

# Phase 2 Engagement Report

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre  
November 2024

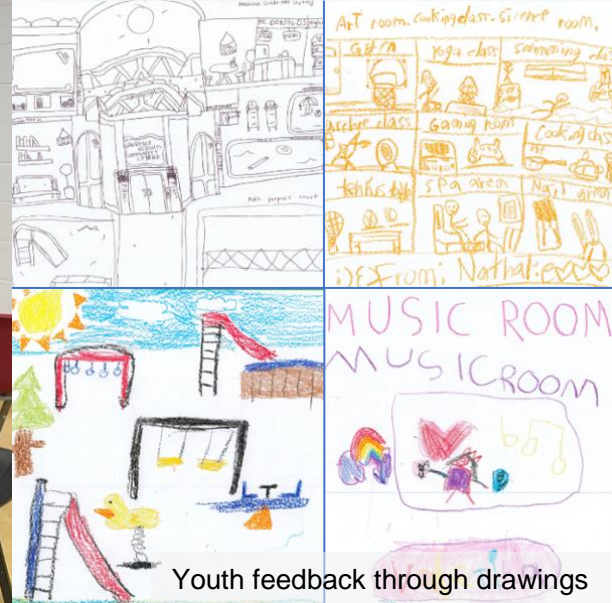




Community pop-ups



Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2



Youth feedback through drawings



Community Advisory Committee Meeting 3

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# Introduction

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From April to September 2024, the City of Toronto held the second phase of a three-phase community engagement process for the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre (CRC). The focus of Phase 2 was to present and seek feedback on the draft design of the new CRC. Several engagement activities were held in-person, virtually, and online, including:

- Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2
- Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting 2
- Five community pop-ups, including youth-focused engagements
- An online survey
- Ethennonnhawahstihnen' Community Recreation Centre tour for CAC members
- Community Advisory Committee Meeting 3

For more information about the project and to review individual summaries of Phase 2 community engagement activities, visit [toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights](https://toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights).

## About this report

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This report summarizes the Phase 2 engagement process, 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.

The intent of this summary is to capture the range of feedback shared, and not to assess the merit or accuracy of the feedback.

# Engagement Process Overview

The Phase 2 engagement took place between April and September 2024. The goal of this phase was to:

- Present the final vision, guiding principles, and big moves.
- Present and seek feedback on the draft preferred design for the CRC, including what should be included in the design for the key spaces in the new CRC.
- Seek feedback to understand if the draft design adequately reflects the vision, guiding principles, and big moves.

Over 700 participants were engaged in six engagement activities in Phase 2. See the list of engagement activities below, along with the number of people who participated in each activity.

Engagement activities	Participants
<b>Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2</b> held simultaneously at Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and virtually on Zoom on April 25, 2024	22
<b>Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting</b> held virtually via Zoom on October 4, 2023	27
<b>Five Community Pop-ups</b> held at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pathways to Education Program</b> at Unison Health &amp; Community Services on June 5, 2024 (20+ youth participated)</li> <li>• <b>Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre</b> on July 8, 2024 (130 youth ages 4 to 12 participating in the CampTO program and 15 community members participated)</li> <li>• <b>Columbus Centre</b> on July 12, 2024 (60+ community members, including many seniors participated)</li> <li>• <b>Lawrence West TTC Station</b> on July 18, 2024 (90+ community members participated)</li> <li>• <b>Lawrence Heights &amp; Neptune Annual Summer Festival</b> on August 28, 2024 (40+ community members participated)</li> </ul>	355
<b>Online Survey</b> available from July 8 to 29, 2024, with hard copies available by request	293
<b>Ethennonhawahstihnen' Community Recreation Centre tour for CAC members</b> on September 11, 2024	3
<b>Community Advisory Committee Meeting 3</b> held at Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre on September 26, 2024	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>714+</b>

# What We Heard:

## Overall Feedback Themes

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**There was general community support for the draft preferred design.** Participants said the draft design adequately reflects the vision, guiding principles, and big moves, and that the design is reflective of the community feedback to date. Many were excited about the new CRC and having a larger facility with increased capacity.

**The design of the new CRC should reflect the community's identity and include diverse cultural elements.** Reflecting the community's cultural identity, heritage, and diversity are important key themes participants want to be considered in designing the new CRC. This includes showcasing the unique history, cultures, and values of Lawrence Heights through elements like public art, murals, and the use of natural materials (e.g., wood) in the design.

**The new CRC needs to be accessible to all.** A consistent point across all feedback is the need for the new CRC to be accessible and inclusive to all community members. This includes making spaces universally accessible and ensuring that facilities like the pool, kitchen, and multi-purpose rooms can be used by a wide range of people.

**Provision of adequate parking for community members is critical** to ensure the new CRC can be easily accessed by the community year-round, especially seniors, children and parents, people with disabilities, and those with mobility challenges. Many expressed concerns that there's not enough parking planned for the new CRC, impacting accessibility of the new CRC.

**The design needs to consider comfort and safety.** Several spaces require careful design consideration for safety (e.g., pool areas, playground, outdoor spaces), and comfort (e.g., ample seating, good air quality and ventilation, shaded seating, secured furniture).

**Key spaces, like multi-purpose rooms, gym, kitchen, lobby, and social spaces, should be adaptable to various community needs and activities.** They should be flexible and be able to accommodate a variety of activities, from community events to individual quiet uses.

**Make the new CRC welcoming, lively, and vibrant to foster social interaction and community building across all age groups.** There was a strong desire for the CRC to be inviting, foster social interaction, and have a vibrant community atmosphere. For example, this could be done through incorporating art, greenery, interactive elements, multifunctional seating, and music. Key areas include the lobby, corridors, and community kitchen.

**Reduce barriers to access by prioritizing local community access to programs and booking spaces.** Barriers experienced at the current CRC should not be experienced in the new CRC (e.g. difficulty signing up for programs, space booking fees, insurance requirements, going through non-for-profits to be able to book a space).

# What We Heard:

## Feedback Highlights From Each Engagement Activity

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Feedback shared by participants are organized under the following engagement activities:

1. Community Advisory Meeting 2
2. Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting 2
3. Community pop-ups, including youth-focused pop-up
4. Online survey
5. Community Advisory Meeting 3

### 1. Community Advisory Meeting 2

**Many appreciated the draft design and said it adequately reflected the vision, guiding principles and big moves.** Participants also provided suggestions, including:

- **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 was to allow spaces to be rented by individuals or groups in the community.
- **Showcase the community's uniqueness, history, evolution, and different cultures in the public art.** 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.
- **Parking is critical to ensure the new CRC can be easily accessed by the community year-round.** 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.
- **Ensure there's a lot of natural light and good ventilation.** 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.
- **Design the pool area with privacy features** to allow for gender specific/children's programming without being visible to the public. The programming should include different time allotments for seniors, youth, women, men, adults, families, and children.
- **Mixed opinions on having a dedicated tech space.** Many preferred creating "tech renting hubs" 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, a youth participant said that it is better to have a dedicated tech space to increase access to technology.

- **Ensure the new CRC is accessible**, especially for seniors, and those with mobility challenges/visual impairments.
- **Prioritize local access when signing up for programs and booking spaces.** Local communities should be provided priority access when booking programs in the centre so that more people in the community can benefit from the facilities in the new CRC. It is also important to ensure 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.** Engage the local youth to understand their needs and wants for the new CRC.
- **There is interest from CAC members to establish a group that could manage and maintain a community garden at the new CRC.**

## 2. Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting 2

Overall, participants said the draft design reflects the vision, and provided a range of suggestions including:

- **Incorporate natural materials and traditional colours and design** like wood instead of concrete. 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.
- **Explore options for increasing parking for community members.** 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.
- **Include directional signs and structural art to guide and welcome people.** Signage may be in Ojibwe, Mohawk/Seneca, or Wendat language.
- **Accessibility and inclusivity** in all design aspects is important.
- **Emphasize youth empowerment and elder comfort** in the design and programming.
- **Include outdoor elements** like living walls or murals reflecting diverse faces and local artists.
- **Make the multi-purpose room a welcoming space for different activities** (pow-wow, jigging, etc.).

**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.

### 3. Community pop-ups

**Excitement for the new CRC and general support for the draft design.** Many supported the draft designs presented and many, including youth, said that they were glad to see their feedback from Phase 1 of the engagement being incorporated in the design. Overall, community members were particularly interested in designs for the aquatics space, gymnasium, fitness and weights space, and the community kitchen, while youth were particularly interested in designs for the aquatics space, music recording space and rehearsal space, youth technology hub, and the multi-purpose rooms.

**Appreciation that the new CRC will be larger and have facilities with increased capacity.** Many participants said that they were looking forward to a larger CRC with improved facilities and increased capacity to serve the community.

**Three themes of feedback that emerged as priorities for the participants were:**

- **Accessibility** – make the spaces accessible for seniors and people with disabilities, including children with disabilities.
- **Reflect the community's cultural identity** – ensure the design reflects the unique cultural identity of the Lawrence Heights community.
- **Reflective of needs** – ensuring the facility and its amenities are designed to meet the everyday needs of the local community.

### 4. Online survey

**90% of participants said the draft overall design reflect the vision, guiding principles & big moves.** Key advice from participants included:

- The new CRC must be **welcoming to and accessible for all community members and address the distinct needs of people.**
- The new CRC should have **spaces for quiet, individual use AND spaces that facilitate community use and social interactions.**
- The design should strive to **reduce potential conflicts due to spaces with different uses being located near each other.**

The table below summarizes the level of support survey participants had for the features proposed for each key space in the new CRC, as well the percentage of those who said the draft design adequately reflect the vision, guiding principles, and big moves.

	Support for the features proposed for this space	% of participants who said the draft design adequately reflect the vision, guiding principles, and big moves
Roof outdoor space	93%	94%
Community kitchen/food spaces	92%	92%
Indigenous cultural needs spaces	91%	96%
Gymnasium	90%	81%
Aquatics	89%	87%
Social spaces	90%	88%
Youth/tech/music spaces	89%	88%
Fitness/weights space	88%	89%
Multi-purpose spaces	88%	89%
Ground floor outdoor space	88%	87%

## 5. Community Advisory Meeting 3

**Participants were happy with the overall updated draft design of the new CRC.** They said that the design is reflective of the community feedback to date. Key advice from participants included:

- **It is very important to create spaces that are comfortable, accessible, and inclusive for all age groups.** Participants would like to see ample seating throughout the CRC, good air quality, accessible equipment, adaptable spaces that can be used for different functions throughout the year, and thoughtful design of spaces to accommodate diverse users and age groups. They would also like to see comfortable and shaded seating areas at the outdoor play areas so parents can supervise their kids comfortably, as well as moveable bleachers in the gym for parents to sit and watch their kids play sports and for community members to watch sports events and performances.
- **Design the CRC in a way that not only serves practical needs but also creates a lively and engaging atmosphere to enhance the overall community experience.** Participants would like to see a vibrant CRC that encourages social gathering, and incorporates elements like greenery, art displays, multifunctional furniture, and sound

system throughout the centre. Ensure spaces like the corridors and hallways are designed to be inviting, not boring, and serve both active and quiet uses.

- **Reconsider the location of the playground.** Participants shared safety concerns for children due to the location of the playground near the parking lot and linear park.
- **Ensure that the design of the food bank space connects to the community kitchen** and works with how the food bank operates.

Summarized below is the overall feedback about key spaces in the new CRC:

- **Gymnasium, Fitness Rooms and Weight Room:** Participants want the design of the gym, fitness rooms and weight room to create an inclusive and accessible gym environment that caters to a diverse range of ages and fitness levels. Key recommendations included providing varied equipment, designated times for different age groups and fitness levels, and specific activities for different community groups.
- **Community Kitchen and Multi-Purpose Rooms:** Participants want the design of the community kitchen and multi-purpose rooms to be versatile, welcoming, and promote social interaction through ample seating and multipurpose uses. Safety, accessibility, and maintenance considerations were highlighted to ensure a clean, functional environment that meets the diverse needs of the community, including seniors.
- **Aquatics:** Participants want the design of the aquatics space to be family-friendly, accessible, and to prioritize safety, comfort, and fun for children of all ages. Key suggestions were to include inviting toddler pools, various water slides, ample seating for parents, and strategically positioned playgrounds for easy supervision. Additionally, the design should address hygiene and security concerns while reconsidering certain high-risk equipment to ensure a safe environment for all users.
- **Lobby and Corridors:** Participants want the design of the lobby and corridors to be a lively, vibrant, inviting environment while balancing different uses, including active spaces and quiet areas. Key suggestions included incorporating multifunctional seating to enhance comfort and social connectivity, displaying art from community members, and accommodating the needs of parents, particularly having safe spaces to parking strollers.
- **Playground:** Participants want the design of the playground to emphasize the importance of creating an accessible and safe space that caters to children of all ages, with clear sightlines for parents to supervise play areas. Key features should include multi-sport courts, diverse playground equipment, and family-friendly amenities like shaded seating and wide pathways. Additionally, thematic designs, such as treehouse and music themes, are encouraged to enhance the play experience and community members' experience.
- **Outdoor Space:** Participants want the design of the outdoor space to be a safe, accessible space designed for year-round use, incorporating features like secured

furniture and adequate safety measures. Key suggestions were to include diverse seating options and multifunctional spaces, greenery and shades, and permanent structures to enhance the aesthetic and usability of the rooftop.

## Next Steps

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The feedback received in Phase 2 of the community engagement will be used to inform and refine the final preferred design that will be presented to the broader Lawrence Heights community for feedback at the next and final phase of engagement in late 2024 and early 2025.