key component to the Centre feeling safe.

Key feedback/advice on the draft Big Moves

- **Community meeting participants liked the draft Big Moves and didn’t raise any objections to them.** Most of comments on the draft Big Moves focused on how to realize the Big Moves through programs, activities, and uses in the future Centre. A few said climate resilience could be better reflected and prioritized, saying this type of goal is often value engineered out of buildings. They were interested in learning more about how a net zero target would be met.
- **Majority of survey respondents (70%) support the draft Big Moves for the new CRC.** 25% said they supported the draft Big Moves somewhat but would like minor changes. 1% of the respondents said they would like major changes, and 3% chose not to

answer. The draft Big Moves respondents said were very important in guiding the CRC design are:

- Big Move 1: **Provide year-round aquatic space including a lane pool and leisure/tot pool.**
 - **83%** said this big move is very important
- Big Move 2: **Provide space for fitness and physical activity including a gym, weight room, indoor track, and fitness studios.**
 - **81%** said this big move is very important
- Big Move 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.**
 - **75%** said this big move is very important

Generally, the five identified equity deserving groups who participated in the survey placed a high degree of importance on Big Move 2 – Provide space for fitness and physical activity including a gym, weight room, indoor track, and fitness studios, and Big Move 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, similar to the overall feedback.

Other top priorities varied by group, including:

- First Nation, Métis and Inuit respondents and respondents with disabilities identified their top priority to be Big Move 1 – Provide year-round aquatic space including a lane pool and leisure/tot pool.
- Respondents from African, Caribbean, and Black communities also placed a high importance on Big Move 4 – Provide dedicated youth space where youth will have access to technology and youth-specific programming.
- Respondents who self-identified as 2-Spirited, non-binary or trans identified their top priority to be Big Move 3 – Provide spaces to support food-centred programming 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), respondents under 30 also placed a high degree of important on Big Move 3.

Comments and suggested additions to the draft Big Moves included:

- **Big Move 3:** The new CRC should help boost food security in the neighbourhood, and provide healthy food options for all those who need it, including low income neighbours and youth. They said:
 - Food security is a right for all community members. Ensure there is space for a food center that respectfully provides food related programming like kitchen/food bank services. There is an opportunity at this CRC to provide dignified food bank services that remove the stigma for families in need.
 - Include a café or social enterprise to provide healthy food options to the community, instead of junk food and vending machines.

- The kitchen can be used to provide job opportunities – for example, employing someone to cook food for the youth.
- It is important to have a community garden. Include vertical gardens, hydroponic gardens, and an option to grow culturally-appropriate food, local flora and native plants.
- Add a community fridge.
- **Big Move 6:** Add the term ‘secure’ to the public Wi-Fi.
- **Big Move 7:** Include public health initiatives.
- **Big Move 8:** Consider including small eco-systems in the garden spaces, including turtles, birds, insects, and pollinators.
- **Big Move 9:** Include mention of community gardens and pollinator gardens.

Top Community Priorities for Programming, Activities, and Design of Key Spaces

Summarized below are the top priorities heard from the community for programming, activities, and design of key spaces in the new Centre. The feedback are organized under the following spaces:

1. Aquatics
2. Multi-purpose rooms
3. Gymnasium
4. Weight and conditioning room
5. Community kitchen
6. Enhanced youth space
7. Ground floor outdoor space
8. Rooftop

1. Aquatics

There was interest in all suggested programming, with the following requested by many:

- **Aquafit**
- **Women’s only swimming**
- **Leisure swimming and age-based leisure swim times** (e.g. Seniors times or tots times)
- **Swimming lessons**
- **Water aerobics**
- **Community permitting** (birthday, special events)
- **Sports training**

2. Multi-purpose Rooms

Spaces to accommodate the following:

- **“Quiet” activities** (e.g. reading/studying, praying, Indigenous cultural/healing programs)
- **Programming for different age groups** (e.g. seniors, youth, children with disabilities and their parents)
- **Community meetings and events**, particularly those hosted by grassroots organizations, and for meetings of unexpected situations
- **Art activities** (e.g. pottery, painting, drawing)
- **Indigenous crafting classes**
- **Physical activities** (e.g. dance, aerobic/pilates, yoga/meditation, low impact stretching, martial arts)

- **Music activities** (e.g. music recording, music practice or teaching)
- **Computer lab/tech programs** used by all community members
- **Cooking programs**

3. Gymnasium

- **Include space for people to congregate and watch big events (e.g. spectator bleachers)** — the current gymnasium is small and lacks proper seating.
- There was interest in all suggested programming, with the following being the most requested:
 - Basketball (including competitive)
 - Seniors' program
 - Fitness classes
 - Volleyball
 - Multi-sports programs
 - Tennis
 - Soccer
 - Pickleball
 - Badminton
 - Gymnastics

4. Weight and Conditioning Room

- **Provide a bigger weight room**
- **Provide more good quality and accessible equipment**
- **Provide instructors and instructional videos** to help people safely navigate the space and use the equipment
- **Reserve time slots** for women, seniors, people with disabilities, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community
- **Provide places to get food and drinks** (e.g. vending machines)
- **Room design to consider the following:**
 - Ability to project instructional videos
 - Open concept set-up
 - Air circulation
 - Acoustics (especially if the weight room is on the second or third floor)
 - Access to power (to charge devices)
 - Machines with similar purpose placed close to each other
 - Fixed stations with mats near weight racks

5. Community Kitchen

- **Think carefully about the role of the kitchen and how it connects to the rest of the Centre** (e.g. connect the kitchen to the hallway/multi-purpose room to provide access during events)
- **Design a large, modern, open-concept kitchen with lots of natural light**
- **Design the space as a teaching kitchen and use for community events and group cooking.** Consider having multiple of the same appliance to facilitate group cooking.
- **Include areas that accommodate different food preferences and requirements**
- **Ensure the space is accessible** (e.g. physically accessible for wheelchair users and appliances are adaptable for people with low vision and vision impairment).

6. Enhanced Youth Space

- **The space should be safe, warm, inviting, and accessible year-round**
- **The space should be fun and accommodates both active and quieter activities** (e.g. music, arts, indoor games and sports, lounging, relaxing, reading)

- **Provide activities and programming that helps in developing new skills for the youth** (e.g. employment support, digital learning, financial literacy, gardening, etc.)
- **Provide updated, accessible technology** to support youth creativity and develop skills to tech driven careers
- **Have a range of support staff available to speak with youth** (e.g. guidance councillors, social service workers, mental health experts)
- **Consider having separate spaces for teenage girls.**
- **Consider putting the music recording studio and computer lab in/near the dedicated youth space.**

7. Ground Floor Outdoor Space

- Playground
- Seating and tables
- Splash pad
- Gardens/planting area
- Canopy/gazebo/shade structure
- Gathering spaces for events
- BBQ
- Space for Indigenous ceremonies and sacred fires
- Space for mindfulness and reflection
- Basketball court (full/half court)
- Walking track/fitness stations
- BikeShare station and bike racks
- Places for stroller and wagon parking

8. Rooftop

- Gardens/planting (e.g. raised planters, space to grow the Three Sisters, area for edible plantings)
- Seating and tables (e.g. picnic tables, benches, worktables, chess tables, etc.)
- Gathering spaces for group activity/events (e.g. outdoor movie night, yoga, etc.)
- Outdoor mindfulness space or garden for reflection
- Canopy/gazebo/shade
- Fitness stations
- BBQ

Feedback Highlights From Each Engagement Activity

Individual summaries of each engagement activity are available on the [City's Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre & Child Care Centre webpage](#). These summaries are not intended to be verbatim transcripts; rather they are intended to capture key feedback and discussion points shared. These summaries do not assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives, nor do they indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of the City.

Feedback highlights from each engagement activity are summarized below. Detailed feedback received from each activity can be found on the individual summaries which are posted on the project webpage.

1. Community Meeting 1

- **The current Community Recreation Centre is a cherished place that's well used and well loved by many in Lawrence Heights**, including youth, seniors, artists, and many more. The City needs to be intentional about making the new Community Centre cherished by making sure people see it as *their* centre.
- **Things are on the right track.** Participants generally said the draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves were on the right track. They were also excited about some of the planned features for the new Centre, especially the new pool. Participants' suggestions were to be more aspirational and to make sure that safety, security, and visibility are key considerations in the design of the new Centre.
- **Planning for youth and seniors is very important.** In both meetings, many participants' suggestions focused on the importance of accommodating youth and seniors. For seniors, participants suggested having programs like aquafit, making the sure the space and its programs are accessible, and providing ample seating. For youth, they suggested fun spaces and programs (like tv lounges and chess), supportive programs (like financial literacy, mental health, and social services) and physical activity (including basketball and hockey). Facilitating intergenerational connections also came up, with mentorship, volunteer programs, and local hiring opportunities suggested as ways people of different ages could connect.
- **Food needs to have a big role.** Participants said that gathering around food is very important in the community and that new Centre should reflect this in its design and programming. Suggestions included having the kitchen easily connect to multi-purpose rooms, offering cooking programs, and installing a community garden to teach people how to grow food.
- **The building should model sustainability.** Some said meeting high standards of sustainability (like a net zero building) will be very important, and that sustainability should not just be part of the building's design but its program, too. For example, the building could include dedicated space for people to store, share, or trade used goods.
- **Many suggestions about programs, features, and activities.** Participants shared many suggestions for programs that they'd like to see considered in the future, including sports, prayer spaces, up to-date technology (especially for computer labs or a maker space), spaces for grassroots meetings and gatherings, a secure, well-maintained weight room, and more.

- **Questions and interest in childcare.** Several participants were interested in the future childcare centre, including understanding if the community would have an overall increase in childcare spaces, how the City arrived at the planned 88 childcare spaces, and whether the City would consider a 24/7 childcare model to help single parents in Lawrence Heights.

2. Online Survey

- **Community members appreciate what they've seen so far and want the new Community Centre to be completed on time and on budget.** In general respondents expressed excitement for the draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves, and reaffirmed the need for and interest in many of the proposed programming, features, and activities.
- **Local use should be prioritized in the new Community Centre.** Respondents said the City should ensure that the local community gets first and prioritized access to the new Community Centre and its programming. Suggestions included having priority access to reserving spots in the e-fun portal and considering how to increase access to low-income community members and those with limited internet access.
- **Ensure access and safety for everyone in the community, including seniors, youth, people with disabilities, women, 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, low-income community members, and young families.** Some suggestions included having proper lighting, reserved hours for programming and activities for the different groups, accommodating different food preferences, ensuring easy access to transit stations, ensuring there are activities which can be enjoyed by people with different abilities, and ensuring that the design of the new Centre is accessible for people with disabilities – including those with mobility limitations, vision impairment, and people with autism.
- **Ensure that the equipment and facilities are of good quality and have an adequate capacity to accommodate community needs.** Respondents said they wanted to see high quality and long-lasting equipment in the new Centre, along with an adequate number of equipment and spaces so that community members could use them at the same time or plan group activities.

3. Community Pop-ups, including youth-focused pop-up

- **The current Community Recreation Centre 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, Guiding 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.

4. Indigenous Sharing Meeting

- **Positive feedback and no major suggested changes to the draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves.** Participants said they would like to see the Seven Grandfather Teachings incorporated in both the programs and Guiding Principles. They also wanted to see the space designed to be inclusive of all genders, ages, and abilities.
- **Many suggestions for programming and activating the future Centre,** including how to accommodate these suggestions in the building's design. Specific suggestions included: spaces for gathering (like ceremonies, drum circles, pow-wow social nights, smudging, performances, and dance) with good acoustics and acoustic separation; spaces for community learning; spaces for traditional crafting classes; quiet spaces indoors and outdoors for reflection; an outdoor space for sacred fires; and more.
- **Advice to integrate Indigenous art, design, and natural materials in the future Centre.** Participants suggested incorporating lots of beautiful Indigenous art from local Indigenous artists and youth, considering how the space can be designed to be connected with Mother Earth and water. Other suggestions including having digital art on the exterior of the Centre, using wood and other natural materials to make the space more warm and welcoming for all nations, having a wampum belt design in the pool, having meeting rooms with Indigenous names, and many more.
- **Interest in seeing Indigenous people hired to run programs and bringing elders to do traditional teachings.**
- Interest in seeing more programs for youth, particularly youth ages 7-12 and teenagers.

5. Community Advisory Committee Meeting 1

- **Overall, participants liked the revised draft Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves, but have suggested further changes to better reflect and address the needs of local communities in the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood.** They also highlighted the need for continuous engagement with the **African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities**, Muslim communities (like the Somali community) and youth for their feedback to be reflected in the statements that would guide the project's overall goals.
- **Highlight feedback and priorities from the African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities in the plan for the new Centre.** The neighbourhood is home to ACB communities so it's important to highlight the feedback from these communities to ensure the plans for the new Centre reflect their needs. There is a need to provide programming and safe spaces for ACB communities, as well as youth, as this is part of the City's commitment in the longer-term revitalization of Lawrence Heights.
- **Prioritize local residents' access to the programming and space at the new Centre.** Participants shared concerns that local residents' could have reduced access to programs and space in the new Centre as a new and improved Centre may create a lot of competition with non-local residents who would want to use the new Centre. Suggestions included having early registration access and limiting the free services and programming to the local community.
- **The new Centre should include a community kitchen, community garden, and a food bank as they can be used to address food security issues in the community.** These facilities could be used to provide food and food-related programming to the community. Participants said that food security is a right for all community members, and they see an

opportunity for the new Centre to provide dignified food bank services that remove the stigma for families in need.

- **Overall, participants support the presented community priorities for programming, activities, and outdoor uses.** There was excitement and interest for a range of programming, activities, and outdoor uses, particularly those for youth and seniors. Participants said that it's important that these programs and activities are free, inclusive and accessible for the diverse demographics that live in the Lawrence Heights community.

Next Steps

The feedback received in Phase 1 of community engagement will be used to refine and finalize the Vision, Design Principles and Big Moves, and inform the draft design of the new Centre that will be presented in Phase 2. To be notified with future project updates, visit the [project webpage](#) to sign up for e-updates.