

Phase 2 Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting Summary

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre
April 30, 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. 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. We are currently in the second phase of the engagement, which is focused on presenting and seeking feedback on the draft proposed designs for the new CRC. Part of the engagement process for this phase is hosting a second Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting.

This report summarizes feedback shared at the captured at the second Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting held virtually on Zoom on April 30, 2024.

Nbisiing Consulting and Third Party Public prepared this summary with support from the City. 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.

Format of the Meeting

The meeting began with a brief welcome from Bob Goulais from Nbisiing Consulting, followed by an invocation and thanksgiving from Elder Diane Longboat, Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River. James Cho from the City of Toronto offered a land acknowledgement. The City of Toronto, CS&P Architects (design consultants for the new CRC), and Two Row Architect (Indigenous design consultants for the new CRC) then provided an overview presentation. Following the presentation, participants asked questions of clarification, and shared feedback on the following discussion 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?
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 other advice for the City and the design team?

The meeting was facilitated by Bob Goulais of Nbisiing Consulting, with note-taking support from Third Party Public (both are independent facilitators retained by the City).

The meeting was reserved for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities members, and representatives of Indigenous agencies, organisations, and community groups across Toronto. 27 people attended the meeting.

Key Themes in the Feedback

- **General agreement that the draft design reflects the vision.** Participants highlighted the importance of using natural materials and less concrete, as well as incorporating traditional colours and using Indigenous art and cultural elements. Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in all design aspects is important.
- **Emphasize youth empowerment and elder comfort in the design and programming.**
- **Concerns about the limited parking planned for the site.** Participants would like to see more parking for community members who will use the CRC to make the centre accessible, especially for those with disabilities/mobility issues.

- **Concerns about the impact on Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) residents.** Participants expressed concerns about the TCHC residents who will be relocated because the new CRC will impact an existing TCHC building. Communicating the relocation plans needs sensitivity due to the impact and disruption the relocation will have on residents' lives.

Detailed Feedback

Overall design

- **Explore options for increasing parking for community members who will use the new community recreation centre.** Participants shared concerns about accessibility, particularly for Elders, disabled children and their caregivers, due to the limited parking planned for the site, which is mainly provided for staff. Consider promoting using active transportation for staff to increase parking spaces for community members.
- **Incorporate traditional colours and materials** like wood instead of concrete. Additionally, consider incorporating more circles and curved designs and the element of wind through wind gardens or wind chimes. Traditional colours may be the four colors of the medicine wheel (yellow, red, black, white), colors of the wampum purple / Haudenosaunee flag, or Anishinaabe clan colours.
- **Consider including directional signs and structural art** to guide and welcome people. Signage may be in Ojibwe, Mohawk/Seneca, or Wendat language.

Other design suggestions

- Integrate student art exhibits and possibly a "Walk of Fame" for local First Nations, Métis and Inuit performers, artists, activists, writers, etc.

Feedback on key spaces

Multi-purpose rooms

- Design the dance room to be a welcoming space for activities such as pow-wow dance classes, jigging, and fiddling lessons.
- Need for natural light in crafting rooms.
- Include Indigenous art in the multi-purpose room.

Outdoor space

- Include outdoor elements like living walls or murals by local Indigenous artists that reflecting diverse faces.
- Explore the possibility of a community garden and a medicine garden.
- Provide storage for ceremonial supplies.
- **Accessibility and Safety:**
 - Ensure adequate parking, including for Elders, and address overflow parking issues.
 - Plan for accessible washrooms and entrances, especially for seniors.
 - Consider safety features like directional signs and structural art that guides and welcomes the community.
- **Programming and Use:**
 - Include spaces for community activities, such as a tool library, tech library, and areas for emergency events.
 - Incorporate programming for both youth and seniors, and consider spaces for ceremonies and sacred fires. Ensure security and proper use of sacred spaces.
 - Explore options for student jobs and Indigenous employment opportunities within the centre.
 - Ensure program is co-developed by First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. For example: pow-wow dance classes, regalia-making, and arts and crafts.
 - Ensure the CRC is a space where youth can feel comfortable and welcomed.
- **Sustainability and Environment:**
 - Utilize rainwater for nourishing gardens and consider eco-friendly materials and practices.
 - Explore repurposing materials from the old centre to reduce waste.
- **Additional Suggestions:**
 - Consider a basketball court with Indigenous art and flexible spaces for various activities.
 - Address potential challenges such as parking, space for events, and community engagement.

Other suggestions

- Investigate the historical significance of the area, including potential longhouses and underground springs.
- Consider waiving street vendor permits to support the local economy.

Questions of Clarification

- **How many people residing at the TCHC building will be relocated due to the new centre? Of those affected, how many are Indigenous? Housing is very important and hard to get in the city, particularly for Indigenous peoples.** *The City explained that the relocation of tenants is led by TCHC so the City was not able to provide information on the number of TCHC tenants. However, the City said that TCHC has a zero-displacement policy. This means that no TCHC tenant will lose housing, but instead will be relocated to better housing.*
- **How many of the spots in the Child Care Centre will be allocated to Indigenous children?** *The City said that there will be a total of 88 child care spots in the new Child Care Centre, and spots will be provided to the local community.*

Next Steps

Feedback received at this meeting, along with feedback received in other community engagement activities (including Community Advisory Committee meetings, online survey, community pop-ups and other interactions), will help inform the final preferred design for the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre.

The final preferred design will be presented to the community for feedback in Phase 3 of the engagement in late 2024 / early 2025. For more information and to sign up for project updates, please visit: www.toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights

Appendix A. Meeting Agenda

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation and Child Care Centre Phase 2 (of 3) Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting

Tuesday, April 30, 2024

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Meeting held virtually



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

PROPOSED AGENDA

6:30 pm Welcome, invocation and thanksgiving, land acknowledgment

Bob Goulais, Nbisiing Consulting
Elder Diane Longboat, Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River
James Cho, City of Toronto

6:40 Introduction and agenda review

Bob Goulais, Nbisiing Consulting

6:45 Presentation: Overview and Draft Preliminary Design

James Cho, City of Toronto
Susan Lewin and Ryan Giuricich, CS&P Architects
Brian Porter and Robert Oleksiak, Two Row Architect
Bob Goulais, Nbisiing Consulting

Questions of clarification

7:25 Discussion

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?
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 other advice for the City and the design team?

8:20 Wrap up and Next Steps

8:25 Closing Invocation

8:30 Adjourn



Tell us how we did!
Take a quick survey
to provide feedback
on today's meeting.