

# Phase 2 Do-It-Yourself Community Workshop Kit Summary Report

Parkland Strategy and Parks and Recreation Facilities  
Plan

Phase 2 Engagement: Setting the Direction

October 2025 to November 2025

Parks & Recreation Division

City of Toronto





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# Overview

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From October 11 to November 30, 2025, the Parks and Recreation team distributed a do-it-yourself workshop kit to hear from Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities across Toronto. The kit included a presentation, a discussion guide, and an online submission form to help groups host their own community conversations and share feedback with the City. **Overall, the kit was used by 13 organizations across the city, to engage 254 community members in discussions about the future of their recreation spaces and parks.**

## Community Coordination Plan (CCP) Cluster Organizations

The City’s Parks and Recreation Division and Social Development Division worked together to engage communities through the City’s Community Coordination Plan (CCP) Clusters. The CCP Cluster model ensures communication with more than 400 community-based organizations and implements localized solutions to meet the needs of Toronto’s Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. There are ten geographic and two city-wide clusters (one focused on Newcomers and one focused on Black Resilience).

12 self-selected organizations (one in each CCP cluster) were provided with funding to host their own community-led engagement on the PRFP and PLS. Below is a list of the 12 community coordination plan (CCP) clusters and the organizations leading community engagements in each cluster.

Cluster and organization leading engagement:

1. Downtown West led by West Neighbourhood House
2. East York Don Valley led by Access Alliance
3. North Scarborough led by Malvern Family Resource Centre
4. South Scarborough led by Access Alliance
5. North York led by Midaynta Community Services
6. North Etobicoke led by Somali Women & Children’s Support Network
7. Black Creek Humber Summit led by Delta Family Resource Centre
8. York Weston Pelham led by Jane Alliance Neighbourhood Services
9. Downtown East led by Neighbourhood Information Post
10. South Etobicoke led by LAMP Community Health Centre
11. Black Resilience led by Be-initiatve
12. Newcomer led by WoodGreen Community Services

## Open Call to Community Organizations and Groups

The kit was also available on the project webpage, for use by community organizations, sports groups, friends-of-park groups, neighbours and other interested community groups, to host community discussion, and share their feedback on the proposed

directions to inform the updates to the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan, and the Parkland Strategy.

One community group submitted results, representing community members in the West Toronto Lawn Bowling Club.

# Summary of Results

This section summarizes the feedback from 12 CCP Cluster community groups and the West Toronto Lawn Bowling Club. CCP Cluster engagements are intended to provide feedback from a range of equity-deserving communities across the City.

Participants provided the following feedback:

## Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

Participants provided feedback on any recreation facility type they felt was in the wrong category, and which category it should be in, instead.

This report refers to facility type priorities using the following legend:

- Category A: Build more to fill existing gaps in service
- Category B: Build more recreation facilities as the population grows
- Category C: Improve to increase use and accessibility
- Category D: Repurpose to a higher use (site specific)

### Category A: Build more to fill existing gaps in service

#### Targeted gaps for community serving facilities

Feedback across organizations showed a cautious and targeted approach to Category A. Rather than calling for broad expansion, participants focused on facilities that support community based, culturally specific, or low-cost recreation. Arenas were also cited as a priority by some groups, reflecting their role in supporting ice facilities and community programming. Bocce courts and lawn bowling facilities were noted as unevenly distributed and important for seniors and newcomer communities.

#### Limited support for expanding some traditional facilities

At the same time, several organizations agreed that not all facility types belong in Category A. Curling rinks, tennis courts, skateparks, outdoor skating rinks, and beach volleyball courts were generally not seen as urgent gaps in service. In some neighbourhoods, demand for curling was described as low, and tennis courts were viewed as sufficiently available relative to use.

#### Mixed perspectives on community recreation centres

Community recreation centres generated differing views. Some respondents felt existing centres are underused or feel empty and therefore should not be included in Category A. Others emphasized that centres are spread far apart and difficult to access without travelling long distances, particularly in dense areas. This reflects an ongoing tension between perceptions of utilization and the need for better geographic access.

## **Category B: Build more recreation facilities as the population grows**

### **Water and cooling facilities responding to climate and density**

There was strong alignment that outdoor pools, splash pads, and wading pools belong in Category B. These facilities were consistently linked to population growth, higher density, and hotter summers, and were seen as essential in high density and equity deserving communities. Participants highlighted their value as low barrier, multigenerational spaces that support both recreation and heat relief.

### **Facilities tied to growing participation and emerging sports**

Several organizations identified facilities connected to changing recreation trends as appropriate for Category B. These included off-road bike parks, beach volleyball courts, and in some cases arenas and gymnasiums. Bike parks were noted as being very limited citywide, while beach volleyball was described as a low cost and accessible way to engage adults and young residents.

### **Balancing new construction with better use of existing spaces**

While there was support for building new facilities, many respondents stressed the importance of first making better use of what already exists. Suggestions included partnerships with underused private or institutional pools and gyms, and caution against building new facilities where access or affordability issues are the primary barriers rather than supply.

## **Category C: Improve to increase use and accessibility**

### **Addressing physical barriers and maintenance issues**

Category C emerged as the area of strongest agreement. Organizations emphasized that improving physical access, maintenance, and year-round usability would have a greater impact than new construction. Outdoor skating trails were frequently mentioned, with specific concerns about snow clearing and accessible entrances. Wading pools, dog off-leash areas, sports bubbles, and lawn bowling clubs were identified as facilities where aging infrastructure and maintenance issues limit use.

### **Equity, affordability and access to public time**

Many respondents framed accessibility in broader terms that included cost, program scheduling, and who benefits the most from public facilities. Sports bubbles were often cited as being heavily rented by private organizations, limiting access for lower income communities. Pickleball and tennis courts were also discussed in this context, with concerns that existing facilities tend to serve older or more affluent users and could be improved to better support a wider range of communities.

### **Differences based on age and condition of facilities**

Participants distinguished between older and newer facilities when discussing improvements. Newer cricket pitches were generally seen as already accessible and not in need of reclassification under Category C. In contrast, some community recreation centres were described as feeling outdated and poorly maintained, reinforcing the need for reinvestment rather than expansion alone.

## Category D: Repurpose to a higher use (site specific)

### **Adapting single use courts for greater flexibility**

Support for Category D focused on practical, site-specific repurposing. Tennis courts were frequently mentioned as candidates for conversion to pickleball, reflecting shifting demand. Basketball courts were also identified as spaces that could support other activities when not in use for basketball, allowing for more flexible programming.

### **Reusing underutilized buildings and spaces**

Several respondents supported repurposing vacant or underused buildings, such as former schools, into community recreation centres or multi-service hubs. Co-locating recreation with other community services was viewed positively, particularly where it improves access and efficiency.

### **Caution against broad or automatic repurposing**

While repurposing was generally supported, organizations stressed that it should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Facilities that are newer, well used, or already accessible were not seen as appropriate candidates. This reinforces the need for local assessment rather than applying Category D broadly across the system.

### **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.**

75% (N 9) of organizations strongly supported Emerging Direction One, 17% (N 2) supported Emerging Direction One and 8% (N1) were neutral about Emerging Direction One. Participants shared additional feedback about Emerging Direction One

### **Considerations for co-location**

Co-location was widely supported in principle but consistently described as something that must be applied carefully. Seniors participating through JANS supported the idea conceptually but raised concerns that co-located facilities can feel impersonal and must consider programming and access for seniors. Access Alliance participants echoed this caution, noting that while multi-service buildings make sense, they can increase overcrowding and density. Several respondents emphasized that one facility cannot meet every need, pointing to sports like cricket that require large, specialized spaces and are not well suited to shared indoor environments. Support for co-location was common across organizations with participants emphasizing the need to consider context, population, and facility type when determining co-location sites.

### **Upkeep and year-round use are foundational to access**

A strong majority of organizations said that Emerging Direction One should place greater emphasis on maintaining facility conditions. Participants highlighted the importance of reliable heating in winter, air conditioning and cooling stations in summer, adequate lighting, year-round access to amenities and routine maintenance. The Neighbourhood Information Post stressed that winter neglect has led residents to view parks as safety hazards during the winter season. Malvern Family Resource Centre

similarly focused on maintenance needs, including garbage removal to deter animals, accessible washrooms, gender-neutral washrooms, and lighting to improve nighttime safety.

### **Challenges with online registration**

Barriers to participation were described as both systemic and procedural. Participants from West Neighbourhood House raised concerns about programs filling quickly, limited program hours, and online-only registration systems that are challenging to access for some residents. There was strong support for restoring in-person support at community recreation centres, including front desk staff who can help people find programs and register on site rather than being redirected to websites. Suggestions included creating a dedicated staff role focused on navigation of the online booking system and access to programming. Long waitlists and the cost of programming were also repeatedly identified as barriers, particularly for lower income residents.

### **Equitable access to new facilities across the city**

Several organizations emphasized that facilities must be appropriately sized and designed to meet demand. Participants from the West Neighbourhood House noted that some community recreation centres are too small and should be expanded to accommodate more people, activities, and programs. Delta Family Resource Centre highlighted inequities in design quality, observing that facilities in higher-income or downtown areas may be more attractive, better lit, and more welcoming than those in other neighbourhoods. Participants strongly agreed that equitable investment in design is needed so facilities across the city feel uplifting, safe, and reflective of community identity. Features such as natural light and vibrant interiors were linked to mental wellbeing.

### **Spaces for social connection and flexible programming**

Many groups emphasized that community recreation centres should support informal social connection as well as structured programs. Participants called for dedicated gathering spaces where seniors and other residents can meet casually, along with simple amenities such as seating and vending machines. There was also support for more flexible outdoor and seasonal programming, especially for seniors during warmer months, to extend community life beyond indoor spaces. Delta Family Resource Centre pointed to the downtown waterfront as a strong example of vibrant, multipurpose public space that combines recreation, seating, music, and social interaction, and suggested similar models be replicated elsewhere.

### **Emerging Direction Two: use recreation spaces to provide a wider range of community benefits in addition to traditional recreation services.**

67% (N 8) of organizations strongly supported Emerging Direction Two, 25% (N 3) supported Emerging Direction Two and 8% (N1) were neutral about Emerging Direction Two. Participants shared additional feedback about Emerging Direction Two:

### **Food security as a central community priority**

Food security emerged as one of the most consistently supported elements of Emerging

Direction Two. Multiple organizations expressed strong support for expanding community food banks, community kitchens, and free or low-cost food programs within recreation spaces. Participants from West Neighbourhood House and Delta Family Resource Centre emphasized the importance of community kitchens, free pantries, and cooking classes as both immediate supports and opportunities for skill building. Neighbourhood Information Post strongly supported food-focused initiatives, linking them directly to increased food insecurity and financial hardship observed since the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in neighbourhoods such as Moss Park. There was also strong interest in farmers' markets and access to affordable fresh produce at community centres and parks as a way to promote public health and strengthen community wellbeing.

### **Multi-purpose community hubs and co-located services**

Participants strongly supported the idea of recreation facilities functioning as multi-purpose community hubs. Organizations highlighted the value of co-locating services such as emergency services, vaccination clinics, and settlement supports within community recreation centres. WoodGreen participants specifically suggested offering English as a second language classes in recreation centres to support integration and social connection for newcomers. This broader use of space was seen to maximize public investment while making services easier to access in familiar environments.

### **Climate resilience and environmental sustainability**

Emerging Direction Two was widely viewed as an opportunity to respond more directly to climate change. Participants supported expanding community gardens, increasing access to green space, and addressing tree canopy gaps, particularly in neighbourhoods with limited greenery. Several organizations reiterated the importance of reliable warming and cooling infrastructure, noting that recreation facilities must be able to maintain safe indoor temperatures during extreme heat and cold. Malvern Family Resource Centre emphasized interest in incorporating green energy features such as solar panels, along with eco-friendly amenities like water filling stations, to align community spaces with sustainability best practices.

### **Indigenous engagement and reconciliation**

Delta Family Resource Centre highlighted strong support for intentional Indigenous engagement and representation within recreation spaces. Participants called for visible cultural elements, and spaces that can support ceremonial or cultural practices. These suggestions aligned with broader support for using recreation facilities as places that reflect and respect Indigenous presence and contribute to reconciliation efforts.

### **Flexible spaces that respond to changing needs**

Across organizations, there was strong agreement that recreation facilities should be designed for flexibility. Participants supported adaptable spaces that can accommodate intergenerational gatherings, food programming, emergency response functions, and cultural activities alongside recreation. This flexibility was viewed as key to ensuring facilities can respond to changing community needs over time and provide value beyond single-purpose use.

### **Emerging Direction Three: ensure the new Facilities Plan serves high-needs communities and reduces barriers to access.**

50% (N 6) of organizations strongly supported Emerging Direction Three, 42% (N 5) supported Emerging Direction Three and 8% (N1) were neutral about Emerging Direction Three. Participants shared additional feedback about Emerging Direction Three:

#### **Using data to guide equitable investment**

Several organizations supported the use of data to guide decision making and resource allocation. Participants from JANS emphasized that Census data and other population health information can help ensure facilities and maintenance investments reflect population size, growth, and community needs. This approach was viewed as a way to reduce conflict between groups by grounding decisions in transparent, shared evidence. Participants supported using data not only to identify where new investment is needed, but also to determine where existing facilities require upgrades or increased maintenance to keep pace with growth.

#### **Accessibility that works in practice**

A strong theme across organizations was the need for accessibility improvements that function in everyday conditions. Participants from West Neighbourhood House and Delta Family Resource Centre shared examples where accessibility upgrades focused on surface improvements, such as landscaping or paths, while missing essential elements like stairs, ramps, or proper connections. Automatic and push-button door openers were repeatedly cited as basic but critical features. Participants stressed that accessibility planning must account for how people move through spaces, including seniors and people with disabilities.

#### **Prioritizing high-need communities**

Many organizations supported directing resources to underserved and high-need neighbourhoods, particularly those facing barriers related to income, disability, age, or newcomer status. WoodGreen and Delta Family Resource Centre strongly supported this focus, emphasizing that investments must meaningfully benefit local residents and not stop at symbolic improvements.

#### **Program affordability and cultural relevance**

Equitable access was further defined in terms of cost and the cultural familiarity of programming. Malvern Family Resource Centre emphasized that truly equitable recreation includes low-cost or free programming, noting that high fees, such as hundreds of dollars per child for sports, are a significant barrier. Participants also called for a wider range of programming that accommodates different fitness levels, mobility needs, and ages. Cultural programming was highlighted by West Neighbourhood House as a key factor in making recreation centres feel welcoming and inclusive, reinforcing the importance of representation and relevance alongside physical access.

**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.**

67% (N 8) of organizations strongly supported Emerging Direction Four, 25% (N 3) supported Emerging Direction Four and 8% (N1) strongly opposed Emerging Direction Four. Participants shared additional feedback about Emerging Direction Four:

**Co-location and mixed-use development as opportunities and risks**

Many organizations supported integrating multiple uses within recreation facilities, including community services and, in some cases, housing. WoodGreen Community Services and Neighbourhood Information Post strongly endorsed building housing above recreation centres, describing it as an efficient use of urban space that can strengthen accessibility and community connection. Neighbourhood Information Post specifically framed this approach as aligning Toronto with successful international models (i.e., in East Asia) where housing and public amenities are closely integrated.

**Priority services and partnerships that communities value**

Participants identified a wide range of services they would like to see co-located with recreation facilities. West Neighbourhood House highlighted strong interest in senior services, newcomer services, libraries and reading spaces, housing supports, food banks and community kitchens, employment and job training services, and free childcare. Malvern Family Resource Centre echoed this focus, emphasizing the need for more seniors' programming, low-cost childcare, and partnerships with employment service providers. Across organizations, these services were seen as complementary to recreation and as ways to reduce barriers and support everyday needs.

**Strong support for partnerships and equitable programming opportunities**

There was strong agreement that partnerships should prioritize public and community-serving organizations. WoodGreen emphasized collaboration with schools, libraries, employment services, and newcomer supports as essential to maximizing community benefit and efficient use of space. In contrast, Access Alliance South Scarborough raised concerns about partnerships that funnel public funds to private corporations without clear public benefit, repeating cautions raised under Emerging Direction One regarding private-sector involvement. This feedback underscored the importance of transparency and accountability in partnership decisions.

Several organizations highlighted the role of partnerships in advancing health and safety. Delta Family Resource Centre emphasized public health and disease prevention, framing recreation and physical activity as essential to wellbeing and long-term health outcomes. A youth participant from WoodGreen suggested introducing self-defense programs for girls, particularly in areas where parks are perceived as unsafe, to build confidence and personal safety. Black Environmental Initiative emphasized the need for welcoming programming developed in collaboration with Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities to encourage use by people who may not traditionally access these facilities.

### **Customization of co-location models and facility planning**

Delta Family Resource Centre highlighted the need for intentional multi-use design that reflects local needs rather than applying uniform models citywide. Black Environmental Initiative specifically emphasized that housing built above recreation facilities must be affordable to ensure these developments serve community interests and align with the City's HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan, rather than contributing to displacement or exclusion.

Across organizations, there was a strong call for ongoing, community-led planning. Participants emphasized that partnerships and co-location should be shaped by local context, lived experience, and clearly identified gaps. Groups cautioned against one-size-fits-all approaches and said that meaningful engagement is necessary to ensure collaborative models remain aligned with community priorities over time.

## **Parkland Strategy**

### **Participants shared their feedback on what makes a high-quality park, outlining whether the list is complete, and what was missing.**

25% (N 3) of organizations said that the list is complete and 75% (N 9) said that some things are missing.

### **Washrooms, and maintenance as top priorities**

Across organizations, accessible and well-maintained washrooms emerged as one of the most critical elements of a high-quality park. Participants from West Neighbourhood House expressed consensus that washrooms must be wheelchair accessible, regularly cleaned, and open year-round, including in winter months. Specific suggestions included heated washrooms, garbage bins inside facilities, and cleared pathways to ensure safe access. Participants also noted that poorly located washrooms, such as those at the bottom of hills or in pits, limit usability and suggested adding additional accessible washrooms in easier-to-reach locations. Maintenance issues such as garbage removal, geese feces on paths, tree overgrowth, and upkeep of lighting and water stations were repeatedly raised as foundational to park quality.

### **Safety as a defining feature of a high-quality park**

Safety was one of the most frequently identified gaps in the list. Participants from Neighbourhood Information Post, Somali Women and Children's Support Network, Delta Family Resource Centre, and Black Environmental Initiative emphasized that real and perceived safety directly affects whether families and children use parks. Suggested improvements included better lighting, clear signage, security patrols, repaired or monitored cameras, emergency call buttons or blue light towers, and clearer information about wildlife such as coyotes.

### **Accessibility beyond AODA standards**

Participants consistently described accessibility as needing to go beyond compliance to support everyday use. Suggestions included wheelchair-accessible playground equipment, safer and more navigable entrances and gates, ramps, accessible

washrooms with adequate privacy, and pathways that are easy to move through for seniors, parents with strollers, and people with disabilities. Several groups emphasized that accessibility upgrades should be implemented at a steady pace, rather than phased slowly over time. West Toronto Lawn Bowling suggested expanding the idea of inclusive design to explicitly include features that support seniors' health and wellbeing, such as lawn bowling facilities and gentle pathways.

### **Transportation and wayfinding**

Ease of getting to and moving through parks was another recurring theme. Participants emphasized the need for better transit access, including bus stops at or near park entrances, and parking lots sized appropriately for park use. Clear signage, trail maps, and directional information were identified as missing or insufficient, particularly in larger parks. Participants also suggested safe bike parking, separated cycling and pedestrian paths to reduce conflicts, and clearer internal wayfinding to support navigation for all users.

### **Year-round use and winter programming**

Many organizations shared that high-quality parks must function year-round. Participants raised concerns about parks or park sections being closed during heavy snowfall and called for consistent winter maintenance of entrances, walking paths, and tobogganing areas. Winter programming, heated amenities, and "heating boxes" were suggested as ways to encourage use during colder months. Several groups also identified the need for more walking paths and trails that support a range of uses, including walking, running, biking, and connecting with nature throughout the year.

### **Social and technological amenities**

Beyond physical features, participants highlighted the importance of social amenities. Suggestions included interactive activities for all ages, such as scavenger hunts, year-round community programming, cultural festivals, and City-supported events celebrating diverse cultures and heritages. Multiple groups emphasized the value of social and gathering spaces, including seating, pergolas, natural seating, picnic areas, and informal meeting spots. There was also interest in outdoor workspaces, charging stations, Wi-Fi, and spaces where people can use laptops, reflecting evolving patterns of park use.

### **Celebrating local cultures and identities**

Participants supported celebrating diverse cultures and heritages through parks, particularly through events, festivals, and gatherings. There was some discussion about how Indigenous culture and heritage should be incorporated into parks. While one respondent suggested merging Indigenous recognition with broader cultural celebration, others strongly disagreed, emphasizing the importance of distinct and visible Indigenous placekeeping given the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization.

### **Age-inclusive and intergenerational design**

Several organizations emphasized the need for parks to better serve both ends of the age spectrum. Participants called for more features and upgrades for seniors, including seating, shade, gentle pathways, and health-supportive amenities. At the same time,

they highlighted the need for play areas designed specifically for very young children, safer play surfaces, and child-focused safety features. Intergenerational design that allows people of all ages to use and enjoy the same spaces was seen as a key marker of a high-quality park.

### **Participants shared their feedback on the proposed new guiding principle “Protect”, including their level of support and suggestions about what “Protect” means to them.**

83% (N 10) of organizations said that they strongly support “Protect” as a new guiding principle, 8% (N 1) said that they support “Protect” as a new guiding principle and 8% (N 1) said that they oppose “Protect” as a new guiding principle.

#### **Protecting nature and land**

Many organizations emphasized that “Protect” should prioritize environmental stewardship. Participants spoke about safeguarding natural landscapes, trees, wildlife habitats, water, and biodiversity. Seniors participating through JANS stressed that parks can evolve to meet community needs, but encroachment on the natural environment should only occur when necessary. Access Alliance participants highlighted protecting conservation lands from development, respecting water and land so they are not polluted, and restoring native habitats by planting native species and addressing invasive ones. Several groups framed protection as maintaining parkland as parkland and preventing rezoning or conversion to private development.

#### **Safety**

Safety emerged as a central and shared interpretation of “Protect.” Participants described protection as ensuring parks feel safe for children, seniors, families, newcomers, and other park users. Suggestions included better lighting, emergency call buttons or posts, visible and open park layouts, and safer pathways. West Neighbourhood House participants emphasized that parks should not feel hidden or isolated, especially at night, and suggested adding streetlights, bike paths, and even piloting park rangers to increase safety. Somali Women and Children’s Support Network and Neighbourhood Information Post also linked protection to preventing vandalism, reducing garbage buildup, and addressing conditions that discourage families from using parks.

#### **Protect and housing implications**

Several organizations broadened the meaning of “Protect” to explicitly include people experiencing homelessness. West Neighbourhood House participants shared that people living in parks should not be evicted without housing solutions and that protection must include pathways to permanent housing. In contrast, Midaynta Community Services opposed the framing of protecting parkland from conversion if it does not account for the housing crisis, noting that strict interpretations risk working against developing more affordable housing.

#### **Enforcement and education**

Participants emphasized that protection requires both enforcement and education.

Access Alliance respondents called for clearer enforcement of bylaws related to off-leash dogs and conservation lands, alongside education so residents understand their responsibilities. Suggestions included increased 311 capacity to respond to concerns and stronger public awareness about protecting wildlife, respecting shared spaces, and preventing environmental damage. WoodGreen Community Services reinforced this point by recommending community-led stewardship programs, environmental education, and youth engagement as practical ways to bring the suggested guiding principle to life.

### **Wellbeing and restorative spaces**

Protection was also described in emotional and social terms. WoodGreen and Delta Family Resource Centre participants emphasized that parks should protect mental health by offering calm and restorative spaces that reduce stress and support wellbeing. Thoughtful, risk-aware design of playgrounds, pools, and gathering areas was seen as essential to preventing injuries while still encouraging play and social connection. Black Environmental Initiative added that protection includes creating environments of reduced harm, free from pollution, and safe for both people and animals.

### **Balancing multiple priorities**

Across organizations, there was strong alignment that “Protect” must balance multiple priorities rather than privileging one at the expense of others. Participants spoke about designing parks that protect people and dogs from wildlife risks such as coyotes, ensure accessible and safe facilities, and maintain a diversity of programs and activities that encourage park use.

### **Participants shared their level of support for including Factor 1: parkland provision rates (amount of parkland per person), to help determine Parkland Priority Areas.**

42% (N 5) of organizations said that they strongly support Factor 1, 50% (N 6) said that they support Factor 1 and 8% (N 1) said that they oppose Factor 1.

### **Participants shared their level of support for including Factor 2: areas with less access to private yard space, to help determine Parkland Priority Areas.**

75% (N 9) of organizations said that they strongly support Factor 2 and 25% (N 3) said that they support Factor 2.

### **Participants shared their level of support for including Factor 3: equity-deserving areas, to help determine Parkland Priority Areas.**

75% (N 9) of organizations said that they strongly support Factor 3, 17% (N 2) said that they support Factor 3, and 8% (N 1) said that they strongly oppose Factor 3.

### **Parkland per person as a core equity measure**

Most participants agreed that measuring the amount of parkland available per person is an important indicator of equitable access. This measure was seen as a useful baseline

for identifying gaps and comparing conditions across neighbourhoods. At the same time, some participants cautioned that parkland per person should not be treated as the only metric, particularly where other needs must be met (e.g., access to social services, access to private yard space, etc.)

### **Overcrowded parks in high-density areas**

In high-density areas, participants emphasized that equity challenges are not limited to the total amount of parkland. Several groups noted that even where parks exist, they are often overcrowded. Families and children were described as facing long waits to access play equipment and sports facilities as populations grow. As a result, enhancing the capacity and functionality of existing parks, through additional play structures, shaded seating, and multi-use recreational zones, was seen as just as important as increasing overall parkland area.

### **The value of informal and natural green spaces**

Participants highlighted that not all green space functions in the same way. One organization pointed out that ravines, even when not usable as formal parks, still provide important benefits such as ecological value, visual calmness, and informal paths that support walking and connection to nature. Participants suggested that parkland assessments should consider unprogrammed greenspaces, along with formally programmed parks.

### **Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 1 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: enhancing waterfront access and additional comments or suggestions.**

58% (N 7) of organizations said that they strongly support Theme 1, 25% (N 3) said that they support Theme 1, and 17% (N 2) said that they are neutral about Theme 1.

### **Transit and physical access as key enablers**

Participants shared that waterfront parks must be reachable without a car to be truly accessible. Tommy Thompson Park was cited as a clear example, with suggestions to introduce bus service to the front entrance and along key walking paths. More broadly, participants highlighted the importance of clear pathways, accessible routes, and infrastructure that supports people of all ages and abilities once they arrive.

### **Geographic distance to the waterfront**

Equitable access was a strong consideration, particularly for communities located far from the waterfront. Participants noted that residents in areas such as North Scarborough face significant distance barriers that limit regular use of waterfront parks. Ensuring that newcomers, families in dense urban neighbourhoods, and communities without nearby waterfront access can reach and enjoy these spaces was seen as important to participants. At the same time, one focus group noted that while they support the idea of enhanced waterfront access they would prefer if City efforts were put towards enhancing local parks and needs.

### **Safety and maintenance at waterfront parks**

Participants highlighted that safety and maintenance are foundational to positive waterfront experiences given the scale of waterfront parks and the number of visitors they attract.

### **Environmental protection alongside responsible use**

Participants supported protecting the natural ecosystems of waterfront parks while still allowing for responsible recreation. Environmental protection was viewed as inseparable from access, with an emphasis on preserving habitats, landscapes, and water quality as visitation increases.

### **Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 2 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: advancing Indigenous reconciliation projects and additional comments or suggestions.**

75% (N 9) of organizations said that they strongly support Theme 2, 17% (N 2) said that they support Theme 1, and 8% (N 1) said that they are neutral about Theme 2.

### **Advancing Indigenous placekeeping, stewardship and education**

Participants were in support of advancing Indigenous Reconciliation efforts through physical structures, design such as engraving Indigenous art in the concrete pathways, adding medicinal plants, and organizing cultural events. Participants suggested incorporating Indigenous-led consultations, stewardship programs, and educational signage in parks to promote ongoing collaboration, cultural representation, and awareness of Indigenous history. Some organizations expressed interest in what a detailed implementation plan would look like for Theme 2.

### **Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 3 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: serving equity-deserving areas and additional comments or suggestions.**

75% (N 9) of organizations said that they strongly support Theme 3, 17% (N 2) said that they support Theme 3, and 8% (N 1) said that they are neutral about Theme 3.

### **Equitable and convenient access to parks**

Participants shared that equitable access to parks includes parks in close proximity, given that some equity-deserving residents may not have access to cars. Close proximity to residences also increases feelings of safety for park users.

### **Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 4 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: increasing tree canopy (e.g., to reduce urban heat island) and additional comments or suggestions.**

75% (N 9) of organizations said that they strongly support Theme 4 and 25% (N 3) said that they support Theme 4.

### **Strong support for increasing tree canopies in parks**

Participants spoke at length about how a tree canopy provides multi-use benefits to

parks including climbing, bird watching, and hearing the leaves blow in the wind as meditative. Participants positively noted that plants can regulate the air and environment to keep it clean.

**Consider the surrounding context and extensive users of parks**

Participants encouraged the PLS to evaluate the surrounding context including nearby features, access points, and how the space connects with the neighborhood. In addition to humans, participants emphasized the importance of protecting wildlife and minimizing disruption to animals in the area.

# Project Team

## City of Toronto

Parks and Recreation Division-Strategic Project Implementation and Community Engagement Branch

- Annely Zonena - Director

Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan Unit

- Matt Bentley - Sr. Project Manager
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- Vanessa Cipriani – Project Officer
- Amanda Rooney – Planner

Parkland Strategy Unit

- Danielle DeMarsh - Sr. Project Manager
- Toni Papa - Planner
- Erica Beasley - Planner

Community Engagement Unit

- Celina Chong – Sr. Public Consultation Coordinator

## Consulting Teams

- **Monteith Brown Planning Consultants**, Technical Consulting Team
- **Ridge Road Training and Consulting**, Indigenous Communities Engagement Leads

# Appendix A: PRFP

## Results by Organization

### Facilities Plan Categories

This report refers to facility type priorities using the following legend:

- Category A: Build more to fill existing gaps in service
- Category B: Build more recreation facilities as the population grows
- Category C: Improve to increase use and accessibility
- Category D: Repurpose to a higher use site specific

#### West Neighbourhood House

- Add **outdoor skating trails** to **Category C**, reflecting the need for accessible winter programming, including snow clearing at entrances to support year-round use.
- Parents noted that travelling long distances in winter is difficult, reinforcing the need for **local skating rinks**, aligned with **Category C**.
- Add **outdoor pools** to **Category B**, given their value for exercise, social gathering, and multigenerational use. Investment in pools was a vocal priority.
- Add **wading pools** to **Categories B and C**, reflecting their importance for children.
  - One participant shared that, through prior work with children in parks, wading pools were an especially important and accessible feature.

#### WoodGreen Community Services

- **Dog off-leash areas**, currently listed under Category A, should also be included under **Category C**, with emphasis on safety, accessibility, and maintenance rather than expansion.
- **Splash pads** should be prioritized under **Category B**, particularly in high-density and new neighbourhoods as summer heat increases.
- **Pickleball courts** should focus on **Category C**, as improvements to scheduling, sound management, and shared use are more impactful than new builds.
- **Bike parks (off-road)** should be included under **Category B**, given the limited number citywide and growing suburban demand.

#### Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (East York Don Valley)

- Respondents suggested prioritizing **Category C** by increasing free access to existing swimming pools and gymnasiums and collaborating with underused private facilities, rather than relying solely on new construction.
- Some respondents stated that **pools, gymnasiums, and outdoor ice rinks** should be addressed through **Category B**, based on current population needs.
- **Pickleball courts** should be addressed through **Category D** by converting existing tennis courts rather than building new facilities under Categories A or B.
- Some respondents supported placing **outdoor pools** in both **Categories A and B**, citing

climate-driven demand.

- **Arenas** were identified as appropriate for both **Categories A and B**, reflecting the cultural importance of hockey and demand for greater access.
- **Wading pools** were identified as relevant to **Categories A, B, and C**, given their role as an accessible introduction to water and swimming skills for young children.
- Bocce courts and lawn bowling were identified as fitting within Category A.

### Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (South Scarborough)

- **Indoor walking tracks** were suggested as a facility type to be added, aligned with **Category B**.
- **Basketball courts** should be included under **Category D**, allowing for alternative uses when not scheduled for basketball.
- **Cricket pitches** should be removed from **Category C**, as respondents felt newer facilities already address accessibility needs.
- Most respondents agreed **community recreation centres** were generally in the correct categories.
  - One respondent suggested removing them from **Category A**, citing recent experiences of underuse.
  - Another respondent disagreed, stating new centres are still needed closer to population-dense areas, aligning with **Category B**.
  - Respondents suggested repurposing underused buildings such as old schools into centres under **Category D**.
  - Others noted existing centres feel old and poorly maintained, aligning with **Category C**.
  - Co-locating centres with multiple services was viewed positively.
- **Sports bubbles** should be included under **Category C**, as private rentals limit access for low-income communities.
- **Pickleball courts** should be under **Category C**, as existing facilities under-serve diverse communities.
- **Beach volleyball** should be under **Category B**, as a low-cost, accessible outdoor sport.
- **Tennis courts** should not be included under **Categories A or B**.

### Neighbourhood Information Post

- The group agreed that skateparks, tennis courts, outdoor skating, curling rinks, and beach volleyball courts are not priorities for Categories A or B.
- **Outdoor pools, splash pads, and wading pools** should have increased presence locally, aligned with **Category B**.
- No major objections were raised regarding facilities listed under **Categories C or D**.

### Midaynta Community Services

- There is no need to build additional **curling rinks**, and they should not be prioritized under **Categories A or B**, as demand is low.

### Black Environmental Initiative

- Clubhouses and fieldhouses should be addressed under Category A.
- **Tennis courts** should be addressed through **Category D**.

## West Toronto Lawn Bowling Club

- Lawn bowling clubs should be included under **Category C**.

## Emerging Direction One

### JANS

- Seniors appreciated the concept of co-location but expressed concern that seniors may feel overlooked or disconnected within such models.
- Participants noted that community centres dedicated specifically to seniors feel more personable and foster a stronger sense of belonging.

### West Neighbourhood House

- Emphasized the importance of maintaining community recreation centres so existing facilities and features can be fully used.
- Identified a need for community recreation centres to be physically larger to accommodate more people, activities, and programs.
- Called for more cooling stations and well-maintained air conditioning to support use during summer months.
- Highlighted the need for reliable indoor heating to ensure spaces are usable in winter.
- Identified access barriers, including:
  - Limited program hours
  - Programs filling quickly
  - Online-only registration systems
  - Lack of in-person support
- Suggested allowing in-person program sign-up at centres.
- Proposed creating a dedicated staff role to help community members navigate programs and registration.
- Noted frustration with front desk staff redirecting people to websites rather than offering direct assistance.

### WoodGreen Community Services

- Expressed strong overall support for Emerging Direction One.
- Of 12 participants, 8 strongly supported, 1 supported, 1 was neutral, and 2 did not respond.
- Participants emphasized improving accessibility, maintaining existing facilities, and co-locating centres with other services.
- One neutral participant stressed the importance of continued community input before finalizing actions.
- Overall, the group viewed the direction as balanced and inclusive.

### Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (East York Don

## Valley)

- Supported co-locating facilities that offer multiple services.
- Raised concerns that co-location may increase overcrowding and density.
- Emphasized that not all activities can be effectively co-located.
  - Cricket was cited as requiring large, specialized space.

## Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (South Scarborough)

- One respondent noted that co-located centres in certain housing contexts may discourage use depending on safety and population dynamics.

## Neighbourhood Information Post

- Strongly supported this direction, citing vandalism and damage to park infrastructure in Moss Park and Regent Park.
- Emphasized the importance of maximizing year-round access, noting winter neglect leads residents to perceive parks as unsafe.

## Midaynta Community Services

- Stated that the City needs to improve how it consults communities on facility design.

## Delta Family Resource Centre

- Identified gaps related to equitable and attractive facility design.
- Noted disparities in lighting, welcoming design, and overall quality across neighbourhoods.
- Emphasized natural light and vibrant spaces for mental wellbeing.
- Recommended multipurpose outdoor and seasonal programming, particularly for seniors.
- Called for dedicated gathering spaces with simple amenities.
- Suggested replicating successful waterfront models citywide.
- Additional feedback included:
  - Improved accessibility features
  - Addressing long waitlists
  - Intergenerational design
  - Ongoing community engagement
  - Opposition to artificial turf due to safety and environmental concerns

## Malvern Family Resource Centre

- Identified the need for better maintenance, garbage removal, and lighting.
- Called for accessible and gender-neutral washrooms.

- Emphasized affordability of programming as an access issue.

### **West Toronto Lawn Bowling Club**

- Expressed overall support, with neutrality tied to concern about lawn bowling being labeled underutilized.

## **Emerging Direction Two**

### **West Neighbourhood House**

- Support for more community food banks and community kitchens was high.
- There was support for seeing co-located emergency services and vaccination clinics.
- There was also support for community gardens and access to more green space.
- As mentioned in Emerging Direction One’s feedback the infrastructure for warming and cooling centres must be updated to keep adequate temperatures in extreme heat or cold weather conditions.

### **WoodGreen Community Services**

- The group expressed very strong support for Emerging Direction Two.
- Out of 12 participants, 11 strongly supported and 1 supported the direction.
- Members agreed that expanding recreation spaces to provide broader community benefits—such as supporting public health, responding to climate change, and promoting reconciliation—is essential.
- There was particular appreciation for the idea of multi-purpose community hubs that foster inclusion, cultural connection, and accessibility.
- The group also suggested that Settlement Services, LINC, and ESL classes could be offered within community recreation centres.
  - This would enhance integration and provide newcomers with accessible spaces for language learning, social interaction, and community engagement.

### **Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (South Scarborough)**

- Consensus was support, with some on either end of the spectrum (one neutral, one strongly support).

### **Neighbourhood Information Post**

- The group strongly supported this direction as they consider the lack of trees and other greenery in their neighbourhoods, especially Moss Park.
- Supporting food security in their area will benefit them immensely, as since the COVID pandemic, they have seen a sharp rise in food insecurity and financial

hardship among their neighbours.

### **Delta Family Resource Centre**

- **Food Safety and Sanitation:** Participants raised strong concerns about food handling practices at community events, emphasizing the need for clear safety protocols, proper staff oversight, and vendor training to ensure food is served hygienically.
- **Food Security and Fresh Food Access:** There was strong support for farmers' markets and affordable fresh produce at community centres and parks to address food insecurity and promote public health. Members viewed these initiatives as valuable ways to engage residents and strengthen community wellbeing.
- **Indigenous Engagement and Representation:** Participants supported intentional Indigenous representation in recreation spaces, including visible cultural elements and designated areas for community and ceremonial practices
- **Flexible, Multi-Use Spaces:** The group emphasized the importance of nontraditional and adaptable uses of recreation facilities such as intergenerational gathering areas, food programming, and emergency response functions to maximize community benefit. The group called for stronger food safety oversight, expanded food security initiatives, authentic Indigenous engagement, and multi-use planning within recreational spaces.

### **Malvern Family Resource Centre**

- The group was really interested in seeing the spaces incorporate green energy like solar panels and provide eco-friendly features like a water filling station.
- They want to see a combination of cooking classes and food supports like free pantries incorporated into community spaces moving forward.

## **Emerging Direction Three**

### **JANS**

- To maintain harmony between various groups, The Census provides valuable information on the overall health of every community.
- The data collected should be used to equitably allocate facilities and determine which communities, based on population size, require greater maintenance or upgrades to meet population growth.

### **West Neighbourhood House**

- Multiple participants discussed how ensuring all doors had automatic and push opens was a priority for them.
- A participant with a disability discussed how finding and using the accessible fitness and recreation programs is usually difficult to navigate.

- Participants also discussed how they liked and valued the cultural programming at recreation centres, this made the centres feel welcoming.
- As mentioned in Emerging Direction One’s feedback, a big barrier to accessing programs is exclusively online signup and exclusively online information navigation.
  - Equity-deserving and Black participants discussed how one must be able to walk into community recreation centre, learn about programs offered at the front desk, and sign up in person with staff at the front desk.
  - The lack of this infrastructure was said to be the biggest barrier for equity-deserving and Black participants, reflecting how rejection when asked for help can be a powerful experience.
  - These participants discussed how a new approach to allow equitable access can include having staff in centres who are knowledgeable about available programs and services and who are trained to help community members sign up for these programs and services.

### WoodGreen Community Services

- Groups expressed strong support for Emerging Direction Three.
- Out of 12 participants, 11 strongly supported the direction and 1 was neutral, without additional comments.
- Participants agreed that prioritizing high-needs and equity-deserving communities is essential to ensuring fair and inclusive access to recreation facilities.
- The group supported accelerating facility upgrades, investing in flexible and multi-use spaces, and developing new approaches to meet the needs of diverse populations, including newcomers, refugees, seniors, and persons with disabilities.
- The group viewed Direction Three as a vital and equitable framework that aligns with community diversity, accessibility, and social inclusion goals across the city.

### Neighbourhood Information Post

- The opinion on this direction was quite mixed, as some participants agreed that more prioritization on underserved communities is needed.
- However, another opinion was raised in the group, where they argued that out of all the other emerging directions, this is the least important for the time being, as Toronto has proven itself as a shining beacon of diversity.
- Participants thought that it would be a more appropriate use of resources if the City prioritized Emerging Directions Two and Four first to relieve the immediate problems of their neighbourhood.

## Midaynta Community Services

- Downtown parks need to be more accessible
- Request for safety injection sites to be removed.

## Delta Family Resource Centre

- Groups identified several key areas that were missing or need improvement.
- Practical Accessibility: Participants shared examples where city investments improved landscaping and added new paths but missed essential infrastructure, such as stairs or proper connections, resulting in continued inaccessibility. This highlighted the gap between planning and real-world implementation.
- Comprehensive, Community-Centered Planning: The group emphasized that accessibility upgrades should go beyond surface improvements to address everyday mobility barriers like walkways, ramps, and transit connections that affect seniors and people with disabilities.
- Prioritizing Underserved Neighborhoods: Members supported directing resources to true high-need areas, ensuring upgrades genuinely benefit local residents, particularly equity-deserving groups who are often excluded by impractical or incomplete improvements.
- Transparency and Accountability: Participants called for greater oversight and follow-through to ensure investments reflect community-identified priorities and result in tangible, usable improvements. The group urged a stronger focus on practical, on-the-ground accessibility, authentic community prioritization, and accountable implementation when planning and upgrading facilities in high-need areas.

## Malvern Family Resource Centre

- The groups saw equitable access as low cost recreation activities (e.g., not paying \$300 for each kid to play soccer).
- Request for a variety of programming available for all fitness and mobility levels.
- More signage and maps to help navigate spaces as well as clear maps within parks for easy navigation.

## West Toronto Lawn Bowling Club

- Members are primarily seniors, so they support where this direction assists seniors.

## Emerging Direction Four

### JANS

- This response reflects the perspective of seniors who shared, “We may feel lost and invisible within a co-location model.”

- To optimize space, housing could be constructed above recreation centres however, the public may perceive such facilities as primarily serving the residents of those buildings rather than the broader community.

### **West Neighbourhood House**

- Popular services mentioned by participants were:
  - Senior services,
  - Newcomer services,
  - Reading and libraries,
  - Housing and access to access,
  - Food banks and kitchens,
  - Employment services and job training, and
  - Free childcare.

### **WoodGreen Community Services**

- All participants agreed that collaboration and partnerships with schools, libraries, employment, and newcomer services are essential to maximize community benefit and make efficient use of available space.
- Members emphasized that co-locating recreation centres with other community services would strengthen accessibility and create inclusive, multi-use hubs that better reflect community needs.
- The group also supported the idea of integrating housing where appropriate, noting that such initiatives could help address urban space challenges and promote stronger, mixed-use community models.
- One youth participant highlighted the importance of introducing self-defense programs for girls, especially in areas where local parks are perceived as unsafe.
  - This addition would promote safety, confidence, and empowerment among young residents.
- Overall, the group viewed Direction Four as a practical and collaborative approach that supports innovation, partnership, and efficient land use to better serve residents across the city.

### **Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (South Scarborough)**

- Respondents repeated concerns from emerging direction one about Toronto Community Housing (TCHC).
- Respondents emphasized that when seeking collaboration and partnerships, the city should not be funneling taxpayer money to private corporations that do not have a public benefit.

### **Neighbourhood Information Post**

- Strongly agreed with the second key point of the emerging direction, where the

City builds housing on top of new Recreation Centres.

- This would improve the accessibility and community bonding experience massively and finally put Toronto's urban planning on par with that of Asia, where housing is consistently built on top of recreational facilities or areas of urban activity.

### **Delta Family Resource Centre**

- Groups expressed strong support and identified several ways to strengthen this approach.
- Health and Wellness Focus: Members highlighted the importance of partnerships that promote public health and disease prevention, recognizing recreation and physical activity as essential to overall wellbeing and long-term healthcare cost reduction.
- Equitable and Public Access: Participants emphasized ensuring that co-located or shared facilities remain equally accessible to all residents, not limited to specific groups or users.
- Intentional Multi-Use Design: The group supported integrated, multi-use spaces that combine recreation with housing or community services but stressed the need for thoughtful design that reflects diverse local needs.
- Community-Led Planning: Participants underscored the importance of ongoing community engagement so that partnerships and co-located models directly address real gaps rather than applying a one-size-fits-all solution.
- Overall, the group supported this direction and emphasized that successful partnerships should promote health and wellness, equitable access, intentional multi-use design, and authentic community alignment.

### **Malvern Family Resource Centre**

- More seniors' programs and low-cost childcare options or early on programming.
- A partnership with a group that provides employment services would be beneficial.

### **Black Environmental Initiative**

- More welcoming programming to welcome people who are not used to using these facilities in collaboration with Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.
- Ensuring that the housing built on top of recreation facilities is affordable.

# Appendix B: Parkland Strategy Results by Organization

Participants shared their feedback on what makes a high-quality park, outlining whether the list is complete, and what was missing.

## West Neighbourhood House

- Participants had an overwhelming consensus and priority for enhancing “b. Washrooms.” They needed public washrooms to be wheelchair accessible and open throughout the winter months.
  - Participants spoke about regular cleaning and maintaining bathrooms, having garbage bins inside, and adding heating for the winter.
  - Pathways should be cleared to the bathroom for accessibility purposes.
  - Participants spoke about how some washrooms are inconveniently placed, for example at the pit or bottom of a hill, e.g., Riverdale Park. In cases like these, a second accessible bathroom should be built in terrain that is easier to navigate.
- Participants had valuable insights on how to enhance “k. Celebration of diverse cultures and heritages.”
  - They discussed how the City helping to organize cultural events, festivals, and gatherings was the strongest way to celebrate diverse cultures and heritages.
- Participants spoke about the importance of enhancing “n. Close to home and easy to access.”
  - Bus routes should make stops at park entrances, or even multiple entrances if the park is big.
  - Parks must be easy to access and get into, especially for families with younger children.
- Participants spoke about the importance of “j. Winter maintenance and programming.”
  - Some participants mentioned that the City closes access to parks, or part of parks during heavy snowfall.
  - Suggested clearing of main walking entrances, pathways, and access to tobogganing during the winter.
  - Another element that is missing from the list is more walking paths and

trails.

- Participants spoke on the different uses of trails, including running, walking, biking, and being in nature.

### **WoodGreen Community Services**

- The group agreed that the list of features is comprehensive and well thought out, covering most aspects of what makes a park safe, inclusive, and enjoyable.
- However, participants identified one important addition: separate biking tracks from pedestrian pathways to improve safety and comfort for all users.
  - This suggestion was made to reduce conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians, especially for families, seniors, and young children, ensuring parks remain accessible and welcoming for everyone.
- The group felt the list is strong and reflective of community priorities, with the above enhancement helping address safety and accessibility concerns.

### **Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (East York and Don Valley)**

- One respondent specifically emphasized shelter from the shade (already on list - item i.).
- One respondent said transit accessibility should be added.
- One respondent said safe areas to lock bikes when travelling to and within the park.

### **Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (South Scarborough)**

- Respondents mentioned interactive activities for all ages in parks (e.g., scavenger hunts).
- One respondent mentioned merging Indigenous culture/heritage (item p.) with the celebration of diverse culture (item k.), as they felt the two points represented the same issue.
- One respondent disagreed with this, saying that specific recognition of Indigenous culture/heritage is important because of historical cultural atrocities that happened on the land currently occupied across the city.
- One respondent mentioned space for individuals to work using laptops at benches, picnic tables, etc.
- One respondent mentioned parking space and other transportation accessibility.

### **Neighbourhood Information Post**

- Safety of some parks must be improved.
  - If security guards or cameras that are repaired periodically should be deployed in these parks, it will increase the quality of life of many residents, especially those who live in the Downtown East.

- As our focus group participants have shared that during the summer, they may not bring their kids due to public parks due to the high presence of crime and loitering.

### **Midaynta Community Services**

- Groups supported the items and suggested a few more:
  - Clear up geese feces on walking paths,
  - Increase walking trails,
  - Maintain trees from overgrowing,
  - Better lighting,
  - More security,
  - Charging station, outlets and Wi-Fi,
  - Outdoor workspaces,
  - Improved water stations,
  - Better outdoor fitness equipment that are senior and beginner friendly,
  - Proper direction signage for trails/walking paths,
  - Accessible washroom – safety, privacy Increase accessibility with ramps,
  - Food gardens that are accessible in more parks and community spaces, and a
  - Heating Box in parks.

### **Somali Women and Children’s Support Network**

- Participants indicated that items that promote safety were missing from the list.
- Having clear signage that indicates running water, the existence of coyotes or other wild animals, or maps to help with direction, could improve the overall experience of community members.
- During the consultation we also brainstormed other ways to ensure safety including the presence of blue light emergency towers so that community members could contact dispatchers if need be.
- Ensuring safety would encourage community members to access parks more frequently and improve the overall quality of a park.

### **Delta Family Resource Centre**

- The group suggested several additions to make parks more inclusive and comprehensive, including:
- Playground equipment and park design accessible for children using wheelchairs.
- Easier gate and entrance designs for wheelchair access.
- Parking lots sized appropriately for the park.
- Play areas specifically for young children (ages 1–3).
- Safer surfaces, such as turf instead of wood chips.

- Enhanced safety measures, including emergency call buttons or posts.
- More child-focused safety elements throughout the park.
- Additional suggestions emphasized:
  - More features and upgrades for seniors, such as seating, shade, and gentle pathways, reflecting an aging population.
  - Greater urgency in implementing accessibility, seating, and amenity improvements.
  - Additional amenities, including more social/gathering spaces, mini-golf, and varied activity options Reinforcement of intergenerational design and relaxing spaces for all ages.
- Overall, the group recommended stronger emphasis on seniors' needs, social and gathering amenities, and accessibility upgrades, ideally implemented more quickly.

### **Black Environmental Initiative**

- The group provided several suggestions including:
  - Mitigation of encampments through community wellness and housing mechanisms,
  - Limiting perceived safety concerns at safety injection sites,
  - Year-round programming for local community, and
  - More pergolas and natural seating.

### **West Toronto Lawn Bowling**

- Expand “accessible and inclusive design for all abilities” to “features that support the health and well-being of seniors” such as lawn bowling clubs.

Participants shared their feedback on the proposed new guiding principle “Protect”, including their level of support and suggestions about what “Protect” means to them.

### **JANS**

- The group of seniors believe that parks can and should be upgraded to meet evolving community needs. However, any changes to park facilities should only encroach on the natural environment when absolutely necessary.
- They emphasized that creating recreational amenities, preserving the natural environment, and protecting the cultural heritage of a space all have tremendous unique value and are all essential to maintaining the unique identity of that society.

### **West Neighbourhood House**

- Participants were passionate about preserving parks and building new parks.
- Participants spoke about their disagreement and frustrations of the redevelopment and conversion of the nearby Ontario Place into a private spa.

- Participants spoke about protecting everyone who uses parks including kids, adults, seniors, and people who live in parks.
- Participants discussed how some parks were not designed to feel safe at times, especially at night.
- An idea shared was to design park to have and/or be located in open, visible areas, and avoid parks being hidden or in corners.
- Having more streetlights and bike paths added into parks was discussed to increase usage, as it can get quite dark at night.
- The group discussed a pilot of park rangers around parks, especially at night, to help people in parks.
- Participants also mentioned people who are living in parks (or encampments).
- Participants discussed that anyone living in a park peacefully should not be evicted out or removed, and that the City must provide real housing solutions for people living in parks to move them into.

### WoodGreen Community Services

- The group expressed strong support for adding “Protect” as a guiding principle.
- Participants emphasized that the concept of protection should go beyond environmental preservation to also include human, animal, and community safety and wellbeing.
- Different participants highlighted various aspects of protection:
  - Physical safety: Ensuring parks are designed to prevent harm and injuries, with secure pathways, proper lighting, and safe play areas.
  - Mental health and wellbeing: Providing calm, restorative, and inclusive spaces that help reduce stress and promote emotional wellness.
  - Environmental and animal safety: Protecting wildlife habitats, trees, and ecosystems while promoting responsible park use.
  - Family and personal safety: Maintaining spaces that feel secure for individuals, families, and vulnerable users such as children, seniors, and newcomers.
- The group agreed that “Protect” reinforces the importance of keeping parks safe, sustainable, and nurturing for people, animals, and the environment alike—ensuring they remain welcoming and resilient spaces for future generations.
- The group suggested that “Protect” should also emphasize education and awareness, encouraging visitors to understand their role in preserving parks and nature.
- Incorporating community-led stewardship programs, environmental education, and youth engagement activities was seen as an effective way to strengthen the principle in practice.
- The group agreed that “Protect” reinforces the importance of keeping parks safe, sustainable, and nurturing for people, animals, and the environment alike — ensuring they remain welcoming and resilient spaces for future generations.

### **Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (East York and Don Valley)**

- One respondent added that “Protect” should include protecting wildlife and park users from off-leash dogs that take over the park with little enforcement of bylaws.
- Lands that are meant for nature conservation should not be used for construction of buildings.
- Respecting the water and land so they are not poisoned we cannot live without safe water/land.
- Ensuring policies and by-laws are enforced, people who do not adhere are reported, and people are educated about by-laws.
- Protect natural beauty of parks, building around that without destroying it More 311 staff to address concerns.

### **Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (South Scarborough)**

- Maintain existing park land.
- Protecting biodiversity, including planting native plants and warding off invasive species, bringing back native habitat that has been lost through over-development.

### **Neighbourhood Information Post**

- To the group, 'Protect' means that the green space they have around their neighbourhood will not be rezoned into new private developments
- Over the years, especially in Moss Park, they have noticed a neglect of the preservation of parks and other green spaces and in general a decrease in greenery such as trees.
- “Protect” means a preservation of city parks and upkeep of facilities.

### **Midaynta Community Services**

- The group opposed the first point “Protecting parkland from conversion to other uses, ensuring that parks remain as parks” as there is a current housing crisis and with the lack of shelters homeless individuals resort to seeking shelter in parks.
- The group stated that this point seems to be working against the homeless and must be re-worked to account for the use of land to tackle the housing crisis.
- Attendees also shared that protecting to them also means ensuring the safety of people by including an emergency buttons in the parks.

### **Somali Women and Children’s Support Network**

- Participants expressed that “Protect” means preserving spaces through

preventing vandalism, garbage build-up, and creating an environment that to promotes growth and community.

### **Delta Family Resource Centre**

- Members agreed unanimously on its importance and discussed what “Protect” means to them:
  - Respect for the Land: Protecting parks involves showing respect for the land, wildlife, trees, and other visitors, including avoiding damage and preserving natural elements.
  - Safety and Security: Parks should feel safe for all users, with adequate safety measures such as emergency call buttons/posts, lighting (including energy-efficient or sensor-based lighting), and controlled access to higher-risk areas.
  - Protecting Natural Habitats: Group members emphasized safeguarding wildlife habitats, promoting coexistence, and preventing ecosystem damage, even during activities like barbecues or fires.
  - Thoughtful, Risk-Aware Design: Intentional design of playgrounds, pool areas, barbecuing/fire zones, and other facilities to minimize hazards and ensure safe use by all visitors.
  - Balancing User Safety and Environmental Stewardship: All park designs should prioritize both visitor safety and the protection of natural and cultural resources.

### **Black Environmental Initiative**

- “Protect” means to make people feel protected and create an environment of reduced harm.
- In addition, it means accessibility, safety, and strong diversity of extracurricular activities, programs and facilities.
- Ensuring people and dogs are protected against coyotes.
- Protecting people from pollution, ensuring parks are not polluted.

### **West Toronto Lawn Bowling**

- Believed the list was inclusive.

Participants shared their level of support for including Factor 3: equity-deserving areas, to help determine Parkland Priority Areas.

- Overall, the groups agreed with including equity-deserving areas in determining Parkland Priority Areas to ensure fair access to green spaces.
- They believe it will promote community well-being and bring much needed attention to individuals and communities most affected by economic, and environmental inequities.
- Participants agreed that measuring the amount of parkland available per person

is essential to ensure equitable access to green spaces across Toronto.

- Several participants highlighted that in densely populated areas, the need is not only for more park space but also for more amenities within existing parks.
  - As populations grow, children and families often face long waits to use play equipment and sports facilities.
- Enhancing the capacity and functionality of existing parks, such as adding additional play structures, shaded seating, and multi-use recreational zones, was seen as equally important as expanding parkland area.
- Improving park accessibility and amenities in high-density neighborhoods will significantly enhance quality of life and community wellbeing.
- In terms of Factor 1, some participants noted that they believe that affordable housing is a higher priority than the amount of parkland per person right now.
- An organization shared that even if ravine land is unusable for official parks, they provide several advantages such as greenspace for nature and are visually pleasing and 'unofficial' paths that traverse along ravines.
- One organization strongly opposed Factor 3, stating that it was unnecessary to highlight equity-deserving areas, as it felt segregating.

Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 1 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: enhancing waterfront access and additional comments or suggestions.

- Participants thought that enhancing access to waterfront within parks was incredibly important.
  - Waterfront access to parks should be accessible by transit. For example, they discussed how Tommy Thompson Park should have a bus to the front entrance and to the walking paths.
- Participants emphasized that Toronto's waterfront areas are among the city's most valuable public spaces and should be accessible, safe, and welcoming for all residents.
- Ensure equitable access so that residents from all communities, including newcomers and families in dense urban areas, can enjoy waterfront parks.
- Prioritize safety and maintenance measures such as proper lighting, pathways, and accessible washrooms.
- Leverage environmental protection to preserve the natural ecosystem while allowing responsible recreational use.
- One focus group shared that they do not regularly access the waterfront due to the distance from their homes. They are open to this idea but think that other themes are of higher priority at the moment.
- Some participants spoke about the inaccessibility of waterfront spaces for communities like North Scarborough who are removed from it.

Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 2 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: advancing Indigenous reconciliation projects and additional comments or suggestions.

- Participants were in support of advancing Indigenous Reconciliation efforts through physical structures, design such as engraving Indigenous art in the concrete pathways, adding medicinal plants, and organizing cultural events.
- Participants suggested incorporating Indigenous-led consultations, stewardship programs, and educational signage in parks to promote ongoing collaboration, cultural representation, and awareness of Indigenous history.
- Participants were excited about this prospect and the value it would bring to these spaces but are curious to know what that would look like and are looking for a clearer explanation of the format and plan.
- Some participants did not have a particular connection with the indigenous community in Toronto, so they had neither showed their support or opposition to this theme.

Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 3 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: serving equity-deserving areas and additional comments or suggestions.

- This approach promotes fairness and ensures that all individuals and groups are included within the scope.
- Participants shared how many parents and people in equity-deserving areas do not have access to cars, and therefore need the parks to be close by to their residence. This is a key point in why it is important to prioritize building parks in equity-deserving areas.
- Parks should be located in prime, accessible areas with a lot of community and residences, and not far away and desolate, which will help to ensure greater safety in their neighbourhoods.
- The group that was comprised of mainly equity-deserving members of Moss Park showed their strong support behind the implementation of this theme.

Participants shared their level for the proposed revisions to Theme 4 of the Parkland Acquisitions Assessment Tool: increasing tree canopy (e.g., to reduce urban heat island) and additional comments or suggestions.

- Participants spoke at length about how a tree canopy provides benefit to the park.
- Discussions included climbing them, to seeing their leaves change, to bird watching, and even hearing the leaves blow in the wind as meditative.
- Participants spoke more about how plants can regulate the air and environment to keep it clean.
- They also discussed how parks should create smoking areas, because the current absence of designated smoking areas encourages people to smoke anywhere.
- Participants shared that during the summers the lack of trees in Moss Park is highly noticeable.

- Participants offered several additional suggestions:
  - Consider the surrounding context: Evaluate not just the parcel itself but also nearby features, access points, and how the space connects with the neighborhood.
  - Protect existing wildlife: Assess potential acquisitions to preserve habitats and minimize disruption to animals already in the area.
  - Ensure community use: Prioritize land that is genuinely accessible and beneficial for local residents, not just green in theory.
  - Promote multi-purpose and flexible use: Select land that can serve diverse community needs over time.

# Appendix C: DIY Kit Feedback

Each DIY kit submission form also included questions about the kit, including the support materials and overall process, to understand if this is a format to replicate or improve for future engagements. All 12 groups responded to this section of the survey.

If the City provided other Do-It-Yourself Workshop Kits on other topics, based on this experience how likely are you to try to host your own community discussion again?

- Very likely 10
- Likely 1
- Neutral 1
- Unlikely 0
- Very unlikely 0

How satisfied are you with the materials and process provided to support you in the Do-It-Yourself Workshop Kit?

- Very satisfied 7
- Generally satisfied 4
- Neutral 0
- Generally unsatisfied 1
- Very unsatisfied 0

Do you have any suggestions or feedback for improving future Do-It-Yourself Workshop Kits?

- The DIY workshop kit was very comprehensive. For next time, it may be beneficial for Parks, Forestry, and Recreation to include in guidelines for the facilitators which discussion content is the highest priority to get in community feedback on. This way, we can know which sections can be allocated more time.
- Overall, the materials are useful, however, they can be a bit challenging to understand, making it plain language for the general public would be ideal.
- The PowerPoint didn't match up very well to the questions provided in the guide.
- I am very satisfied with the DIY Workshop Kits. It is particularly helpful that city staff meet with facilitators from different organizations before the community engagement sessions to answer questions

and provide guidance. The kit itself is well-organized, clear, and very useful.

- Wording was a little difficult to communicate to the community.
- Having the discussion questions throughout the presentation would potentially improve engagement. The bulk of the discussion questions were at the very end, when it might have been more effective to place questions right after their corresponding slide. For instance, the discussion question relating to how strongly participants agree to the four guiding principles could have come after slide 13. That way the information is still fresh in their minds and is immediately reinforced by a group discussion.
- During our focus group session, many second-language English speakers may find this survey hard to navigate and require assistance in simplifying the content. So if the wording of the presentation can be simplified in the upcoming year, it would be perfect. Thank you again for this opportunity, and we look forward to working with the city again!
- The information was clear allowing anyone to present it effectively without needing in-depth knowledge of the subject. The kit was well prepared making it easy to deliver the content within the allotted time while keeping my seniors engaged and focused. I would be more than happy to deliver similar surveys on behalf of the City should an opportunity arise in the future.