

Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

Virtual Public Meetings Summary Report

Community Engagement Phase 1

Meeting Date: November 28, 2024





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Background

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 Five-Year Review

Every five years, the City reviews the PRFP. This review is an opportunity to assess what is working well and what may need adjustment to ensure the plan continues to reflect the needs and priorities of residents. The review will focus on key areas such as:

- Identifying priorities for new or improved facilities, such as soccer fields, basketball courts, ice rinks and community recreation centres, and whether current recreation facilities meet the needs of residents
- Understanding where population growth is happening and deciding if planned recreation facilities are in the right places, or if changes are needed to better serve growing communities
- Reviewing how construction costs and available funding have changed and figuring out how to spend money where it will have the most impact

Virtual Public Meetings

Overview

On November 28, 2024, the project team held two virtual community meetings, including one afternoon and one evening session, to provide residents with the option to attend the session they found most convenient. 11 people attended the afternoon meeting, and six people attended the evening meeting.

Each meeting included a presentation that provided an introductory overview to the PRFP, followed by a question-and-answer session and then small group discussions, where participants could share their needs and priorities for the future of the City's recreation facilities. The presentation and discussion questions were the same at both meetings.

This document summarizes feedback received at both the afternoon and evening meetings.

Summary

Question and Answer Session

This section provides summaries of questions(Q) and responses(R) and is not verbatim. Responses are provided by City Staff.

Q. Can you tell us more about how the development of this plan intersects with the development of other strategies, such as for the Ice Facilities Strategy and the Citywide Approach to Dogs Off-leash Areas? Will these more specific strategies be adopted wholesale into the facilities plan?

R. Once these documents are complete, elements will be incorporated into, and used to inform, the PRFP:

- The Citywide Approach to Dogs Off-leash Areas, which hosted community engagement sessions through 2024 and is anticipated to go to City Council in 2025.
- The Ice Facilities Strategy, which is hosting community engagement sessions concurrently with the PRFP and will be incorporated directly into the PRFP once it is complete in 2025.

Q. There is concern around how pickleball facilities in Banbury Park are run, and a community member would like more organized play.

R. Please email facilitiesplan@toronto.ca and staff will discuss this site-specific concern with you.

Q. What will be the focus of the second engagement phase?

R. In phase 2 of engagement, the draft directions for the PRFP updates will be shared with community members for review and feedback.

Q. How does the City interact with private entities to ease the financial burden of the City?

R. The City has a Partnerships Office that works with potential donors to form partnerships that align with the City's priorities, including the delivery of recreation facilities. The current Facilities Plan supports the use of partnerships, when aligned with city priorities, to deliver recreation facilities.

Q. How do you account for growing sports, such as pickleball, that happened in the middle of the planning cycle?

R. This is part of the purpose of the 5-year review; to identify any changes in trends and resident demand, so the Plan can be adjusted in response. There is currently a Pickleball Advisory Group and a Pickleball Strategy in development, which will help to inform the PRFP review.

Small Group Discussion Session

1. Guiding Principles are the values that guide the direction (what is included and prioritized in) the Facilities Plan. Do you agree or disagree with these guiding principles? Are there changes or additions you would make?

- **Overall feedback:**
 - General participant support for the principles
 - Speak to indoor vs. outdoor facilities more (e.g. reflect indoor winter sports more)
- **Guiding Principle: Quality**
 - Include **consistency in quality** between various community centers and **communications quality** about facilities.
 - Include safety and inclusivity.
- **Guiding Principle: Innovation**
 - Include support for 'year-round' uses and partnerships, which are key for innovation.
 - Remove this principle as the role of government is to provide stability, not innovation.
- **Guiding Principle: Sustainability**
 - Use City recreation facilities as demonstration pieces for sustainable design (e.g. net zero design).
- **Guiding Principle: Equity**
 - "Other" barriers could be expanded/specified (e.g. barriers related to 2SLGBTQ community).
 - Add that community centers should be spaces where people can meet others, build civic engagement, build community and connection, and overcome polarity in society.

2. At community recreation centres, the City often partners with other service providers and facilities, like libraries, childcare centres, and schools, to create community hubs – a practice called 'co-locating'. These hubs allow for access to multiple services and programs in one space. Would you like community recreation centres to co-locate with other community partners, services, and facilities to become community hubs?

The majority of participants support co-location, with a few participants noting that they somewhat support co-location, depending on the specific services and facilities involved.

Most participants support co-location as it leads to the creation of synergies between different programs, services, and sports. A participant shared their concern that co-location

could lead to challenges when funding needs to be prioritized in a blended facility. Suggested considerations for planning a well-functioning co-located Centre include:

- Choose partners and services that serve the specific needs of a community.
- Ensure co-location does not take away from recreation facilities and programs.
- Co-locate with uses that are complementary in their peak use times, to keep a facility busy at all times.
- Consider using underutilized school grounds as locations for co-located facilities.

Suggestions for co-located services and facilities include:

- Facilities:
 - Libraries
 - Schools
 - Health Centres
 - Arts hubs
 - Malls
 - Senior's facilities
 - Shelters
- Services:
 - Seniors' services and programming
 - Youth programs
 - 2SLGBTQ+ programs
 - Services for marginalized people, including those who are unhoused

3. What are your top needs and priorities for the future of recreation facilities in Toronto? Do you have any suggestions for making City of Toronto recreation facilities more safe, welcoming, inclusive for all?

Participants shared their priorities for a variety of recreation facilities and programs:

- **Community Recreation Centres:**
 - Accessibility
 - Update existing facilities so they are physically accessible. This includes installing pool lifts and ramps, ramps between Centre rooms, and more.
 - Ensure each Centre's webpage is up to date with hours and closures.
 - Co-location
 - Include food banks, city services, and employment services in community recreation centers to normalize and serve people who have low incomes.
 - Maximize all square footage in existing Centres to serve community.

- Provide more meeting rooms what are accessible for community organizations.
- Provide more casual, drop in spaces facilitate community building/meetups. This can be especially important for families and individuals that are caregivers (e.g. of Alzheimer's patients) in the winter.
- Gender-neutral change rooms and showers:
 - Members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities expressed concern that they do not feel completely safe when using gendered change rooms/locker rooms/showers and would feel safer in gender-neutral facilities.
 - Other participants shared that they enjoy the ease of changing/showing in an open, shared space, which is removed in gendered changerooms (as all changing occurs in private stalls); they suggested adding a gender-neutral or private space while also keeping open, gendered spaces.
- Include positive 'community guidelines/rules' to encourage positive behavior at recreation facilities.
- Use new building technologies (e.g. steel shingles).
- **Tennis:**
 - There are too many tennis clubs compared to the availability of tennis courts. This affects equity of use and prevents community use, as access to tennis courts is limited. Place more restrictions on tennis clubs so that there is more community access to tennis facilities.
 - Allow tennis clubs to provide more funding for renovations.
 - Convert outdoor courts to indoor courts, to increase useable hours and revenue.
 - Provide Padel Tennis facilities:
 - Padel Tennis is a fast-growing sport around the world, especially popular in Spanish speaking countries, and targeting a younger demographic. It is a combination of squash and tennis that needs enclosed courts like squash.
- **Pickleball:**
 - Provide city programing at new city pickleball facilities.
 - Give priority access to seniors.
 - Partner to build Pickleball facilities on Toronto District School Board lands.
- **Off-leash areas (OLAs)**
 - OLAs should be better distributed across the city (e.g. there are wards and communities without OLAs) as there are many dogs who cannot travel on the TTC, and so need local facilities.
 - Ensure OLAs are accessible for people with limited mobility.
 - Design suggestions:
 - Fence existing greenspace to create new OLAs quickly and cheaply.
 - Include grass instead of gravel, use high-quality materials, and build OLAs that people and dogs want to use.

- **Other facility suggestions:**
 - Provide more fires pits (these facilitate community building).
 - Use rinks as outdoor dog parks in the off season.
 - Update specific facilities:
 - Banbury Community Recreation Centre should be updated to allow for heat adjustment by room, to address mechanical noises throughout the building, and to fix the stage shaking (due to ventilator).
 - Include a library near St. Lawrence Market.
- **Programing:**
 - Provide more:
 - Diverse programming, especially for seniors
 - Drop-in programs for youth
 - Provide language services to help newcomers access programing.
 - Help people find ways to connect to one another.
 - Allow residents greater control over programming in their local community recreation centre.
 - Allow permit holders to advertise their recreation programing in community recreation centres (e.g. provide access to notice boards). Currently, the City only allows city-run programs to be advertised.
- **User fees:**
 - User fees are a barrier to use and a barrier to equitable use.
 - Permits requiring insurance is prohibitive for small groups to obtain – the city should cover safety and insurance for all permits.
 - Remove fees from amenity use/permitting that builds community and contributes to the common good (e.g. fire pit use, tennis), and keep fees for uses that serve individuals (e.g. parking).

Next Steps

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

Appendix A:

Participant Overview

At the start of the meeting, **optional** polls were used to get a sense of who was in the virtual room. Results are as follows. Note that all meeting attendees did not participate:

What area of the city do you live in?

- Scarborough: 1
- North York: 0
- Etobicoke: 1
- Downtown and/or East York: 3
- Outside of Toronto: 0

What is your age?

- 12 years old or under: 0
- 13 to 18 years old: 0
- 19 to 29 years old: 2
- 30 to 39 years old: 1
- 40 to 55 years old: 1
- 56 to 64 years old: 1
- 65 to 74 years old: 0
- 75 years old or above: 1

How often do you use City of Toronto recreation facilities?

- Daily: 0
- Multiple times a week: 3
- Multiple times a month: 2
- A few times a year: 1
- Once a year or less: 0

Are you attending this meeting as a representative of an organization?

- Yes: 1
- No: 4

Rank the 5 recreation facilities that are most important to you or your household:

- Baseball diamond: 0
- Basketball court: 2
- Beach volleyball court: 0
- Bike park: 0

- Bocce court: 0
- Cricket field: 0
- Curling rink: 1
- Dogs off-leash area: 2
- Outdoor fitness equipment: 3
- Frisbee/disc golf course: 0
- Golf course: 0
- Gymnasium: 1
- Indoor ice rink/arena: 2
- Outdoor natural ice rink: 1
- Outdoor artificial ice rink: 1
- Ice skating trail: 0
- Lawn bowling green: 0
- Multipurpose room: 0
- Pickleball court: 1
- Outdoor playground: 2
- Indoor playground: 1
- Outdoor pool: 0
- Indoor Lane Pool: 2
- Indoor Leisure Pool: 0
- Skateboard park: 0
- Splash pad: 1
- Sports field: 2
- Tennis court: 1
- Weight/cardio room: 2
- Wading pool: 1
- Other: 1