

Do-It-Yourself Workshop Kit

Discussion Guide

Updating the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan and Parkland Strategy

Phase 2 Engagement



This guide is for meeting **organizers** and **facilitators**.

Meeting participants do not need to read this guide.

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Introduction

Toronto's recreation facilities and parks offer communities spaces to play, connect, learn, exercise and celebrate. The City of Toronto's **Parkland Strategy (PLS)** and **Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan (PRFP)** (formerly the Facilities Master Plan) are 20-year plans that guide the growth of, and investment in, recreation facilities and parks across the city.

These plans are being updated to ensure they continue to meet the changing needs and priorities of residents and reflect updates in population, policies, and funding.

Using the Do-It-Yourself Workshop Kit is one way community members can get involved and share feedback to help inform the updates for both plans.

How to Use the Do-it-Yourself Kit: Community organizations and groups are encouraged to use this kit to host community conversations and gather community input to help shape the future of Toronto's recreation facilities and parks. The focus of the discussions within the kit are on the emerging directions for how each plan will be updated. These directions were developed with the help of community input received during Phase 1 of the community engagement process.

This guide will help you host a community discussion with a small group of people. The kit includes:

1. This Discussion Guide, to be used by the meeting organizer/facilitator to plan and run the community discussion.
2. The Slide Deck, to be viewed by all participants during the community discussion.
 - The Slide Deck can be shared during the discussion virtually, on a projector/screen, or can be printed for in-person use.
3. A link to the Online Submission Form, where you can share the results of your community conversation with the City's project team.

All input that the City receives, including feedback from groups participating through this kit, will be summarized, posted on the project webpage, and presented to the Mayor and City Council as the projects progress.

Suggestions and Tips for Hosting the Discussion

Before hosting the discussion, review this guide and familiarize yourself with the project, background information, and discussion questions. Pay special attention to instructions for handling different types of questions. This guide provides enough information to facilitate the discussion. You are also a participant in this discussion and are welcome to contribute your own thoughts and ideas.

You don't need to be an expert! Questions from your group can be recorded as input. If participants have specific or technical questions about parks or recreation facilities, direct them to Celina Chong, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator, at celina.chong@toronto.ca.

Preparation for the Discussion

Review the Do-It-Yourself Workshop materials: Please familiarize yourself with the background information and discussion questions in this guide. Also, review the accompanying slide deck, which offers more information about these documents.

Set a meeting agenda: Help attendees understand the structure of the workshop and let them know they will have opportunities to share their thoughts during the session. Aim to keep the workshop to one hour and a half to ensure there is enough time to cover all discussion questions. If participants are meeting for the first time, consider starting with introductions and a quick icebreaker.

- **Ice-breaker question idea:** Ask participants to introduce themselves to the group and share their favourite activity when they visit a park (e.g., walking, reading, playing sports).
- **Decide the meeting format:** Will it be in-person, online, or hybrid? If online or hybrid, choose the online platform. Plan how you will share the slide deck, including getting any tech you need (e.g. computer and projector) or printing materials before the meeting if you are sharing the materials in person.

Engage participants: Contact community members to find a suitable time and format. It is suggested to hold the session with a group of 8-10 individuals at a time, but feel free to design the group size based on the specific needs of your group.

Provide background materials: Make sure attendees know they will be asked to share their thoughts on the future of recreation facilities and parks in Toronto. Feel free to send presentation slides and a preview of the discussion questions before the meeting.

Determine a method to take notes: Make sure to charge your laptop or bring a pen and paper to take notes during the group discussions. You may wish to assign a colleague or friend to take notes and summarize the discussion to lighten your workload. Discuss this with them in advance of the workshop.

Review the questions in the submission form: You'll need to provide a summary of what was discussed by your group as your report back to City staff. Read through the [submission form](#) so that you know the format that responses are collected in. This will help you with your note taking.

Facilitation Tips for During the Workshop

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/long-term-vision-plans-and-strategies/parkland-recreation-facilities-strategies-community-engagement/>The follow are a few tips for facilitation during the workshop:

- **In-person setup and distribution of materials:** Set up your space and distribute printed materials before participants arrive.
- **Survey reminder for individual input:** Remind participants that their feedback will be submitted collectively as a group. If they wish to share their individual feedback, please encourage them to take the [engagement survey](#) available on the process webpage until the end of September.
- **Introductions:** Begin by asking participants to introduce themselves and share briefly why they joined (and their responses to the ice breaker question, if time allows).
- **Focus on the agenda:** Start with an overview of the session and ensure everyone understands the purpose and flow of the session.
- **Stay neutral:** You don't need to be an expert on the subject, but being familiar with the questions will help guide the discussion.
- **Encourage participation:** Ask quieter participants if they have thoughts to share and remind more vocal participants to allow space for others.
- **Clarify and restate:** Repeat what you hear and ask for clarification when needed to ensure everyone understands.
- **Keep on track:** Use the discussion questions to steer the conversation back if it strays.
- **Foster a respectful environment:** Disrespectful language or intimidation should not be allowed. Gently remind everyone to be respectful and inclusive.
- **Virtual meeting tips:** Use features like hand-raising, the chat function, or calling on participants by name to keep the conversation flowing in virtual formats.

Reporting Results

Once your community conversation is complete, please submit the results of the engagement using the [submission form](#).

Background Information on the Project

The following provides brief context on how Toronto's population is growing and an overview of each of the strategic documents. Background information is also provided within the presentation slide deck.

Toronto is Growing!

Toronto is experiencing rapid population growth, putting pressure on recreation facilities and the parks system. In 2019, Toronto had a population of approximately 2.9 million residents. The Province's 2020 Growth Plan forecasts Toronto's population to reach 3.65 million residents by 2051.

Much of Toronto's population growth is anticipated to occur in locations where higher-order-transit (like subways and trains) is in place or planned, and much of it will be housed in high-rise buildings. There are now almost as many households in mid/high-rise units as there are households in low-rise units. Providing recreation facilities and parks is critical to supporting the livability of neighbourhoods across the city, especially in *high density areas* (areas with a big population, over a small land base, usually living in taller buildings).

Slide 8: Overview of the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

The [Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan](#) (PRFP) and its [Implementation Strategy](#) help the City of Toronto to prioritize investments in the following indoor and outdoor recreation facilities across the city:

- **Community recreation centres:** Including pools, gymnasiums, multi-purpose spaces, and more.
- **Ice facilities:** Including arenas, outdoor artificial ice rinks, skating trails, and curling rinks.
- **Outdoor aquatics:** Including outdoor pools, splash pads, and wading pools.
- **Sports fields:** Including Soccer and multi-use rectangular fields, ball diamonds, cricket pitches, and the support buildings and sport bubbles that support them.
- **Sports courts and zones:** Including Tennis and pickleball courts, basketball courts, skateparks, skate spots, bike parks, bocce courts, lawn bowling greens, and off-leash areas.

Note: Smaller facilities like seating, picnic areas, and outdoor fitness equipment are not included in the PRFP. Golf courses and playgrounds are addressed through other planning projects and are also not included.

There are hundreds of City of Toronto owned and/or operated recreational facilities in parks and buildings, including:

- 595 outdoor tennis courts
- 333 ball diamonds
- 316 soccer and multi-use fields
- 188 clubhouses and fieldhouses
- 175 splash pads
- 149 basketball courts
- 125 community centres

- 88 wading pools
- 80 dog off-leash areas
- 71 bocce courts
- 64 indoor and 58 outdoor swimming pools
- 61 outdoor artificial ice rinks
- 65 indoor ice rinks
- 28 lawn bowling greens
- 27 cricket pitches
- 25 beach volleyball courts
- 19 skate parks or skate spots
- 19 dedicated and 229 lined/shared pickleball courts
- 8 skating trails
- 5 off-road bike parks
- 3 curling rinks

The PRFP and its Implementation Plan guide how the City prioritizes and invests limited budgets and partnership opportunities in indoor and outdoor recreation facilities from 2019 to 2038. The PRFP helps determine when and where to:

- **Reinvest in existing recreation facilities** through replacement, repurposing, renewal, when facilities reach their end of life or are under-used.
- **Address recreation facility gaps** where there is a lack of facilities or large waitlists
- **Respond to future recreation facility needs** based on estimated population growth

The PRFP aims to produce **high-quality, sustainable, and innovative** recreation facilities that are distributed **equitably** across Toronto.

Slide 11: Overview of the Parkland Strategy

The [Parkland Strategy](#) (PLS) was adopted in 2019 to guide long-term planning for Toronto's parks, including where the City of Toronto adds new parkland and improves existing parks. It fulfills the Provincial [Planning Act](#)'s requirement for a 'parks plan' to be adopted in order to access the Province's 'alternative' rate for parkland dedication to be applied to new developments, which is higher than the legislated 'base rate'. At its core, the PLS is the City's strategy for addressing the increased need for parkland as Toronto's population grows.

The PLS is a high-level document that identifies areas that should be prioritized for investment in creating new parkland and improving existing parks. . The PLS does not address park-specific improvements, but rather it describes a vision for the parks system and considerations for creating high-quality parkland. The PLS outlines where and how the City should acquire new parkland and provides a framework for improving parks so that every Torontonians has access to vibrant park spaces that support the community.

As Toronto grows in population, the parks system must grow alongside it, and geographical and social gaps in the park system must be addressed along the way. To reflect this, the PLS is guided by the four overarching principles of Expand, Improve, Connect, and Include. The PLS uses

demographic and geographic data in maps that assess Toronto's park system in different ways, including how much parkland is available (measured in square metres per person) for residents living across the city. This mapping helps identify which parts of Toronto are 'parkland priority areas' that are in need of more parkland that the City can either purchase or have conveyed to the City by developers.

Slide 14: Community Engagement for the Review Process

The City of Toronto is updating the PRFP and PLS to reflect:

- the changing needs of residents
- the growing population
- changes to provincial legislation
- new policies and funding
- updated accessibility and environmental standards
- new and ongoing recreation studies (e.g. [cricket](#), ice facilities, [off-leash areas](#), [pickleball](#) and [curling](#))

A multi-phase, city-wide community engagement process is informing updates to both plans.

Community Engagement Phase 1 – Over 10,000 people engaged!

Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan Engagement Events:

4 Online public meetings	Classroom workshop kits (200+ student participants)	Online surveys (8,800+ responses)	Visit Existing City Advisory Bodies (ongoing) Senior's Forum Lived Experience Advisory Group P&R Community Disability Steering Committee	Indigenous communities & First Nations engagements (ongoing)
Equity-Deserving Advisory Group Meeting 1	Community-led DIY engagements with equity focus (12+ events)	In-person pop-ups in all 25 wards 3,000 + interactions		
Additional Engagement for Ice Facilities Strategy	One online public meeting	Online survey (2,800 + responses)		



[Visit the project webpage](#) to sign up for e-updates and learn more about how to get involved.

Slide 21: Discussion Questions – Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

Discussion A Instructions: Read the question aloud and allow participants a moment to gather their thoughts. Take notes on key points discussed. If the conversation stalls, use follow-up questions in the Facilitator Prompts chart to inspire further ideas. Refer to the facilitation tips in this guide to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.

Discussion A Report Back: After the session, please review your notes and provide a summary of the group's suggestions for missing or alternative facility type categories. Share this summary in the [submission form](#).

Discussion A (Slide 23): Preliminary Overview of Priorities for Future Provision

Please list any recreation facility type your group felt was in the wrong category. Beside it, list which category/categories your group felt that recreation facility type should be in, instead.

Facilitator Prompts

- *Looking at the categories, do any facilities seem like they don't quite fit where they've been placed?*
- *Based on your experience, which facilities are most in demand in your community? Do their placements here reflect that demand?*

If your group does not want to change any of the categories presented for the facility types, note that down and move on.

Discussion A notes:

Discussion B to E Instructions: Present Emerging Direction One in the presentation deck and allow participants a moment to gather their thoughts, and then open the meeting up to discussion. Take notes on key points discussed. If the conversation stalls, use follow-up questions below to inspire discussion. Refer to the facilitation tips in this guide to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.

Discussion B to E Report Back: After the session, please review your notes and provide the group's level of support for Direction One, Two, Three and Four and a summary of the discussion in the [submission form](#).

Discussion B (Slide 25): Emerging Direction One

Emerging Direction One: Seek to maximize year-round, all-day use, improve accessibility, and improve the overall resident experience by building new, renewing, replacing, or repurposing recreation facilities. *(see slides for full list of actions)*

What is your group's level of support for Direction One?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Emerging Direction One:

Facilitator Prompts (optional, to encourage discussion)

- *Read through each action(the bullets on the slides) aloud. Pause after each and ask if participants support the action, or if they have related suggestions.*
- *Can you think of examples where co-location already works well—or situations where it hasn't worked?*
- *What creative ways could we use existing facilities during their 'off season' to make them more useful year-round?*
- *Are there populations or age groups whose needs aren't well served by current facilities? How could they be better served?*

Discussion C (Slide 26): Emerging Direction Two

Emerging Direction Two: Use recreation spaces to provide a wider range of community benefits in addition to traditional recreation services (*see slides for full list of actions*)

What is your group's level of support for Direction Two?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Emerging Direction Two:

Facilitator Prompts (optional, to encourage discussion)

- *Read through each action (the bullets on the slides) aloud. Pause after each and ask if participants support the action, or if they have related suggestions.*
- *How do you see recreation facilities playing a role in supporting the community during emergencies (e.g., heat waves, pandemics, extreme weather)?*
- *What sustainable or climate-friendly features would you like to see in new or upgraded recreation facilities (e.g., green roofs, solar panels, natural cooling)?*
- *Do you have ideas about how food services in recreation facilities can help bring people together and support local culture or traditions?*
- *Are there examples of food-related initiatives at community spaces that you've seen work well?*

Discussion D (Slide 27): Emerging Direction Three

Emerging Direction Three: Ensure the new Facilities Plan serves high-needs communities and reduces barriers to access (*see slides for full list of actions*)

What is your group's level of support for Direction Three?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Emerging Direction Three:

Facilitator Prompts (optional, to encourage discussion)

- *Read through each action(the bullets on the slides) aloud. Pause after each and ask if participants support the action, or if they have related suggestions.*
- *What would equitable access to recreation facilities look like to you?*
- *What kinds of accessibility upgrades are most urgently needed in existing facilities (e.g. elevators, signs, sensory spaces, etc.)?*
- *How can facilities be designed to be welcoming and inclusive for people across genders, incomes, abilities, and cultures?*

Discussion E (Slide 28): Emerging Direction Four

Emerging Direction Four: Actively pursue and enhance collaboration and partnerships (e.g., schools, libraries, etc.) to better meet community needs and make the most of the land available for recreation facilities and other community services and facilities (*see slides for full list of actions*)

What is your group's level of support for Direction Four?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Emerging Direction Four:

Facilitator Prompts (optional, to encourage discussion)

- *Read through each action(the bullets on the slides) aloud. Pause after each and ask if participants support the action, or if they have related suggestions.*
- *What services (e.g., libraries, seniors' programs, newcomer supports, childcare, employment services) would make a recreation centre more valuable in your community?*
- *Are there partnerships you'd like to see formed that could benefit your community?*

Slide 29: Discussion Questions – Parkland Strategy

Discussion F Instructions: Read the question aloud and ask participants to refer to the printout of Slide 34 if you printed individual copies of this slide for participants to view the high-quality park considerations at their tables. Allow participants a moment to gather their thoughts and then discuss. Take notes on key points. If the conversation stalls, use the follow-up questions in the Facilitator Prompts chart to inspire further ideas. Refer to the facilitation tips in this guide to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.

Discussion F Report Back: After the session, please review your notes and provide a summary of items the group felt was missing from what makes a high-quality park and which considerations they liked the best. Share this summary in the [submission form](#).

Discussion F (Slide 30): What makes a high-quality park?

Is the list of considerations for what makes for a high-quality park complete, or are there things missing that your group wanted to add?

- ☐ List is complete
- ☐ Some things are missing

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or is most important, or should change, about Discussion F:

Facilitator Prompts

- *Do you prefer spaces that are dedicated to specific activities (e.g., basketball, fitness stations) or more flexible/open spaces that can be adapted for different uses?*
- *What design features (e.g., fencing, pathways, signage) could reduce conflict and make spaces safer for people and dogs?*
- *What types of natural features (e.g., hills, gardens, streams, meadows) make a park more enjoyable for you?*
- *Are there community-specific elements that could help to create a stronger sense of identity in your local park spaces (e.g., art, gardens, memorials)?*
- *Are there examples of parks or public spaces in Toronto (or elsewhere) where art and design enhance your experience?*

Discussion G Instructions: Read the question aloud and ask participants to refer to the guiding principles on printout of Slides 35 and 36, if you printed individual copies of this slide for participants to view at their tables. Invite them to brainstorm on the “cloud” worksheet allowing a few minutes for participants to write their thoughts on what the proposed guiding principle “Protect” means to them. Encourage them to use the different coloured clouds to categorize their thoughts into themes. When ready, have a group discussion on what people wrote down and gather an overall level of support for adding “Protect” as a guiding principle in the Parkland Strategy. If participants are grouped by tables, consider going around the room to allow each table to optionally share their thoughts. If the conversation stalls, use follow-up questions in the Facilitator Prompts chart to inspire further ideas. Refer to the facilitation tips in this guide to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.

Discussion G Report Back: After the session, please review your notes and provide the group’s overall level of support for adding “Protect” as a guiding principle in the Parkland Strategy as well as a summary of the group conversation, noting items written/shared from the mind maps. Share this summary in the [submission form](#).

Discussion G (Slides 31 & 32): Proposed new guiding principle, “Protect”

What is your group's level of support for adding “Protect” as a guiding principle in the Parkland Strategy?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Discussion G:

Facilitator Prompts

- *What is important to you to have protected in parks?*
- *Are there elements outside of the three bullets that should be reflected in this proposed principle? Are there examples in your community where parkland has been lost to other uses, or where there has been concern for losing parkland? (e.g. Metrolinx)*
- *Are there good examples of parks or open spaces in your community that have successfully protected cultural heritage?*
- *Do you feel that parks sufficiently protect Toronto's natural system, or should they do more?*

Add any additional comments or suggestions about adding "Protect" as a guiding Principle here.

You can leave this blank.

Discussion H Instructions: Present Factors 1 to 3 related to Parkland Priority Areas mapping in the presentation deck. After each factor, allow participants a moment to gather their thoughts and open a discussion. Take notes on key points discussed. If the conversation stalls, use follow-up questions in the Facilitator Prompts to inspire further ideas. Refer to the facilitation tips in this guide to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.

Discussion H Report Back: After the session, please review your notes and provide the group's level of support for Factors 1, 2, and 3 and additional suggestions about Parkland Priorities Areas in the [submission form](#).

Discussion H (Slide 33): Parkland Priority Areas mapping

Factor 1: Parkland provision rates. What is your group's level of support for the revisions proposed to this factor, to help determine Parkland Priority Areas?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Factor 1: Parkland provision rates:

Factor 2: Areas with less access to private yard space. What is your group's level of support for including this new factor, to help determine Parkland Priority Areas?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral

- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Factor 2: Areas with less access to private yard space:

What is your group's level of support for the revisions proposed to Factor 3: Equity-deserving areas, to help determine Parkland Priority Areas?

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Factor 3: Equity-deserving areas to help determine Parkland Priority Areas:

Facilitator Prompts

Factor 1

- *Do you agree that inaccessible natural areas (e.g., steep ravines) should be excluded from the calculation of available parkland? Why or why not?*
- *How do you feel about counting provincial and federal parks or portions of hydro corridors used for parks as part of Toronto's local park system?*

Factor 2

- *What challenges do residents in higher-density areas face that parks could help to address?*
- *Are there examples in your community where lack of private yard space makes access to public parks especially important?*

Factor 3

- *What would it look like in practice for the City to prioritize equity-deserving communities when acquiring or improving parks?*

Add any additional comments or suggestions about Parkland Priority Areas here.

You can leave this blank.

Discussion I Instructions: Present Revising the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment (PAA) Tool in the presentation deck. Allow participants a moment to gather their thoughts and open a discussion. Take notes on key points discussed. If the conversation stalls, use follow-up questions in the Facilitator Prompts chart to inspire further ideas. Refer to the facilitation tips in this guide to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.

Discussion I Report Back: After the session, please review your notes and provide the group's level of support for each theme in the revised PAA Tool and additional suggestions about Parkland Priorities Areas in the [submission form](#).

Discussion I (Slide 34): Revising the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment (PAA) Tool

What is your group's level of support for each theme in the proposed revisions to the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment (PAA) Tool?

Theme 1: Enhancing waterfront access

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

**Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Theme 1:
Enhancing waterfront access:**

Theme 2: Advancing Indigenous reconciliation projects

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

**Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Theme 2:
Advancing Indigenous reconciliation projects:**

Theme 3: Serving equity-deserving areas

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

**Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Theme 3: Serving
equity-deserving areas:**

Theme 4: Increasing tree canopy (e.g., to reduce urban heat island)

- ☐ Strong Support
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Strongly Oppose

**Notes below, anything your group said is missing, or should change, about Theme 4:
Increasing tree canopy:**

Facilitator Prompts

- *How important is it to prioritize acquiring land that provides or improves public access to Toronto's waterfront?*
- *How can parkland acquisitions better advance Indigenous reconciliation in Toronto?*
- *How important is it to prioritize acquiring land in equity-deserving areas (e.g., Black, newcomer, and low-income communities)?*
- *What balance should be struck between using land for treed natural areas versus open spaces and active recreation amenities?*

- *Do you think anything is missing from the proposed themes that should be added to the tool?*

Add any additional comments or suggestions about the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment (PAA) Tool here.

You can leave this blank.

Thank you for your participation!

Participants can learn more at www.Toronto.ca/ParksAndFacilitiesPlans

Facilitators/meeting organizers, please submit your responses here:

<https://ca.mar.medallia.com/DIY2>