

**Parkland Strategy,
Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan,
and Ice Facilities Strategy**

In-Person Pop-Ups Summary Report

Community Engagement Phase 1: Exploring Options

Pop-up Dates: October 19 to November 30, 2024





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Background

Introduction

A multi-phase, city-wide community engagement process is occurring to inform joint reviews of the City of Toronto's [Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan](#) (PRFP) and the [Parkland Strategy](#) (PLS), as well as to create the City's new [Ice Facilities Strategy](#) (IFS). This process has been initiated to reflect:

- Changing resident needs and priorities (e.g., changes in work and leisure patterns influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic)
- A growing population
- Provincial legislation changes
- New city-wide priorities and policy directions (e.g., Net Zero Strategy, (Indigenous) Reconciliation Action Plan, Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, and more)
- Changing financial tools that have resulted in less funding
- Updated accessibility and environmental standards

As part of the engagement activities planned for Phase 1 of this process, 25 in-person pop-up events were held with a pop-up occurring in each of the City's 25 wards. This document provides a summary of these pop-up events and the input provided by over 2,775 participants.

Residents were invited to visit the process webpages to view engagement summaries and sign up for notifications for future opportunities to get involved:

- PRFP and PLS community engagement: www.toronto.ca/ParksandFacilitiesPlans
- IFS: www.toronto.ca/IceFacilitiesStrategy

The Parkland Strategy

The City'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 PLS sets a 20-year vision and planning framework guided by the principles of: Expand, Improve, Connect, and Include. It fulfills the *Provincial Planning Act*'s requirement for a

parks plan to be adopted in order for the City to receive parkland from new developments over the legislated base rate for conveyance to help address the increasing need for parks as Toronto's population grows. The City's Parks and Recreation Division is the lead on developing and implementing the PLS, with the support of other City Divisions and community partners. 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

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 to assess new opportunities for partnerships and community proposals for new or improved recreation facilities.

The Ice Facilities Strategy

The City of Toronto is developing an [Ice Facilities Strategy](#), a long-term plan to maximize use and guide future investment in both indoor and outdoor ice facilities where residents skate, play hockey, curl, and more. The Strategy will be integrated into the five-year review of the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan.

In-Person Pop-Up Events

Overview

The feedback summarized in this document was collected at in-person pop-up events that took place between October 19 and November 30, 2024, at locations in each of Toronto's 25 wards. The pop-ups provided participants with the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the 5-year reviews of the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (PRFP) and Parkland Strategy (PLS), and the new Ice Facilities Plan (IFS), during Phase 1 of these community engagement process.

Images of the four pop-up boards used to facilitate the pop-up events are included in Appendix A. Responses from participants were collected using sticky notes and sticky tabs.

The following chart lists the dates and locations of each pop-up event, as well as the number of people that staff interacted with at each pop-up (either by providing feedback on the boards or by taking an informational postcard on how to get involved or learn more about the process). **In total, it is estimated that staff interacted with over 2,775 people.**

Date (2024)	Ward	Location	Interactions
October 19	3	Fairfield Park (Fall Fest)	120
October 21	4	Sorauren Avenue Park	100
October 22	10	Trinity Bellwoods (Farmers' Market)	200
October 24	9	Wallace Emerson Community Recreation Centre	34
October 26	17	Ethennonnhawahstihnen' Community Recreation Centre	49
October 26	5	Artscape Weston Commons (Weston Farmers' Market)	120
October 28	2	Etobicoke Olympium Community Recreation Centre	100
October 30	16	Dennis R. Timbrell Community Recreation Centre	73
November 1	20	Variety Village Active Living Centre	36
November 2	6	Earl Bales Community Recreation Centre	65
November 3	24	Centennial Community Recreation Centre	74
November 5	1	Rexdale Community Hub	55
November 6	22	L'Amoreaux Community Recreation Centre	90
November 9	12	Wychwood Barns (Farmers' Market)	150
November 12	21	Scarborough Town Centre	50
November 13	13	Pam McConnell Aquatic Center	12
November 14	25	Heron Park Community Centre	30
November 16	18	Cavalcade of Lights (Rosedale Business Improvement Area)	104
November 16	11	North York Central Library	165
November 17	7	Driftwood Community Recreation Centre	20
November 19	14	Jimmie Simpson Community Recreation Centre	60
November 23	15	Toronto Botanical Gardens (Annual Holiday Market)	55
November 26	19	Main Street TTC Subway Station	600
November 27	8	Lawrence West TTC Subway Station	380
November 30	23	Agincourt Community Recreation Centre	36

Staff additionally facilitated pop-ups in several Indigenous community spaces, which are summarized in the project's Indigenous Engagement Summary Report.

What We Heard: Parkland Strategy

The following provides a summary of the three questions featured on the display boards at the pop-up events that focused on the Parkland Strategy.

What's your favourite park in Toronto and why?

Participants were asked to share the name, or provide a location description, of their favourite park in Toronto, and share the reasons that make it their favourite park.

315 total sticky notes were received from participants responding to this question. Specific park names were mentioned 311 times identifying 103 different parks, plus two squares (Sankofa Square and Mel Lastman Square). Some sticky notes described parks in relation to streets or general areas (e.g. Mid-town), and some listed favourite amenities or activities within favourite parks without mentioning the name or location of the park.

The 9 parks most frequently mentioned as favourites are as follows:

- High Park (51)
- Regent Park (16)
- Earl Bales Park (16)
- Sunnybrook Park (11)
- Rowntree Park (9)
- Tommy Thompson Park (8)
- Riverdale Park (7)
- Rouge Park (6)
- Centennial Park (6)

The most commonly mentioned parks listed above, with the exception of Regent Park, are larger parks with significant natural systems, such as ravines, woodlands, and lakeshore. Some also have substantial recreation features, such as sports fields, baseball diamonds, and a ski hill. Size ranges for most range between 72 ha and 215 ha, with Rouge Park measuring considerably larger at 7,956 ha (1,260 ha within Toronto). In contrast, Regent Park is a smaller though still generously sized park (1.75 ha) adjacent to the Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre with features that include a community garden, playground, and dog off leash area.

94 other park names were mentioned five times or less each in a total of 181 responses. These parks range from smaller parkettes to larger community parks in locations across the city, and contain many diverse features and amenities.

Top 10 Parks Mentioned (including number of times mentioned)

1. High Park (51)
2. Earl Bales Park (16)
3. Regent Park (16)
4. Sunnybrook Park (11)
5. Rowntree Park (9)
6. Tommy Thompson Park (8)
7. Riverdale Park (7)
8. Centennial Park (6)
9. Rouge Park (6)
10. Other (180)

The 20 most frequently mentioned reasons for parks being indicated as favourites are indicated below:

- Playgrounds (39)
- Proximity or close to home (27)
- Nature or natural, unspecified (20)
- Trails (20)
- Walking or running (16)
- Large size (15)
- Lots to do or activities, unspecified (12)
- Dog parks, dog trails, or dog walking (13)
- General amenities, unspecified (9)
- Skating rinks, skating trails, or hockey (9)
- Zoo at High Park (8)
- Pools (7)
- Benches (7)
- Paths (7)
- BBQ (7)
- Biking (7)
- Splash pads (6)
- Quiet (6)
- Bike paths or trails (6)
- Greenery or vegetation (6)

This or That: Park Edition. What do you prefer?

Participants were asked to choose their preferred park quality in each of the following 3 pairings. 1,065 total responses were collected using sticky tabs. The number and percentage of participants who preferred each type of park is indicated below:

Natural vs. Landscaped (369 total responses)

- 308 (83%) preferred “a natural park with lots of greenery and trees”
- 61 (17%) preferred “a landscaped park with lawns and landscaped gardens”

Small vs. Big (340 total responses)

- 197 (58%) preferred “a small park close to my house with few or no recreation amenities”
- 143 (42%) preferred “a big park further away from my house with lots of recreation amenities”

Quiet vs. Programmed (356 total responses)

- 165 (46%) preferred “a quiet park that’s good for relaxing”
- 191 (54%) “a programmed park with lots of events happening”

How can parks be improved to feel more welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all Toronto residents?

Participants were asked about how parks can be improved to feel more welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all Toronto residents. 583 sticky notes were received in response to this question, many containing multiple suggestions. The 10 most commonly mentioned themes are indicated below.

Washrooms (47 respondents)

Having, or adding more, washrooms was the most frequently referenced suggestion for how to make parks feel more welcoming, inclusive, and safe. Some participants indicated that washrooms should be available in all seasons. It was additionally mentioned that washrooms should be gender inclusive, better maintained, and improved to be safer and more accessible in their design.

Benches and other seating (43 respondents)

Having, or adding more, seating in parks in the form of benches and picnic tables was frequently mentioned, including for parks in hydro corridors. Suggestions for the placement of seating included in the sun for enjoyment in colder months and in the shade for relief in hotter months. Orientation towards views was also suggested and it was mentioned that bench materials that attract wasps (e.g. natural logs) should be avoided. A suggestion was made to have emergency supplies included in the design of benches.

Dogs in leashed and off-leash areas (32 respondents)

How dogs are managed in parks was a common theme in responses. For leashed areas, it was indicated that more enforcement of leash use is needed to keep people safe, and especially children in playground areas. It was suggested that fencing of playground areas could help with keeping children safe from dogs and more clean up of dog poop was needed. Some respondents indicated that more off-leash areas are needed, including specialized areas for smaller dogs and reactive dogs. It was suggested that some off-leash areas need improvement. Some respondents indicated they would like to have areas that are dog-free.

Lighting (26 respondents)

Having, and adding more, lighting in general was frequently mentioned. Specific areas indicated that could use more or better lighting include trails, playgrounds (for after hour use), and tennis courts. It was additionally mentioned that solar lighting could be used, and that too much lighting in parks can cause light pollution.

Accessibility (24 respondents)

Accessibility was frequently mentioned for the design of parks. It was suggested that accessible design is particularly needed for seniors and should be applied to paths (e.g. paving), trails, and washrooms. Accessible design is also needed for playgrounds and other park equipment where ramps could also be added. It was indicated that driving to and parking within parks supports accessibility.

Plants, trees, and naturalization (24 respondents)

It was suggested that trees add comfort to parks by providing shading and cooling, and encourage walking. The need for maintenance of trees and clean up of tree debris (e.g. fallen branches) was indicated. Planting of Indigenous trees and fruit trees was encouraged. Concern for the loss of trees to Metrolink development was indicated. The theme of naturalization (which generally includes trees, shrubs, and tall grasses) was mentioned including in the context of parks in hydro corridor. Some participants indicated that native plants and flowers should be used to create meadows and support pollinators.

Playgrounds (22 respondents)

Amongst the common suggestions were that more playgrounds are generally needed and for a variety of ages, and some existing playgrounds need repair. Playground safety and design were frequently mentioned. It was suggested that playgrounds should be designed to be accessible and should be colourful. Some suggested more of specific types of features, including monkey bars, swings, slides, naturalized play structures, and the addition of toys.

Cleanliness, maintenance, and garbage bins (21 respondents)

References to cleanliness and maintenance were frequently made, relating to garbage management as well as clean up of natural debris from trees, such as fallen branches, from trails. Mentions of more frequent garbage pick up and the need for more waste bins was made. It was also mentioned that maintenance trucks should stay off the grass to avoid damage to parks. Dog poop was pointed out as a maintenance issue that needs further attention.

Parking (12 respondents)

It was generally mentioned that there should be more and better parking available in parks. To a lesser extent it was suggested that there should be less or no parking in parks. As indicated earlier, it was mentioned that parking is a component of accessibility, especially allowing seniors to travel to and use parks.

Water fountains and bottle filling stations (11 respondents)

Having, and adding more, drinking fountains and water bottle filling stations were mentioned by some participants. It was suggested that fountains should be in all parks, big and small. Fountains should be in working order.

What We Heard:

Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

The following provides a summary of the 2 questions at the pop-up events that related to the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan.

Which three types of recreation facilities are most important to you?

Participants could select up to three facilities. Responses include:

- Pools, splash pads, and wading pools: 261
- Community recreation centres: 244
- Sport courts (e.g., tennis, basketball, pickleball, etc.): 188
- Playgrounds: 178
- Sports fields: 162
- Ice facilities: 144
- Outdoor fitness equipment: 91
- Dog off-leash areas: 83
- Other: 74
- Skateparks and bike parks: 61

How can recreation facilities be improved to feel more welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all Toronto residents?

The eleven most common themes included:

Programing

Many participants suggested new or expanded recreation programing, spanning a wide range of activities (skating, art, cooking, dance, camp, drop-in sports, women-only programs, cultural programs, and more) and target demographics (newcomers, seniors, adults, teens, kids, babies, and families), and times (after school, evening, weekend, daytime), including expanding existing programs to meet high demand. A couple of respondents suggested local residents should be prioritized for limited recreation program spots.

Design

Many participants provided suggestions for improved facility designs. The most common suggestions centred around playgrounds and community recreation centres.

Many participants suggested either building more playgrounds (indoor and outdoor), or provided specific suggestions for improving playground designs. Design suggestions included: more wheelchair-accessible design; natural playgrounds; more creative/challenging playground designs; inclusion of specific features like climbing features and slides; larger playgrounds; playgrounds for all ages or areas for different age groups; soft and accessible surfacing.

Some participants suggested specific design features for community recreation centres including: kitchens; community gathering spaces (both casual and organized gathering); more multi-purpose and multi-generational spaces; co-located libraries; safer routes to recreation facilities; and spaces specifically for seniors, and for youth. Some participants also suggested including cafes or food stalls and improving lighting across a range of recreation facilities.

A few participants commented about the design of change rooms, showers, and washrooms, which most preferring family/gender inclusive stalls, and fewer preferring more open, gendered facilities.

Maintenance and Cleanliness

Some participants suggested improved maintenance and cleanliness of existing recreation facilities and washrooms, including better waste management, replacing worn out nets, repairing heating and colling systems, tree maintenance, improving drainage at outdoor facilities, keeping sports court lines fresh, and more.

Accessibility

Many participants provided suggestions to improve accessibility of existing facilities. Suggestions to improve physical accessibility, included; building more playgrounds that are fully accessible for wheelchair users; adding lifts and ramps to pools; adding elevators and ramps to existing facilities; providing stroller parking; providing Wi-Fi and tech equipment/facilities; providing shuttles or other travel options to help residents reach recreation facilities; and providing recreation equipment that can be used by wheelchair users. Suggestions to improve other elements of accessibility included: providing programming and signage in various languages and hiring multi-lingual staff; reducing tech barriers for seniors; and providing more, affordable, inclusive programming / programming for people with disabilities.

Communications and Awareness

Many participants suggested improving communications between the City and residents about recreation facilities and programs. Participants noted that communities are not always aware of the recreation facilities and programs that are already available to them, and suggested better promotion of existing programs, facilities, events (e.g. paid ads, flyers, signage, in-facility info-sheets; social media posts). A few participants also recommended:

improved communication with permit holders and program registrants, especially about any changes or cancellations; more staff available to answer questions in facilities; an easier and more transparent feedback process (e.g. following up on complaints, requesting cleanings); and more/easier to find information on facility hours, program registration, and facility booking.

Affordability/Cost

Many participants provided suggestions to make the use of recreation facilities more affordable. Common suggestions included free or more affordable program costs (e.g. for children, people with disabilities, newcomers, shelter users, swim classes, etc.); free and easy to access facility rentals for community groups; and more free centres.

Extended Facility Hours

Some participants suggested extending facility hours or season length to allow for higher use of existing facilities (e.g. community recreation centres, pools, ice facilities) and more program hours.

Registration and Permit/Booking Process

Some participants suggested improving the various processes to make registering for programs, and booking permits easier, simpler, and more transparent. This included improved allocation policies, more transparency about what programs and spaces are booked, creating an app for program registration; more flexibility for booking permits after application deadlines; and more options, clarity and transparency around booking of tennis and other sport courts and fields.

Staffing

Some participants noted the importance of friendly and helpful staff to create a welcoming space. Key suggestions included hiring more staff overall (to run more programs and provide more front desk service), hiring multi-lingual staff, hiring staff with specific program skills, and improved staff training.

Upgraded Facilities

Some participants underscored the importance of investing in and upgrading existing facilities, especially older community recreation centres.

Maintaining or Increasing Public Access

Some participants noted the importance of keeping recreation facilities public, and increasing public use over private/permitted use.

What We Heard: Ice Facilities Strategy

The following provides a summary of the two questions at the pop-up events that related to the Ice Facilities Strategy.

What three ice activities are you most interested in?

Participants could select up to three facilities. Responses include:

- Drop-in / Public skating: 185
- Learn to skate: 171
- Hockey: 99
- Shinny: 58
- Figure skating: 57
- Curling: 49
- None - Not interested in ice activities: 21
- Ringette: 11
- Other: 11
 - The top 3 suggestions provided under 'other' included:
 - Skiing (downhill and cross country): 6
 - Social/dance skating (e.g. DJ skate nights): 3
 - Speed skating: 2

Outdoor rinks and many indoor rinks don't have ice during the warmer months. Do you have any ideas for how we could use these spaces when there is no ice?

The ten most frequent suggestions included:

1. Ball hockey, foot hockey, roller hockey, or knee hockey (22 responses)
2. Roller skating or roller blading (18 responses)
3. Community events (e.g. markets, workshops) (16 responses)
4. Improving facilities to extend the ice season so that more people can participate in ice programming (15 responses)
5. Basketball (14 responses)
6. Splashpads, mist/cooling station, decorative fountain, or pool (13 responses)
7. Pickleball (10 responses)
8. Skateboarding (8 responses)
9. Tennis (6 responses)
10. Gym/fitness/training space (5 responses)

Other suggestions included: Biking or learn-to-bike space; lacrosse; lawn bowling or bocce; soccer; playground or play space; football; indoor movie theatre; camp space; volleyball; rugby; bookable off-leash area.

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 review, PRFP review, and Ice Facilities Strategy 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: Pop-Up Boards

Help plan the future of Toronto's recreation facilities and parks

Toronto's 1500+ parks and hundreds of recreation facilities provide communities with places to play, connect, celebrate, learn, grow, exercise, build community, access nature, and have fun.

The City of Toronto's Parkland Strategy and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan are 20-year plans that guide the growth of, and investment in, these spaces across the city. The documents are reviewed every five years to make sure they support current resident needs and can be implemented based on changes to provincial legislation and today's financial realities.



Through upcoming engagement opportunities, we invite you to share what matters most to you and your community for parks and recreation spaces, both now and for the future.

Process Timeline



Get Involved

Scan the QR code to visit the project webpage and learn more about the project and the engagement opportunities below.

Online Survey

Choose between a long or short version based on your available time. The survey closes on December 18.

Virtual Public Meetings

Meet the project team, explore the plans and how they work, and share your feedback.

DIY (Do-it-yourself) Workshop Kit

Teachers, members of organizations, community groups, and neighbours can use these kits to run their own community engagements.

Urban Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle

Representatives from Indigenous organizations and Indigenous leaders will inform how these documents can respond to the needs and priorities of Indigenous communities members.

Equity Focused Advisory Group

Representatives from a wide range of organizations serving equity-deserving communities will help steer the project forward.



Improving your recreation spaces

Which three types of recreation facilities are most important to you?

	Community recreation centres (e.g. with gymnasiums, multi-purpose rooms, weight rooms, etc.)	
	Ice facilities (e.g. arenas, curling rinks, skating trails, etc.)	
	Dog off-leash areas	
	Playgrounds	
	Pools, splash pads, and wading pools	
	Skateparks and bike parks	
	Sport courts (e.g., tennis, basketball, pickleball, etc.)	
	Sports field (e.g., soccer, cricket, football, etc.)	
	Outdoor fitness equipment	
	Other:	

How can recreation facilities be improved to feel more welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all Toronto residents?



Improving your parks

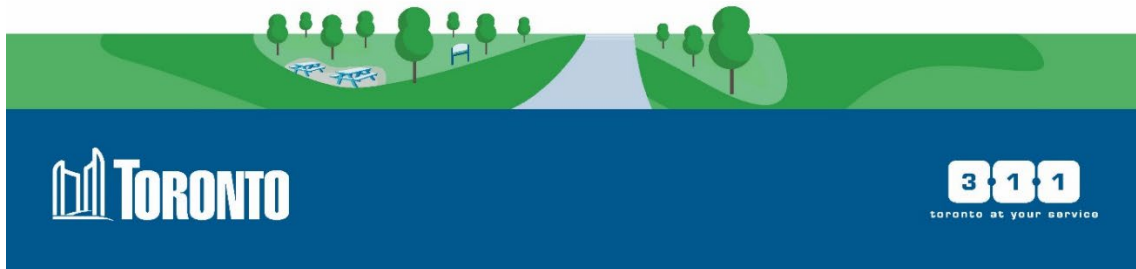
What's your favourite park in Toronto and why?



This or That: Park Edition. What do you prefer?

A natural park with lots of greenery and trees	or	A small park close to my house with few or no recreation amenities	or	A quiet park that's good for relaxing
A landscaped park with lawns and landscaped gardens	or	A big park further away from my house with lots of recreation amenities	or	A programmed park with lots of events happening

How can parks be improved to feel more welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all Toronto residents?



Improving your ice facilities



The City is developing an Ice Facilities Strategy, a long-term plan to enhance the use of both indoor and outdoor ice facilities where residents skate, play hockey, curl and more. When completed, the Ice Facilities Strategy will be incorporated into the refresh of the larger Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan.



Get Involved

Scan the QR code to visit the Ice Facilities Strategy webpage to learn more about upcoming engagements, share your input, and sign up for e-updates.

What 3 ice activities are you most interested in?

Curling	Ringette	Figure skating	Hockey
Learn to skate	Drop-in / Public skating	Shinny	None! I'm not interested in ice activities
Other			

Outdoor rinks and many indoor rinks don't have ice during the warmer months. Do you have any ideas for how we could use these spaces when there is no ice?

