

Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2 Summary Report

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre

Phase 2

April 25, 2024





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Introduction

The City of Toronto is designing a new Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre for the Lawrence Heights Community. The Community Recreation Centre (CRC) will be one of the City's newest and largest community centres. 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 CRC. The first phase of this process 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 CRC. We are currently in the second phase of the process, which is focused on presenting and seeking feedback on the draft preliminary design.

This summary includes feedback shared in the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting 2 which was held on Thursday, April 25, 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to present the final vision, guiding principles, and big moves to the CAC members, as well as seek feedback on the draft preliminary design for the new CRC. The goal was to determine if the draft preliminary design adequately reflects the vision, guiding principles and big moves, and to understand what specific design features the community would like to see in key spaces of the new CRC.

Participants also had the opportunity to provide additional feedback via email for a week after the meeting.

For more information about the project and to review summaries from previous community engagement activities, visit the project webpage:

toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights.

About this report

This report summarizes feedback shared in Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2. It includes the following sections:

- Format of the meeting
- Key themes in feedback
- Detailed feedback
- Next steps

This summary was written by Third Party Public, an independent facilitation team retained by the City to support the community engagement process for the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre. The intent of this summary is to

capture the range of feedback shared at the meeting, and not to assess the merit or accuracy of the feedback.

This summary was shared with meeting participants for a one-week review period before being finalized.

Format of the Meeting

The Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2 was held in-person at the current Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre, with an opportunity to join online over Zoom made available for those who requested as they were not able to join in person. 20 CAC members attended the meeting in-person, and two CAC members joined online.

The meeting began with a light dinner, followed by a welcome and Land Acknowledgement by James Cho from the City of Toronto. Khly Lamparero from Third Party Public then shared the objectives and agenda for the meeting. The project team, including James Cho, Khly Lamparero, Susan Lewin from CS&P Architects, and Brian Porter and Robert Oleksiak from Two Row Architects presented the project overview, engagement overview, the final project vision, guiding principles and big moves, and the draft preliminary design of the new CRC.

Following the presentation, participants asked questions of clarification to the project team. Participants then worked in small groups to discuss three questions:

1. Does the draft preliminary design adequately reflect the vision, guiding principles and big moves?
2. Are there any changes you want to see in the draft preliminary design to better reflect the vision, guiding principles and big moves?
3. In addition to the feedback heard to date, what specific design features would you like to see in the key spaces in the new CRC?

Each small group was provided with table worksheets and two reference sheets to support their discussions. The first reference sheet listed the guiding principles and big moves, and the spaces in the new CRC that incorporates the guiding principles and big moves. The second reference sheet listed the suggestions the community shared in Phase 1 for the different spaces in the new CRC.

After the small group discussions, each group shared with all meeting participants key points from their discussion and additional feedback they have for the project team. Afterwards, participants were asked the following three questions:

4. Do you think there's interest in the community to establish a group that could manage and maintain a community garden?
5. Do you have any advice for the project team when planning the broader community engagement through online survey and community pop-ups?
6. Do you have any other advice for the City and the design team?

The feedback provided by participants through these discussions, written feedback submitted through worksheets, and feedback provided via email after the meeting is captured in the following sections.

What We Heard: Key Themes

Overall, many appreciated the draft preliminary design and said it adequately reflected the vision, guiding principles and big moves, and provided suggestions to root the design further into community needs and feedback.

Ensure that the new CRC has a lot of natural light and good ventilation. Many participants said it is important for the new CRC to be well lit and have adequate air flow, especially in the gymnasium and in areas where smudging might take place. Some suggestions on how to achieve this were: including windows that can be opened, having higher ceilings, and use of natural materials to ensure the centre feels open and well-lit.

The design should address needs of the local community and show the City's commitment to the current residents of Lawrence Heights. Some suggestions on how to achieve this were: including spaces focused on Afro-centric cultural needs, including public art, plaques and murals that showcase the community's history and evolution, and including spaces which can be rented by individuals or groups in the community.

Parking is critical for the community. Many community members emphasized the need for more parking spaces at the new CRC. They said parking is important to ensure the new CRC can be easily accessed by the community year-round, particularly by parents with kids and seniors in the winter-time. Some suggestions on how to achieve this were: including underground parking and issuing street parking permits for those using the CRC to avoid getting parking tickets.

Prioritize local access in programming and booking spaces. Participants emphasized that local communities should be provided priority access when booking programs in the centre – so that more people in the community can be benefitted from the facilities in the new CRC. They also reiterated the importance of ensuring that

barriers local grassroots organizations experience when booking spaces in the current CRC (e.g. booking fees, insurance requirements, going through non-for-profits to be able to book a space) are not experienced in the new CRC.

Involve youth in the development of the new CRC. Participants said it is important for the project team to engage the local youth to understand their needs and wants for the new CRC.

There is interest in the community, including many CAC members, in establishing a group that could manage and maintain a community garden at the new CRC.

What We Heard: Detailed Feedback

Generally, participants said the draft preliminary design adequately reflected the vision, guiding principles and big moves, and appreciated the inclusion of community feedback from Phase 1 in the design. Participants further emphasized that the design should show commitment to the local communities and people who have lived in the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood for a long time – including African, Caribbean, and Black communities and local youth.

Some participants said they appreciated the sense of openness, double high ceilings, and use of natural light reflected in the draft preliminary design. They also appreciated the plan to design the building with visibility from all angles in the community, and encouraged the indoor-outdoor connections and the use of natural materials in building construction.

Participants provided the following suggestions for changes/additions to the preliminary design to better reflect the vision, guiding principles and big moves:

- **Consider adding more parking spots.** Lawrence Heights is a growing and high-density neighbourhood, and participants said there is a need for 50-60 spots at the new CRC. Some suggested that the parking spots could be added by including underground parking or dedicated on-street parking spaces with permits showing that drivers are using the CRC to avoid getting parking tickets.

City staff at the meeting explained they will take it back for review however underground parking is significantly expensive to build. While participants understand the high cost of parking, some said that the City should consider spending millions of dollars on parking because limited parking would make the new CRC inaccessible to the community.

- **Ensure the uniqueness of the local community and different cultures are represented in the public art.** Participants said this could be represented by including murals, plaques and other artworks reflecting the neighbourhood's history. A participant suggested to have opportunities for Black artists to create the art included in the new CRC.
- **Include spaces highlighting Afro-centric cultural needs,** which honour and reflect commitment to the needs of the local community.
- **Create a centre that would bring out the community's creativity,** and encourage music, writing, and other creative activities.
- **Consider adding solar energy elements.** Participants said this could supplement the site's energy use as well as be displayed for educational purposes.
- **Ensure adequate spaces for the CRC staff,** providing them appropriate locker rooms, storage spaces, and office spaces.
- **Consider adding co-working spaces,** which can be a great way for people to network and connect professionally and can help elevate the community.
- **Consider adding options for grey water collection, processing and use.**
- **Other design additions suggested by CAC members, included:**
 - EV charging stations
 - Indoor/outdoor movie screening areas
 - Digital visual boards to show programming and event schedule, with options for people to sign up for programs
 - Rock climbing wall (similar to the wall at Lifetime Fitness in Vaughan)
 - Safe bicycle parking – in a visible, well-lit area to deter theft

Participants also provided the following space-specific feedback for the key spaces in the new CRC:

Aquatics

- Ensure wheelchair accessibility and accessibility for visually impaired CRC users.
- Ensure the space includes curtains/privacy settings that can allow for gender specific/children's programming without being visible to the public. Participants also said the programming should include different time allotments for seniors, youth, women, men, adults, families, and children.

Multi-purpose Rooms

- Include design elements like windows which can be opened to facilitate ventilation and natural airflow in the building. The indoor spaces should be airy.

- Ensure the building revives adequate natural light and does not look dark or “like a dungeon.”
- Other elements participant said they would like to see included, were:
 - reading room
 - mini library
 - stage for performance
 - storage space for dedicated equipment
 - capacity signs

Social and Public Spaces

- Ensure there is good airflow throughout the entire space and include windows that can be opened.
- Include spaces for indoor/outdoor movie screening.
- Include a café which serves culturally appropriate and healthy food options.
- Include spaces that can be dedicated to prayer/faith-focused practices.
- Other elements that participants said they would like to see in this space, included:
 - active stairways which can be used as work and seating spaces – such as those in UTS schools
 - solar power outlets or charging stations near indoor and outdoor seating areas
 - seating by the windows
 - Feng Shui elements in the design

Community Kitchen and Food

- Consider making this space open concept and increase the capacity to adequately match community needs.
- Include spaces that allow community members to cook and sell food.
- Include a space dedicated for the food bank to operate from the community kitchen. *City staff at the meeting said that a nutritional resource food space (a food bank) will be included in the new CRC.*
- Consider connecting the kitchen to the community garden – some said they would like to see “indoor-outdoor” elements.

Participants also said that community members should be able to access the kitchen space for events and suggested having community job opportunities to program the kitchen.

Gymnasium

- Ensure that the space has lots of natural light – some suggested floor to ceiling windows and using natural materials.
- Include stadium seating – bleachers, for large gatherings and events. A participant suggested including retractable bleachers so the space is not wasted. *City staff at the meeting said there is difficulty fitting the project program into the design due to the constrained site but will take this request back to review.*
- Include a stage for performances.
- Some said it would be great if the gym can be split.

Additionally, a participant said they envision this community having its own basketball program and teams. It's a sport that has deep roots and a tradition in the community. Seating where families can watch games and tournaments would be key to bringing people together.

Youth and Technology

- Ensure that the devices in this space adequately match community needs – there need to be more devices than in the current CRC.
- Mixed opinions on creating a dedicated tech space. Many participants said they prefer creating “tech renting hubs” (where youth can check out portable computers/devices like iPads or Chromebooks) than having a dedicated computer lab as it would allow for more flexibility, and youth can use the device anywhere in the CRC to do their homework. However, one youth participant said that it is better to have a dedicated tech space to increase access to technology. The participant said that not a lot of people, particularly youth, can afford computers that would allow them to do more advanced tasks. The participant suggested having computers with better specifications to help youth who are looking into careers like technology.
- Prioritize youth teaching.
- Ensure that the equipment is youth friendly. Consider installing parental controls on programs available on computer devices.
- Include capacity signs.

Participants also emphasized that the space should be inclusive of children living in the community right now and should show a commitment to long-term residents of Lawrence Heights.

Outdoor Space – Ground Floor

- Include facilities for BBQ.
- Ensure adequate seating area, especially for seniors.
- Include trees in the outdoor space.

Outdoor Space – Roof

- Ensure adequate seating area, like benches.
- Include facilities for BBQ and gardening.
- Designate some space for private or community bookings.

Fitness and Weights

- Ensure accessibility in the space.
- Ensure that the space has adequate capacity.

Indigenous Cultural Spaces

- Ensure that proper airflow and ventilation in spaces where smudging will take place, to avoid rooms getting smoke filled.

Programming-related feedback

- **Ensure prioritized local access to the CRC.** Participants emphasized that the local community should be given priority in booking programs at the new CRC. They said that often the spaces are filled too quickly by residents from across Toronto, leaving no programming opportunities for local community members who do not have access to good internet or online presence.
- **Remove barriers to booking spaces.** Participants reiterated the importance of ensuring that barriers local grassroots organizations experience when booking spaces in the current CRC (e.g. booking fees, insurance requirements, having to go through non-for-profits to be able to book a space) are not experienced in the new CRC. They would like for the City to clarify if the booking of spaces in the new CRC will be free.
- **There is interest from CAC members to establish a group that could manage and maintain a community garden at the new CRC.** Many participants expressed interest in being part of a volunteer group that could manage and maintain a community garden. A participant also suggested partnering with Unison to manage the community garden.

- **Consider extending hours for the CRC** to encourage youth to be occupied with activities for longer.

Engagement-related Feedback

- **Continue to be transparent with the community** about the process as it unfolds.
- **It is critical to involve youth in the development of the new CRC** – the project team should engage with the youth to understand their needs and want. They suggested to consider reaching out to youth participating at the Pathways to Education program, as well as consider forming a youth advisory committee.
- **Consider forming a seniors advisory committee.**
- **For the next meeting, include large printouts of the proposed building design on the walls throughout the room(s).** This would provide a better opportunity for CAC members to refer to the designs while providing feedback and make for a more active and collaborative environment.

Next Steps

Feedback from the Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2 will be used to inform and refine the draft preliminary design that will be presented to the broader Lawrence Heights community for feedback later this summer through various engagement activities in Phase 2 of the community engagement process. The project team will also share the draft preliminary designs to the Design Review Panel on May 15, 2024 for feedback.

The final CAC Meeting 2 summary will be posted on the project website (toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights). The next CAC meeting and a CAC site-tour are scheduled for later this summer. CAC members will be consulted about their dates and availabilities in the coming weeks.

Attachment 1: Agenda

Thursday, April 25, 2024, 6:00 – 8:30 pm | Lawrence Heights CRC (5 Replin Road)

Meeting purpose:

- To present the final Vision, Guiding Principles, and Big Moves
- To present and seek feedback on the draft preliminary design for the Community Recreation Centre

Agenda

6:00 pm **Light Dinner and Welcome**

6:30 **Formal Meeting Begins: Land Acknowledgement and Agenda Review**

James Cho, City of Toronto

Khly Lamparero, Third Party Public

6:35 **Presentation: Overview and Preliminary Design**

James Cho, City of Toronto

Susan Lewin, CS&P Architects

Brian Porter and Robert Oleksiak, Two Row Architects

Khly Lamparero, Third Party Public

Questions of clarification

7:15 **Small Table Discussions**

1. Does the draft preliminary design adequately reflect the Vision, Guiding Principles and Big Moves?
2. Are there any changes you want to see in the draft preliminary design to better reflect the Vision, Guiding Principles and Big Moves?
3. In addition to the feedback heard to date, what specific design features would you like to see in the key spaces in the new Centre?

7:45 **Plenary Report Back and Discussion**

4. Do you think there's interest in the community to establish a group that could manage and maintain a community garden?
5. Do you have any advice for the project team when planning the broader community engagement through online survey and community pop-ups?
6. Do you have any other advice for the City and the design team?

8:20 **Quick Meeting Evaluation Survey**

8:25 **Next Steps**

8:30 **Adjourn**



Tell us how we did!

Take a quick survey to provide feedback

Attachment 2: Worksheets

1. Does the draft preliminary design adequately reflect the Vision, Guiding Principles and Big Moves?

2. Are there any changes you want to see in the draft preliminary design to better reflect the Vision, Guiding Principles and Big Moves?

3. In addition to the feedback heard to date, what specific design features would you like to see in the key spaces in the new Centre?

Community feedback heard to date	Write below additional DESIGN FEATURES you would like to see included
Aquatics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquafit • Community permitting • Leisure swimming • Relaxation • Sports training • Water aerobics • Water Play features • Women's only swimming 	
Social and Public Spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lounge • Natural Daylight • Outdoor Event Space, Multi-sport court and all-ages play areas • Public Art • Snack Bar • Social Space • Spaces for Study • Unique representation of the community 	
Community Kitchen & Food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Garden • Connection to MP • Cooking and Gathering around Food • Cooking for youth • Food Focused Programming • Indoor-outdoor connection • Kitchen for community events • Nutritional resource food space in Multipurpose Room • Snack Bar with healthy food options 	
Gymnasium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basketball, seniors, volleyball, pickleball, badminton • Flexible space for community events • Include space for people to congregate and seating • Indoor track 	
Fitness & Weights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible Equipment • Fitness Classes • Instructional Videos • Larger weight room than current centre • New equipment • Open Concept Setup • Vending Machines 	

Multi-Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Activities – pottery, painting, etc. • Community Events (Grassroot Groups) • Community spaces (local community agencies) • Dance, yoga, martial arts • Different age groups • Indoor-outdoor connection • Music practice or teaching • Quiet space to read and study • Sensory Room • Tie-into cooking programs 	
Youth and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment support, tutoring, homework • Exterior youth area • Music, arts, indoor games, lounge • Recording studio • Safe, dedicated space • Technology/ computer lab 	
Indigenous Cultural Needs Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Ceremonies • Drum Circles • Gardens and Planters • Natural Materials • Performance and Dance • Pow Wow Social Nights • Quiet Spaces / Mindfulness • Sacred Fire • Smudging • Youth Focus 	
Outdoor Space - Ground <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Playground • Event Space / Dancing / Yoga • Gardens/Planting Areas • Mindfulness Space or Garden for Reflection • Multi-Sport Court • Sacred Fire • Seating and Tables • Shade Structure 	
Outdoor Space – Roof <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBQ and Social Area • Fitness Stations • Gathering Spaces (Movies, yoga) • Mindfulness space or garden for reflection • Planting & Gardens • Seating and Tables • Shade Structure 	
Other?	