

Phase 3 Online Survey Summary Report

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre
January 2025





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Introduction

The City of Toronto is designing a new Community Recreation Centre (CRC) and Child Care Centre as part of the redevelopment of the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood. When completed, it will be one of the largest Community Recreation Centres in Toronto. It will be located north of Flemington Public School, connecting to a new road extension from Varna Drive. The City anticipates beginning construction in 2026 and opening the new building for community use in 2028.

Community consultation has been very important to developing the design, features, and programming of the new CRC. The detailed design and engagement process for the CRC has followed a three-phase approach:

Phase 1 ran from September 2023 to January 2024 and focused on creating a new community-led vision, guiding principles, and big moves to guide the design.

Phase 2, which ran from April to September 2024, focused on sharing and refining a draft proposed design based on the feedback from Phase 1.

Phase 3, which began in December 2024 and will continue to March 2025, is focusing on setting the direction for the CRC's detailed design.

Survey Overview

The Phase 3 survey ran from December 11, 2024 to January 8, 2025. The City hosted the survey on the Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre project webpage, with the option to complete the survey over the phone if requested.

Over 150 people completed the survey, which the City promoted via emails to the project contact list, social media posts and advertising, the project webpage, and communications from the local Councillor's office. Toronto Community Housing (TCH) community engagement staff also helped distribute the survey link to TCH tenants in the community.

The survey asked respondents to share their overall satisfaction with the proposed overall design of the CRC as well as the ground floor landscape plan and each of its four floors. The survey also asked respondents to share their thoughts and preferences about:

- parking at the CRC
- playground design and equipment
- water play equipment
- fitness equipment

Survey feedback will help inform the final preferred design for the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre, which is anticipated to be presented to the community in early 2025. For more information and to sign up for project updates, please visit: www.toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights.

About this Report

This report was written by Third Party Public, an independent facilitation team supporting the City of Toronto's community engagement on the design of the new Community Recreation Centre. It summarizes feedback in the following sections:

1. Feedback about the overall design
2. Feedback about the ground floor landscape (including parking and the outdoor playground)
3. Feedback about the ground floor (including water play equipment)
4. Feedback about the second floor
5. Feedback about the third floor and active rooftop (including fitness equipment)
6. Feedback about the fourth floor and sustainable roof
7. Other feedback
8. Demographics

For questions where qualitative feedback was requested in the survey, this report captures the range of feedback provided by the respondent. It uses the words "many," "some," "few," and "one" to provide a sense of the proportion of respondents sharing a given perspective.

Feedback Summary

Overall design

The survey asked, "**Overall, how satisfied are you with the overall design of the CRC?**" Of the 156 respondents who answered the question:

- 75% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 19% were neutral
- 5% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Some respondents were enthusiastic about the new CRC, saying they "can't wait to go" and that the plans are "very exciting." The Snoezelen room, focus on food, rooftop running track, and overall design specifically received compliments.

A few shared suggestions about the overall design of the CRC, including:

- Add more colour – the images of the new centre have too much grey.
- Maximize the amount of usable space and create more spaces for socializing (as opposed to having lots of empty space).
- Make sure the building is energy and water efficient, even if that means removing windows or reducing the amount of water used.
- Clarify or enhance the accessibility features of the CRC, including ensuring accessibility has informed the design of the outdoor playground, changerooms, staff areas. Ensure there are lots of ramps throughout the centre.
- Strengthen Indigenous place-making and the visibility of the community's heritage (especially the Black community) in the design.
- Show how the CRC how it will serve as a “third space” for youth beyond the youth lounge and tech space, supporting studying, sports, and more.

Ground floor landscape

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the final proposed ground floor landscape?**”

Of the 148 respondents who answered the question:

- 76% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 20% were neutral
- 3% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Parking

Throughout the engagement process the City has heard that providing car parking at the CRC is important for some community members. The survey asked respondents to share their thoughts on several options related to parking, including:

- Option 1: staff parking and visitor pick-up and drop-off only (the current plan)
- Option 2: on-street parking on the new Varna Road extension
- Option 3: surface parking on the CRC property
- Option 4: Underground paid parking below the new CRC
- None of the above

The survey asked, “**Given the assessment provided, which of these parking options do you most prefer?**” Of the 126 respondents who answered the question, the top options selected were:

- staff parking and visitor pick-up and drop-off only (29%)
- surface parking on the CRC property (29%)

Respondents also suggested the City explore other options when considering if or how to add parking to the new CRC, including:

- a hybrid option that combines Option 1 (the current plan) and Option 3 (surface parking on the CRC property)

- sharing parking with a neighbour, such as Flemington Public School or the current CRC
- providing seasonal parking, such as a lot that can be converted to sports or outdoor uses in the warmer months and to parking in the cooler ones
- offering time limited or timed parking (free or paid) that can be booked in advance
- moving the proposed staff parking underground
- providing 24/7 parking on Varna Drive and implementing speed bumps so bikes can safely share the road with cars
- promoting and incentivizing carpooling with lower fees and priority carpool parking spots
- removing staff parking if there is no visitor parking
- outsourcing management of parking to a third party to keep City costs down
- lobbying to other levels of government for more funding to support adding parking
- exploring a Varna Drive / Regina Ave connection to the Allen Road ramp

The survey also asked “**Given the options and assessment provided, rank the following factors in order of importance to you**”

Of the 126 respondents who answered the question, the top three ranking factors were:

1. Providing as many outdoor ground floor community uses as possible.
2. Delivering project on time and on budget.
3. Reducing congestion, environmental impacts, and improving pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Respondents also suggested several additional factors the City consider when deciding if or how to provide parking:

- **Year-round accessibility**, including for those using mobility aids, families with children, seniors, school groups, delivery vehicles, and others.
- **Affordability and economic realities of residents.** TCH tenants or other residents may not be able to pay for parking every time they visit.
- **Cost.** For some, this meant not allowing the high cost of parking dissuade the City from underinvesting in the community; for others, this meant not wasting valuable land building expensive parking.
- **Population growth**, especially given all the change happening in Lawrence Heights and beyond.
- **Safety**, including how safe people feel getting to and from the CRC and whether a parking lot will feel safe.
- **Balance**, including considering the needs of those who don’t drive.
- **Existing parking capacity in the area.** With so many people living in Lawrence Heights, there may not be enough room on-street for more parking.
- **Success (or lack thereof) of other CRCs with little parking**, such as Parkway Forest, Edithvale, or York Recreation Centre.

Other feedback and perspectives about parking

Respondents shared differing opinions about the importance of parking. Some said parking was very important for reasons like:

- Seniors and families with young children are likely to travel by car, especially in cooler months.

- People with mobility devices depend on accessible parking spots to access rec centres.
- Demand to use the CRC is likely to be high, both outside the community (for things like swim meets and events) and within it (especially considering the broader Lawrence Heights revitalization).
- Without parking the new CRC may be underused, limiting the benefit of a big public investment.
- Lawrence West subway station is too far to provide a convenient transit connection to the CRC.
- The CRC's location is too remote for most people to walk to.
- Some CRC visitors may not feel safe walking in the neighbourhood, especially after dark.
- Some CRC visitors may be bringing equipment (like art supplies) that needs to be transported by car.
- Requiring people to pay to park may limit those with lower incomes from accessing and using the CRC.
- Parking is more important than trees and play areas.
- Limiting parking could lead to conflicts between people trying to find places to park.

Among those supportive of parking, many felt strongly that it should be free. A few said that, if parking is provided and must be paid, the rates should be affordable and potentially include one free hour.

Others were not supportive of the City providing parking, saying they support the current plan. Among these respondents, reasons shared included:

- Pedestrian and cyclist safety should not be compromised to provide parking.
- Outdoor play, community space, trees, and a comfortable public realm are more important than storing cars.
- It is not worth delaying the construction of the new CRC to add parking.
- Area residents may fill up the spots for their own use, limiting the benefit to visitors.

Some suggested that instead of providing parking the City improve, promote, and prioritize non-automobile access to the CRC, including:

- Enhancing transit and providing shuttles by working with TTC to provide more frequent transit connections (like increased bus service or a shuttle bus between Lawrence West Subway station and the new CRC).
- Offering an autonomous neighbourhood shuttle, similar to the Brightwater community in Mississauga or the [Beep shuttle](#) in Lake Nona, Orlando.
- Supporting walking and cycling through bike parking, bike lane connections, e-scooter rentals, shaded boulevards, and providing direct paths between Yorkdale and Lawrence West Subway station.

Outdoor playground

The survey presented three options for the CRC's outdoor playground and asked **"Which of these options do you most prefer?"**

Of the 116 respondents who answered the question, the top option selected was option 1: Treehouse theme with waterplay, with 53% of respondents selecting this option.

The survey also asked, “**Rate these playground equipment options in order of most important to least important.**” From the 116 respondents who answered the question, the top option selected was swings (a total of 85% selected it as very important and somewhat important), followed by junior play towers (a total of 75% selected it as very important and somewhat important) and senior play towers (a total of 72% selected it as very important and somewhat important).

A few respondents shared additional feedback about the playground space, including suggestions to:

- prioritize kids’ play over fitness equipment (since people who want to exercise can use the equipment in the CRC).
- include structures that provide “endless play” for kids and structures kids can develop games around.
- make sure the playground considers people in wheelchairs, such as adding a wheelchair swing and reducing the use of woodchips. Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital has an [Inclusive Playgrounds Handbook](#) the City should reference.

Ground floor

The survey asked respondents to share feedback on the design of the key spaces on the ground floor, including the aquatics area, the community kitchen and multi-purpose rooms, and the social and public spaces.

Aquatics

Respondents were asked “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed aquatics area?**”

Of the 116 respondents who answered the question:

- 88% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 7% were neutral
- 3% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

A few respondents suggested the City consider:

- adding a water slide
- adding a family change room, a small women-only change room, and a small men-only change room.
- offering adult swim classes (like aquafit), not just classes for kids

Water play features

The aquatics area will include water play equipment that provides fun, interactive experiences. The City wanted to understand the community’s feedback on three water play equipment options it was considering for the aquatics area.

The survey asked, “**Which of these water play features would you most like to see in the aquatics area?**” Of the 116 respondents who answered the question, the top option selected was Option 3: Umbrella, with 34% of respondents selecting this option.

Community kitchen and multipurpose rooms

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the final proposed community kitchen, multipurpose rooms, and food bank space?**”

Of the 116 respondents who answered the question:

- 76% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 16% were neutral
- 5% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Some respondents said they appreciated that the City had added dedicated food bank space, saying the food bank provides an important service to the community. They said they hoped it would help the Food Bank elicit even more food donations.

Social and public spaces

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the final proposed ground floor social and public spaces?**”

Of the 116 respondents who answered the question:

- 78% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 15% were neutral
- 7% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Second floor

The survey asked respondents to share feedback about the design of the key spaces on the second floor, including the technology room, the Snoezelen room, other activity rooms.

Technology room

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed technology room?**”

Of the 114 respondents who answered the question:

- 77% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 18% were neutral
- 3% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Snoezelen room

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the proposed Snoezelen room?**”

Of the 113 respondents who answered the question, a total of:

- 67% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 24% were neutral
- 5% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied.

One respondent was very happy to see the addition of a Snoezelen room on the second floor, suggesting the City make sure that the room is available to people with mental health struggles or conditions, not just those with physical disabilities.

Second floor activity rooms

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the second floor activity rooms?**”

Of the 113 respondents who answered the question:

- 88% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 14% were neutral
- 2% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied.

Third floor and active rooftop

The survey respondents to share feedback about the design of the key spaces on the third floor, including the gymnasium, fitness studio, and weights area; the youth spaces; and the active rooftop.

Gymnasium, fitness studio, and weights area

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the gymnasium, fitness studio, and weights area?**”

Of the 112 respondents who answered the question:

- 80% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 5% were neutral
- 4% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Respondents shared the following additional feedback about fitness and weight room on the third floor:

- Consider enlarging the weight room – there is likely to be significant community demand for this space.
- Make sure there is more than one of each piece of fitness equipment.
- Make sure the workout space is accessible to people using mobility devices or people who are blind or low vision.

Youth spaces

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the youth spaces?**”

Of the 112 respondents who answered the question:

- 79% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 14% were neutral
- 4% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Active rooftop

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the active rooftop?**”

Of the 112 respondents who answered the question:

- 82% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 16% were neutral
- 1% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

Outdoor fitness equipment

The City shared two options they’re considering for the outdoor fitness equipment on the active rooftop.

The survey asked, “**Which of these fitness equipment options do you prefer?**”

Of the 109 respondents who answered the question, the top option selected was Option 2: step bench, push up bars, parallel bars, with 51% of respondents selecting this option.

The survey asked, “**Rank these fitness equipment options in order of most important to least important.**”

Of the 109 respondents who answered the question, the top three options selected were:

1. Push up bars (a total of 63% selected it as very important and somewhat important)
2. Step bench (a total of 62% selected it as very important and somewhat important)
3. Dip bars (a total of 60% selected it as very important and somewhat important)

Fourth floor and sustainable roof

The survey asked, “**Overall, how satisfied are you with the fourth floor and sustainable roof?**”

Of the 108 respondents who answered the question:

- 87% said they were very satisfied and satisfied
- 12% were neutral
- 0% were unsatisfied and very unsatisfied

One respondent suggested the City consider increasing the weight load to grow food as opposed to sedum. Another suggested enclosing the “open to below” area and adding a second gym.

Other Feedback

In response to question about what other feedback (if any) they had about the design of the new CRC, respondents suggested additions, changes, and other advice about its design, layout, and programming.

Suggested changes

- Replace the paneling beside stairs with glass so it's easier to see where others are.
- Make sure there are a substantial number of lockers with locks (or options to purchase a lock) so that visitors know their possessions are safe.
- Rather than an uncovered concrete area, add more greenery to the Community Square to help pedestrians feel safer and mitigate the ill effects of rising summer temperatures.

Suggested additions

- An indoor playground.
- A community garden space and/or garden plots (either on the ground floor or on the roof).
- A skateboarding and scooter area.
- A drama/theatre room.
- Prayer/meditation rooms.
- A sauna or steam room.
- A dedicated yoga or Zumba studio.
- Small business support spaces.
- Small to medium fitness spaces that are rentable by independent trainers/fitness instructors (like local yoga, pilates, or kickboxing instructors).

Other suggestions

- Make sure individuals from the community can be considered for jobs to build the community recreation centre.
- Ensure there lots of activities for seniors.
- Make sure washroom stalls are fully enclosed and do not have gaps above or below doors.
- Make sure it is easy for community members rent space for families and sports.
- Consider hosting in-person consultations or distributing surveys to households in the area to get more feedback about the CRC.

Demographic Information

Question: What is the age of the person filling out this survey?

The top responses were: 35% said they were 40 – 55 years old, 25% said they were 30-39 years old, and 13% said they were 19 to 29 years old.

Question: What language do you prefer speaking?

93% said they preferred speaking English.

Question: Does the person filling out this survey identify as Indigenous to Canada?

6% self-identified as First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native or Indian.

Question: Which race category best describes the person filling out this survey?

The top responses were: 36% said they identified as White, 17% identified as Black, 14% preferred not to answer.

Question: Does the person filling out this survey identify as a person with a disability?

16% identified as being people with disability.

Question: Excluding yourself, does anyone in your household identify as a person with a disability?

15% said someone in their house identifies as a person with a disability.

Question: What best describes the gender of the person filling out this survey?

The top responses were: 59% identified as a woman, 20% identified as a man, 16% preferred not to answer.

Question: What best describes the sexual orientation of the person filling out this survey?

The top responses were: 68% identified as heterosexual or straight, 22% preferred not to answer.

Question: What best describes your current housing situation?

The top responses were: 46% said they were homeowners, 30% said they were renting and 6% said they were permanently living with parent(s) or other family member(s).

Question: What best describes you and your household's access to outdoor space? Select all that apply.

The top responses were: 40% said they have access to private outdoor space like a yard, 24% said they have access to private outdoor space like a balcony, and 19% said they only have access to public spaces like parks.

Question: What was your total household income before taxes last year?

The top responses were: 29% preferred not to answer, 15% said their household income was \$150,000 or more, followed by 12% each who said their income was between \$30,000 to \$49,999, \$70,000 to \$99,000 and \$100,000 to \$149,000.

Question: How did you find out about this survey?

The top responses were: 50% they found out about the survey from a City of Toronto social media account, followed by 19% who found out through word of mouth, and 17% who found out through an email from the project team.