

Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan Parkland Strategy

Classroom Engagements Summary Report

Community Engagement Phase 1: Exploring Options

Fall 2024





Contents

Background	4
The Parkland Strategy (PLS)	4
The Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (PRFP)	4
The Five-Year Reviews	4
Community Engagement	5
Classroom Engagements	8
Overview	8
Summary of Results	9
Next Steps	11



Background

The Parkland Strategy (PLS)

The City of Toronto's [Parkland Strategy](#) (PLS) was adopted in 2019 to guide the long-term planning for Toronto's parks, including where the City adds new parkland and improves existing parks. The Parkland Strategy sets a 20-year vision and planning framework guided by the principles of: Expand, Improve, Connect, and Include. It fulfills the Ontario *Planning Act*'s requirement for a parks plan, enabling the municipality to apply the alternative requirement, under Section 42 of the *Planning Act*, to development and redevelopment that is eligible for parkland dedication. This is a tool that Toronto and other municipalities use to help address the increased need for parks and recreational facilities as Toronto's population grows. There are over 1,500 parks owned and/or operated by the City throughout Toronto and the system is growing with new parks added every year.

The Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (PRFP)

The City owns and maintains hundreds of recreational facilities in buildings and parks. The [Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan](#) and its [Implementation Strategy](#) help prioritize investments in indoor and outdoor recreation facilities across Toronto, like new basketball courts, cricket fields, skateparks, splash pads and community recreation centres. These documents also help the City assess new opportunities for partnerships and community proposals for new or improved recreation facilities.

The Reviews

Every five years, the City reviews the PRFP and PLS to reflect:

- Changing resident needs and priorities (e.g. changes due to Covid)
- A growing population
- Provincial legislation changes
- New city-wide policy directions (e.g. Net Zero Strategy, Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan, Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, and more)
- New financial tools resulting in less funding
- Updated accessibility and environmental standards

Community Engagement

A multi-phase, city-wide community engagement processes will inform the development of the PFRP and PLS reviews. Residents are invited to visit the project webpages to review past engagement summaries and to sign up for e-updates to be notified of future opportunities to get involved www.toronto.ca/ParksandFacilitiesPlans

Community Engagement Phase 1

This phase of community engagement took place from Fall 2024 to Winter 2025. In this phase, feedback on needs and priorities for recreation spaces and parks was collected from community members. The community engagement activities in this phase included:

- An online survey
- In-person pop-up events
- Do-it-yourself workshop kit
- **Classroom engagement kit (summarized in this document)**
- Equity-focused advisory group workshops
- Virtual public meetings
- Community-led engagements with the [Community Coordination Plan Clusters](#)

Engagement with Indigenous communities and First Nations included:

- Pop-ups in Indigenous community spaces
- Tours of Indigenous community spaces
- Indigenous Advisory Circle meeting
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation meeting

The feedback collected in Phase 1 will be used to guide updates to the PRFP.

This document summarizes the Phase 1 PRFP virtual public meeting.

Community Engagement Phase 2

In this phase, the draft directions for the PRFP updates will be shared with community members for review and feedback.

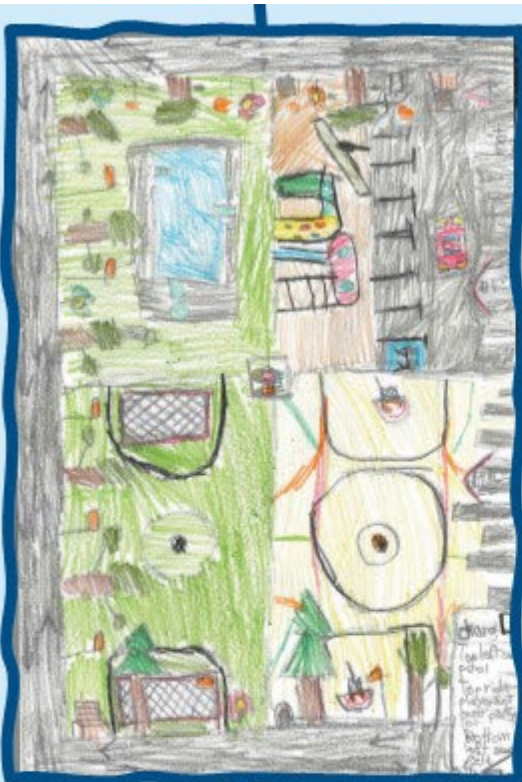
The community engagement activities anticipated in this phase are planned to include:

- An online survey
- A do-it-yourself workshop kit
- Equity-focused advisory group workshops
- Virtual public meetings
- Community-led engagements with the [Community Coordination Plan Clusters](#)

Engagement with Indigenous communities and First Nations is anticipated to include:

- Pop-ups in Indigenous community spaces
- Tours of Indigenous community spaces
- Indigenous Advisory Circle meeting
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation meeting

The feedback collected during this phase will help refine and finalize updates to the Parkland Strategy and Facilities Plan as part of the five-year reviews.



Classroom Engagements

Overview

A classroom engagement kit, designed for grades 5 to 8, was available on the project webpage from October 18 to December 18, 2024. The kit included a presentation to teach students about recreation facility and park planning, a printable classroom activity where students could design a park or community centre and an online form for teachers to submit a summary of their classroom's feedback to the City. The kits were available in French and English and were shared with the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board for distribution to teachers.

In total, 4 schools located in Scarborough, North York, Toronto, and East York and one Youth Council located in Thorncliffe submitted results, representing over 210 students from grades 5 to 11 being engaged in the process. This included a special classroom-engagement session at Alvin Curling Public School in Scarborough to mark the project's community engagement launch. The event included a City of Toronto staff-led presentation to students about the park and recreation facility design process, and a 'design-your-own-park' activity. In total, over 50 students in grade 5 participated in this event. Teachers at Alvin Curling Public School completed the activity with students and shared the results with City staff.

The project team would like to extend their thanks to all the teachers, community leaders, and students that shared their time and ideas through the classroom engagement kits. Thank you for helping shape the future of Toronto!

Summary of Results

Students ranked the following as the top 5 important park improvements:

1. More sport spaces (like fields, diamonds, courts)
2. More play spaces (playgrounds, splash pads, or wading pools)
3. Washroom, drinking fountains, and shade
4. More natural spaces (more trees and plantings)
5. More trees

When asked to design a park they would like to visit ...

Students chose to design a park with the following types of features:

- A park with both active and relaxing elements: 76%
- An active park: 15 %
- A relaxing park: 9%

These results suggest that most students favour a park with a mix of active and relaxing features.

Students chose to design a park of the following size:

- Smaller than a soccer field: 3%
- About the size of a soccer field: 17%
- Much larger than a soccer field: 81%

These results suggest that most students favour a large park to a small park.

Students most commonly included the following park features:

1. Playground
2. Sports field (e.g. soccer, cricket, other)
3. Basketball court
4. Outdoor pool
5. Outdoor ice rink
6. Splash pad
7. Dogs off-leash area
8. Outdoor fitness equipment
9. Bike park

Students identified the following qualities as helping to create a park that is fun, welcoming, and accessible to all:

- Areas made for play and activity, including playgrounds, sport areas, rinks, splash pads/water play areas, and community gardens
- Ensuring safety by keeping places well-lit, designing spaces to not feel isolated, and keeping parks clean and free of drugs, graffiti, and anti-social behavior (e.g. 'dangerous people')
- Good walking trails and pathways
- Clean park washrooms
- A café/snack bar
- Trees
- Accessible spaces (e.g. ramps and signage)
- Some students felt that they people living in a park made them feel unsafe, while other suggested supporting people who are experiencing homeless so they can enjoy the park as well
- Parking nearby

When asked to design a community recreation centre they would like to visit ...

Students most commonly included the following features:

1. Library
2. Café or other place to get food
3. Gymnasium
4. Indoor ice rink/arena
5. Indoor sports field
6. Childcare Centre
7. Shared space to study, read and work, with wifi access
8. Lane pool and leisure pool
9. Multipurpose room
10. Walking/jogging track
11. Youth-specific room (e.g. Enhanced Youth Space)
12. Food bank
13. Tech space or computer lab
14. City service offices (like health clinics, employment services, newcomer services, and other)
15. Affordable housing
16. Weight/cardio room
17. Indoor playground or play space
18. Connection to a school
19. Performing arts spaces (like a stage or theatre)
20. Kitchen
21. Informal spaces to meet and spend time with other community members

Students identified the following qualities as helping to create a community recreation centre that is fun, welcoming, and accessible to all:

- Physically accessible spaces, for people with physical disabilities (e.g. mobility challenges)
- Dedicated spaces for teens, so they have a space that feels like a second home (e.g. enhanced youth space)
- Places to sit
- Spaces with security and supervision, including changerooms that feel safe
- Spaces that are not overcrowded
- Activity spaces, such as pools, gyms, skating rinks, and multi-purpose activity rooms
- Non-recreation spaces, such as cafes, libraries, and childcare centres

Qualities of a park or community recreation centre that made students feel unwelcome or unsafe include:

- Unwelcoming community members or staff (e.g. community members who ask teens or others to leave a space, strict staff, older youth not making space for kids, people who are unpredictable or feel dangerous, etc.)
- Lack of cleanliness (e.g. litter, garbage, dirty spaces) or maintenance
- Poor lighting, or dark and isolated spaces
- Drugs
- Overcrowding
- Proximity to busy/dangerous streets
- Lack of supervision
- Lack of youth programs

Next Steps

All feedback collected through community engagement Phase 1 will be summarized. This information will be used to inform the development of the PLS and PRFP reviews. The draft directions will be shared with community members in Phase 2 of the community engagement process for review and feedback.