

Community Advisory Committee Meeting 4 Summary Report

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre

Phase 3

March 4, 2025





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Introduction

On Tuesday, March 4, 2025, the City of Toronto hosted the fourth and final Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting about the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre (CRC) and Child Care Centre. The meeting was part of Phase 3 (of 3) of the community engagement process to help inform the design, features, and programming of a new CRC and Child Care Centre for the Lawrence Heights community. Phase 3 of the engagement process focused on presenting and seeking feedback on the final CRC design. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide a summary of the insights gathered from the previous CAC meeting and the final public survey.
- Present the final CRC design, highlighting how the design has been updated in response to the community's feedback.
- Celebrate CAC member's dedication and valuable contributions through the process.
- Share next steps and opportunities to stay involved in shaping the future of the new Lawrence Heights CRC.

Other engagement activities held in Phase 3 included:

- An online survey
- Flemington Public School classroom engagement
- Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting 3
- Four community pop-ups, including youth-focused engagements

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 4. 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.

A draft of this summary was shared with participants for review before it was finalized.

Meeting Format

CAC Meeting 4 was held in-person at the Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre at 5 Replin Road. 18 CAC members attended.

The meeting began with a dinner, followed by a welcome, Land Acknowledgement and African Ancestral Acknowledgement from the City of Toronto. The City began the meeting by sharing the objectives and agenda. Various members of the City and consultant design team then shared an overview of the project timeline, recent community feedback, proposed outdoor playground design, and the final CRC design.

Following the presentation, CAC members asked questions of clarification followed by small group discussions focused on the final CRC design and the engagement process. Finally, CAC members shared feedback about the final design and the engagement process via three “Feedback Frame” stations.

The meeting concluded with the City sharing next steps, thanking everyone for participating, and providing CAC members with certificates of participation as thanks for and acknowledgement of their contribution.

Next Steps

The final CAC Meeting 4 summary will be posted on the project website (toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights) after participant review of the draft summary. The City will continue to communicate with CAC members and the broader community as the detailed design and construction process moves ahead.

What We Heard: Key Themes

Participants were generally happy with the updated design of the new CRC. CAC members generally said they were very happy with the updated draft design, with several saying they appreciated the efforts the City and design team made to consider the CAC's previous feedback. They identified a few areas where they would like to see the team consider some additional refinements, including the depths of the pools, the number of cooking stations in the community kitchen, and more.

Parking, local access, and reflecting the community's diversity remain priorities. Some CAC members said they would like to see the City continue to explore opportunities to provide parking access (to ensure the new CRC is inclusive and accessible), prioritize local community access for programs and space booking, and ensure the many diverse communities that call Lawrence Heights home are reflected in the building's design and art.

Appreciation for the engagement process. Most CAC members complimented the City and design team for the engagement process, saying they felt meetings were well run and documented and that the team put a lot of effort into responding to and incorporating CAC feedback.

Questions of Clarification

Before the small group discussion, participants asked questions of clarification. Following each question is a response from the City or design team.

Questions about public art

- **What are the selection criteria for the public artist? Is there anything that recognizes local artists?** *The City has three selection criteria: 1. “excellence,” 2. “qualifications,” and 3. “community connection.” The third of these criteria is intended to help the City identify an artist that is either from or has a strong connection to the Lawrence Heights community. The selected artist will also do further engagement with the community to make sure the resulting work responds to local feedback.*
- **What is the budget for public art?** *The budget for the indoor art is \$160,000, and the budget for the outdoor art is \$375,000.*
- **Who is on the public art selection committee?** *The committee is made up of three art experts and one community member.*

Questions about the final CRC design

- **Will there still be Food Bank space in the new CRC?** *Yes, the team has provided a dedicated space for the Food Bank on the ground floor.*
- **Why have you not included a bar in the fitness studio? These are often used for dance classes and could make the space more accessible to seniors.** *There is a separate dance studio where we have included a fitness bar; we could consider adding one to the fitness studio, too, if there is a strong desire to see one in both spaces.*
- **Could you clarify the depth of the pools?** *The lap pool has a maximum depth of 10 feet (3 metres), while the leisure pool has a maximum depth of 2 feet, 8 inches (800 millimetres).*
- **Would you consider adding a slide to the aquatics area?** *There will be portable slides available to the aquatics area that swimmers will be able to use.*
- **Why have you not included any kind of community garden?** *The Community Recreation Centre site is very tight, so we felt it would be better to place a community garden in the planned future park nearby. The future park will have more space for a community garden and will still be close enough to the new CRC to be useful to its visitors.*

Questions about the playground

- **How have you adjusted the design of the playground given previous concerns shared about the potential for kids to run into the linear park and bike lane beside the playground?** *We have added a fence on the west side of the park between the playground and the path. We have also added a landscape buffer, planters, and seating to create visual and physical separation between these spaces. There will still be openings between the playground and the linear park so that people can use the path to access the playground and vice versa, but these are away from the main play areas in the playground.*

Questions about parking

- **Could you provide an update on the status of providing parking?** *The City is continuing to explore options on how to provide parking. Late last year, we were exploring three options: provide surface parking on the CRC site, provide on-street parking nearby, and provide underground parking below the new CRC. Since then, we have ruled out the underground parking option: the cost estimate to provide underground parking was about \$20 million, and neither the City nor Toronto Parking Authority have budget available to build it. For the on-street parking design, the City is working with Toronto Community Housing to explore options since the design of the road is connected to the broader revitalization work it is leading. The City will update its website and notify all CAC members once it has made a decision about parking.*

Other questions

- **Will there be a bus stop that serves the new CRC?** *We don't know the exact location, but yes, there will be a TTC stop serving the new CRC.*
- **Will there be a fee to take classes in the new CRC?** *No, the new CRC will be a free centre, just like the current one.*
- **Did you consider using greywater for the CRC's water service?** *We designed the building to use stormwater for things like irrigation. City policy does not allow for greywater to be used for plumbing of things like toilets and sinks.*

What We Heard: Detailed Feedback

Over the course of the meeting, participants shared:

1. Feedback about the final CRC design
2. Other comments and suggestions about the CRC
3. Feedback about the engagement process

The following sections organize CAC members' feedback under these three topics.

1. Feedback about the final CRC design

Overall, participants were happy with the final CRC design, saying it does a good job of achieving the vision. Several said they were excited to see the building open. Among the participants who rated their sentiment about the statement, "the final proposed design achieves the vision for the new Community Recreation Centre," **53%** strongly agreed, **41%** agreed, and **6%** were neutral. Among the CAC members who rated their sentiment about the statement, "I'm excited about the final design of the new CRC and playground," **82%** strongly agreed and **18%** agreed.

CAC members highlighted aspects of the design that they liked, including:

- it accommodates and balances a very comprehensive program in a small footprint (including a greater variety of amenities than are available at the current CRC).
- it's welcoming to many different people, including people of different ages and abilities.
- it includes sustainable materials.
- it largely reflects community priorities and feedback.

Specific features CAC members were excited about included the food bank, community kitchen, seating (including in the gymnasium), the playground, outdoor seating, splash pad, youth spaces, rooftop area, swimming pool, and ceremonial plaza.

Several said that they appreciated the efforts the City and design team made to consider and address community feedback. They said that, while the team did not accommodate all feedback, they appreciated that it shared how feedback had been considered or incorporated.

2. Other comments and suggestions about the CRC

CAC members shared some final comments and suggestions about the CRC design, including comments about parking, local access, and other comments.

Parking

Several said that providing parking remained a priority for them, with a few saying the lack of parking could present barriers to some visitors, like seniors or families with young children. They said that, since the new CRC will be serving a big community, it will be important to have parking access. CAC members suggested the City explore options like providing free parking passes for on-street parking to CRC visitors, ensuring there is street parking in the design of the new road, or providing public parking (even if paid) as part of the development of any nearby condos.

Local access

Several reiterated comments from previous CAC meetings that they wanted to see the City prioritize local community access to the new CRC. Specifically, they said it would be important to:

- ensure local organizations do not have to pay to book spaces in the building.
- make sure local community members receive some kind of priority when signing up for programs at the CRC (since programs tend to get filled up very quickly).

Pools

Some CAC members said they would like to see the team consider adjusting the depth of the pools so there's a middle ground between very deep (in the lap pool) and very shallow (in the leisure pool). They were worried that the leisure pool is too shallow, and the lap pool is too deep for young kids. Suggestions included adding an incline to the lap pool (with the ability to add some kind of barrier to separate shallower and deeper sides of the pool) and ensuring at least one lifeguard is present at all times (preferably hired from the local community).

Community identity

Some said they would like to see the CRC showcase the community, including its history, milestones, and diverse demographics. While CAC members appreciated efforts to represent Indigenous and Black communities, they said Lawrence Heights is also home to Italian, Jewish, and many other communities and that it should be clear that the CRC is for all regardless of their background. Suggestions on how to showcase the community's identities included having a looping video in a lobby that teaches people about Lawrence Heights and adding more community-specific art throughout the building.

Other suggestions

Other comments CAC members shared included:

- Add features to the glass to make it less reflective and likely to become a “dead bird magnet”.
- Add multiple cooking stations and portable cooking equipment (as opposed to a single main cooking station).
- Include outlets for charging devices both indoors and outdoors.
- Design the building’s interior to be full of art of plants and make sure outdoor shade structures provide good, consistent shade.
- Carefully consider how community members access the food bank: it will be important to balance giving people the ability to “help themselves” to what they need while recognizing that there are different levels of need in the community and that food is there for those most in need.
- Make sure the roads around the CRC are designed with traffic calming measures to prioritize the safety of those around the building.
- Involve local youth in the detailed design of youth spaces.

3. Feedback about the engagement process

Participants generally said the engagement process was well-organized and planned, with meeting agendas followed, emails responded to, and feedback documented in detailed reports. Some said this project was their first time participating in such a process and they had felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. They also appreciated the level of detail the City and its design team shared in its presentations and how much attention the team paid to addressing, responding to, or incorporating the CAC’s feedback. CAC members also said they appreciated the team’s efforts to engage community youth through school workshops, saying young voices are often ignored in these types of processes.

Among the CAC members who rated their sentiment about the statement, “The engagement process was meaningful and a good use of my time,” **35%** strongly agreed, **39%** agreed, **17%** were neutral, and **9%** strongly disagreed.

CAC members shared some suggestions for the City consider, including:

- Make sure to connect with the existing CRC’s staff to assess how well the proposed design will meet their needs.
- While receiving honorarium was appreciated, consider providing a mechanism for community members to donate their honoraria back to the community, such as the food bank.

- Explore opportunities to condense the timeline so there are not big gaps between meetings.
- Make efforts to increase attendance and participation in CAC meetings – it was a shame that more people did not attend.
- Continue to keep the CAC and broader community updated, including about any planned road closures or diversions that will be needed due to construction.
- Consider identifying which specific aspects of the design changed or are different because of the CAC's advice — in some cases it felt like the team was asking for feedback on decisions that were already made.

Attachment 1: Meeting Agenda

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation and Child Care Centre Community Advisory Committee Meeting 4

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

6:30 – 9:00 pm

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre (5 Replin Rd), Multi-purpose Room

Meeting purpose:

- Provide a summary of the insights gathered from CAC meeting 3 and the final public survey
- Present the final CRC design, highlighting how the design has been updated in response to the community's feedback
- Celebrate your dedication and valuable contributions as members of the CAC
- Share next steps and opportunities to stay involved in shaping the future of the new Lawrence Heights CRC

PROPOSED AGENDA

6:30 Acknowledgements, Welcome, Agenda Review, Introductions

City of Toronto

6:50 Presentation: Final Lawrence Heights CRC Design

City of Toronto Parks & Recreation

CS&P Architects

PMA

Questions of clarification

7:30 Discussion

1. To what extent do you feel the final proposed design achieves the vision for the new CRC?
2. What final comments (if any) do you have about the design of the new CRC and other features?
3. What comments (if any) do you have about the engagement process? What did you like or appreciate about it, and what do you think could be improved?

8:30 Next steps, thanks, mingling

9:00 Adjourn