

# Phase 3 Engagement Report

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre  
April 2025



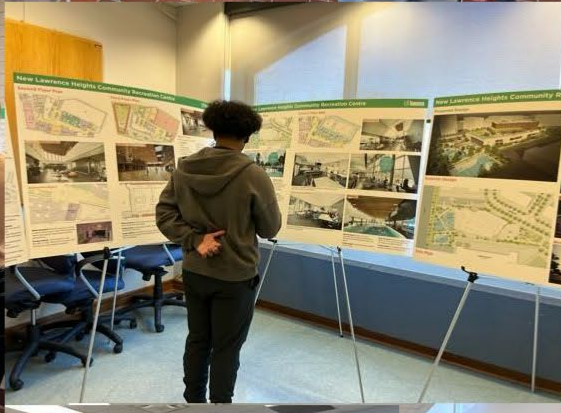




Community Advisory Committee Meeting 4



Classroom workshop with Flemington Public School students



Community pop-ups





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# Introduction

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From December 2024 and March 2025, the City of Toronto held the third phase of a three-phase community engagement process for the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre (CRC). The focus of Phase 3 was to set the direction for the CRC's detailed design by presenting and gathering final comments on the final CRC design.

Several engagement activities were held in-person, virtually, and online, including:

- An online survey
- Classroom Workshop with Flemington Public School students
- Community Advisory Committee Meeting 4
- Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting 3
- Four community pop-ups, including youth-focused engagements

For more information about the project and to review individual summaries of Phase 3 community engagement activities, visit [toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights](https://toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights).

## About this Report

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This report summarizes the Phase 3 engagement process, what we heard from the community, and next steps. This report was written by Third Party Public, an independent engagement team retained by the City to support the design, delivery, and documentation of the engagement process for the new Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre.

The intent of this summary is to capture the range of feedback shared, and not to assess the merit or accuracy of the feedback.

# Engagement Process Overview

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The Phase 3 engagement took place between December 2024 and March 2025. The goal of this phase was to:

- Set the direction for the CRC's detailed design.
- Present the final CRC design, highlighting how the design has been updated in response to the community's feedback.
- Share next steps and opportunities to stay involved in shaping the future of the new Lawrence Heights CRC.

Over 450 participants were engaged in five engagement activities in Phase 3. See the list of engagement activities below, along with the number of people who participated in each activity.

1. **Online Survey** available from December 11, 2024 to January 8, 2025 (150+ participants)
2. **Classroom Workshop** held in-person at Flemington Public School with Grades 1 to 6 students on December 12, 2024 (99 participants)
3. **Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting 4** held at Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre on March 4, 2025 (18 participants)
4. **Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting 3** held virtually via Zoom on March 5, 2025 (24 participants)
5. **Four Community Pop-ups** held at:
  - **Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre** on March 11, 2025 (30+ community members, including youth, parents and CRC staff)
  - **Lawrence Allen Centre** on March 14, 2025 (80+ community members participated)
  - **Pathways to Education Program** at Unison Health & Community Services on March 17, 2025 (20+ youth participated and 2 community members)
  - **10 Old Meadow Lane, Community Room** on March 18, 2025 (30+ community members participated)

# What We Heard: Overall Feedback Themes

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**Strong excitement and overall support for the final CRC design.** Across all engagement activities, participants expressed enthusiasm and support for the final design of the new CRC. In the online survey, a majority of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the design, describing it as “very exciting” and saying they “can’t wait to go.” Participants at the community pop-ups said the CRC design was beautiful and described it as a “breath of fresh air” that would help the community feel more connected to the rest of the city. At both the CAC meeting and Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting, participants appreciated seeing their feedback reflected in the updated design and acknowledged the City’s efforts to respond to community input.

**Participants want the CRC to reflect the identity and diversity of the local community.** A shared theme across several engagement activities was the desire for the CRC to reflect the local community’s diversity and history. CAC members said they wanted to ensure that the many diverse communities that call Lawrence Heights home are reflected in the building’s design and art. Participants in the Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting expressed support for the Indigenous Placekeeping features in the design and shared suggestions for further incorporating Indigenous art, teachings, and ceremony. Some survey respondents also suggested strengthening Indigenous Placekeeping and the visibility of the Black community’s heritage in the design.

**Suggestions to make the space feel more welcoming and less institutional.** Some participants—particularly in the Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting and the online survey—said the design felt “cold,” “sterile,” or “institutional,” and suggested adding more colour, art, natural materials, and greenery to make the CRC feel warmer and more inviting.

**Accessibility and safety are important priorities for participants.** Participants at the Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting and the pop-ups emphasized the importance of accessibility and safety throughout the CRC. This included providing accessible parking and drop-off areas, ensuring Elders and people with disabilities feel safe and welcome, and incorporating features like security cameras, lighting, and emergency call buttons. Some survey respondents also highlighted the need to clarify or enhance the CRC’s accessibility features, such as changerooms and the playground.

**Parking remains an important priority.** Providing adequate parking was raised across multiple engagement activities, including the online survey, CAC meeting, and community pop-ups. Some survey respondents preferred the current plan (staff parking and visitor pick-up/drop-off only), while others preferred surface parking on the CRC property. Across all perspectives, participants emphasized the importance of making sure the CRC remains accessible by providing parking—particularly for families, seniors, and people with mobility needs.

**Participants appreciated the features that support a wide range of activities and interests.** Across the engagement activities, participants highlighted features they were most

excited to use. These included the indoor and outdoor basketball courts, pool, recording studio, weights room, active rooftop, and playground with water play. Parents, staff, and youth especially appreciated features like the multi-sensory room and youth spaces. The treehouse playground theme and the umbrella water feature were the most preferred options in both the survey and classroom workshop.

**Suggestions focused on fine-tuning and expanding some features.** Participants offered suggestions for improvement that focused on enhancing some features. These included expanding the weight room, enlarging the recording studio and adding seating, increasing the number of cooking stations in the kitchen, adjusting the depth of the pool to attract younger youth that are older than toddlers, adding more seating in the gym, and providing sufficient storage to support ceremonies, community activities, gatherings, and events (e.g., storage for firewood, tools, and safety equipment, including a heat-proof container for disposing of used ash/coals in the ceremonial space).

**Participants valued the engagement process.** At the CAC meeting, CAC members said they appreciated how well the engagement process was run and documented, and felt their feedback had been heard and incorporated. Similarly, participants in the Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting said they were pleased to see how their earlier feedback had influenced the final design. Pop-up participants also acknowledged the time and effort that went into the design and expressed hope that the final CRC lives up to the vision shared during the engagement process.

# What We Heard: Feedback Highlights by Engagement Activity

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Feedback shared by participants are organized under the following engagement activities:

1. Online survey
2. Classroom Workshop with Flemington Public School students
3. Community Advisory Committee Meeting 4
4. Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting 3
5. Community pop-ups

## 1. Online survey

The survey asked respondents to share their overall satisfaction with the proposed overall design of the CRC as well as the ground floor landscape plan and each of its four floors. The survey also asked respondents to share their thoughts and preferences about:

- parking at the CRC,
- playground design and equipment,
- water play feature for the pool, and
- outdoor fitness equipment.

## Overall design, ground floor landscape plan, and each floor

**The majority of respondents (75%) said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall design.** Some shared their enthusiasm about the new CRC, saying they “can’t wait to go” and described the plans as “very exciting.” The multi-sensory room, focus on food, rooftop running track, and overall design specifically received compliments.

**Most respondents also said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the ground floor landscape plan and the features on each floor.** Below are the combined percentages of respondents who expressed satisfaction with the proposed designs:

### Ground floor:

- Landscape plan – 76%
- Aquatics area – 88%
- Community kitchen and multipurpose rooms – 76%
- Social and public spaces – 78%

### Second floor:

- Technology room – 77%
- Multi-sensory room – 67%
- Second floor activity rooms – 88%



### Third floor:

- Gymnasium, fitness studio, and weights area – 80%
- Youth spaces – 79%
- Active rooftop – 82%

### Fourth floor and roof:

- Fourth floor and sustainable roof – 82%

Other suggestions respondents shared about the overall design were to:

- Add more colour – the images of the new centre have too much grey.
- Maximize usable space and space for socializing (as opposed to having lots of empty space).
- Make sure the building is energy and water efficient
- Clarify or enhance the CRC's accessibility features (including in playground, changerooms, and more).
- Strengthen Indigenous Placekeeping and the visibility of the community's heritage (especially the Black community) in the design.
- Show how the CRC will serve as a "third space" for youth beyond the youth lounge and tech space, supporting studying, sports, and more.

## Parking at the CRC

Respondents said that the **most important factors when considering options for parking** were:

1. Providing as many outdoor ground floor community use as possible.
2. Delivering the project on time and on budget.
3. Reducing congestion, environmental impacts and improving pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Respondents **preferred parking options** were split between:

- Staff parking and visitor pick-up and drop-off only (the current plan).
- Surface parking on the CRC property.

## Playground design and equipment

**Majority of respondents (53%) preferred the Treehouse theme with waterplay design option for the CRC's playground.** The other options presented were Hill theme with separate play areas and Music theme with picnic area, which were preferred by 22% and 21% of respondents, respectively.

**The most important playground equipment included swings, junior play towers, senior play towers, monkey bars and water play.**

## Water play feature

**The umbrella was the most preferred (34%) water play feature for the pool,** followed by aqua dome (32%), and water bucket trio (27%).

## Outdoor fitness equipment

The most preferred outdoor fitness equipment were push up bars, step bench, dip bars, and parallel bars.

## 2. Classroom workshop with Flemington Public School students

99 students in grades one to six at Flemington Public School participated in a classroom workshop to provide ideas and feedback for the outdoor playground and indoor waterplay equipment at the new Lawrence Heights CRC.

### Playground design

**The most preferred playground design was the Treehouse theme with waterplay design (34%),** followed by the Hill theme with separate junior play (23%), and Music theme with picnic area (17%).

The top three preferred play equipment features were play structures, swings, and water play.

### Water play feature

**The umbrella was the most preferred (35%) water play feature for the pool,** followed by the water bucket trio (31%), and aqua dome (18%).

## 3. Community Advisory Committee Meeting 4

The purpose of the meeting was to provide a summary of the insights gathered from the previous Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting and the final public survey held at the beginning of Phase 3, present the final CRC design, highlighting how the design had been updated in response to the community's feedback. The meeting also celebrated CAC member's dedication and valuable contributions throughout the process. Below are the key themes feedback shared at the meeting.

**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.

## 4. Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting 3

The purpose of the meeting was to present the final CRC design, highlighting how the design been updated in response to the community's feedback, particularly from previous Indigenous Community Sharing Meetings. Below are the key themes feedback shared at the meeting.

**Participants appreciated seeing their feedback reflected in the updated design.** Many participants said they were pleased to see earlier ideas and suggestions incorporated into the final CRC design.

**Some participants said they like the overall design and how it offers something to all ages. However, some participants said the design felt cold, sterile and institutional.** While some participants liked the openness, natural light, and inclusion of wood features, some felt the design still appeared sterile and cold. Suggestions included adding more colour, greenery, art, and natural materials to make the space feel warmer and more welcoming.

**Participants expressed support for the Indigenous Placekeeping features presented, with suggestions for more Indigenous artwork and representation of Indigenous culture and history.** Participants shared several suggestions, which included, but was not limited to: incorporation of the Seven Grandfather Teachings around the ceremonial space, including a canoe near water features, emphasizing water and acknowledging the sacred connection of water with First Nations women, and inclusion of a welcome wall/signage at the entrance to acknowledge the treaties and Indigenous peoples who have lived in the region.

**Provide sufficient storage to support ceremonies, community activities, gatherings, and events.** This includes providing dedicated storage in the ceremonial space for firewood, tools and safety equipment including a heat-proof container for disposing used ash/coals. The space should also include storage space for community activities like drum-making or sewing, and providing storage in the kitchen pantry, fridge, and freezer to support food sharing programs and community cooking during community events.

**Ensure accessibility and safety features are incorporated in the design.** Participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that elders, families, and people with disabilities feel safe and welcome in the CRC. This included a range of suggestions such as accessible parking and drop-off near the ceremonial space, ensuring there are security cameras and good lighting, and installing security posts with emergency call buttons.

**Participants encouraged the City to ground the project in ceremony and acknowledgment.** They suggested that, prior to construction, the City begin the on-site work with ceremony, including tobacco offerings and acknowledgement of Mother Earth.

## 5. Community pop-ups

The purpose of the community pop-ups to present the final CRC design. Below are the key themes feedback shared at the pop-ups.

**Strong enthusiasm and excitement for the new CRC, and general support for the final design.** Participants were happy with the final design of the new CRC and said it achieves the vision for the facility. Community members — including youth attending programs at the current CRC and the Pathways to Education Program at Unison, staff at the current CRC, parents, and seniors — said they were excited about the new facility and are looking forward to when it opens. They described the design as beautiful and said it includes space to support a variety of interests and activities. Participants felt the design was an improvement not only to the aesthetics of the community but also because it fills a gap by meeting the needs of many, especially children. Many said they could see themselves, their friends, and their families using the space regularly. One participant shared, *“I feel like the new CRC will bring our closed-off community to a place where we feel like a part of the city. We sometimes feel forgotten; our CRC doesn’t have as many programs, clean, fresh space, activities, and this new CRC will bring a breath of fresh air to us.”*

Participants also expressed appreciation for the time and effort that went into the design and emphasized that they hope the final facility lives up to the vision and becomes a regular, well-used space in the community.

### Key features participants liked

- **Indoor and outdoor basketball courts and the indoor pool** were particularly liked by youth. One youth said that they liked that they could “play ball and then go swimming after.”
- **Multi-sensory room** was especially appreciated by parents and CRC staff, who said it would be very helpful for families.
- **Recording studio, gym, weights room, and indoor and outdoor running tracks.**
- **Community room and kitchen**, especially the improved kitchen appliances.
- **Active rooftop**, where people could barbecue and hang out.

### Suggestions:

- **Expand the weight room** to avoid overcrowding, with specific requests for more treadmills and additional equipment like a stair machine.
- **Enhance the recording studio** by ensuring it is not too small and includes comfortable seating, such as a couch, so youth can bring friends to listen while they record music.
- **Ensure adequate parking** is available, especially since the new CRC will attract many users, including those from outside the local community.
- **Add more seating in the gym** or ensure it can accommodate more moveable seating.



- **Add a sauna**, either in the multi-sensory room or attached to the pool area near the showers.
- While participants were hopeful about the positive impact of the new CRC to the neighbourhood, a few expressed concerns about crime and violence in the community and said the **need for safety and security measures**.

## Next Steps

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The Phase 3 engagement report, along with the summaries from each Phase 3 engagement activity, will be posted on the project website ([toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights](https://toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights)). The City will continue to communicate with the community as the detailed design and construction process moves ahead.